



BROADWINDSOR GROUP PARISH

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

1 MARCH 2024

REPORTS

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Good evening. A warm welcome to you all and to our guest this evening our constituency MP Chris Loder. This past year has been another very busy one for the Parish Council and also for all the groups and organisations who work tirelessly for all in our community, you will be hearing reports from some of these during the evening. One event that requires mention is the coronation of King Charles III, it was lovely to see the efforts that were put in to mark this special occasion by the villages in the parish and it was a pleasure to deliver coronation mugs donated by the Parish Council to the school and to other venues for distribution to the children. A new war memorial was opened, a fitting tribute to those who have given their lives in service to our country and special thanks to Councillor Andrew Frampton for his efforts in getting it in place and for organising the fly past, a very special day and thanks to all who attended. The Parish Council continues to lobby the Dorset Council for the many improvements and repairs needed in the Parish these include drains, flooding and road safety with pressure being put on the Council to have a pavement installed on the road to the Cricket Club also to reduce the speed limit into the village from Beaminster from 60mph to 40mph. Road maintenance especially pot holes dominate many meetings, I would like to thank those who have taken on the task of moving and installing the SIDs on a monthly basis, these are a great visual warning.

The village halls and community pub along with other organisations such as CAB and Life Education Wessex continue to receive financial support from the Parish Council and groups like the Brownies/Guides and the MUGA receive support from the FMR Trust. A significant milestone involving the shop was when after many months of negotiations the Parish Council was able to finalise the loan from the PWLB to secure the future of the shop for the community. A huge thank you to all who are on the various committees and who volunteer to run these vital facilities, the twice weekly Post Office which is another vital facility has recently seen a change as there is now a van which calls instead of having the Post Office in the hall, my thanks to the Users Group who help to run this and provide a coffee/social occasion for all. Planning applications are still the leader in getting people to

attend Parish Council meetings which is great, the issue of common land is still something which needs to be sorted as it gives the Parish Council a headache when maintenance is required. Public transport is an issue as we are very poorly served in this area, but I do know that various groups including WATAG are working with our MP and Dorset Council to facilitate some improvements. Climate change is becoming more and more apparent as I am sure you will agree especially with the amount of rain we have had in the past three months, which has caused localised flooding in some residents' houses and a local road closed for over three weeks. The Parish Council continues to push for more maintenance to our drainage systems, the Parish Council has a working group who engage with local groups to enhance where possible our understanding of what is required to best offset this global challenge, my thanks to those involved. Mobile phone and broadband coverage is also something the Parish Council is trying to improve for parishioners but as usual it's the rural areas that suffer the most. Social housing is something the Parish Council has supported and are proud to have given support to the CLT who have very recently succeeded in getting to fruition the building of 15 affordable homes in Netherhay Lane, I am sure there will be a report from the CLT later. Our website and Facebook pages continue to keep parishioners updated on local and national information relevant our community and has excellent reach and engagement. I would like to pay tribute to Dave Chumbley who sadly passed away last year, Dave was an extremely dedicated councillor who worked extremely hard and was a really lovely person. We have also welcome our new councillors Nathalie Roberts and Stephen Curtis. In summing up this evening you can see that Broadwindsor Group Parish Council is a very forward thinking and extremely proactive council which is only possible by the hard work and dedication of all our Councillors past and present and also from those of our community who might not be councillors but give of their time and effort in the furtherance of services to our community, my heartfelt thanks to you all. My final thanks as always is to our Clerk Helen whose continuing hard work and dedication and attention to detail enables the Council to run smoothly and efficiently, my role as Chairman would be much harder without her invaluable help I'm sure that all on the Council will agree with me.

CHAMPIONING WEST DORSET

It is great to be back with the Parish Council again this year and firstly, I would like to pay thanks to Councillor Hibbard for his long service, under his Chairmanship the Parish Council has achieved great things, a real testament to him and to those who have supported him including Sue, his wife. Some of you may have seen me sitting in my car earlier, I was listening to a speech by the Prime Minister who has delivered a very important message about the growing levels of extremism across the Country. This is of great concern to me, and I am pleased that the Prime Minister is addressing it head on.

My number one priority as your MP is to bang the drum for West Dorset, to enable West Dorset to get its fair share of investment in areas in need and of services that are needed. There have been various Had various successes, but many challenges still exist. For example, there has been considerable work undertaken at Dorset County Hospital resulting in an

enlarged A&E Department, a new car park, and an extension providing extra beds. I continue to make the case for further investment and some of you may know that I have had a somewhat fractious relationship with the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) as although rural West Dorset represents 12% of the population only attracts 3% of investment funds. The Government gives the LEP £100 million over a set four or five year period. Despite repeated requests from me, the LEP didn't take the hint, so I and others have campaigned for the LEP to be obliterated and I can report that it will cease to exist this year and a new Shared Prosperity Fund will come into being and funds will come directly to the Council and I have much more confidence that under the stewardship of elected councillors there will be a better distribution of funds invested in areas of need.

Rural bus services continue to be a challenge, I deal with First Group the most, who I find very hard going to the extent that I sometimes believe that it would be better with a different company as they seem to have very little consideration for community needs. A few months ago, there was a problem with the West Dorset Ring and Ride service which serves the Marshwood Vale area. There was concern that the service would need to find an alternative provider but following a donation it can continue for longer. This is a good example of when solutions can be found to prevent closure and I make a plea that should you be in a similar situation, please do reach out.

Life in Westminster is colourful; you can watch most of it on TV. Please rest assured that my mission in Westminster on your behalf, is to make sure that we get our fair share, that we can address the needs most prevalent here in West Dorset and that the Government recognises that rural Dorset is as important as other parts of the country. Rest assured that we are in a strong position, I'm very confident that we will not find ourselves in a similar situation as Somerset who are likely to be facing a massive council tax rise, we have many strengths as a result of the legacies of the Parish Council and from the astute management of Dorset Council.

