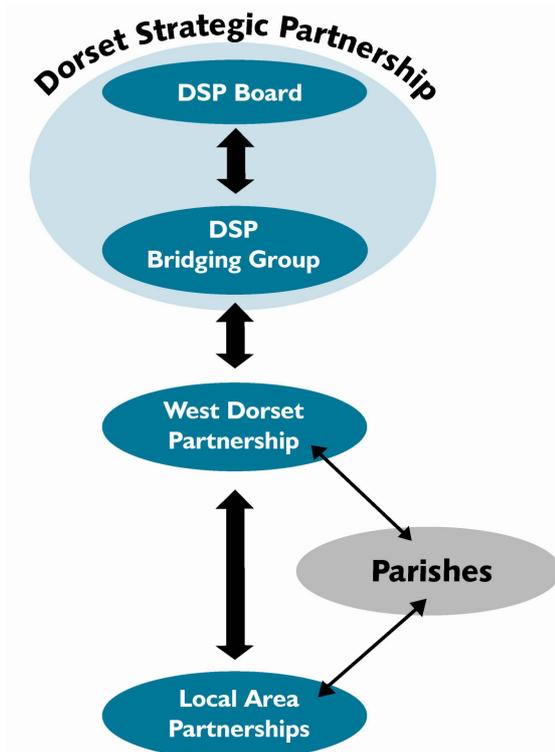




WEST DORSET PARTNERSHIP CONSTITUTION



The West Dorset Partnership is a group of local organisations committed to working together to improve the quality of life of the people of West Dorset. The role of the partnership is to produce a Community Plan that aims to help “join-up” the actions of all these public, private and voluntary sector organisations.

The aim is to give the local community the opportunity to create a shared vision for their area and identify priorities for action, which are agreed by a wide range of people, organisations and groups.

The diagram on the right outlines the different layers of community planning within West Dorset which feed into each other.

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To facilitate and support the development of community planning in the local areas of the district, and to support the work being done by Local Area Partnerships and town and parish councils to identify and articulate the needs and aspirations of local communities.
- To produce and implement a sustainable community strategy, based on evidence from, and in consultation with, the local area partnerships, parish plan groups and other sources to establish a shared vision and priorities for action in the district.
- To monitor, review and performance manage progress against the priorities and targets of the community plan through the annual report.
- To influence the work of the Dorset Strategic Partnership by identifying and feeding up the local strategic needs and aspirations.
- To facilitate better communication and direct interaction between the Local Area Partnerships and Dorset Strategic Partnership theme groups.
- To work with the Dorset Strategic Partnership to implement the relevant actions of the Dorset Community Strategy at the local level.
- To provide a forum for information exchange between West Dorset Partnership members.

- To facilitate the sharing of information on forthcoming community consultation, engagement activities and major developments and programmes and where possible integrate and / or combine these to avoid duplication.
- To work to address inequalities across the district and seek the views of those groups whose views may not be heard through other community planning or other consultation processes.
- To facilitate an alignment of the resources of member organisations, where relevant to the delivery of the sustainable community strategy.

2. MEMBERSHIP

Partnership Board

The West Dorset Partnership Board draws its members from a wide-cross section of public, private, voluntary and community organisations that operate across West Dorset. Membership is comprised of one named representative appointed by each of the organisations listed below (supporting officers where appropriate may attend):

- Age Concern Dorchester
- Beaminster and Villages Local Area Partnership
- Bridport Local Area Partnership
- Churches Together in Dorset
- Dorchester Area Community Partnership
- Dorset Agenda 21
- Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils
- Citizen Advice Bureau
- Dorset Community Action
- Dorset County Council
- Dorset Fire and Rescue
- Dorset Police
- Dorset Primary Care Trust
- Dorset Wildlife Trust
- Federation of Small Business
- Lyme Forward (Lyme Regis Local Area Partnership)
- Magna Housing Association
- Sherborne Area Partnership
- West Dorset District Council
- West Dorset Heritage Joint Advisory Committee
- Western Dorset Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

The following agencies are invited to attend as observers:

- Natural England
- South West Regional Development Agency
- Government Office for the South West.

The Partnership Board has the authority to make amendments to its membership and may, at any time, decide to change the organisations that are members of the partnership. A 2/3rds majority vote is required for any changes or additions to the membership except when an organisation voluntarily rescinds its membership. Where an organisation sends a representative to fewer than 50% of meetings each year, the partnership is entitled to review that organisation's membership of the partnership and may ask the organisation for an explanation before taking further action.

