

LEADER'S BUDGET SPEECH 2017/18

The world of local government and public service provision continues to change at speed. Today's budget provides the foundation to deliver our ambitions for North Dorset and continue to transform the way we operate.

Before looking ahead, it is useful to reflect on some of what we have achieved over the past year....

On Customer Focus

Our latest performance shows

96% of all of phone calls answered compared to 92% last year

100% of complaints were dealt with within target

And a new streamlined corporate complaints procedure has recently been introduced to make current performance sustainable.

Stour Valley & Poole Partnership (SVPP) – Both improved performance and delivery of financial savings of £89,000 in addition to the £116,000 achieved last year

Time taken to process new benefit claims reduced from 23.5 days to 20 days

Housing Benefit Change of circumstances reduced from 13.06 days to 8 days

On Land Charges

The average days to process Land Charge searches (working days) is 10 days compared to the target of 15

Payments to Businesses who trade with the council showed 649 out of 651 invoices were paid within 30 days

Electronic payment to all suppliers will be achieved following the alignment of the finance systems across the partnership

Focusing on Development Management

The Development Services Improvement Plan is in place and has led to major service redesign. 100% of 'Major' planning applications were determined within 13 weeks or by the agreed extension of time so far this year.

The Latest quarter shows 84% of 'Minor' planning applications were determined within 8 weeks or agreed extension.

This is the best performance over the last 2 years.

On our Business & Commercial Activity

Our Investment income is the 4th highest performance across 132 Local Authorities

Historically the income from Treasury Management was £40k when interest rates were 0.5%. Our new strategy and approach means that despite rates halving to 0.25% for the 2017/18 our budgeted income will be £190k

If I refer to Property Management

We have adopted a more commercial approach to manage assets through bringing in a private sector partner. The PSP Limited Liability Partnership is now set up.

The Council Office site at Nordon has been actively marketed. It is intended that this will leave our desired legacy with quality housing of mixed tenure on the site. It will reduce on-going property costs and achieve a capital receipt for the Council.

Some detail on Partnership working..

Our cutting edge **Dorset Councils' Partnership** has helped management capacity, brought in extra skills and delivered financial savings.

By bringing the Parking service back in house and managing it across the partnership we will generate £21,000 for the coming year

In Finance, savings of £48,000 will be achieved as finance systems are aligned.

The work of the team has been nationally recognised and they are shortlisted for finance team of the year.....

The IT service was smoothly brought in house. This will deliver savings of £51,000 for 2017/18

Mentioning the Dorset Waste Partnership

The service across Dorset has been stabilised and the partnership will deliver savings of £60k for the coming year

The South West Audit Partnership (SWAP)

The leading edge audit partnership has also been shortlisted by CIPFA for the “innovation in audit award”

To the Future

I must mention Local Government Reform. I am so proud of this Council; our 100% support for reorganisation is a testament to the level of understanding and respect you all have for our residents.

But let's be clear. LGR is not a panacea for all of Dorset's budgetary problems, but it will make large savings.

However there is more to be gained than savings alone, it is that one-off opportunity to reshape the governance of Dorset Rural, for the benefit of everyone that drives us toward a simpler, more accountable, and cost effective, local authority.

But whether or not the Secretary of State is minded to approve our proposals for **Future Dorset** we will continue to deliver our agenda for change

Mr Chairman, in so proposing the budget as tabled, I would like to pay tribute to the finance team for their work preparing the budget—total professionals as always.

Throughout this organisation, staff are rising to the challenge, working in new ways and delivering quality services day after day.

In a break with tradition I am handing over to Cllr Batstone, as finance portfolio holder to second my proposal and give a detailed presentation on our budget.