



BRIDPORT TOWN COUNCIL - TOWN CLERK'S REPORT - 2017/2018

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 28 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. The new allotments at St Cecilia's, opened last year, have proved to be very popular.

Asker Meadows: The open space and adjoining New Zealand site are overseen by a well supported community group. Once again, the showground was used during the year by the Circus, the 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. The Gardens were also used for events during the year.

Bridport Football Club: The Town Council 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 and receives a £6,000 annual funding contribution from the District Council. In the past year, BLAP has led on projects looking at homelessness and working with the parish and town councils, to look at the options to work together on delivering services, which may be devolved after local government reorganisation.

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. The new parking places on its land at Plottingham should be available this spring. The Town Surveyor has worked with West Dorset District Council on the local consultation for the resurfacing works at the West Bay car parks. This work is due to start later this year.

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.

Cemetery: The Town Council manages the Bridport Cemetery, which is such an important and highly regarded asset for the town.

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. CCT supported projects are due to be delivered over the next year, including the re-opening of the West Bay Methodist Chapel as an innovative and welcoming Discovery Centre. The Discovery Centre project is being led by the Bridport Area Development Trust. The CCT will be meeting again soon to

review further projects to be considered for funding in the next round of national coastal community funding.

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. The Town Council, through the TIC, is now able to take online bookings for events on the community web site. A weekly Town Council bulletin is issued to all town councillors.

Community Transport: The Town Council established a Working Group, with representatives from WATAG and BLAP, to consider the findings of a feasibility study into bus services in the area and options for community led solutions, at a time of reductions in local services. It is hoped that new community run services will be introduced later this year. The Town Council has agreed funding in its revenue and capital budgets for 2018/19.

Consultation: The Town Council has responded to a 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.

The Council's Public Open Forum at its full Council meetings was very well attended for discussions on town centre traffic, play areas and public transport.

The Town Council undertook consultations on town centre traffic and play area provision.

Democracy - Working with Young People: The Town Council continues to support the Bridport Youth and Community Centre and the Youth Council. Local schools were also involved in the Rights Respecting project, which was supported by the Town Council.

Events: The Town Council was represented at the 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 organised the Remembrance Parade in November. 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: Some of the items considered by the Committee included a proposed car share scheme in the town, supporting efforts to establish a scrapstore and community workspace, approving proposals for new Town Council reusable water bottles (to reduce the use of plastics) and receiving reports on open space management etc. The Committee also received regular reports on a number of ongoing issues and established a Working Group to look at the options for public art projects in the town.

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 from 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 2018/19 taking into account a number of factors including another annual reduction of £13,002 in the Council Tax Support Grant, (In total, over 5 years, the Town Council has had a funding reduction of £58,237) and making provision to safeguard services that could be at risk from local government reorganisation.

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.

The Town Council has agreed a Capital budget to support the delivery of projects in the next 2-3 years.

The Finance and Office Manager was appointed as the Council's Responsible Finance Officer.

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.

Grants: The Town Council agreed to continue funding the Leisure Centre, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Museum, Arts Centre and Youth and Community Centre under Service Level Agreements at existing levels, which run until 2019. It also provides one off funding for community groups to support the delivery of projects. In total, the Town Council has awarded £36,750.

Highways and Transportation: The Working Group, which reports to the Planning Committee, considered a large number of issues over the year, including the consultation on town centre traffic and local bus services. It is very grateful for the support it receives on bus services from Alan Williams of the Western Area Transport Action Group.

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.

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 gulley clearing, repairing notice boards, removing fly posting, grass cutting, removal of weeds, 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 and is due to start providing services for Litton Cheney Parish Council and the Museum.

Local Government Restructuring: As part of the preparation for the new unitary councils, West Dorset District Council established a Programme Board comprising the West Dorset town councils and District Council representatives. The Board was established "to ensure input into the devolution/delegation process initially by town councils, as the bodies most likely to be invited to manage some delegated services at this stage and to encourage partnership working with their surrounding parishes in providing services that are important to and valued by the wider town area." The Town Council has been attending the meetings of the Board, now being held monthly. The District Council has so far identified the following services for possible transfer/delegation: TIC/ tourism, public conveniences, town centre economic development, discretionary grants and town centre street cleansing

Potential models of service delivery are to be looked at through the Programme Board, working with consultants Local Government Resource Centre (LGRC). LGRC have emphasised that councils need to consider what services are important to them and what support they need to deliver them. Examples are to be looked at of where towns and parish councils currently work together to deliver services that benefit the wider area.

The Town Council had already been in discussion with West Dorset District Council regarding potential asset transfers, to provide an income to support any delegation of services, particularly public toilets, but this process will now be taken forward as part of the work of the Programme Board and with the advice of LGRC.