I also want to say something about the railways, there are a few people from Drimpton who aren't here tonight who are very active with the Salisbury to Exeter Line Users Group. The service from Crewkerne and Axminster has in my opinion, decreased in the quality of service over the last few years. Only a few months ago, there was relatively no service at all towards Exeter with no replacement bus service, for those dependent on working in Exeter this had a huge impact on daily working life. Myself and other and MPs from along the line have taken South Western Railway to task and are now at the point of taking a representation to Government to ask that the franchise be stripped from them and if that is unsuccessful at least that part of the railway being taken out. It is totally not acceptable that a company can say that it will not run any trains and that it will not even try to run any replacement buses, and if you need to travel, then you have to find your own way. This is absolutely atrocious and an embarrassment for me as I used to work for the railways, and it saddens me to see this.

DORSET COUNCIL REPORT

At the February Full Council Meeting Councillor Spencer Flower, Leader of Dorset Council, reflected on how much we've achieved over the last five years. Dorset Council has come a long way since May 2019, when the first all-out elections took place. The Leader of Council, set out his ambition to work across the Council chamber to achieve the best outcomes for the communities of Dorset. This ethos of our cross-party working has been judged as a success and, in recognition, he was honoured to be short listed for the Local Government Information Unit's 'Council Leader of the Year 2023' award, from over 200 nominations nationally. The annual awards event took place in November 2023, when he received his certificate as one of the final five nominees. He valued this recognition of our focus on ambition, outcomes, and achievements.

Budget setting can be a challenge, but the administration has enjoyed majorities of between 47 and 70 in budget votes, which many observers consider to be a ringing endorsement of our approach and ethos. One of the key reasons for this has been early member participation in reviewing and understanding budget pressures and ambitions. I give great credit to the involvement of the two scrutiny committees. Dorset Council operates two budget cafes, which are open to all 82 members to attend, two scrutiny committee reviews, followed by Cabinet and then Full Council for decision. This approach has enabled strong councillor participation in budget setting not previously experienced prior to the creation of the new unitary Dorset Council. All these savings have been reinvested into front-line services; mainly Adult Social Care, Health & Housing, and Children's Services, ensuring there have been no cuts to front-line services which are so vital in maintaining and improving social wellbeing across the communities of Dorset.

Embracing Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) has been a huge success. However, it certainly hasn't been an easy ride, particularly coping with the worst global pandemic in 100 years, and the future looks challenging without an uplift in central government funding. Dorset gets very little Revenue Support Grant (RSG), just £700,000 in 2024, compared to other local authorities: those largely in inner city areas get an RSG allocation ranging from £20-30 million a year. This is not fair, and I continue to lobby hard for change. Shire County areas have been poorly funded for decades by successive governments. The Local Government sector needs a new funding formula, which applies proper weight to rurality and the aging demographic. In Dorset, we have 30% of the population who are over 65 years old and rising, compared with the national average of 19%. The burden of additional costs for social care currently falls on the local taxpayers which is unfair to the people of Dorset. As with all councils, we must set a balanced budget. Dorset Council, having benefited from transformation savings, has been able to achieve this statutory requirement, without any cuts to front-line services, which makes us an outlier in the Southwest and compared to other unitary councils across the country. Dorset Council has a growing reputation for, quote... "doing the day-to-day stuff well", such as waste and recycling, potholes, highway maintenance, grass cutting and streetlights etc, coupled with a strong focus on sound financial

management supported by good governance oversight, underpinned by strong and constructive working relationships between elected members and officers. Testament to this, DEFRA has recently revealed that Dorset Council is the number one unitary authority in the UK for recycling, with rates topping 59% and with just 2% of waste going to landfill. An incredible achievement. There is an excellent track record of achievement based on bold and ambitious policy making, coupled with clear aims and objectives, which is an excellent basis for optimism as we move into the next phase of transformation: continuing this good work and putting the needs and aspirations of Dorset residents first.

One of the other key ambitions is the preparation of our first Dorset Council Local Plan. The advent of the changes included in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act will enable the Local Plan to be based on a far more strategic approach. Key changes, such as the removal of the duty to co-operate and the 5-year land supply (provided the council has an up-to-date plan), will bring many benefits ensuring that the needs and aspirations of the people of Dorset can be met. Dorset Council has been shortlisted for COUNCIL OF THE YEAR 2024 which by any measure is a huge endorsement for the Conservative administration at County Hall “Dorset Council has been shortlisted for the 2024 LGC Awards as one of five finalists from across the country for the prestigious Council of the Year awards. This is a huge endorsement for the Conservative administration for the incredible achievements during the first five years as a Unitary Council. This national recognition follows on from the Conservative Leader being shortlisted for Council Leader of the Year 2023. This along with the recent announcement by DEFRA which ranked Dorset Council as the number 1 Unitary Council for recycling at 59% which compares with a national average of 43%.

The Armed Forces Covenant as:

“... an enduring Covenant between the people of the United Kingdom, Her Majesty’s Government and all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces and their families”.

The Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Programme is a partnership between Dorset Council, Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council, Dorset HealthCare University Foundation Trust, NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, the Office of the Police, Crime Commissioner Dorset, Bournemouth University, Wessex RFCA, Royal British Legion, SSAFA, other relevant charities, the Military Bases, businesses, communities and individuals in a pledge of support between local residents and the Armed Forces Community in Dorset. The Armed Forces Covenant sets out the relationship between the nation, the Government and the Armed Forces. It recognises that the whole nation has a moral obligation to members of the Armed Forces and their families, and it establishes how they should expect to be treated. It considers the Armed Forces Community to include Regular Personnel, Reservists, Veterans, families of these and the bereaved. The Government describes it as “an enduring Covenant between the people of the United Kingdom, Her Majesty’s Government and all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown and their families”. The whole nation

has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

How we support The Armed Forces Covenant. Dorset is fortunate to have a two year MoD Funded Programme that employs a Programme Co-ordinator who is responsible for the delivery of specific projects identified to support the Armed Forces community across the pan-Dorset area. The overarching aim of the programme is to raise the profile of and to embed the Covenant in the day to day activities of all partner organisations across Dorset, ensuring that all members of the armed forces community are treated fairly and equitably.

