

District Councillor Annual Report 2016 - Abbey Ward

This last year at North Dorset District Council has been a full one with changes to every department as the Tri-partnership begins to take shape. The tri-council has appointed a joint Chief Executive, joint Directors and joint senior leadership team. These teams are in the process of developing their joint workforces all to serve the three council areas.

North Dorset has now formally placed the Nordon site on the open market. This will mean further changes to working practices for everyone and will provide greater flexibility. This is an opportunity to provide greater access to services across the district either digitally, over the telephone or face-to-face at hubs.

Despite financially challenging times the Council has been able to add positive contributions to the residents of North Dorset.

Through the Economic Growth Fund, £65,000 has been allocated to support local business and enable growth in the area. Currently 23 projects have been funded across the district, 12 new business created and a further 11 existing business have been able to enjoy successful growth. This has provided 26 new jobs and as these businesses continue to grow, more new jobs will follow.

16 young people have been given the opportunity to gain work invaluable skill and experience as Apprentices at North Dorset, 11 of these successfully completed the course and now work in local Government and 2 are working in the private sector, and a new scheme is currently being developed for the tri-partnership.

All district councils across Dorset have agreed to look at the devolution opportunities being presented by central Government. The work of the Combined Authority, our bid for devolution and the unitary discussions could change the shape and face of local government services in Dorset, pooling resources and experiences to offer tangible savings to budgets. Both Emma and I believe that this will inevitably mean a reduction in the numbers of elected members across Dorset. To us this makes sense and as much as we enjoy our roles as your District Councillors, we recognise that having 3 elected members (including County Councillor, Hilary Cox) serving you may need to reduce and change.

The priority will always be to ensure that we and the District are prioritising services and fully focusing resources to support service delivery and smart working practices.

The Local Plan was finally approved and we are beginning to see a number of Neighbourhood Plans being embarked on across the District and within the ward here. Milborne St Andrew and Milton Abbas are currently working on their plans with much work being put in by Parish Councillors.

Unfortunately, Jane was unsuccessful in her bid to convince fellow councillors of holding some meetings in the evening when she put a motion to full council some months ago. However, the vote was close and we hope it will be re-visited.

Our work continues with Licencing and Orders and on Scrutiny, which has become even more essential to ensure the significant changes are closely monitored and that residents needs are always the priority when decisions are made.

We look forward to another full and challenging year ahead.

District Councillors Jane Somper and Emma Parker.
May 2016