



BIDEFORD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES

Name of Committee: Amenities Committee

Meeting Date: Thursday, 3 September 2026

Meeting Time: 6:30pm

Venue: Greenhouse, Riverbank House, Bideford EX39 2QG

Present:

North Ward

Councillor D Bushby (substitute for Councillor C Hawkins)

Councillor J Gordon

Councillor K Hind

Councillor S Smith

South Ward

Councillor S Inch

Councillor P Lawrence

East Ward

Councillor J Craigie

Councillor J Gubb

Councillor J McKenzie

Also Present

J Gardner, Town Clerk

R D Coombes, Deputy Town Clerk

S Long, Tricks Site Representative

A Mitchell, Pollyfield Site Representative

N Wheeler, Chairman Handy Cross Association

25. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Clarke and C Hawkins.

26. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

No declarations of interest or requests for dispensations were received.

Order of Business

The Chairman proposed that Item 6. (Allotment Sites Budget and Rent 2027-28) be brought forward for consideration prior to Item 5. (Management of Butchers' Row) in respect for those attending Allotment representatives. Seconded by Councillor Smith it was resolved to Change of the Order of Business.

(Vote – For: 8, Against: 0)

27. Public Participation

The Chairman read a report on the Marland Association activities (their AGM clashed with the Meeting):

“The Site has no vacancies currently. It has been a challenging growing season because of the lack of water. An internal best plot competition was held. The spring work day and cream tea were well attended and a lot of Site work was done in a short space of time. In the process of getting quotes to top the hedge adjacent to Union Close, the hedge is now taller than the houses and casting permanent shadow over two plots, making growing much more challenging for the plot holders. It is hoped to have the work done on the hedge in October. A second work day will also be held in October.”

The Chairman invited the Allotment attendees to provide a brief update on their respective site details.

Mr Long advised there was vacancy for a “half plot;” an offer (to an applicant) had been made. He had led a “self-help” operation to repair and strengthen the boundary fence; five gallons of creosote were applied! Many of the plots were well maintained, the office had sent some letters of encouragement; the Site is running smoothly.

Mr Mitchell advised that three tenants were given Notice to Quit. Three offers had been made. There remains two full size plots that will be offered following agreements with the aforementioned three. The Site is running well but conceded that the scarcity of water had been a challenge.

Mrs Wheeler noted that the Association's AGM is scheduled for 18 September 2026. She advised that fifty seven plots were filled five were vacant (one tenant had been given Notice to Quit). One applicant turned down the opportunity of a plot mindful of workload; a further one has not responded. The Site is in good condition. The central boundary dividing the three areas has a number of overhanging trees.

The Deputy Town Clerk indicated that tree surgeons had been contracted in the past; he would ask the Maintenance Team to assess in the first instance.

Mrs Wheeler noted that there had been a number of “break ins,” with the Site taking subsequent appropriate measures.

The Chairman thanked the Allotment representatives for their contributions.

(Councillor Hind joined the Meeting.)

28. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was proposed by Councillor McKenzie, seconded by Councillor Lawrence and **resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities Committee held on 23 July 2026 as a correct record.

(Vote – For: 8, Against: 0, Abstention: 1)

Allotments

29. Allotment Sites Budget and Rent

The Councillors had previously received the Draft Budget for 2027 / 2028.

Councillor Lawrence believed there to be an inequitable arrangement that saw the Pollyfield and Tricks allotment rental payments subsidise the Associations. He believed that the Council covered the Associations' general costs including works to boundaries trees and hedges. He noted that the Associations also have the ability to raise / apply for funding elsewhere.

Councillor Lawrence indicated the modest rent should be changed requiring the Associations to pay the annual rent to DCC (Marland) and the Bridge Trust (Handy Cross) of £500 and £250 respectively.

The Deputy Town Clerk suggested that the Council's legal duty was to satisfy the demand, from the Community, for allotment provision. He noted that the Council owned both Pollyfield and Tricks Allotment Sites and that by renting additional sites the wider Community was supported.

The Council office staff administer the Pollyfield and Tricks Site including the applications, tenancy agreements, and rental demands for the 100 gardens. The Associations self-administer and organise the Site including general maintenance through their committee members. He speculated should the Associations be dissolved the Council would have a further 100 gardens (to administer).

