

COUNCIL RE-ORGANISATION

For years Bradpole Parish Council has operated independently, free of party-political bias, for the benefit of residents who had commented on their preference for this “local hands on” approach.

In July 2022 Bradpole Parish Council (est. 1894) was told by Dorset Council, supported by Bridport Town Councillors, that it was to be abolished despite the overwhelming support the Parish Council received from residents who had responded to the [Dorset Council Community Governance Review Consultation](#).

A new Council for the Bridport area will be formed in 2024 comprising of 5 wards of equal standing.

I encourage Parish residents, who wish to see the continuation of local representation in the proposed new Ward of Bradpole (5 seats), to stand as candidates for election in May 2024.

THE PAST YEAR IN BRADPOLE CIVIL PARISH

A [2021 Census Profile](#) for Bradpole Parish has recently been published and shows the civil parish population remains static, since the 2011 census, at around 2300.

Parish Councillors have been engaged in various projects within the community in the past year including:

- A new Fitness Trail comprising 6 elements, which was installed in 2022 at the Gore Cross Recreation Area, at a cost of c.£8.6k (net). This was achieved with financial contributions from SICOR Ltd, HUCK NETS, and HOWDENS Ltd., all from the Gore Cross Business Park, together with a Community Infrastructure Levy arising from a property development at Metz Farm, Bradpole.

Bradpole Parish Council thanks these contributors.

The balance of the installation cost was covered from Parish Council reserves resulting in no cost to current council tax payers.



- The ageing swings and safety surface at Pageants Close Play Area were replaced in Autumn 2022.

The cost, c.£19K (net) came from Council reserves, earmarked over the years for this purpose, and again at no cost to current council tax payers.



- A “Happy to Chat” bench was designated at Railway Gardens to encourage community interaction.



- Councillors have just entered a contract with a local business to replace the 30-year-old Railway Crossing Gate this year funded, within budget, from cash reserves accrued for this purpose over recent years.

- The Parish Council facilitated a free community event for the late Queen's Jubilee at Gore Cross Recreation Area. With the help of local children, two commemorative trees were planted in connection with the Queen's Green Canopy initiative.

Thanks go to all those community volunteers who made this event a success.

- A Book of Condolence was provided for the duration of the mourning period following the Queen's death.

- Responding to a petition from residents, supported by Councillors, safety signage was installed on Caley Way by Dorset Highways Dept.

- After the easing of COVID restrictions the Parish surgery at the Village Hall was re-established on a fortnightly basis attended by the Parish Clerk and Councillors which, together with the rental paid for the Parish Office and Council meetings, provides an important income stream for the Village Hall. In consultation with residents over recent years there is a Parish Action Plan which is [reviewed annually](#). Similarly Climate Change is an important issue with which the Parish Council engages. The 2022 Climate & Environmental Action Plan Review is available on the [Parish Website](#).

PARISH COUNCIL TAX

The parish portion is a minor part of the full Dorset Council Tax but does affect what our residents pay. We had been able to hold the Parish Council Tax portion to similar levels in recent past years. The 2023~24 budget review, undertaken against the background of inflation of around 10%, resulted in a modest increase in the parish precept for this current year. This means that the average (BAND D) parish portion of the full Dorset Council Tax has risen by £2.51 per annum to £45.54 per annum. This remains well below the national average of £78.79 per annum, and will enable the Parish Council to support current service levels together with a nationally agreed pay award for our valued Clerks. The equivalent BAND D rate for Bridport Town Council rose this year by £24.72 to £274.53 per annum which continues to be the highest level in the Dorset Council area. The intention, under Council re-organisation, is equalisation of the Council Tax across the entire new Bridport Council Area. Given that the current [Town Council Medium Term Financial Plan](#) anticipates “an unavoidable need to increase the precept in future years” it is clear that Bradpole’s residents will be adversely affected from April 2024. [2023-24 Council Tax Comparisons](#)

PLANNING

This is one of the most important roles that Councillors undertake on behalf of residents whether they be applicants or neighbours. Whilst Councillors do not have the power of decision-making their well-considered comments, as statutory consultees, can inform planning decisions by Dorset Council planners and preserve the landscape benefits of being situated within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a major concern expressed by our residents in various consultations.

