



BROADWINDSOR GROUP PARISH

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

14 APRIL 2023

REPORTS

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

The past year has been a busy one for the Parish Council and all the groups that work tirelessly for our community. The Parish Council has continued to lobby for the many improvements and repairs that are needed in the parish which range from drains, footpaths, dog fouling, potholes and road maintenance and speed control. The Parish Council listened to concerns and responded by purchasing speed indicator devices which are being used in Broadwindsor and Drimpton and it continues to press for a new pavement in Broadwindsor which will improve the safety of pedestrians. The village halls, community shop, community pub along with other organisations such as the Citizens Advice and Community Land Trust continued to receive financial support, over £8000.00 was provided to these groups by the Parish Council last year. Other organisations for example the Brownies, Guides and Broadwindsor School received financial support from the FMR Trust to help support them to achieve their goals. The Post Office Users Group continued providing an outreach service twice a week for the community. Planning applications and damage to our byways by inconsiderate 4x4 users are other items that the Parish Council has to deal with, sometimes it seems that we are lacking in manpower and resources from the authorities who I feel should be more proactive in helping us resolve these challenges. The issue of common land ownership is one issue which I feel should be resolved by Government so that parish councils are not left in limbo when action needs to be taken on matters effecting common land. The continuing lack of decent public transport infrastructure for rural communities is a sad reflection of past and present governments and an issue which has a detrimental effect on rural life. Surely it is not beyond the wisdom of Government to sort this out, especially as climate change seems to be a high priority and getting vehicles off the road is a well-publicised strategy - areas of high population seem to have many buses running all of the time. Another issue for the Parish is decent broadband and mobile phone coverage which can be patchy and slow, it is amazing that Central Government requires businesses to do everything online when it does not consider rural areas worthy enough to insist that providers offer 100% coverage. Social housing is another contentious issue, as our Community Land Trust found as it had to battle many

obstacles put in their way to achieve their aim of building fifteen affordable units in Netherhay Lane, Drimpton. To me it seems incredulous when so many brilliant volunteers put in hundreds of hours of their time at no cost to Dorset Council, (Dorset Council should be doing this themselves anyway) to have all these obstacles put in their way. Our website and Facebook pages continue to keep people up to date with local and national information specific to our community and has excellent reach and engagement. In summing up this evening, you can see that Broadwindsor Group Parish Council is very forward thinking and extremely proactive which is only possible by the hard work and dedication of all our Councillors past and present and those members of the community who give so much of their time, my heartfelt thanks to you all. I would also like to welcome our new Councillors this year, Rebecca Burt and Stefan Nikolov and my final thanks go to our Clerk, Helen whose continued hard work and attention to detail enable the Council to run smoothly and efficiently and my role as Chairman would be so much harder without her valuable help, and I am sure that all on the Council would agree with me, thank you Helen.

CHAMPIONING WEST DORSET

It is very good to be here with you this evening and thank you for having me. I shall provide an overview of the work I am doing as your MP and then take questions. My number one priority since COVID has been to ensure that rural areas such as where we are tonight, get a fair allocation of public money and funding. For too long it appears that urban areas have benefited much more than rural areas although I am pleased to see that Government is working to rebalance this in many ways. We have seen a considerable amount of money come forward for support such as for Dorset County Hospital. The two biggest challenges I have as your MP is to continue to press Government on the amount of funding Dorset Council receives to ensure that our council tax here is fair compared to other parts of the country. Our council tax is quite high even compared to areas such as South Somerset and the reason for this is because the costs base of the Council is generally higher than other councils, not because Dorset Council is ineffective financially, but the burden for the taxpayer is much greater than you would typically see. For example, a third of our population is over sixty five years of age, and at the time of checking, 19% of those are aged over seventy five and the associated care costs that go with that are quite considerable. This is an ongoing challenge. In terms of rural buses, First Group – mainly the Yeovil based operator has in my opinion totally neglected rural areas, especially the Number 6 route which goes from Crewkerne to Beaminster and then to Bridport. What they have typically done over the last couple of years is to almost threaten the local authority that if they don't give them money then they will pull their services. Dorset Council has done quite lot in terms of providing transport to those in need through their NORCAP bus provision, it is not completely ideal but when we ask why some buses are not running, we are told that very few people travelled on them, and when we then look at the environmental aspect of that, it is often concluded that running buses which are mostly empty is negative to the environment. In an ideal world every bus would be full. The Saturday service run by Beaminster Town Council is a great model, it is well used and sustainable. Rural transport and rural connectivity continue to be a big challenge especially with the energy

