

Bridport Local Area Partnership - Protocol

1. Background

- 1.1 The Bridport Local Area Partnership (BLAP) is the community planning partnership for the area covering Bridport and the surrounding parishes. The partnership includes the town and parish councils as well as local voluntary agencies, business organisations and community groups within the area.
- 1.2 The establishment of the Bridport Local Area Partnership was led by Bridport Town Council and supported by West Dorset District Council, and they are jointly funding a part-time Project Manager. The Town Council also provides offices space and administration support to the partnership.
- 1.3 The aim of community planning through partnerships is:
- i) To enable local people to voice their wishes and concerns;
 - ii) To ensure that planners and decision makers hear local views;
 - iii) To increase local people's influence on decision-making about their area and services;
 - iv) To identify and organise actions which communities can take to meet local needs;
 - v) To make service provision more responsive to community needs;
 - vi) To improve coordination between the agencies and organisations delivering local services;
 - vii) To improve efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources to serve communities; and
 - viii) To share and learn from everyone's experience.

2. Terms of Reference

- 2.1 BLAP is responsible for taking forward the community planning initiative for the area covering Bridport and the surrounding parishes.
- 2.2 The Partnership's objective is to identify, through community planning, local priorities which are agreed by local people, groups and organisations, and represent these to the West Dorset Partnership in a local area community plan. The aim is to enable local communities and organisations to influence decision-making, to work together to address local needs and to improve the coordination of services provided by public, private and voluntary agencies.
- 2.3 In doing so, the Partnership will have regard to the principles of local area community planning set out by the West Dorset District Council, which are to:
- i) Consider social, economic and environmental issues;
 - ii) Promote wide and inclusive involvement in the Partnership and its activities and ensure that the community is informed;
 - iii) Provide a key contact and liaison point for local organisations, groups and individuals;
 - iv) Take account of and act as a conduit for other processes locally which also seek to identify community needs, such as the neighbourhood plans, parish plans, village appraisals, village design statements etc.;
 - v) Represent the views of harder to reach groups and minority interests;

- vi) Mediate and negotiate between differing interests to reach a positive consensus;
- vii) Work with key local organisations/stakeholders to address local issues;
- viii) Review local priorities regularly;
- ix) Monitor and evaluate the progress of the Partnership.

2.4 Subject to resources, the Partnership may provide limited administrative or start-up support for local projects and initiatives and, also subject to resources, may undertake projects of its own.

3. Roles and Activities of the Bridport Local Area Partnership:

3.1 Partnership development

- i) Building a partnership of councils, voluntary agencies, business organisations and community groups which is fully representative of the local area, issues and communities;
- ii) Raising awareness of the Partnership, its work, community planning, the activities of partner organisations and local community issues;
- iii) Encouraging local people's engagement with the Partnership and community planning;
- iv) Ensuring the inclusion of organisations or groups to represent the views of harder-to-reach people and minority needs;
- v) Encouraging existing partnerships/umbrella groups to join or work with the BLAP;
- vi) Supporting the development of groups/fora to address underrepresented issues, areas or communities, including harder-to-reach groups and minority needs.

3.2 Working together

- i) Improving communication and working relationships between councils, service agencies, voluntary organisations, business associations and community groups in the area;
- ii) Exchanging information, experience and advice between partner organisations and with local communities;
- iii) Developing working relationships with agencies beyond the local area, including West Dorset District Council (WDDC), West Dorset Partnership (WDP), Dorset County Council (DCC) etc.

3.3 Community planning

- i) Developing and encouraging processes for consulting the local community;
- ii) Organising and participating in consultation exercises;
- iii) Supporting partners' community planning exercises (e.g. parish plans);
- iv) Considering existing consultations and plans in representing local views;
- v) Ensuring that the needs and views of harder-to-reach and minority groups are taken into account in community planning;
- vi) Mediating between interest groups to develop consensus.

3.4 Local Area Community Plan

- i) Preparing a realistic and achievable local area community plan;
- ii) Supporting the implementation of the local community plan;
- iii) Reviewing the local area community plan.

3.5 Representing local views

- i) Presenting the views of the local communities to WDDC/WDP and DCC, through the local area community plan, other documents (e.g. neighbourhood and parish plans) and meetings.
- ii) Acting as advocate promoting local issues and concerns in order to influence decisions on services and development made at district level or beyond.

