

## Dorset Councillor Report October 2019

The Full Council met last week at County Hall where 3 important decisions were made.

The Youth Justice Plan was adopted. This is a statutory duty that the Council must have in place. Similarly, after a number of years the Minerals and Waste Plan which covers Dorset Council area and also the BCP area has been adopted. The Plan has already been adopted by BCP and is an important step in identifying areas that are suitable for this purpose and crucially, protecting other areas across the County from inappropriate development.

The Council agreed to provide additional support, through an extension to the Council Tax Relief Scheme to care leavers. Care leavers will now not be required to pay Council Tax until they reach the age of 25 if they live alone or will benefit from a 25% reduction if they live with someone else. This is set to benefit the 225 people that Dorset Council currently has corporate parenting responsibilities for. This is vital support for some of the more vulnerable people that come under the Councils care. I was delighted to support this and believe that it is worth noting the significant role that Cllr Coombs has played in supporting care leavers through her work on this matter and on the Corporate Parenting Board.

### The Budget and Spending Round

The Leader, Cllr Spencer Flower has written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP to press for fairer funding for Dorset. The longstanding issue of fairer funding that sees rural councils such as Dorset receive significantly less than Councils elsewhere remains an area of concern. Despite this, in the recent Spending Round it was announced that Dorset could benefit from an additional £10million to help with cost pressures in schools, social care and SEND provision. Further details are expected in the budget in early November.

### Cross Party working and Executive Advisory Panels (EAPs)

A number of cross party EAPs have been established. This fulfils a pledge made by the Leader that many of the important issues facing the Council and our communities would be tackled in a collegiate manner with input from elected members from all parties. EAPs have now been formed to look at issues including:

- Climate Change
- Equality, Diversity and inclusion
- Engaging with Town and parish Councils
- ICT and Digital
- Dorset Local Plan
- Leisure Centre Review
- Economic Development

The EAP on Climate change has been particularly successful and a recent report shows that the Dorset Council is amongst the best performing Councils in tackling climate change. This builds on the promises made when declaring a climate emergency and demonstrates collaborative working to tackle the big issues affecting Dorset. During a recent Peer Review, Dorset Council and its leadership were praised for the Cross Party working within the Council.

Cllr Simon Gibson 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2019