

Report to the Parish Council August 2023
Councillor Jill Haynes Chalk Valleys Ward Dorset Council

Hello Councillors and Members of the public. August is traditionally a quiet month at the council as officers spend some time with their families during the school holidays. Therefore it is a short report this month.

Award of grants

One of the ways Dorset Council can make limited resources go further and reduce the need for local taxation is through active pursuit of external funding opportunities. These opportunities are often competitive processes require bidders to put forward ambitious ideas and demonstrate a commitment to delivery in accordance with the scheme criteria. Successfully bidding helps to accelerate and unlock improved outcomes for those that live, work and invest in Dorset. For the period 2020/21 to 2023/24 Dorset Council has received £101.3m of grant funding. In total we have been successful in more than 35 bids and some of the major wins are below:

- DSG Safety Valve £42m
- Levelling Up Fund (LUF) – Weymouth Regeneration £19.5m
- Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme - Main Grant £18.8m
- DfT Transforming Cities Fund £14.2m

The council is proud to have won so many bids and will continue to explore all future grant opportunities.

Prevention by working in Partnership.

The government is pushing councils and health authorities to work more closely and more efficiently to give residents the care they expect by establishing Integrated Care Systems (ICS). Dorset's ICS was one of the first when it was created in 2018 and the drive towards a common approach to digital has dominated our partnership.

Dorset has one of the biggest health and social care challenges because of its demographics, with a much higher proportion of residents aged over 65 than regional and national averages. We have benefited from national funding to trial approaches to improving efficiency. Dorset Council has been working more closely with our local health partners in three main areas: by sharing data to understand population need, having common goals including a relentless focus on prevention and a shared approach to digital skills. We are beginning to see the benefits of this collaboration.

The award-winning Dorset Intelligence and Insight Service (DiIS) brings together millions of data records from health and social care across Dorset and makes them widely accessible

via interactive digital dashboards. This amalgamation of data is delivering better outcomes for local people in a fairer, more cost-effective and productive way. It links health and social care information, providing population health management information and enabling clinicians to design services based on what is required across the ICS.

“It’s clinically led. Clinicians tell us what they want to achieve and we get them all the data and information they need,” says Stephen Slough, chief digital information officer at NHS Dorset. 800,000 patient records are updated nightly across Dorset, with other feeds updating every 15 minutes. The focus now is on what we need to do to prevent illness, address inequalities and help communities manage their own health and wellbeing.

Making prevention the core of what we do will lead to better outcomes and quality of life, more personalised services and, vitally, will reduce the inequities across the county. Prevention is a real and long-lasting way to reduce the unsustainable load on our health and care services.

Dorset Council has been piloting digital inclusion approaches with Dorset NHS for several years and has extended its support programme to encompass health. As well as recruiting and supporting volunteer digital champions (VDC) to work in surgeries, around 100 of its nearly 940 embedded digital champions are from the NHS. These frontline workers help people in the moment, as they need to download an app onto their phone for example, or signpost them to other services for more in-depth help. The council also has device and data-giving projects to help people get online which can be extended to those who need it to access health applications.

Work continues with other councils on a possible Devolution Deal which could bring considerable bespoke funding for things like transport links and supporting rural bus routes. The consultation on the new Housing Strategy is coming to a close and then the process of writing and approving the strategy will be completed this autumn. We are looking at ways to fund the new Digital Infrastructure strategy which will be vital to insure we have appropriate coverage for both broadband and mobile phone coverage going forward. In September we will start the really challenging process of setting the budget for next year. A bit like the schools it is back to the start of a new term in September with lots of work to do.