

BLAP Parish Liaison Group – Virtual meeting held on Wednesday 29th September 2021 at 4.00pm

Present:

Brian Wilson	BLAP and meeting Chair
Cllr Graham Styles	Bothenhampton & Walditch Parish Council
Cllr Dave Rickard	Bridport Town Council
Will Austin	Bridport Town Council (Clerk)
Cllr Martin Sayers	Charmouth Parish Council
Cllr Hilary Joyce	Char Valley Parish Council
Cllr Clare Mahaddie	Char Valley Parish Council
Cllr George Dunn	Chideock Parish Council
Cllr Geoff Fry	Puncknowle & Swyre Parish Council

Also present: Claire Peters-Way (Bridport Town Council).

1. INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received Cllr John Firrell (Litton Cheney Parish Council), Cllr Pelham Allen (Symondsburry Parish Council) and Marilyn Stone (Symondsburry Parish Council Clerk).

3. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on 23rd June 2021 were agreed as correct, proposer Geoff Fry and seconder Hilary Joyce.

4. BLAP REVIEW AND UPDATES INCLUDING

Summary of BLAP members' survey responses

A summary note was circulated to members before the meeting and the Chair thanked those who had responded to the survey. Many positive comments were received. These included the BLAP bulletin and Parish Liaison meetings which were both seen as very useful. It was also noted that BLAP's objectives were valued by members. Some suggestions for improvement are being looked at by the Management Team. These include the BLAP Protocol (its governance document) which is in need of a substantial update. The role of the Steering Group needs clarifying given changes that have taken place since BLAP was originally set up.

Martin Sayers noted some duplication between the Steering Group and Parish Liaison group as both meetings receive updates from Parish Councils. Hilary Joyce asked about the structure of the Steering Group and which organisations are members. The Chair gave a brief overview of the structure of BLAP and its groups. It was noted that members of the Steering Group include all the Parish Councils in the BLAP area, plus representatives from the voluntary and community sector. The Steering Group's remit includes electing the Chair and Vice Chair of BLAP, establishing Working Groups and taking decisions about how BLAP is run. The three current Working Groups report back to the Steering Group. Will Austin reminded members that BLAP was one of four Local Area Partnership's originally set up by WDDC, primarily to bring together non-statutory organisations, though the picture has moved on since.

It was noted that each Parish Council has the right to a vote at Steering Group meetings. The Chair reiterated that any BLAP member could attend these meetings, but only certain members have voting rights.

Action: Further information about BLAP to be circulated to members with the minutes.

BLAP bulletin

The Chair reminded members that information on upcoming events within their parish can be added into the fortnightly BLAP bulletin. This could prove a useful publicity channel. It can be

done by emailing Claire Peters-Way.

BLAP Management Team representative

The Chair outlined the work of the BLAP Management Team and explained that a Parish Council representative would be very welcome to join the team. It would be good to have parishes, outside Bridport, represented on this team. The Management Team meets roughly every 6 weeks and – amongst other things – considers issues raised by BLAP groups, progresses BLAP developmental activity and responds to relevant consultations.

Action: Claire Peters-Way to circulate information to all members inviting anyone interested in joining the Management Team or wishing to find out more to make contact.

Funding sources

The Chair noted that the partnership is managed by volunteers. However, there is a financial cost to the running of BLAP. This includes administration and support time from Bridport Town Council, the cost of meeting room hire and events. BLAP was previously funded by West Dorset District Council and Bridport Town Council. Dorset Council continued that funding until the end of last financial year in March 2021. Bridport Town Council made good the gap and is currently the sole funder. The Management Team has searched for replacement funding, but without success: most grants are targeted towards projects and not organisation running costs. The Chair wished to explore whether Parish Councils would be willing to contribute, preferably from April 2022.

Dave Rickard noted that Parish and Town Councils are able to raise money through the precept.

Members asked what the running costs are and how much parishes would need to contribute. The Chair clarified the overall budget for 2021/22 as £9,500 and said there was not a fixed sum in mind at this stage of the discussion. Members asked whether all members of BLAP would be asked for a contribution. The Chair reiterated that Parish Councils can raise money through their precept, whereas voluntary/community sector organisations tend to be funded by donations or grants so there was no plan to ask them.

