

## **East Dorset District Council Report to VERWOOD TOWN Council 17/01/2012**

**Shared Services between Christchurch and East Dorset Councils** - The partnership each surveyed 3,000 residents from August to October last year. The response was 36 per cent, which was significantly above expected numbers. Both councils decided to issue their own survey to monitor the effectiveness of their work over the previous three years.

The results show major service improvements for both councils with East Dorset figures showing an improvement in overall satisfaction rising from 53 per cent in 2008 to 65 per cent in 2011.

The excellent results of the survey are due to the hard work and dedication of Elected Members and Officers alike that have worked together and overcome the many challenges we have faced in these difficult financial times.

The Council's priority has always been to deliver quality services to the people of Christchurch and East Dorset and this feedback indicates that it is on the right track. The Residents Survey also shows the majority in the community understand why the partnership was needed and appreciate the work it has already done and will continue to do in the future.

The Partnership officially came into operation in January 2011 with objectives to drive down costs, improve services and reduce the risk of services failing.

The Revenues and Benefits service operates in partnership with North Dorset District Council. This joint service, called the Stour Valley Partnership, began in October 2010. This was followed by the joint Housing service between Christchurch and East Dorset which started in December 2010 and has shown significant improvement, being based on the quality of the service offered.

A shared services timetable, covering all services under review, has been drawn up and is now well under way. Scheduled reviews will be taking place progressively over the next 4 year period.

**Further Electoral Review of East Dorset** – Following a report to Policy & Resources Committee in August 2011, the Council wrote to the Local Boundary Commission for England requesting a review of the district wards be undertaken. Initially the Commission informed the Council they were unable to undertake a review. However in December an opening in their schedule occurred. The review will now be going ahead, based on the mandate already agreed with Members last year.

The Commission are coming to talk to the Chief Executive and Officers involved in the review on 24 January, next week and will be further visiting on the 16 February 2012 to brief all members of the Council on the process involved. They will also be holding briefings with the Political Leaders of the Council and representatives from the Parish and Town Councils at dates yet to be agreed.

A cross party Member Task and Finish Group has been established to deal with this review under the Chairmanship of the Deputy Leader - Cllr Alex Clarke. The other members of the group are Cllrs Little, Gibson, Monks, Mrs Warman and Mrs Hymers. The Group will be meeting regularly with officers throughout the review timetable. A special Policy and Resources Committee meeting is being planned for sometime in April 2012 to authorise submission of the Council's case for the review. It is expected that the review will be completed by August 2013 with implementation of the new warding and governance arrangements in place ahead of the scheduled May 2015 District Council Elections. All Parish and Town Councils will be fully consulted.

During the review process the number of District Councillors that make up the Council will be considered, along with the resolution of 'acknowledged anomalies' in order to address the representation throughout the District. New ward boundaries will be drawn up. The ultimate aim is to ensure that East Dorset District Council is efficient and cost effective. There will be full consultation with the public and Town and Parish Councils leading up to the submission to the Boundary Commission.