Happy New Year

Devolution of powers

We have been talking to various Council departments concerning the much discussed devolution of powers to Local Councils. Sadly it seems that most Council attention has been forced into the discussion and planning for the wider Devolution in to "Heart of Wessex" group and there is little space for more local issues. The Leader of the Council Nick Ireland has been attending various Parish and Town council meetings and was at Upton last week. If you wish him to visit a meeting please contact his pa at Dorset Council. He has promised to visit as many local councils as he can in the next year.

Purbeck Blueprint

The Purbeck Blueprint will be a model for working with the NHS strategically, to explore ways to bridge areas of duplication and cross-purposes with Social Care, Health and Childrens' services. It will link to an NHS programme called Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs) and focus on finding ways to support people to manage their health proactively so that they do not need to enter hospital through avoidable illnesses. It will also develop pathways to help people get out of hospital earlier and get the support they need in their own home. Rather than have the usual projects developed in Weymouth and Portland we have been successful in lobbying for Purbeck to be the next stage of this work which will stretch up into Corfe Mullen. Although encompassing Upton it will actually be based from Wareham due to the fact that many of the GP patients in Upton are from BCP rather than Dorset. How this will affect Lytchett Matravers surgery is unclear at this time.

Dorset Council Budget

Dorset Council has set out proposals for a £416 million budget for 2025/26.

This marks a £39 million increase in spending from last year, injecting much needed funding into essential services for residents, especially vulnerable children and adults.

Additional funding includes:

- £14.5 million for adult social care and housing services
- £1.5 million for children's services, and
- £4 million for Place services including transport, highways and planning services.

Councils are required by law to set a balanced budget with expenditure equal to revenue. Dorset Council faces rising pressures on services, for example with the growing number of older people in Dorset who need social care support. The additional cost of service delivery next year is forecast to be £83.4 million. Yet council funding is set and limited by Government and this sum is not affordable.

The council's budget proposals therefore also outline significant cost-saving measures of around £44 million to be delivered in the following ways:

- new service grants and income - £12 million
- managing and meeting need differently - £14 million
- reducing 3rd party spend - £3 million
- and operating more efficiently as a council - £14.4 million

The council has developed a transformation plan to streamline council operations including increased use of technology, better customer service, working more closely with communities, and lower operating costs. Over the coming years, these changes will result in a slimmer council with fewer staff.
To support these initiatives the council proposes a Council Tax increase of just under 3 per cent and a 2 per cent adult social care precept. This equates to an additional 24p a day for most

households. Details will be available with council tax bills in March and online after the budget is approved at Full Council on 11 February

Local Representation

We continue to hold surgeries on the first Saturday of the month at Upton Library. We can usually be found at Win on waste in Lytchett Matravers on the second Saturday. We have been able to support a number of individuals and organisations across the area including a family that were in the position of potentially having their home taken from them and also issues of fire safety and potential neglect. Unresponsive Housing Associations and signposting residents who are facing increasing household bills to help and advice is a large part of our time.

Baker Arms Roundabout

It was good to see Vikki Slade MP she spoke in Parliament before Christmas on the ongoing challenges at the Bakers Arms. We are aware that she has asked to see full history of meetings so as to identify any potential ways forward. I have had a detailed discussion with highways engineers. We decided the first step is a complete revue of all existing infrastructure – about 25 drains and culverts to see which ones are inefficetive. It has already been found that many are only 50% effective. Next step is to consider if a new enlarged culvert is needed. However that would mean road closures which have to be planned. Flood awareness signage is another interim possibility.