

The Importance of Parish and Town Councils and of Becoming a Councillor

A view from the Chairman of the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC)

Communities need enthusiastic and hardworking parish and town councillors, who understand local issues and local needs. Councillors need to be approachable, imaginative and willing to communicate with their community in order to present sensible and well-argued cases for local issues and needs via the parish or town council. Being a town or parish councillor is sometimes challenging but always rewarding and enjoyable.

Having been a Dorset parish councillor for nearly 12 years and having been involved with parish and town councils at the county and national level, I am convinced that 2019 will be the most important year for parish and town councils in Dorset since local government re-organisation in 1974.

From May 2019 there will be only two levels of local government; the unitary councils (one covering Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and the second covering the remainder of Dorset) plus parish and town councils. This new structure will mean that parish and town councils will be even more important in how quality services are delivered to their local community.

Parish and town councils already deal with many matters affecting their communities such as development planning, where the parish or town council's view is sought by the planning department. Other matters include open spaces, playing fields, provision of allotments and supporting local clubs, libraries and village halls to name but a few. With the new unitary councils, the role of parish and town councils in these and all local matters will be enhanced and increased, but there is plenty of support from the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) in partnership with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), providing support plus promoting and improving local councils.

At such a significant time of change in Dorset, I am sure that it will be even more rewarding to be part of it.

John Parker

Chairman, Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils.