



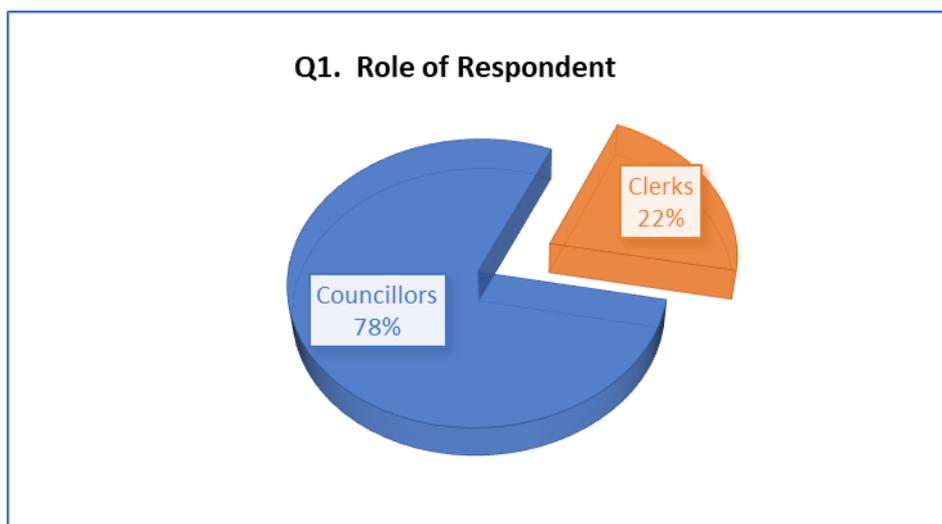
DAPTC Area Committee Survey – Summary of responses

March 2021

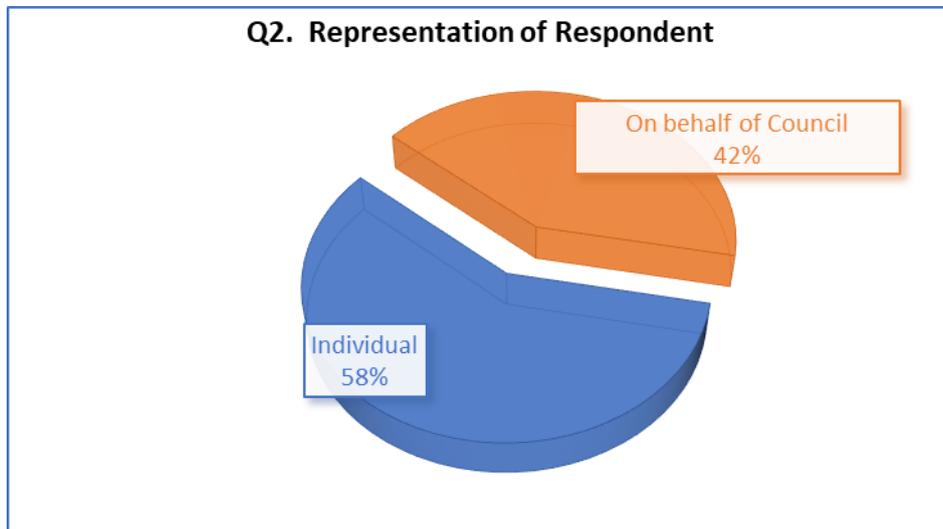
Area Committee Information & No. of Responses received

Area Details		No. of Councils responding		No. of Responses	
Area Committee	No. of councils in Area	No. of Councils responding	% of councils responding	No. of Representatives in Area (from DAPTC Reps database)	No. of Responses received
Eastern	20 (inc BCP Councils)	11	55%	39	17
Central	45	12	27%	71	12
Northern	49	16	33%	83	16
Purbeck	21	12	57%	41	15
Western	27	18	67%	48	19
Total	162	69	43%	282	79

