

CHIDEOCK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at Chideock Village Hall on Tuesday 27 February 2024 at 10am.

Present: Cllr George Dunn, Cllr Anna Dunn, Cllr Vanessa McAra, Cllr Mick Downes, Cllr Caroline Parkins.

In attendance: The Clerk, Cllr Simon Christopher, PCSO Bishop and 3 members of the public.

The Parish Council meeting commenced at 10.00.

3041 Apologies.

Cllr Hunt sent his apologies which were accepted.

3042 Grants of Dispensations.

None received.

3043 Declarations of Defined Pecuniary Interests.

None made.

3044 Minutes.

a) **RESOLVED** to accept and sign, as a true record, the minutes of the Parish Council meeting of 30 January 2024.

Proposed by Cllr Downes, seconded by Cllr Parkins, carried unanimously.

b) **RESOLVED** to make retrospective corrections to the minutes for the meetings held on 27 June 2023, 25 July 2023, 26 September 2023, and 31 October 2023.

Proposed by Cllr Parkins, seconded by Cllr McAra, carried unanimously.

The required changes are appended to these minutes.

N.B. This was deferred at the January meeting as only 3 councillors were present.

3045 Dorset Ward Councillor and Police Reports.

a) PCSO Bishop.

PCSO Bishop said that there have been several thefts from cars at beauty spots such as Langdon Woods. He said that vigilance is required and that visitors should, if possible, be warned to not leave any valuable in their vehicle.

There have been reports from Symondsburry parish of off-roading on Shutes Lane. He asked that anyone witnessing this type of activity should, if possible, record or photograph the registration numbers and report the incident to the police. Cllr Downes said that the police should be stopping groups of motorcyclists, often with illegally small registration plates, as they pass through Bridport.

b) Cllr Simon Christopher's report was deferred as he was not yet present.:

Standing Orders were suspended for the following item.

3046 Democratic Period.

Mr Richard Benjamin suggested that the police should periodically visit areas such as Langdon Woods in a patrol car as a deterrent.

He thanked the Clerk for sending him the response from RoSPA about the safety of the ground level dug in trampoline and said that if that information had been supplied when he first asked, he would not have need to pursue the issue. He said that he would not take it any further.

A member of the public, representing the Winniford River Action Group, requested that the Motion With Notice be reworded to be a request for an update regarding repair of the sewage pipe.

Standing Orders were resumed.

3047 Reports / Updates by the Clerk and Councillors.

At Cllr McAra's request the Clerk explained that the pre-election period does not affect the work of the Parish Council. The clerk then explained the nomination process for electors wishing to stand for election to Chideock Parish Council. She said that as far as she knows only 1 of the current councillors intends to stand for election and warned of the danger of an inquorate council if only 2 are nominated.

Item 1 – Parish Liaison Meeting. The Clerk said that the presentation by the Dorset Flood Team manager was excellent. He highlighted the issues faced by the team in dealing with the causes of flood incidents. Whilst there are flood issues in the upper part of Sea Hill Lane there are areas in the Dorset Council area with far worse issues. Cllr George Dunn agreed and said that land ownership issues and land owner responsibilities can also cause problems for the Flood Management Team.

3048 A35 Matters.

Items 2 and 3 on the Actions & Information List were **NOTED**.

Cllr Downes said that there are 3 more drain covers which are sinking. He has been told by Connect Balfour Beatty that the one reported last month is "in the programme".

The Clerk has followed up on the request for agreement to the notes at the last meeting with National Highways but has had no response.

Cllr McAra said that the notes from the 30 November Air Quality meeting with Dorset Council have been sent to Dorset Council. The Clerk said she will request that the meeting promised for February is arranged as soon as possible.

Cllr Downes said that he thinks that the government has changed which type of PM should be monitored – Clerk to check.

Both Cllr McAra and Cllr George Dunn said that they are willing to carry on in the group when they cease to be councillors at the elections on 2 May 2024.

Cllr McAra said that the November meeting was very helpful and that it is essential to maintain continuity on both Air Quality and A35 Trunk Road issues. She said that an update is needed from National Highways on the proposals for village "gateways", Average speed cameras and the current works on Chideock Hill. The Clerk will write to Jonny Hill, the current National Highways person in charge of the A35 in Dorset and Devon.