The strain of increasing debt during the rising cost of living impacts many. Dorset Citizens Advice can talk through the options for managing debt and help get things under control. Visit Citizen Advice via the Dorset Adviceline on 0800 144 8848.

A Reminder, Dorset Council and BCP Council are working together on options to move around Dorset safely, efficiently, and sustainably for years to come. This will be a joint plan, designed and managed by BCP and Dorset Councils using the results of a wide-reaching engagement survey. The Councils are listening to valuable feedback and not making any big decisions at this stage. This joint plan will set out how transport is delivered to meet some of the demanding challenges facing the area, covering all types of transport, as well as road safety and maintenance. The new plan is needed to ensure we can travel safely and easily, whilst reducing carbon emissions and protecting the landscape that makes BCP and Dorset so special. All this must be done while maintaining economic growth and improving transport choices, accessibility, and experiences for all. Since the last Local Transport Plan was produced in 2011, a lot has changed. Now is the chance to update our plans to ensure that our transport system meets the expectations of everyone and to identify the most important issues to prioritise future investment. The plan will be designed in line with the government's priorities, including the Net Zero by 2050 target. The aim of this survey is to understand the different needs of the diverse communities who live and work in Dorset. Recent research has helped us understand the wider transport related issues and opportunities for the future. We'd now like to understand your views, so our new plan works for everyone. This survey finishes on Sunday 3 March 2024. If you cannot access the survey online an alternative format is available, please email, ltp@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk (Dorset Council), ltp@bcpcouncil.gov.uk (BCP Council) or call Dorset Council customer services 01305 221000 for a copy. This phone number is also suitable to use for BCP residents.

We are now halfway through the agricultural transition period in England and, as per the plan, basic payments are being progressively removed, and environmentally focussed payments are being introduced. This is alongside efforts to boost farm productivity to help improve their viability without direct support. The latest round of the Improving Farm Productivity grant has just opened and now funds solar PV installations alongside automation technology. Developers and landowners can now progress Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) projects and credit

purchases with more certainty as the government has announced the requirement's new implementation date in England.

The second round of the Improving Farm Productivity grant is open for applications. The grant will now cover half the cost of certain robotic and automated equipment, increased from 40% in the last round. This year the scheme is also offering funding at a 25% rate for the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems on farm building rooftops and over irrigation reservoirs. The grant is part of the Farming Investment Fund and is open to farmers, growers and related contractors. For robotic and automated equipment, the minimum grant available is £25,000 and the maximum grant available is £500,000. For solar equipment, the minimum grant available is £15,000 and the maximum grant available is £100,000. Applicants can apply for robotics and solar equipment, but the combined grant amount cannot exceed £500,000. There is a two-step application process. Applicants must first go through the online checker before 21 March 2024. Those invited to make a full application then have until 30 June 2025 to do so.

Of the 49,399 convenience stores in the UK, more than a third (36%) are rural and half of those are the only business in the local area. The 2024 Rural Shop Report from the Association of Convenience Stores highlights how these rural shops play a key role in isolated rural communities. For example, 83% of independent rural retailers engaged in some form of community activity in the past year. Many also offer key services such as bill payment services (72%), free-to-use cash machines (49%) and community notice boards (48%). Savills forthcoming Spotlight on Social Value in the rural sector will explore the importance of community and social value in generating sustainable economic growth.

What has Dorset Council been doing about potholes in our roads and when can we expect some action?

Answer per Spencer Flower Leader of Dorset Council:

Dorset has faced unprecedented weather conditions during some of our recent winters, which have put a huge strain on our ability to reinstate road defects, in some cases it is possible only to affect a temporary repair until weather conditions improve. However, a major programme of highways works has been in place since May 2019, with a focus on the summer months, due to the suitable weather conditions. We will always treat as a priority immediate issue such as potholes and drainage. Our emergency repair crews reach 97% of class 1 defects and 95% of class 2 defects within target priority immediate issue .

What is Dorset Council doing about the lack of NHS dentist provision in Dorset?

Answer per Spencer Flower Leader of Dorset Council:

Dorset Council members who sit on the boards of the ICS [Integrated Care System] have made representations on behalf of residents affected but this is not directly a Dorset Council responsibility. This sits with the NHS.

I now turn to the empty Magna House in Drimpton, I have made enquiries of a Dorset Councillor with Housing Responsibilities . From the reply received here is my understanding of the position. The property in question I've spoken with Magna about, the reason it's empty is because the costs to bring it up to the "decent homes standard" are prohibitive. This is often the case with all of the Registered Providers (RP) who took over old housing stock during the transfer process years ago. All the RPs build more than they dispose of, they try wherever possible to recycle any capital receipts into the local Dorset area if not the Dorset wide Pot! The cost of renovation of the particular property was I am informed unworkable for them. I hope this is of assistance and look forward to discussing this with you

Dorset Councillors have approved proposals for a council tax premium on second homes and an amendment to agree an earlier commencement date for the existing Long Term Empty Homes premium, under the new flexibilities for councils provided in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which received Royal Assent in October 2023. For those properties classified as Long-Term Empty and Unoccupied a 100% premium will, from 1 April 2024, be applied after one year rather than the existing 2 years. The introduction of the 100% council tax premium on second homes will come into effect on 1 April 2025, making a total council tax charge of 200%. Unlike empty dwellings, there is no requirement for a property to have been used as a second home for a fixed period of time before the premium can apply so it becomes chargeable from day one that a property is considered a second home (or dwelling periodically occupied). Where exceptions are provided for in law and once final regulations have been provided, Dorset Council will adopt and apply such exceptions. The council website will be updated as soon as this information is available.

Cllr Jill Haynes, Dorset Council Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Transformation said:

“The proposal to introduce council tax premiums on second homes and empty properties has been discussed in Dorset for several years.

“Now that the government’s Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill has been passed and received Royal Assent, Dorset Council will implement the changes and additional premiums in 2024 and 2025.

“These new powers will provide much needed additional funds to help the council continue our track record of protecting vital frontline services on which Dorset residents rely.”

A motion was put forward which proposed 40% of the additional income should be used to support the provision of affordable housing in Dorset. Council agreed to this motion, and it was approved. It may be that a new Dorset Council will instigate a higher percentage.

