

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
12th May 2022

- **DORSET UNITARY COUNCIL UPDATE**

- **Dorset Council Grant Agreement** – I attach the drafted and updated grant agreement for 2022/23 for visibility. The only noticeable changes relating to a desire to improve engagement between our tier and Dorset Council.
- **Working Together Engagement Webinars** - This exercise is proving hard work! However, when Dorset Council teams do attend and present we have had some great question and answer sessions and positive feedback. It creates an opportunity for elected members and officers in parish and town councils to engage with the unitary councils. It would be great if we could get a clearer committed to calendar of events for at least 3 months and also, attendance by members as this can be extremely flaky. It's a start.
- **Dorset Council Local Plan** – a number of you will be aware that we had hoped to stage a webinar in January with an update on the Local Plan. This was cancelled. I was then informed in early April of new date for an in person meeting for the 29th. This didn't materialise either. I have now got a new date that will be communicated direct by Dorset Council planning of 27th May 2022 at the Dorford Centre, Dorchester. Invites will be issued for one person per council and if space allows up to 2 delegates per council. At the point of compiling this report I do not believe this has been issued.

- **TRAINING**

We are just concluding the work to assess the level of training attended in 2021/22 so that we can issue the DAPTC Star Training Awards. At first glance it looks as though we will have had record numbers through training in the last 12 months. As ever the challenge remains to look for new and pertinent training topics going forward and to find the time to write new material or procure third parties on specific topics.

[New Clerk Training](#) is now a regular quarterly event and launches in January 2022. The structure will mirror the New Councillor training below with follow up 1:1 sessions on specific topics.

[New Councillor Training](#) is now a monthly feature to capture any co-optees as soon as they join their council. This training incorporates a 'What We Do' DAPTC introduction session, a new e-learning module developed by us here in the South West and then a webinar to consolidate learning. We are now running Code of Conduct and ROI training sessions every month through 2022 to ensure new councillors get off on the right foot. These are proving popular at a cost of £49.00 per councillor.

[E-Learning](#) we will very shortly be adding two new modules highlighted above and have ideas for other modules on our plan for 2022 in the South West. Our skills in developing and authoring the courses are improving each week and we are sharing the prototypes with users to gather feedback and improvements. The first two new modules are 'New Councillor Induction' and 'Standards in Public Life'. Once launched will see the South West Association take 65% of the e-learning revenue which will be split out to each association based on their individual take up.

[DAPTC Webinars](#) have developed a new offering for new chairs of council or committees. This course is suited to chairs making a return to the hotseat or first time chairs or vice chairs. It is in two parts, an hour long video followed by a 'round table' discussion to tackle worries and concerns and ideas about chairing. Dates have been scheduled in the lead up to Annual Council Meetings and the swap over of committee chairs.

[Finance Training](#) for DAPTC is outsourced via our agreement with Parkinson Partnership. These are nationally run courses with booking direct to the trainer. These prove highly popular and book up very quickly.

[Communications & GDPR](#) training is outsourced to Breakthrough Communications. More dates have been made available, and additional topics. New courses have been developed by Breakthrough for 2022, including

how to consult your community and the art of writing surveys. They have also split out their GDPR and Freedom of Information courses, due to the increased demand for these topics.

[Planning & Neighbourhood Planning](#) training continues with additional dates being booked now into the autumn. Word is spreading on this 3 module planning course and we are getting councils not previously attending now booking in.

NEW - We are developing some additional training for 2022 that will focus on the common types of small applications and how to make the most effective use of council time and respond to these in a considered fashion. This will also include support on the use of the planning portal for Clerk and Councillors.

[Events & Engagement](#)

Face to face events and conferences are on hold until we are able to better manage attendance and costs for these activities.

- **ADVICE / SUPPORT**

Council Meetings – We have seen the odd example where councils have continued to utilise online meeting formats to stage committee meetings and in some cases full council meetings. The use of this alternative format and the scheme of delegation during the pandemic has proved difficult for some councils to drop. We have received a steady flow of queries where clearly members and some officers have failed to see that making decisions on line is no longer lawful, no matter how convenient it may be.

