Dorset Councillor report March 2025

March 2025 has been a busy month . There are several areas under consideration. After setting the budget there were questions about how to implement efficiencies. This does include some planned redundancies. Mostly this is done by not recruiting new staff when vacancies occur and allowing natural wastage, and moving staff sideways to fill gaps in other departments. 'Cross department working', of course this does not suit everyone.

Most people still think of the 'Council' as in charge of Bins and Roads. The Bin collection and Highways team work well in covering gaps especially when gritting icy roads takes the refuse collection team away overnight.

The Hedge to Hedge project has restarted so Dorset has just gone round clearing grips and grypes to aid water running off the road. Dorset now has two hedge-cutting contractors, who have finished the winter hedge cutting schedule. The verge cutting schedule has been published. More areas are getting cut and collect machines which help to reduce coarse grass growth overtime but sadly our narrow lanes and sloping banks are not suitable for those mowers yet so C and D roads and narrow lanes in the countryside will still have the cut and leave mowers.

Because of budget pressures Dorset Council is now largely a Social service for Childrens and Adults. We are aware of the need for coordination between Social services and Council and NHS.

Day Care .We are consulting on changing Day Services whether moving sites or closing some day centres in order to bring services nearer to the users in village and town cafés, churches, care homes and community centres rather than bus folk around, may be acceptable and efficient. The consultation closes on 9thJune. Please look it up or get in touch if you are interested.

Future Care is a programme which aims to clear blockages between teams in dealing with patients leaving hospital care. Working with the NHS there is a consultation event in Wimborne in April. Future care may deliver savings but aims to keep mainly older people from needing fulltime hospital care and supporting them in their homes so they do not relapse.

Housing. Most of my case work has been about housing. I am on the newly formed Housing Board but new houses in Weymouth does not help residents in our villages. Many tenants believe lack of maintenance on their houses has allowed damp and rot to grow. Insecure tenancies are a worry in our Parishes, when private renters are given notice to quit at a time when there are very few properties coming on to the market. Fear of being homeless is affecting peoples mental and physical health. It is good to remember that although our villages seem calm and pleasant places to live some people are under great stress.

Press Release. :-Councillors have voted last week to support an increase in the supply of affordable homes in Dorset.

This will be achieved through use of council-owned land and buildings and by leasing more homes across the county.

A plan to supply 100 homes to be used for temporary accommodation for family and single households within 12 months will start first. These homes will be leased from Private and RP landlords.

The plans will help to reduce the numbers of people waiting on the housing register.

March report for Red Post Magazine. Cllr Alex Brenton

The approach will double the number of new homes built each year by working alongside our Registered Provider partners who currently build around 460 new homes a year. We hope to work with Pension fund investors

Busses. Despite my praise of the Nordcat Community Bus helping our non – drivers get to shops once a week, it has sadly gone bust from lack of income. I hoped that Dorset Community Transport would be able to take up the slack but they are already committed in the West Dorset area , I am pressing them to think of running a loop to Red Post Parish but it might link to Blandford rather than Wareham but I will keep working on it. Shortage of volunteer drivers is a serious problem. The Bere regis Community Bus has also stopped running. We are having talks with MoreBus about changing routes to include more villages but do not expect any great changes yet. There is possibility that the X8 Blandford to Poole Bus route will loop through Lytchett Matravers but that is next year.

Because of the reports of ASB around the MUGA contact was made with the Local Police and the DC Targetted Youth Workers who promise more regular visits to the village but reporting of actual incidents helps to log where the issues are found and highlights the need for patrols.