situation, supermarkets have been taking huge profits, up to 20p a litre on petrol. I am sorry to say that I genuinely think that supermarkets are the enemies of rural communities as they look to underprice our small rural shops on purpose to take them out of business and they set their prices according to how well off they think a community is. Supermarkets explained the recent egg shortage on bird flu, in reality supermarkets have got away with poor prices to farmers and suppliers for far too long and these are the people who informed them that it wasn't sustainable. What has happened over time is that the Government has appointed many arm's length bodies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency to name a couple which I believe has been a big mistake, it has meant that Ministers have not been able to send a lightning bolt through issues like they could do in the past. Inevitably as a result Parliament has to legislate in way it has not done before, the Agricultural Bill in 2020, made specific provision for a grocery code adjudicator, and although some progress has been made, it has not in any way been as rigorous as it needs to be. There are often discussions and debates about subsidy mechanisms for farmers and what's happened over time is that subsidies have been supporting the supermarkets, that needs to stop, it is not sustainable, not right and creates the perception that farming businesses and farmers are always wanting a subsidy when in fact it is the supermarket which has control over the actual supply chain, which is appalling. I am aware that farmers have been threatened by supermarkets and I went to speak to the Prime Minister about the power of supermarkets and in fairness, a couple of days later an investigation was set up, which is still ongoing. The Prime Minister has been very supportive, and I hope to see some positive feedback from the investigation. The extent and pace that the Government and country has been working towards net zero shocked the energy industry, in October 2021 there were queues outside of petrol stations, supposedly caused by petrol shortage, in fact it was in my opinion a triggered demand spike which allowed fuel companies and supermarkets to increase the price of fuel, which is quite wrong. On the back of the war in Ukraine, some businesses have looked at taking advantage of the situation and the Government has looked to deal with this by the introduction of the windfall tax and will be looking for a much fairer approach from energy companies.

DORSET COUNCIL REPORT

Since our last Parish Council meeting, I have attended many meetings whether in connection with schools, also road safety with Chris Loder MP, the head of Dorset Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and as the Dorset Councillor's representative at the Local Access Forum to name a few. With respect to road safety, I have passed on the concerns of Parish Councillors to the Leader of Dorset Council and will be working with Chris Loder MP on this. The Government has announced its intention to transfer the functions and powers of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to local authorities. It is also proposing the withdrawal of central Government support for LEPs from April 2024. On 1 April 2023 Non Domestic Buildings let on an existing tenancy were required to have an EPC rating of E or above. At this stage it is worth noting that from 1 April 2030 the minimum EPC rating will change from E to B. I will further set out my understanding of the position. There are a number of exemptions including:

- a) A temporary building only to be used for 2 years or less
- b) Used as a place of worship or for other religious activities
- c) An industrial site, workshop or non-residential-agricultural building typically not heated
- d) A detached building with a total floor space of under 50 square metres
- e) A furnished holiday let where the landlord is responsible for meeting the energy costs

Also, a building which is listed or within a Conservation Area does not require an EPC where compliance with the minimum Energy Efficient Standard would unacceptably alter its character and appearance. The Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard Changes will be enforced by local authorities. Where the local authority believes a landlord is in breach of the Regulations they may serve a compliance notice. Ultimately penalties can be issued of up to £5000 or up to 10 per cent of the rateable value whichever is higher subject to a maximum of £50,000.

I recognise that the production of food and also the Dorset Council Farms Estate are hugely important to the County of Dorset. As we experience April showers it is possible that we do not all focus on water resources and climate change and the likelihood of water shortages, there is also a continued debate on pollution. DEFRA has revealed new measures that will see more funding for farmers in England to improve the storage of slurry, manage irrigation more efficiently and secure water supplies through the construction of on farm reservoirs. £34 million is available through the first round of the Slurry Infrastructure Grant - more than double the original budget following very high demand from farmers. This is part of a new integrated plan with the aim of improving water quality for people, businesses and nature. Also outlined in the update is the second round of the Water Management Grant, which will open for applications in Mid-April. It will provide £10 million in funding to help farmers manage their water use through more efficient irrigation and securing water supplies through the construction of on-farm reservoirs. The integrated plan is said to focus on the quality of the water environment - both how clean a source is, and how much water it contains. Within this, it aims to tackle every source of pollution, including from storm overflows, agriculture, plastics, road run-off, chemicals and pesticides.

I have in the not too distant past, spoken to audiences in village halls with solicitors and chartered surveyors and indeed other members of the tax agent community about tax matters. Very often there are discussions about the applicability of Inheritance Tax reliefs. These are questions posed by landowner's tenant farmers and indeed those who both own land and rent land. The history of this is that in recent months there has been much discussion of the Rook Report chaired by Baroness Rook of Stratton in the County of Dorset, one key part of the report is future applicability of Agricultural Property relief for agricultural let land. The definition of agriculture in the tax system will become even more interesting when consideration is given as to whether in the future it would provide for Agricultural Property relief in respect of environmental land management and ecosystem services. Ecosystem services include the provision of carbon sequestration, biodiversity net gain units or nutrient neutrality offsetting.

The budget did announce a consultation on whether 100% agricultural property relief from inheritance tax (IHT) should apply when farmers make long-term changes from agricultural to environmental land use. This has been a major sticking point for those considering entering into Environmental Land Management schemes or other natural capital based agreements. The call for evidence and consultation will run until 9 June 2023. There is also the question of future availability of Agricultural Property relief in respect of landowners owning affordable housing built on exception sites.