Clerk Employment matters – We have received a lot of enquiries on Clerk employment/pay related matters since the New Year. A number of smaller councils are trying to recruit new staff and are asking for advice on recruitment and the correct documentation requirements. Clerks who are in employment are also seeking clarification on current pay scales and contract related issue.

As a result of this we have added some key questions to a Membership Survey that will be expanded upon below. We have also held discussions with a number of training providers to support some new training sessions around employee relations. We are conscious that many councils upon receiving a grievance often haven't had any training or even undertaken such a procedure before. Additionally, many councils appear to struggle with cost of living increases and the necessity to periodically review the spinal column point grade of their Clerk, specifically if the breadth of council activity has changed. A copy of the draft Membership Survey is held on the [Executive Committee webpage](#).

Crisis Management and Direct Support – there are and have been a number of ongoing issues at member councils that have required almost 1:1 support. In a busy small team this can lead to backlogs and exposes the vulnerabilities of the organisation. The last 6 months have seen between 6-8 scenarios where the amount of time allocated to individual councils has increased significantly.

Casual Vacancies and Recruitment / Co-option of New Councillors – At the last election there were a significant number of parish councils with an uncontested election and the struggle to find new councillors doesn't appear to be getting any easier. Neither is it easy to find councillors will to accept the role of Chair. With the next elections in May 2024 it would seem wise to start planning now and looking at what councils can do to increase awareness about the role. This could be combined with a programme of support and training after May 2024 with the hope that more contested elections leads to better representation and more likely candidates for taking on Chair roles. This issue is evident across all sizes of council.

- **DORSET NHS CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP (CCG)**

The current grant agreement has now come to an end and we await contact from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) structure to understand whether we form part of any grant arrangements going forward. The ICB structure originally scheduled to go live in April has been put back to July 2022.

- **NALC/SLCC 'CIVILITY & RESPECT PROJECT'**

The work of this project between NALC and SLCC continues with more lobbying of central government around sanctions. A newsletter with an update will be issued shortly covering progress made to date.

- **COLLITON ANNEXE**

We are now back in the 'new look' office 9am to 2pm, on the following basis:

Monday – Neil (Debbie/Lisa work from home)

Tuesday – Neil / Debbie / Lisa (office)

Wednesday – Debbie / Lisa (Neil work from home to 12 noon)

Thursday - Neil / Debbie / Lisa (office)

Friday - Neil / Debbie / Lisa all work from home

The new telephone is **01305 224460** and we have the ability to make and receive calls using our laptops whether we work from home or are in the office. We also have an answer phone facility that can be accessed whether in office or at home.

There is likely to be some disruption to office working in May as Dorset Council are installing new heating systems to the entire site and the work has started in our location first. Any change to arrangements will be notified.

To finish the transition back to the office we now need to organise some suitable images for the walls and branding for online meetings / training sessions.

- **AREA COMMITTEE SECRETARIES 2022**

We currently have more vacancies than at any other time. The only areas with a secretary in place and willing to continue are Purbeck, Towns and Larger Parishes and Western Area Committee. That leaves North, Central and East without permanent support plus any new proposed area for the BCP Council area members.

I would very much welcome Staffing Committee support to consider possible options going forward.

- **SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT (SLA) – DAPTC/MEMBERS**

I'm aware this has been muted before for DAPTC and has not become a reality and given some of the challenges faced in the last 6-9 months for a small number of members, it might be appropriate to flag this as a piece of work that may be mutually beneficial.

I attach an example SLA from a neighbouring county association and upon enquiry with others it would appear they are quite common place. This is potentially a piece of work for the Strategy Working Group to look at which could then be part of any changes to the constitution in late 2022.

SLAs for Gloucester, Devon and Cornwall are on the [website](#) to read.

- **2022/23 MEMBERSHIP SURVEY**

This year for the first time we will be using an online tool to gather and update member council information. It is quite common now for county associations to gather a range of information from members to help inform and supplement training needs.

The information as a result has been expanded and will be issued as part of the membership renewal process. Executive Committee members can read the survey as part of the 12th May meeting information. The survey has had the input of a small number of clerks both in terms of content and ease of completion. The survey takes less than 8 minutes to complete. The survey will go out mid-May. A copy of the draft Membership Survey is held on the [Executive Committee webpage](#).

