

DAPTC Larger Parish and Town Councils Committee meeting in Blandford Forum
Friday 16th November 2018

This meeting was the committee's AGM and started with election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Cllr Chris Turner (Beaminster TC) was re-elected Chairman and Cllr KD Johnson (Colehill PC) was re-elected Vice-Chairman. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman together with Cllr Hadyn White (Blandford Forum TC) and Cllr Lindsey Dedden (Verwood TC) were re-elected to represent the committee on the Executive Committee.

The Chief Executive sent a written report which included a report on the AGM where all motions proposed were carried, charging for parish and town council elections in 2019 and Local Government Reorganisation. During the discussion on the report, the committee secretary advised that the counts following the elections would be held at the Redland Centre in Weymouth. The new Unitary Council count will be held on Friday 3rd May and for Parish and Town Councils on Saturday 4th May. It was pointed out that travelling to Weymouth on a Bank Holiday weekend Saturday for the count will be extremely difficult. There was discussion about charges Parish and Town Councils are likely to face for these elections. It was felt that being charged ½ is unfair. There was discussion about the close of nominations and date for withdrawal of nominations being on the same day. NALC had been asked to pursue this problem which can result in unfilled vacancies and elections in adjacent wards. In connection with the formation of the new Unitary Council, the Chief Executive advised that the new logo for the Council has been unveiled. This was devised in house with no use of outside consultants.

There was a question about the timing of introduction of business rate relief for public toilets. It is believed that this will not be introduced until 2021.

The committee received a report from Stephen Hill of the Dorset Councils Partnership (North, West Dorset DCs and Weymouth and Portland Borough Council). There was a discussion about transfer of assets in the West Dorset area. Concern was expressed that some transfers had been blocked by the Shadow Unitary Authority. Concern was also expressed that the process across the new Unitary area was not consistent. It was reported that harmonisation of Council tax will take place immediately the new Authority comes into being however it was acknowledged that harmonisation of services will take longer. Appointments are being made to new posts and those present were reminded that fortnightly newsletters on progress of LGR are being issued to all Town and Parish Councils. In response to a question, it was explained that the DWP will continue to provide services to the Christchurch area for at least the short term. It will no longer be a partnership as all functions will be the responsibility of the new Dorset Council.

The Chairman highlighted problems caused by late removal of bus subsidies and routes being withdrawn/new timetables at very short notice. There were some instances where students had purchased long term bus passes and then found there was no service. During a brief discussion on this it was said that feedback from County Councillors at Town and Parish Council meetings is patchy, some being good but many failing to attend or give reports.

A brief report on the NALC AGM and conference was given and a fuller written report is to be circulated shortly. The report given highlighted the successes NALC has achieved in respect of GDPR, business rate relief on public toilets and savings due to the establishment of the SAAA.

Members reported items as follows:

Blandford Forum Town Council: The Town Council is concerned that it does not know if the former North Dorset DC offices “Norden” have been sold. The potential purchasers want planning permission to demolish the building and build housing before agreeing to purchase it.

Verwood Town Council: There was a spectacular and beautiful display of knitted poppies in the town centre, organised by Verwood Rotary, the wool being sponsored by Irvings estate agents. Poppies were knitted by a large number of people of all ages and the sponsors ran out of wool twice, such was the demand.

Lytchett Matravers Parish Council: The Neighbourhood Plan is proceeding and it is hoped that it will be complete by March 2019. There is concern about the possibility of green belt land being built on.

Colehill: A new bus shelter has been provided which has led to a request for another one nearby. The Parish Council has also provided litter bins and will have to pay DWP to empty them. The Parish Council will probably have to do more of this sort of provision in future. A beacon was lit in Wimborne Cemetery (jointly owned and run by Wimborne, Colehill and Pamphill and Shapwich Councils) to commemorate the centenary of the end of WW1. The Parish Council is trying to persuade local businesses to make their toilets available to the public as there are no public toilets in the parish.

Wimborne Town Council: 5000 houses are to be built in Poole near Magna Road but the residents will use Wimborne Town facilities. There is a need to manage the expectation of the public about services which can be provided. The Rugby club is to move to a new site and 170 houses built on the site, 28% will be social and affordable housing. A neighbouring parish made a last minute submission about parish/town boundaries which will effect wards in the town. There was no opportunity for the Town Council to respond and there was no dialogue with the Town Council before the submission was made. It is felt that the process is poor.

Wareham Town Council: The Town Council will be starting its budget process during the following week. The CAB needs a new roof which will cost £20K.

West Moors Parish Council: Two new seats were dedicated on Armistice Day. The Parish Council is seeking to let a new contract for toilet cleaning. A group of local volunteers is rejuvenating the overgrown BMX track.

Beaminster Town Council: The Play area is more or less complete. The Town Council is running a bus service on Saturday which is successful but the Council feels that this sort of service should not be the responsibility of a small Town Council.

Swanage Town Council: Dorset County Council has agreed to replace some paving lost with historic stone having previously said it would not do so.

Gillingham Town Council: Planning permission has been given for the first 90 houses in the southern extension to the town. The Town Council agreed to carry out road clearance to prevent flooding but had to suspend this as the disposal costs of £9K were not notified to the Council for budgeting purposes. The Council hopes to reinstate this. A meeting will be held at the end of November about community led housing. A Community Land Trust exists in the area and will be involved.

Dorchester Town Council: New seat planters have been installed in the High St. section 106 money from Poundbury will be used for new play areas. A new football 3G pitch is being well used. A last minute change by the Boundary commission has caused a problem in connection with a new unit at Poundbury. Regeneration suggestions for the town centre have been received including a new closed market on a car park. A Rotary club has closed which threatens events in the Carnival. The town is making progress to becoming plastic free.

Suggested dates and locations for meetings for 2019 are to be decided and suggestion circulated.