



Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils
(Affiliated to the National Association of Local Councils)

Towns and Larger Parishes Committee

Friday 18 February 2022
10:00am
via Zoom

Minutes

Present:

Cllr KD Johnson	Colehill Parish Council (Chairman)
Cllr John Broom	Lyme Regis Town Council (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr Colin Stevens	Blandford Forum Town Council
Cllr Andrew Todd	Colehill Parish Council
Cllr Anne Holland	Corfe Mullen Town Council
Cllr Paul Holland	Corfe Mullen Town Council
Cllr Belinda Bawden	Lyme Regis Town Council
Cllr Avril Harris	Swanage Town Council
Cllr Lindsey Dedden	Verwood Town Council
Cllr Keith Green	Wareham Town Council
Cllr Vera Green	Wareham Town Council
Cllr Colin Way	West Moors Town Council
Cllr David Harris	Weymouth Town Council
Cllr Colin Huckle	Weymouth Town Council
Cllr Diann March	Wimborne Minster Town Council

Also present: Neil Wedge Chief Executive – DAPTC
Kirsty Riglar Secretary – Towns and Larger Parishes Committee

1/22. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllr Terry Cordery	Ferndown Town Council
Cllr Barry Von Clemens	Gillingham Town Council
Cllr Anne Hall	Sherborne Town Council
Cllr Tony Willats	West Moors Town Council
Cllr Carol Butter	Wimborne Minster Town Council

2/22. Minutes

The minutes of the annual general meeting held on 26 November 2021 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

3/22. Levelling Up White Paper – NALC's Summary

The Chief Executive drew attention to NALC's summary of the Levelling Up White Paper. In general, NALC welcomed the mention of communities and town and parish councils in the document. Members expressed concerns that the focus of this would be on northern communities and there was a lack of understanding of the challenges faced by rural areas in the south.

Concern was also expressed that, should funding be allocated to Dorset, local councils would not be considered in where this would be focussed. The Chief Executive welcomed these comments and confirmed that he would ensure engagement with the two unitary councils about transparency

of decision-making and encouraging early involvement of local councils in the process. He encouraged councils to think about whether they would wish to be involved in this.

4/22. Dorset Council Local Plan

The Committee noted the latest position in relation to the development of the Local Plan, including the recent statement from the Leader of Dorset Council about challenging the approach based on housing number allocations. Disappointment was expressed that the webinar for local councils due to take place on 27 January had been cancelled. In general, there was felt to be a lack of information and engagement with the planning department about the development of the Local Plan. The Chief Executive explained that he was seeking a clear picture of how Dorset Council would engage and communicate with local councils during the next steps of the process.

Some members confirmed that their councils were participating in the Dorset Deserves Better campaign spearheaded by the Dorset Climate Action Network. Issues such as proposals for development on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other greenspace and the lack of synergy between the emerging Local Plan and Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Change Strategy were being raised through this campaign.

Cllr Keith Green left the meeting at 10:35am.

5/22. Update from DAPTC Chief Executive

An update was received from the DAPTC Chief Executive which predominantly focussed on:

- (i) the current approach to cascading information to member councils and inviting comments on this;
- (ii) neighbourhood planning training;
- (iii) Carbon Literacy Accreditation training;
- (iv) NALC's Lobby Day and a call for any issues to be raised with local MP's; and
- (v) the recommendations published by Dorset Council in the next stage of the Community Governance Review

Members shared their views about the Community Governance Review recommendations relating to their council areas. Some concerns were raised that there had been no explanation as to why submissions made by local councils had not been accepted and included in the recommendations. The Chief Executive undertook to request further information about how the recommendations had been arrived at for individual councils from the relevant officers.

The Committee also noted that there remained some anxiety about the return to in-person meetings and the continuing call for local councils to have the option to hold formal meetings virtually as this had proven to be efficient during the pandemic. It was noted that many councils continued to meet virtually informally and decisions made under delegated powers whilst others had resumed in-person meetings. The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that councils should revisit the temporary delegation arrangements to ensure that they remained current and appropriate.

6/22. Update from Member Councils

Colehill

- In-person meetings were cancelled in January to the increase in cases of Covid associated with the Omicron variant.
- Some informal planning meetings had taken place about the programme of events to commemorate HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
- Seven new trees had been planted in the park but complaints had been received and one had been pulled up.

Lyme Regis

- Whilst meetings had been taking place in-person for some time, the Town Council would meet in the Council Chamber for the first time since the start of the pandemic.
- The Dorset Ward Councillor had resigned and a by-election would be held.

- The Town Council had been offered five places on Bridport Town Council's scheme to train community energy champions which would form a platform to build upon.
- A wide-ranging community engagement programme with residents was being planned.

Wareham

- A consultation seeking the views of residents on the town skate park was currently underway.
- The refurbishment of play areas was progressing with a tender process underway.

Wimborne Minster

- The Town Clerk was due to retire at the end of the municipal year.
- In-person meetings had now resumed.
- On 7 January, many of the Wimborne Market stallholders moved to the Allendale Centre which had proven successful and more pitches were sought.
- A tree trail had been established for the Green Canopy initiative.

Weymouth

- The Town Council had significant concerns about the Community Governance Review and the fact that those councillors who were also members of Dorset Council had been told that they could not vote on the matter at full Council because they had participated in the formulation of the Town Council's recommendations. It was considered that this prevented them from contributing properly and representing the local community.
- Work had commenced on the construction of a skate park.
- The development of Tumbledown Farm was progressing; the Town Council would be moving its plant nursery to the site to grow plants for the town's parks and gardens.
- The Town Council had decided not to let two leases for seafront cafés and to run these itself.

Corfe Mullen

- The village hall had re-opened on 1 February following the employment of new staff.
- Interviews had taken place for co-option to a councillor vacancy.
- In-person meetings had resumed.
- A precept of just over £20 increase had been agreed.
- The Town Council was very cross that it had not been consulted by Dorset Council about the application to relocate Wimborne Market at Lake Gates.

Swanage

- In-person meetings of the Council had resumed. Larger committees continued to meet informally online; in-person meetings were held for smaller committees.
- A precept representing a 9.46% increase had been agreed in order to expand the Council's staffing structure.
- Most of the town's seafront was now traffic-free.

Verwood

- The Town Clerk would retire at the end of February. Her replacement had joined the Council in mid-January to enable a handover to take place.
- The Town Council had now taken over the town's youth and community centre.

West Moors

- A precept representing a 9.5% increase had been agreed, mainly to fund the expansion of the offer of the local youth club.
- A tree planting project was underway and a tree giveaway event would be held on the following weekend.
- It was planned to go ahead with the Westival event in 2022.
- In-person meetings had resumed in a local church hall.

7/22. Attendance

The Chairman expressed his concern that only 10 town and larger parish councils were represented at the meeting and considered that those councils who were members of the Committee should be reminded that they are entitled to appoint two representatives and a deputy.

The Chief Executive reported that there was a wide variety of participation across the DAPTC's area committees. Whilst Zoom had helped to make attendance easier, work continued on identifying how these committees could be made more effective and participation encouraged.

8/22. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting be held on a date to be confirmed in May 2022.

The meeting closed at 11:40pm.

Signed _____ Date _____

Cllr KD Johnson
Chairman