

## **Question by Cllr C Reynolds – West Dorset District Council**

**Q:** Given the time and effort expended by the senior executive of WDDC, supported by LGRC and the principle West Dorset Town Councils in reaching a financially sustainable proposition, which is aimed at delivering key local services following the implementation of the new unitary authority:

Is it the intention of the Shadow Executive to look to support the work undertaken thereby endorsing the significant effort afforded to this project by all concerned, mindful of the clear strategic objectives both in service delivery and cost, that it has sought to maintain, or alternatively is the Shadow executive seeking to undermine the proposition thereby creating an environment of uncertainty and potential distrust across West Dorset?

**A:** Thank you Cllr Reynolds for your question which relates to agenda item seven on the agenda. I am also aware that West Dorset District Councils Strategy Committee, who met this week, did not consider the paper on the transfer of assets to town and parish councils.

The predecessor to this shadow executive, the Joint Committee, on the 18 June adopted the Protocol on Spending Commitments that we see in paragraph 3.2 in the report before us today. This protocol needs to be adhered to and requires any items that could have a financial impact on the new council to be initially assessed by the interim S151, and if it has significant financial impact, seek approval by the Shadow Executive.

The work you refer to, of which this SEC is not party to the detail because there has yet to be a public report, could fall within the protocol and therefore remit of this committee. When a paper is published we will use the agreed protocol to review this and take any decision accordingly.

However, perhaps it would help if I gave some clarity here about the issue of services currently delivered by County or District/Borough Councils at present, and an emerging view of the Shadow Executive. We are not in the business of 'dumping' services to other local authorities or agencies, we are also not looking to remove services – but we have to be realistic about the financial position of the new authority and its priorities and ask ourselves the question, who is best to deliver these local services. Many of these are not income generating but are highly visible to the public at large. If as a result of negotiations between sovereign councils that currently deliver these services and future service delivery organisations, deals are proposed that deliver on the principles set out here today – there should not be an issue.

**vii** states – where a council has negotiated the devolution of a service to a town or parish council and asset is transferred to support the deliver of that service, there will be no financial loss to the new Dorset Council i.e. the transfer cost is neutral.

If therefore proposals are put forward that do not adhere to these principles then the SEC will have to take a view of these based on the facts available to them – which in the case you raise we do not have here today so cannot make any further comments.