



Report from the Leader of Bridport Town Council 2016/2017

The Town Council elected in 2015 adopted a new Town Plan, which included a number of priority projects. It is pleasing to be able to report that a number of these projects have been delivered in the past year. The Town Plan was produced at a time of great change in local government funding and service delivery, with District Council service reviews underway and both the County and District Councils reviewing their services and assets.

The Town Plan states that the Town Council will seek to safeguard services, currently provided by other councils, that may be at risk and that are important to the town. In this report, I would like to refer to some examples of how we have delivered on that objective, as well as on the delivery of our priority projects in general.

Working with a dedicated team of volunteers, the Town Council has helped to facilitate and support the project to safeguard the Bridport Youth and Community Centre, following the decision taken by the County Council that it would no longer fund youth centres. As from September, the Centre has been managed by a new community Trust, which now has a service level agreement with the Town Council, which sees the Town Council provide annual funding for the Centre and the Youth Club.

The Tourist Information Centre has been retained in the town and is now managed by the Town Council, with transitional funding support from West Dorset District Council. The future of this important service was at risk, with the District Council looking at options for the service. It is pleasing that the Town Council was able to secure its future.

We have been able to continue to support the Bridport Local Area Partnership (BLAP) following a reduction in funding from the District Council. The Town Council remains very grateful for the hard work and commitment of the BLAP Chair, Maureen Jackson and the very many volunteers in the Partnership. We are lucky to now have Katy Graham, the Council's new Project Manager, who is providing support for BLAP, the Neighbourhood Plan as well as many other Town Council initiatives.

The Town Council established a Coastal Community Team with other partners and supported Coastal Community Fund applications for the West Bay Discovery Centre at the Methodist Chapel and other projects for West Bay, including improved cycle access, as part of the Dorset Coast Forum's Coastal Community Fund application. I am delighted to report that these applications have been successful.

Working with volunteers on the West Bay Play Area Steering Group and in partnership with the Bridport Young Persons' Action Trust, the Town Council has opened the fully accessible and popular extension to the West Bay Play Area.

We are supporting a new steering group looking at the next phase of the re-design of the Skate Park and looking to improve other play areas in the town.

We are providing new allotments on land at St Cecilia's Fields, in Pymore Road; and we are still working with the District Council to seek to identify additional car parking provision and hope very soon to open new spaces on our land at Plottingham.

The last year therefore has seen the Town Council start to deliver on its commitment to safeguard local services. This will continue to be a key priority over the coming years, with

possible moves to a new unitary authority. We are already working hard to identify other services that could be affected by moves to a unitary authority, such as public toilets, further minor highways work etc. However, in considering any further service delegations, the Town Council will seek to ensure delegated funding is also provided, as was the case with the TIC transfer.

The Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan has an important role to play in enabling the community to determine how it wants this area to develop. I am the Town Council's representative on the Joint Committee of the 5 local councils overseeing the project. There is a recognition that we will need to continue to work together, bearing in mind our shared interest in the future of the Bridport area and the likely onset of any new unitary authority. I would particularly like to thank the many volunteers who have worked so hard on the Steering Group and in the working groups, putting together the evidence base and intentions that will soon go out for consultation.

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 Working Group.

As well as the potential implications of a unitary council for local services, it is not known at this stage what a unitary authority might mean for the funding of community organisations. Locally, the Arts Centre, Museum, Citizens' Advice Bureau and Leisure Centre receive funding from the District Council. The Town Council will do all it can to support these bodies in obtaining future funding. As well as providing some funding for these larger organisations, the Town Council's annual grants programme also enables support to be provided for smaller one off projects.

This year has seen the completion of major redevelopment projects at the Arts Centre and very soon the Museum, which have been supported by the Town Council. Later this year we hope to see the opening of the restored Literary and Scientific Institute, work which we have also supported.

I said last year that these are challenging times for local government and the services we all value. This remains the case, but I hope that this report shows how we are responding to the challenges. This is in addition to the continued delivery of our core services.

I am grateful for the support of the Council and the hard work of all of our staff. I would like to finish though by particularly thanking the very many community volunteers, who do so much for the town, as I hope my report has shown.

Thank you

Sarah Williams
Leader of the Council
2016/17