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DORSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2022

Present: Cllrs Tony Alford, Jon Andrews, Richard Biggs, Cherry Brooks, Alex Brenton, Piers Brown, Graham Carr-Jones, Simon Christopher, Kelvin Clayton, Robin Cook, Jean Dunseith, Matthew Hall, Paul Harrison, Sherry Jespersen, Carole Jones, Stella Jones, Andrew Kerby, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Howard Legg, Robin Legg, Jon Orrell, Emma Parker, Andrew Parry, Mary Penfold, Bill Pipe, Byron Quayle, Molly Rennie, Maria Roe, Jane Somper, Clare Sutton, David Tooke, Kate Wheller, Sarah Williams, Jill Haynes, Mike Parkes (Vice-Chairman), Ryan Hope, Rob Hughes, Tony Ferrari, Beryl Ezzard, Andrew Starr, Derek Beer, Cathy Lugg, David Gray, Toni Coombs, Gill Taylor, Barry Goringe, Pete Barrow, Brian Heatley, Ryan Holloway, Pauline Batstone, Nick Ireland, Andy Canning, Paul Kimber, Laura Miller, David Morgan, Louie O'Leary, Ray Bryan, Shane Bartlett, Val Potheary (Chairman), Mark Roberts, Spencer Flower, David Shortell, Gary Suttle, Roland Tarr, Simon Gibson, Bill Trite, Les Fry, Peter Wharf and Rod Adkins

Apologies: Cllrs Mike Barron, Dave Bolwell, Janet Dover, Rebecca Knox, David Taylor, John Worth, Mike Dyer, David Walsh, Tim Cook, Belinda Ridout, Julie Robinson and Susan Cocking

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Susan Dallison (Democratic Services Team Leader), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), Hayley Caves (Member Development and Support Officer), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Jacqui Andrews (Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services), Elaine Tibble (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and George Dare (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

60. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held in May, July, October and December 2021 were approved and signed as a correct record.

61. Declarations of Interest

The following members declared an interest in item 11, the Community Governance Review, as they had previously participated and voted on the item as members of their local Parish or Town Council.

Cllrs: Val Potheary, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Sarah William, Byron Quale, David Tooke, Gill Taylor, Kelvin Clayton, Jon Orrell, Kate Wheller, Paul Harrison, David Gray, Pete Barrow, Howard Legg, Tony Ferrari, Gary Suttle, Andrew Parry and Shane Bartlett.

62. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman congratulated Cllr Les Fry on the award of his British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours List.

The Chairman announced the death of Honorary Alderman Dr Ian Roebuck and Cllr Gill Taylor paid tribute to him.

Council was advised that the results of a survey on the proposal to sing the National Anthem at Full Council were as follows:
71 responses, 46 against the proposal, 19 in support, 6 no preference.

63. Public Participation - Questions and Statements

Public questions, statements and the responses from the Leader of the Council and appropriate Portfolio Holder are set out in Appendix 1 attached to these minutes.

64. Public participation - petitions and deputations

There were no petitions or deputations.

65. Announcements and Reports from the Leader of Council and Cabinet Members

The Leader of the Council presented his bulletin and highlighted the following points:

He had been in dialogue with Government ministers and officials, seeking a change to the national planning framework and a different approach to the Local Plan for Dorset.

Along with two Cabinet colleagues he had visited Cornwall Council to meet their Leader (Cllr Linda Taylor) and two of her Cabinet colleagues to view and discuss some of their experiences in dealing with various issues.

The recently published Levelling Up White Paper had presented opportunities for devolution and a County Deal. The Leader was keen to see Dorset Council work in partnership with BCP to consider opportunities across the Dorset area to increase funding into Dorset.

The Leader announced the results of a survey published recently by Climate Emergency UK and advised that an appointment had been made for the new role of Corporate Director – Climate and Ecological Sustainability.

He was also delighted that Moors Valley Country Park and Forest had been awarded Gold in the competitive Large Visitor Attraction category at the Dorset Tourism Awards, he congratulated all staff involved.

Dorset Council News magazine was due to be delivered to every household in Dorset during March.

Members were invited to ask questions relating to the Leaders bulletin. Several members were keen for the Leader to visit their wards and following questions relating to the Community Governance Report the Leader advised that he would respond when the item was presented.

66. **Budget Strategy Report**

The Finance, Commercial & Capital Strategy Portfolio Holder presented the Budget strategy and medium-term financial plan (MTFP). A copy of his speech is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

The Chairman invited the Group Leaders to present their replies to the budget proposals.

Cllrs Ireland, Sutton and Fry presented their budget speeches which are attached as appendices to these minutes.

Members sought re-assurance that borrowing debt would be controlled and discussed the proposed Council Tax increase. Generally, the feeling amongst members was that although they did not want to raise Council Tax, the priority was to maintain services to the communities they represented and safeguard residents.

The Finance, Commercial & Capital Strategy Portfolio Holder was confident that the budget was balanced but still encouraged prudence when committing reserves.

Members were appreciative of the officer work that had gone into producing the budget and the opportunity of attending budget cafes, cross party working and input from the Scrutiny Committees.

Cllr Flower presented his speech as seconder of the budget proposal. Attached as an appendix to the minutes

Proposed by Cllr Suttle, seconded by Cllr Flower.

In accordance with procedure rule 19.6 a recorded vote was taken. Those who voted in favour of the recommendations:-

Cllrs: Adkins, Alford, Andrews, Barrow, Bartlett, Batstone, Beer, Biggs, Brenton, Brooks, Brown, Bryan, Carr-Jones, Christopher, Clayton, R. Cook, Coombs, Dunseith, Ferrari, Flower, Fry, Gibson, Goringe, Gray, Hall, Harrison, Haynes, Heatley, Holloway, Hughes, Jespersen, S Jones, C Jones, Kerby, Kimber, Lacey-Clarke, H Legg, Lugg, Miller, Morgan, O'Leary, Orrell, Parker, Parkes, Parry, Penfold, Pipe, Potheary, Quale, Rennie, Roberts,

Shortell, Somper, Starr, Suttle, Sutton, Tooke, Trite, Wharf, Wheller and Williams.

Those who voted against the recommendations:-

Cllrs: Canning, Ezzard, Hope, Ireland, Legg, Roe and Taylor.

Those who abstained:-

Cllr Tarr

Following a recorded vote, 61 for, 7 against and 1 abstention the recommendations were approved.

Decision:

- (a) That the revenue budget summarised in appendix 1, was agreed
- (b) That the increase in general council tax of 1.998% and 0.996% in the social care precept, providing a band D council tax figure for Dorset Council of £1,832.67, an overall increase of 2.994%, was agreed.
- (c) That no change to the current scheme of Local Council Tax Support as set out in the report, was agreed.
- (d) That the capital strategy set out in Appendix 3 and the capital programme set out in Appendix 4, was agreed.
- (e) That the treasury management strategy as set out in Appendix 5, was agreed
- (f) That the assumptions used to develop the budget strategy and medium term financial plan (MTFP) as set out throughout the report and summarised in Appendix 6, was agreed
- (g) That the recommended balances on earmarked reserves and on general funds, including the minimum level of the general fund, was agreed
- (h) That the addition of £4.4m from the settlement into the contingency budget, until there is clarity around further costs of implementing national reforms and as a hedge against emerging cost pressures, was agreed
- (i) That the responses to the recommendations and comments made as part of the budget scrutiny process, was agreed
- (j) That the concern around the cumulative overspend on the High Needs Block (HNB) and more importantly, the impact that an unmitigated transfer of this deficit to the council will have on its financial position when the statutory instrument falls away, as currently scheduled, on 1 April 2023, was noted.

Reason for Decision:

The Council was required to set a balanced revenue budget, and to approve a level of council tax as an integral part of this. A balanced budget was essentially one where all expenditure was funded by income without unsustainable use of one-off, or short-term sources of finance.

The Council was also required to approve management strategy.

67. Questions from Councillors

There were three questions received from councillors. A copy of the questions and the responses are attached as Appendix 2 to these minutes.

In response to supplementary questions from Cllrs Gray and Taylor regarding the boundary review suggestions, the Leader addressed these when the item was discussed at minute no. 69.

68. Appointment of External Auditors

The report was introduced by the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Proposed by Cllr Hall, seconded by Cllr Goringe.

Decision:

That Full Council accepted the Public Sector Audit Appointments' invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023.

Reason for Decision:

The Council had a statutory responsibility to appoint an external auditor to audit its accounts. By March 2022 all local government bodies would need to make a decision about their external audit arrangements for the period commencing from the financial year 2023/24

69. Budget Recommendations from the Harbour Committee

The Chairman of the Harbours Committee introduced the Harbours Budget, Fees and Charges 2022-23 and proposed taking the recommendations en bloc.

Proposed by Cllr Roberts, seconded by Cllr Hughes.

Decision:

1. That the budget request for 2022/23 for Weymouth Harbour was approved
2. That the budget request for 2022/23 for Bridport Harbour was approved.
3. That the budget request for 2022/23 for Lyme- Regis Harbour was approved.

Reason for Decision:

The Harbours Committee has the responsibility for the harbour finances within a budget set by the Full Council.

70. Community Governance Review - Draft Recommendations

The Corporate Director, Legal and Democratic gave an explanation of an email sent to all members in relation to the voting procedure on the Community Governance Review Draft Recommendations.

A number of members had declared an interest at the start of the meeting as “dual hatters”, being both a Town or Parish Councillor as well as a Dorset Council Councillor. It was intended to take the recommendations in the Community Governance report en bloc, not individually by Parish. Members were advised that if they had voted on the Community Governance Review response at their Parish Council meeting, they should not vote again this evening. However, it had been agreed with the Chairman that members could remain in the Chamber and speak to the item but not vote.

The Leader presented the report. He reminded members that they were not making a decision today, they were just being asked to approve the 12-week consultation, he encouraged everyone to respond to the consultation and to encourage their constituents to do so. The recommendations set out in the report included a timetable, which would enable the result of the further public consultation to be reported back to Full Council on the 14 July 2022. The Community Governance Review Working Group would reconvene to review the consultation responses and agree the final draft proposals.

Members were invited to speak and commented on the option of disaggregation and how they should respond to the consultation to get it right rather than split their communities.

It was understood that occasionally boundaries had to change, but there was an argument for Weymouth and Chickerell and not to allow the tidying up to become a takeover of some areas.

The opportunity of Parish/Town councils to look at warding at the same time as Dorset Council was also suggested.

Proposed by Cllr Flower, seconded by Cllr Fry.

Decision:

1. That the proposals set out in Appendix 1 were adopted by the Council as Draft Recommendations for the purposes of the Community Governance Review.
2. That, save as set out in the Draft Recommendations, the existing parishes in the Dorset Council area, and the names, boundaries, council size, groupings, and other parish governance arrangements in respect of those parishes, remain unchanged.
3. That the Draft Recommendations be published for consultation purposes from 28 February 2022 to 23 May 2022 inclusive.
4. That the results of the consultation would be reported to Full Council on 14 July 2022.

Reason for Decision:

To ensure that community governance arrangements within the Dorset Council area were reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area and achieve electoral equality.

The following members did not take part in the vote, having declared an interest in the item: Cllrs: Val Potheary, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Sarah William, Byron Quale, David Tooke, Gill Taylor, Kelvin Clayton, Jon Orrell, Kate Wheller, Paul Harrison, David Gray, Pete Barrow, Howard Legg, Tony Ferrari, Gary Suttle, Andrew Parry and Shane Bartlett.

71. **Pay Policy Statement**

The Corporate Development and Transformation Portfolio Holder presented the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23.

Proposed by Cllr Haynes, seconded by Cllr Rennie

Decision:

That the provisions of the Localism Act and content of the Pay Policy Statement for the 2022/23 financial year were noted.

That the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 was approved.

Reason for Decision:

The Full Council was responsible for approval of the annual pay policy statement.

72. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

73. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Appendix 1 Public participation - Q&A

Appendix 2 - Councillors Q&A

Budget presentation, responses by Group Leaders and seconder

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 9.22 pm

Chairman

**Full Council
15 February 2022**

Questions submitted for the Public Participation Period

Question 1 – submitted by Cllr David Harris (Weymouth Town Council)

The advice given for the establishment of parish wards focuses on putting communities together and having a reasonable balance in numbers of residents per councillor. There is no national guidance suggesting that these should reflect the Dorset Council Wards which ignored communities when they were set up three years ago and in some parts of Weymouth cover over 11000 people, larger than some towns in the County.

If an independent councillor wished to stand in that ward that person would have to call on 11000 residents to get elected for the Town council.

If a resident living in the Littlesea estate wishes to organise a street party to celebrate the Queens Jubilee they are not linked to other members of that community by the same councillor

Littlemoor is one of the most deprived parts of Dorset and Preston is one of the wealthiest yet these two totally different communities have the same four councillors to represent them in these proposals.

Can you please explain why the DC ward boundaries are seemingly more important than the town's community boundaries and so lead to the anomalies in the statements described above?

Question 2 & 3 – submitted by Cllr David Northam (Weymouth Town Council)

I am astounded that Dorset Council have ignored the suggestions from Weymouth Town Council which were reached after consideration of alternatives, an extensive debate, and a significant majority vote of councillors. I disagree with all that has been proposed by Dorset Council but would like to focus on two issues; the number of councillors that are proposed for Weymouth Town Council, and the move away from wards with 2, or at most 3 councillors to wards with 4 and 6 councillors.

The last significant change to the boundary for Weymouth came in 1933, under the Dorsetshire Review Order, when the size of the borough was increased from 1,317 acres to 5,690 acres and the population, thereby, increased from 22,193 to 29,534. As a consequence of the increase in size and population the warding structure was changed in 1933 from 6 councillors per ward, to 10 wards each with 3 councillors making 30 councillors to achieve a 'more equal representation to the electors'.

In 1974 Weymouth and Portland were combined. The wards were reviewed by the Boundary Commission and in 1977 Weymouth had 11 wards (5 with 2 councillors, 6 with 3 councillors) with 28 councillors.

In 2017, prior to the 2019 Local Government Review, Weymouth & Portland Borough Council had considered and consulted on how Weymouth council should be constituted after

the LGR. This resulted in a proposal to Full Council for 12 wards and 29 councillors (7 wards with 2 councillors and 5 wards with 3 councillors).

Weymouth is not homogenous, there are many distinct neighbourhoods and communities which is why WTC proposed 14 wards (12 wards with 2 councillors and 2 with 3 councillors) each with local identities and interests reflecting the diverse and frequently geographically segregated communities across Weymouth. More wards with smaller numbers of electors provide more opportunity for diverse communities to be represented. It has not been the history of local government in Weymouth, since before 1933, to have large wards with large numbers of councillors as this blurs councillor focus on distinct communities and their specific interests.

The argument that basing the town council wards on Dorset Council wards will make this more convenient governance of the area for Dorset Council may be true from a Dorset Council perspective but does not reflect the local identities and interests of the Weymouth community.

1. With the Increase in population (and electors) of Weymouth by 2026 Weymouth Town Council proposed 30 councillors. Why have Dorset Council chosen to decrease the number of councillors representing Weymouth, from 29 to 24, with the consequence that each councillor will represent 1,878 electors each, when in the rest of Dorset Town councillors typically represent far fewer electors e.g. Dorchester's 20 councillors will on average represent only 912 electors each?

2. Will Dorset Council reconsider the decision to ignore the Weymouth Town Council recommendations, and instead propose 14 or 15 wards with 2 or 3 councillors, to reflect Weymouth's history, distinct local identities and interests?

Question 4 – submitted by Cllr Lucy Hamilton (Weymouth Town Council)

Agenda Item 11. Community Governance Review

I write in protest at the Community Governance Review proposals for Weymouth. Firstly, the proposed pattern of wards does not respect natural communities or simple geography. For example, under the proposed scheme, Lanehouse Estate is part of Wyke Regis and Rodwell ward. Lanehouse is divided from Wyke and Rodwell by the steep hill of Lanehouse Rocks Road. Lanehouse belongs with Westham West and Littlesea. Secondly, there are huge differences between the sizes of the proposed wards and the number of councillors per ward. Wyke Regis and Rodwell would be a mega town council ward of 10974 electors. Meanwhile, Nottingham would have just 177 electors. I urge Dorset Council to reconsider the well thought through proposals made by Weymouth Town Council, divided in 2- and 3-councillor wards. "It is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government either for voters or councillors, to have significant difference in levels of representation between different parish wards."

Response to Questions 1 – 4 by the Leader of Council – Cllr Spencer Flower

Thank you for your questions, which I will take together given the common theme expressing a number of concerns about the Community Governance Review. I will deal with this matter more fully under agenda item 11, therefore my response to the various questions will focus on setting out the principle legal requirements used when carrying out such a Review. I

Firstly, a Community Governance Review is a legal process whereby the Council will consult with those living in the area, and other interested parties, on the most suitable ways of representing the people in the area identified in the review, in this instance all parishes within the Dorset Council area.

The Review will consider electoral equality, ensuring that each councillor represents approximately the same number of electors. In some areas electoral equality may no longer be achieved resulting from development that has taken place within a parish. The Review will also seek to change councillor numbers or review any warding arrangements to make this more equitable.

The Review will also consider whether any amendments to parish boundaries are considered appropriate, or whether to group or de-group parishes, to improve community governance. However, when considering these changes, the Council must take into account government guidance which says that, so far as is reasonably practicable, no unwarded parish or parish ward should be split by a Principle Council ward boundary, as this is seen as creating voter confusion whereby one resident may vote with his neighbour for a parish election but may for example vote for a different Dorset Councillor. The Review has been carried out in compliance with government guidance and kept parish boundaries within a Dorset Council ward boundary.

