

**Minutes of the Arts & Culture Advisory Committee (A&C) held at 5.30pm on
Tuesday 28th July 2026 in the Council Chamber, Shaftesbury Town Hall**

Members Present: Fran Hill (Chair), Cllr Elaine Barratt (Vice-Chair), Rachel Diment, Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones, Charlie Hamilton-Saul, Amber Harrison, Julia Markus, Cllr Conor Smith, Janet Swiss and Peter Wildman

Absent: Deborah Jones, Tim Royle, Mark Thistlewood and Karen Wimhurst

Officers Present: Matthew Harrison (Town Clerk) and Sarah Johnson (Office Administrator)

In Attendance: Public (2), Julie Wood (Shaftesbury Waters), Press (1)

[Link to agenda](#)

The Town Clerk introduced himself to the committee and explained Agenda Item No. 7. He stated that Shaftesbury Town Council had received a letter addressed to the whole committee and, when received by a whole committee, it needs to be considered by the whole committee. He stated, however, that the Town Council is limited in what it can do when a matter involves a third-party organisation. He asked that, during discussion of this item, no individual be mentioned or individual roles that could identify specific people be mentioned and made the Chair aware that the committee are able to discuss the matter if they so wish or can choose not to, defer it to a future meeting, or remove it from the agenda.

Public Participation:

- The Town Clerk read out a statement on behalf of the Trustees of Shaftesbury Arts Centre –

Chair, Members of the Committee,

The following statement is made on behalf of the Trustees of Shaftesbury Arts Centre.

The Trustees thank the Committee for allowing this statement to be read.

The purpose of this statement is not to debate the views expressed in the correspondence before the Committee, but to address the process by which it has come before the Committee and to ask Members to consider whether discussion of the internal governance of an independent registered charity falls within the Council's proper remit.

Shaftesbury Arts Centre is an independent registered charity governed by its Board of Trustees. The Trustees have legal duties and responsibilities under charity law, and those responsibilities rest solely with the Board. They are not delegated to, or overseen by, the Town Council.

The Trustees were disappointed that the letter now before the Committee was not shared with them before it was submitted to the Council, nor were they given the opportunity to respond before it was placed on the public agenda. The Chair of the Trustees only became aware of the correspondence after the agenda had been published.

The Trustees also note that the correspondence was submitted on the official letterhead of The Shaftesbury & District Historical Society whilst stating that it had been written on behalf of an informal

Arts Collective. No allegation is made regarding the authority under which the letter was submitted; however, the Trustees believe it is a reasonable point for the Committee to consider when assessing the weight to be attached to the correspondence.

It is also relevant to note that the Chair of the Trustees is a member of the Arts Collective and was not consulted about the contents of the letter before it was submitted. The Trustees therefore understand that the correspondence cannot necessarily be taken to represent the views of all members of that group.

The Trustees welcome the Town Clerk's advice that Members should declare any conflicts of interest and avoid discussion that could identify individuals.

However, the Trustees respectfully invite the Committee to consider a more fundamental question: what is the appropriate role of the Town Council in relation to the internal affairs of an independent charity?

If the Committee wishes simply to acknowledge receipt of the correspondence or determine whether any matters relate directly to the Council, that is entirely understandable. However, if the intention is to investigate, comment upon or seek to influence the governance, management or operation of the Arts Centre, the Trustees respectfully suggest that this would fall outside the Council's remit.

For almost seventy years, Shaftesbury Arts Centre has served the community as an independent charitable organisation. Like any charity, it is not beyond criticism, and the Trustees remain committed to listening to constructive feedback and continually improving the organisation for the benefit of the community it serves. Over recent months the Trustees have welcomed a number of new volunteers and established a new Music & Comedy Group to broaden the Centre's programme and attract new audiences.

Where concerns are raised, the Trustees believe they are best addressed through direct dialogue and through the established governance processes that apply to charities, rather than through public debate by a body that has no governance responsibility for the organisation.

