

LAST COUNCIL

It is not very often in one's lifetime that we knowingly participate in a moment of genuine History.

Today; fellow councillors, officers, ladies and gentlemen is one such day.

We may not generate the impact of a Tsunami or major Earthquake. Indeed your grandchildren may never ask "where were you at the end of the NDDC" - but nevertheless today marks a major and fundamental change in the structure of local government, here, and indeed across our county.

What we commemorate today affects the lives of everyone, the councillors, officers, residents, services users and suppliers of NDDC. It affects all of our constituents, the names and boundaries of our wards and, in due course, it will impact on the duties and responsibilities of town and parish councils throughout Dorset.

We must make some time today to look back and recognise our Past Achievements

Having lived under the NDDC umbrella for over 50 years and been a councillor for 12 years I can say that during my time alone there are have certainly been people and accomplishments that we can all be proud of. I am delighted that some of those people are here today and later we will all have the opportunity to thank them for their dedication and their service.

I have typed up my personal memories and pride in our accomplishments and have placed them on the display table – otherwise we would have been here all day!

But I would just like to share a quote from Hilary Ritchie, who cannot be with us, speaking about the Community Partnership model "The combination of building strength in the community right across the district and being able to support them with staff and office resources and project funding was a real and lasting success and legacy. It was the envy of many, but took the bravery of our little authority to achieve.

And a message from Hilary:-

"I am sorry not to be there with you today. NDDC deserves to be celebrating all that it has achieved. It was always the best Dorset council by far (and I believe better than most others as well) and was never afraid to try something new.

We had so many notable successes over the years. For a small authority with a small budget to always be positive and find ways of making things happen, so that our community had what it needed and wanted, was no mean feat. But we did it. Not just once, but time and again. We always worked with and for our community and wherever possible, gave them the choices and empowerment."

I echo that view and have been extremely proud to be a member of this council – and even prouder to be its chairman.

So let us take a moment to consider the Future

Changing the name, the boundaries and even the remit of the new Unitary Authority will not and cannot, alter the challenges we face.

North Dorset will not disappear with the council boundary.

Our constituents will continue to struggle with the consequences of poor communications, both physical and electronic.

We must work together to tackle the problems of personal and rural isolation, find the means to deal with the strains on our social and health care services, and develop the education and training resources needed to improve our local economy. Everyone here has been working hard on activities, projects and programmes - all intended to improve our quality of life. Everybody here knows the work isn't done yet!

So we come to the end of NDDC

There are some things that we must give upour chain of office, our seal, our jobs and 'job titles' - even our leader!

But there are other things which I believe we must never lose. Things that I have been particularly proud of about the way this council behaves and conducts itself

- We have kept and continue to keep a sense of duty and responsibility to our residents
- We behave with civility to each other - whatever our persuasions (I use the term loosely)
- We act with respect and appreciation for our officers
- We have worked hard to acquire the confidence and knowledge to challenge officers and their departments, when required
- We have been frugal – we have dug deep and taken tough and unpalatable decisions – working in cooperation to make the best and most effective use of ever dwindling resources
- But above all, I believe we have worked with the principles of honesty and fairness and a willingness to hear, (if not always to embrace) another's point of view.

I believe, my fellow councillors, that these are the lasting attributes and qualities of North Dorset District Council. That is what makes us special.

It is my sincerest hope, that those who are elected in May, will take our values and principles with them. Lead by example and encourage (no insist) that the new Dorset Council adopts them.

Thank you for coming today. Thank you for everything you have done in the past. I salute you all.