I now turn to the cost of living generally, which is still a burden. Some of you may have picked up on news of an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) report in respect of Rural Business and the Rural Powerhouse. There will be appreciation of the rural premium as it is described, making life much more expensive in the countryside. And indeed, perhaps outweighing the benefits. The Government will maintain the energy price cap of £2,500 for domestic supplies for a further three months, from April to June 2023. From July 2023, the cap will increase to £3,000. This reflects higher-than-expected energy prices. Of course, it is quite possible we are likely to see prices falling over the summer and beyond to reflect the reductions in global prices that have largely been seen over the last three months. Albeit with a price spike last week when the Organisation of Petroleum exporting countries sought to reduce production.

The Government had previously announced further support for business through the Energy Bill Discount Scheme, which replaces the Energy Bill Relief Scheme on 1 April 2023. This will provide electricity discounts at £19.61/MWh (with a price threshold of £302/MWh and gas discounts at £6.97/MWh (with a price threshold of £107/MWh). For energy-intensive industries, such as manufacturing, there is a larger discount of £89/MWh for electricity and £40/MWh for gas. The new discount scheme prevents an obvious cliff edge for businesses in terms of increased energy costs. However, the discount rates are substantially less than under the current relief scheme, so the benefits will be limited unless businesses are eligible as an energy-intensive industry.

It is my understanding that rental income from telecom masts have been falling substantially. Indeed, since the Electronic Communications code was revised in 2017 there has been an imbalance between landowners and operators to mirror the disparity between the difference in power between individual farmers (at the extreme) and supermarkets. The code in 2017 was revised such that the new valuation system was based on the sites value to the landowner in determining the rent. Some may have thought it was in the interest of the nation for rents paid to fall by 40 percent as perceived in 2017. In the event rents are believed to have fallen by some 77 per cent. There is also the impact of losing protection under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. Also, negotiation of agreements appears to take at least 18 months not 28 days.

COMMUNITY POLICING REPORT

In relation to crime locally, over the last year, we saw a busy September/October where a few vehicles had been stolen. Two Land Rovers were stolen from Drimpton and a campervan from Broadwindsor (one of the Land Rovers was stolen from a pub car park after the keys were taken off a table). Around the same time, there were 5 thefts of catalytic converters from cars across the section (Bridport, Beaminster and Lyme Regis areas). With regards to catalytic converters, due to the value of some of the precious metals used in the parts, the scrap value shot up and nationally over the last couple of years, there has been a huge rise in thefts of these parts. We often find that the majority of victims drive Japanese vehicles, and this is likely due to the parts having a slightly higher amount of the precious metals, meaning the parts are dearer. Other than this spate, non – dwelling burglaries (outbuildings, sheds, etc) and opportunist thefts have been low, but don't take this for granted. Review your security and contact me if you would like any security advice. Please be vigilant and report any suspicious activity to use on 101, or www.dorset.police.uk, or call 999 at the time, if you believe a crime is in progress.

I'm not saying there has been a rise, but there appear to have been many concerns and reports of livestock worrying. Livestock worrying is an offence and occurs when dogs are in a field where there is livestock (whether fenced off or not), not on a lead or close control (out of arms reach would be a good guide, but not limited to) and whose behaviour could be considered as attacking or chasing livestock, or acting in such way as to lead to an abortion or loss or suffering of that stock. Best practice is to always put a dog on a lead when entering a field until you know the field is completely clear of animals. It is also best practice for dog owners to check their boundaries regularly so dogs cannot escape.

Nationally, one of the biggest concerns in relation to criminality is scams. Scams come in a number of guises, the most frequent are unsolicited or cold calls to a land line or mobile, but there are plenty of text or email scams. Most companies no longer cold call, so as not to be tarred with that brush. Banks will only contact you to confirm if a transaction may be genuine, but will never ask you to confirm details or pin numbers and will never ask you to transfer funds. The best advice is to find out if your phone provider offers a call screening service, such as the caller has to state who they are before you pick up, so you know who is calling you. These weed out calls from automated diallers for example, or give you the opportunity not to speak directly to a caller you don't know or recognise. Another similar option of call screening, is to let unexpected calls go to voicemail, or ignore them completely. There is so much advice, it would be difficult to go through it all in a report, but www.actionfraud.police.uk, or www.dorset.police.uk have a lot of scam prevention advice. Always remember, NEVER give out any personal/financial details to any callers. Finally, I have an engagement at Broadwindsor Comrades Hall on the second Tuesday of each month, at 11am, should anyone wish to come and say hi, or discuss anything with me.

