



**DORSET ASSOCIATION OF PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS
TOWNS AND LARGER PARISHES COMMITTEE
Minutes of meeting held at 10:00am on Friday 6 September 2019
at The Public Hall, Beaminster**

Present:	Cllr Turner	Beaminster Town Council (Chairman)
	Cllr Johnson	Colehill Parish Council (Vice-Chairman)
	Cllr Page	Beaminster Town Council
	Cllr White	Blandford Forum Town Council
	Cllr Howard	Corfe Mullen Parish Council
	Cllr Cordery	Ferndown Town Council
	Cllr Lugg	Ferndown Town Council
	Cllr Bawden	Lyme Regis Town Council
	Cllr Broom	Lyme Regis Town Council
	Cllr Russell	Verwood Town Council
	Cllr K Green	Wareham Town Council
	Cllr V Green	Wareham Town Council
Also present:	Hilary Trevorah	Chief Executive – DAPTC
	Kirsty Riglar	Secretary – Towns and Larger Parishes Committee
	Prof. Michael Dower	Speaker – Beaminster Area ECO Group
	Ms Gillian Perrott	Speaker – ECO Church Beaminster

19/19. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllr Stayt	Blandford Forum Town Council
Cllr Dean	Chickerell Town Council
Cllr Cowsill	Colehill Parish Council
Cllr Holland	Corfe Mullen Parish Council
Cllr Potter	Dorchester Town Council
Cllr Von Clemens	Gillingham Town Council
Cllr Burns	Lytchett Minster and Upton Town Council
Cllr Richards	Lytchett Minster and Upton Town Council
Cllr Andrews	Sherborne Town Council
Trevor Savage	Sherborne Town Council (Clerk)
Cllr Jones	Sturminster Newton Town Council
Cllr Lacey	Sturminster Newton Town Council
Cllr Bonfield	Swanage Town Council
Cllr Dedden	Verwood Town Council
Cllr Hawkes	West Moors Parish Council
Cllr Yeo	West Moors Parish Council
Cllr Harris	Weymouth Town Council
Cllr Huckle	Weymouth Town Council
Cllr Butter	Wimborne Minster Town Council
John Sellgren	Dorset Council

20/19. Speaker: Professor Michael Dower CBE on community level environmental initiatives

Professor Dower, co-ordinator of the Beaminster Area ECO Group, addressed the Committee on community level environmental initiatives. His full speech is attached as the appendix to these minutes.

In response to a member's question, Professor Dower gave an explanation of the Transition Town initiative which focussed on transition to the use of other sources of power than fossil fuels. In Dorset, towns such as Bridport, Dorchester and Blandford Forum had signed up to this initiative.

Some concern was raised that limited resources in local communities made progress on some of the suggested initiatives challenging and that, from the perspective of local councils, this could impact upon the precept.

Members acknowledged the lack of requirements for energy efficiency and renewable energy sources in the current planning process and that there was a role for local councils in lobbying for this to be introduced at a national level as well as through the development of the new Dorset Council Local Plan. The challenges faced by some communities in achieving the adoption of a neighbourhood plan was also recognised.

The experience of the One Planet Working Group in Lyme Regis was shared as a good example of a partnership including but the Town Council. Lyme Regis Town Council had declared its intention to be carbon neutral by 2030 and was currently making a plan to achieve this. Initiatives being considered included tapwater points along the seafront, a possible free bus service to reduce the number of cars entering the town, electric vehicle charging points and refurbishment of the Council's offices to become more energy efficient.

The issue of sustainable travel and how people could be encouraged to cycle more was also discussed. It was noted that there were a number of cycleways across Dorset which were used very little.

Members agreed that it would be useful to have a toolkit of suggested initiatives for local councils to help focus their consideration of what could be implemented in their own communities. It was suggested that the [UN sustainable development goals](#) provided a good starting point. It was also noted that the ECO Church Beaminster had developed a toolkit for individuals.

