

Bradpole Parish Annual Meeting

Report to residents from the Chairman of Bradpole Parish Council

The CORONAVIRUS crisis of recent weeks has had an overwhelming effect on all of our lifestyles. In line with UK Government guidelines the 2020 Annual Parish Meeting, due in April, has been cancelled. I nevertheless consider that it is important that the Chairman's Annual Parish report to residents remains available. This is provided hereunder against the current fast changing background.

A BIG thanks to our key workers and to those volunteers who have been able to step forward to help our community in these difficult times.

My best wishes to all residents of our Civil Parish and beyond.....Cllr Colin Baker.

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The past year represented the 125th anniversary of the founding of Bradpole Parish Council and was a year of many changes both locally and nationally.

Bradpole Council continues to operate independent of political parties and is managed by volunteer Councillors together with an employed Parish Clerk.

Local authority funding cuts, by various elected national governments, continue to present challenges for parish councils as the cost of maintaining local areas of responsibility persists. Vegetation, for example, having no respect for austerity, continues to grow along our footpaths. We are grateful to members of the Bridport Lengthsman Scheme and the Dorset Rights of Way Team for their efforts across the Parish. We pay Bridport Town and Dorset Council for these services as do we pay those contractors who look after our tree stock and other green spaces.

The new Dorset Council advised local Councils in December 2019 that they expect to devolve further responsibilities, and associated costs, to those councils.

Whilst parish Councillors are unpaid volunteers there is a need to increase paid clerical time to accommodate these additional responsibilities.

Bradpole, along with other councils, has recognised this and has budgeted accordingly. The resulting precept figure for Bradpole Parish remains just two-thirds of the national average for Parish Councils as advised by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

Parish Councillors have represented the Civil Parish at several external meetings over the past year including with Dorset Council, Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils, Bridport Area Local Partnership, Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan (BANP) Joint Council, and others.

With the Neighbourhood Plan receiving an 87% YES vote in February's referendum the adopted Plan will sit alongside Local and National planning guidelines for determining planning applications in the BANP Area, which includes the settlements of Bradpole & Pymore.

The Joint Councils of the BANP will continue to monitor the plan and the projects therein.

Bradpole Civil Parish will continue to be represented on the Joint Council.

The consideration of Planning Applications is an important, and increasingly detailed, responsibility for Parish Councillors, several of whom having received training in the past year. The benefit of this being that our input, on behalf of residents, is well regarded and has been an important factor in Local Authority planning decisions.

In the past year we have responded to 30+ applications, this number is increasing annually.

Over the past year we have been delighted to support the formation of the “Get Bradpole Buzzing” Group whose members have been working hard to bring the many colours of wildflowers to our Green Spaces. This coincided with the Parish Council being able to establish, with the help of S106 grant money, a secure storage facility at the Gore Cross Recreation Area which is now the base for the group.

S106 grant money has also contributed to improved signage at our Green Spaces.

In the past year we have been able to add additional notice boards and replace dilapidated ones around the parish enabling more information to be made available, including a quarterly notice board Parish Council news sheet.

Parish Councillors were delighted to see Bradpole Post Office and Village Stores re-open in 2019. Following a successful 2019 Bradpole Fete the Parish Council agreed to match fund the money raised by the Fete for a defibrillator to be installed in the telephone box at the shop. Whilst there have been many bureaucratic bridges to cross to achieve this we hope to see the facility become available during 2020.

Climate Change has become a “HOT” topic in recent months and Bradpole Council has adopted a Climate Action Plan to which residents will be invited to contribute ideas. Alongside this will be a Community Resilience Plan to deal with arising emergency situations in the Parish.

The Village Hall is in need of support from the community. It was built and opened in 1890 with public subscription in memory of the Rt. Hon W.E. Forster who was raised here in Bradpole and became a significant Victorian politician, introducing the 1870 Education Act.

Whilst the Hall is well used the number of volunteer trustees, who are needed to manage the Hall, has diminished to a critical level. Councillors have been in discussion with new volunteers to consider how this valuable community asset may continue for the benefit of all.

Councillor changes: Following the 2019 elections the Parish Council comprises of 7 Councillors, including a couple of new members.

There remain 3 vacancies which may be filled by co-option, based upon the skills and experience required. Please speak to a Councillor or to our Parish Clerk Sandy if you feel that you can help.

I wish to acknowledge the voluntary work of Cllr. Tricia Dendle who stood down as Chairman and Councillor last summer as she moved to pastures new. Tricia was a strong supporter and eventual leader of the Parish Council and her contribution over many years was formidable.

Finally I wish to thank, on behalf of Councillors and residents, the work of our Parish Clerk Sandy whom we are lucky to have available to keep us all in order.

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Please keep informed, particularly at the present time, via the Parish website,
www.bradpole.co.uk , social media platforms and notice boards.

Cllr C. Baker,
Chairman Bradpole Parish Council
April 2020