

Cllr Christopher's E-mailed Report – 28 March 2022

This is a shorter report than normal.

I am particularly concerned that it deals with facts as I see them and does not make overtly political points at the expense of others at this stressful time.

I note with interest your agenda and an item therein in relation to inviting our Member of Parliament, Chris Loder to meet with you.

It is my further understanding that Dorset Council Place and Resource Overview Committee will meet on 21 April 2022 to consider a report on the Draft Air Quality Action Plan consultation and Draft Air Quality Action Plan proposals.

I have attended meetings for businesses convened by Dorset Members of Parliament in both Dorchester and Blandford. At the meetings employers stressed both labour supply shortages and cost push i.e. input inflation.

These meetings were held before the Chancellors Spring Statement.

The increase in the employers National Insurance Allowance announced in the statement is particularly welcome in the County where employment in the private sector is dominated by small firms.

I have met with Police and Crime Commissioner David Sidwick on more than one occasion . I always stress my concern in respect of speeding in and around Chideock David has meanwhile stressed how Southwest Police Forces are co-operating well in arresting those thought to be at the heart of the criminal gang drug distribution networks. This work involves co-operation across force boundaries as gangs clearly do not recognise County borders.

It is my understanding that the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Rt Hon George Eustace, will be addressing Members of the local Melplash Show next month.

Some of us will remember that George, when Minister of State at the Department around five years ago, commented that post Brexit Agriculture Ministers etc. would no longer be able to continue with the post 1973 trick of blaming all U K farming's ills on Brussels!

Now clearly there is huge concern for farmers about the price of tractor fuel and fertiliser and there will be a great deal of interest in what Mr Eustice has to say. There have been calls from farming organisations for a two-year halt to the reduction in area based agricultural subsidies and the corresponding move towards environmental subsidies.

When I was asked to become a local councillor some 7 years ago, I did not expect that we would see war in Europe or a pandemic.

Clearly in Dorset those impacted most by the increase in the cost of living are those in the most challenging financial position.

I am sure that we all recognise those that do so much to assist and pray for peace to be restored to Ukraine .

I have received e mails involving concerns about the switch to a digital landline service and where resident's concerns are compounded by the paucity of a mobile signal within parts of the Dorset Council Marshwood Vale Ward. I am liaising with both our MP and rural business organisations.

The most recent article I have read on this matter was in the Daily Telegraph of Saturday 26 March 2022

“ Isolated and vulnerable people are being forced to spend hundreds of pounds to ensure they can still make calls after.. landlines were torn out.

BT and other phone companies are replacing Britain's copper-based landline network with a new “voice over internet “ system which connects calls using broadband technology .

All homes will lose their old existing connections by 2025 and will be forced to use digital phones ,which unlike traditional landlines ,are dependent on the supply of electricity and the internet

The reliability of the new technology has been called into question after digital phones left some unable to dial 999 after their power was cut off in the recent stormy weather “

I will now move to discuss Adult Social Care

Dorset Council is creating a new company to provide adult social care for residents now and in the future.

The council will end its current contract with Tricuro and ensure the safe transfer of adult social care services provided to its residents to the new company, Care Dorset. Dorset Council is responsible for arranging the social care for around 4,000 residents at any one time. Not all care for those residents is provided by Tricuro.

Dorset Council is working closely with the regulator and all stakeholders, to ensure Care Dorset is set up correctly and meets the required standards.

The transfer of care service to the new company will happen later this year but will not be before October. Tricuro will continue to provide care services to residents in Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole residents.

Dorset Council residents will continue to receive the same level of care by Care Dorset and residents who currently receive care are being contacted directly about the changes.

Members of Tricuro staff who support Dorset Council residents will transfer to the new company without changes to their existing employment contracts.

The council is working closely with Tricuro and with Trade Unions regarding all employees, including care workers, to manage the transition to Care Dorset.

Dorset Council Cabinet members believe social care services will be better provided by a new company which serves just the Dorset Council area, which is large, rural and whose residents have different needs.

Councillor Peter Wharf, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health, said:

“We are in the process of ensuring we can continue to provide high quality social care to our residents, while also achieving the best possible value for money.

The needs of residents in the Dorset Council area are at the heart of the decisions being made. We want to be able to tailor our social care services to best meet those needs.

Employees of Tricuro have our profound respect and thanks for working with some of the most vulnerable members of the community who need assistance to live a fulfilling life. We value these colleagues hugely and will continue to do so as they transfer.”

Tricuro was set up in 2015 as a provider for social care services under the former council structures, to cover the whole of Dorset. Since then, there have been significant changes including the creation of the two new unitary authorities – Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole Council. These two councils are very different, geographically, and demographically.

The council will keep residents and colleagues updated on the plans.

Dorset Council has decided to act, as spending on adult social care represents around half of all Dorset Council expenditure which will be £141m in the 2022/23 budget. In addition, demand for adult social care is growing year on year, and Dorset Council has the highest percentage of residents aged 85 and over of any county or unitary authority in the country.

Finally, I would comment that I have met with a local headteacher who has stressed the impact that news coverage is having on young people and this should not be forgotten as we adults carry on with our duties as Councillors .

Best regards

Simon

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