COMMUNITY POLICING REPORT

The last year has not seen much of a change from the last few years, in terms of local Policing. As things stand, the Neighbourhood Policing Team are based in Bridport, covering the areas of Bridport, Lyme Regis and Beaminster (and the villages in between). There are

currently five members of the team, including myself. In terms of the work we do on a daily basis across the area, we have largely been focusing on intelligence and targeted Policing around drug supply, with several positive warrants being conducted in Lyme and Bridport and reports of Anti-Social Behaviour, mainly in the three towns. We also do a lot of work around safeguarding of vulnerable people, which can be an issue, particularly in isolated areas. In terms of crime, we still see the traditional targeting of vehicles parked in isolated areas, particularly around beauty spots, where thieves will look for valuables left inside unattended vehicles. We advise not to leave any valuables in vehicles, even hidden away. Most victims of these crimes are often visitors to the area. I have noticed that we have seen less non dwelling burglaries over the last couple of years, such as break ins to sheds and barns, etc. We have however, seen some thefts from farms in the last few weeks across the Bridport area, including a theft of a quad bike, that we believe is linked to an organised spate of quad bike thefts in Wiltshire and North Dorset, as well as a couple of thefts of goats and a caravan, all of which have been located and returned to their owners. Over the years we have focused a lot on providing tailored crime prevention advice, particularly to the farming community in this area, advising of ways that people can reduce the opportunity of crime. I believe this information as well as the continued improvement of security methods, such as CCTV, have had a large impact on putting offenders off. However, we always urge vigilance and encourage the reporting of any suspicious activity. This is something that many people don't often consider until something happens, so if anyone is interested in security advice, please contact us. In recent months, the Post Office has changed its outreach in Broadwindsor, as you know. This has changed the times of my usual engagements. My next engagement will be on Monday 18 March, at 11.00 am. I have also been invited to engage with residents at the FareShare scheme at Drimpton Village Hall on Fridays, so over the next couple weeks I will look to do an initial engagement and hopefully set something more permanent up there also.

BROADWINDSOR SCHOOL

Firstly, I would like to introduce myself I am Jacqueline Clark-Basten BEM, the new Chair of the Board of Governors, I have been the previous Vice Chair for two years under Jill Mohiki and a Parent Governor for the last three years. We also have a new Vice Chair in post Alison Hall. Secondly, we currently have two vacancies on our Governing Body - one for a Parent Governor of which recruitment and elections will start ahead of the Easter break and one vacancy for a Foundation Governor which arose when we sadly had to say goodbye to the Rev. Jo Neary. Well, that's the housekeeping out of the way and on to what the school has been doing.

The school decided to revise its Christian ethos and with input and discussion from the pupils, staff, parents and Governors "the tenth man" was chosen for taking the extra step for others, the values we took from this as our focus are Courage, Creativity, Kindness, Perseverance and Responsibility. Something our whole school community has embraced.

We constantly engage with the parents and pupils with regular surveys to review how we are doing and how to improve, one thing that parents requested was a breakfast club which has been operating since October, though the uptake was slow we are now running at our required levels to maintain its viability, parents can drop off children from 8.00 am, which has been a big help to working parents and has seen the improved attendance of some of our pupils. We run several after school clubs with the help of volunteer parents and staff, wood craft, ICT and running club. Our cross-country team competed recently at a competition at Beaminster School in which we fielded three separate aged teams, with our YR 5/6 group coming a respectful second place overall. Our Yr5/6 children also have Cricket Club in preparation for the annual Beaminster School Competition in April and our Yr3/4 children will start preparing for the West Dorset School Sports Festival in the Summer.

External trips are something we also like to encourage to help develop the children's wider understanding of the world outside of the school and recent trips to the Bovington Tank Museum, Axe Valley Park, tree planting at Lodgers with children from other schools and a successful trip to Birmingham to participate along with 5000 children in the Young Voices concert are some of these experiences. A testament to our school is the lovely letters we receive from these organisations commending our children on their wonderful behaviour and manners which is a great credit to them and the staff which we as Governors are extremely proud of.

Attendance was one of the Governors' key objectives last year and we are pleased to see a vast improvement and currently our attendance levels are higher than the national requirement a great effort by parents and children. Parental engagement continues to be a strength in our school and the PTA are very hardworking organising a Movie Club once a term, egg rolling competition for Easter, Christmas Fayre and many other fun activities for the children and families. Along with the generous donation of £2000 from the FMR Trust last year (thank you so much) and money raised by the PTA for some new outside play equipment our target was reached. Praise Assemblies on a Friday morning continue to be well attended by parents and is a lovely opportunity to see what achievements the children have made not only in school but in their outside activities as well. World book day is coming up on the 7 March something the children really look forward to so enjoy all the wonderful costumes as the children journey to school.

Governors and school staff continue to be part of the West Dorset School Collaboration which gives great support sharing ideas, knowledge, and training. Our school had its recent OFSTED inspection before Christmas. The full report is available on our school website, and we have a Parents Review meeting planned for 20 March to discuss the report and hear parents' views going forward. Though it was a very robust experience it was good that OFSTED acknowledged all the schools hard work in recognising key areas of improvement and the impact of these plans beginning to show. A busy year so far and much more to come from Broadwindsor CE VC Primary School.

VILLAGE HALLS REPORT

Blackdown Village Hall

At Blackdown Village Hall, we only have two regular hall users, The Dog Club holds weekly classes, and the WI meets once a month and hold their annual flower and produce show. The Parish Council and the polling station use the hall a few times a year. The Defib machine has been removed from Kittwhistle Garage and is being put up in the outside porch of the Hall in the next few weeks. I have taken over the checking of the maintenance and checking of the machine. 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

Good Evening, I am grateful for the opportunity to present this report. Broadwindsor Comrades Hall Management Committee has faced a few challenges over the last three years following Covid restrictions, the sad loss of David Leader our Chairman and then David Chumbley a former Secretary. We are however, now pleased to report that following their efforts, ably assisted by Sheila Hawkins and with Lottery Funding the Hall is now equipped for an ecofriendly future. We were very fortunate that Andrew Hookings stepped up to become Acting Chair and steered the group through the finalisation of the new play equipment and adult exercise equipment on Bernards' Place. This area has now become a firm favourite with our local children and visiting families – something to entertain all ages! From teenagers chatting up in the Eagles Nest to families having balancing games on the see saw! The shelter area has also proven to be of great benefit for those waiting for the school bus or the walkers having their picnic there.