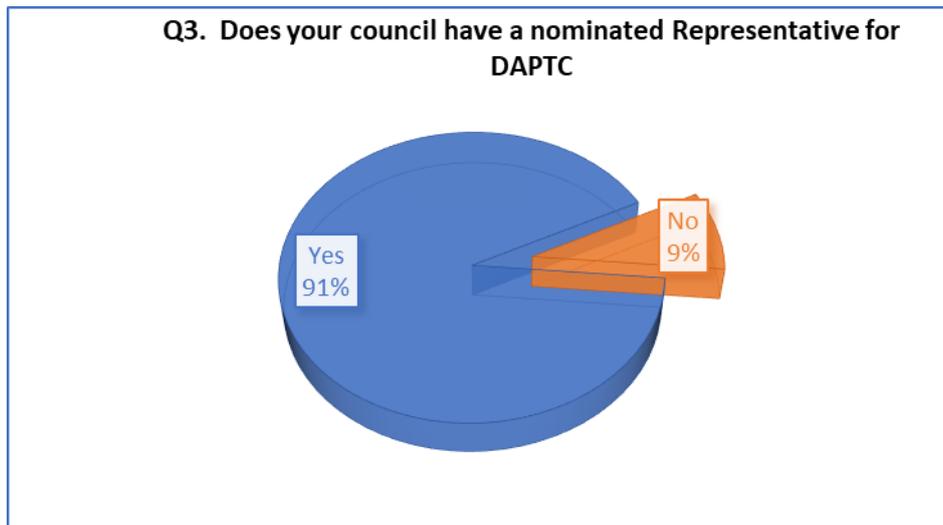
Q1. Role of Respondent



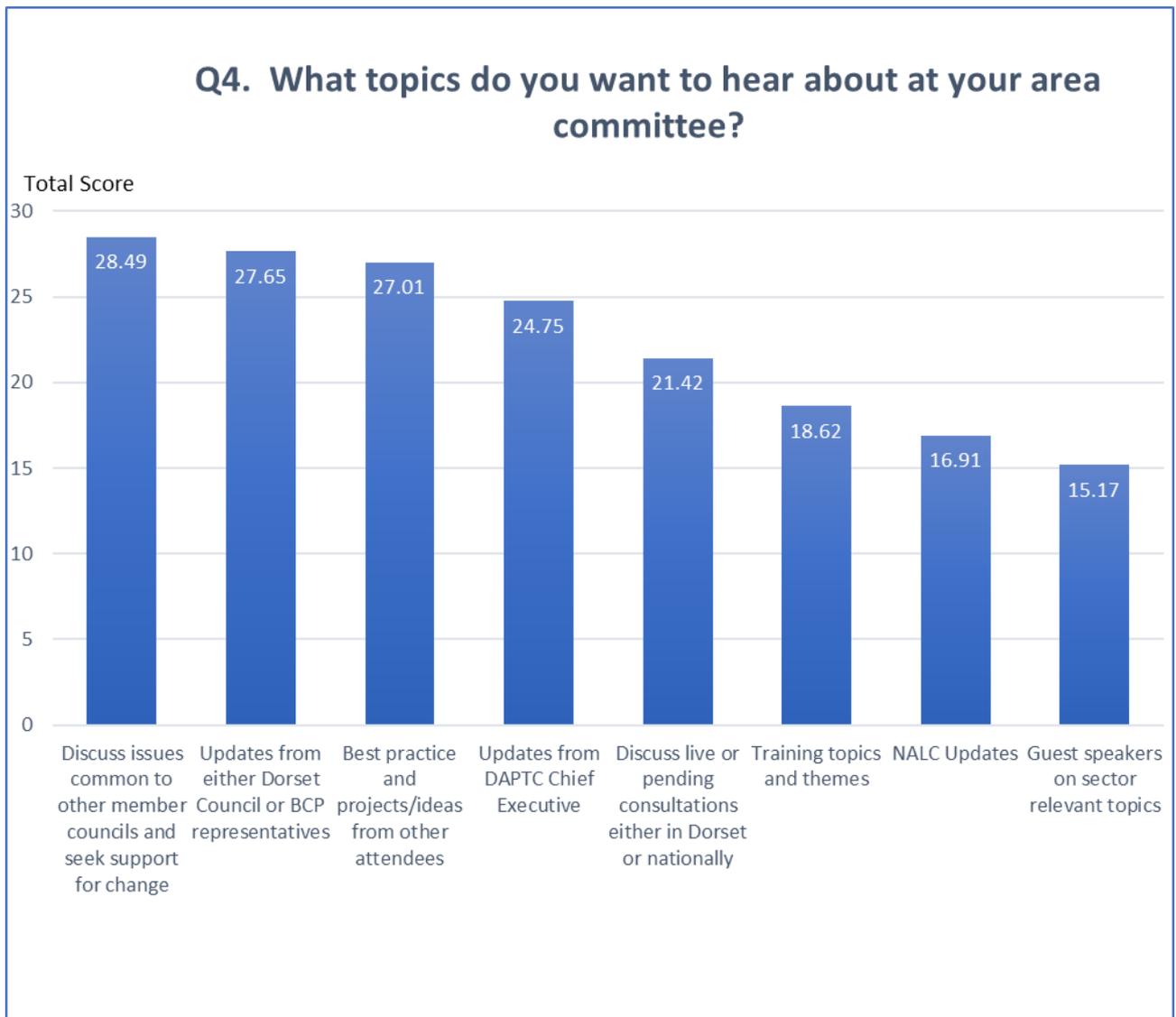
Q2. Representation of Respondent



