

Budget speech 25-26

Thank you Chair,

Cllr Rob Hughes ward member for the isle and Royal Manor of Portland, the jewel in Dorsets Crown.

On behalf of the Independents of Dorset I would like to say the following regarding this Budget for 25-26.

I had hoped to have started my speech by thanking the new Labour Government for increasing their grant support aid. Alas I can't do that as they have given so little funding to Dorset, whilst forcing the council to raise the highest available council tax from our residents.

Setting a budget of £417m for the year ahead and with rising costs, the council has calculated we are looking at an increase in spending of over £85 million pounds to deliver its services in 25-26. This is due to the ever-growing need for the support services within our community, with extra demand for housing and children's services and a population that is getting older every year. In fact, we have the oldest demographic in the country and one of the highest levels of council tax.

To meet this £85m spending increase, the Government has provided us with an extra £3.9 million of funding. The remainder is to come from £18.3 million raised by increasing the council tax to the allowable maximum of 4.99% (this includes 2% for the adult care precept), giving us a sum of £22.2 million increasing to £40.5m of revenue when combined with other income sources that the council

receives, leaving the council with a shortfall of £44.6m to meet its statutory commitments. This Shortfall will be met by savings and efficiencies that have been identified by the council.

The Officers of the council have worked hard to bring in a balanced budget in these difficult circumstances and we take this opportunity to thank them for the time spent in grappling with the budget for the fiscal year ahead.

The two scrutiny committee members have also worked with our officers, we have attended the budget cafes that were arranged for us, and we all understand the pressures ahead of us.

Despite the continuing lack of government funding we will be supporting this budget and all the difficult adjustments that will have to be made in-order to fund this shortfall, as we are forced to transform the council to meet our obligations.

In future the Government must change the way it delivers local authority funding or else it could well be facing a whole raft of councils going bust in the coming months ahead, despite their best efforts.