

FORM FOR PROPOSALS FOR DAPTC AGM

To be submitted by Wednesday 5 August 2020

NAME OF COUNCIL BRIDPORT TOWN COUNCIL

Please note that NALC requests this information and careful completion of the form will increase the chances of a proposal being accepted by NALC

1. Please give the motion your Council would like considered at the DAPTC AGM

Bridport Town Council notes that:

- a. Government departments, businesses, individuals, charitable organisations and principal local authorities have all seen specific funding support.
- b. Town and Parish Councils are arguably the only sector of society not to have received some form of direct government support.
- c. Those councils in tourist areas like Dorset are suffering not only more costs in adapting to the regulations to protect our society and organising community support networks, but also from loss of revenue from the restriction of visitors.

Bridport Town Council requests that Her Majesty's Government recognises that:

- a. Town and Parish Councils are expected to rely on business income to supplement their precept revenue and, in the light of disappearing subsidies from higher authorities, are suffering financially during the present crisis.
- b. In many areas of our delivery of services and community support, we are no different from small businesses which currently are eligible for grants, loans and rate & tax reliefs to mitigate those financial shortfalls.

Bridport Town Council therefore calls on Her Majesty's Government to:

- a. Ensure that affected Town and Parish Councils are given financial support during and beyond the present crisis.

2. Please give the reason (as thoroughly as possible) why your Council is submitting this motion.

The motion is largely self-explanatory, and requests Government support for Town and Larger Parish Councils in the light of extra expenses and losses due to delivering extraordinary services and loss of revenue from their business interests during the COVID-19 crisis.

Dorset Council has received some financial support from Government, with a 'request' that Town and Parish Councils be considered when allocating this funding. However, the request was not binding, and the funding provided has not been sufficient to cover Dorset Council's own deficit arising from COVID-19. Understandably the priority has been to protect its own priority services such as social care.

Bridport Town Council (annual precept £718,341) faces a potential deficit of some £200,000 in 2020/21 as a result of the crisis. It has incurred significant additional expenditure in acting as the coordinating body for local support needs, working with over 20 local groups and organisations and 170 volunteers to provide access to food, medical/clinical support, mental health and wellbeing services, citizens' advice, and signposting to other sources of help, through a single distributed helpline number. Some 1,500 people have benefited directly from this service, which is ongoing. The Council has also been heavily and successfully engaged in activity to support the

recovery of the local economy, through a 'shop local' campaign, changes to the town centre highway, and social distancing banners/signs/pavement markings. It has also seen major reductions in income from market tolls, car parks, venue hire fees, box office commission and other sales. The Council has limited access to grant aid due to its statutory status as a local council, and without other sources of financial support, the deficit incurred will fall directly on local tax payers. This is at odds with the impact in every other sector, where direct Government help has been provided.

Councils have, over the past 25 years, been encouraged by successive governments to act in a more business-like manner, for example by raising revenue from non-statutory services. Having responded successfully to this challenge, it is reasonable that Government should now recognise the financial consequences to councils following the COVID-19 outbreak, in the same way as it has done for commercial businesses.

Dorset Council has worked well with Town and Parish Councils during the crisis, and it is simply unreasonable to put these partner organisations in a position of potential conflict over the allocation of funding. Government should recognise the separate statutory status of Town and Parish Councils and provide direct funding to them.

3. Please state how this issue is affecting parish and town councils in Dorset (with case study evidence please) and try not to duplicate answers from previous questions please.

Most Town and Parish Councils have experienced a financial impact from the COVID-19 crisis, and the degree will vary according to their size, their role in responding to the crisis, and the extent of reliance on revenue that has been adversely affected by Government restrictions. Bridport Town Council considers the impact on its own finances to have been severe, but by no means the most severe in Dorset.

Councils such as Bridport have reserves available, and potential access to borrowing, but to use these avenues will result in the cancellation or deferral of community projects, and a lasting consequence for Council Tax payers in restoring these reserves. This is at odds with the Government's efforts to protect other sectors of society from both the immediate and lasting effects of the crisis.

4. If you have information on how this issue is affecting parish and town councils nationally and why this is a national issue please give this and try not to duplicate answers from earlier questions please.

It is anticipated that NALC and DAPTC will have been collecting and collating information on the impact of COVID-19 on behalf of local councils.

5. If relevant, please tell us exactly what aspect of national parish policy your Council would like NALC to lobby Government on (with case study evidence please).

This motion could usefully be linked with existing NALC efforts to change policy on National Non-Domestic Rates (business rates) so that an element is passed to Town and Parish Councils. This would at least recognise the role that councils play in supporting the local economy. This is not simply a COVID-19 issue. Bridport Town Council, for example, provides such support routinely, for example through local markets, devolved highway maintenance services, management of street licensing, development of town centre strategy, and provision of town events that support the vital visitor economy.

The Localism Act provided Town and Parish Councils with welcome powers to take on devolved services, but has not been supported with access to funding for such services.

We understand that the Government has no established legislative mechanism for provision of direct financial support to Town and Parish Councils. This may act as a disincentive to direct funding, as it would presumably mean negotiation of individual funding agreements with each council. This legislative deficit could also explain why funding streams are directed towards principal councils with only a discretionary request to consider passing on funds to Town and Parish Councils.

6. If you have the information, please tell us exactly which part of primary or secondary legislation (or secondary regulation/statutory instrument) your Council would like to be changed as a result of NALC/local lobbying.

We would seek DAPTC/NALC support in determining the appropriate legislative changes.

7. If relevant, please state what other action your Council would like NALC and its Policy Committee to take if this motion is adopted.

We would ask NALC to consider carrying out a detailed national impact survey in respect of the financial and operational impact of COVID-19 on Town and Parish Councils.

8. If you have the information, please confirm the names of any other organisation or local council that formally support your Council's motion.

N/A

If you have any supporting documents to be jointly considered with your Council's motion – please e-mail them with this form to DAPTC.

[See enclosed impact summary - Bridport Town Council Summary 030820.pdf](#)