Q3. Does your council have a nominated representative for DAPTC?



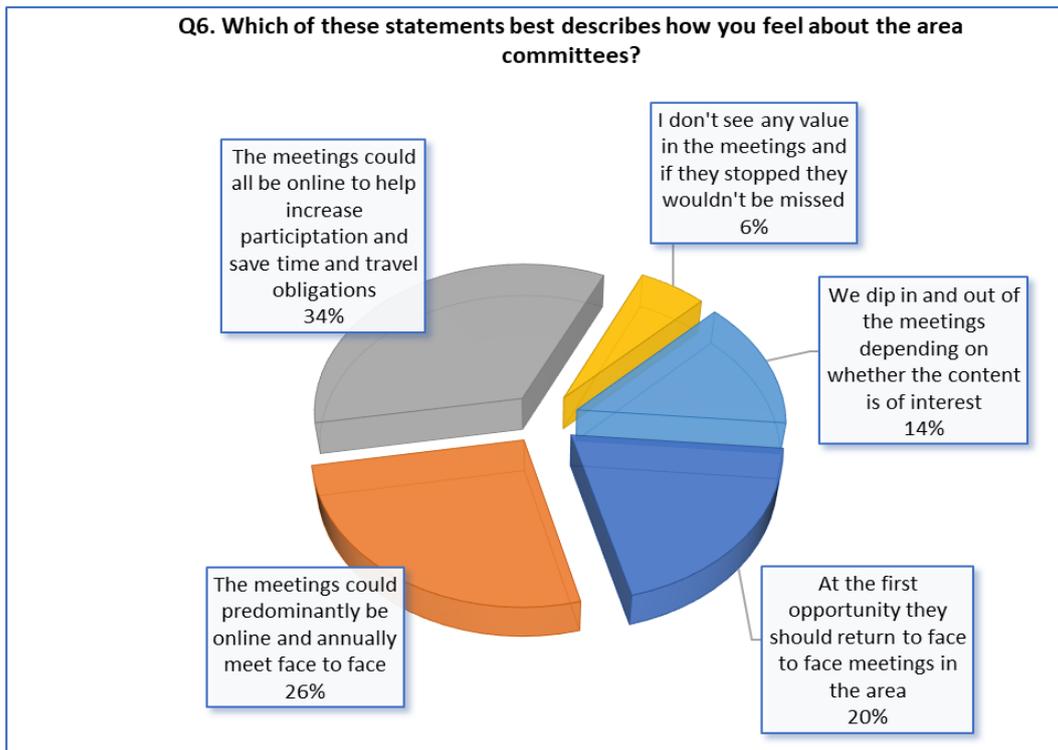
Q4. What topics do you want to hear about at your area committee?



