



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

Towns and Larger Parishes Committee

Friday 18 May 2022
10:00am
via Zoom

Minutes

Present: Cllr John Broom
Cllr Colin Stevens
Cllr Haydn White
Cllr Ian Bark
Cllr Dave Rickard
Cllr John Dean
Cllr Andrew Todd
Cllr Anne Holland
Cllr Paul Holland
Cllr Terry Cordery
Cllr Barry Von Clemens
Cllr Belinda Bawden
Cllr Colin Way
Cllr Colin Huckle
Cllr Shane Bartlett
Cllr Diann March

Lyme Regis Town Council (Vice-Chairman) – in the Chair
Blandford Forum Town Council
Blandford Forum Town Council
Bridport Town Council
Bridport Town Council
Chickerell Town Council
Colehill Parish Council
Corfe Mullen Town Council
Corfe Mullen Town Council
Ferndown Town Council
Gillingham Town Council
Lyme Regis Town Council
West Moors Town Council
Weymouth Town Council
Wimborne Minster Town Council
Wimborne Minster Town Council

Also present: Neil Wedge
Kirsty Riglar

Chief Executive – DAPTC
Secretary – Towns and Larger Parishes Committee

9/22. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllr KD Johnson	Colehill Parish Council (Chairman)
Cllr Alistair Chisholm	Dorchester Town Council
Mrs Trish Jamieson	Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council (Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Ross	St Leonards and St Ives Parish Council (Clerk)
Cllr Helen Reed	Sturminster Newton Town Council
Cllr Joe Rose	Sturminster Newton Town Council
Cllr Lindsey Dedden	Verwood Town Council
Cllr Keith Green	Wareham Town Council
Cllr Vera Green	Wareham Town Council
Cllr David Harris	Weymouth Town Council

10/22. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2022 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

11/22. Dorset Council Local Plan and planning matters

The Committee were informed that Dorset Council would be holding an update meeting for town and parish councils on 27 May. The invitation had been sent to clerks and each council was invited to send one attendee. It was acknowledged that the development of the Local Plan and some planning changes made over the past 12-18 months, such as ceasing neighbour notifications and summary documents, had caused issues at the local council level. Feedback about awareness of this event and completion of an online survey to collate views was sought.

One member reported that they had submitted a personal complaint about the refusal of Dorset Council's planning committees to accept call-ins and not listen to the concerns of local councils and local councillors who were representing their residents. It was felt that officers were overstepping their delegated powers for the determination of applications. Concerns were also expressed about the late notification of applications to local councils, limiting the amount of time available for consideration.

It was noted that some councils had introduced a triage system to progress consideration of applications in a manageable way in order to prioritise meeting time.

12/22. Working Together Charter

The Chief Executive explained that where a unitary council was created it was not unusual to have a document in place - often a charter or memorandum of understanding - setting out statements of intent agreed by both tiers of local government as a framework for working together. He showed the South Gloucestershire Charter to the Committee as an example of this.

Whilst there had been early discussions about this with Dorset Council, this had not been progressed and it was felt that the gap left by the district councils had not been filled by the current arrangements with the unitary council, particularly in relation to consultation with parish and town councils. It was therefore proposed that the DAPTC seek to progress the establishment of a charter to provide a framework for working together between the unitary council and parish and town councils.

The Secretary reminded the Committee that a series of workshops had taken place during Autumn 2019 to begin the conversation about how Dorset Council could best work with town and parish councils with a view to a further round of workshops being held in early 2020. However, these had not been progressed due to the pandemic and changes in portfolio holder. Members who had attended these workshops shared their recollections about these; the key request had been to improve lines of contact with local councils.

Members welcomed the proposal to seek a charter to provide a framework for working together. It was felt that there was a disconnect between what Dorset Council purported to be doing to communicate with local councils and what was happening in reality. However, it was considered that whilst the Shadow Dorset Council was sitting prior to 1 April 2019, there had been a will amongst members and officers to have productive partnership working in place. It was also acknowledged that Cllr Laura Miller, the current Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Communities, was open to improving the relationship between Dorset Council and parish and town councils.

The Chief Executive thanked the Committee for their views and would progress this with Dorset Council. He would also raise this proposal with the other DAPTC area committees.

13/22. Update from DAPTC Chief Executive

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that subscription invoices would be sent out shortly, alongside a survey asking for more information than previously sought, including on governance, employment and staffing issues. This would help the DAPTC understand the scale of the challenges in that area and what training needed to be put in place.

