

**West Dorset Partnership
23 April 2018**

Notes of the West Dorset Partnership meeting held on 23 April 2018 at South Walks House, Dorchester.

Present:

Organisation	Name
Chairman	Paul Overall
Vice Chairman	David Aldwinckle
Beaminster & Villages LAP	Joanna Keats
Bridport Local Area Partnership	Maureen Jackson
Dorchester Community Forum	Emma Scott
LymeForward	Cllr Cheryl Reynolds
BAVLAP and Marshwood and BW Group CLTs	Cllr Jacqui Sewell Joanna Keats
Dorset Association of Town and Parish Councils	Cllr Alan Thacker
Churches Together in Dorset	Tom Murphy
West Dorset District Council/Dorset Councils Partnership	Cllr Anthony Alford (WDDC), Cllr Ian Gardner (WDDC), Jane Nicklen (Community Planning & Development Manager), Kathy Boston-Mammah (Community Development Team Leader) and Stephen Hill (Strategic Director, DCP)

Apologies:

Organisation	Name
Dorset Councils Partnership	Hilary Jordan, DCP
Public Health Dorset	Vicky Abbott
LymeForward	Wendy Davies
Dorset Community Action	Alex Picot
Dorset Local Nature Partnership	Maria Clarke

1. Introduction and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all parties present to the meeting and each attendee introduced themselves.

2. Election of Vice-chairman

David Aldwinckle, the current Vice Chair, offered to stand again for the post. There were no other candidates. He was proposed by Councillor Alan Thacker, seconded by Maureen Jackson with all members in favour of his re-election, so he was duly re-elected.

3. Notes of the last meeting.

Maureen Jackson noted that care needed to be taken on the emphasis of wording within the minutes.

Joanna Keats referred to page 4 of the notes of the last meeting and noted that the session held in Sherborne on 7 February had been a community focus meeting rather than a seminar on the General Data Protection Regulation as stated in the notes.

The notes of the previous meeting on 22 January 2018 were agreed subject to the amendment detailed above.

4. LGR update and discussion

Stephen Hill provided an update in respect of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It was noted that Dorset was to be served by two new unitary authorities – one to cover Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and one to cover the rest of the Dorset area. This update was in respect of the rural Dorset area which currently consisted of Dorset County Council (excluding Christchurch), East Dorset, North Dorset, Purbeck, West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland.

The Structural Change Order had been placed before Parliament and was now going through the process. Once the Structural Change Order was signed, there would be a period of 14 days in order to arrange a meeting of the Shadow Council which would comprise of every elected councillor in the councils covered by the area. The first meeting would determine the membership of the Shadow Executive Committee.

In the meantime, the Dorset Area Joint Committee continued to meet, with agendas and minutes available publicly. A number of task and finish groups had been established, some of which were currently paused. It was noted that the role of the joint committee would cease once the Shadow Council and Executive Committee were in place.

A Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) Programme Team of officers had been established, led by Keith Cheeseman (LGR Programme Director). The remit of the team, provided by the joint committee, was to bring together an organisation that was safe and legal on 1 April 2019.

All presented discussed the issues arising and the following points were raised:

- In respect of ward boundaries for the unitary authority, initial discussion had been held with the Boundary Commission and draft proposals put forward. Consultation was currently underway with councillors. There would be 82 seats on the new council;
- The importance of communications in this area was recognised;
- A number of task and finish groups had been established with a couple of the groups currently paused including the groups looking at engagement with community partners and area based decision making. These groups would be restarted in the summer once the Shadow Executive had been established and had provided them with their remit;
- Those present considered what type of model might be used by the new authority for community partnerships and it was hoped that there would be a

mechanism for continued input. There was a hope that the model currently used in West Dorset could be extended for use in the new council;

