



## **Report from the Leader of Bridport Town Council 2015/2016**

The new Town Council took office in May last year and I would like to highlight just some of the Council's achievements over the past year.

We have created a new Town Plan and looked at our budgets for the next 4 years.

We opened the new watersports centre at Fisherman's Green in West Bay a facility used by the Canoe and Gig Clubs.

This past week has seen the start of the work to extend the Town Council's West Bay Play Area. This key project, working with the Bridport Young Persons' Action Trust and other partners, will see this prestigious facility made fully accessible. We have obtained planning permission to create car parking spaces at Plottingham, to replace those lost at the Magistrates' Court.

Last year saw the Town Council take on the maintenance of highway verges, under an agreement with the County Council. We received a lot of good feedback and it is pleasing that this is another service that we have been able to deliver locally, with the necessary funding. Most of the public green spaces in Bridport and West Bay are now maintained by the Town Council and its outside team. Their work is greatly appreciated. We also continue to support the Lengthsman scheme.

The Town Council has been supporting efforts to safeguard the Youth Centre, following the decision of the County Council to withdraw its support. The Town Council has agreed £15,000 towards the future management of the centre by an independent Trust and the continued provision of the Youth Club.

The last year, saw the adoption of the District Local Plan and the Town Council made strong representations, including attending the Local Plan Inspector's Inquiry, to ensure that local views on the strategic allocations were fully represented and that the important role of the neighbourhood plan was recognised.

The Town Council has continued to support Vision 2030, the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan, working with Allington, Bothenhampton & Walditch, Bradpole and Symondsburry Parish Councils. I would like to thank Phyllida Culpin, the Chair, and all the volunteer members of the Steering Group for all their hard work. We are very lucky to have so many dedicated people across the whole Plan area and we look forward to seeing the reports from the working groups. It has also been pleasing to be part of the Joint Committee of all the councils involved in the plan, which is helping to build on the good relationships between the participating councils. This will be particularly important in the coming years, with changes to the structure of local government and possible unitary councils. Experience elsewhere has shown that where unitary councils are introduced, there is more pressure on local town and parish councils to deliver services.

The Town Council's Plans Committee made a very strong objection to the outline planning application for the Vearse Farm site and it continues to push for the local community to be fully involved in the development of the Master Plan for this site.

The Town Council has continued to work with the Chamber of Trade and Commerce, the Bridport & District Tourism Association, Market Traders and BLAP on promoting the town through the Market and Business Liaison Sub Committee and its working group. Currently we are updating the community website. We have also all worked together, along with the West Bay Forum and the Bridport Area Development Trust, on the establishment of a new Coastal Community Team. The CCT has produced an Economic Plan, which included a large number of key projects for the area. This should help to ensure that the area is well placed to bid for funding from a number of sources, including the soon to re-open Coastal Communities Fund. I would like to thank the CCT project manager Brian Wilson for all his work on the Plan.

The Council has been fully involved in responding to West Dorset District Council's Service Review programme, including, in particular, looking at support for the Bridport Local Area Partnership (BLAP) and the future management of the Tourist Information Centre. Sadly, due to the reduced funding support for BLAP, we lost the post of Community Planning Officer. The Town Council is committed to continuing to support BLAP and we are very lucky to have so many dedicated volunteers who work so hard, as part of the Partnership. In particular, I am very grateful for the continued leadership of the BLAP Chair, Maureen Jackson. Bearing in mind the likely changes at County & District Council level, the expectations on the community will increase and BLAP's role in the coming years will be more important than ever.

As part of the District Council's service review process and in light of the need for the District Council to reduce its costs, we have put forward a proposal for the Town Council to manage the Tourist Information Centre. I am very hopeful that this will be accepted and safeguard this important and highly regarded service.

The Town Council continues to support a large number of local community organisations, through its grant scheme. It was particularly pleasing that we were able to maintain our existing levels of funding for the key larger organisations that we support through service level agreements - the Arts Centre, Museum, Citizens' Advice Bureau and Leisure Centre. We also agreed capital funding for important ongoing building projects for the Museum, the Literary and Scientific Institute and the Arts Centre.

These are difficult times for local government and we will need to continue to work hard to ensure that all the services and assets that we all value are protected. The continued support of all of our partners, local organisations and the community will be more important than ever.

I am grateful for all the support of the new Council, as well as the continued hard work of all of our staff.

Thank you

Sarah Williams  
Leader of the Council  
2015/16