

### COUNTDOWN TO 1 APRIL 2019

#### 47 DAYS TO GO

We hope you find this newsletter useful. If you have any questions or feedback, please email [shapingdorsetcouncil@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:shapingdorsetcouncil@dorsetcc.gov.uk)



### USEFUL DATES FOR THE DIARY

Town and parish councillors and members of the public are encouraged to come along to meetings of the Shadow Dorset Council and its committees. You can find all the details at [dorsetareacouncils.wordpress.com](http://dorsetareacouncils.wordpress.com), but here's a list of some of the next key dates:



20 February - Shadow Dorset Council, 6.30pm, South Walks House. Members will be asked to set the forthcoming budget.

7 March - Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 6.30pm, South Walks House

11 March - Shadow Executive Committee, 4pm, South Walks House

### BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR THE NEW DORSET COUNCIL

A report outlining the budget proposals for the new Dorset Council was published ahead of Shadow Executive Committee on 11 February. The proposals will go to full council on 20 February for final agreement. This includes information on how the council tax is set.

It is proposed for all residents in the Dorset Council area to pay the same council tax rate from 1 April 2019 - this is called Council Tax Harmonisation. This avoids residents in one part of the new council area contributing more to the cost of services than others. Previously, rates varied across the 5 district and borough councils. Council tax helps to pay for many local services like care for vulnerable children and adults, maintenance of roads and rubbish collection. Council tax is charged on the household and is based on the value of the property, not on what the household earns. The amount of council tax paid depends on which property band the home is in and any discounts or exemptions that apply. The average 'Band D' rate for Dorset Council is proposed as £1629.75 per year.

You can read the full report [here](#).

Communications colleagues from all councils are working together to deliver the campaign for Dorset residents to tell them about why the new Dorset Council is being created and what it means for them.

We'll be distributing leaflets and posters to libraries, GP surgeries, schools, council receptions and voluntary and community organisations, and we'll be sending leaflets to all residents with their council tax bills. We've also launched the campaign on radio, social media, our website and via email, and we're advertising on council vehicles and roundabouts. If you'd like to order copies of the leaflet and/or poster, please email [comms@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:comms@dorsetcc.gov.uk) and we will arrange this for you.

## Six councils into one working for Dorset



[dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](http://dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

### **DORSET RESIDENTS TELL US WHAT THEY THINK!**

We ran a short survey in January to find out how much Dorset residents know about the new Dorset Council, and what their questions and concerns are. The response to the survey was excellent, with over 3,300 responses!

Some of the key findings were:

- Public awareness that the new Dorset Council is being created is pretty high (between 67% and 86% depending on channel of response)
- However, there was limited knowledge about how the new council will work and what it means for residents.
- The key concern is how local areas will be represented and served by the new council. This will be a vital issue for the new council to address.

Here are a couple of quotes from residents who completed the survey:

***"Council services becoming more centralised runs the risk of local services becoming less tailored to the needs of each area of the county."***

***"Councils that have merged before tend to ignore areas outside where they are headquartered."***

***"I'm worried that rural areas will lose out in financial spending."***

We'll address the concerns raised by residents and use this to shape the messaging of our information campaign which is now live.

## A ROUND UP FROM SHADOW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Members of the Shadow Executive Committee met on Monday 11 February, to consider a range of reports for the new Dorset Council including the Budget 2019/20, Local Plan and Emergency Response Plan. You can view tweets from the meeting via @ShapingDC and the agenda and reports [here](#). Take a look at some of the highlights below.

### Highlight report

Programme Director, Keith Cheesman updated members on progress since the last Shadow Executive Committee meeting on 14 January, including an update on the main priorities before the new Dorset Council is formed on 1 April. Less than 7 weeks to go!

### Local Council Tax Support Scheme

In order to provide help for people on low incomes with their Council Tax bill, members of Shadow Executive Committee voted to support an aligned scheme with a maximum support of those of working age limited to 90%. This will go forwards to full council on 20 February for final agreement.

### Budget 2019/20

Members approved budget proposals for 2019/20. This will go to full council on 20 Feb for the first budget of the new Dorset Council to be set. Dorset Council is forecasting a balanced budget for 2020/21, despite continuing financial challenges. The budget has been created, based on the council's aims to protect services and deliver further savings. Officers and members from across county, district and borough councils have been working together to bring the finances for six councils into one new organisation, with one budget, which is estimated to be around £290m. The budget report includes information on how the council tax is set - take a look at the article on the first page of the newsletter for more information about this.

### Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Employer Discretions Policy Statement

The LGPS regulations require all scheme employers to prepare and publish a pension discretions policy statement. Members agreed to adopt this policy statement with effect from 1 April 2019. The discretions cover a range of areas for existing scheme members and deferred beneficiaries and include flexible retirement, additional pension contribution arrangements and early access to deferred benefits.

### Timeline and resources for producing the Dorset Council Local Plan

Members are to start work on a local plan for the Dorset Council area, with the intention of adopting the plan by April 2023. This will look at how communities in the new council area will develop in the future. A member task and finish group will be set up to oversee this work which will be progressed after the May elections. All existing work carried out to date for current district local plan reviews will be used where possible, to shape the new Dorset Council Local Plan.

### Emergency Response Plan

Members have approved the emergency response plan for Dorset Council. The structural change order laid by Parliament requires Dorset Council to be able to fulfil its emergency planning duties as a Category One responder under the Civil Contingencies Act from 1 April 2019.