

**Verwood Town Council Meeting –Tuesday 25 October 2011**  
**County Councillor Report –Cllr. Spencer Flower**

**Olympics Games 2012** – Last week, Jonathan Stephens, the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, visited Dorset for the day with two of his senior colleagues. They toured the Olympic site and associated venues, and met many of the people involved locally in the extensive preparations for the Olympics. In the afternoon, they attended the beginning of the Dorset Olympic Board, which is chaired by Leader of the Council.

He was very impressed with the way in which all agencies are working together on this very important project, and very encouraged by the DCC state of readiness. He acknowledged that there is a great deal more to do, but said that he was confident that we are on the right track.

A particular point that he emphasised was that over the Olympic and Paralympic period, the events will be an all consuming focus of our efforts in Dorset. With such a high profile internationally we may need to accept that other things may take second place during this period. This is an important message that we need to absorb in Dorset.

**Dorset Export Group** –The Chief Executive chaired a meeting in Dorchester, attended by Oliver Letwin MP, Robert Walter MP, representatives of most of the local authorities in Dorset, and representatives of the various business organisations in Dorset. The objective of the meeting was to engage MPs, business representatives and local authorities in work being undertaken in Dorset relating to international trade activities, and to agree a way forward.

The sailing Olympics give Dorset a unique opportunity to take advantage of world attention, and to create new opportunities for export for Dorset businesses, and new opportunities for inward investment to the county.

A working group was put together, to be chaired by Peter Scott, Chief Executive of the Dorset Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with the remit to create a venue and programme of events to constitute a "business embassy" for Dorset.

The UK Trade and Investment executive team were represented at the meeting and will encourage and support these efforts.

The County Council feels it is important that this initiative is private sector led, but fully supported by the local authorities. The Council was very grateful for Oliver Letwin's and Bob Walters' personal interest in this initiative: their personal commitment and presence at this and a previous meeting have been very helpful in achieving the engagement of others.

**Meeting Future Challenges** –Committee and Cabinet Reports continue to set out the expected level of savings required by DCC over the next three years to achieve balanced budgets. In the current year savings of £27.0 million have been achieved with work ongoing to secure the remaining £4.0 million required to meet 2011/12 savings targets.

The difficulty of the task ahead cannot be over stated with savings from the revenue budget estimate to be in the region of £57.0 million. Whilst efforts can and are being made to find efficiencies it is very unlikely that we will not have to make some service cuts. The Budget Working Group is applying a ‘Star Chamber’ approach with the aim of finding significant saving using a measured review of all service areas. It has been made clear by the Chief Finance Officer that the Council must have a balanced budget.

If we fail to achieve the required savings using the measured approach it will be necessary to achieve a balanced budget through ‘top slicing’ of budgets which is likely to be the worst possible means of dealing with the problem.

Further revenue savings of £9.0 million have to be identified for 2012/13 and detailed business cases established in the Meeting Future Challenges [MFC] programme. Following a series of Budget Working Group meetings individually, with each Directorate, they now looking at stretched targets for further savings in this and the next two years.

The outcome of this exercise will be put to the Cabinet in December and then to Full Council. This will enable Officers to then prepare the 2012/13 budget for approval by Members at Full Council in February 2012.

Following the Coalition Governments announcement of a further Council Tax Freeze in 2012/13 we are still waiting to receive detailed terms of the grant settlement that will enable Councils to take account of this financial support linked to this initiative. Details of the likely impact on the 2012/13 budget will be included in the November County Councillor Report.

**Draft Minerals Core Strategy** –The last of a number of road show events took place on Saturday 22 October at the Verwood Farmers Market. It was well attended keeping the four officers and at times two Districts busy answering questions. This approach contrasts significantly from the HCC public consultation in that the communities across the County are being engaged even at the Non Site Specific stage of preparing the minerals strategy for Dorset.

It is anticipated that the next stage of consultation will take place towards the end of 2012, when site specific proposals will be available for comment. At the present time no sites have been identified near to Verwood or Three Legged Cross.