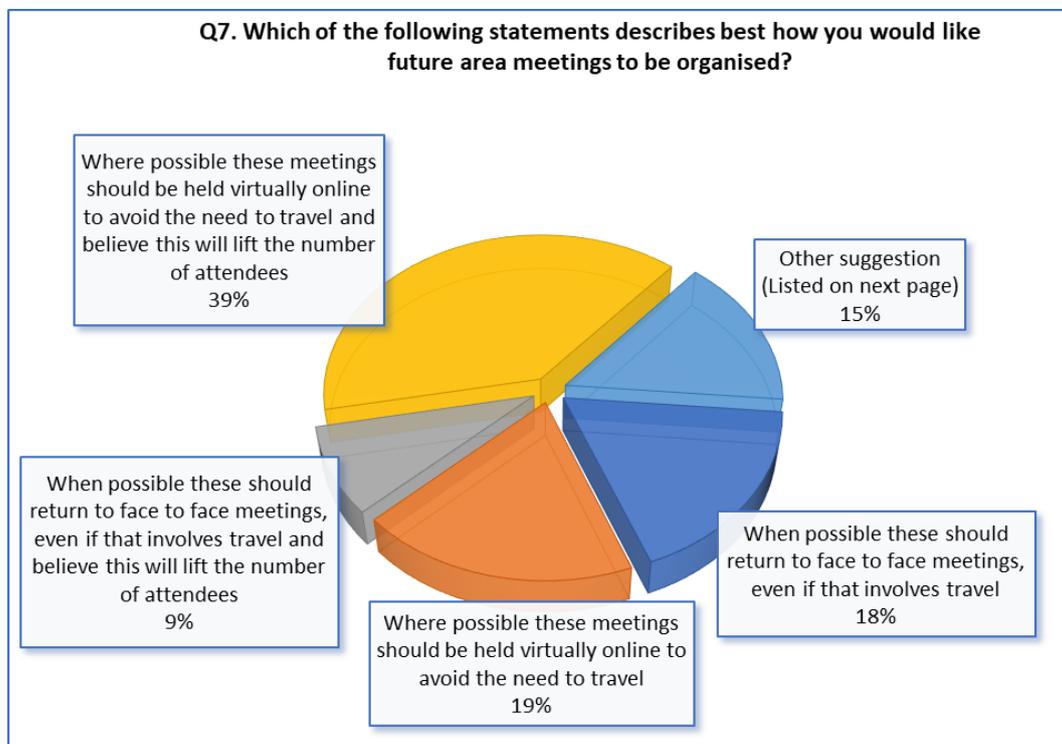
Q5. Other Topic representatives are interested in hearing about at Area Committee Meetings (copied directly from the Area Committee surveys)

1. Specific tasks from the Executive Committee.
2. Climate and Environmental Emergency - actions, updates and future plans
3. National issues which impact upon parish council
4. Role of Parish Councils in a Unitary Council system
5. Lobbying Dorset Council to change unsupportive policies
6. Actual issues of highest importance: The accelerating threat of over-development and the need for measures to limit climate change.
7. All of the above are important and vary in importance depending on what issues are prevalent at the time. Please therefore do not take notice of the order, as this does not represent an order of preference. In addition, Climate and Ecological Emergency mitigation needs to be applied across all aspects of P&TC and County Association work. P&TCs also need DAPTC to pre-empt their concerns when there is short deadlines to respond to such things as the Dorset Council Local Plan. This 8 week consultation period gives little time for P&TCs to read the vast volumes of papers and no time to engage with their residents. It would be hoped that DAPTC would understand this and be making representation that in normal times a 12 week consultation should be offered. Further rethink is needed here however as P&TCs literally can do no face to face engagement over something as important as the Dorset Council Local Plan. Perhaps therefore DAPTC should be lobbying DC on its members behalf for a delay and a restart with a 12 week consultation once circumstances allow for face to face engagement. As it stands only a small number of those people who do not have internet will have an opportunity to read the consultation documents by loaning it from the library. This marginalises many people across Dorset.
8. Engagement with Dorset Council; establishing the collective view of the local council sector and acting on it.
9. Monitor DC responses to P&TC queries and identify areas of concern. Assist P&TC's to provide good governance.
10. Funding applications and where to go.
11. 1 & 2 are much the same, if the survey allowed, I would put them 1=. A missing item: Chair's report.
12. Updates on common approaches to the Climate Change debate would be very valuable.
13. Planning.
14. Issues specific to Parish Meetings i.e. why the Chairman of a Parish Meeting cannot have a copy of their own Parish Electoral Register.
15. There are significant benefits from hearing what other council's issues are.
16. Updates on Planning - mainly about Dorset Council progress and process issues, but the area committees could be a useful way to disseminate any policy changes and keep us up to date.
17. Highways.

