

191111Cranborne & Alderholt Ward Dorset Councillor Report for Alderholt Parish Council

Somerley Tip

Following the earlier rejection by the Place Scrutiny Committee of the Officers' recommendation that we take no action to fund the use of this HRC by Dorset residents, Cabinet has agreed a plan with Hampshire County Council that we will joint fund this facility pending the construction of a local facility in the east of the Dorset Council area to replace the aging and inadequate facility in Wimborne.

Dorset Council Financial Position

The Council has forecast increasing pressure on Adult and Children's services in particular will cause it to go beyond its budgeted costs. The likely annual over budget expenditure has risen from around £7.1 million overspend forecast in Q1 to £8.1m in the Q2 forecasts presented to Cabinet. Currently the plan is to meet these deficits from Reserves which are healthy. However the situation does need careful monitoring.

The Cabinet heard from Cabinet Member Cllr Tony Alford that cuts of up to 10% to Charitable and voluntary organisations could be required, though no decision has yet been taken. Many such groups pointed out that they were only able to attract additional funding from other sources because they got Dorset Council grants. Cutting these would reduce the total income much more than by the simple amount missing from the Council. It was argued that many of these organisations provided great value for money and that for example the Council's support for Dorset Community Action to the tune of £92k brought in an additional £1.5m in external funding. Cabinet agreed to extend the 6 week Consultation period to 8 weeks.

Better news on this front is that the Council has cut its borrowing by £35m in 6 Months. This reduces the amount of interest that the Council pays, although it has also reduced the amount the Council has available for investment. The Council has no major capital plans in the foreseeable future which would require further borrowing.

Digital Champions

The Council has been instrumental in creating a network of around 75 volunteers across the area running free one-to-one computer help sessions in Libraries and other venues, helping with all aspects of IT – from turning the thing on, to using the internet safely, emails, and video calls. One learner in her 80s starting from scratch can now even use her doctors website to order medications.