- **DAPTC WEBSITE** – We have made some changes to the website in terms of usability and content and will look to better integrate our social media accounts in the remainder of 2022. We are also looking at how we can develop some revenue from sponsorship and advertising from sector suppliers. This will mean working with Vision ICT to look at the art of the possible within the website structure we have. This part of what we do is one that I personally feel we need to invest more time in, specifically to make it a more compelling offer to members and also something that helps us internally in terms of efficiencies.
- **DAPTC STAFFING COMMITTEE & STRATEGIC WORKING GROUP** – I sincerely apologise that we haven't convened any further meetings since these last met which has meant a lack of progress in the matters being discussed. Preparation for these meetings, as for the Executive Committee and area committees is time taken away from supporting member councils either directly or generally. I have drafted a schedule of priorities for both of these committees which you can review and help decide the areas we want to focus upon. I will do my best to combine where we had got to in our discussions as well as some items that may warrant consideration, in my opinion.

Neil Wedge, Chief Executive DAPTC – 3rd May 2022

Scroll Down for Appendix

AGENDA ITEM 4

Appendices: Website Data to 30/4/22:

DAPTC New Website launched late 2019.						
Month	Page Visits	Page Views	Pages/Visit	Ave. Visit Duration	Bounce Rate	% New Visits
Jan-21	1091	5067	4.64	00:04:09	47.11%	40.15%
Feb-21	1055	4475	4.24	00:04:14	45.12%	39.72%
Mar-21	1030	3167	3.07	00:02:33	49.51%	40.87%
Apr-21	849	3501	4.12	00:03:18	49.12%	42.17%
May-21	1292	4018	3.11	00:02:57	51.32%	45.74%
Jun-21	1485	4660	3.14	00:02:45	49.56%	43.57%
Jul-21	1263	3398	2.69	00:02:16	55.98%	45.29%
Aug-21	900	2532	2.81	00:02:48	53.56%	44.78%
Sep-21	1289	4063	3.15	00:03:01	50.66%	40.42%
Oct-21	1279	3562	2.78	00:03:07	50.12%	39.17%
Nov-21	1152	3355	2.91	00:02:32	54.95%	39.24%
Dec-21	704	2367	3.36	00:03:10	55.54%	44.18%
Jan-22	1095	3167	3.07	00:02:33	49.51%	40.87%
Feb-22	905	3501	4.12	00:03:18	49.12%	42.17%
Mar-22	1000	4018	3.11	00:02:57	51.32%	45.74%
Apr-22	932	2840	3.05	00:03:01	52.79%	41.63%
May-22						
Jun-22						
Jul-22						
Aug-22						
Sep-22						
Oct-22						
Nov-22						
Dec-22						

Month	Page Visits
Jan-21	1091
Feb-21	1055
Mar-21	1030
Apr-21	849
May-21	1292
Jun-21	1485
Jul-21	1263
Aug-21	900
Sep-21	1289
Oct-21	1279
Nov-21	1152
Dec-21	704
Jan-22	1095
Feb-22	905
Mar-22	1000
Apr-22	932

Month	Page Views
Jan-21	5067
Feb-21	4475
Mar-21	3167
Apr-21	3501
May-21	4018
Jun-21	4660
Jul-21	3398
Aug-21	2532
Sep-21	4063
Oct-21	3562
Nov-21	3355
Dec-21	2367
Jan-22	3167
Feb-22	3501
Mar-22	4018
Apr-22	2840

Month	Pages/Visit
Jan-21	4.64
Feb-21	4.24
Mar-21	3.07
Apr-21	4.12
May-21	3.11
Jun-21	3.14
Jul-21	2.69
Aug-21	2.81
Sep-21	3.15
Oct-21	2.78
Nov-21	2.91
Dec-21	3.36
Jan-22	3.07
Feb-22	4.12
Mar-22	3.11
Apr-22	3.05

Visits:	Total number of visits by unique users during the period
Page Views:	Total number of pages viewed during the period - good indicator of usage +/-
Pages/Visit:	Average number of pages viewed during one session from the visitor
Ave. Visit Duration:	The average time the website is being used during the visit
Bounce Rate:	The % of sessions with a single page view - where the browser finds what they want on one page
% New Visits:	Captures the % of new visitors not previously captured through the website analytics