REPORT OF DISTRICT COUNCILLORS TO PARISH COUNCIL DECEMBER 2018

FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR WENDY MEADEN

The PDC Council meeting for December was cancelled due to lack of business and the upcoming Policy Group has also been cancelled for the same reason.

Mostly in the village I have been involved in sorting out blocked drains, road sweeping of leaves, hedge cutting and wind damage to trees. DCC officers have been most responsive and at the time of writing this report I only have two jobs still outstanding.

The Christmas tree light up outside Tesco in the village was as popular as last year’s event. Woodlands Nursery provided and erected the tree as they did last year. My nephew brought his tractor which was decorated and lit up with strings of lights as well as all the legal lights. A large face of a red nosed reindeer with bells and lights which was on the front of the tractor proved very popular with the small children and became quite a photoshoot location. The School has worked really hard with lots of practising by the School Choir. They sang so well with descant as well as normal tones and tunes which is not easy for adults let alone Primary age youngsters. Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer was sung with gusto and in rounds which also is not easy. Away In A Manger was the last song and the public joined in. Father Christmas switched on the lights at 5 p.m. on the dot with Reverend Stephen Partridge doing the honours on the PA system and leading the countdown then completing the event with God’s Blessing. Tesco provided free of charge over 300 mince pies and mini yule logs plus mulled wine and cranberry juice. Plans next year include some savouries and a hope to invite a hot chestnut vendor. Nigel hopes to still be the Manager next year and will be open to ideas to make next year’s switch on even better. Last year’s Manager, Paula, came along dressed in Christmas costume and it was pleasing to have this continuation. A lot of behind the scenes work goes on to bring this event about, but it seems very popular and is appreciated by many. Consideration and hopefully action needs to be taken to get the hole in place for next years Christmas tree, Maypole, Flagpole etc.

I attended the December Teapot Monday at Castle Farm Care Home where I spoke with some of the non-craft residents who were enjoying their morning hot drink and a mince pie. The craft residents were being helped by some regular craft attendees to make Christmas Wreaths. The Lounge was stacked with foliage which smelt wonderful and soon disappeared to appear again as most professional wreaths. I could only admire as flower arranger I am not.

I attended a Councillor Briefing last Thursday in South Walks House, Dorchester which was about the Constitution for the new Dorset Council. The main difference is that PDC is a Committee arrangement whereas Dorset Council will be a Cabinet led Council. Although this streamlines the decision making it does mean that most decisions are made by a few councillors rather than all. This point was discussed and some amendments made regarding Councillor attendance at Cabinet and other meetings and public participation. It appears that the Dorset Council area will be split into 3 sub divisions (East, North and West) not in line with the current District Council areas. Much discussion took place regarding the Planning Committees. There will be one Planning Committee per sub division. The main hubs for East which includes us seem to be Verwood, Wimborne, Wareham and Swanage. Much of the planning applications will be devolved to planning officers as is the situation now. There will be a Strategic Planning Committee dealing with minerals, waste and other strategic issues for the whole of the Dorset Council area. It is envisaged that each Area Planning Committee will only be dealing with any application which is controversial thereby meaning that the Planning workload per councillor should not be too onerous taken with all their other duties and larger Wards. There will be some mechanism for referring the more controversial planning applications to the Area Planning Committees.

This Briefing was followed by a Full Shadow Council meeting which voted to accept the appointment of staff proposed to the 2nd tier management posts. There was an urgent item to reduce the quorum for the Shadow Council to 41 from 69. It is foreseen that attendance is dropping off already and as 31st March 2019 approaches there may not be 69 councillors attending future meetings.. Most of us present felt this was not the case, but it was allowed that there was a possibility so it would be best not to take this risk of not being quorate especially for the setting of the budget. The quorum has therefore been reduced to 41.

Just for your information the voting at the Full Council meetings is carried out electronically and each councillor can be identified electronically. It is possible to see how a particular councillor voted which will be important when we vote on the Budget which legally has to be a recorded vote. The electronic meters are tested at the beginning of each meeting by a question being put up on the 3 large screens in the room and all the councillors using their meters to vote For, Against or Abstain. The question this time was “Do You Believe in Santa Claus”. The voting was 64 For, 11 Against and 21 Abstain. Does this say something about the mindset of councillors?

As always I am happy to answer questions or listen to suggestions.

FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR Peter Webb

I have little to add to Wendy’s comprehensive report. The task of arriving at a balanced budget for the Dorset Council is proving interesting if not difficult. With over 75% of the budget being consumed by Adult and Children’s care by statute and the unpredictability of how many people will be involved there is danger of squeezing resources available for other statutory and non-statutory activities that affect a vastly higher proportion of DC’s resident’s.