



**DORSET ASSOCIATION OF PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS
TOWNS AND LARGER PARISHES COMMITTEE
Minutes of meeting held at 10:00am on Friday 22 February 2019
in the Council Chamber, Corn Exchange, Dorchester**

Present:	Cllr Turner	Beaminster Town Council (Chairman)
	Cllr Johnson	Colehill Parish Council (Vice-Chairman)
	Cllr Page	Beaminster Town Council
	Cllr Stayt	Blandford Forum Town Council
	Cllr White	Blandford Forum Town Council
	Cllr Dean	Chickerell Town Council
	Cllr Cowsill	Colehill Parish Council
	Cllr A Holland	Corfe Mullen Parish Council
	Cllr P Holland	Corfe Mullen Parish Council
	Cllr Potter	Dorchester Town Council
	Cllr Cordery	Ferndown Town Council
	Cllr Hunt	Gillingham Town Council
	Cllr Bush	Lytchett Matravers Parish Council
	Cllr Richards	Lytchett Minster and Upton Town Council
	Cllr Bonfield	Swanage Town Council
	Cllr Dedden	Verwood Town Council
	Cllr Russell	Verwood Town Council
	Cllr Green	Wareham Town Council
	Cllr Hawkes	West Moors Parish Council
	Cllr Yeo	West Moors Parish Council
	Ms Biscombe	Weymouth Town Council (Clerk)
	Cllr Bartlett	Wimborne Minster Town Council
Also Present:	Hilary Trevorah	Chief Executive – DAPTC
	Stephen Hill	Director – Dorset Councils Partnership
	Kirsty Riglar	Secretary – Towns and Larger Parishes Committee

1/19. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllr Horniman	Bridport Town Council
Cllr Von Clemens	Gillingham Town Council
Cllr Burns	Lytchett Minster and Upton Town Council
Mr Savage	Sherborne Town Council (Clerk)
Cllr Jones	Sturminster Newton Town Council
Cllr Lacey	Sturminster Newton Town Council
Ms Bright	Verwood Town Council (Clerk)
Mr Booth	Wareham Town Council (Clerk)
Cllr Butter	Wimborne Minster Town Council

2/19. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2018 were confirmed as a true and accurate record of the last meeting and signed by the Chairman, subject to the amendment of minute 39/18 to replace the heading 'Corfe Mullen' with 'Colehill'.

3/19. Report from DAPTC Chief Executive

The DAPTC Chief Executive presented her report which focussed predominantly on local government reorganisation and the Association's activities in representing the local council sector in Dorset. Particular attention was drawn to the decision of the Shadow Dorset Council to amend the proposed constitution for Dorset Council to allow parish councils to be part of the process to refer planning applications to committee for determination. This reflected the approach currently taken in North Dorset, West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland. However, it was noted that the decision to refer an application to committee was at the discretion of the chairman of that committee and therefore local councils needed to ensure that any objections were made on material planning grounds.

The Chief Executive reported that she had been heavily involved in the creation of new town councils in Weymouth and Christchurch and the community council in Highcliffe and Walkford.

An update on the training and events for 2019 was also provided. The annual conference was sold out and a waiting list was being operated. Planning training had been held on the previous day, with all 60 places filled. Work was currently underway on a full programme of training and development events for the coming year, including induction for new councillors and new chairmen, and details of this would be published shortly. Members requested that opportunities for planning training be prioritised as it was important that all councillors, even those who were re-elected, were aware of the new National Planning Policy Framework.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for her report.

4/19. Dorset Councils Partnership update

Mr Hill presented the quarterly update report from the Dorset Councils Partnership (DCP) which focussed on local government reorganisation and recent decisions made by the three councils. This also provided an update on decisions about the shape of Weymouth Town Council.

The Chairman welcomed Ms Jane Biscombe, Clerk to the new Weymouth Town Council, to the meeting and hoped that the Council would be joining the DAPTC. Ms Biscombe confirmed that discussions were underway about this.