BROADWINDSOR SCHOOL

The new school year has started well with a newly appointed Headteacher and two admin office staff as well as a new Year 5/6 teacher and a part-time teacher. The school is almost full with a couple of spaces. Behaviour is good with pupils supporting each other to do the right thing both in class and at playtimes, this has been commented on especially when pupils have been out on visits. We like to know what pupils think about their school life and gauge this through surveys and School Council representatives as well as pupil voice when monitoring of their work takes place between staff and Governors. Attendance has been a national concern for all schools, and we have monitored this closely and sent letters to encourage and praise good attendance to parents. We have a working array of solar panels which both encourage pupils to be aware of environmental issues and give us both power and remuneration.

The outdoor area is used well by pupils for various activities such as Forest school, gardening, sport, an outdoor classroom to support learning and large play equipment for physical and social development. Parental support is good, some parents run after school clubs, they accompany classes on trips, events are well attended and feedback via surveys is good. The PTA have run some excellent fundraising events and are helping to buy new outdoor play equipment. Lots of interesting after-school clubs are taking place across the year which further support pupil development, we encourage as wide a participation as possible from all pupils. The school collaborates with other local schools through Headteacher meetings, staff training and other shared curriculum initiatives. Governors have been participating in monthly meetings, as well as taking part in training especially safeguarding ensuring they are able to fulfil their roles to the best of their ability. We have a full complement of Governors now who have various interests and backgrounds. All Governors take part in monitoring activities alongside staff to ensure the education that the children receive is both challenging and appropriate. The school encourages classes to go on trips to support their learning such as to Beaminster Museum and Parnham House, the summer residential for pupils will be to Carey Outdoor learning centre. This school year so far has been enjoyable, fun and successful.

VILLAGE HALLS REPORT

Blackdown Village Hall

At Blackdown Village Hall, we only have two regular hall users, since the Whist Drive and the Dance Club have folded. The Dog Club holds weekly classes, and the WI meets once a month. The Parish Council and the polling station use the hall a few times a year. The work on the hall was completed in time for our annual flower show and looks great, thank you to Philip Bailey for all his hard work. Our treasurer reported that the expenditure was greater than the income due to repair costs, also rising electricity and gas costs. Luckily, we have a healthy bank balance, but this can't go on forever and we must generate more interest in hiring the hall. Many thanks to the Parish Council for their continued support and to the Hall Committee and to their families and friends who support the Hall.

Comrades Hall

Well, what a year this has been in the life of the village hall. First, David Leader, our chairman, sadly died. Jacqui Sewell then took up the reins for a couple of months, before resigning along with several members of the committee, including David and Joyce Chumbley who had served the hall committee so well for a number of years, for which I thank them.

Whilst this has been a difficult year for the hall's finances, with increases in energy costs, we end the year with a new play area for children, a beautiful new timber shelter on Bernards Place in conjunction with a larger community green area near The Square. In addition, we have updated our heating system to Air Source Heat Pump and the installation of 36 solar panels providing on site electricity generation and reducing the building's carbon footprint. We thank the National Lottery Community Fund, Zero Carbon Dorset and Broadwindsor Group Parish Council for their grants that helped to fund these improvements. We have also been able to arrange for three pieces of outdoor fitness equipment for adults, which will be installed soon (two pieces of which were funded by Bridport Round Table and Magna Housing Association). I am also delighted to say that with the hard work of Sheila Hawkins and Margery Hookings with their grant applying skills as well as the Crowdfunder appeal, our overall financial position remains very strong. Comrades Hall enjoyed its 70th anniversary in November, an evening a fun, dancing and celebration. A great evening organised by Megan Jones and her team. The hall continues to be well supported by village organisations, and we are so fortunate to continue to benefit with the twice-weekly post office service.

A big thank you to Margaret Wing and her team for the great work they do running the film club and organising the Artsreach events, which are hugely popular and a key fundraiser for the hall. I would also like to thank Brian Stone, who is standing down from the hall committee after ten years as our treasurer. Similarly, Sheila Hawkins, who supported me by taking up the role of secretary on an interim basis in July last year. My thanks also to every member of the hall committee who give of their time voluntarily, to manage the Comrades Hall, which is such a key facility at the heart of our community. This year, the committee, aware of those standing down, agreed to circulate a flyer seeking some new committee members from within the community at attend the Hall's AGM on Monday 24 April at 7.30pm.

Drimpton Village Hall

It has been a difficult year for Village Halls in the parish and Drimpton is no exception. The cost of running the Hall is ever increasing and we are working hard to keep our charges affordable for everyone. Since Covid restrictions it has been a struggle to get back the footfall we had come to expect, as some are still nervous. We had only one "Artsreach" event this year which was well attended. But we are very fortunate to have our regulars back up and running. We have weekly Yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi classes. Our monthly Film Club and our well attended indoor bowls every week. We received £1500 income from our Solar Panels last year, sadly despite the cost of electricity going through the roof our income from the sunshine stays the same! We look forward to putting on many events this year which I am sure will be

well attended. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Council for their continued support without which we would be in real trouble!