Q6. Which of these statements best describes how you feel about the area committees?



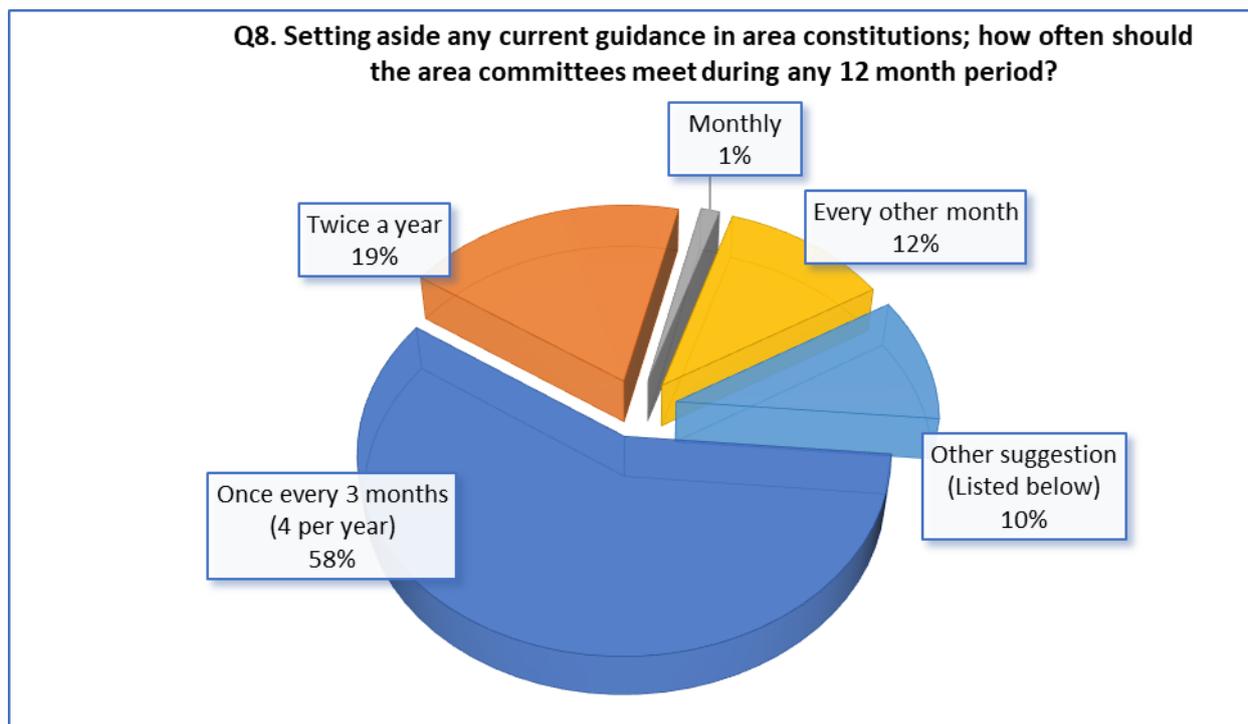
Q7. Which of the following statements describes best how you would like future Area Meetings organised?



Q7. Ideas on future meetings from Area Committee meetings (copied directly from the Area Committee surveys)