In response to a Member's question about the introduction by West Dorset District Council and Weymouth and Portland Borough Council of the new system to enable members of the public to search and comment on planning applications, Mr Hill explained that this had been in train for some time to bring the Dorset Councils Partnership councils onto a single system. He explained that legacy systems would remain in place for the time being as the new Dorset Council came into being. It was noted that these systems would not correspond with the proposed planning committee areas and it was likely that the procurement of a single system to be used by the new council would be progressed in due course but this process could take up to three years. It was noted that a calendar of meetings for the Dorset Council had been agreed, with proposed venues for the area planning committees. However, the Committee was informed that these were subject to change as the practical arrangements were put in place.

The Chairman reiterated that it would be an advantage for parish and town councils to have dedicated link officer(s) to act as a conduit for enquiries into the principal council, perhaps on a locality basis. Mr Hill reminded the Committee that Dorset council would be 'digital by default' and an emphasis would be placed upon ensuring that information was available on the website so that local councils and residents could find the answers to their queries.

It was noted that the nomination papers for anyone wishing to stand as a candidate in the elections for parish and town councils and Dorset Council were now available on dorsetforyou.gov.uk. Some concern was expressed about the length of these and the fact that prospective candidates could not have copies of electoral registers until 26 March, which made it difficult to know whether residents were registered.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hill for the update and the Committee expressed their gratitude to him for all of his efforts on behalf of the local council sector.

5/19. Towns and Larger Parishes Committee – Chairman’s report

Cllr Turner reported that after 23 June 2019, the community bus service in the Beaminster area would lost support from Dorset Council and the Western Area Committee were still seeking guidance about the future of such support. He expressed frustration at the lack of information being received from the local government reorganisation programme.

6/19. NALC Report

Cllr Dedden reported that there had been no NALC meetings since the AGM in October 2018; the next meeting was scheduled for 13 March 2019. She explained that Lobby Day had been postponed to July. NALC had recently published papers on peer review for larger councils and she had passed these to the DAPTC Chief Executive and Chairman. It was suggested that this would be a useful item for discussion at a future meeting of the Committee.

7/19. Motion from Okeford Fitzpaine Parish Council

The Committee considered the Motion submitted by Okeford Fitzpaine Parish Council relating to the establishment of 20mph speed limits in towns and villages to encourage sustainable travel, as requested by the Executive Committee.

It was noted that 20mph speed limits were inappropriate in most settings and were only likely to be implemented in areas of perceived need, for instance on roads past schools. It was also noted that such limits were not supported or enforced by Dorset Police.

Members shared their experiences of seeking to reduce the speed of vehicles travelling through villages. Evidence from community initiatives in some areas had demonstrated that it was difficult to encourage some drivers to observe 30mph speed limits.

In relation to the Motion, the Committee acknowledged that 20mph speed limits were largely unenforceable and therefore a blanket introduction was inappropriate. It was proposed that Okeford Fitzpaine Parish Council approach officers of Dorset County Council to discuss how this could be pursued in that parish.

8/19. Additional urgent item – Motion of no confidence

With the agreement of the Chairman, Cllr Bartlett of Wimborne Town Council informed the Committee that, in his capacity as a County Councillor, he had submitted a motion of no confidence against the Leader of Dorset County Council. This would be debated at an extraordinary meeting of the Council, which was anticipated to be held on 1 March 2019. He detailed his reasons for submitting this motion, which were based upon the lack of wider member engagement in the shaping of Dorset Council, particularly with town and parish councils, contrary to statements made by the Leader recognising the need for inclusivity.

As it was anticipated that there would be no opportunity for public participation at this extraordinary meeting, Councillor Bartlett invited parish and town councils, as well as individual councillors, to send him any comments or evidence in relation to this motion which would help to inform his introductory statement to reflect the views of the local councils

sector. However, as this meeting would be a public meeting, he also encouraged as many parish and town councillors to attend to show their support.

Members shared their concerns and frustration about the lack of engagement with local councils on such issues as planning, council tax harmonisation and the devolution of services. Concern was also expressed that most meetings of Dorset Council were likely to be held during the day, which reduced the opportunities for engagement as well as precluding working people from standing for election.

The Committee **resolved** to support the submission of the motion in recognition of the lack of engagement and consultation with parish and town councils in the shaping of Dorset Council and communication about the impact of reorganisation on the local council sector.

