

Report on DAPTC Central Area Committee Meeting held on 18 Mar 25

Councillors,

Preamble: I was disappointed that no-one else was prepared to take on this meeting given that I was already committed to a Village Hall Meeting, a meeting I attend as the elected representative of the PC. However, that disappointment was nothing compared to my concern about the discourtesy of those who ignored my calling notice. I thank Councillors Nuttall, Fitzgerald, Walker and Hutchinson for declaring previous engagements and can only assume that others have little or no interest in how our Council interacts with other similar local PC's, or influences local approaches to common matters. Given this disinterest I even considered not providing feedback, but I do consider that would have been unfair to those Councillors who did respond, and that there a number of matters that should be of concern to us all.

The Meeting: There were 9 Parishes represented at the meeting which was facilitated by DAPTC. Dorset Town Council also had a representative present, which is of interest given what followed.

A large portion of the meeting was given over to consideration of the paper I attached to my appeal for help email, the final draft of "**Future Directions for Dorset's Larger Towns and Parishes**" and in particular given that this meeting was focussed on smaller Parishes, to future relationships between larger organisations and our own. I urge Councillors to consider Headlines 14 + 16 and then to read in to the main paper as appropriate (as an aside the final version of the paper had been received that day and will be shared in due course). There is opportunity in closer cooperation, in our case with Dorchester Town Council, but also threat not least of absorption, of functions where they overlap, and ultimately of inefficient or failing PCs. To me this boils down to an equation balancing the local focus we can bring, with our lack of impact on the larger scene as we only represent a very small number of people. But, a factor is also our precept per property, which is roughly one ninth of that of Dorchester.

As a linked aside to this matter of representative mass, DAPTC are currently advising three PC's who are seeking to downgrade to Parish Meetings, being unable to maintain a PC. Neither Dorset Council nor DAPTC wishes to see this level of democracy lost.

Dorset Council has a policy to work more closely with Town and Parish Councils and I therefore volunteered our PC as one to be consulted both on response to the document and on improving relationships moving forwards.

These issues also link to a regrouping within the DAPTC network in an effort to allow discussion on "the demands and needs of our people". I suggest that we cannot pretend that we are not dependent upon relationships with neighbouring parishes and our big brother in Dorchester.

NALC The relevance of NALC to us was then discussed with DAPTC becoming increasingly concerned that they do little for us (links to question with Clerk about whether we can access their resources). Roughly 30% of our DAPTC membership fee is sent to NALC and DAPTC question the VFM (£26k) on the return, and ask themselves whether they could better utilise that funding to become the prime source of the sort of advice we should be getting from NALC. I suspect that this will be raised as AGM business.

There was then a very short discussion on the introduction of **20mph** limits, very short as none of those present expressed any interest in furthering the issue.

Next Meeting. The next meeting will be on 23rd June and I recommend that whoever is then Chair should continue to be our DAPTC representative, and represent us at that meeting.

Mark Pemberton