BROADWINDSOR GROUP PARISH CLIMATE & ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY GROUP

Susannah Madigan and myself have been representing the Parish Council at monthly Zoom meetings of the Dorset Council CEE Group. During the last year we have been joined at these meetings by Councillor Rick Dyke. These meetings are a fantastic networking forum for Town and Parish Councillors and occasional interested community representatives. Generally, there are guest speakers on specific topics – updates from Dorset Council portfolio holders on the CEE Strategy and Action Plan, Investment Zones, de-carbonising Pension Funds, local public transport issues and so on. It is really valuable to be able to provide and listen to updates of what parish and town councils are planning or doing in this important area, and knowing that there are lots of concerned people around trying to respond positively to the Climate and Ecological Emergency. Some of the things that Broadwindsor Group Parish Council have supported in this respect are the improvements at Comrades Hall with the installation of heating by air source heat pumps and solar panels; and at our community shop the installation of improved chiller cabinets. Other local community initiatives have also been well supported, such as tetra pack, aluminium foil and crisp packet recycling, as well as other activities such as tree and wildflower planting activities to support biodiversity.

BEAMINSTER AREA AND BROADWINDSOR ECO GROUPS

Firstly, I would like to say how sad we all were at the death of Professor Michael Dower in November 2022. He was such an inspiring leader and conservationist, and we were very lucky to have him driving the programme of the Beaminster Area Eco Group. He encouraged Beaminster's satellite villages, such as Broadwindsor, to contribute to their activities – which included, for example, volunteers helping to plant 1,000m of hedge saplings at Burstock Grange Farm.

Broadwindsor Group Parish Council agreed a few years ago to provide a half plot on the Broadwindsor Allotment site to create a tree nursery, managed by the Broadwindsor Eco Group. In Winter 2022 we planted 250 native tree saplings on this site. These were provided free of charge by The Conservation Volunteers via Beaminster Area Eco Group. In January 2023, we found homes locally within the parish for all these saplings. Currently the tree nursery is home to 50 or 60 saplings grown from seed by members of the Drimpton community. We hope in due course to be able to plant these around the CLT's site at Nethercombe Lea in Drimpton. We hosted an event in Comrades Hall, Broadwindsor to celebrate Big Green Day in September 2022 – volunteers ran childrens' activities, a café, members of the allotments provided fresh produce, and the Eco Group provided information about all things 'green'. Volunteers helped with the winter tidy up of Hursey Common – some scrub management and removing a fallen tree from the football pitch area, as well as planting some alder and other native tree saplings in the woodland areas. As part of the Beaminster Area Eco Group, we will be contributing to the event that they plan in Beaminster in September this year.

BROADWINDSOR GROUP PARISH COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

During the course of the last year, progress on the CLT's development site in Netherhay Lane in Drimpton has been very visible. Starting from being a grassy field, it initially became a 1.5 acre muddy patch. Now, a year later we have 15 well designed and constructed homes that will be available for affordable rent to people with a local connection to our parish area. We have been working in partnership with the housing association Abri (originally Yarlington Housing Group) and the local building contractor CG Fry. We have had many complicated discussions and overcome some great difficulties on the way, mainly in connection with drainage, which we won't elaborate on here. But we have successfully worked through them all. Construction was delayed because of the wet weather in December 2022 and at the beginning of 2023, but now the scaffolding is down, the internal work is underway, the road and pavements are being put in, and work on the landscaping aspects will soon begin. The development is currently scheduled for completion by the end of June this year, and we hope to be able to welcome tenants to their new homes at some point in July.

The design of the homes is as ecofriendly as we could be within a tight budget. Heating will be by air source heat pump, each unit has some solar panels on the roof, insulation levels are high, surface water drainage engineering and technology should ensure there are no flooding issues. Once completed, the planned landscaping will improve the ecology and bio-diversity of the site, with wild flower meadow areas, planting of native trees and shrubs, and the whole development surrounded by a native fruiting hedge.

The CLT Board has been running a *Homemaking* project throughout the construction period. With grant funding from Dorset Council's Community Fund, we have commissioned an artwork "from field to homes" by Drimpton based artist Jenny Beck, local volunteers have created hedgehog boxes, bird boxes and so on from recycled materials from the construction site, and a metal bench has also been commissioned from Rob Hedditch, a local blacksmith, which will be in the memory of David Leader and Nick Bellorini who were both members of the CLT Board. The CLT Board is justifiably proud of what we have managed to achieve to provide much needed attractive and affordable housing for rent within our parish area, and we look forward to welcoming new tenants into our community in Drimpton. The CLT Board will be planning an open day for the community before the houses become occupied – we will publicise this as soon as we can arrange it.