It was noted that, after initial enthusiasm, the A35 Communities Group meetings appear to have been abandoned. Cllr George Dunn said that he has chased up on this – in his view most participants are enthusiastic but one of the "leaders" does not want to proceed without National Highways participation.

Cllr Christopher arrived during the previous item.

3049 Dorset Ward Councillor and Police Reports – continued.

Cllr Christopher spoke as follows: -

- Surface water flooding issues – please keep him informed of further incidents.
- Chris Loder MP is meeting Dorset council on Friday 1 March and is attending the Broadwindsor Grouped Parish Annual Parish Meeting in the evening.

Cllr McAra said that she objects to Chris Loder taking credit for the slight reduction on NO2 levels on Chideock Hill following the introduction of the 30-mph limit. She said that she came onto the Parish Council in 2016 to try to do something to improve the impact of the A35 on the Chideock community. She also raised the public health issue of ambulances arriving late or not at all, potentially putting lives at risk. The South Western Ambulance Service covers a vast area and appears to focus on urban areas. In her opinion the issues are down to poor organisation and use of resources rather than money.

Cllr Christopher agreed and said that there are also issues with dentists, pharmacists, and paramedics.

Cllr Anna Dunn said that there have been problems with the renewal of the 100-Club licence ever since she took over running the draw. Dorset Council has been informed of the change but is still sending the e-mails to the previous organiser.

Cllr Christopher again said that issues should be reported to him by e-mail, and he will contact the relevant Dorset councillors / officers.

Cllr Downes said that there are national issues with ambulance services. He also said that the NHS 111 call centres are not staffed by medical professionals and that calls are prioritised according to preset criteria.

Cllr McAra said the Dorset County Council (as was) would have been involved in making the decision to create the South Western Ambulance Service. Cllr Christopher suggested that she e-mails him and Chris Loder with her concerns.

Cllr George Dunn said that rural area come off 2nd best.

He thanked Cllr Christopher for his early intervention on the flood issues on upper Sea Hill Lane.

3050 River Winniford and Water Pollution Issues.

a) Dorset Council.

No updates.

b) Wessex Water.

Item 4 on the Actions and Information List was **NOTED**.

c) Winniford River Action Group.

No updates.

3051 Motions Received with Notice. None.

Cllr Downes had put forward the proposal to send a letter to West Dorset Leisure Holidays requesting them to take urgent action to make a permanent repair to the private sewage pipe which takes all foul water from the Golden Cap Holiday Park. Wessex Water has carried out a temporary repair to prevent effluent from entering the River Winniford, which had caused high levels of pollution.

After discussion it was **RESOLVED** to amend the wording to "Cllr Downes proposes that a letter be sent to West Dorset Leisure Holidays asking what action has been taken, or will be taken (with timescales), to make a permanent repair to the private sewage pipe which takes foul water from the Golden Cap Holiday Park. It is understood that a temporary repair was made by Wessex Water in August 2023 to prevent effluent entering the River Winniford, which had caused high levels of pollution.

The amendment was proposed by Cllr Parkin, seconded by Cllr McAra, carried unanimously.

The substantive motion was then **RESOLVED**.

Proposed by Cllr George Dunn, seconded by Cllr Downes, carried unanimously.

3052 Planning Matters.

a) Applications.

P/TRC/2024/00947 Northdene North - T2 London Plane - 2-3 metre (20%) prune to appropriate growth points. Crown raise up to 3 metres from ground level. T3 Common Beech - 2-3 metre (20%) prune to appropriate growth points. Crown raise up to 3 metres from ground level. T4 Lime - 2-3 metre (20%) prune to appropriate growth points. Crown raise up to 3 metres from ground level. T5 London Plane - Fell T6 Lime - Fell T7 London Plane - Fell T8 & T9 Ash - 2-3 metre (20%) prune to appropriate growth points. Crown raise up to 3 metres from ground level. G1 Leylandii - Fell

It was agreed to not support the application with the comment "Chideock Parish Council does not support the felling of sound mature trees."

b) Determinations.

None.

c) Appeals. No new appeals lodged.

d) Other Planning Matters.