The Chairman thanked Professor Dower and Ms Perrott for attending the meeting and giving such an informative talk.

21/19. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2019 were confirmed as a true and accurate record of the last meeting and signed by the Chairman.

Further to minute 13/19, the DAPTC Chief Executive acknowledged the comments made about the planning training and confirmed that the feedback received would help to shape the content of future training.

22/19. Report from DAPTC Chief Executive

The DAPTC Chief Executive introduced her report. She explained that she continued to meet with Dorset Council officers, particularly the Executive Director of Place, to reiterate

that local councils wanted to participate in designing the relationship with Dorset Council. She drew particular attention to a series of workshops to be held across the Dorset Council area during October to progress this. Members expressed concerns that it was not proposed to hold one of these workshops in the east of the County. The Chief Executive reiterated that the arrangements were being made by Dorset Council, not the DAPTC.

In addition to the liaison with Dorset Council, the Chief Executive explained that she was also in contact with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council and the Council's Monitoring Officer had been involved in the induction for new parish councillors in that area. The induction sessions held across Dorset since the elections in May had been successful, with over 230 councillors having attended.

Particular attention was drawn to the DAPTC events scheduled to be held throughout the Autumn tailored to audiences of both councillors and clerks.

In response to a member's request, the Chief Executive confirmed that the new website would be accessible to both councillors and clerks and undertook to ensure that the DAPTC newsletters were made available.

In relation to the DAPTC AGM in November, one member requested that member councils be made aware of the importance that motions were debated and voted upon on the basis of that debate and that councils' representatives should not be instructed how to vote in advance.

In response to a member's question as to whether further local councils would be created in the BCP Council area, the Chief Executive explained that a community governance review was currently underway to create a parish area around Holdenhurst.

One member elected in May 2019 expressed his surprise and frustration at the lack of communication and consultation between Dorset Council and local councils. He considered that the relationship was driven by top-down priorities, particularly in relation to planning. He requested that the DAPTC continue to make very strong representations to Dorset Council that local councils be listened to but also provided with clear and proper reasons for decisions made, particularly in relation to planning. The Chairman acknowledged this frustration as there had long been little engagement with local councils and appreciation of this grassroots level of local government. There was a need for local councils to be seen as partners of Dorset Council and for engagement to be meaningful.

23/19. Dorset Council update

In the absence of a representative from Dorset Council, the Chairman referred to a written update provided for the meeting. This would be circulated to all members following the meeting.

It was hoped that arrangements for representation and attendance at meetings of the Committee would be considered through the Executive Advisory Panel established by the Cabinet Member for Customer, Community and Regulatory Services. The recent working lunch to which clerks to towns and larger parishes had been invited by the Chief Executive of Dorset Council was welcomed as another opportunity for engagement with the local councils sector.

24/19. Towns and Larger Parishes Committee – Chairman's report

The Chairman explained that he had little to report on this occasion and moved to the next item.

25/19. NALC Report

In the absence of Cllr Dedden, as NALC representative, the Chairman moved to the next item.

26/19. Members' updates

Lyme Regis

- The project for the installation of lighting in the Langmoor and Lister Gardens was now complete and this would be switched on for the first time on 14 September. It was intended that the gardens would be illuminated during the summer season and on special occasions. It was confirmed that the installation used low energy lightbulbs.
- The Town Council was considering updating its tourism brochure.

Verwood

- Tenders were currently being sought for the refurbishment of the teenage play area in Three Legged Cross.
- One councillor had been co-opted to fill one of the two vacancies arising from the elections in May.

Ferndown

- The Town Council had agreed to take on the operation of the Barrington Centre in order to secure the future of this facility and the viability of the town centre. There was a lot of concern from the councillors about the commitment and the inevitable increase in the precept to cover the costs but the loss of this facility would be detrimental to the town.
- Phase 1 of the King George V project was now complete and Phase 2 would now commence, including the replacement of all children's play equipment, renovation of tennis courts and replacement of the wheel park. The Town Council had £160,000 put aside for this phase.

