Joint Report from
16/11/2024
Andrew Starr
Alex Brenton
Steve Robinson

As the seasons change and we prepare for Christmas we have continued to keep a keen eye on working for Upton, Lytchett Minster and Morden. The three councillors attended the Acts of Remembrance on the 10th November in Lytchett Matravers and Upton as well as the all Dorset event on the 11th.

Devolution of local powers
The Cabinet have been developing the Council Plan for the coming 5 years. There was opportunity to comment on an early draft which has now been substantially rewritten to include many of the relevant comments received. This includes a number of strategic pathways to move non statutory decision making away from Dorchester, bringing it closer to communities to consider the right ways of addressing their own issues in their own ways. Steve is also working with the NHS strategically to explore ways to bridge duplication and cross-purposes with Social Care, Health and Childrens services.

Budgets
The 2025/26 budget preparation process has been ongoing over the summer and, in common with many Authorities, "difficult decisions" are going to have to be made to ensure stability in the future. It has been found that over the last three years, not all proposed 'efficiencies' have come through and the budget has been balanced by using reserves, which are now at a low rate. This has not been an easy process, and it is not over, particularly given that we will not be informed of any central Government support until December 19th. The formal budget will be brought to the February Full Council meeting in Dorchester.

Local Representation
We continue to hold surgeries on the first Saturday of the month at Upton Library. We have been able to support a number of individuals and organisations across the area including a local charity that was having difficulty being heard by Dorset officials and is now able to prepare properly for the anticipated demand for services. We have also been able to arrange care and reablement reassessments due to deteriorating health and arranged protection for an individual receiving domestic abuse. Our more general work has included supporting people facing eviction and also linking young people to the mental health services.
Signposting residents who are facing increasing household bills to help and advice is a large part of our time.

General
We are pleased to see that work on the Wet Land mitigation scheme from Wessex Water at Bulbury pumping station now looks as though it should start in the Spring. This should help to stop overflows getting into Poole Harbour.
The crashed van on Upton Bypass, which was flagged up by Cllr Starr as a possibly pollution risk has finally been removed. However another car has fallen into a watercourse at Lytchett Minster.
The application for a Battery Electric Storage System at Post green farm has been passed, and will go ahead in the spring. The building and concrete trackway being built is for developments at Harbour View Farm.
At the Scrutiny meeting, the feedback from the Dorset Council 'Big Conversation' was discussed, there was widespread public agreement that the Council priority should be accelerating provision of truly affordable housing for locals. Many people commented on lack of affordable private tenancies as well as asking for council Housing. A Dorset Council Board is

being set up to consider new ways to build 'Council Housing'. On the back of this it is hoped there will be economic growth. It is accepted that this is not a consultation or binding in any way, and it was pointed out that the sessions for Town and Parish Councils were not run well. As the National Government housing numbers for Dorset have doubled, this will be a focus item for the next few years.
Dorset Council is preparing for exceptional weather this winter, with the climate changing anything is possibly so preparation and growth of Resilience is necessary. Fifteen new salt gritters with detachable snow ploughs have been obtained and all P&T councils should have the local grit bins filled.
There have already been 3 nights of gritting working from midnight -4am with an afternoon session. The gritting network is shown on the website but does not include Lytchett Matravers as an essential route. But as a community route which would be gritted after all strategic routes are covered in prolonged freezing weather.
It is also asked that any street gutters or drains which appear to be blocked should be reported to Highways as soon as possible to get them clear to prevent flooding. It was agreed that the stopping of clearing of ditches and grips was counterproductive and the routine clearance drainage holes has been re-started.
Recent flooding incidents around Bakers Arms roundabout are a problem but there have been several attempts to sort drainage but they only work if the Harbour waters are low and ground water levels normal. We have had many complaints about the road works on A350 and elsewhere, but they were planned to be in Autumn 'before the winter weather hits' and the lights on the A35 at present are do deal with an emergency situation.

We are concerned about the stalemate over School Crossing proposals on Wareham road.
As a Cabinet member Steve Robinson has been pressuring Andrew Bradley to arrange a meeting on Monday 2nd December. However I am aware that several of the Highways team do not work Mondays…..
The fact that there is a scheme being considered about 20mph area and continuing pressure for a highways safety improvement on Huntick road, also adds to confusion as to who answers what questions.

Cllrs Brenton, Robinson and
Starr.