REPORT OF DISTRICT COUNCILLORS March 2018

The latest consultation on Purbeck’s Local Plan Review was launched and has now finished. For myself this has formed the main piece of my work and taken up a great deal of my time.

I attended our own drop in event on 17th February, but have also been out and about in Purbeck attending the drop ins at other venues. The Infrastructure Forum had to be cancelled because of the inclement weather, but did take place very soon after the cancellation. From my discussions with residents at the drop ins I found that although they may start out wanting no new homes at all, they almost all of them have family that would love to live in this area too but cannot afford to. I am hoping that the section in the consultation about affordable homes will garner some really worthwhile comments.

Additionally, in our village I have stood around in the High Street outside Tesco, the Library and the Pharmacy speaking to young people who have ranged in age from 17/18 up to 28. We have discussed housing, probably approximately 30-35 in number. They all live in the village and none of them can afford to buy or even rent their own homes. All are living with parents or family members. Some are completed students looking or have found local employment, some have young families of their own and have failed to set up their own homes sustainably so have returned. They all aspire to live independently either renting or buying. They all said they had seen the Consultation form but their parents would be filling it in. Most of them had differing opinions to their parents so I gave them the details of how to get their own forms. I didn’t have any way of targeting who I spoke to, only by guessing their age range from their appearance so it paints a gloomy picture and emphasises that there is truly a desperation for building a great many new homes. Perhaps it means that maybe we do need to be investigating nationally more incursions into the less important green belt areas. It irks me somewhat, having lived in Dorset all of my life, listening to people who have moved here and are now living in what was not so long ago, agricultural green belt land, saying that we must not build on green belt or agricultural land.

Work has been continuing in the Community Partners Task and Finish Group (T & F) for the Dorset Council Joint Committee of which I am a member and our next meeting is imminent. At the last full Council meeting at Purbeck District Council under Urgent Matters it was decided that an Extraordinary Council meeting would be held to pass a motion that the Secretary of State needed to make his decision urgently. So much work had been completed and much more was in process, but could not continue until The Decision had been made. Fortunately The Decision came through just a few days later so there was no need for the Extraordinary Meeting to be held. The Evening Echo put the story out about the Extraordinary Council meeting with the angle that PDC was about to reverse its involvement in the new Unitary Authority (UA). This was unfortunate, but a push was necessary or the May 2019 deadline for the new UA to be operational could not be achieved. I feel sure that either Peter Webb or Peter Wharf will elaborate on this subject.

In our village the Dog Wardens have been out and about. I have seen their vans and the Wardens walking about and talking to residents. I hope this will result in improvements to pooh picking up and more responsible dog owner behaviour, but I won’t hold my breath. One tree issue of long standing has finally been sorted out before the end of February, but there is now the tree issue around the Glebe Road bus stop. The bus company has taken responsibility to cut the trees back due to passenger safety issues, but no visible action has yet taken place. I will continue to monitor and pester if necessary. The true responsibility rests with the landowner, who is absent and does not respond to communication.

I have received e-mails about the motorhome parked on the verge in Halls Road. I pass up and down this piece of road many times and can see no actual harm; there is no litter or untidiness, the vehicles are parked on the verge not interfering with any passing traffic and there appears to be no noise or other disruption. At the moment I feel it is perhaps better to keep an eye on this situation rather than making it a bigger issue. Drains and surface water have been issues mainly due to the inclement weather, but all of the ones reported to me have, I am pleased to say, been taken care of by Dorset Highways. We do have some potholes which have appeared or deepened, some of which have been addressed, but some of which still need to be sorted out.

In my role as Vice-Chairman of PDC, I look forward to meeting our Volunteer of the Year at the Awards on 12th April. I have two other Civic events to attend in late March/early April and will, as has become my usual practice, be escorted by village residents.

As usual I am happy to answer questions or listen to any suggestions.

FROM COUNCILLOR WENDY MEADEN

Since Wendy Meaden wrote the above the motorhome in Halls Road has moved on and the verge has been left in reasonable order.

On LGR the first meeting of the Budget & Finance Group is meeting later in the week. I am a member of that group. It would appear that as time scales are short for creating the new Unitary, "Dorset Council", the priorities between now and April 2019 will be to create a budget, sort out ward boundaries and the legal structure of the Council. Structural changes and how local input is kept and services provided are unlikely to change until after April 2019. Devolution of tasks to towns and parishes is therefore less likely in the short term but must be born in mind. One good thing is that council tax harmonisation across Dorset will not be a problem for Purbeck residents as it will be for those in other Districts.

Bridget Downton has been re-hired as General Manager Planning and Community Services. Having resigned , with no pay-off, her personal circumstances have changed. Given all that is going on with LGR and the Local Plan review this has been welcomed by all Councillors.

Dorset Waste Partnership will have run well under budget this year. The savings are being partly repaid to individual Councils and the balance being reserved against the risks of price and cost fluctuations. There has been an adverse shift of nearly £40 per tonne  in the cost of disposing of recyclates in recent months since China stopped taking plastics from other countries.  This change well may become permanent until new treatment capacity comes on line in a few years' time putting pressure on future costs of running the DWP. At £160 per household for a year the service is very good value. DWP is the best performing service in the country and for carbon footprint.

Peter Webb