

Verwood County Division Report February 2018

County Councillor Report – Cllr. Spencer Flower

Government Approves Unitary Councils for Dorset - In an historic moment for public services in Dorset, the government has given the green light to plans to create two new unitary councils in Dorset. Local Government Minister, Sajid Javid, announced on Monday that he will progress his initial 'minded to' decision to create two new unitary authorities in the county, replacing the existing nine councils.

Each authority will deliver all local government services in their respective areas. One will cover Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole; and the other will serve the rest of the county.

This change will help protect local services, generate further economic growth, reduce costs, and provide more efficient, brand new councils structured around communities.

The Secretary of State has reviewed all the evidence and representations received since making his 'minded to implement' announcement, and now confirmed his decision that replacing nine councils with two unitary authorities, being in the best interests of residents in Dorset. Parliamentary Orders will follow later this year. The work of the Dorset Area Joint Committee will now be vital for determining the structure, budget and service delivery model of the new Dorset unitary council, which will go live: 1 April 2019.

This is about so much more than the reorganisation of council structures in Dorset. The opportunity to change the way we provide services will help save money, give greater accountability to council tax payers/service users, and protect public services in future years.

Highway Issues (i) Batterley Drove - Following the recent spell of icy weather and accidents on Batterley Drove between Verwood and Alderholt. Pressure put on the Highways Department by Cllr Toni Coombs has resulted in the regrading of the verge to divert water away from the highway, and a skid resistance test at the Heavy Horse Centre with an undertaking to resurface in due course. Highway vegetation is also to be cut back in several places along the road.

(ii) C2 Horton Road - Following a recent meeting between local members and Highways, a number of actions were agreed as a result of these discussions for the C2 between Ashley Heath and Thickthorn Cross.

Vegetation along the C2 route between Ashley Heath and Thickthorn Cross will be reviewed with appropriate vegetation cut back if it is on highway land. Encroaching vegetation on private land will be enforced, with landowners being made aware of the responsibilities. Attempts will be made to be completed before the bird nesting season is fast approaching which may hinder the cutting back of some vegetation.

Traffic Surveys will also be carried out at several locations along the C2 route to get evidence of current traffic flows. Surveys will provide a count of traffic, a breakdown of the type of traffic and traffic speed. Highways will also review warning signage and lining at Wigbeth.

The narrowing at Stanbridge bends was discussed. There was a general agreement that widening this section would have an adverse impact upon traffic flows as the route would become even more attractive and accommodating for larger vehicles.

Discussions took place regarding the suitability of weight restriction on the C2 route, However, this was deemed inappropriate as a legal order would have to include 'accept for access'. As the majority of the larger vehicles using the C2 route are doing for access the impact would be far from significant and unlikely to receive a level of enforcement from Dorset Police to deter large vehicles travelling the C2 route.