During the year, the Town Council has also been in discussion with Dorset County Council regarding some of its services that could be delegated to the Town Council including sitting out licences, "A" board management and other minor highway issues.

Market: The Town Council manages the street market and in 2017/18 there has been a slight increase in revenue. The Town Council is working on a new Markets Policy, looking at how it can build on its support for the market.

The District Council has agreed to transfer its right to manage the market to the Town Council, which will include the ownership of the Market Charter. The Town Council had previously managed the market under licence, granted by the District Council.

The Town Council hosted a regional meeting of the National Association of British Market Authorities in May. This year the Town Surveyor received the Tourism Association's award for services to tourism, partly due to his work in supporting the market.

Market & Business Liaison Working Group: The Working Group includes representatives from the Bridport & District Tourism Association, Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Market Traders' and the Bridport Local Area Partnership. The Working Group considers reports on the Tourist Information Centre, the market, town events and co-ordinates town publicity and promotion. It also oversaw the production of the 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. New tenants - Jurassic Coast Trust and Agincare - moved into the first floor of the building. Mountfield continues to be well used for meetings.

The Town Council is working with the Millennium Green Trust on its management plan for the area. The grounds continue to be well used for events, including the Hat Festival and the Folk Festival. The new Churchill development was opened during the year, which saw the access road resurfaced.

Neighbourhood Justice Panels: The provision of Neighbourhood Justice Panels, which started in Bridport, have now been rolled out across Dorset, with the support of the Dorset Police & Crime Commissioner. The Borough of Poole, through the Safer Poole Team, now deliver the county-wide Restorative Dorset Service.

Neighbourhood Plan: The Town Council continues to work 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. The past year has seen work on the draft intentions, which went out for public consultation over the summer, and which are now being worked up into policies. There will be further consultation later this year.

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. This year one of the Orchard Group's founding members, Jill Lloyd, retired as the Chair of the Group.

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.

Planning: The Town Council is a consultee for planning applications. Over the past year, 96 applications were reported to its Planning Committee and comments passed to West Dorset District Council. The Town Council was involved in the Vearse Farm Master Plan Working Group and will be participating in the new St Michael's Trading Estate Community Group. Members of the Committee also attended and spoke at meetings of the District Council's Planning Committee, when Bridport items were considered.

Play Areas: The Town Council maintains a number of play areas, including the fully accessible West Bay Play Area. The Town Council participates in a Steering Group looking at the options for the Skate Park. It also undertook a detailed consultation exercise on all its play areas, which it will be taking forward in the next year.

Riverside Gardens: The Town Council continues to maintain the Gardens and will be asked to consider the proposed new cycle path.

Salt House: This venue continues to be well used. 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 21 members of staff (one post is vacant), who are listed overleaf.

The Town Council is a Living Wage Council (Living Wage Foundation), receives an annual review of staffing at its Finance and General Purposes Committee and is currently undertaking a job evaluation exercise of all its posts.

Tourist Information Centre: As from January 2017, the Town Council took over the management of the TIC, from the District Council. 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. The TIC is very popular and visitor numbers are very high. This year saw the TIC using its online booking system to sell tickets for a number of

events, including the Literary Festival and it continues to look at opportunities to offer increased services to the town.

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 bookings taken through the Tourist Information Centre.

External Funding: The Town Council relies on partnership funding for many of its projects and it is now looking at projects to be taken forward for Section 106 funding. It has also received its first instalment of Community Infrastructure Levy.

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 the delivery of the priority projects.

Youth and Community Centre: The Town Council helped to establish the new Charitable Trust, which has taken 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. The Centre continues to be very well used.

The Weather: The Town Council is now part of the West Dorset District Council Emergency Planning arrangements. It has also worked to finalise its Flood Plan. Just this month, the outside team responded to the severe weather and heavy snow by clearing and gritting a number of key access routes around the town. In addition, the Town Council provides and fills a number of grit bins around 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 West Bay Days. The Town Council supports the Coastal Community Team (CCT), which as stated earlier, is helping to bring funding and new projects into West Bay. The Town Council works closely with the Harbour Master on events in West Bay. The Town Council has also agreed a project to provide public wifi in West Bay later this year.

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.

5 March 2018

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 David Dixon
Administrative Officer/Mayor's Secretary Linda Bullock
Clerical Officer Claire Peters-Way
Clerical Assistant Steven Yarde

Tourist Information Centre

Tourist Information Centre Manager Terri Foxwell
Tourist Information Centre Deputy Manager Rebecca Jones
Tourist Information Assistant Millie Webber-Cox
Tourist Information Assistant Jill Beed
Tourist Information Assistant Abigail Sparks
Town Hall Cleaner/Caretaker Darryl Hills

Ground and Caretaking Staff

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