1. As suggested in Q6, it might be useful to have an annual face to face with all other meetings held virtually online
2. To start with, alternate face to face and online to see which encourages more attendance and participation
3. The meetings could predominantly be online and annually meet face to face
4. Online meetings are more time effective, however where possible there should be at least 2 face to face meetings a year as it helps to get to know fellow delegates.
5. Virtual meetings are working well but it is useful to have face to face meetings occasionally. Possibly AGMs?
6. When possible, these should return to face-to-face meetings, even if that involves travel. Virtual meetings are acceptable if there is no feasible alternative, but in reality, they reduce communication and mutual understanding by comparison with face-to-face meetings. They also have the disadvantage of excluding some of the less technically minded, especially older people.
7. I support the idea NALC are looking at of giving the opportunity after C19 for people to do what works best for them. So this could mean only face to face, or it could mean only virtual, or it could mean hybrid meetings. The important thing is that no one should feel excluded! It is also important to say as a critical friend that it is important to acknowledge that there has been reduced engagement from P&TCs over the past years with DAPTC. We are fortunate now to have a new Chief Executive who is working with the Executive Committee to turn things around. It should be expected with all things P&TC that it may take time for the new will to represent our sector better to filter down to all P&TCs and so there may be a need to re-launch Area Committees and explain what potential they offer P&TCs. DAPTC must appreciate that with the loss of the middle tier of local government, the prediction of its speaker at DAPTC Annual Conference of 2018 or 2019 Rt Honourable Oliver Letwin MP that P&TCs will need to step up and take on a role to fill the democratic deficit created by the removal of that middle tier. Surely therefore, the role of the Area Committees are more important than ever. This should be better funded and P&TCs should be encouraged to have at least one representative attend each meeting. This should form part of P&TC best practice.
8. Your options are too prescriptive. Area meetings should be face to face (post COVID) AND allow for member councils to join virtually if they wish. To be relevant they need to stay local.
9. Most meetings could be online with once or twice annually face-to-face.
10. The majority of these meeting could just end up as a moaning session with the larger councils getting the larger share of the inputs. Best to put everything down on internet and we can read and disseminate what is important to our small parish
11. Mixture of alternate online and face to face meetings.
12. Past meetings have lack substance and direction but if the meetings became more focussed and purposed then face to face could be justified. Previously meetings were just a talking shop.

Q8. Setting aside any current guidance in area constitutions; how often should the area committees meet during any 12 month period?



Q8. Ideas on the frequency of future Area Committee meetings (copied directly from the Area Committee surveys)

1. As decided by the DAPTC Chairman - who has the big picture.
2. Once every three months unless there is a major topic (such as local plan early next year)
3. If more than 4 meetings is the outcome, could they be a mixture of on-line and face to face.
4. Depending on the required business and the availability of representative(s) from Dorset Council and/or DAPTC then I think every other month is about right. There is no point in having a meeting without anyone to give/take feedback and inform.
5. each meeting to have a clear focus; provide access to other area committee meetings
6. Area committees should be flexible so they can meet more frequently if the agenda requires it and participants agree.
7. We are getting along quite well now during lockdown. Why change it.
8. Alternate online and face to face meetings every other month

Q9. What works well or could work better for the area committee for your council or parish meeting (copied directly from the Area Committee surveys)

1. There is a lack of direction provided to the area committees by the Executive Committee; what is their role within the DAPTC structure and what should they be actually doing? The Central Area Committee has been poorly attended for a number of years now, even when a guest speaker was engaged to address them on a topic of their own choosing. I believe this is because the 'Central Area' has no cohesive identity; in fact, it has often been difficult to identify which councils are included within the area. This also includes a number of large councils who engage with the Towns and Larger Parishes Committee for whom there is duplication in attendance. There has also tended to be a lack of feedback received from the Executive when an issue has been raised with them by the area committee. The current structure lacks any sort of flow or cohesion. If the area committees were tasked by the Executive to discuss or to act as 'on the ground' consultees for particular issues, this would provide them with a greater focus and understanding of their role.
2. More opportunity to explore ways to work together on projects which are larger than our own parish boundaries e.g. car-clubs; e-bike rental hubs network; electric car-sharing and community ownership schemes; electric charging points as a coherent network of provision in Dorset; public transport; community renewable energy generation; large-scale retrofitting projects; nature-based and green/blue solutions to adapt to a a changing climate and improve biodiversity to benefit human health and well-being. etc
3. Having an effective chair, where there is good time management, others are enabled to speak, and the meeting is not dominated by only certain individuals and topics.
4. Much of the content of these meetings is not relevant to us as a very small parish council. More localized meetings with relevant topics might help engagement.
5. Clear evidence that the area committee meetings serve the interests of Parish Councils. In addition to disseminating information, this structure should facilitate empowering parish councils collectively by enabling the DAPTC to gather and represent its members' views and interests.
6. Set target times for each agenda item
7. Set target discussion time for each agenda item
8. I think area committees should be asked to form a view amongst themselves rather than have a view imposed on them. Some areas may feel strongly that they have a strong tie to the old district areas and prefer to stay organised in that method. Ultimately the decision should be one of the Area committees, made up by those who attend after Area committees have been relaunched.
9. shared learning works well in face to face meetings DAPTC to consider how to incorporate shared learning into virtual meetings. The Purbeck Area needs to be maintained as it is a coherent area and any merger with another area would be opposed by local councils due to weakened representation and a loss of identity.
10. Identify common areas of concern and campaign on them providing legal advice where needed.