In the past year the number of planning applications has fallen slightly, possibly as a result of changes to permitted development rights and /or concerns over the current economic uncertainty.

Nevertheless the Parish Council has commented on all of the applications received. [2022 BPC planning applications report](#). In the majority of these the Council had raised no objections but were able to influence the positive outcomes by employing [Neighbourhood Plan](#), and other planning policies, to improve the applications for the benefit of the Parish and its residents.

The Parish Council did object to a small number of applications as they contravened planning policies. Dorset planners refused those applications, including one which went to Appeal where the application was subsequently dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate in accord with Parish Council comments.

Whilst it was disappointing that Bradpole Post Office closed in 2022 the Parish Council was able, through the planning system, to ensure the retention of the village post box at a nearby site within the village.

During 2022 the Parish Council received £3416 from a Community Infrastructure Levy which was used for the benefit of the community, as referred to earlier, at the Gore Cross Recreation Area in accord with the Parish Plan to enhance our recreational areas.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

We are fortunate to have, within the civil parish, community groups to whom we have been able to provide some financial support. These groups enhance our environment both around Bradpole and at Pymore. Our thanks go, on behalf of our residents, to those volunteers.

PARISH COUNCILLORS

Bradpole's Team of Parish Councillors are based in the neighbourhood and having their "ears to the ground" enables them to engage in day-to-day local issues.

We were pleased, in the past year, to co-opt Cllr Sharon Morgan to our team. Cllr Morgan brings a wealth of experience and complements our existing team of Councillors.

Bradpole's Councillors attendance at full Council meetings over the past year stood at an excellent 87%.

In addition to other administration meetings, and meetings with residents, Bradpole's Councillors also represent the Civil Parish, and its residents, on several external committees.

This is all achieved without them receiving any financial allowances for their time and therefore not adding to Parish Council costs. My thanks to them for their commitment.

PARISH OFFICERS

Whilst Councillors determine the policy direction of the Parish Council this cannot be fully implemented without the work of our administration officers being our valued Clerks.

Our Clerks are often the "public face" of the Council and at times this can be a stressful role to fulfill when dealing with those difficult issues that occasionally arise.

My thanks, on behalf of Councillors, to our Clerks for their advice, support and guidance over the past year.

THE FUTURE

The current national trend is to create more parish councils and to de-merge those that are oversized.

In contrast to this trend this will be the last Bradpole Parish meeting as the Parish is set to be abolished at the end of March 2024. From April 2024 meetings of the new Council for the Bridport area, comprising a total of 20 Councillors from 5 Wards, will meet at "Mountfield" in Bridport.

Existing Parish Councillors will be seeking for arrangements to be put in place to ensure that future Bradpole Ward Committee meetings are held at the locally accessible Bradpole Village Hall, rather than at the remote "Mountfield" in the centre of Bridport Town.

We would hope that future Ward Councillors will ensure that the transparent information, currently available to residents on Bradpole's website, facebook and notice boards, will continue to be available.

I believe that these are all good reasons for Bradpole Parish residents, with a neighbourhood community interest, to stand as candidates for the Bradpole Ward election in 2024 rather than see candidates, without an understanding of Bradpole, Pymore etc, emerge from outside of the Bradpole community.

The formation of a Bradpole Ward Residents' Association/Forum/Society may facilitate this.



The Bradpole Community gets together for the 2022 Queen's Jubilee Event

Councillors intend to provide a final Bradpole Parish Council report in March 2024 to add to the archives.

Cllr C Baker Bradpole Parish Council Chair 6th April 2023