Note: Cllrs Page, Potter and Turner abstained from voting.

9/19. Members' updates

Corfe Mullen

- An open day had been held to encourage new parish councillors to which there had been a positive response.
- A monthly litter pick now took place engaging volunteers.
- The installation of air-conditioning and heating in the village hall was being investigated.

Colehill

- A recruitment exercise for a new parish clerk was currently underway; 37 applications had been received and interviews would be held in the following week.

Verwood

- There was a lot of local concern about a possible minerals extraction site, including lack of access and archaeological concerns.
- Residents were being surveyed about the charge to use to the Somerley Household Waste Recycling Centre near Ringwood.
- Monthly litter picks were now taking place.
- The Town Council was seeking to recruit a new assistant to the Town Clerk. Quite a few applications had been received and interviews would take place shortly.
- An open session for prospective councillors would be held on 8 March.

Lytchett Matravers

- A Sustrans review of the school crossing had been held following a petition signed by residents. A trial of the new arrangements would be undertaken.

Blandford Forum

- The future of the Nordon offices and site was still unknown; North Dorset District Council would not provide information for commercial reasons. However, a planning application for the site had been submitted.
- The Blandford Plus Neighbourhood Plan had finally been submitted for examination.
- The Town Council had employed a Market Manager and the market was going from strength to strength.

Gillingham

- The new Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer were now in place and the Town Council's policies were being updated.
- A Bee's Knees Award had been received for the town's open spaces.

Dorchester

- Support had been secured from West Dorset District Council for three projects in the town – improvement of the area around the town pump; promotion and enhancement of the town's heritage quarter and the continuation of some activities at the St Osmund's Sports Centre.
- Work on the significant refurbishment of the Dorset County Museum was underway. Whilst the Museum was closed, a small pop-up museum was in place in Brewery Square.
- Access to the town's household recycling centre was causing problems.

Wimborne

- Proposals were in place to provide additional office accommodation in the Town Hall.
- The transfer of assets from East Dorset District Council was progressing.
- The former District Council accommodation in Furzehill had not yet been sold.

Swanage

- Half of the current town councillors were standing down in May, which would see a considerable loss of experience. An open day for prospective councillors was being held.
- A new Operations Manager had been recruited and was now in post.
- A number of issues relating to leases and legal matters were being dealt with.

Beaminster

- The new play area was nearly complete but the installation of a log was outstanding. The LEADER funding would not be received until the project was complete.
- The Town Council had a new logo.

Chickerell

- Funding received to build new youth clubs was being utilised to extend Willowbed Hall to enable more accommodation for activities.

Lytchett Minster and Upton

- The Town Clerk had been absent due to sickness for three months but had now returned to work.
- A new youth councillor had joined the Council and was running a survey about the skate park.
- The Town Council had joined the Lytchett Bay Partnership with other local stakeholders to improve the area and encourage its use.
- The majority of the existing councillors were standing again.

West Moors

- West Moors Middle School was holding a Sustrans event to explore a traffic free zone around the school.
- A Commonwealth Day event would be held on village green.
- Funding had been received from the National Trust to held fund other events and for evidence gathering.
- The BMX track regeneration project was progressing.

Wareham

- There was a lot of disquiet locally about the housing associated with the proposed health hub to be developed on the former Wareham Middle School site.

- There was also a lot of anger and frustration in relation to the closure of the foot level crossing due to the absence of safety staff.

Ferndown

- A cycle path along Ham Lane and past Sainsbury's had been completed. It was hoped to link this to the industrial estate and airport in the future.
- A meeting for prospective councillors had been attended by 12 residents.
- It was hoped that the Town Council would become officially responsible for the market in April.
- Phase 1 of the regeneration of the King George V playing field was due to be completed in March. Phase 2 relating to the play area, skate park and MUGA would then need to go to tender.
- Volunteers were being sought for an 8-weekly litter pick.
- The Town Council was still pushing for a 30mph speed limit.

10/19. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that future meetings would be held on:

Friday 14 June 2019

Friday 6 September 2019

Friday 22 November 2019

The meeting closed at 12:25pm.

Signed _____ Date _____

Cllr Chris Turner
Chairman