CHARITIES REPORT

THE FMR TRUST

The FMR Trust was established to support charitable activities for the benefit of the local community in Broadwindsor, Drimpton and Blackdown. Specifically, it provides grants for active recreational projects. For the period 2022/2023 the Trust provided grants to three local projects totalling £3150. These were as follows:

- Broadwindsor Group Parish Community Land Trust £150.00 to support the cost of producing a local walks brochure

- Comrades Hall £1000.00 towards their improvements to the play area in Bernards' Place
- Broadwindsor School £2000.00 towards new play equipment

The Trust has invested in an Equities Investment Fund and has shares with a current value of £75,724.37 (as of 31 March 2023). The Trust receives a quarterly dividend which does fluctuate somewhere between £600 - £1200. The cash balance in the bank as of 31 March 2023, the year end was £2601.79. The Parish Council is the sole trustee of the Trust and Trustees convene each quarter to consider applications. The Trust very much encourages the community to put forward their projects, please do contact me if you have any questions.

THE BLACKDOWN EDUCATIONAL TRUST

The Blackdown Educational Trustees have not held their annual meeting in person since October 2018. Grants have been received and awarded annually from then on via zoom or email communications. Trustees do plan to hold the 2023 meeting at Burstock Grange in person on the second Tuesday in October. The following grants have been awarded to successful applicants, living within the parishes of Blackdown, Thorncombe and Broadwindsor.

- 2018, four grants for £200
- 2019, three grants for £180 and two grants for £100
- 2020, two grants for £200 and one grant for £350
- 2021, three grants for £260
- 2022, two grants for £300

In July 2022 the Nationwide Building Society closed all their charity accounts. The trustees have secured a new account with Lloyds Bank and any dividends earned on the capital investment are now paid quarterly into this account. The estimated fund available for awards in 2023 is £800.

Broadwindsor and District Sick/Poor Fund

This fund was set up to offer financial help to residents of the parishes. The charity has continued to make donations to both individuals of the parishes, and charities and organisations that have helped parish residents. The Trustees of Broadwindsor and District Sick/Poor Fund decided in 2022 to make donations to the following charities, Weldmar Hospice Care, Cancer Research UK, Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance, Fortuneswell Cancer Trust and Kidney Research UK.

BROADWINDSOR ALLOTMENT GROUP

Over the last year the Broadwindsor allotments have continued to provide gardening opportunities for local Parish residents and allotment holders from further afield (Crewkerne, Beaminster, Salwayash). Currently all plots are taken apart from a half plot. Various plot holders took part successfully in the August 2022 Broadwindsor and District Horticultural Society Annual Show, and in the Melpash Show, and Broadwindsor Community Shop has occasionally benefitted from donations of surplus fruit and vegetables from plot holders. In

the summer of 2022, with the aid of the skip hire funded by the Parish Council, the site was cleared of accumulated general rubbish and waste, making individual plots clearer and safer. Three general work parties occurred over this autumn and winter, to clear and cut back boundary hedging areas, plant out saplings in the tree nursery, and manage the wild area and locate a hedgehog house which was gifted to the BAG. In conjunction with Broadwindsor Eco-group, over 200 trees from the BAG nursery were given to local residents this tree planting season to increase hedges and wooded areas within the parish, including tree planting at Hursey Common. The communal wildflower meadow and allotment orchard continues to be maintained and the BAG committee highlight and support the correct removal and disposal of ragwort. The Eco-toilet project build for the site is near completion, after receiving funding from the Parish Council and from Wessex Water. Unfortunately, with the bad weather over the winter the project had been delayed but is expected to be finished in the next few weeks.

BROADWINDSOR COMMUNITY STORES

The highlight of the last twelve months has been the shop celebrating its 10th birthday. No mean feat when you look back at the various difficulties it has had to cope with in recent times. The celebrations for the event were well attended and undoubtedly there is still a great pride and desire to have a community shop. Trading conditions have been tough. Two main factors can be identified for this, the huge jump in electricity prices and the difficulty in maintaining margins with a constant flow of price rises from suppliers. We are confident we have been dealing with the margin issue much better in the last few months yet retain competitive prices against local stores. We are pleased to announce that shortly we will be purchasing the shop premises from our current landlords. This will entail a £50,000 loan through the Parish Council, for which we are truly grateful, payable back over 30 years. In doing so our repayments will be lower than our current annual rent and prevent any further rent increases that might apply in the future. The Committee would like to thank the landlords for their fair price and cordial dealings in the sale.

In the past twelve months we have had three shop managers. Kevin, who had been with us for almost five years, Mike, who had agreed to join but for family reasons had to depart after a few months and lastly but not least Jane who had been with us for the whole 10 years as assistant and has blossomed in her new role. We are also very lucky to have two great assistants in Margaret and Sarah. As ever we are ever thankful to two groups of people, our volunteers and our customers. Some of our volunteers have been with us throughout our existence, others have left or moved away but have been replaced by new residents in the village. For anyone moving into the village volunteering in the shop is a great way to meet people. Our customers are great and loyal and without them we couldn't exist. So, thank you to one and all.