Councillor Lawrence sought to keep all rental levels the same with the Associations covering the site rental costs respectively.

The Deputy Town Clerk referred members to the Associations' Tenancy Agreements (with the Council) that provided for the Associations to determine their individual tenant rental charges and stipulated their overall (agreed) site rental charge.

It was proposed by Councillor Lawrence, seconded by Councillor Bushby, to defer the item until the next Meeting, to be held on 15 October 2026, to provide for clarification on the Associations' Agreements with the Council.

(Vote – For: 9, Against: 0)

Pannier Market

30. Management of Butchers' Row

Councillors discussed a report regarding the use of the Butchers' Row thoroughfare in attracting additional footfall that would be equitable to all tenants and provide landlord management in a coherent and fair manner.

It noted various conditions of the Tenant's Lease that in effect precluded those activities that have benefited and promoted individuals and the Complex as a whole of late.

The Town Clerk indicated that there were areas that the Council, as Landlord, needed to safeguard in terms of Health and Safety towards all stakeholders and ensuring that those Tenants benefitting from a wider outlet opportunity had appropriate (Fire) Risk Assessments and Public Liability insurance provision.

Due to the sensitive or confidential nature of the following item it was proposed by Councillor McKenzie, seconded by Councillor P Lawrence and **resolved** to exclude the press and public from the remainder of the meeting on the basis of Section 1 paragraph 2 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 which stipulated that a council may, by resolution, exclude the public from a meeting (whether during the whole or part of the proceedings) whenever publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons stated in the resolution and arising from the nature of that business or of the proceedings.

(Vote – For: 9, Against: 0)

Part II (Closed Session)

Councillor Lawrence explained why the thoroughfare would benefit from better management in ensuring equitable opportunities and clarity for all tenants in the light of recent and future events.

Further discussion provided for the safeguard for stakeholders as a means to encourage wider equality of opportunity but not to discourage any tenant's business model.

Councillor Bushby proposed, seconded by Councillor McKenzie:

1. The use of the thoroughfare in Butchers' Row for individual business purposes. Proposed solution: Retailers contact the Council to request permission to place temporary obstructions in the common parts or ways of the building which shall not be unreasonable withheld. Tenants will be required to submit to the landlord their risk assessments and evidence of their public liability insurance.
2. The playing of music / noise which audible outside of individual retail units. Proposed solution: Retailers contact the Council to request permission to make any sound audible outside their individual units. If required the Council can then consult with the other retailers so that any business activity involving noise does not result in a nuisance to other retailers.

3. The use of Butchers' Row Retailers for events. Proposed solution: Retailers contact the Council before they publish details of any event they are planning for permission so that the landlord can coordinate events to prevent diary clashes on a first come first served basis.
4. Retailers contact the Council to book the Market Hall prior to events.

(Vote – For: 9, Against: 0)

31. Landlord / Tenant Matters

No matters were raised.

Decarbonisation and Environment

32. Ford Woods Woodland Management Plan

Councillor Gordon confirmed that the Bideford Sustainability Group (BSG) would sign the Project Collaboration Agreement, for Governing the Development of a Woodland Management Plan for Ford Woods, once all the Trustees had given their ascent.

Until the Agreement was signed they will look at the Ford Woodland Management Plan 2012 – 2017 as a source to be drawn from that would be tailored to present and future needs. It would allow for grant applications to develop greater revenue streams.

He reiterated from the last Amenities Meeting (Minute 22.) that the Collaboration would provide for the future management and protocols for the Woods, at each stage the Town Council would have the “power of veto.” At no point would the Council’s stewardship of the Woods be undermined. The Town Council would have ownership of the Management Plan and will agree / amend where necessary.

It was proposed by Councillor Gordon, seconded by Councillor McKenzie and **resolved** to recommend the draft written agreement to the full Council for approval, subject to:

1. the points listed in section 19 in the draft agreement being answered, and
2. the merit having been scoped in reviewing the existing woodland management plan 2012-17 rather than creating a new management plan.

(Vote – For: 9, Against: 0)

The business of the meeting having been concluded the Chair thanked the councillors for their attendance at the meeting, which concluded at 7.33 pm.

Signature of Town Mayor:

Date:

Signature of Chairman:

Date: