



BRIDPORT TOWN COUNCIL - TOWN CLERK'S REPORT - 2016/2017

This report provides details of the Town Council's services and projects delivered in the past year.

Allotments: The Town Council has 170 allotments and at the current time there are 40 people in the parish on the waiting list. The Town Council works closely with the Bridport and District Allotments Society on all aspects of the management of the allotments. During the year it has taken on the management of land at St Cecilia's, which in 2017 will provide between 12 and 20 new allotments, depending on size.

Asker Meadows: The open space and adjoining New Zealand site are overseen by a well supported community group. The showground was used during the year by the Circus, the third Jurassic Music Festival and the Food Festival.

Borough Gardens: The Borough Gardens community group, supported by the Town Council, has met regularly on site, making continued improvements to the Gardens.

Bridport Football Club: The Town Council now has the freehold ownership of this land and the Football Club has an existing lease. The District Council manages the car park on behalf of the Town Council, with the proceeds split equally between the Football Club and Town Council. The multi use games arena on the site is free to use during the day and continues to be very popular.

Bridport Local Area Partnership: The Town Council continues to support BLAP through the new post of Project Manager and Community Initiatives Officer and also with administrative support. The District Council now provides £6,000 funding per year to support community planning. BLAP continues to successfully represent a membership of 10 local councils and more than 100 local community groups, organisations and individuals.

Car Parking: The Town Council continues to work with West Dorset District Council to seek to identify additional car parking capacity in Bridport and West Bay. It received planning permission to establish up to 26 new parking places on its land at Plottingham and it is hoped that these spaces will be available this summer. The Town Surveyor will be assisting West Dorset District Council with its audit of all car parks in the area, which will include the arrangements to resurface the West Bay car parks.

CCTV: The town centre CCTV contract with Weymouth and Portland Borough Council has continued over the past year, with funding from the Town Council and the District Council. The funding from the District Council remains under review, but it is hoped that this will continue for future years.

Cemetery: The Town Council manages the Bridport Cemetery. The solar panels on the cemetery workshop came online during the year and other work at the Cemetery this year has included new gates. During the year, the Cemetery Superintendent welcomed a party of local school children on a visit to the war graves.

Coastal Community Team: The Town Council supports the Bridport and West Bay Coastal Community Team (CCT), which is a local partnership formed to produce an Economic Plan for the area. The CCT includes representatives from the Bridport Local

Area Partnership, Bridport Area Development Trust, Bridport & District Tourism Association, Bridport Chamber of Trade and Commerce, West Bay Community Forum, Dorset County Council and West Dorset District Council. This year the CCT supported a successful application for Coastal Community funding of over £240,000, to restore the former West Bay Methodist Chapel and adapt it as an innovative and welcoming Discovery Centre. The project is being led by the Bridport Area Development Trust, with the support of the CCT. The local CCT also supported other projects for West Bay, included within a separate Dorset wide application submitted by the Dorset Coast Forum CCT, which has also been successful.

Communication: The Town Council issues an annual report on its work, which is widely available throughout the town, along with newsletters for events. An occasional Market Newsletter is also issued for market traders. The Town Council hosts its own web site and a community web site. Both sites were upgraded during the year. A weekly Town Council bulletin is issued to all town councillors.

Community Transport: The Town Council provided funding and support for a community bus feasibility study, which is looking at the options for community bus services in the Bridport area.

Consultation: The Town Council has responded to a large number of consultation exercises from national and local government over the past year, ensuring that the views of the town are taken into consideration on a variety of matters. This included extensive responses to the Clinical Services Review, Mental Health Services review, Local Government restructuring, review of the Local Plan, and many others.

The Council introduced a new Public Open Forum for its full Council meetings and these have been very well attended for public contributions on the Clinical Services Review, play areas and town centre traffic.

Democracy - Working with Young People: The Town Council has hosted meetings this year of the Bridport Area Youth Council, involving students from The Sir John Colfox School and local primary schools. The Youth Council recently met at the Youth Centre and have fed in their ideas for the future of the centre and also commented on the play area review and traffic in the town. The Town Council is also supporting the Bridport Community Youth project, which has been meeting every week in Mountfield.