Colehill

- A working party had been established to consider how the Parish Council could contribute towards climate change initiatives.
- The installation of a projector and screen in the Memorial Hall had been completed and was enabling the Parish Council to move towards being paperless.
- The transfer of assets from the former East Dorset District Council had still not been completed due to legal capacity issues.
- Dorset Council had been approached about outstanding replacement of street name signs. These had been made but, as this was previously a district council function, no-one had been tasked with installation.
- A preliminary meeting had taken place with Wimborne Minster Town Council to consider progressing a joint neighbourhood plan.
- Following co-options, the Parish Council now had a full complement of councillors.

Corfe Mullen

- A councillor had been co-opted into a casual vacancy for which there had been a number of applicants.
- The Parish Council was currently in the process of setting up live-streaming of its meetings.
- There had been an issue with Dorset Council over the lack of decision on outstanding Definitive Map Modification Orders.

Wareham

- The Building Better Lives project being developed by Dorset Council was causing a great deal of concern to the Town Council and local residents. Whilst the development of an integrated health hub on the site of the former Wareham Middle School was supported, one of the viability options had included the development of part of the town's recreation ground. Incorrect information had been circulated by a protest group and this had caused a lot of upset to local residents.
- A new Town Clerk would take up post on the following Monday.
- The Wareham Neighbourhood Plan was currently with an inspector and it was hoped that this was now nearing the end of the process.

Beaminster

- Planning was underway for the construction of new public toilets on the Public Hall, to replace those elsewhere in the town. This would be funded by £70,000 granted to the Town Council by West Dorset District Council for this purpose.
- The new play area had now been planted with 1,000 shrubs and trees and was awaiting inspection for the release of the LEADER funding.
- The community bus continued to be a success.
- The Town Council now had both a new logo and a new website.

27/19. Date and venue of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Friday 22 November 2019 at Gillingham Town Hall.

The meeting closed at 12:30pm.

Signed _____ Date _____

Cllr Chris Turner
Chairman

Appendix

Community level environmental initiatives

Professor Michael Dower CBE

Thank you for the chance to offer ideas.

I introduce myself as the coordinator of the Beaminster Area ECO Group, which is campaigning in West Dorset to raise public awareness of, and promote action related to, climate change, loss of biodiversity and waste of resources. We work closely with local schools; and with ECO Church groups, who are increasingly active in this area. We enjoy close liaison with Dorset Friends of the Earth, Transition Town Bridport and Turn Lyme Green. Personally, I am also the vice chairman of the Southern Dorset Local Action Group, using European funds to support local enterprises and community initiatives; and a member of the Rural Enterprise Group of the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership.

I understand that the context for this talk is that some of your Town or Parish Councils have made, or are considering, Declarations of Climate Emergency. You therefore wish to consider what this may imply for action by your Councils and within your communities.

I offer 10 points which I hope will provoke your thinking.

1. This is not a new theme. The principle of sustainability has been strong in the public agenda since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro of 1992. Global thought and action has evolved over the years, and was crystallised in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals approved in 2015 by the UN General Assembly, which I urge you to read. The specific issue of climate change has been long debated at global level. The Paris conference on Climate Change of 2015, which saw commitments by many governments on the action they would take, was the 21st such conference ! The UK Climate Change Act, focused on control of greenhouse gas emissions, was passed in 2008. The UK government has for many years supported production of renewable energy; building standards which conserve energy; and the transition away from coal in generating electricity.
2. However, we have now reached a tipping point of concern related to climate change. Headlines throughout the last 18 months have sharply increased public and political awareness of climate change, and acceptance that it is largely caused by rising human emissions of carbon and other greenhouse gases. This rise in emissions is at the root of the devastating droughts, floods, storms, melting of glaciers, rise in sea levels and widespread wildfires which have caused such environmental damage and human suffering during that period. Intensified worldwide research by scientists has proved the links between climate change and these events, and has revealed the accelerated pace of greenhouse gas emissions and rises in temperature. This led the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to urge, in a report last October, a more radical and rapid approach than that agreed in Paris in 2015. Scientific findings also provoked the School Strike movement led by Greta Thunberg, and the widening sequence of declarations of Climate Emergency.

