

WEST DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING – 26 FEBRUARY 2019

PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT FOR THE PERIOD UP TO AND INCLUDING FEBRUARY 2019

1. Corporate: Councillor P Barrowcliff - Portfolio Holder's Report

Strategy Committee decisions within this Portfolio

Quarter 3 Business Review Report

Universal Credit

The national press has been reporting on issues with Universal Credit. West Dorset has been taking the following steps to assist our claimants.

1. Many Universal Credit (UC) claimants struggle with the initial claim process. In order to help support these claimants we are providing advice and guidance to those that contact us direct and we are funding two CAB Case Workers (across PDC, WDDC and WPBC). The role of the Case Workers is to help with the initial claim process as well as assisting with general issues. The cost of this funding is £60k per year.
2. Providing funding of £7,600 per year to the Digital Champion scheme. This scheme is run by the Dorset Superfast Broadband Team and helps train volunteers who then help individuals to become more familiar with the internet. As UC has to be claimed "on-line", this support is useful to those who have little or no knowledge or experience of using the internet.
3. Providing Personal Budgeting Support to those claimants who wish to access this support. This involves having an interview with the customer, reviewing their existing arrangements and advising where improvements can be made. This includes identifying any benefits/income they may be entitled to but not claiming.
3. Organising regular stakeholder workshops. The workshop is used as an opportunity to share information and discuss issues. The CAB and Department for Works & Pensions attend these workshops.

Beaminster ATM attempted theft

Members will be aware that there was an attempted theft of an ATM in Beaminster in August last year where an ATM was ripped out of a listed building resulting in partial demolition of a listed building in The Square thus causing significant disruption to parking, traffic and local businesses. A program of support was developed following a meeting that included local businesses, DCC, WDDC, councillors and the Town Council. WDDC's contribution to assist those businesses included financial support in the form of business rates relief and provision of some free parking. Firstly businesses were contacted to ensure that they had claimed SBBR (Small Business Rates Relief). Secondly WDDC supported those local town centre businesses who had a rates liability, who were affected by the attempted ATM theft and who could demonstrate that they had been affected financially by awarding them a six months

rates holiday (the maximum time we have estimated that business will have been affected). To date we have provided £24,000 financial support.

Land Charges

Members will be aware that over the last years our land Charges turnaround times were well over our targets and causing considerable delay and disruption to many parties. WDDC instituted an Action Plan to remedy the situation which has now borne fruit. From a turnaround time of several weeks land charges search turnarounds for WDDC are now down to 5 working days, well within all relevant targets. It is also great news to be able to record that the achievements of the Land Charges Unit have now been more widely recognised with all 3 councils in DCP being shortlisted in the Local Land Charges Awards for Excellence 2019 as the Most Improved NLIS Service. The fact that all 3 councils have been recognised is testament to the benefit of a single team approach used by the Land Charges Unit to deliver its services and is a credit to all staff involved. The winner of the award will be announced on 4th March 2019.

2. Environmental Protection & Assets: Councillor J Russell - Portfolio Holder's Report

Strategy Committee Decisions within this Portfolio

New visual arts venue in Sherborne – request for rights of access and a lease of parking spaces in Old Market Car Park
Leasing of the Grove in Bridport

3. Planning: Councillor I Gardner - Portfolio Holder's Report

Strategy Committee Decisions within this Portfolio

Adoption of Dorset AONB Management Plan 2019 - 2024

4. Housing: Councillor T Yarker - Portfolio Holder's Report

Strategy Committee Decisions within this Portfolio

No decisions

5. Enabling: Councillor M Penfold - Portfolio Holder's Report

Strategy Committee Decisions within this Portfolio

Annual Report for Dorchester Sports Centre and update on the resolution of build defects

Grant request from St Osmunds Middle School

Request for grant and loan from Cam Vale Parish Council

Allocation of grant to the Bridport Museums Trust

Allocation of grant to the Beaminster Town Council

Support for town centre improvements in Dorchester

Grant funding of Beaminster Public Conveniences Project

New visual arts venue in Sherborne – request for rights of access and a lease of parking spaces in Old Market Car Park

Leasing of the Grove in Bridport

6. Equalities: Councillor S Jones - Portfolio Holder's Report

Strategy Committee Decisions within this Portfolio

No decisions

7. Community Safety & Access: Councillor A Thacker - Portfolio Holder's Report

Strategy Committee Decisions within this Portfolio

Review of Dog Control Orders

8. Sustainability – Councillor M Hall – Portfolio Holder's Report

Strategy Committee Decisions within this Portfolio

No decisions

9. Vulnerable residents: Councillor S Hosford – Portfolio Holder's Report

Strategy Committee Decisions within this Portfolio

No decisions