3.6 Project development

- i) Establishing or identifying a source of advice and expertise for developing and funding local projects emerging from community planning.

4. Members of the Bridport Local Area Partnership

4.1 Membership

- i) Membership of the Bridport Local Area Partnership is open to all organisations, groups and individuals living or working in Bridport and the surrounding parishes.
- ii) A group/organisation/individual may register membership by giving their details to BLAP.
- iii) A list of members will be maintained by BLAP.

4.2 Rights and responsibilities of members

- i) Members will benefit from access to the sharing of information, experience and advice within the Partnership and the opportunity for their group/organisation to influence the development of community plans for the area.
- ii) Members are expected to support the work of the Partnership (see section 3), particularly by sharing information with other members and communities, supporting and participating in consultation exercises and coordinating activities with other member organisations.
- iii) All BLAP members will have equal status and the views of all members will be respected.
- iv) Members are welcome as observers at meetings of the Steering Group
- v) An Annual Assembly for all members of BLAP will be held each year.

5. Steering Group

5.1 Members of the Steering Group

- i) A Steering Group has been formed to act on behalf of the wider membership of the Bridport Local Area Partnership.
- ii) Steering group members are drawn from the member organisations of the BLAP, so that the Steering Group is representative of the local community and local issues.
- iii) A Steering Group member should represent an organisation/group which is the principal strategic community body for the area focusing on a specific community or topic.
- iv) The Steering Group can review and develop its membership at any time.
- v) BLAP will seek to develop democratic processes to determine Steering Group membership.
- vi) A list of the members of the Steering Group will be made available to all Partnership members and to the public.

- vii) Member organisations will be asked to re-confirm their commitment to the Partnership on an annual basis and a list of the member organisations of the Steering Group will be submitted every year to the BLAP Annual Assembly for approval.

5.2 Responsibilities of the Steering Group

- i) The Steering Group has the authority to act on behalf of the membership of BLAP.
- ii) The Steering Group will be responsible for determining and directing the activities of the Partnership to fulfill the roles outlined in section 3, in order to meet its community planning aims and objectives. In particular the Steering Group will be responsible for coordinating community consultation and involvement in the development of the local area community plan(s) and ensuring the development, implementation, monitoring and review of the local community plan.
- iii) The Steering Group will provide a point of contact for local organisations and communities, for sharing information and for coordinating activities.
- iv) The Steering Group will ensure that BLAP maintains a close working relationship with the WDP and follows the agreed procedures for presenting local issues to the WDP and its partners.
- v) If a member of BLAP consistently fails to support the aims of the Partnership, the Steering Group may reconsider their membership.
- vi) The Protocol for the Bridport Local Area Partnership may be reviewed by the Steering Group, and any significant changes will be reported to Partnership members.

5.3 Meetings of the Steering Group

- i) Meetings of the Steering Group will take place when necessary, but a minimum of four meetings will be held each year.
- ii) A quorum for meetings of the Steering Group will exist when one third or more of the member organisations are present at the meeting. In the event of less than one third of the member organisations being present, the meeting may proceed, but no voting decisions will be taken.
- iii) If any Steering Group member is unable to attend a meeting, they may nominate a named substitute to represent their organisation.
- iv) In order to fulfil the terms of reference of BLAP and discharge its roles and activities, member organisations on the Steering Group are encouraged to ensure that their representatives attend its meetings – thereby ensuring a full breadth of community representation. If a Steering Group member organisation is consistently unable to send a representative to meetings, the Steering Group may review that organisation's membership of the Steering Group.
- v) The Agenda will be sent out seven days before a meeting.
- vi) Items for the Steering Group agenda must be submitted 14 days before a meeting.
- vii) Meetings will be advertised and open to BLAP members and the public to attend as observers.
- viii) Steering Group members will be asked to declare any interests at the start of the meeting.
- ix) All members of the Steering Group are equal, and entitled to one vote (observers are not entitled to vote). Matters put to the vote will be determined by simple majority on a show of hands from those present; in the case of an equal vote the Chair may give a casting vote.

