



Bothenhampton & Walditch

Parish Council since 1886

Cllrs Bolwell, Clayton & Williams
Dorset Council Councillors

Via Email

17th September 2021

We were sorry you could not attend the Bothenhampton & Walditch Parish Council Main Committee meeting on 13 September 2021.

Several residents attended the Democratic Half Hour and expressed some concerns over what they had heard on the direction of Bridport Town Council's thinking. This fed into the restricted discussion of the BTC Working Party draft report which we consider to be important in the absence of any consultation with BTC.

The Working Party proposes that the BTC recommend to Dorset Council a takeover of our parish. It dismisses rather arrogantly the views of the Bothenhampton & Walditch Parish Council itself, and glosses over the financial impact on our residents, stating that "parish council opposition does not equate to community opposition and that with the exception of the potential impact on Council Tax in the surrounding parishes, there is unlikely to be a significant rational counter-argument".

It is our view that Council Tax could well increase in Precept payment by around 500% for a Band D household. This is in itself a very real counter argument. There would also be a reduction in democratic representatives of about 50% in the Bridport neighbourhood area.

All volunteer councillors would disappear, to be replaced by town councillors on allowances, inevitably spending much of their time on town committees. Councillors would have significantly less time to attend to the local issues that are most important to our residents: play areas, open spaces, dog waste bins, potholes, safety and speed limits, tree planting and preservation, planning applications, footpaths, introducing climate emergency measures, etc. Parish councillors are also responsible for responding to Government consultations on behalf of residents. Residents will have to make representations to Bridport Town Council instead, where they will have to join the queue of other competing interests.

The argumentation in the Working Paper is furthermore at odds with the BANP, which, for example, stresses the importance of avoiding the "risk that.....the town and surrounding parishes will coalesce" and of retaining "the distinctive identities of existing individual settlements within the parishes". What will happen to our Parish Plan which integrates the BANP policies and projects in its programme?

The closer representatives are to local residents, the more they are likely to understand their concerns and to respond quickly. We talk directly to our residents when they raise concerns, often on the same day. We talk to those submitting planning applications, and neighbours who may be affected by them. We believe residents value this face-to-face interaction and responsiveness, which they get from few if any other representatives of local government. Overall, under this paper, we believe our residents will have to pay more for a worse service.

We consider this to be a reduction of democracy, ignoring differing identities, and making it more difficult for residents to access effective redress for their problems.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A Basker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

A J Basker
Chairman - Bothenhampton & Walditch Parish Council
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