During the year, we have held two outside working group sessions on Bernards' Place and one inside the Hall. These have been well supported by Committee Members and indeed other villagers have turned up to support our efforts too which has been very much appreciated. Our running costs for the year have been higher as we have dealt with the following: complying with Health and Safety and Fire regulations, which involved emergency exit signs and emergency lighting updating, gutter cleaning and roof repairs, increased insurance costs, trimming of lime trees and increased electricity charges. A new commercial cooker has also been purchased. On the cosmetic side the Committee agreed that after 38 years of service the Hall curtains should be replaced to give a brighter fresher look.

In support of all the ongoing costs the Committee have been actively working towards supporting the Hall funding by reinstating the 100 Club, thank you Sara Dyke and Margaret Wing. A tabletop Sale and Big Breakfast was organised and well supported. A further tabletop sale is taking place on (March 16) and a Barn dance for the 11 May has been booked. In view of the increased running costs, it will be necessary to raise the hire charges from April, these have not changed in the last two years. There will be continued support for the coffee group and the mobile PO van, the local and discounted charges for the Brownies and Guides

and all regular users will still be applied. Looking forward, there are improvements to be made, the disabled parking area and car park needs to be updated, and internal decorating works are also due.

Our Village Halls provide a wonderful space for so many different groups and activities and it is important to be proud of this gift and for the hard work of many in the past, and to keep this legacy going. It is not any easy task to manage, maintain and improve within the considerable restraint of rules and regulations that have become necessary in society today. The considerable rise in electricity costs and maintenance bills are indeed onerous. Without the ongoing financial support of our Parish Council, it would be even harder! Without the support of our wonderful volunteers who give their time, expertise and enthusiasm and are willing to act as Trustees and serve on a Hall Committee it would not be possible. Without the support of our Village members who book the Hall and those who support and attend all the events, it truly would not be possible. I would just add that Our Annual General Meeting, which is open to all, will be held on Tuesday, 23 April, when the annual report and accounts will be presented. I look forward to seeing some of you there. Thank you.

Drimpton Village Hall

Whilst it is still a difficult time for Village Halls, we are starting to get back our pre covid foot fall. We still have our regular users and clubs, Yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi, Film Club and of course Indoor Bowls and this year we have welcomed Food Share on Friday mornings. We had our Centenary celebration this year, which was very well attended, and a great time was had by all. Needless to say, not many of us could remember the original buildings put up 100 years ago, but we had all the history written down and some great photographs. We had some good support from Artsreach and certainly look forward to having many more this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Council for their continued support and look forward to an exciting year ahead.

BROADWINDSOR GROUP PARISH CLIMATE & ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY GROUP

As reported last year, Sheila Hawkins and Susannah Madigan continue to represent the Parish Council at the monthly zoom meetings of the Dorset Council CEE Group. Councillor Dyke also attends although diary clashes result in that being less frequently. Guest speakers, including Ray Brien, Portfolio Holder for the Environment have covered topics including Dorset Council's Climate & Ecology strategy, Zero Carbon Dorset, the charity 'Nature Watch', Household waste and where it all goes, and Sheila Hawkins has presented on the Community Land Trust. A Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy for BGP has been drafted by a working group and will be discussed at the March 2024 Parish Council meeting. The Strategy will then form the basis of an Action Plan which will detail specific tasks that BGP intend to undertake. The Strategy and the Action plan cover Planning, Transport, Community, Farming/Landowners and the Natural Environment. A series of Climate Café events will be planned to take place around the parish to find out the community's views and ideas for inclusion in the draft Action Plan. On a practical level, volunteers from the Broadwindsor Eco Group, Broadwindsor Allotment Group and the local community have attended work parties helping with general

on-going maintenance of Hursey Common, both North and South Compartments. On the north side, it is predominantly general maintenance. However, on the south side, primarily thanks to the dedication of local resident, Peter Stocker, the work is more ambitious, and has led to the designation of both North and South Compartments as an SNCI– Site of Nature Conservation Interest - by Dorset Wildlife Trust. Further work planned for the rest of the year will include removal of invasive species, planning the development of the planting of understorey trees next winter, beginning to undertake baseline surveys of birds, insects, amphibians and to investigate the possibility of water sampling of the Little Axe as part of the River Axe catchment project.

BEAMINSTER AREA AND BROADWINDSOR ECO GROUPS

Broadwindsor Eco Group continues to manage and maintain a tree nursery on the allotment site in Broadwindsor. Some of the saplings, grown from seeds by Drimpton residents and transferred to the nursery in the winter of 2022, have now been returned to Drimpton. On 11 February a group of volunteers planted them – including hazel, field maple, beech, holly and privet - on the bank at the end of Oxhayes. These replace the hedgerow removed by South West Water when making the connections for the CLT housing project at Northcombe Lea. Some of the hazel from the Drimpton batch will be planted on Hursey Common at a work party this coming weekend. Volunteers participated in the main annual work party on Hursey Common in January, clearing the concrete ramps of moss and fallen leaves, cutting back brambles from around the wildflower area, rescuing one of the footpaths by removing bits of a fallen tree, removing clumps of grass growing in the car park, and clearing scrub growth from around the perimeter of the playing pitch. We'll be completing this task on Sunday 3 March. Work includes felling some sycamore, and coppicing willow, before it reaches the power lines.

Broadwindsor Eco Group and Drimpton's Making a Difference group are both represented on the committee of the umbrella organisation, Beaminster Area Eco Group, which has the capacity to provide small amounts of funding, and saplings to plant around Beaminster, Broadwindsor, Netherbury and Corscombe areas, and wider. This winter we received a batch of 250 mixed saplings, including traditional hedgerow plants, and some Oak, Beech, Rowan and Field Maple. These have been planted up in the Broadwindsor tree nursery until they are large enough to distribute for planting, possibly next winter. If there are areas that are accessible to the public (along public footpaths, country lanes in corners of marginal agricultural land) where small copses or hedgerows could be planted or infilled, please get in touch with me.

Beaminster Area Eco Group organises an annual Big Green Day in Beaminster during late September – this year on Saturday, 28- at which all things 'green' in Broadwindsor Parish are represented, including the lively Broadwindsor Allotment Group stall of fruit, flower and vegetables, given away for donations. Beaminster Area Eco Group also organise a series of talks in the Spring, taking place in The Pavilion in Beaminster. These will be open to the public as well as members. Topics include the Asian Hornet and its threat to UK honeybees (23

April), Wild Woodbury Community Rewilding Project (20 May) and the River Char Restoration Project (25 June). A quarterly Newsletter is issued to members, with details of what's going on around this area, favourite walks, pieces about bats, beavers and glow worms. Join the organisation (at no cost) and you too can find out more.

BROADWINDSOR GROUP PARISH COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

Since the idea of forming the Community Land Trust was first mooted in early 2016 as a result of information gleaned from the 2012 Parish Plan and later reinforced by the Neighbourhood Plan of 2018, a lot has happened and I would like to give a reminder of what had to happen before the houses were built at Northcombe Lea. First the Community Land Trust was set up and a steering group was tasked with acquiring suitable sites within the Parish, a few were considered but the land at Northcombe Lea was deemed to be the most suitable so the committee were in lengthy negotiations with the land owner, Dorset Council planning department and also Wessex CLT Projects who were a very valuable source of knowledge and information in getting the project off the ground. There were months of discussion and debate on how many units were required, what style of building was suitable and who we would be in partnership with to finance and construct these units, Abri Housing Association took on the role of financing and C.G.Fry were contracted to do the building, we also had financial support from Dorset Council and the Parish Council.

Now nearly eight years since the formation of the C.L.T we now have all the houses and apartments occupied which is lovely to see, from chatting to new residents at their homes and at our welcoming coffee morning in October they all seem to be very happy to be living in Northcombe Lea, I hope they feel welcome and become part of the fabric of the community as Drimpton has always welcomed new residents warmly. In November last year the B.G.P.C C.L.T. was given an award from the National Community Land Trust Organisation for Beautiful Community Led Homes a wonderful tribute to all involved. Without the support of all who have been part of the C.L.T from the beginning whether old or present committee members or local residents who have been involved, also the continuing support from the Parish Council, this wonderful project would have never been completed so huge thanks to all involved you should all be very proud to be part of this amazing community project.

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 2023/2024 the Trust provided nine grants to local projects totalling £3293.05. These were as follows:

- 1st Broadwindsor Guides, £100.00 towards a sleep over activity night
- 1st Broadwindsor Brownies, £100.00 towards a sleep over activity night
- Young Farmers, £200.00 towards new sports tops

- Broadwindsor School £750.00 for play equipment
- 1st West Dorset Rangers, £200.00 towards a visit to Parliament
- £99.00 for geocaching brochures for Broadwindsor
- £ £475.00 for Village Voices in Drimpton towards the installation of a new bench
- Two grants totalling £1369.05 for the repayment of PWLP loan for the MUGA

The Trust has invested in an Equities Investment Fund and has shares with a current value of £73,945.03 (as of 31 December 2023). The Trust receives a quarterly dividend which does fluctuate somewhere between £600 - £1400. The cash balance in the bank as of 29 February 2024, was £1,792.46. 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

Blackdown Educational Trust is a local trust that can provide some funds, on application, to local young people to assist in supporting them through further or higher education opportunities. There have been some changes regarding the personnel who make up the Trust. Celia Carmichael and Robin Loudon stepped down from their roles and were thanked for their 10 years of service. Sonia Raymond and Rebecca Burt have agreed to become Trustees, and Rebecca has agreed to act as Secretary. There were a few issues with some changes regarding the banking that was being used, resulting in a delayed payment of awards, but these issues were resolved by Angie Frampton. These changes were instigated by changes made by the bank, and not anything that the Trust had any control of. For this year, the amount that was available to be distributed as an award was £1015. This varies each year depending on interest rates and the returns on the invested capital. We received five applications and were able to award on four of those applications. The fifth did not meet the residential requirement of the Trust. Awards were £280 for three of the applicants, and £175 for the fourth, as this was a second award. Applications for 2024 awards need to be submitted to the Trust by 15 September 2024 for consideration, with decisions being made on Saturday 5 October.

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.

BROADWINDSOR ALLOTMENT GROUP

The last year was very productive and exciting for BAG members. The big story was installation of composting loo, and communal herb beds, a nice addition to the communal orchard. All plots on the site have been taken this year, with 18 individual plot holders, a few with more than one full strip under cultivation. The little orchard produced a good harvest, which was shared by plot holders. The Broadwindsor Eco Group maintains its tree nursery on Plot 20. It has been a very productive venture so far, and in November, 250 new tiny saplings sourced

from the Conservation Volunteers charity, which will be brought on until they are large enough to donate to suitable planting spaces. The Allotment Group participated in Beaminster's Big Green Day, with donations from plot holders of plot grown vegetables, fruit, flowers and seeds being given away for donations. Thanks very much to Carol and Bill, Sarah and Dom and all other helpers. Thanks to Sarah and Dom also for the banners and signage they have produced for Broadwindsor Allotment Group and the site. They have re-vamped our logo very stylishly! I would like to thank all of our member for their hard work. And finally, thanks to the Parish Council and Helen for the financial help and support.

DRIMPTON AND DISTRICT GARDENING CLUB

Thank you for inviting our club to your meeting. My name is Diana and am the secretary and with me is my colleague and treasurer of Drimpton and District Gardening Club, Julia. You may remember our club under our former name which was.....Clapton, Wayford, Drimpton and District Horticultural Society. As well as being too long to fit onto a cheque we thought that becoming a Gardening Club was less formal and really described us as we are...a group of amateur gardeners eager to learn and expand our knowledge...and appealing to gardeners like myself who are very much what can be called "plonker gardeners" i.e. dig a hole, plonk the plant in and hope for the best. This VH is our home....where we have monthly meetings, our Spring Show in April, our quiz evening and best of all our very popular and successful Summer Show in August. We are just about to get back to our 7 monthly meetings with speakers after a few months off while we had our Christmas dinner, our money raising Quiz and Pud evening in January and our AGM in February.

Our monthly talks are not just concerned with gardening. We have widened our scope to include countryside subjects, for instance we had Ross Dickinson from Racedown Farm to talk to us about regenerating hedgerows on one occasion and then again to speak to us about the history of our West Dorset countryside from Norman times to the present day.....he is an excellent speaker. And in November he is coming back again to talk to us about the trials and tribulations of farming today. Among other speakers we have coming are Sara and Simon Barrett, a local couple, talking about land management for regenerative farming (Julia, could you add a bit about this subject?) Deborah Harris from Winsham who grows flowers for a business and will talk about making a cutting garden. Then we have Jenny Short, who has visited us on many occasions, this time giving us advice on ponds and water features. We have speakers booked until June 2025 as good speakers are like hen's teeth and are booked up months in advance. We always ask our speakers to take on another task.....to judge the flower of the month competition. Each month members bring in their best bloom and the speaker places them 1st, 2nd. and 3rd. places. Points are added up at the end of the year and the winner is awarded a prize at the Christmas dinner.

Our year runs from August until July...the Summer Show is a good place to recruit new members. Currently our membership stands at 80. Our July meeting is a social evening with wine and nibbles combined with our fuchsia competition and we also start the membership renewal which takes the pressure off renewing on Summer Show Day. We belong, as so many

garden clubs do, to the Gold Club run by the Castle Gardens Group who supply us with fuchsia plug plants which we grow on for the competition at the July meeting and daffodil bulbs which we grow for the April Spring Show Competitions. This particular show is open to the public but the competition is for members only. And this month they will be giving us the free talk which is part of the Gold Club membership, and this will be on planning a border.

The Summer Show is the highlight of our year and we like to think, also, of the village year.....this year we are having our 78th Summer Show. We have an excellent show secretary who has developed the show massively over the years he has been doing this, but this is a very time consuming job and we are very grateful to Robin for taking on this never ending task.... To conclude.....we are a thriving club, always eager to attract more members, to encourage gardening in all its various ways and we are diversifying to speak to a larger audience. Thank you.

BROADWINDSOR COMMUNITY STORES

We finally completed the freehold purchase of the Old Telephone Exchange in 2023, which will ensure the long-term sustainability of our community stores in Broadwindsor. We were supported in this process by the Parish Council and our thanks go to Rowland Hibbard, Chairman, and his fellow Councillors. The trading year in 2023 has been another difficult year, with inflation impacting on shop prices let alone the ongoing issue of high energy prices. Unlike households, our community shop did not receive any financial support from Government towards our energy costs. This year, our energy costs have increased from £5.7K last year to a massive £11.2K. However, without the excellent work of our staff to keep our electricity usage to a minimum, these costs would have been much higher. Additionally, towards the end of the year, we were able to install LED lighting, which will help with our energy costs in the future. We have recorded our highest level of sales, in excess of £330K, and whilst some of the increase is due to inflation, we have also seen an increase in footfall from our ever-loyal customers. We would not continue to exist without our fantastic band of volunteers. Recently we have seen an increase in volunteers as newcomers to our community settle in and find that working in the shop is a great way to meet others in the village and find out what is going on. Jane, our manager, has worked hard to keep margins in line with our budget, and she has been well supported by Margaret and Sarah, her assistants. The shop committee thank Jane and her staff team, our wonderful volunteers and our loyal customers for their continued support.

BROADWINDSOR COMMUNITY PUB – THE WHITE LION

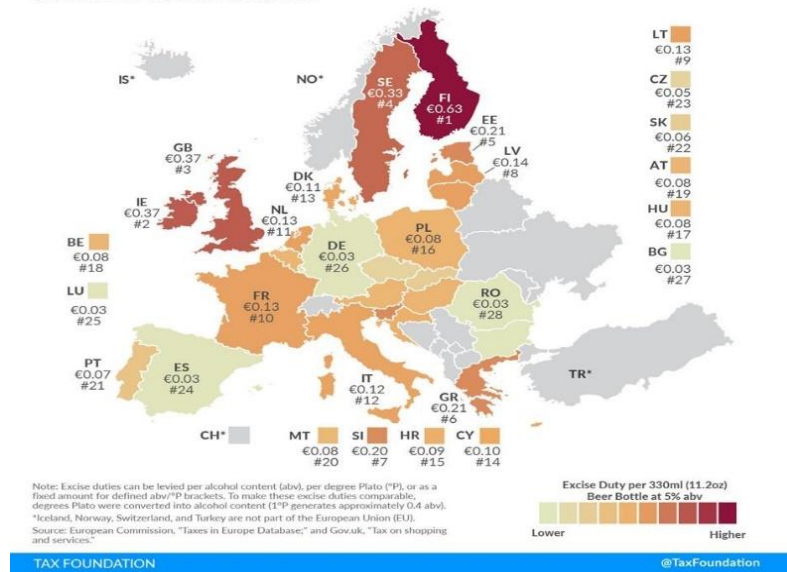
Last year we reported that the White Lion was doing well but ended by asking what future there is for the British pub when costs are spiralling upwards and yet there is little help from central government. With yet more pubs closing in the past year, including The Clock at Chideock and more recently The George in Bridport, the situation remains the same. The positives are that we have employed a new Management couple who have made a fantastic impression on the community. They could not be more welcoming, have created seasonal menus that are attracting customers from further afield as well as from locals and even

delivered 2 full sittings for lunch on Christmas day. Along with quizzes, bingo, live music and open mic nights, there is something for all and a vibrant atmosphere which is attracting an increasing number of regulars. That is all positive, but for the rest of this report we would like to focus on the issues we face along with many others in the hospitality trade. Primarily it is continuing high energy costs. The White Lion is a relatively low user in comparison to many businesses and our usage falls below the threshold applied before any benefit is received from the government’s Commercial Energy Bill Discount Scheme. The White Lion has therefore had no assistance with its spiralling energy costs. Aside from lowering the EBDS threshold for small businesses, there are two areas where we and others in the hospitality trade would like assistance:

1. Duty Relief

Freezing the level of cask duty at the last budget was welcome but it is still at a very high level compared to most of Europe, as the map below shows. The significant gap between pub and supermarket prices has driven a lot of people away from their local pub. Why not go further and reduce the on-trade duty significantly and raise off-trade to make up the difference? On-trade prices are significantly more than off-trade as it stands.

