**Beacon Ward Report to Parishes**

**Dorset Council**

**Cllr Jane Somper**

JAN-FEB 2025

**The Budget**

The budget making process has now gone through workshops and two Scrutiny Committees. The next stage will be the Cabinet meeting before finally being voted on in Full Council.

The proposals for setting a budget of £416m for 2025/26 and increase of £39m, though additional cost of service delivery next year is forecast to be £83.4m.

Increases in spending to directorates below:

£14.5 million for adult social care and housing services

£1.5 million for children’s services, and

£4 million for Place services including transport, highways and planning services.

DC have also set a savings figure as well as a Transformation programme, however the programme has not yet been seen by councillors making the whole budget difficult to agree to without understanding what transformation is being proposed in detail. We have been given a light touch summary during meetings of the requirement for a digital shift including use of AI as well as staff efficiencies and working with the Voluntary and Community Sector. Papers will be released on Monday (20th) and will be debated at the next Cabinet meeting.

Proposals for savings including transformation:

New service grants and income £12m

Managing and meeting need differently £14m

Reducing 3rd party spend £3m

Efficiencies £14.4m

Another area of concern is the drop in reserves which was at the recommended amount of 10% but the proposals are to drop this to just over 6%.

Proposal for Council Tax rise of 3% and 2% for Adult Social Care.

The budget process is never easy but despite all the good work over the past 5yrs since the formation of Dorset Council, this year looks like it is going to one of the most difficult I have ever encountered.

**Devolution Deal**

Following briefings from this administration it appears that the council is likely to progress with a submission for a Devolution Deal. Dorset is looking to work with Somerset and Wiltshire councils to form a “Heart of Wessex Mayoral Strategic Authority” following the release of the Devolution White Paper. This is likely to bring increased investment and funding to the council areas and see additional powers handed down to the region from central government. However, the Government are insisting that this comes with another layer of bureaucracy, and we will be expected to have an elected Mayor and a mayors office for the region. I will update you when I have more information.

**Chief Executive Leaving Dorset Council.**

After many years at both North Dorset District Council and then as the CEO of Dorset Council Matt Prosser is leaving us to take up a new role as CEO of Wellington Council New Zealand. Matt has always been a champion for Dorset and successfully led us through local government reorganisation to for a unitary council. I wish him every success in his new job on the other side of the world.

**Reporting Any Highways Related Problem**

Highways problems can be reported on the link below. You will receive a reference number so the report can be tracked. You can also upload photographs of the issue concerned and pin-point on the interactive map. Some of the reporting you can do as follows; pothole, blocked drain, flooding, abandoned vehicles and fly-tipping [Report a problem on a road or pavement - Dorset Council](https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/roads-highways-maintenance/report-a-problem-on-the-road-or-pavement)

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