

Report to the parish council 6/10/24
Cllr Jill Haynes Chalk Valleys ward

Dear Clerks, Councillors and members of the public,

I thought this time I would give you an update on some of the processes that we are involved with as Dorset Councillors. Dorset is a member led council but in order to give this lead there are many policies and strategies that have to be agreed so that officers know the way forward. It is a rather slow and process driven way of operating but does give clarity not just to staff but other organisations and indeed central government as to the way we intend to run the council. Some of the strategies are mandatory requirements of central government and have to be reviewed annually.

At the start of the new term of a council there are often changes in direction and priorities and then a larger number of these documents need to be reviewed. This happens through the two Overview Committees. There are two cross party committees, chaired by the party in power, one covering People and Health and the other Place and Resources. These committees give the steer to Cabinet on new policies and their recommendations are then ratified and or amended at the next Cabinet meeting.

So far the following papers have been reviewed, debated and agreed:

The Extra Care Housing Strategy – Looking to supply supported living to both elderly people and those needing additional support.

The Youth Justice Plan

The Growth and Economic Regeneration Strategy – this is a vital follow on after the government has withdrawn funding from the Local Economic Partnership (LEP)

Review of Dorset Council Waste Strategy

Strategic Asset Management Plan – a key enabler to the council plan and it is how we manage the councils wide and diverse property estate.

Pan Dorset Safeguarding Children's partnership Annual report

Dorset Community Safety Plan and the Pan Dorset reoffending planning document

The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Aspire Adoption Service Annual Report

There is a forward plan for both committees about which policies/strategies are coming to future meetings and this is continuously being updated. There are often working groups of the two Overview Committees working on items on the forward plans.

Going forward the two Scrutiny Committees (People and Health as well as Place and Resource) have the job of reviewing the effectiveness of the policies and ensuring that they are giving good value for money and successful outcomes for the people of Dorset. These committees are chaired by the opposition but are again cross party.

As well as being a member of at least one of these committees most members are also on either a Planning committee or Licensing, as well as a number of sub committees.

The committees all require a considerable amount of background reading of papers to understand the full picture under discussion. There are also regular on line webinars on a wide variety of topics to ensure councillors are well informed when they make decisions.

When reading this back this all sounds very dry but the truth is that it is mostly both interesting and important to support our communities by making informed choices.