Events: The Town Council was represented at the Charter Fair, Food Festival, Melplash Show and the Community Fair, as well as providing support for the Christmas Cheer and Hat Festivals and processing road closure applications for all community events in the year. It also organises the Remembrance Parade in November, which is such an important event for the town. The Town Council provided flags and bunting for the town centre last summer, put up Christmas lights and enabled event organisers to have banners on town centre lamp posts.

Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee: The Council's Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee this year reviewed actions taken by the Town Council in response to the adoption of its Climate Change Strategy in 2012. It agreed to re-confirm the Town Council's commitment to the Strategy and will bring forward an updated action plan. Actions that had been carried out already include the installation of photovoltaic panels on Town Council buildings at Plottingham, the Cemetery and Mountfield and a solar thermal hot water system installed in Mountfield. The Committee also progressed a number of projects including Rights Respecting, Youth Centre support and commented on coastal flood alleviation works at West Bay.

Finances: The Best Value and Scrutiny Sub Committee received reports during the year on all aspects of the financial management of the Town Council, including reports on any issues raised by the Council's Internal Auditor. The Town Council receives regular budget monitoring reports and the Town Council's Budget Working Group looked in detail at the budget.

The Town Council agreed its budget for 2017/18 taking account of the need to make provision for additional service delivery pressures and the need to protect local services in the light of the potential moves to a unitary authority. Funding was included within the budget to support the Youth Service, as part of a new Service Level Agreement. The Town Council also considered its estimated budgets for a further three years, as part of its medium term financial plan.

The Council's Internal Auditors make three visits during the year and it was pleasing that there were no issues reported, either as part of the internal or external audits. The Auditors also work with the Council to update an annual Financial Risk Assessment, which is reported to members. During the year, the Council moved to electronic banking.

Governance: The Town Council has a series of policies that regulate its proceedings, including a Code of Conduct for Councillors, Financial Regulations, Standing Orders etc. It also has a number of other key documents that it reviews each year, including its Asset Register, Risk Management Policy, Health and Safety Policy and Investment Strategy. These policies are reviewed each year by the Best Value and Scrutiny Sub Committee.

Grants: The Town Council agreed to continue funding the Leisure Centre, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Museum and Arts Centre at existing levels under service level agreements which run until 2019. It also provides one off funding for community groups to support the delivery of projects. In total, the Town Council awarded £28,200 in addition to the £15,000 to support the youth centre and youth club.

Highways and Transportation: This was established as a working group of members, reporting to the Planning Committee and it considered a large number of issues over the year, including developing options for town centre traffic and South Street. The Working Group received regular reports on local bus services from Alan Williams of the Western Area Transport Action Group. The Town Council provided funding to support WATAGs production of bus timetables.

The Town Council, in partnership with West Dorset District Council, operated the West Bay/Bridport Park and Ride Scheme again during the summer holiday period, on Wednesdays and Saturdays (market days). It was noted though that the District Council would not be able to fund the scheme in 2017 and options are being looked at to provide a park and ride service.

Highway Verge Maintenance: The Town Council continued to maintain the highway verges, as part of a Service Level Agreement with Dorset County Council. The SLA states that the work, including in adjoining parishes, is for a minimum of 7 cuts a year and the Town Council receives a grant from Dorset County Council to assist with the work. The Town Council is in discussion with the County Council regarding an extension of this agreement, which was only for three years up to March 2018.

Land Transfers: The Town Council completed the transfer of land at St Cecilia's for new allotments. The management of the land will be supported with Section 106 funding of £14,687.

Lengthsman: The post of Lengthsman is funded by the Town Council and the local councils participating in the scheme - Bothenhampton & Walditch, Symondsburry and Bradpole Parish Councils. The work of the Lengthsman includes gully clearing, repairing notice boards, removing fly posting, grass cutting, removal of weeds and repairing benches throughout the town and similar tasks. The Town Council receives good feedback from the parishes in the scheme and has also taken on some additional work on behalf of Chideock Parish Council. The councils will be looking at possible extensions to the work of the Lengthsman in the light of some minor highways maintenance work no longer being delivered by the County Council.