Beer Taxes in Europe
Excise Duty per 330ml (11.2oz) Beer Bottle at 5% abv in European Union (EU) Member States and the United Kingdom, as of July 2022



2. VAT

Raise the VAT threshold to £250,000. This would relieve most smaller pubs of the significant burden that VAT creates in terms of administration and allow them to charge lower prices. This wouldn’t address the cliff-edge effect of passing the threshold but the benefit to many small businesses would still be significant and quite probably a lifeline. An alternative would

be to exempt hospitality from VAT as an extension of what happened during the pandemic and create a more level playing field with the supermarkets.

With the Spring budget being delivered next Wednesday, 6 March, time is short, but we ask Chris Loder MP for his assistance in raising our plight with the Chancellor. At the Autumn statement, the chancellor specifically referenced pubs and we hope that next week’s statement is taken as an opportunity to recognise the critical need to invest in pubs, supporting their future growth.

FARESHARE

FareShare is the UK's national network of charitable food redistributors, it's made up of 18 independent organisations, they accept good quality surplus food from right across the food industry and transport it to frontline charities and community groups - this initiative was initiated by the NHS & Dorset Council. Councillor White and I started our FareShare scheme in June last year, soon we were joined by Councillors Chubb and Roberts – to put it simply we are distributing surplus food that would have been destroyed to local people at very low cost. We have a fabulous team of volunteers who support the larder each week with administration, putting up tables and assembly of the food crates and clearing everything away when we're finished. 60 - 70 residents are benefiting from the scheme every week, this surplus food is nutritious and good to eat, produce varies every week, usually including as a minimum, fresh fruit and vegetables, a source of protein and store cupboard items. FareShare is a membership scheme where members pay a small weekly fee to receive a crate with a variety of produce and anyone in the BW Group Parish Area is eligible to become a member. The Food Larder days are also being used as an opportunity to provide information on the advice, help and support available from other agencies including Citizens Advice, Social Prescribing and Live Well Dorset on a rolling programme. The sessions are open to all parishioners.

BROADWINDSOR RAINBOWS, GUIDES AND WEST DORSET RANGERS

Currently we have 40 members over the 4 sections – Rainbows (4-7) Brownies (7-10) Guides (10-14) and Rangers (14-18) we are also lucky to have 3 YLs and one Peer educator within the team and one DofE volunteer. Peer educators are young members of Girlguiding, aged between 14 and 25, who run informative sessions on subjects that are important to young women today. They cover topics like body confidence, wellbeing and gender stereotypes during face-to-face sessions for Brownies, Guides and Rangers. We have been utilising the hall a lot due to the poor weather raining off many of our autumn outdoor adventures but hope for a busy outdoor spring/summer!

Since my last report to you we have had sleepovers if that's what you call them, trips to seals cove in Bridport, beach visits, farm visits, paddleboarding as well as completing many activities within the hall. We have had visits of exotic animals, the Royal Navy and the guide dog association. The Rangers visited Parliament (on a very wet and flooded day meaning we missed our first train to London) with Chris Loder MP and his assistant where we had a tour, sat in on PMQs and Chris presented a YL leadership qualification and the Ranger sectional silver award. One presented virtually to a ranger who was with Mickie Mouse in Disneyland Paris. Following our visit, we had front row seats to watch witness for the prosecution and then a very civilised meal before heading home.

We recently joined the rest of the West Dorset units for a thinking day event where we took over seals cove for the evening on 21 February using the soft play and the climbing walls and some of our members went on the county thinking day event to Corfe Castle via the Swanage Railway steam train. Being able to run the units and attend events couldn't happen without

our volunteers to whom I'm eternally grateful and to the community who regularly support our fundraising either buying a raffle ticket at the local or supporting our events. Also, the FMR Trust who has donated funds for specific events or resources. Girlguiding is a charity and the adults who run the sessions are all volunteers who give up their personal time to support the young members of our community. We do have a Facebook page – Broadwindsor Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and West Dorset Rangers where we post some of the things we get up too. So do follow us for updates. Thank you.

POST OFFICE USERS GROUP

Customers are still adjusting to the new Mobile Post Office Service with the new days and timetable. Fortunately, the Comrades Hall Management Committee are allowing us to provide shelter in the hall foyer.(free of charge) Alongside in the Served Coffee/Tea is available run by volunteers. This also encourages social gathering. It is felt a further 3/4 months are required to allow an overall fair assessment.

BROADWINDSOR CRICKET CLUB

Councillor Frampton stated that it had been a very successful year with the Club finishing second in the league. Councillor Frampton stated that the Club has eight teams which play in a Sunday playing 40 overs and on Saturdays, the Club hosts friendlies and other teams and that there is also a long established evening league. Councillor Frampton paid thanks to the captain – Adrian Philips who runs the entire Club. Councillor Frampton stated that last year solar panels had been installed which now been that there is hot water and shower facilities which has been brilliant for players. Councillor Frampton stated that the fireworks evening had been a success and that £1800 had been raised which was being split between the Club and the village hall. Councillor Frampton stated that the Club would look to host again next year and support another local group. Councillor Frampton stated that the Club continues to lobby Councillor Christopher regarding a new footpath which would allow school children to access the ground safely for cricket coaching. Councillor Frampton reported that a new boundary board competition for sponsorship is to be launched at a cost of only £200 for five years!