- x) Minutes will be taken at all meetings and circulated to all Steering Group members, to others as requested and will be available to BLAP members and the public on the website www.bridportandwestbay.co.uk.
- xi) Other members of the Partnership may be invited to a Steering Group meeting to take part in discussion, consultation or information exchange on certain issues.

6. Chair and Vice-Chair of Bridport Local Area Partnership Steering Group

6.1 Selection

- i) The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Bridport Local Area Partnership Steering Group will be elected by the Steering Group following the Annual Assembly for a period of one year.
- ii) The Steering Group may review the procedure for the selection of the Chair and Vice-Chair.

6.2 Role of the Chair

- i) To uphold and promote the Protocol of BLAP, and to interpret it where necessary;
- ii) To ensure that the Partnership operates according to its agreed working practices and that it is inclusive, transparent and open;
- iii) To ensure that the Partnership (and its Steering Group) is meeting its aims, objectives and roles according to the Protocol and carrying out activities according to agreed programmes;
- iv) To champion the work of the Partnership by attending meetings and speaking to the media;
- v) To preside over meetings of the Steering Group so that its business is carried out efficiently and with regard to the Protocol, the rights of partners and the interest of the community;
- vi) If a member behaves in an inappropriate manner the Chair may ask them to leave the meeting;
- vii) To preside over the Annual Assembly of BLAP.

6.3 Role of the Vice Chair

- i) To chair meetings of the Steering Group in the absence of the BLAP Chair.

7. Management Team

7.1 Members of the Management Team

- i) The membership consists of the Chair and Vice Chair of BLAP, leads of the Working Groups, a parish representative, a POPP representative, a Neighbourhood Plan representative and co-opted as and when appropriate.

7.2 Responsibilities of the Management Team

- i) To monitor and review the BLAP Community Plan and Action Plan
- ii) To make ongoing recommendations to the BLAP Steering Group for the Community Plan and Action Plan
- iii) To act as a consultee and to respond on behalf of BLAP to Government, Regional and local consultations on issues relevant to the Community Plan and Action Plan

- iv) To co-ordinate views on relevant issues within the Bridport area and, where possible, to represent a co-ordinated local area response
- v) To develop and promote advice and guidelines for parishes to improve local responses on community planning matters.
- vi) To have delegated responsibility to determine or resolve any matters arising between Steering Group meetings which may be referred to the Management Team by the BLAP Chair.
- vii) To consider recommendations from the BLAP Working Groups and to make recommendations to the BLAP Steering Group accordingly.

7.3 Meetings of the Management Team

- i) The Management Team will meet on a monthly basis, but can also meet on an ad hoc basis in special circumstances as the work demands, at the agreement of the members.

8. Working Groups

8.1 The Steering Group can set up working groups at any time.

8.2 The purpose and membership of each group will be agreed as required and will broadly be in line with the Action Plan priority areas.

8.3 Each working group will adopt Terms of Reference.

8.4 Each working group will appoint its own leader.

9. Annual Assembly

9.1 An Annual Assembly of the Bridport Local Area Partnership will be held each year.

9.2 The Annual Assembly will be a public meeting open to all members of BLAP and to the public.

9.3 The Assembly will be advertised, and notices sent out a minimum of two weeks in advance.

9.4 All members of BLAP will be encouraged to attend.

9.5 All members of BLAP will be entitled to vote at the Assembly; each member organisation will have one vote.

9.6 The Chairman of BLAP will present a report on the work of the Partnership in the past year.

9.7 A list of the member organisations of the Steering Group will be submitted every year to the Annual Assembly for approval.

10. Finance

10.1 Bridport Town Council will manage any funds on behalf of the Bridport Local Area Partnership.

10.2 Management and utilisation of BLAP finances will be transparent and open to public scrutiny.

10.3 A report on financial matters will be presented at the Annual Assembly.

11. Secretariat

11.1 Administrative services for the Partnership will be provided by Bridport Town Council.

11.2 Storage space for Partnership documentation etc. will be provided by Bridport Town Council.

11.3 Document storage by Bridport Town Council will include provision for access by partners and the public as appropriate.

11.4 The work of the Partnership will be supported by the part-time Project Manager, through funding and facilities provided by Bridport Town Council and WDDC.

12. Equal Opportunities

12.1 All members of the Partnership must adhere to the principles of equal opportunities.