Most of the questions relate to points of detail in a particular area. Can I therefore strongly urge that such questions are submitted for consideration during the 12-week public consultation, which will commence shortly, subject to member support for the recommendation to consult on the draft proposals later this evening.

Question 5 – submitted by Cllr Lucy Hamilton (Weymouth Town Council)

The all-party Local Government Association has responded to Westminster's package to ease cost of living with the following statement.

“This year will be tougher than most, particularly for those on lower incomes, with many households feeling the impact of the pandemic on their earnings, alongside the removal of the £20 Universal Credit uplift and rising costs of energy.

“We are pleased the Government is stepping in to provide financial support to help ease these pressures. Extra discretionary funding for councils will also help them continue to provide much needed crisis support to households who are struggling to afford food, fuel and other essentials.

“We want to work quickly with government to clarify the details of this funding. To ensure it can be distributed as quickly as possible, we would urge it to be added to existing discretionary council schemes.

“Many households are likely to be economically vulnerable for some time to come. Going forward, councils want to work with government on an effective long-term solution to preventing poverty and disadvantage that moves away from providing crisis support towards improving life chances and building resilience. This is vital to levelling up and tackling the stark inequalities exposed by the pandemic.”

My question to you: how many Band A-D households in Weymouth, as compared with wider Dorset, are projected to benefit from the £150 council tax rebate?

Response by Cllr Gary Suttle

The Dorset Council area, as a whole, as at the 30 November 2021 Tax base had 129,561 properties in band A-D. I can advise that as at the same date 22,886 of the total number of band A-D properties are in Weymouth. At the time of providing this reply, Government are yet to issue their full guidance to Local Authorities regarding the administration of the £150 assistance, further detail which will assist in the correct administration is expected. Whilst this new assistance is referred to as a Council Tax Energy Rebate, please may I just confirm that this is not a rebate against your Council Tax liability. Government have asked Local Authorities to utilise the Council Tax lists and banding structure to help identify households they wish to help support with this financial assistance for an energy rebate.

Question 6 – submitted by Len Herbert

Councillor Flower - in your statement of 26 January on the Local Plan you affirmed the commitment of the Council to its Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy. This asserts that urgent action is required, not least because use of fossil fuels is driving greenhouse gas emissions, with profound impacts on ecosystems and consequently our lives. The strategy sets out the intention of the Council to transition away from fossil fuels.

Since Dorset Council published its report in July last year it has become clear that the climate and ecological emergency is intensifying. The head of the United Nations describes the latest report by the UN's climate agency as “code red for humanity”.

Antonio Guterres says: “The alarm bells are deafening and the evidence is irrefutable: greenhouse gas emissions from fossil-fuel burning and deforestation are choking our planet and putting billions of people at immediate risk. Global heating is affecting every region on Earth, with many of the changes becoming irreversible. This report must sound a death knell for coal and fossil fuels, before they destroy our planet.”

Councillor Flower

Does the Council intend to play its part in national and global efforts to address the climate and ecological crisis by prohibiting any new attempts to exploit underground fossil-fuel resources in Dorset?

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

The Council certainly intends to play its part in national and global efforts to address the climate and ecological crisis, and we have set out how we are doing this in our published Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy. But we are required to assess any developments requiring planning permission, taking account of national and local policy including the environmental implications. Government has not revoked any of the petroleum exploration licences issued in Dorset or elsewhere, and National Planning Policy does not indicate that Mineral Planning Authorities should stop planning for oil and gas

extraction. This means that we cannot simply prohibit all fossil fuel exploitation in the area but must consider each proposal on its merits.

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**Full Council
15 February 2022**

Questions submitted by Councillors

Question 1 – submitted by Cllr Louie O’Leary

I voted against the Littlemoor urban extension each time it came to planning based around concerns of road access, over development and other issues. One of the things put in place to help address these issues was the proposal of the provision of crossings, and speed calming measures including reducing the speed down to 30mph from 40. These measures would also help address issues around access from off roads to Littlemoor road. Can I ask are the measures mentioned previously still to be carried out as part of the development?

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

Crossing points are required to be provided. Speed reduction and/or other traffic calming measures along Littlemoor Road are not required to be delivered as they were not considered necessary when the outline application was determined.

The S106 Agreement associated with the outline permission specifies that “at least” three pedestrian and cycle crossing points across Littlemoor Road are provided. The number and location of the links are to be agreed with the Council before commencement of development. Associated Section 278 agreements (under the Highways Act) will need to be entered into before each phase is occupied.

Access to the site is a reserved matter and is required to be agreed through the Reserved Matters Applications. Planning Condition 3 requires that the Reserved Matters are informed by the approved Access and Movement Parameter Plan (ref. 0379-0065-08). This plan shows three pedestrian crossings across Littlemoor Road and four vehicle accesses into the site. Within the site Planning Condition 14 also requires that details of the access, highway layout, turning and parking areas for each phase of development are submitted and approved before the relevant phase commences.

Question 2 – submitted by Cllr David Gray

Is the purpose of CGR to review parish boundaries, address anomalies and create community cohesion, therefore improving the Electoral qualities of parishes?

Question 3 – submitted by Cllr Gill Taylor

With reference to agenda item 11 Community Governance Review – draft recommendations; There is a recognition that the boundaries to the south of the Weymouth needed to better reflect the communities that live there, which is welcomed, however the new proposed ward, with a proposed name of Chickerell, has three distinct and separate parts with totally different community needs. Each of these parts can easily merge with present wards and hence remain within their communities as recognised by DC in the reason for including them in Weymouth.

Can you please reassure us that this anomaly can be rectified?

Response to Questions 2 and 3 by the Leader of Council – Cllr Spencer Flower

Thank you for your questions, which I will take together given the common theme expressing a number of concerns about the Community Governance Review. I will deal with this matter more fully under agenda item 11, therefore my response to the various questions will focus on setting out the principle legal requirements used when carrying out such a Review.

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Firstly, a Community Governance Review is a legal process whereby the Council will consult with those living in the area, and other interested parties, on the most suitable ways of representing the people in the area identified in the review, in this instance all parishes within the Dorset Council area.

The Review will consider electoral equality, ensuring that each councillor represents approximately the same number of electors. In some areas electoral equality may no longer be achieved resulting from development that has taken place within a parish. The Review will also seek to change councillor numbers or review any warding arrangements to make this more equitable.

The Review will also consider whether any amendments to parish boundaries are considered appropriate, or whether to group or de-group parishes, to improve community governance. However, when considering these changes, the Council must take into account government guidance which says that, so far as is reasonably practicable, no unwarded parish or parish ward should be split by a Principle Council ward boundary, as this is seen as creating voter confusion whereby one resident may vote with his neighbour for a parish election but may for example vote for a different Dorset Councillor. The Review has been carried out in compliance with government guidance and kept parish boundaries within a Dorset Council ward boundary.

Most of the questions relate to points of detail in a particular area. Can I therefore strongly urge that such questions are submitted for consideration during the 12-week public consultation, which will commence shortly, subject to member support for the recommendation to consult on the draft proposals later this evening.

Appendix

GOOD EVENING I AM GARY SUTTLE THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE

TONIGHT I PRESENT TO YOU THE PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2022/2023

THIS IS THE 4TH BUDGET FOR DORSET COUNCIL THE SECOND UNDER THE PRESSURES AND UNCERTAINTY OF COVID

THE BUDGET FOR 2021/22 HAS BEEN THE CATALYST FOR THE WORK DONE ON THIS EVENINGS PROPOSALS. FOLLOWING THE SHOCK OF THE FIRST QUARTER RESULTS AND THE SIGNIFICANT PREDICTED SHORTFALL, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT WE HAD MUCH TO DO TO ENSURE THAT DORSET COUNCILS FINANCES WERE PUT ON A SOUND BASE. WE STARTED WORK ON STRIPPING BACK TO BASICS, TO FIND REAL COSTS OF SERVICES AND REMOVED ANY SYSTEM THAT MERELY ADDED TO THE PREVIOUS YEAR WE HAD A THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE OF OUR AUTHORITY A DESIRE TO ENSURE DIRECTORATES WERE ADEQUATELY FUNDED. THIS WORK WAS NOT JUST ABOUT THE PAPERS BEFORE YOU TODAY BUT ALSO ABOUT OUR CURRENT YEARS BUDGET, USING SIMILAR PRINCIPLES AND WITH CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR WE HOPE TO REPORT A BUDGET THAT IS IN BALANCE THIS CURRENT YEAR. BUT USING THE SAME CRITERIA WHEN APPLIED TO THE 2022/2023 BUDGET THIS PRODUCED A SHOCKING OUTCOME THAT IN SEPTEMBER 2021 SHOWED A BUDGET SHORTFALL OF £36.1M. OVER THE NEXT 2 MONTHS USING THIS AS OUR BASE IT WAS POSSIBLE TO REDUCE THE DEFICIT TO £4.49M AND NOW IN THIS EVENINGS BEFORE YOU I GIVE OUR BALANCED BUDGET PROPOSALS AND AS TO THE CURRENT YEAR, I BELIEVE THAT WE WILL BE AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO OUR ORIGINAL BUDGET PROPOSALS FROM LAST YEAR.

THIS LEVEL OF WORK IS NOT DONE BY COMPUTERS BUT BY REAL PEOPLE WHO HAVE SHOWN A WONDERFUL COMMITMENT TO GET US WHERE WE ARE TODAY, DORSET COUNCILS FINANCE OFFICERS ARE SECOND TO NONE IN MY OPINION, THEIR DESIRE TO MAKE THIS WORK BRINGS US HERE TODAY.

THIS YEAR WE HAVE HAD SOME ADDITIONAL MONEY FROM CENTRAL GOVT AND THIS HAS BEEN VERY WELL RECEIVED AS I AM SURE YOU ARE AWAY THE £10.4M RECEIVED WAS IN EXCESS OF OUR ORIGINAL ESTIMATES AND HAS ENABLED US TO BALANCE THE BUDGET AND MAKE ADDITIONAL COMMITMENTS TO HOUSING, SOME IS RING FENCED AND RIGHT NOW WE STILL WAIT FOR GUIDANCE ON SOME OF THE MONEY. I PARTICULARLY THANK THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FOR HIS LOBBYING AND WORK BEHIND THE SCENES WITH MINISTERS TO MAKE DORSETS CASE FOR FUNDING.

HOWEVER, WE LIVE IN DIFFICULT TIMES WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RELY ON SUCH MONEY IN THE COMING YEAR, GOVT REMAINS APPREHENSIVE ON FINANCIAL MATTERS AND THE DREAM OF A 3 YEAR FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT REMAINS UNAVAILABLE AT THE MOMENT. THE IMPORTANCE TO US OF A LONGER TERM SETTLEMENT IS TO ENABLE LONGER TERM PLANNING. THIS IS EXTREMELY RELEVANT TO DORSET COUNCIL, ALTHOUGH TONIGHT WE CONCENTRATE ON THE COMING YEAR, MY SIGHTS REMAIN ON THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN WHICH SHOWS SIGNIFICANT DEFICITS MAY ARISE OVER THE COMING YEARS, WE MUST CONCENTRATE ON THE FUTURE AND PREPARE ACCORDINGLY.

TO DO THIS WE NEED TO ENSURE THAT EACH BUDGET WE SET REFLECTS THAT LONG TERM AMBITION.

THE PAPERS BEFORE YOU ARE COMPREHENSIVE IN THEIR CONTENT BUT I WANT TO ENSURE THAT THE IMPORTANT AND SIGNIFICANT HEADLINES ARE AIRED AND FULLY TRANSPARENT.