Local Government Restructuring: The Town Council made a detailed response on the restructuring consultation. The Town Clerk and Leader of the Council, along with other West Dorset town councils, have been meeting with West Dorset District Council to discuss the process to move to unitary authorities, seeking to ensure that local services were protected and that where there was an opportunity to delegate services, then funding would come with it. The Town Council has also been discussing with the District Council a potential package including income generating assets to support services that could be delegated, such as public toilets. The Town Clerk has been meeting with Dorset County Council as part of a group of clerks and the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils, to discuss this issue, as part of the ongoing “working together” project.

Market: The Town Council manages the popular street market and in 2016/17 there were an average of 33 stalls on Wednesdays and 71 on Saturdays, which was slightly up on the previous year. The Town Council will be producing a new Markets Policy, looking at how it can build on its support for the market.

During the year, the District Council agreed to waive the licence fee for the Town Council to manage the market and the Town Council is in discussions for the Market Charter to be transferred to the Town Council and it is hoped that this will happen soon.

The Town Council will be hosting a regional meeting of the National Association of British Market Authorities in May 2017.

Market & Business Liaison Working Group: The Working Group includes representatives from the Bridport & District Tourism Association, Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Market Traders’ Forum and the Bridport Local Area Partnership. The Working Group considered reports on the Tourist Information Centre, the market, town events and co-ordinates town publicity and promotion. It also oversaw the work to commission a re-design of the Bridport and West Bay web site and will be co-ordinating the production of a new Town Guide.

Mountfield / Millennium Green: The Town Council’s offices are now on the second floor of Mountfield, but with a presence in the ground floor reception. Magna Housing gave up their rooms this year and those rooms are being advertised. New tenants have been agreed for the other rooms (formerly used by the Town Council) on the first floor.

The Town Council is working with the Millennium Green Trust to deliver its new management plan for the area. The grounds are being used more for events, including the Hat Festival and this coming year, a Folk Festival. Once the work on the new development at the Magistrates Court site is complete, the path on to Coneygar Hill is to be improved.

Neighbourhood Justice Panels: The Town Council continued to work with Bridport Police, Dorchester and Sherborne Town Councils, Housing Associations and West Dorset

District Council, on the roll out of Neighbourhood Justice Panels across West Dorset. Restorative justice is supported by the Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner, who is looking at the future management and delivery of a Dorset wide scheme.

Neighbourhood Plan: The Town Council is working with Allington, Bothenhampton and Walditch, Bradpole and Symondsburry Parish Councils on Vision 2030, the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan. The delivery of the Plan is being co-ordinated by a community led Steering Group, overseen by a Joint Committee of all the participating councils, supported by the Project Manager and Community Initiatives Officer post. There has been a lot of work by all involved and the next stages will see consultation on the findings from the working groups.

Priory Lane - Community Orchard: The Bridport Community Orchard Group manages the Orchard site and hosts a number of popular events during the year, including the Apple Day and Wassailing events. The Orchard Group also manages the land at the top of Park Road. The sites are managed in partnership with the Town Council. The Orchard Group updated its Constitution and Management Plan during the year and agreed a new management agreement with the Town Council.

Partnership Working: The Town Council continues to work with a large number of partners, including local community groups, the Police, Chamber of Trade, Tourism Association, County Council, District Council, Magna Housing and many other organisations.

The Town Council appoints representatives to a large number of local and regional bodies and officers also attend networking meetings, including the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC), Society of Local Council Clerks etc. We also have regular meetings with District Council Chief Officers and worked with DAPTC and the County Council on the "Working Together" project.

Planning: The Town Council is a consultee for planning applications. Over the past year, 169 applications were reported to its Planning Committee and comments passed to West Dorset District Council. The Town Council is also represented on the Vearse Farm Master Plan Working Group. The Plans Committee welcomes comments from members of the public.

Play Areas: The Town Council maintains a number of play areas, including the very popular West Bay Play Area. During the year and working with the Bridport Young Persons' Action Trust and other partners, it completed and opened the new fully accessible extension to the Play Area. The Town Council also helped to establish and participates in a Steering Group looking at the options for the Skate Park. The Town Council is to undertake a consultation exercise on all its play areas.

Riverside Gardens: The Town Council continues to maintain this popular open space.