3. This is not just a Climate Emergency : it also embraces Environment and Resources. Our ECO Group, and the other organisations which I named earlier, are pursuing three simultaneous and tightly linked global and local issues :
- Climate change, its potentially devastating impact, and the consequent need for radical and urgent cuts in greenhouse gas emissions
 - The loss of biodiversity, which is having catastrophic impact on wildlife throughout the world, including this country
 - The grossly excessive call by mankind on the world's resources, and the appalling waste of those resources, which contributes heavily to the other two great processes : one massive example of this is the impact of plastic waste upon land and ocean, as graphically shown last autumn in the final film in Blue Planet II series.

In our view, the Emergency Declarations should focus on all three of these great themes.

4. This is everyone's emergency. If – as a human race – we do not act, everyone on the planet will be affected by a deeply troubling, hotter, and in many places unliveable, world. I am in this campaign because I tremble for my grandchildren's future. We here, in green temperate Dorset, with low density of people and highly productive land, may feel detached now from these great global issues. But if the seas rise, the deserts widen and water resources are exhausted elsewhere, we will inevitably feel the impact of migration and competition for land and resources. That is why we need widespread collective action – by international organisations, by national governments, by local authorities at county and local level, by commerce and industry, by the owners and managers of land, by communities of all kinds, by social organisations, households and individuals everywhere.

5. The role of local Councils. In Dorset, the precise division of functions between the new Dorset Council and your member councils is not yet clarified. But the broad lines are already clear. You are not responsible for education, children's services, care for the elderly, transport, waste disposal or planning. You are responsible, to variable extent, for local administration, parks and open spaces, playing fields and playgrounds, cemeteries, litter collection, car parking, town and village halls. You can support local voluntary organisations. You have a broad power to pursue the well-being of your communities, and to raise precepts for this purpose – provided you carry your ratepayers with you ! You can represent, lead and advocate on behalf of your communities. These powers enable you:
- to take direct action which can contribute to the collective environmental effort
 - to influence what higher-level authorities think and do
 - to encourage, and where appropriate support, relevant action within your communities.

You already do these things. The effect of a declaration of Climate Emergency is to sharpen the environmental dimension of what you do. Notably, the new imperative to cut back on use of fossil fuels can powerfully assist the long-standing fight to sustain rural services, to build affordable homes and diversify rural economies, in order to enable people to live full lives without extensive travel.

6. Consider a measure of formality. Each local council already has its own pattern of meetings and committees. It is for each council to decide how this new

environmental agenda should be handled. But this issue is so crucial to the long-term well-being of your communities, and will be so sustained (and probably increasingly difficult) over time, that I urge a measure of formality. For example, the Dorset Council has set up a Climate Panel, with eight Councillors, answerable to the Cabinet, with staff support and a brief to review the whole scope of the Council's activities and to identify the contribution which each activity already makes, and could further make, to the pursuit of environmental objectives. Through Friends of the Earth, we have urged that this Panel produce a Climate and Environment Action Plan, with clear and urgent targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, reduction of waste, and enrichment of wildlife throughout the county. You may wish to consider similar formality in your town or parish.

7. Direct action by Councils. Moving to the potential scope of local environmental initiatives, I comment first on direct action by local councils. Obvious examples are :
- i. The Council's own buildings, such as offices, town and village halls, pavilions or toilets : for these, you may secure energy efficiency through insulation, automatic door closing, automatic light switches etc.; or generate energy through solar panels or other means.
 - ii. Land owned or managed by the Council, such as parks, open spaces, playing fields or allotments : on these, you may take action to enrich wildlife, avoid use of pesticides, plant trees in order to capture carbon, or use mini solar panels for lighting.
 - iii. Vehicles and equipment used by the Council : you may convert to electric vehicles, or reduce the use of fossil fuel, for example by turning part of a park into flower-rich meadow in order to enrich wildlife and cut the cost of mowing.