The Trustees therefore respectfully ask the Committee to recognise the Arts Centre's independence as a registered charity, to ensure that any consideration of this correspondence remains proportionate, fair and within the Council's proper remit, and to encourage any future concerns to be raised directly with the Trustees in the first instance.

The Trustees thank the Committee for its time and careful consideration.

- Cllr Barratt confirmed, as writer of the letter, that it was sent to all members of the Arts Collective before it was sent to the Town Clerk.

The meeting commenced at 5.36pm.

AC1 To elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for 2026/27

Officer report 0726AC1 was received and it was **RESOLVED** to re-elect Fran Hill as Chair of the Arts & Culture Advisory Committee for 2026/27.

Proposed by Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones and Seconded by Janet Swiss

In Favour 10 Cllr Elaine Barratt, Rachel Diment, Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones, Charlie Hamilton-Saul, Amber Harrison, Fran Hill, Julia Markus, Cllr Conor Smith, Janet Swiss and Peter Wildman

Against 0

Abstentions 0

MOTION CARRIED

It was **RESOLVED** to re-elect Cllr Barratt as Vice-Chair of the Arts & Culture Advisory Committee for 2026/27.

Proposed by Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones and Seconded by Janet Swiss

In Favour 10 Cllr Elaine Barratt, Rachel Diment, Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones, Charlie Hamilton-Saul, Amber Harrison, Fran Hill, Julia Markus, Cllr Conor Smith, Janet Swiss and Peter Wildman

Against 0

Abstentions 0

MOTION CARRIED

Action: Full Council

AC2 Apologies

No apologies were received.

AC3 To receive any Declarations of Interest

Officer report 0726AC3 was received. It was **NOTED** that members should declare any interests if they arise.

Amber Harrison declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 7 as she was a board member of Shaftesbury Arts Centre from 2012 to 2020.

Charlie Hamilton-Saul declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 7 as an employee of Shaftesbury Arts Centre.

Fran Hill declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 7 as Shaftesbury Arts Centre pay some of her wages.

Janet Swiss declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 9 as she is a member of the Shaftesbury Waters project committee.

AC4 To approve the minutes of the meeting on 28th April 2026

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting on 28th April 2026. These were duly signed.

Proposed by Cllr Elaine Barratt and Seconded by Julia Markus

In Favour 7 Cllr Elaine Barratt, Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones, Charlie Hamilton-Saul, Amber Harrison, Fran Hill, Julia Markus and Janet Swiss

Against 0

Abstentions 3 Rachel Diment, Cllr Conor Smith and Peter Wildman

MOTION CARRIED

Due to some sensitivity concerns, the Chair PROPOSED a motion that Agenda Item No. 7 be removed and the Council representatives for Shaftesbury Arts Centre will discuss the concerns directly with the Arts Centre.

It was **RESOLVED** to remove Agenda Item No. 7 from the meeting.

Proposed by Fran Hill and Seconded by Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones

In Favour 9 Cllr Elaine Barratt, Rachel Diment, Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones, Charlie Hamilton-Saul, Amber Harrison, Fran Hill, Julia Markus, Cllr Conor Smith and Peter Wildman

Against 1 Janet Swiss

Abstentions 0

MOTION CARRIED

AC5 To receive a presentation by TrailTale

Officer report 0726AC5 was received and members noted the information given in TrailTale's presentation.

It was **RESOLVED** to seek support in principle and funding support from Shaftesbury Town Council for the provision of a mobile phone-based town trail for Shaftesbury.

Proposed by Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones and Seconded by Amber Harrison

In Favour 9 Cllr Elaine Barratt, Rachel Diment, Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones, Charlie Hamilton-Saul, Amber Harrison, Fran Hill, Julia Markus, Janet Swiss and Peter Wildman

Against 0

Abstentions 1 Cllr Conor Smith

MOTION CARRIED

Action: Full Council

Nomination of committee members to take the project forward was discussed together with possible contributions from other bodies.