BROADWINDSOR COMMUNITY PUB – THE WHITE LION

Saturday 29th April marks the 1st anniversary of the reopening of the White Lion and it has certainly been an eventful year. There are a lot of people that deserve a big thank-you. First of all, Kate Staff and her entire family who all put an enormous effort into getting the pub open and trading during 2022. It is well documented how the hospitality trade was affected by COVID, how many people left the profession and the consequent difficulty there was in recruiting experienced staff. We therefore have admiration for the task that Kate and her family took on and for keeping the pub open during difficult trading conditions. Ultimately though, Kate and her daughters decided it was time to move on and we wish them well in their new ventures.

Whilst we looked for new Managers, we were indebted to all those who stepped forward to keep the pub not only open but serving food. We had and still have numerous volunteers who learned the day-to-day running of a pub and, unsurprisingly, there's a lot that is certainly not glamorous! We had volunteers preparing for opening-up, serving behind the bar and, crucially, preparing excellent food and in particular Sunday roasts. They are too many to mention by name but their support in this way meant that the pub was still successfully trading and hence it was easier to attract new experienced managers. What was heartening too was that the volunteers were a mix of both the committee and members of the community. Thank you too to those who cleaned, pot-washed, acted as chefs and sous-chefs, kitchen porters and also waited on the tables. Coordination of all the resources was no simple matter either. What this has given us though is a far better understanding of what our new managers, Clive and Kerry, are taking on. Thus far, all that we hear are extremely positive reports of a warm welcome, great interaction and exceptionally good food. Without doubt, we are delighted that Kerry and Clive have joined us and we are excited about the next stage of the White Lion's progress into a pub that is widely renowned for the quality of its food.

Thank you too to everyone who has supported the pub as a customer. Like many pubs, we have our regulars and rely upon them for much of the atmosphere and ambience. However, there are 2 groups in particular that we would like to mention as we think they demonstrate well the community aspect of the pub that we would like to nurture and develop further. First, the Farmers who have met for a monthly breakfast throughout the past year. Thank you to Councillor Frampton for organising attendees and speakers and thank you too to the volunteers that have assisted in the kitchen and waited on tables each month. This event has been so successful that it has now spawned a monthly Village Community breakfast, also very well attended. Second, I would like to thank the Church Group who have supported the pub pretty much weekly on a Saturday morning for a coffee, cake and chat. Always cheerful and amusing, their support is greatly appreciated.

To sum up the past year, it has been far from plane sailing but with Clive and Kerry, we are confident that the pub is in good hands and we would be disappointed if during the course of the next year we don't add to the awards received during the past 12 months; CAMRA's West

Dorset Pub of the Year and Palmers Master Cellarman winners. We have to end though on a cautionary note. As with the hospitality trade generally, we have seen electricity costs skyrocket over the past year. To make matters worse, the electricity companies view the trade as a bad risk with many reluctant to even quote whereas those who are clearly see it as an opportunity to charge what they like. Despite this, support from central government is negligible. Somehow, these spiralling costs need to be met and ultimately, this has to be by the paying customer. This is where the warm welcome becomes even more vital because without it and the atmosphere it helps generate, what future does the British pub have?

BROADWINDSOR FUN GROUP

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Councillors for their ongoing support to Broadwindsor fun group. It has been a busy year and having now just about recovered from the long Jubilee celebrations followed by an event marking her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's funeral, we are looking forward to our fun day in June. A highlight of the year has been the warm hubs run from December and February. We are grateful to those supplying soup, bread, jam and other goodies! A questionnaire seeking the community's views on events was circulated to all local residents early in the year and people voted for a June fun day in preference one marking the Coronation of King Charles. That said I have no doubt that if an event was held, people would attend. Sadly, the fun group do not the time or resources to do both. In the meantime, the group are pleased to be sponsoring a village party this month which is being organised by a Broadwindsor resident. The hope is that both long term and new residents will attend and make new friends. We continue to look for new people to join the fun group committee.

BROADWINDSOR.ORG

Broadwindsor.Org celebrates 3 years this month. A point I didn't expect to reach following the horrendous hack on my personal Facebook account, just as I came out of hospital last summer. This was not the 'usual type of hack' where one's contact list is accessed etc. No – this was on a very different level, so much so I reported it to the police and obtained an Incident number. As expected, nothing became of it as there is no way to actually contact anyone on Facebook once you've "violated their rules"! I am happy to say all the posts on social media: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram originate from the website, so no content was lost. One can use the Search button at the top of the page or explore the archives and find anything that has been previously published.

As over 70% of visitors to the website came through Facebook and the #Broadwindsor page was now lost, I then created #Broadwindsor.Org. The addition of a Broadwindsor locals page on Facebook by another individual has proved beneficial too. Funerals and celebrations of Life continue to be the most visited pages on the website. Sadly, in 2023 alone, I have already reported on four of our parish residents' passing. I do consider this a privileged service though it is also very emotionally draining as I more than likely know the individual involved and their families – Julie Steele, Colin Lawrence, Harold Jenkins and most recently Simon Emmerson, who died on the first anniversary of former Vice Chairman of this parish council, David

Leader's passing! The journey of our community pub, The White Lion also rates highly at the top of pages visited and first impressions of Clive & Kerry are fantastic. Our farmers (and dogs), the new housing development at Netherhay, businesses and services, What's On, community information are all accessed for the information I publish, and I do my best to keep it up to date.

