

Well Graham, you can't threaten me with the Finance Portfolio anymore or South West Councils great get togethers.

So what am I going to say??

3rd August 2016 newspaper

New leader elected for North Dorset District Council

The new leader of North Dorset District Council has been elected.

Graham Carr-Jones has replaced Deborah Croney, who announced she was stepping down last month after becoming county council cabinet member for learning and skills.

Mr Carr Jones has been a councillor since 2003 and was previously the deputy leader on the Conservative-run authority.

He said he was "really looking forward to taking on this new role"

He was right, because this was a totally new role.

I have only known 3 Leaders of North Dorset District Council and they have all been very different each one had to take on a different role because each one faced a different Challenge. Graham was right in his quote that this was a new role because this was a Challenge North Dorset had never previously encountered in fact very few Councils had at that time come across Local Government Reorganisation. There was no template for Dorset for him to follow

Thankfully, Deborah was a great believer in Succession Planning and the day Graham took the helm he was already up to speed with everything that was going on and that was essential for North Dorset having a voice at the table of the many meetings that we attended.

Graham was reported in Somerset Live, to be one of 6 Council Leaders pledging their commitment to plans to change local government in the county,

He said: “The future Dorset Plan will bring £108million of savings in the first 6 years through economies of scale and reduced costs.”

“These savings could turn the tide and make money available to empty the bins, fix the roads, protect Parks and Open Spaces and run libraries- things that will be under very real threat if there is no change.”

He said, “The reduction in the number of Councillors – currently standing at 330 across the Authorities – would save more than £1million in costs.”

Graham has been very clear and open from the start as to the reasons why Local Government Reorganisation was necessary but there were long periods of frustration whilst we waited for news. It was essential that Government did not forget us with all the other things they had on their plates. To keep our aspiration in governments, mind alive on a number of occasions Graham and others would visit Parliament to ensure that the Secretary of State and others were keeping things on track to come into effect in April 2019 and these visits to Ministers obviously paid off.

Many, many meetings were held and we spent many hours with all the Leaders and Chief Execs, but at the time of the Somerset reporting 3 Councils were not on side and that made for meetings where certain Leaders were not given a Mandate to speak from their councils so at times it seemed that progress was slow and though frustrating Graham kept his cool, until on the drive home, when he would bend my ear but that is how it should be

In those meetings, the leaders sit around the centre tables and the deputies sit behind them around the edge of the room quietly, it is very formal. At the beginning of my involvement leaders started to talk about planning in Dorset at that point Graham asked the Chair if they would like the chairman of the Dorset Strategic Planning Forum Cllr Walsh to come to the table and address them? the response was in the affirmative. Thankfully I was still awake but totally unprepared and in David trying to wing it very enthusiastically definitely over enthusiastically. The Dorset Strategic Planning Forum was nearly dissolved for having aspirations to take over the world. I knew that I had mucked up and Graham just looked at me and said “well you really messed that up didn’t you?” Yes, Graham but a bit of warning next time would help. at least from that point those around the table knew that I had a voice and was not just there to carry my leader’s bag

Though he can be diplomatic. One of Graham's strengths is his forthrightness. To Graham a spade is a spade and he will speak straight to the point when others would perhaps pussy foot around until the next meeting, but he was disciplined in his approach and was always willing to listen to the views of others....before ignoring them! People trust him because he means what he says and he says what he means you always know where you stand with Graham being a man of loyalty and honour, he is great to have on your side and he will do whatever he can to support his members regardless of their party politics if you mucked up but were straight with him, he would be your best advocate

Working with Graham, I have seen his confidence grow and grow, now making quite a presence in even the highest of forums, where not only is he listened to, but his views are sought.

9 months ago, we received the go ahead from government and from then on we had to pick up the momentum to be safe and legal for Day 1.

All the way through this long process, Graham's concern was keeping everyone informed, involved and in the loop Members and Public alike so it was well suited when Graham was made Lead at the Shadow Council on Member Engagement and Communications realised as vital by everyone and in this role, he made great strides forward.

Graham hated that less was going on for member involvement which is why he pushed for members to be engaged and attend as many briefings as could be given Members then being conduits would disperse that information down to their Towns and Parish Councils So that everyone would know what was going on

Graham is dedicated and very hard working, I know for a fact that his work day starts at 5 am

No one could have worked harder than he has, leading us all, with eyes wide open into an unknown new era of Local Government for Dorset. I have learnt a great deal from Graham and listened sometimes in awe after he has spoken, I am left thinking, where did he pull that gem from?

Graham Carr-Jones it has been a pleasure working with you: At times

and for what you have done what you have achieved for all the people of North Dorset I thank you and applaud you