If any member is unable to attend a meeting they are encouraged to nominate a named substitute to represent them.

Partnership Network

All organisations (particularly private, community and voluntary sector) located or working within West Dorset are invited to join the West Dorset Partnership Network. The Network will be brought together at the Annual Assembly to be held each autumn and will be sent two newsletters per year. Members of the Partnership Network may feed issues into the Partnership Board through the Community Planning Officer or any organisation represented on the Board.

3. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

An independent chairperson of the whole West Dorset Partnership is appointed on a fixed term contract of four years following an open recruitment process. A press advertisement will be issued advertising the position and applicants will send in a CV and statement explaining why they would be suitable for this role. A panel of West Dorset Partnership partners will interview candidates and recommend a suitable chairperson whose appointment will then be agreed by the Partnership Board. The requirement for independence means that the chair cannot be an elected district council member, and cannot also represent any other partner organisation. A candidate who has previously represented a partner organisation may be eligible if there is another representative appointed to replace them, and if the selection panel are satisfied that the candidate will as chairperson represent the views of the whole partnership.

A travel allowance for attending meetings and an honorarium of £1,050 a year is paid to the Chair. The current term of the chair expires in April 2012.

A vice-chair will be appointed at the Annual General Meeting held each April from the Partnership Board by a majority vote of the partnership for a period of a year.

4. THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Role of the Chair:

- To uphold and promote the purpose of the constitution, and to interpret the constitution where necessary.
- To preside over meetings of the partnership so that its business can be carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of partners and in the interest of the community.
- To speak to the media regarding the work of the partnership.
- Attend public events to champion the work of the partnership.
- Ensure that the West Dorset Partnership operates according to its agreed working practices and that it is inclusive, transparent and open.
- Work with supporting officers to ensure that the partnership is achieving its aims, objectives and targets according to the agreed timetable.
- To attend and represent the partnership at the Dorset Strategic Partnership Bridging Group.
- To meet with the Local Area Partnership Chair and coordinators to feed in the local issues into the Dorset Strategic Partnership via the Bridging Group.

Role of the Vice-Chair:

- To stand in for the chair, in their absence, in accordance with the role set out for the chair.
- To liaise with the Chair in regard to setting the Board meeting agendas.

5. ROLES OF OTHER PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS ON THE BOARD

Role of Partner Organisations:

- Adopt the principles of the West Dorset Community Plan and consider them in making decisions on policy, service planning and project planning, within their own organisations.

- Have regard to the community views and requests as expressed through community plans (Local Area Partnerships and parish plans) when making decisions on policy, service planning and projects.
- Respond to the Local Area Partnerships action plans and parish plans as set out in the West Dorset Partnership protocols.
- To consider requests from the partnership for services and funding.
- To challenge existing ways of working and service delivery to increase effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness to community needs, but recognising where constraints exist.
- To raise awareness of existing services or projects and maximise the links between partner organisations to improve quality of life.
- To develop initiatives jointly to improve the quality of life and future service delivery and project planning in West Dorset.
- To provide a short bullet-point report on what is happening within the organisation to inform other partnership members.

Role of individual Organisation representatives:

- Feed back to the partner organisations the community views and needs expressed to West Dorset Partnership, and advocate their consideration in those organisations' decisions on policy, services and projects.
- Provide information from their organisations to other West Dorset Partnership members and provide feedback to their organisations on the issues, agreements etc, emerging through the West Dorset Partnership meetings.
- Within their organisations, advocate and monitor the implementation of agreed actions, especially those in the West Dorset Community Plan and Action Plans.
- Support and advocate community planning in the local areas within their organisation particularly through Local Area Partnerships and parishes.
- Highlight the need within their organisation to have regard to local communities and needs identified through local community consultation, and particularly those expressed in Local Area Partnerships plans and parish plans.
- Act as the link between their organisation and other partnership members between meetings.

6. GOVERNANCE

The West Dorset Partnership was established in the context of the requirement in the Local Government Act 2000 to prepare a community strategy. The dissolution of the Partnership would be as a result of a resolution supported by a majority of two thirds of the membership of the Board, providing that the majority of the Board are present at the meeting.