It was agreed that some figures suggesting contribution levels should be circulated, so Parish Councils could consider them. These could be based on the number of council tax paying households in each area. Dave Rickard noted that BLAP was a benefit to the areas it covers and not just Bridport. Will Austin added that BLAP had helped to achieve several projects, including instigating the Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan, LSI project and Coastal Communities Team.

Action: A proposal, with figures, to be circulated to Parish Councils, asking them to consider contributing towards BLAP running costs and to reply by Christmas.

Sarah Williams reported that the Parish Liaison group was first set up when WDDC were in the initial stages of asset transfers. It was felt those discussions were taking place with Town Councils but not Parish Councils. As a result, the Parish Liaison group helped discussions develop between the Parish Councils and WDDC. This topic may soon be back on the Dorset Council agenda.

5. PROPOSAL FOR DORSET COUNCIL ON BETTER COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair reported that since the last meeting, he had met with Will Austin, Hilary Joyce, John Firrell and Sal Robinson to clarify the main communication issues for Parish Councils. As a result, it was felt that a letter could usefully be sent to Dorset Council highlighting the issues and suggesting ways they could be resolved. The Chair asked members for comments on the draft letter and, in particular, its suggestions.

Members agreed that the tone of the letter was good and reflected the experiences that Town and Parish Councils are having. Sarah Williams confirmed that the flow of information to Dorset Council Ward Councillors, enabling them to liaise with Parish Councils, could be patchy.

Dave Rickard emphasised the need for better communication from Dorset Council, noting that Dorset Council previously stated that the public, town and parish councillors should not call its officers directly. Rather, Dorset Council's chosen method is a member led council, whereby

officers liaise with Ward Councillors. Dave Rickard asked about sending the letter to Ward Councillors in the BLAP area.

Action: It was agreed that the letter be sent to the Portfolio holder Councillor Jill Haynes, plus the leader of Dorset Council, the Chief Executive, the Director of Place, Ward Councillors in the BLAP area and DAPTC.

6. UPDATES FROM MEMBER COUNCILS

Puncknowle and Swyre

A new bus shelter is to be erected in Swyre along the X53 bus route, and councillors have met with Dorset Council Highways Officers to enquire who owns the land. A questionnaire is to be sent to residents in West Bexington for their views on whether double yellow lines should be on the road leading to the beach. Problems with camping on the beach in the summer had been exaggerated by local newspapers. Discussions have been held about an ongoing problem with lack of ticket enforcement at the beach car park. It was noted that the car park is Dorset Council owned but run by a private agency. The new owners of Looke Farm shooting range are to close the shooting range and have put in a planning application for a small holiday camp. Councillors are to meet with the new owners to look at their proposals.

Chideock

A summer fete was held in the village. Face-to-face Parish Council meetings were resumed in the summer and are being held in the village hall. Ongoing issues concerning the A35 include pollution and traffic congestion. Dorset Council ward member Councillor Simon Christopher facilitated a meeting with the Parish Council and National Highways (formally Highways England). The NH area rep has since met parish councillors to walk round the village and look at concerns. They are due to visit again with a road engineer. Parish Councillors have contacted Chris Loder MP, seeking a meeting, but have not received a response. Progress is being made with the proposed cycle and footpath from Chideock to Bridport. The Parish Council asked about joining the Foundry Lea Working Group to raise concerns about A35 construction traffic and added pressure on the road.

Will Austin reported that he had received the request from the Chideock Parish Council Clerk. It was noted that working group discussions were focussed around on-site (not off-site) issues and that National Highways were not members, even though they are responsible for delivering the new A35 roundabout.

Char Valley

Parish Councillors are currently working on their proposals for the Community Governance Review. There were ongoing discussions with Charmouth Parish Council who have asked about several boundary changes. It was felt that if parts of the Stonebarrow area were moved into Charmouth parish then the Stanton St Gabriel parish would no longer be viable. A report on the River Char project has been finalised and adopted by the Parish Council. There will be a competition to choose the front cover photo. The survey helped to indicate areas of the river that need action, including pollution from farms and septic tanks. An action plan is to be prepared.

