Report Lytchett Matravers Parish Council from Dorset Councillor 22.1.2020

The Council is at present concentrating on developing a Strategic Plan, known as the ‘Emerging Plan’ which involves setting a vision of vibrant future for Dorset and embedding principles with which to work . This is in consultation , at Parish and Town Workshops, but it is good intentions written down.

The budget for 2020-2021 has been discussed in detail. The major overspend last year and assumed this coming year is Adult Social Care and Vulnerable children (Children in Care or with Special needs) both of which have increased in number and the length of time they need care. The budget for both social care items has been increased by £11mill . Dorset will still have to find more money. There is emphasis on improving assessments and putting together more flexible care packages.

Although the Council has inherited many surplus properties and the plan is to sell about £15mill worth but local towns and parishes will be consulted first. So no movement yet. Savings from the change to local government have happened in redundancies in staff.

Although the biggest need is for extra funding for Social Care the general public demands more attention to roads and highway maintenance,

It looks as if the council tax precept will be raised by 3.99% which includes a 2% increase just for Adult social care. There will be an increase in the Fire and Police Precept as well. This still has to be confirmed at the February meeting and there will be opposition from North Dorset Councillors as North Dorset had a 10% rise last year to standardise Council Tax across the county with the understanding that there would be no rise this year.

Parking fees across the County will be standardised in different area bands. Coastal, Market Towns and the Rest.

There is a scheme of grants to Volunteer groups and especially new schemes, there is an online survey to fill in. My personal opinion is that the criteria makes applying for a grant difficult for smaller groups and risks turning volunteers into poorly paid council workers. It is running until March so please have a look.

The Dorset Planning system has been under review by an LGA team to consider if the changes are being effective and how the different schemes of delegation have been brought together. Provisionally reported issues include serious problems in uniting the IT system, which has been very consumer unfriendly. Loss of older more experienced planners has reduced staff morale. The planning backlog has built to an unwieldy size slowing down all applications which leads to some rushed decisions just so as to get through according to national guidelines. Lack of training and understanding of the procedures is also a problem with the public leading to overoptimistic expectations. CIL money may not always be used in a timely manner to really help the local area but pooled away from the source.

However at a recent Planning Application the Planning Committee overruled an officers recommendations and supported a refusal on the grounds of a Neighbourhood Plan recommendation.

The extreme rainfall has caused several problems with flooding of the highways and some homes. Highways are responsible for keeping roads open, and problems should be logged on the Dorsetforyou Website. Water coming into homes is a problem for the Environment Agency and should be reported there.

I have been impressed by the efficiency of Hydrosnake and Hydrosacks at keeping small floods out of doorways, both available at local hardware stores.

The problems with a broken drain on the westward side of the Upton Bypass will be attended to 20-24th January. The work may cause delays.