

Annual Report to the Parish Council 2018

Jill Haynes Three Valleys Division

It has been an extremely busy and I feel productive year at DCC. Much of the work in health issues that I am involved in is not particularly visible to the public but is making a difference. As there is so much happening I am going to keep my report brief in each area but I am happy to discuss any particular area in greater detail as required.

Over a year ago Dorset provided a submission to central Government to change from two tiers to single tier local government. This means that the District and County Councils would be dissolved and replaced by new councils. This was finally agreed in February and there will now be two councils instead of nine. The first area being the urban area, including Christchurch, Bournemouth and Poole and the other covering the rest of Dorset.

This now gives a very tight timescale to create these two new councils. A shadow authority for each council will be formed in June of this year and a shadow Executive of 10 county councillors and 10 district councillors will oversee the setting up of the new council. In this area the new council will be called the Dorset Council. We are currently advertising for the three principal officers for the new authority. Across the area the number of councillors will reduce from 211 to 82 with each councillor representing just under 4000 people. The new areas for the councillors will be out to consultation shortly with elections in May next year. The new council will “go live” on the 1st April 2019. All staff from the current councils will be transferred to the new organisation. This includes some 15,000 people from the county council and 900 from the districts. A large amount of work needs to be done to confirm the governance and policy arrangements for the new council. We also need to ensure that the IT systems talk to each other and rationalise the Council Tax across the area. Most importantly we need to ensure that people who are in receipt of council services remain safe and have a seamless move to the new authority.

We were expecting this announcement over a year ago and at this late stage it will not be possible to make big changes to staffing or building use. Certainly this will need to be tackled as a matter of urgency when the new councillors are elected.

There have been considerable pressures in both the children’s and adult’s budgets in the last financial year. In addition to the savings that have to be found due to the cuts in Government Grant for these areas we are finding increasing complex needs are making the cost of caring for people much more expensive. Although the budget for adults will be balanced this year we still need to find further savings of £9 M next year. (Total budget £89M) The Children’s budget will be overspent this year but covered by some “one off” money; the directorate will be trying to find a further £6M

next year on a £60M budget. This amounts to savings of some 10% on each budget and is going to be very hard to achieve without cuts to services.

Dorset Waste Partnership on the other hand is performing very well. We are currently rated as the best waste service in the country and they look to be about £900K underspent.

I feel that I must say a big thank you to all our staff for their hard work in the two big falls of snow that we had recently. Many were working very long days in terrible conditions to keep people safe and the roads open as best they could. When this kind of weather happens there is a 24 hour incident control room permanently staffed and in contact with all the emergency services. Also a big thank you to the many people with 4X4 vehicles who went out and helped others, took nurses to work, or carers to their clients. It was a massive effort and we often forget the hard work of the council employees. Another bit of good news is that the government has given the Council an additional £1.4M to help with potholes caused by the bad weather on top of the £750K we received in November.

We are the first county in the country to use modular housing for Adult Social Care needs. Cabinet has agreed to put forward £1.5M to start the process and we have been working to put together a package with social investors, developers and housing associations to provide a total of 130 units on council owned land in the next two years. We know that over five years we will need some 250 new units of housing to keep those who need our support living in county. Many of these are people with a physical or learning disability, in particular those on the autistic spectrum, where living in shared accommodation will not work for them. Some of the units will be used for key workers to support those who need care.

We continue to work hard with other health organisations and the NHS locally to better integrate our services. We have set up the Dorset Care Record which allows health professionals to access and share patient information. Using this system paramedics will soon be able to see the case history and GP notes and patients will have to only tell their story once. It has started to be used in Poole hospital area and will roll out across the county in the coming months. We are now jointly commissioning day care and residential care with the NHS, this gives us much greater purchasing power and has stopped the competition between organisations for a scarce resource.

The Council is working closely with the District, blue light services and Health to look how the whole of the public estate could benefit the people of Dorset. Property, if it becomes surplus now, is offered to other public organisations first and in each area we are looking to create a master plan of what facilities are needed over a 10 year period. In particular we are looking to build a number of care villages across the area to provide various solutions to people as they get older.

We all know that there are not enough care workers for our older population, particularly in rural areas. We are looking at ways we can help set up micro businesses and let the workers operate in their immediate communities. We will be offering more personal budgets for people to decide what care they want and when they receive it using these local agents.

Rural transport has been an issue for many years now. We have all seen the busses with just one or two passengers going through our villages. We know how very important these links are for people but we cannot continue to subsidise busses in this way. We have been doing a big piece of work with the NHS non-emergency transport and also the transport to our day centres to see how we can find a more holistic solution to this problem. This seems to now be working well in most of our communities and we hope that more options will continue to be rolled out in future months.