THE PROPOSAL IS TO RAISE COUNCIL TAX AND THE SOCIAL CARE PRECEPT BY 1.998% AND .996% RESPECTIVELY AN INCREASE OF £1.02 PER WEEK ON A BAND D PROPERTY. THIS IS THE MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE UNDER LEGISLATION. I KNOW THAT MANY OF YOU SAT HERE THIS EVENING WILL WINCE AT THE NUMBERS AND WISH THAT WE COULD DO BETTER IN HARD TIMES, WHEN RESIDENTS FACE FUEL POVERTY AND RISING INFLATION WHICH

WHEN I LAST CHECKED HAD EXCEEDED 5%. THE LAST THING THAT IS NEEDED IS YET ANOTHER INCREASE.

THE QUESTION IS WHY DO WE NEED TO DO THIS AND FRANKLY I BELIEVE THAT IT IS THE ONLY THING THAT A PRUDENT FINANCIAL OFFICER WOULD ADVOCATE. I TURN BACK TO THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN SHOWING THE ISSUE FOR THE COMING YEARS, IF WE FAIL TO AGREE AN INCREASE THIS EVENING THAT DEFICIT WILL RISE ACCORDINGLY AND YEAR ON YEAR WE WILL HAVE LOST NOT ONLY THE INCREASE OF THIS YEAR BUT THE FUTURE INCREASES ON THE INCREASED COUNCIL TAX FIGURE. WE WOULD EFFECTIVELY BE IGNORING THE FACT THAT WE DO NOT HAVE PERFECT FINANCES, THAT WE ARE UNDER FUNDED IN SO MANY AREAS AND WE WOULD NOT BE TAKING INTO ACCOUNT A NUMBER OF EXTREMELY IMPORTANT FACTORS THAT WILL ARISE IN THE COMING YEAR.

LET US LOOK AT THE YEAR AHEAD, ASSUMING NO NEW VARIANT OF CORONAVIRUS DECIMATES US THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL CHANGES THAT WE MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.

EVENTS THIS YEAR INCLUDE RISING INFLATION AT A FAR GREATER RATE THAT WE CAN INCREASE THE COUNCIL TAX SO WE ALREADY KNOW THE POUND WE RAISE IN YEAR WILL BE WORTH LESS BY THE TIME WE GET TO MARCH 2023, OUR SUPPLIERS WILL SUFFER IT AND WOULD I AM SURE LIKE TO PASS IT ON TO US, A 5% PLUS INCREASE TO THEM AND YET WE CAN ONLY RAISE JUST UNDER 3%. IN APRIL THE NEW NATIONAL INSURANCE 1.25% WILL COME IN FOR EMPLOYERS ALTHOUGH IT DOES NOT EFFECT DORSET COUNCIL DIRECTLY IT EFFECTS OUR SUPPLIERS WHO IN TURN WILL NEED TO PASS AT LEAST SOME OF THAT INCREASE ON TO THEIR CUSTOMERS THE WAGE SETTLEMENT HAS YET TO BE AGREED. IN YEAR WE WILL SEE THE GOVT'S NEW CAPPED CARE REGIME, THIS HAS TO BE ADMINISTERED BY US ALTHOUGH WE HAVE HAD SOME FINANCIAL BACKING FOR THIS IT IS VERY MUCH AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY FOR OUR RESOURCES.

ABOVE ALL I WANT TO UNDERLINE HOW THIS BUDGET WORKS IN THE AREA OF TRANSFORMATION. THIS BUDGET INCLUDES £17.2M OF TRANSFORMATION SAVINGS, THOSE WE HAVE YET TO DO AND YET WILL BE ESSENTIAL FOR THE YEAR TO WORK. THESE ONLY NEED A SLIGHT DIFFERENCE TO BE INSTRUMENTAL IN CHANGING OUR BUDGET SIGNIFICANTLY AND WE CANNOT SHY AWAY FROM THE FACT THAT TO DATE WE HAVE NOT ALWAYS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN THIS FIELD. THE 3% WILL RAISE £7.5M UNDER HALF OF THAT FIGURE IF THE OUTCOMES ARE NOT ACHIEVED AND THEN I REFER YOU BACK TO THE OTHER ISSUES OF THE YEAR, INFLATION, CAPPED CARE, NATIONAL INSURANCE, TO SAY NOTHING OF COVID. DORSET COUNCILS BUDGET IS A SIMPLE TASK OF SPENDING 10 PENCE WITH 9 PENCE THAT PENNY IS THE COUNCIL TAX INCREASE, THE TRANSFORMATION THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - THIS IS NOT COUNCIL TAX INCREASE FOR THE SAKE OF IT THIS IS A PRUDENT MEASURE TO ENSURE THE FUTURE OF ALL OF THE RESIDENTS IN THIS PART OF THE COUNTY.

OUR ROLE AND COMMITMENT IS TO ENSURE AND MAINTAIN SERVICES TO RESIDENTS IF WE DO NOT ACCEPT THIS INCREASE I CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT THIS WILL BE POSSIBLE.

I DO NOT WANT IN ANY WAY TO UNDER ESTIMATE THE IMPACT OF A COUNCIL TAX RISE ON RESIDENTS AND I WANT TO EMPHASISE FOR THOSE IN THE MOST DIFFICULT OF TIMES THE 90% COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT FOR THOSE WORKING REMAINS IN FORCE.

THIS BUDGET PROVIDES THE FUNDING THAT DIRECTORATES REQUIRE TO FUNCTION WE WILL SEE INCREASES OF 10.38% IN ADULT SERVICES CULMINATING IN A BUDGET OF £148M. A 3.82% INCREASE IN CHILDRENS SERVICES GIVING A BUDGET OF £74M AND PLACE RISING TO £81M. WE HAVE STRIPPED BACK TO BASICS AND ARE PROVIDING THE FUNDING TO ENSURE SERVICE PROVISION.

LAST YEAR I MADE A COMMITMENT TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND THIS YEAR THE BUDGET INCLUDES £750,000 AS ADDITIONAL FUNDING AND ON TOP OF THIS WE MAKE A CAPITAL COMMITMENT OF £10M AND LET US NOT FORGET THAT WE ARE ALSO CURRENTLY SPENDING THE £19M FROM GOVT. CLLR BRYAN HAS DONE AN AMAZING JOB IN BRINGING

DORSET TO THE ATTENTION OF CENTRAL GOVT AND IN FACT RECENT FIGURES SHOW US ALMOST IN THE TOP 10% OF ALL COUNCILS IN THE UK IN OUR RESPONSE. I KNOW THAT HE WILL CONTINUE IN HIS FIGHT AND WISH HIM WELL AND THANK HIM AND ALL THOSE WHO SUPPORT HIM IN WHAT IS A VITAL ELEMENT OF OUR FUTURE, I WILL CONTINUE THIS COMMITMENT AS LONG AS I REMAIN IN POST AND HOPE THAT ANY SUCCESSOR WILL DO THE SAME.

THE PROCESS HAS BEEN LENGTHY TO GET TO THIS EVENING, WE HAVE ACTUALLY HAD OVER 20 HOURS OF MEMBER ENGAGEMENT, SCRUTINY AND EXCELLENT INPUT FROM SO MANY MY THANKS TO ALL ACROSS THE CHAMBER FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE. MANY SAID IS THIS ENOUGH, WHAT ABOUT INFLATION SURELY WE NEED TO PROVIDE MORE AND I CAN REASSURE YOU THAT IT HAS BEEN VERY MUCH AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE PROCESS. THE BUDGET IS FIT FOR 2022/23 AND I COMMEND IT TO YOU.

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Every February, this Council holds its own version of Groundhog Day; I guess from what Cllr Suttle has just presented, he saw his shadow and the financial blight on Dorset will continue for another year.

This is the fourth budget for Dorset Council, the third created by this Tory administration and yet again it has raised the council tax burden on the long suffering population of Dorset by the maximum possible. Last year it was 5%, this year another 3% compounded on that.

Some of our residents will benefit from a small, one-off rebate to their council tax bill but this will only serve to generate a more significant actual rise in their bills next year when this administration will again undoubtably levy the maximum increase possible.

We have no assurance that this budget won't be overspent. In fact, the small windfall in one-off funding recently promised being earmarked as 'contingency' rather than being used elsewhere pretty much implies the original figures were understated.

We continue to pay one of the highest council taxes in the country.

Do we get more than anyone else for that burden?

No, we don't! The fact is that we pay more than others for the same or less.

Year on year our residents are asked to pay for services that should be centrally funded. We have numerous areas under Dorset Council control that exceed 30% of children in poverty, over 40% in places such as Underhill. We are propping up the social mobility indices. We have some of the lowest wages in the country.

And now we have inflation at levels not seen for a generation, petrol and diesel prices are at record highs and energy costs are going up by more than 100% with additional increases on the horizon. This will put many, many more of our residents into fuel poverty.

And yet we keep asking our residents to cough up greater than they can afford when for significantly more than ever, heating their residence and putting food on the table will dominate everyday life.

For over decade, ALL of our representatives in parliament have been in government yet it's difficult to quantify the benefit that this has brought to our residents, because quite simply there hasn't been any.

Boris Johnson's Tory government won't be sending any significant amounts of 'levelling up' funding to Dorset Council; this much was admitted in parliament recently by South Dorset MP Richard Drax in about the only cognisant statement he's ever made.

Every year we are told that the reason we are at the top of the highest council tax league yet continue to add the maximum permissible to our residents' bills, is that our central government funding is inequitable. Yes, Council Tax is outdated and regressive, but we keep pouring on the misery year on year without this Tory administration managing to do anything about it.

As Sir Edward Grey might once have said to Douglas Adams,

“The lamps are going out all over Dorset; we shall not see them lit again until we have a council led by people who really know where their towels are.”

Cllr Nick Ireland

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Well, this isn't easy, is it?

In terms of **people**, COVID has had a profound effect on us all, including on our financial security. According to the Resolution Foundation, the richest 10% of UK households are £50,000 better off, while an additional 700,000 people, including 120,000 children, fell below the poverty line. Even more will do so now the £20 a week boost to universal credit has been scrapped.

In this context, we support the protection of front line services for those in greatest need, primarily in Adult Social Care and Children's Services, which together comprise 65% of this budget. Nevertheless, we know some of the £11m tactical savings will cause real hardship for some families.

In terms of our **planet**, time is fast running out if it is to be habitable for future generations. According to Climate Action Tracker, EVEN IF all the pledges made at COP26 are honoured, global temperatures will rise by c2.4 degrees, which would be disastrous, and many think this an extremely conservative estimate. Of course this comes down to global politics and economics, but we must play our part here in Dorset, not only in the interests of future generations but also to improve our quality of life locally, right now, in terms of, for example, cleaner air and protecting local ecologies.

We therefore welcome the inclusion in the budget of revenue and capital spending to address the Climate and Ecological Emergency. However, it's now nearly three years since we declared this, and it IS an emergency, so pace matters. We have been pressing for these budget lines from the start – even without a detailed plan, we knew in 2019 that this would cost money.

But, given that funding from central to local government has been cut by around 40% since 2010, and Dorset's Revenue Support Grant reduced from £80m to zero, how do we pay for this?

I wish we could spend some of the additional £4m being allocated to Contingency on, for example, youth services or community facilities, but we feel obliged to support this because, according to the Bank of England and other forecasters, the 2% inflation assumption in this budget could be closer to 5 or even 6%, which would require closer to £20m than £4m.

Where we do see some promise is in our excess assets. We now have a strategy but making progress on generating income from them must be a priority.

