

DAPTC Larger Parish and Town Councils Committee meeting in Braeside Hall St
Leonards and St Ives Friday 14th June 2019

A representative of the new Weymouth Town Council was warmly welcomed to the meeting.

The Chief Executive reported that she has met with senior officers of the new Dorset Council and has arranged for Code of Conduct training by Monitoring Officers from Dorset Council and Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council for new Town and Parish Councils.

The DAPTC area arrangements may be reviewed at a later date in the light of the formation of the two new unitary councils.

Hilary also reported that the three new Town and Parish Councils have joined DAPTC.

The Chief Executive reported on progress regarding motions passed at the AGM in November 2018 (see attached)

During a brief discussion about future training events, the Chief Executive reported that the course held in February on Planning from a Parish perspective would be repeated. Some present stated that the course had not been the training expected and required by Town and Parish Councillors. They also expressed concern about the use of an outside consultant. Others present however, felt that the course had been as described in advance and had been useful. There was a request for in house training from officers of Dorset Council, such events being opened to neighbouring councils if space permitted.

The agenda item “Dorset Council Update” provoked much discussion around lack of presence of an officer (Stephen Hill had previously attended from the West, North and Weymouth and Portland partnership). Those present felt that the presence of someone with a county wide perspective was necessary. It was stated that information was not being disseminated to Town and Parish Councils and there is great difficulty for Clerks finding the correct officer with whom to discuss issues raised. There was also concern about the lack of information on the website. There were two Dorset Councillors present who explained that Dorset had been considered by the Government as a model to other counties considering becoming or being required to become Unitary Authorities but that support for the process had been withdrawn. They also explained that some future meetings would be moved to County Hall due to problems with communications within South Walk house.

Dorset Council has declared a “climate emergency” and during the discussion, examples of how Town and Parish Councils can act to improve the environment and help alleviate the climate change problem. Examples given included installation of electric charging points (Dorset Council has asked for location suggestions), including green initiatives in local plans, planting small pieces of unused council owned land with bee friendly plants, becoming bee friendly (Gillingham and Shaftesbury have become bee friendly), replacing machinery with more eco friendly versions, engaging with the Chamber of Commerce to become plastic free, using salt filtration instead of chemicals in the swimming pool, cutting verges less often and sowing wildflower seeds on small pieces of land, declaring a “war on waste” and reducing all types of waste material. Wimborne reported replacing its plastic bunting with material bunting made by local people. It was suggested that DAPTC lobby Government for all new developments to be eco friendly by installing ground water heat pumps and

mandating the installation of solar panels. It was suggested that councils should contact local schools for ideas and to find out what they are doing as children and young people are leading on this issue.

Members reported items as follows:-

Weymouth Town Council: The new council has 29 members, of whom 12 were previously Borough Councillors and 6 are Dorset Councillors. The council has started to hold committee meetings and is trying to build up reserves and ensure that the budget set is adhered to.

Wimborne Minster Town Council: There is a paving problem in the town. Dorset Council will not replace slabs due to the cost but is using tarmac. Residents and Councillors are complaining about this due to Conservation area status and the Town Council may have to pay for slabs to be used. The Town Council is considering preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Transfer of assets is ongoing. The Council has one vacancy following elections and will co-opt to fill the vacancy. The recent Folk Festival was well attended and brings about £1.02m to the local economy.

Ferndown Town Council: The Town council did not request any assets to be transferred due to concern about increased costs. The Barrington centre is under threat of closure as the organisation running it will give up later in the year. The Town Council is considering taking over but would need to raise the precept by a large amount due to the running costs. Phase one of the refurbishment of the KGV ground has been completed and phase two includes a MUGA, and a new wheels park at a cost of c£160K. The project should be complete by June next year. There will be a fete on the Ground on 22nd June.

Verwood Town Council: There is the possibility of a new LIDL store being built in Ringwood Road. 16 councillors were elected for 18 seats and the final two seats will be filled by co-option. The Local Action group was granted funding to meet its meeting costs and those present were asked for information about any Local Action groups which still exist in their area. The Local Action group in Gillingham is very active in a variety of spheres within the Town and does not receive funding from the Town Council. No other representatives had Local Action groups in their area. The new leader of Dorset Council is also a Verwood Town Councillor. A new care home is proposed close to the centre of the town but there is concern about the proposal due to traffic on a narrow road and other issues. The road in the cemetery is being resurfaced.

Beaminster Town Council: The play area funded by EU (LEADER) money has been completed. The Council is planning to build a skatepark beside the new play area. W Dorset DC gave Beaminster £60K for new toilets as the old ones were about to close. A festival is to be held during the week following the meeting. The Community bus service which operates between Bridport and Crewkerne on Saturdays will be have been operating for a year shortly. The service is organised by the Town Council and run by volunteers including the vicar. It is well supported and receives donations from some passengers in addition to bus fares. The bus was donated by Dorset County Council.

West Moors Parish Council: The recent elections saw 9 seats of the 12 available filled. The Council has therefore retained its Power of General Competence. Asset transfers have not yet been completed. There is also an ongoing process to divert a footpath. The process has already lasted several years and there is concern that it might not be completed by the 2026 deadline for mapping footpaths in the County. There will be a charity fun event “Westival” on 13th July.

Gillingham Town Council: The Council is working in partnership with Guys Marsh prison. The prison is supplying plants for the Council, repairing bins and it is hoped the prisoners will also be able to build new benches. One prisoner allowed out prior to release has worked successfully in a lunch club and the Council hopes that other prisoners might be able to work on open spaces within the town. The Town Council is very concerned about the lack of a Plan in the former North Dorset District area. As a result there is no official settlement boundary for the town and developers are planning to build on inappropriate sites such as one with poor access while not building on sites already approved for development. The Council is finding it hard to oppose inappropriate development because of the lack of a Plan. Progress is being made with the formation of a Community Land Trust. One ward was contested at the recent elections but there were 5 vacancies after the election. 2 “Meet the Councillors” events were held and other means tried to encourage people to stand for election. Volunteers have been co-opted to fill the vacancies. A refurbishment of a play area has started.

Lyme Regis Town Council: There were contested elections. One elected Councillor has resigned and a by election will be held to fill the vacancy. New lighting in the gardens will be switched on at the end of June. The Pedlar problem reported at previous meetings has worsened. There was 1 Pedlar and now there are 3. The Town Council hopes that Dorset Council will help to solve the problem.

Colehill Parish Council: The Council has a new Clerk. Open days were held to encourage candidates for election but there were no elections in the area and there are 3 vacancies. Three people have applied for co-option and will be interviewed shortly. Equipment has been installed in the Village Hall to enable viewing of plans by the Parish Council. The transfer of assets has stalled. The Council has taken on extra areas around play areas and is considering installing adult exercise equipment. New Streets in the Parish are being named after people who died in WW1 (taken from the War Memorial).

The next meeting will be held on Friday 6th September probably in Gillingham, but venue to be confirmed.