

Dorset Council, West Purbeck, January 2020 Report

Welcome

Thank you for bearing with us whilst we ceased communications because of the requirements to maintain political neutrality during the election period. The Council can now concentrate on its core activities and will now attempt to set up working relationships with our newly elected MPs. We will be writing to our MPs asking them to work with us on the key areas of funding, Adults and Children's Services and Climate change to name but three of these areas. There are obviously many others that we will be talking to them about and hopefully we may be able to get their attention a little more than previously.

Laura and I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy New Year and to remind you that if you want either or both of us to talk to you or visit then please ring or email us (details at the end of the report).

Climate Change

Dorset Council recently took the decision to amend its Climate Emergency, so it is now a 'Climate and Ecological Emergency' declaration. Earlier this year members of the Councillors panel met with local activists to discuss the change to the wording of the emergency declaration so that the protection and enhancement of Dorset's natural environment and wildlife biodiversity is also considered in the Council's climate emergency mitigation work. While agreed in principle at the time, the panel needed to establish the formal process for making this change; this has now been done.

The panel were also updated on the Council's Task & Finish groups' progress, covering four key areas of work (with a Leadership & Influence group to follow). Notable points and ideas included:

Buildings – Accounts for over half of Dorset Council's carbon footprint, so an opportunity for significant savings. These include potential commissioning of energy surveys as part of office reviews. Investigation of policy changes and enforcing minimum standards for new projects, using Dorset Council Local Plan

Natural Environment – Establish an information hub with guidance on best practice. Maximise use of existing Biodiversity protocol and Pollinator action plan. Investigate how we can make better use of our county farms

Waste and Energy – Introduction of Single Use Plastic policy and better waste segregation across all Dorset Council sites. Commission study to look at how Dorset energy system could work. Investigate building our own renewable energy facilities

Transport – Lobby for a national plan on transport. Planning must reduce the need to travel and encourage uptake of sustainable travel. Greener travel policies should be embedded in current key strands of work, including our Assets review, Local Transport Plan and Local Plan.

Officers also presented their timeline for a wide-reaching 'Call for ideas' engagement exercise, which will launch and be publicised shortly. The aim is to allow the public to submit their ideas for tackling climate change, with a few selected members of the public to present directly to the panel. Further details will follow shortly.

Lulworth

Laura and I have recently managed to persuade the Planning Committee to overturn the Officers' recommendations to scrap the requirement to prevent new houses being used as second homes for a development in Lulworth. We now await the results of the Inspector's review of our Local Plan to see whether he will support this being a key policy in our Local Plan. We hope to hear of his decision in time for the next report.

Dorset Council Plan

One of the problems of Local Government is that we sometimes use confusing terminology because it is what Central Government understands!

What is the difference between the Dorset Council Plan and the Dorset Local Plan? Two different plans are currently being talked about for the Dorset Council area. We are asking residents what they think of the draft Dorset Council Plan. It sets out what the council needs to focus on in the next four years to make Dorset a great place to live, work and visit; and how we should prioritise our activities.

We have also started work on the Dorset Local Plan. From 2024, it will guide all building development in Dorset. It will identify sites for homes and business and will include policies to guide decisions on planning applications. We'll be asking everyone in the Dorset Council area for views in late 2020.

Surgery

We frequently and happily hold meetings with our constituents at a time and place that is mutually convenient to one or other of us. We will respond to any email or telephone request to meet which we will hold either at a local village hall, hostelry or at your home to suit you. Please ring or email us with the subject matter so that we can prepare ourselves. Peter's email address is peterwharf@hotmail.com telephone 07986600799 and Laura's is cllrlaura.miller@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk telephone 07814 569563.

Peter Wharf & Laura Miller, Dorset Councillors for West Purbeck