Residents have complained about ongoing problems with camping, with one bell tent arriving in April and still in situ. Councillors have asked Dorset Council about their policy on camping. The Parish Council is finding it hard to arrange a meeting with Chris Loder MP. Dorset Council recently built a new wooden bridge over the stream and this was subsequently vandalised. Dorset Council have now mended the bridge with the hope it will not be taken apart again. Councillors have received a complaint from a resident about the parish noticeboard.

Bothenhampton and Walditch

A Dorset Council waste vehicle accidentally demolished one of the newly installed dog bins. Residents raised concerns with regards to a van which was parked at the side of the road for several months. This has now moved. Face-to-face Parish Council meetings have restarted at the village hall. There has been an increase in planning applications. A letter was sent to Dorset Council in July highlighting the issues surrounding the development of Homestead Farm and what lessons could be learnt to avoid a similar situation happening again. The Parish Council wrote to National Highways in July to pursue a 20mph speed limit through Bothenhampton. The

volunteer footpath officer has continued clearing a number of paths over the summer. Repairs to the wall in Main Street have been completed to a good standard by Dorset Council. The Hyde at Walditch is to plant twenty specimen trees and several hundred other trees on their land with public access to the woodland. A footpath is to be created on The Hyde side of the lane. Parish Councillors are currently working on a submission to the Community Governance Review.

Charmouth

The Parish Council has restarted holding face-to-face meetings. The Parish Council had asked National Highways for a 20mph speed limit through the village, but this has subsequently been abandoned due to lack of discussions with the agency. A flashing speed limit sign has now been installed. Dorset Council's parking team visited the area and issued some parking fines. The Parish Council are working on a response to the Community Governance Review and are awaiting a formal response from Char Valley Parish Council about some properties which lie on the parish boundary. A large number of crocus bulbs have been donated by the Rotary Club and trees have been donated from the Woodland Trust.

Bridport

Bridport Town Council's proposals to the Community Governance Review can be viewed online. Town Council's meetings are being held in a hybrid format with decisions being dealt with under delegated powers. A 20mph speed limit in Bridport and a new cycle/walking route from Foundry Lea (formally Vearse Farm) to Bridport are being looked at by the Access and Movement Study. This is being led by the Climate Action Sub Committee. Bob Gillis, who was Bridport Town Clerk from 2007-2018, has sadly passed away. The Mayor of Bridport's Civic Day was a success and was a chance to show other town mayors and leaders in Dorset how Bridport was working on its Climate Change declaration.

Dorset Council

Dorset Council is developing its response to the Government's Bus Back Better strategy. Dorset Council councillors were invited to a presentation on the findings and what could be implemented. This includes earlier and later buses, easier ticketing between bus companies, a youth discount and responsive transport to outlying villages. One councillor from each Parish and Town Council is to be invited to a presentation by Dorset Council on these proposals. Dorset Council's planning portal is in the final stages of merging the former six district council portals. Year 6 secondary school registrations close at the end of October. Artsreach events are taking place across west Dorset. Digital Dorset's Festival of the Future is to be held in early October.

7. ISSUES TO TAKE FORWARD

ACTIONS:

- An invitation to be circulated to members seeking a representative for the BLAP Management Team.
- Further information about BLAP and its structure to be circulated to members.
- The request for a future BLAP funding contribution to be sent to members, with some cost figures.
- The letter to Dorset Council about improving communication with Parish Councils to be sent to key Dorset Council Councillors and officers, as well as DAPTC.

8. NEXT MEETING

Options for a speaker included the South West Regional organised crime unit on fraud prevention and Dorset Council about their Bus Service Improvement Plan. Members were asked to put forward suggestions for future speakers at any time.

The next meeting will be held on either Wednesday 10th or 17th November at 4pm, with the format to be decided.

The meeting closed at 6.03pm.