Salt House: This venue continues to be well used and the Town Council now has the freehold ownership of the building and the adjoining Green, following its transfer from the District Council. During the summer, the popular West Bay Wednesday evening markets were held once again on the Green and in the Salt House.

Staff: Regular staff meetings and annual appraisals are held for all staff. The Town Council supports the apprenticeship scheme and where it can, will take on new apprentices, as it has done in the past.

Following the transfer of the Tourist Information Centre, the Town Council now has 20 members of staff, who are listed overleaf. As the responsibilities of the Town Council have grown, so has the workload of staff and we are very lucky to have such an excellent and dedicated team.

The Town Council is a Living Wage Council (Living Wage Foundation) and it receives an annual review of staffing at its Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Tourist Information Centre: As from January 2017, the Town Council took over the management of the TIC, from the District Council. The District Council provided transitional one off funding of £150,000 and also agreed to waive the annual market fee to help support the service. As well as its existing services, the TIC also now manages the Town Hall, Bucky Doo Square, the Bridport and West Bay web site and the production of the Town Guide. Opportunities to provide more services from the TIC will be looked at over the coming year. The management of this service offers a great opportunity for the Town Council and the local area.

Town Hall: The Town Hall is open to the public six days a week. The meeting rooms are popular, with the venue being well used and the Tourist Information Centre is a key feature of the building.

External Funding: The Town Council relies on partnership funding for many of its projects and over the past year has received funding from a variety of sources, including from West Dorset District Council, Dorset County Council (for the West Bay Play Area) and Government grants for the Coastal Community Team and Neighbourhood Planning. Grants and partnership funding continue to make an important contribution to the delivery of the Town Council's projects. The Town Council will be looking at opportunities to access Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funding, to support project delivery.

Town Plan: The Town Plan provides a framework for the development of the Town Council's future policies, schemes and the formulation of budgets. The priority projects are reviewed each year and the Council receives regular progress reports on project delivery. The new updated Town Plan was adopted by the Council in 2016 and a large number of the priority projects have been delivered.

Youth Centre: The Town Council has been helping to establish the new Trust, formed in last September to take over the management of the Bridport Youth and Community Centre. It has provided funding for the running costs of the Centre and also to support the twice weekly provision of a Youth Club. This follows the decision by Dorset County Council to stop funding youth centres.

The Weather: The Town Council is now part of the West Dorset District Council Emergency Planning arrangements. It holds a supply of sand bags which it can deliver in the Bridport area in the event of potential floods. It is also working with the County Council to identify and improve problem drains in the town.

West Bay: The Water Sports Centre is used by the Canoe Club and the Gig Club. The Town Council continued to support the West Bay Forum and also West Bay Days. The Town Council supports the Coastal Community Team (CCT) which as stated earlier is helping to bring funding into West Bay. The Town Council improved the path alongside the

Bridport Arms Car Park, to improve access and will be working with the District Council to look at improvements to the car parks in West Bay. The Town Council works closely with the Harbour Master on events in West Bay.

Conclusion: This report is a summary of the Town Council's work over the past year. I would like to thank all the Town Council staff for their hard work and dedication during the year and thank the Town Councillors for all their continued support.

4 April 2017

Bob Gillis
Town Clerk

Bridport Town Council Staff

Town Clerk Bob Gillis
Town Surveyor Daryl Chambers
Finance and Office Manager Paul Fuszard
Project Manager and Community Initiatives Officer Katy Graham
Administrative Officer/Mayor's Secretary Linda Bullock
Clerical Officer Claire Peters-Way
Clerical Assistant Steven Yarde

Tourist Information Centre

Terri Foxwell Tourist Information Centre Manager
Rebecca Jones Tourist Information Assistant
Millie Webber-Cox Tourist Information Assistant
Jill Beed Tourist Information Assistant
Elle Poole Tourist Information Assistant

Ground and Caretaking Staff

Senior Groundsman Rob Goodland
Groundsman Sean Coombs
Groundsman Richard Pollard
Market Superintendent Ken Hussey
Lengthsman Ed Wootton
Cemetery Superintendent Paul Violet
Groundsman Bobby Harris
Cleaner/Caretaker Clare Violet