- i. AONB, Lighting / Dark Skies, Dorset National Park, Conservation Areas.
Nothing to report.
- ii. Enforcement, Retrospective Planning Applications.
Nothing to report.
- iii. Other.
Nothing to report.

3053 Finances.

a) Payments.

i.	Clerk's Salary and Expenses for February	£320.19
ii.	Village Hall Hire – 27 February	£22.00
iii.	Bridport Town Council – Foss Orchard Hedge Cutting	£72.00
iv.	Bridport Town Council – Clapps Mead Mowing (2 invoices)	£1080.00
v.	Bridport Town Council – Clapps Mead ditch and sump clearing	£2988.00
vi.	S. Lee Garden Services	£252.00
vii.	Luke Bennett – Bus Shelter Cleaning	£40.00

viii. Dorset Council – Clapps Mead Tree Work £546.00
Proposed by Cllr Anna Dunn, seconded by Cllr McAra, carried unanimously.

b) Budget Monitoring Prediction to 31 March 2024.

The Budget Monitoring Prediction of a possible underspend was **NOTED**.

c) Initial Consideration of grants to external bodies at the end of March 2023.

Items 5 and 6 on the Actions & Information List were **NOTED** and discussed in more detail.

PROVISIONALLY AGREED that the following grants be made: -

Winniford River Action Group - £1,000

Chideock Village Hall - £925.

Chideock News - £300

Bridport Citizen's Advice Bureau - £400.

The total amount provisionally agreed is £2,625 which exceeds the budgeted amount of £1,835 by £790. It was **INFORMALLY AGREED** that any shortfall will be taken from the expected budget underspend and if necessary, money will be vired from the General Contingency Reserve. This will be resolved at the 26 March 2024 meeting.

N.B. The amounts quoted may change.

d) Foss Orchard Car Park.

Items 7 and 8 on the Actions & Information List were **NOTED**.

i. Electric Vehicle Charing Point Lease

RESOLVED to sign and return the Novation Agreement which substitutes SWARCO UK Ltd with SWARCO Smart Charging Ltd.

Proposed by Cllr Parkins, seconded by Cllr Anna Dunn, carried unanimously.

ii. RESOLVED to raise the cost of Foss Orchard Car Park Season tickets by 50% from 1 April 2024, such that the charges are £30 for 3 months, £60 for 6 months and £120 for 12 months.

Proposed by Cllr Anna Dunn, seconded by Cllr McAra, carried unanimously.

AGREED that the Clerk contacts Dorset Council Parking Services to inquire about replacing the current ticket machine (second-hand, installed April 2018) with another more up-to-date second-hand machine.

3054 Clapps Mead Playing Field.

a) Playing Field Update.

Items 10 to 14 on the Actions & Information List were **NOTED**.

Cllr Downes reported that there is debris partially blocking the brook following the work carried out by Bridport Lengthsmen. Clerk to report this to Bridport Town Council.

b) Friends of Clapps Mead.

Cllr Anna Dunn reminded councillors that the Classic Car Rally will take place in May and the Chideock Fete is in August. She will formally ask for permission to use Clapps Mead for these events at the March meeting.

She also asked if the Parish Council will again pay for the entertainer – this was **AGREED** in principle.

3055 Dorset Rights of Way, Dorset Highways and Flood Management.

a) Rights of Way.

Items 15 and 16 on the Actions and Information List was **NOTED**.

AGREED to send the letter endorsing Mr Maskell's letter asking National Highways for funding towards surfacing the new Bridleway running along the northern side of the A35 once at least 4 councillors have agreed the wording.

b) Dorset Highways.

It was **NOTED** that Dorset Highways are slow to act on reported problems. The Clerk will ask Cllr Christopher to investigate.

Concerns were raised that the land slippage at Carters Lane is worsening – Cllr George Dunn will draft a letter to report this to Dorset Highways.

c) Flood Management.

Items 17 to 17B on the Actions & Information List were **NOTED**.

The Clerk will ask Mrs Lyn Crisp if she has had a response from the George pub to the request to move the sandbag store from the Clock House car park to the George car park.

AGREED to send a letter to Dorset council thanking them for the work already carried out and the proposed further work to prevent flood in the upper part of Sea Hill Lane – to be drafted by Cllr Parkins.