- There was a discussion with regard to the potential devolution of services to town and parish councils and work being undertaken in West Dorset was noted. However, it was recognised that the Shadow Executive would decide on its priorities once established;
- Reference was made to the model used by Wiltshire Council which included area committees and how community partnerships could feed into this;
- In response, Stephen Hill highlighted the need to distinguish between how internal decisions would be taken (e.g. planning or licensing decisions) and how external decisions would be taken (e.g. use of area committees). The currently paused task and finish groups looking at engagement with community partners and area based decision making could potentially be merged and look at the issues around external decision making. This could include learning from the experiences in Wiltshire;
- Staff from the existing councils would be TUPE transferred to the new unitary council on 1 April 2019. It would be for the new council to undertake staff reorganisation. It was important for staff to be kept informed but also key that staff continued to focus on providing services within the existing councils;
- Elections for the new unitary councillors would take place in May 2019. Existing councillors would continue until then;
- The Local Government Resource Centre (a private company) had been commissioned by West Dorset District Council to work with the district council and town councils to discuss potential services that could be devolved. Discussions to date had also involved some of the local area partnerships;
- There was a need to acknowledge the amount of work that was already going on at the local level;
- Some parishes had expressed concern that they did not have either the people or money available to take on services and a question was raised as to whether instead of taking on services, parishes could, in some cases, put in money for services or facilities run elsewhere? Bridport LAP noted that they were assisting parishes to have these conversations;
- The system for community planning in West Dorset was felt to be good and it was noted that it could be more difficult for community partnerships to raise issues within a unitary council;
- Once the Shadow Executive was in place, the district council would be more constrained by what it could do. Proposals would need to be considered by the Shadow Executive as to whether something being proposed by the district council was to the detriment of the new unitary council;
- Stephen Hill set out the arrangements to establish a Change Authority body and the role of the body. Matters that could have an impact on the new unitary authority would be referred to the Change Authority who could then make recommendations to the sovereign councils. Any decisions taken by the sovereign councils needed to be taken for the benefit of all communities, and there was a duty to spend public money wisely;
- Jane Nicklen noted that there was a programme for grants in the current financial year but did not know what would be in place from 1 April 2019 as this would be determined by the Budget of the new unitary authority. She noted that initial discussions had been held with some core funded organisations and that the issue had been raised with the LGR Programme Manager. Those present noted the valuable role of these organisations;

- A concern was raised that some of the task and finish groups would not be re-started until the summer, as community organisations were keen to be involved and be part of the conversation;
- In response to a comment raised about the amount of work to be done, a point was made that there was a need for a proactive approach and a recognition of the work that was already being undertaken within the community;
- A question was raised as to whether there would be a role for the West Dorset Partnership moving forward?

5. LAP matters and partner updates

Churches together in Dorset

Tom Murphy reported that a good meeting had been held with regard to issues around food banks and homelessness, to which Oliver Letwin MP had attended. In addition, Citizens Advice had been present.

Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils

Alan Thacker noted that there was an important support role for the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils moving forward.

WDDC Planning Portfolio Holder

Councillor Ian Gardner observed that how planning decisions were taken in future would be a matter for determination by the new unitary authority.

Magna Housing Association

David Aldwinckle reported that Magna was developing 200 homes a year with an increased emphasis on rented properties as opposed to shared ownership. A current project was with regard to under occupation and it was noted that Magna were now using fixed term tenancies which would assist with this issue.

Beaminster and Villages Local Area Partnership

Joanna Keats provided an overview of current areas of work which included rural transport and working with people with dementia. As a general point, she noted that there was a level of concern about taking on services that were volunteered out.

Bridport Local Area Partnership

Reference was made to discussions underway to identify suitable premises for a "Cupboard Love Plus" facility to support the foodbank. A discussion was also held in respect of the development of land at Flood Lane.

Dorchester Community Forum

Emma Scott provided an overview of areas being covered by the Dorchester Community Forum which included the creation of an access guide to attract disabled visitors to Dorchester, lobbying Network Rail and South Western Railway about access to the station, lobbying Dorset County Council to install drop kerbs and working with the Thomas Hardy School in conjunction with Mind to support pupils with attendance issues and additional support to Sixth Formers. In addition a number of events were planned, including a Health and Wellbeing event.

Joanna Keats reported that an approach had been made about providing a community Launderette in Dorchester.

Lyme Regis

An information report had been provided and circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

Sherborne

It was noted that the Sherborne Local Area Partnership had been dissolved in June 2017. Dorset Community Action was undertaking a community focus project to revisit the priorities of the former local area partnership and a further meeting was to be held in June with regard to community values.

6. Date and theme of next meeting.

September 2018 – date to be confirmed. Theme – Health and Wellbeing.

7. Any other business

Jane Nicklen noted that as LGR progressed, there would be the need to measure the value of the West Dorset Partnership. In addition to the information provided in the annual reports it would be useful to be able to attach monetary value to activities and it was hoped to be able to work up a model in order to achieve this. The use of a case study approach was also highlighted, to profile projects with outcomes.

Jane Nicklen also reported that Democratic Services would no longer be able to provide support to the West Dorset Partnership due to LGR work demands.

A query had been raised with regard to the representation of Dorset Wildlife Trust at partnership meetings. It was noted that it was a matter for the Dorset Wildlife Trust to agree who would attend meetings.

The meeting closed at 12.14pm.

Chairman

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