A suggestion was made to speak to Sherborne Town Council as they have commissioned a TrailTale app, and that a 'Tree Trail' be one of the trails included in Shaftesbury's app.

Rachel Diment left the meeting at 6.17pm.

It was PROPOSED and **RESOLVED** to discuss Agenda Item No. 9 at this point in the meeting.

Proposed by Janet Swiss and Seconded by Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones

In Favour 10 Cllr Elaine Barratt, Rachel Diment, Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones, Charlie Hamilton-Saul, Amber Harrison, Fran Hill, Julia Markus, Cllr Conor Smith, Janet Swiss and Peter Wildman

Against 0

MOTION CARRIED

AC6 To receive an update on the Shaftesbury Water Feature project

Officer report 0726AC9 was received and members **NOTED** the verbal update from Julie Wood.

A 'Singing Walk' was held at the Fringe singing river music to the spring. This was very well attended and a mini launch of the project, and Julie Wood thanked Karen Wimhurst and Palida Choir.

Harry Jonas (stonemason) has started to develop a design for the stone. Concept of water goddess feature, influenced by the Roman Baths. A drawing was circulated of the shape of the stone which it is proposed will sit above the spring (one large greensand stone) and it is intended that the spring will demonstrate the importance of water through history and, in particular, Shaftesbury's heritage.

The committee AGREED they are happy to work with this concept.

It was noted that the area has been strimmed in places and it was suggested that project members contact the Town Clerk for any strimming required as DC rangers currently carry out this work.

Shaftesbury Waters are considering an Instagram account or Facebook group to publicise the project, and they also propose submitting an application to Swans Trust to start the funding process for the project once costs are finalised.

The Chair thanked Julie Wood for her hard work thus far.

AC7 To receive an update on Town of Culture 2028

Officer report 0726AC6 was received and members **NOTED** the update.

The Chair thanked Helen Watts and Charlie Hamilton-Saul, together with the other members of the Arts Collective who worked incredibly hard to put the expression of interest together in such a short space of time.

AC8 To receive an update on brown signs

Officer report 0726AC8 was received and members **NOTED** the verbal update given at the meeting.

It was felt important to reference Shaftesbury Abbey and Gold Hill Museum and a suggestion was made to change "i" on signs to "M" for museum. The Town Clerk will take this up with Dorset Highways.

It was suggested there should also be a sign for 'view' as Shaftesbury's two key assets are heritage and view.

To reduce cost, it is felt only one set of signs is needed each side of the A350 junction.

Once the committee have heard back from National Highways, they will put a proposal forward as they will then know likely costs and subsequently what to do about local signs.

Concerns were raised about weeds and overgrown vegetation when visitors come to look at Gold Hill. As Dorset Council are responsible for this, as it is a highway, STC would need to ask DC if they would be happy for volunteers to attend to this if they are unable to maintain it more frequently. It was also suggested that letters be written to Gold Hill residents asking them to upkeep the area in front of their properties.

A further update on brown signs will be given at a future meeting.

AC9 To discuss the Terms of Reference

Officer report 0726AC10 was received.

Members noted the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference and it was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council to approve and adopt the 'Shaftesbury Arts & Culture Working and Advisory Committee Terms of Reference 2026' with the correction that committee meetings will be held every third month on the last Tuesday of the month.

Proposed by Cllr Edwyn-Jones and Seconded by Cllr Elaine Barratt

In Favour	10	Cllr Elaine Barratt, Rachel Diment, Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones, Charlie Hamilton-Saul, Amber Harrison, Fran Hill, Julia Markus, Cllr Conor Smith, Janet Swiss and Peter Wildman
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Against	0
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Abstentions	0
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MOTION CARRIED

Action: Full Council

The next formal meeting will be held at 5.30pm on Tuesday 27th October 2026.

Julia Markus gave her apologies as she will be unable to attend.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 6.43pm.

These minutes were adopted on *DD/MM/YY* under minute reference *AC* as a true record of the decisions taken and are duly signed below by the chair of that meeting.