In relation to staffing, the issue of whether local councils applied the Green Book terms and conditions was raised. For some councils, not doing so had proven to be one of the reasons for

losing staff to other employment. It was noted that the Green Book terms and conditions were more costly and not easily understood by councillors who did not have a public sector background.

In response to a question about what local councils could do now to start recruiting potential candidates, especially younger people, for the elections in 2024, the Chief Executive explained that work was commencing on this with a focus on resources, such as Dorset-orientated social media content aimed at different age groups. He offered to hold a focus group of councils to look at this. Members' attention was also drawn to a page on the NALC website about elections.

14/22. Update from Member Councils

Colehill

- There were currently a large volume of planning applications to be considered by the Parish Council.
- Planning for the Platinum Jubilee was ongoing.

Corfe Mullen

- The annual Town Council meeting had been held.
- Three applications for co-option had been received for one vacancy.
- The Neighbourhood Plan was about to be launched.
- A new Deputy Clerk had taken up post.

Ferndown

- Staffing levels were an issue with only two full-time and two part-time staff currently in post.
- The Barrington Centre continued to cause quite a few problems for the Town Council, particularly in relation to recruitment of staff.
- Planning for the Platinum Jubilee was ongoing.
- There was a lot of graffiti on the new skatepark.

Blandford Forum

- There had been a loss of footfall in the town centre due to ongoing renewal of the pavements.
- Events were planned to take place across the four days of the Platinum Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend.
- Three new staff had recently been recruited.
- There was concern about the lack of change proposed for the boundaries of Blandford in the Community Governance Review recommendations.

West Moors

- A wildflower planting project was underway around the town.
- A new part-time Communications Officer post had been created to improve and maintain the Town Council's website and improve communications with local residents.

Chickerell

- A new Mayor would be elected in the following week.
- There were currently two vacancies on the Town Council.
- The Town Council had responded to the Community Governance Review recommendations as part of the town would be lost to Weymouth. The Town Council did not consider that it had been consulted on this.
- The Town Clerk had sought and welcomed advice from the Chief Executive about salary scales.

Lyme Regis

- An election to fill a vacancy on the Town Council would be held on 27 May.
- There would be a change of Mayor and Deputy Mayor later in the month.
- A member of staff had recently resigned and recruitment was underway with a revised job description focussing on community engagement.
- Platinum Jubilee events would take place alongside the Jazz Jurassica events.

Cllr Bartlett left the meeting at 11:15am.

Bridport

- The Town Council's proposal to combine some of the adjoining parishes with the town was included in the second wave of consultation on the Community Governance Review recommendations.
- Preparations for the Platinum Jubilee were going well.
- A part-time project officer had recently been appointed.
- The Mayor's Blog was proving to be an effective way of communicating with residents.

Weymouth

- Works to the harbourside were underway including improvements for pedestrians and installation of new benches.
- Dorset Council were handing benches in the town back to the Town Council to maintain.
- Work on the improvements to Radipole Park Gardens was out to tender.
- A Blue Flag had been awarded for the beach.
- Platinum Jubilee events would include the lighting of a beacon and firing of cannons at Nothe Fort, as well as fireworks over the bay.
- The annual Armed Forces Veterans weekend would take place in June.
- Work was continuing on the Neighbourhood Plan.
- There were issues about the Dorset Council car parks in the town, with machines and the Just Park app not working properly.
- Meetings had been held with Dorset Council officers about the Community Governance Review recommendations.

Gillingham

- Green Canopy planting had taken place.
- Planning for the Platinum Jubilee continued.
- Two new councillors had joined the Council; one through election and the other through co-option.
- The Annual Town Council meeting would take place at the end of May.
- It was proving difficult to recruit to the Town Council's grounds team.
- Town Councillors had been invited to view the new Principal Street.
- The review of the Neighbourhood Plan was nearly complete and it was possible that another consultation might need to be undertaken.
- The Town Council continued to hold hybrid meetings with councillors attending in person and the public remotely.
- A further councillor and tweaks to the boundaries were proposed through the Community Governance Review recommendations.
- Following the failed Bus Better bid, the setting up of a community bus service was being considered.

15/22. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting be held on a date to be confirmed in September 2022. The possibility of holding an in-person meeting was raised and it was resolved to seek views on options nearer the time.

The meeting closed at 11:43am.

Signed _____ Date _____

Cllr John Broom
Vice-Chairman