3056 Consultations.

A corporate response to the LTP4 consultation will be submitted by the Clerk before the 3 March deadline.

3057**Date of Annual Village Meeting and Annual Council Meeting.**

The Clerk reported that the Village Hall has been booked as follows: -

- May 21st 10am for the Annual Parish Council Meeting
- May 28th 7 pm for the Annual Village Meeting.

3058 Correspondence.

There were no other items of correspondence to be brought to Councillors' notice.

3059 To confirm the date and time of the next meeting of Chideock Parish Council meeting.

The next scheduled meeting is at 10am on Tuesday 26 March 2024.

The meeting closed at **12.05 pm.**

Action	Responsible individual	Item	Notes
Next Air Quality meeting with Dorset Council	Clerk	3048	Complete.
Check if government PM details have changed	Clerk		Complete.
Walk-about to find suitable locations for pods	Cllrs	3048	Complete.
Letter to WDLH re sewage pipe	Clerk	3051	Complete.
Comment on tree work application	Clerk	3052	Complete.
Novation Agreement to SWARCO Charging Ltd	Clerk	3053 d)	Complete.
Notify car park season ticket holders of price increase	Clerk	3053 e)	Outstanding.
Ask Dorset Council about possibility of "new" parking ticket machine.	Clerk	3053 e)	Complete.
Letter to NH and Connect Balfour Beatty endorsing Mr Maskell's request for funding	Clerk	3055 a)	Complete.
Letter thanking Dorset Highways and Flood Management for acting on flood issues	Cllr Parkins	3055 c)	Outstanding.
Report debris in Clapps Mead brook to Bridport Town Council	Clerk	3054 a)	Complete.
Submit Local Transport Plan consultation response	Clerk	3056	Complete.

Retrospective Amendments Required to Minutes.

There are a number of errors in minutes from June to October 2023 which require retrospective amendment by resolution, mostly for Internal Audit reasons as they are errors in the recording of payments made.

Details of these errors can be found below.

I will manually add the amendments and present them for resolution at the next meeting. The Chair of the meeting will countersign and date the amendments and the resolution will be minuted.

1. Minutes 27 June 2023.

Minute 2944.

- a. **RESOLVED** to make the following payments:
- i. Clerk's (Steven Rose) salary and expenses for June: £342.60
 - ii. Clerk's (Sal Robinson) salary and expenses for June: £324.70
 - iii. Village Hall hire - 27th June £20.00
 - iv. Sal Robinson, BOSCH battery and charger £65.82
 - v. CPRE Subscription £36
 - vi. HRMC PAYE – £228.40 - added**

Missing payment – HRMC PAYE – £228.40, cleared by TSB on 10/7.

2. Minutes 25 July 2023

Minute 2963.

- a. **RESOLVED** to make the following payments:
- i. Clerk's salary and expenses for July £362.74
 - ii. Clerk's salary and expenses for August (cheque post-dated) ~~£324.70~~
£354.82 – see below.
 - iii. Village Hall hire - 25th July £20.00
 - iv. ~~HMRC PAYE April to June (retrospective) £228.40~~
HMRC payment was made at the June meeting.
 - v. **Ken Hussey for** Quarterly inspection of Mill Lane play area £47.50
 - iv. ~~John Bright Fencing Ltd, Cllr George Dunn – materials for~~ play area repairs £29.09.
 - v. **Luke Bennett – Bus Shelter cleaning £40**
(Invoice filed, cheque written and cleared but not minuted.)
- ~~b. **SOLVED** to make the following payments:~~
- ~~Clerk's expenses for August £12.22 –~~ **Amount included in ii) above.**

Regarding a. ii. and b. -

Cheque number 299 was cleared by TSB on 4/9, for £354.82.

BUT £324.70 + £12.22 = £336.92 not £354.82.

There is no cheque stub for the individual payments and no stub for the total of the 2 amounts.

The filed Clerk's invoice for August gives a total of £354.82 made up of £352.60 Salary, £7 Office and £5.22 for travel expense for a meeting on 8 August. The cheque stub is dated 29 August (the date payment was due) and both the invoice and stub have been countersigned by Cllr George Dunn. The minutes will be amended to show the full amount paid.

