

Budget Speech

Dorset – The natural destination with choice

We are here today to set the Dorset County Council 2018-19 budget. Important to this is respecting change in residents needs, basing discussions on evidence, but also meeting their expectations. The way people lead their lives changes constantly, and particularly over the past 5 years with the use of technology in their everyday lives, this means we need to adapt and have that flexibility of delivery too. This provides a huge opportunity for how we deliver services, with others, and how we invest in our staff. Our evidential data has become far more targeted with the County Council, our district and boroughs, town and parishes along with other public sector, community and private sector partners, now having greater in-depth understanding of what and where those needs are. Greater sharing of data and evidence is now a given.

As a Council, we have set some principles which align with our residents views. These are personalisation, community based, delivery, prevention, early help and the ability for choice to empower independent living, and the ability from our delivery front line and from residents to have a curiosity and ability to adapt to that individual need. These principles assist in giving our senior leadership teams and all our staff, who have first-hand experience of working with residents, that ability to make the most of the whole Dorset £. The outcome is to invest in people and connectivity.

We all face financial constraints, but this should not stop us listening to residents and making sure we are delivering services that make a positive difference to people's lives.

But we can't do that by ourselves: we will need to work even more closely with our communities and partners to help people be safe, healthy and independent, and make sure Dorset is a great place to live and work.

As I run through some of the issues this budget is set to address, you will see that already a great deal is happening, with more coming, we are really setting a pace for joint collaborative work.

Investing in people – this is both investing in resident services through that personalisation and independence agenda and investing in our staff. For both, that requires matching need with delivery – the examples being shown today show some of what this can mean. The key to much of this is swift joined up work together, and technology plays a really key role.

So investing in connectivity – this is about Communications and infrastructure, which are essential, particularly in an area such as Dorset, where we have a mixed economy and diversity between rural and urban living.

Our focus contained within the budget financials are plans which need to focus on the areas where our spend is highest and where demand needs to be addressed.

This means:

- For our very young people – early help which is more visibly available in locations where families are based – that early help agenda working with our health partners and schools.

- For those young people faced with care issues – a two pronged approach – early help but also to provide facilities within Dorset to look after them, more social care, more foster families and more places for special educational needs to be provided within our scope.
- Independence is a core ambition for our residents – and that is what adult social care along with our very successful work with our health partners is delivering – not only the return to home agenda, but the early help and prevention agenda of not having to go to the acute NHS Service to start with. The Dorset Care Record is just the most amazing, pioneering investment we have made to joint up health and social care records, nationally recognised and for Dorset, we took that risk when others didn't, but it was the right choice based on evidence.
- Prevention comes in the form of many issues – for Dorset we have the most excellent and still emerging prevention agenda, working with public health and the NHS – our environment team is being hailed in the HWB Board world as the best practice.
- All in all, we have some fantastic work already making a difference, but we need more of it, to spread best practice across the whole geography of Dorset. The budget you have before you will help to deliver that, the budget builds on working collaboratively with others, so that the Dorset £ can work harder than it has before. Our partners are key – and it is that natural destination of Dorset which is our goal – to live, grow up, stay, flourish, be safe independent healthy and prosperous.

So working with others in the County, Parish & Town Councils, MP's, the public sector, we all recognise the co-responsibility for getting the most out of the whole Dorset £. We continue to press for fairer funding for our residents through these networks and those regionally and nationally, the CCN (County Council Network), LGA (Local Government Association) and others. This is a collective, but we are here today to take the responsible steps to ensure we have a budget set with services provided, to provide safe, healthy living for our communities.

The position we find ourselves in today as Councillors, elected members safeguarding the taxpayers spend is a collective responsibility, and one which stretches across many diverse communities and needs. We are deciding on a budget where the spend is about 2/3 directed to social care across the ages – just one placement from Children's area can add an extra £300k to that budget with no notice for instance, we must address that and are, so the place based approach to delivery of early help with partners is key.