The Chief Executive of the district council or his nominee shall be clerk to the West Dorset Partnership. West Dorset District Council will act as the accountable body to the West Dorset Partnership. Any matters relating to complaints, risk assessment and financial matters that are not covered within this constitution will follow the West Dorset District Council Constitution or the district council's policies or regulations

The Community Planning Officer, employed by the district council will coordinate and support the work of the partnership with the Partnership Chair.

Funding received from partners (e.g. the Dorset Strategic Partnership) and allocated to projects will be monitored by West Dorset District Council, as the accountable body for the partnership, and reported to the West Dorset Partnership Board.

The Partnership will annually review progress against the community plan and annual action plan in the form of an annual report. The Constitution will be reviewed every 3 years and in light of future Government guidance.

7. MEETINGS, EVENTS AND GENERAL COMMUNICATION

The West Dorset Partnership will meet formally five times a year and on such other occasions as the chair may in his/her discretion deem appropriate to fulfil the functions of the partnership. The chair may cancel any meeting if in his/her opinion there is insufficient business to be transacted.

The place and time of meetings will be determined by the clerk to the partnership and notified in the summons.

The Annual General Meeting will be held each April and an Annual Assembly will be held each autumn.

The partnership may appoint working parties, as it considers necessary, to advise it in the discharge of its functions.

The West Dorset Partnership Network will be kept informed of the work of the Partnership and its members through the Partnership website (currently www.dorsetforyou.com/communityplan/west) and two newsletters per year.

8. PROCEEDINGS OF THE WEST DORSET PARTNERSHIP BOARD

- The agenda is drawn up by the clerk in consultation with the Chair and vice-chair of the partnership, and the community planning officer.
 - Members are encouraged to ask for items to be included on the agenda and provide agenda papers, giving at least ten days notice.
 - The clerk will give notice to partners of the time and place of any meeting.
 - At least five working days before a meeting, the clerk will send a summons to every partner.
 - The summons will give the date, time and place of each meeting and specify the business to be transacted.
 - Matters of urgency may be raised without notice at a meeting.
- Members and substitutes must declare if they have any personal interest in a matter under discussion, i.e. an interest which is greater than that of other persons in the district, and the decision on the matter would affect their well being or the financial position of themselves, a relative or friend or the body which they represent.
 - Having declared such an interest the member may stay, and speak and vote on the matter.
 - The member will, if they consider that they have a personal interest in a matter, need to then consider whether the personal interest is a prejudicial one, i.e. one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the member's judgment of the public interest.
 - A member declaring a prejudicial interest should neither speak or vote on the issue, but leave the room for the duration of that item on the agenda.
- The Quorum of the West Dorset Partnership will be a quarter of the member organisations (this is currently 7).
 - At the beginning or during any meeting if the Chair counts the number of partners present and declares there is not a quorum, and then the meeting will adjourn immediately.
 - Remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chair. If he/she does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next meeting.
- Decisions will be made in a democratic manner with all partners having an equal voice.
 - Each partnership organisations will have one vote.

- Observers are not entitled to vote (unless they are the only representative from their organisation).
 - Any matter, other than those on membership above, will be decided by a simple majority of those partners voting and present in the room at the time the question is put.
 - The chair will take the vote by a show of hands, or if there is no dissent, by the affirmation of the meeting.
 - If there are equal numbers of votes for and against, the chair will have a second or casting vote.
 - There will be no restriction on how the chair chooses to exercise a casting vote.
- The clerk shall keep a note of the proceedings of all partnership meetings and shall record the names of the partners and others present at such meetings.
 - The notes of the meeting shall be open to inspection and available on the Partnership's webpage.
 - Meetings of the West Dorset Partnership are open to the press and public to attend as observers.

9. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

West Dorset Partnership recognises the value of diversity and will promote equality of access and opportunity, promote good relations, and combat discrimination in the way we operate. The West Dorset Partnership commits itself to fairness and equality for all, operating with professionalism, integrity and openness, and a belief that everyone is entitled to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness whatever their race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or age. The Partnership will seek to address inequalities by ensuring, through its work, that everyone in West Dorset has an equal opportunity to access services, facilities and activities and can influence local decision making. We expect a commitment from all members and substitutes of the West Dorset Partnership to implement equality legislation to improve service delivery and to ensure that their action does not lead to unlawful discrimination.

16 July 2008