Of some interest, the top ten countries that visit the website are:

1. United Kingdom
2. United States
3. Ireland
4. Australia
5. Spain
6. France
7. Sweden
8. Canada
9. South Africa
10. New Zealand

When Covid began, we all had lots of time on our hands, not so now. My daughter's progressive ill health occupies my time much more. I receive more requests to publish articles/information and events occurring meaning much more of my time is required. I do receive personal notes of thanks from individuals in the village which make me feel appreciated but if I am to continue, it is essential I update my hardware. I am not increasing the annual registration fee of £15. I intend to apply for a grant (source as yet unknown) to help me achieve this. If any councillor can point me in a positive direction to achieve this – their information would be most welcome! Thank you for your attention and your continuing support.

BROADWINDSOR RAINBOWS, GUIDES AND WEST DORSET

We are really busy, we have fifteen four to seven year olds in our Rainbow Unit, six girls have just moved up from Brownies to the Guides Unit which is now top heavy with fifteen. Our Rangers Unit has six members and covers the whole of the West Dorset area and is also very busy, they will be taking part in a visit to Parliament in October which they are all very excited about. In terms of what we have been doing, we have been to Seals Cove a number of times for soft play and climbing, we have been on camps and attended my farm to learn outdoor skills. The FMR Trust has kindly supported us with a number of grants, recently to fund a sleepover event for the Guides and Rainbows. Costs are continuing to rise, and we do not want to put extra pressure on parents who are already struggling, all leaders are non-paid volunteers so all monies coming in gets spent on the girls. We do need new volunteers, recently one of our volunteers from the Brownie Unit left after 40 years of service which is amazing, but we need to fill that role. Our most recent fun event was canoeing! The girls

come from a wide area – Thorncombe, Beaminster, Burstock, Broadwindsor, Marshwood and Mosterton. They are all lovely girls having a great time!

POST OFFICE USERS GROUP

Most of us will have forgotten that in 2005/2006 Post Office Counters Ltd carried out a review of all branches with a view to closing some branches – at that time the Broadwindsor Post Office was located at 1 The Old Bakery, run by Pam and Keith who were desperate to move, but they had no idea and couldn't find out if the Broadwindsor branch was marked for closure, eventually in December 2007 they sold up and the post office closed. That's when I along with Ruth Yarde and Jean Frampton met and decided on a plan of action to get our post office back. Luckily, I had firsthand knowledge of how post offices worked as my dad had been the postmaster in Crewkerne. We wrote so many letters/emails to everyone we could think of that might be able to help. It was over two years of me providing Post Office Counters Ltd with data about the previous/potential customer numbers and many conversations with those with the power to get us a post office service in Broadwindsor. It was November/December 2008 that the infrastructure broadband etc was installed at Comrades Hall, we were one of the first outreach services with Jo arriving from Bridport Post Office with the kit on a Tuesday and Friday morning each week. The first outreach service was Tuesday 20 January 2009, well over forty people crammed into the Servedy in Comrades Hall – now over fourteen years later we are still operating, serving coffee and biscuits. Even during COVID we were able to provide one outreach session a week on a Friday with myself, along with other volunteers, including Councillor Burt and her husband, at the Hall ensuring that COVID distancing rules were adhered to. Then in 2018 I organised a new outreach service in Marshwood Church – John Walther who ran the village shop/post office had to close due to ill health – this time it only took me seven months, but sadly after COVID the Church decided that they could no longer host the outreach service. However, I'm hopeful that a new venue will soon be made available. Citizens Advice recently said that people in rural areas are more dependent on their local post office than those who live in towns and cities.

BROADWINDSOR CRICKET CLUB

Broadwindsor Cricket Club are busy gearing up for the new season as work on the ground and pavilion continues apace. After the recent purchase of the ground all efforts have been put into finally finishing the pavilion. With the plumbing completed in the last few days, solar panels and batteries installed, we finally have lights and hot water! The ground is now being used not just for cricket as we host the annual village fireworks display, and the girl guides and the council for parish meetings. We have a great partnership with Beaminster CC and host several training sessions through the summer for the All Stars and Dynamo's programs for boys and girls from ages 5-16. Our successful evening League for local clubs/pubs/works teams will again involve 10 teams with games played on weeknights from May through to a finals day in early September. Our men's team kick off their Mid-Wessex League campaign on Sunday 30 April, looking to go one better having finished runners-up by just 3 points in 2022. We also host 4 touring sides during 2023 and look out for the annual chairman's X1 game

which in the past 2 years have seen appearances by former internationals Chris Lewis and Azaam Rafique. You can view all the fixtures, results and club news on the website, broadwindsorcricket.co.uk