

1 February 2010

## **NORTH DORSET SEEKS BENEFITS OF JOINT WORKING**

Partnership working across councils was given a vote of confidence by North Dorset District Council, at its first meeting of the year on Friday 29 January, when it identified a wish to search for economies and improvements through a pilot project with Dorset County Council and the Primary Care Trust under the Total Place initiative.

Total Place is a national initiative to transform the way in which local services are delivered to reduce duplication and costs between public agencies. In Dorset the current focus is on care for the elderly.

The Council also agreed to support the concept of two or more councils working together in a cluster where there are common and shared benefits, a sound business case and a clear benefit to the public.

However, it did not agree to pursue the proposal of joining a three-council merged management team with Christchurch Borough Council and East Dorset District Council under the leadership of a single chief executive officer.

Leader of the Council, Cllr Peter Webb, said: "We remain very keen on partnership working to reduce costs and improve services. We have thought long and hard about the current proposal to join management teams and there are many factors which we believe do not provide any advantage to us, our Council or our residents. This includes consideration of the cost-benefit dimension."

Leader of Dorset County Council, Cllr Angus Campbell, said: "As Leader of Dorset County Council I would welcome even closer partnership working with North Dorset District Council and look forward to working towards this goal."

North Dorset District Council is an active participant in a number of joint initiatives including the county-wide joint waste management project, the plan to merge the three Revenues & Benefits Teams of North Dorset, East Dorset and Christchurch Borough Council, the Dorset-wide procurement project and some joint housing initiatives with the Borough of Poole. Councillors pledged enthusiastic support to all current partnership projects.

- more follows -

## **North Dorset seeks benefits of joint working** continued ...

Cllr David Milsted, Leader of the Opposition, said: "In the last four years this council has gone from special needs to special qualities. It understands and embraces the concept of joint working but should only join up where there is a demonstrable benefit to North Dorset and particularly North Dorset residents."

Over the last four years the Council has made huge efficiencies and economies, including management costs, and it is now comfortable with the way in which councillors and senior officers work together to implement radical change programmes.

Councillors expressed concern that these close working relationship would prove impossible if a joint management structure was formed with other councils.

- ends -

**For more information contact: Cllr Peter Webb, Leader of North Dorset District Council on 01258 473631 or the Communications Manager on 01258 484100.**