

DAPTC Eastern Area Committee meeting held on Tuesday 16th June by Zoom starting at 7.30pm

The committee was chaired by Vice-Chairman Terry Cordery (Ferndown Town Council) following the resignation of Cllr Penny Yeo due to health issues

Cllr K D Johnson paid tribute to the late Cllr Alan Thacker, Chairman of DAPTC who died suddenly in March and who was present at the previous meeting of the committee in January. Cllr Johnson attended Cllr Thacker's funeral attendance at which was severely affected by the spread of the coronavirus in mid-March.

The election of a new Chairman of the committee was discussed and it was decided to postpone the election until the committee is able to meet in person. The Chief Executive had explained that this is in line with the decision taken by the Executive to postpone the election of a new Chairman for the Association. In response to a concern about under-representation of the committee at the Executive, it was agreed that Cllr Janet Wallace (Holt Parish Council) would act as representative in the interim.

The Chief Executive reported on his activities for the Association. He started his role as Chief Executive on 1st April during lockdown and has been working from home. Despite the difficulties of the present situation, he has had meetings with the Dorset Council Chief Executive, Matt Prosser and with John Sellgren Executive Director of Place. He has also taken part in meetings with NALC and other County Chief Executives around the country. He has responded to NALC's survey into the financial impact of the coronavirus on member Councils' finances having surveyed Councils around Dorset. This was to enable NALC to report to the Government as part of its campaign to obtain financial support for the sector. Neil, Debbie and Lisa have also been examining possible training methods including online training for both Clerks and Councillors. There is great concern about the loss of training income.

Dorset Cllr Tony Alford, Portfolio Holder for Customer, Community and Regulatory Services, attended the meeting and when invited to speak, very briefly outlined the financial position of Dorset Council. It is estimated that the Council will have a deficit of £39m after using all available reserves. Cllr Alford also highlighted the briefings being distributed. Cllr Alford was thanked for attending the meeting and also for the briefings and regular updates received from Dorset Council.

There was a report from the Executive committee including the fact that it has met by Zoom and that the Strategy group has met and is preparing a draft revised Constitution which will be circulated to all member Councils for comment shortly, the final version to be presented to the AGM for approval.

The NALC rep reported that a pilot meeting of the National Assembly had been held by Zoom that afternoon and that a written report has been prepared for circulation. The main item of the meeting had been an update from the County Associations (CALCs). Many were concerned about financial problems experienced by member Councils and behaviour of visitors to more popular areas.

Members reported issues and activities as follows:-

Colehill Parish Council: A subcommittee has been formed to disseminate information about support available during the crisis. Posters have been displayed with phone numbers for residents needing help with shopping and other essential activities. Emergency powers have been delegated to the Clerk. Work has been carried out on a play area which it is hoped will be completed before the play area is re-opened as part of lockdown easing. More bus shelters are on order, funded by CiL money. The Council has a number of vacancies due to resignations .

Knowlton Parish Council: It was reported that there are delays in receipt of planning applications and the Council then has difficulty meeting Dorset Council's deadline for comments.

Wimborne Town Council: The Council is holding meetings by Zoom. It has re-opened some facilities such as the tennis courts and skate park. The Council is supporting the Food Bank. There is one vacancy for a Councillor.

Verwood Town Council: Travellers established themselves on ground adjacent to the Scout Hut but thanks to prompt action by the Clerk, moved in about 24 hours. There is a third application for a new Lidl store and 300 comments have been submitted in response. The Council has held some meetings by Zoom and will resume all committee meetings by Zoom in July. One Councillor has resigned, causing a casual vacancy. A comprehensive support scheme was established as the lockdown started by two Councillors and has been working very well. The Town Council has provided financial support.

Corfe Mullen Town Council: A support scheme similar to that in Verwood has been established. The Clerk has retired after 18 years' service and her replacement has just started. A play area has been refurbished. The Council hopes to re-open the Village Hall in September.

Sturminster Marshall Parish Council: The Council has experienced the same problem reported by Knowlton Parish Council about planning applications. The Council has also delivered leaflets about support available during the crisis and provided a grant to the scheme in operation. Meetings are being held by Zoom and the public has been attending. This is working very well. The Village Hall has been granted 10K to keep it going. Some impromptu entertainment was being provided to residents near the Hall by a local person and was generally well received. However, it caused distress to a local resident with mental health issues. The entertainment is now being streamed.

Pamphill and Shapwick Parish Council: One meeting has been held by Zoom. The Council has awarded a grant so that the War Memorial can be repaired after being damaged by travellers last year. It is hoped the work will be completed by November so that a rededication can be held on Remembrance Sunday.

Alderholt: There has been a lot of change to the Council. Three Councillors resigned at once, the Council has regrouped and is now more harmonious and is advertising for a new Clerk as the Clerk resigned due to the upheaval.

West Moors Town Council: A volunteer support scheme has been set up led by the Churches. There was a leaflet drop and the scheme attracted more volunteers than it needed.

West Parley Parish Council: The Council has made a grant to the Village Hall due to its inability to operate during the crisis. The Council has two vacancies. The Clerk has recently completed her CiLCA qualification. The Sports Club handed the building it had leased from the Council back at the end of the lease. The building is in a poor condition and will require about 250K – 300K to repair.

Holt Parish Council: Meetings are being held by Webex. There has been a problem with fly-tipping in the parish. Items such as fridges have been dumped. There is good support in the community during the crisis including local shops delivering shopping to those unable to go out. The community spirit is very good.

Ferndown Town Council: A new Clerk has been appointed and should start in September. The Council has not had a Clerk for about eighteen months. A new play area has been completed and local children are keen but not able to use it due to corona virus restrictions. The Barrington Centre is a huge financial problem for the Town Council. A support network has been established to help during the crisis.

Thanks were given to Cllr Alford and Neil Wedge, Chief Executive for all their help and participation in the meeting.

The next meeting will be held in about six weeks, date to be arranged.