3. Minutes 26 September 2023.

Minute 2969, Co-option.

The applicant's name is PARKIN not LARKIN.

Minute 2984

- a) **RESOLVE** to make the following payments: -
- i. Clerk's salary and expenses for September £358.42
 - ii. Village Hall Hire 8 August £20.
 - iii. Village Hall Hire - 26th September £20.00
 - iv. Chideock Cemetery Maintenance £700
 - v. Changing Chairs Online Training £2.70
 - ~~vi. Clapp's Mead Playing Field ditch clearing £1,980.~~
 - ~~vii. Foss Orchard Car Park Hedge Trimming and grass cutting £60.~~
 - ~~viii. Strimming all banks to ditches; both sides of the playing fields £60~~
 - ~~ix. Dig out sump hole, strim and clear bank along road and playing field sides £450.~~
 - x. **Anna Dunn – Repayment for** Professor Bumble £155.

Items vi, vii, viii, ix are quotations not payments.

Item x. – the cheque was made out to Cllr Anna Dunn, not Professor Bumble.

AGREED to accept the following quotation from Bridport Town Council – work to be carried out by the Lenghtsman Team: -

- i. Clapp's Mead Playing Field ditch clearing £1,980 ex. VAT.**
- ii. Foss Orchard Car Park Hedge Trimming and grass cutting £60 ex VAT.**
- iii. Strimming all banks to ditches; both sides of the playing fields £60 ex. VAT**
- iv. Dig out sump hole, strim and clear bank along road and playing field sides £450 ex VAT.**

- b) **RESOLVE** to pay any invoices received after the Agenda was circulated.
- i. **Cllr George Dunn – Clapp's Mead** ~~Field~~ equipment repairs £23.74.

- ~~e) **RESOLVE** to make the following payment:-~~
- ~~i. **HugoFox Bronze plan** £9.99.~~

The cost per month is £9.99 ex VAT, £11.99 with VAT.

I can find no trace of a cheque for this, though HugoFox shows a payment of £12 applied on 4 October.

4. Minutes 31 October 2023 – the Clerk was not present.

Minute 3003.

Finance

- The following were resolved, proposed by Cllr George Dunn and seconded by Cllr Peter Hunt-;
 - Clerk's salary and expenses for October 2023 (£360.40).
 - Village hall hire 31st September **October** 2023 {£20.00}
 - ~~Ken Hussey TBA at the point of installation but agreement in principle (£985)~~
 - Ken-Hussey **for installation of trampoline £985 AGREED in principle.**
 - DAPTC—Clerk's conference £22.50
 - Huck **s nNets for trampoline** -£5062.50 **AGREED** in principle.
 - Proposed payment for training and development budget sessions for the clerk **AGREED in principle.**

The “payments” to Ken Hussey and Huck Nets were, it appears, agreed in principle, therefore no cheques should have been drawn and signed.
The payment for training was also agreed in principle.

The explanation re purchase of the trampoline is incorrect – I will make a statement correcting it at the January meeting.

Sal Robinson
25 January 2024

Cllr Christopher's E-mailed Report – 26 February 2024.

A few notes prior to the meeting and discussion of road and flooding issues:

Reflections on the first term of Dorset Council

At the February Full Council meeting Councillor Spencer Flower, leader of Dorset Council, reflected on how much we have achieved over the last 5 years.

Dorset Council has come a long way since May 2019, when the first all-out elections took place. The Leader of Council, set out his ambition to work across the council chamber to achieve the best outcomes for the communities of Dorset.

This ethos of our cross-party working has been judged as a success and, in recognition, he was honoured to be short listed for the Local Government Information Unit's 'Council Leader of the Year 2023' award, from over 200 nominations nationally. The annual awards event took place in November 2023, when he received his certificate as one of the final 5 nominees. He valued this recognition of our focus on ambition, outcomes, and achievements.

Budget setting and savings

Budget setting can be a challenge, but the administration has enjoyed majorities of between 47 and 70 in budget votes, which many observers consider to be a ringing endorsement of our approach and ethos. One of the key reasons for this has been early member participation in reviewing and understanding budget pressures and ambitions. I give great credit to the involvement of the 2 scrutiny committees.