11. The value of DAPTC has to be its effectiveness in getting us a collective voice and action from Dorset Council on key issues. In my view attendance will increase as that effectiveness increases.
12. Crucially that area committees stay local to be relevant and so that the committee reps can properly convey that areas views to the committee.
13. Online meetings have increased attendance and reduced a lot of duplicitous discussion. Need the ability to call a sudden meeting if required due to time schedules or deadlines
14. On occasion I have found the area meetings to be useful, but I know that my councillors who have attended have not. They have felt that the meetings are not relevant and tend to be hijacked by those who shout loudest. The Area Meetings were supposed to be the top of a cascade system so people such as the Dorset Council Chief Exec and Police Commissioner would attend this as they couldn't or wouldn't be able to attend every parish council meeting in the county and information would be cascaded out. This does not seem to be happening. In fact, most of the time the DAPTC Chief Exec never attended (although I know this has now changed). I am frequently asked by all the councils I deal with what we pay the subs for and what benefit do we get.
15. As a new Councillor I have found face to face meetings, when they were possible, enable me to talk to and learn from those present. However, having spent most of the last year "zooming" I can see the value and efficiency of on-line meetings and would be happy to have a mixture of both formats e.g.an annual face to face interspaced by on-line meetings
16. Some areas are vast. The Northern Area for N to S is around trip 1 1/2 hours, E to W is 1 hour 20 mins. Virtual meetings would negate this. Otherwise a rearrangement of areas is vital.
17. Personally, at our area DAPTC meetings, I have appreciated hearing about issues faced by the other councils in our area and sharing how to deal with them - especially as many of these issues are common to us all. Somehow, the next step which it to have the strength together to tackle Dorset Council over matters that affect us all, seems to be missing. Fine to talk and discuss, but we need that 'voice' and leverage now more than ever, to drive through whatever has been agreed and champion 'Walk the talk'.
18. Updates from DAPTC and BPC & Dorset Council to be current and informative, and not just a read through of reports already circulated.
19. We would be able to attend the majority of online meetings, current face to face often clash with other commitments or our own meetings.
20. Meetings I have attended have often lacked focus and it has been unclear what I am meeting for. Attendees have been allowed to speak at length on their particular hobby horse even though it has not been part of the agenda. I would like to suggest that a call is put out before the meeting for items to appear on the agenda and a time limit placed on speaking from the floor about non-agenda items.
21. I attended one meeting last year. It was poorly attended and pointless
22. Items for discussion or information from local councils could be submitted beforehand and taken as read unless someone wishes to ask/comment
23. Personal contact with representatives of smaller and larger councils in our local area is important. The problems may be the same, or may differ greatly, but the solution will probably be of help or interest to the others at some time.

24. Discussion with a variety of other Councils is useful, and it's helpful when minutes are made available promptly
25. Develop an open house format, any cllr able to attend according to zoom capacity.
26. The Eastern Area does not work well for BCP parish and town councils as it tends to be Dorset Council centric. This possibly requires a BCP parish and town councils sub-committee to report into Eastern area.
27. Guest Speakers could be done on line outside of the twice yearly meeting. Would be good to know the personalities involved eg cabinet members but also opposition leaders
28. In the past the Eastern Area committee was well supported by attendance by Officers and Cabinet Member(s) from EDDC and DCC. This helped maintain our influence and interest and meant that these meetings were well attended.
29. I have been pleasantly surprised at how well recent zoom meetings have worked but I suspect this is in part because we know each other from physical meetings
30. Guest speakers can be useful, but topics should be carefully selected and time allotted strictly limited. Eastern area meetings are useful and usually well conducted
31. The Eastern Area works well because it is problem solving and issue sharing not a soapbox exercise