As example, Broadwindsor Parish Council has accepted proposals from our ECO group to convert part of its sports field into flower-rich meadow and to use a vacant allotment as a tree nursery to serve the Group's ambitious tree-planting campaign. Grant-aid for this purpose has been offered by Dorset AONB.

8. Development control. Local councils are statutory consultees on local plans and development. They can put pressure on developers and on the planning authority to ensure that high environmental standards are secured, notably in new housing. This can include a focus on energy efficiency; energy generation, such as solar panels on each house or ground-source heat pumps for larger projects; sustainable building materials; tree planting to create benign microclimates and to support wildlife; and inclusion of local facilities – playgrounds, open space, shelters, footpaths, cycleways etc. - in order to enable people to have a full life near their homes without being forced to use cars.
9. Proactive planning. Development control, as just described, is essentially reactive. Local councils can move into proactive mode by preparing Neighbourhood Plans which express the aspirations of their communities for future development and which become supplements to the formal Local Plan. Such Plans can be good vehicles for action related to climate and environment. In particular, they can help to find a balance between homes, workspaces and services within a town or parish, so that people do not have to travel far in their

daily life. Where there is clear need for affordable housing, the Council may identify suitable land, secure its designation as an 'exceptions site', negotiate a viable price with the owner, and support the creation of a Community Land Trust to initiate such development. Examples in our locality are the Community Land Trusts at Toller Porcorum and at Whitchurch Canonicorum.

Local Councils can also secure external funding for new developments to meet local needs. For example, Southern Dorset Local Action Group recently gave (from its EU LEADER funds) 80% grants to Beaminster Town Council for a brand-new playground, and to Broadwindsor Parish Council for a new multi-use games area. The application from the Parish Council for the grant to the games area referred to the clear environmental benefit of enabling local people to pursue different games without having to travel to neighbouring towns. The Dorset Rural Enterprise Group is pressing for the inclusion, in the Shared Prosperity Fund which the Government is expected to announce if we leave the EU, of locally-administered funding similar to LEADER. Meanwhile, the National Lottery has launched a £100 million Climate Action Fund to help communities take the lead in tackling the climate emergency.

10. Action by voluntary bodies ... and partnership between all sectors. England has a rich tradition of voluntary organisations active in the environmental field, including a wide network of local amenity societies, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, County Wildlife Trusts and others. In recent years, the rising focus on climate change has been adopted by many of these earlier bodies, and has also provoked creation of a new network of Transition Towns and of other local groups such as Turn Lyme Green and our Beaminster Area ECO group. Also rising in strength are the network of ECO Churches, inspired by the A Rocha organisation; and the network of ECO Schools, which promote awareness among schoolchildren of the need to care for the environment. In broad terms, these networks are seeking to raise public awareness of climate change and related issues, to encourage changes in lifestyle in order that we can collectively 'live more lightly on the land', and to promote community-based action to resolve specific issues.

A key example of this is the designation of Plastic Free Communities. Three Dorset towns – Lyme Regis, Dorchester and Wimborne Minster – are already certified as Plastic Free, according to the definition set by Surfers against Sewage; and Lyme Regis (for example) has already enabled 24 different businesses in the town to secure their own Plastic Free status. A further dozen communities in Dorset are in process of seeking that status. In each case, the Town or Parish Council is involved, but the leadership often lies with a voluntary body or individual. This neatly illustrates the final key point that I want to make, namely that the leadership in pursuing a declaration of Climate Emergency may lie with town and parish councils, but a large part of the action lies with voluntary organisations, enterprises and individuals. There is a strong need for partnership between the different sectors, and for support and encouragement to flow from the local councils to those who act in the communities. We are all in this together.

Having made 10 points to you, I end with a 10 word summary:

Help us all to live more lightly on the land !