So, finally, to Council Tax. A 3% increase will hit our poorer households hard, but we feel we have no choice but to support it in order to play our part in protecting our most vulnerable residents, and our planet, within the limited resources available to us.

Cllr Clare Sutton

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I read say this not for the benefit of my colleagues in the chamber but those hard-pressed people watching this meeting.

Dorset Council is requesting an increase in our Council tax of 2.99% or £1.02p per week for a Band D property.

I am sure that like me a great many people find this extremely disappointing and wished it did not happen. Many people will be juggling increased household expenses, domestic fuel increases combined with the price of food all a serious cause for concern.

But Dorset Council also has a number of serious financial challenges to face and with competing demands and in several areas cannot and should not avoid these costs. Some of you may have seen the very helpful pod casts created by Dorset Council to help residents understand the need for this increase. But if not..... here at the main points

By the way a Band D property in Dorset the proposed council tax is £1,832.67 for a band D property which is made up of £1629.63 Core and £203.04 Adult Social Care precept.

The amounts for specific areas have been rounded for the comms messages so the infographics are showing:

Waste Disposal - £160 - 9%
Adult Social Care - £712 - 40%
Children in Care - £302 - 17%

You also have Public and School Transport and SEN Transport - £142 - 8%, Highways and Streetlighting £71 - 4%,
Education and Learning - £52 - 3%.

There are a lot of other small percentages of other services, and they are also accounting techy things such as capital finance (which is a provision for repaying external borrowing on our assets) - £88 - 5%.

For 2022/23 the Adults and Housing Directorate have had an increase of 10% of their budget which is an increase of £13m, Place have had an increase of 9% of their budget which is £6.8m, and Children's have had an increase of their budgets of 4% which is an additional £2.7m

Dorset Council has higher costs and lower funding from Government than many other Councils, for example we have 2300 miles of roads to maintain. As Councillors we are all very aware of the poor deal Dorset gets from Central Government, across the board, in Dorset Council, Dorset Fire and Rescue and Dorset Police.

Dorset Council has to run a balanced budget, or to put it another way cannot run at a loss, Hence this very regrettable request to the members of our County.

Thank you to all those members of the finance team who have worked hard to prepare this budget.

I will with regret be supporting this budget, let's hope that we can get a better and fairer deal for Dorset next year.
Cllr Les Fry

Borrowing question

The level of borrowing for Dorset Council causes me some concern. **P123 of report**

The total external debt for 2024/25 is showing as £442 million with a liability benchmark of £337 million, a difference of £85 million, an increase over this end of march figures of £149 million

Is this sustainable?

Budgets 2022 – Seconder response

Firstly, can I congratulate Cabinet Member – Gary Suttle and other members of the Cabinet, as well as senior officers Aidan Dunn, Jim McManus, other Directors and all those involved, for the excellent work that has been carried out in the preparation of the 2022/23 budget we have before us this evening. This is without doubt Chairman a well-presented budget, a budget which has been zero based. A Budget which has enabled members of this council to get a good understanding of the challenges and opportunities we will face in the coming months and years ahead.

Can I echo the remarks made by Gary Suttle regarding the key role that the two cross-party Budget Cafes and the two Scrutiny Committees have played this year, in what has been a very challenging process. Ensuring we are able to have a balanced budget; achieved without the need for reductions in services. Such an approach has allowed unprecedented involvement by members cross-party, fitting well with the pledge I made at Annual Council in May 2019 that we should work in a collaborative way across the chamber, working at all times to achieve the best outcomes for our communities.

We have made significant progress since becoming Dorset Council in May 2019, close to three years ago, and contrary to some recent comments in the media this council has come a long way showing ambition and determination, even during the worst pandemic for over 100 years. We have saved almost £30m so far with much more to come thanks to LGR. Convergence, transformation and the challenges of increased cost pressures

dealing with COVID have been our focus; been faced and overcome.

We still of course have much more to do, but I believe we are on the right track, moving forward at pace, having achieved so much since May 2019.

Gary Suttle eloquently set out the assumptions on which the budget has been based, so I will not dwell on this further.

I am reminded about our commitment, as elected members, that on the formation of the Unitary Council, services would be safeguarded. That is exactly what this budget does, with no old fashioned top slicing. In addition, we continue to invest heavily, in service delivery for Adult and Children's Social Care, demonstrating this council's wholehearted commitment to the more vulnerable in our communities, who need our support on a daily basis. Investment in the future is at the heart of this council's ambitions and they will be achieved.

Chairman, we have before us this evening a well prepared, sound budget that meets the statutory requirement of being balanced. However, despite the considerable savings made to date and those projected; along with some additional funding from Government, we still need to increase our council tax. This was not a decision taken lightly, and I appreciate some of the concern expressed by Dorset taxpayers. However, we must do the right thing. We must look after those who need our help. The young people in care and those who need our support to cope with age related health and mobility issues. Without those savings and increases in Council Tax we would have been faced

with the prospect of reductions in discretionary services to balance budgets.

I am hopeful that in future years with the promise of a multi-year settlement from Government in the offing that we will get a better deal for Dorset. As you are aware Chairman, I take very opportunity to be a strong advocate for Dorset with Government. Dorset deserves a better deal. For far too long we have been treated unfairly by successive Governments down the years. I am optimistic that we are making our case well for more central government funding and testament to that optimism was the better than expected settlement for 2022/23 which has enabled some additional commitments on housing; and helped to mitigate risk, underpinning the strength of the budget.

So, Chairman I will conclude by confirming my full support for this budget, as per the recommendations set out in the report before us tonight. This will be a budget that enables this Council to offer the best outcomes overall for the communities we serve. Helping to establish a sound basis on which to take this council forward in a strong, financially sound and structured way; enabling us to fulfil our ambitions to serve the communities of Dorset well, through transformation of council structures and investing in our front-line services. This fits very well with what was promised when Local Government Reorganisation in Dorset was first proposed and subsequently approved.

Thank you, Chairman

Cllr Spencer Flower

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