

Verwood County Council Report –June 2018

Cllrs. Toni Coombs and Spencer Flower

New Shadow Dorset Council –Elected Members came together for the first meeting of the Dorset Shadow Council, which took place on Thursday 7 June.

The Shadow Council will ensure the safe and legal transition from the six existing councils to the new ‘Dorset Council’ in April next year. Elections to the new Dorset Council are scheduled to take place on Thursday 2 May 2019.

The Shadow Dorset Council consists of all 174 members for the Dorset Area (drawn from the existing Dorset area councils). This arrangement was established when the Structural Order, confirming the creation of the new unitary council, was approved by Parliament and then ratified by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, James Brokenshire MP.

The digital technology was embraced at the first meeting of the Shadow Dorset Council with a live broadcast of the meeting via livestream and Councillors used remote handsets to cast live votes on decisions such as the election of Chairman and Vice Chairman of the new Shadow Council along with the constitution, ratifying of interim statutory officer appointments to the roles of Head of Paid Service, [Chief Executive], 151 Officer [Head of Finance] and Monitoring Officer [Head of Legal].

Councillor Hilary Cox – County Council was appointed the Chairman of the Shadow Dorset Council unopposed. There were two candidates for Vice Chairman and following a vote Members elected Cllr Peter Shorland – West Dorset to the role of Vice Chairman. Following a vote by Members nominations to other committees were also approved including the 20 seats of the newly established Shadow Executive Committee, which meets for the first time on the 18 June, when the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Shadow Executive Committee will be elected. In accordance with the Structure Change Order de facto the Chairman and Vice Chairman will become Leader and Deputy Leader of the Shadow Dorset Council.

The Verwood County Councillors have been appointed to:

Cllr. Spencer Flower - Shadow Executive Committee

Cllr. Toni Coombs - Shadow Council Standards Committee.

Members are statutory obliged to adopt an Allowance Scheme for the Shadow Council, but the Chairman accepted an amendment from the floor, contrary to the recommendation by the Independent Remuneration Panel, that no Special Responsibility Allowances be paid to the Chairman of the Council, the Shadow Council Leader or the Chairman of the Scrutiny Overview Committee. Therefore for the avoidance of any doubt there will be no additional member allowance paid during the lifetime of the Shadow Council. The IRP will be asked at a later date to come forward with recommendations for Member Allowances, which will be place in time for the start of the new council, post 2 May 2019.

The new ‘Dorset Unitary Council’ will serve around 377,000 residents, so combined with the new authority for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, we will be within the twenty largest local authorities in the country. We will have a more unified voice and will create stronger and better links both nationally and locally. This is seen as a great opportunity to bring about radical changes to how the council is structured and a way of streamlining local services for our residents and to make them more accessible and fit for the 21st Century.