Dorset Council operates 2 budget cafes, which are open to all 82 members to attend, 2 scrutiny committee reviews, followed by Cabinet and then Full Council for decision. This approach has enabled strong councillor participation in budget setting not previously experienced prior to the creation of the new unitary Dorset Council.

All these savings have been reinvested into front-line services; mainly Adult Social Care, Health & Housing, and Children's Services, ensuring there have been no cuts to front-line services which are so vital in maintaining and improving social wellbeing across the communities of Dorset.

Embracing Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) has been a huge success. However, it certainly has not been an easy ride, particularly coping with the worst global pandemic in 100 years, and the future looks challenging without an uplift in central government funding. Dorset gets very little Revenue Support Grant (RSG), just £700,000 in 2024, compared to other local authorities: those largely in inner city areas get an RSG allocation ranging from £20-30 million a year. This is not fair, and I continue to lobby hard for change.

Shire county areas have been poorly funded for decades by successive governments. The Local Government sector needs a new funding formula, which applies proper weight to rurality and the aging demographic. In Dorset, we have 30% of the population who are over 65 years old and rising, compared with the national average of 19%. The burden of additional costs for social care currently falls on the local taxpayers which is unfair to the people of Dorset.

As with all councils, we must set a balanced budget. Dorset Council, having benefited from transformation savings, has been able to achieve this statutory requirement, without any cuts to front-line services, which makes us an outlier in the Southwest and compared to other unitary councils across the country.

"The day-to-day stuff..."

Dorset Council has a growing reputation for, quote... "doing the day-to-day stuff well", such as waste and recycling, potholes, highway maintenance, grass cutting and streetlights etc, coupled with a strong focus on sound financial management supported by good governance oversight, underpinned by strong and constructive working relationships between elected members and officers. Testament to this, DEFRA has recently revealed that Dorset Council is the number one unitary authority in the UK for recycling, with rates topping 59% and with just 2% of waste going to landfill. An incredible achievement.

There is an excellent track record of achievement based on bold and ambitious policy making, coupled with clear aims and objectives, which is an excellent basis for optimism as we move into the next phase of transformation: continuing this good work and putting the needs and aspirations of Dorset residents first.

One of the other key ambitions is the preparation of our first Dorset Council Local Plan. The advent of the changes included in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act will enable the Local Plan to be based on a far more strategic approach. Key changes, such as the removal of the duty to co-operate and the 5-year land supply (provided the council has an up-to-date plan), will bring many benefits ensuring that the needs and aspirations of the people of Dorset can be met.

Dorset Council has been shortlisted for **COUNCIL OF THE YEAR 2024** which by any measure is a huge endorsement for the Conservative administration at County Hall.

“Dorset Council has been shortlisted for the 2024 LGC Awards as one of five finalists from across the country for the prestigious **Council of the Year** awards. This is a huge endorsement for the Conservative administration for the incredible achievements during the first five years as a Unitary Council. This national recognition follows on from the Conservative Leader being shortlisted for **Council Leader of the Year 2023**.

This along with the recent announcement by **DEFRA** which ranked **Dorset Council as the number 1 Unitary Council** for recycling at 59% which compares with a national average of 43%.

The Armed Forces Covenant as:

“... an enduring Covenant between the people of the United Kingdom, Her Majesty’s Government and all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces and their families”.

The Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Programme is a partnership between Dorset Council, Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council, Dorset HealthCare University Foundation Trust, NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, the Office of the Police, Crime Commissioner Dorset, Bournemouth University, Wessex RFCA, Royal British Legion, SSAFA, other relevant charities, the Military Bases, businesses, communities and individuals in a pledge of support between local residents and the Armed Forces Community in Dorset.

The Armed Forces Covenant sets out the relationship between the nation, the Government, and the Armed Forces. It recognises that the whole nation has a moral obligation to members of the Armed Forces and their families, and it establishes how they should expect to be treated. It considers the Armed Forces Community to include Regular Personnel, Reservists, Veterans, families of these and the bereaved.

The Government describes it as “an enduring Covenant between the people of the United Kingdom, Her Majesty’s Government and all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown and their families”.

The whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army, and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

How we support The Armed Forces Covenant

Dorset is fortunate to have a two-year MoD Funded Programme that employs a Programme Co-ordinator who is responsible for the delivery of specific projects identified to support the Armed Forces community across the pan-Dorset area.

The overarching aim of the programme is to raise the profile of and to embed the Covenant in the day-to-day activities of all partner organisations across Dorset, ensuring that all members of the armed forces community are treated fairly and equitably.

Managing Debt

The strain of increasing debt during the rising cost of living impacts many.

Dorset Citizens Advice can talk through the options for managing debt and help get things under control.

Visit Citizen Advice via the below button to find the local office or call the Dorset Adviceline on [0800 144 8848](tel:08001448848).

Local Transport Plan Consultation.

A Reminder, Dorset Council and BCP Council are working together on options to move around Dorset safely, efficiently, and sustainably for years to come. This will be a joint plan, designed and managed by BCP and Dorset Councils using the results of a wide-reaching engagement survey. The Councils are listening to valuable feedback and not making any big decisions at this stage.

This joint plan will set out how transport is delivered to meet some of the demanding challenges facing the area, covering all types of transport, as well as road safety and maintenance. The new plan is needed to ensure we can travel safely and easily, whilst reducing carbon emissions and protecting the landscape that makes BCP and Dorset so special. All this must be done while maintaining economic growth and improving transport choices, accessibility, and experiences for all.

Since the last Local Transport Plan was produced in 2011, a lot has changed. Now is the chance to update our plans to ensure that our transport system meets the expectations of everyone and to identify the most important issues to prioritise future investment. The plan will be designed in line with the government's priorities, including the Net Zero by 2050 target.

The aim of this survey is to understand the different needs of the diverse communities who live and work in Dorset. Recent research has helped us understand the wider transport related issues and opportunities for the future. We would now like to understand your views, so our new plan works for everyone.

This survey finishes on **Sunday 3 March 2024**.

If you cannot access the survey online an alternative format is available, please email, lt@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk (Dorset Council), lt@bcpcouncil.gov.uk (BCP Council) or call Dorset Council customer services 01305 221000 for a copy. This phone number is also suitable to use for BCP residents.

Any information collected will be stored in line with GDPR regulations and the Data Protection Act. Further information on our privacy notice can be found at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/your-council/about-your-council/data-protection/dorset-council-privacy-notice

We are now halfway through the agricultural transition period in England and, as per the plan, basic payments are being progressively removed and environmentally focussed payments are being introduced.

This is alongside efforts to boost farm productivity to help improve their viability without direct support. The latest round of the Improving Farm Productivity grant has just opened and now funds solar PV installations alongside automation technology.

Developers and landowners can now progress Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) projects and credit purchases with more certainty as the government has announced the requirement's new implementation date in England.

Apply for an Improving Farm Productivity grant

The second round of the Improving Farm Productivity grant is open for applications. The grant will now cover half the cost of certain robotic and automated equipment, increased from 40% in the last round. This year the scheme is also offering funding at a 25% rate for the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems on farm building rooftops and over irrigation reservoirs.

The grant is part of the Farming Investment Fund and is open to farmers, growers, and related contractors. For robotic and automated equipment, the minimum grant available is £25,000 and the maximum grant available is £500,000. For solar equipment, the minimum grant available is £15,000 and the maximum grant available is £100,000.

Applicants can apply for robotics and solar equipment, but the combined grant amount cannot exceed £500,000.

There is a two-step application process. Applicants must first go through the online checker before 21 March 2024.

Those invited to make a full application then have until 30 June 2025 to do so.

The importance of rural shops

Of the 49,399 convenience stores in the UK, more than a third (36%) are rural and half of those are the only business in the local area. The 2024 Rural Shop Report from the Association of Convenience Stores highlights how these rural shops play a key role in isolated rural communities. For example, 83% of independent rural retailers engaged in some form of community activity in the past year. Many also offer key services such as bill payment services (72%), free-to-use cash machines (49%) and community notice boards (48%). Savills forthcoming Spotlight on Social Value in the rural sector will explore the importance of community and social value in generating sustainable economic growth.

Best regards

Simon

Councillor Simon Christopher
The Dorset Councillor for the Marshwood Vale Ward
077988 33715