**Gillingham Ward Monthly Report**

 **Cllr Belinda Ridout – November 2023**

**Household Support Fund (HSF)** will re-open for applications on Thursday, 2nd November, 2023 for low-income households in the Dorset Council area. Department for Work and Pensions has given local authorities funding to support residents throughout the year. In Dorset, this is in the form of supermarket vouchers and applications open each month for eligible households. Citizens Advice allocate this fund on behalf of Dorset Council. The application form can be found at <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/household-support-fund> or call Customer Services on 01305 221000.

**Landlines** from the summer of 2024 analogue phone (landlines) will be switched off. Everyone with a current landline will need to change to a digital connection via a router. This is out of Dorset Council’s control but will have implications for Dorset’s residents. Members will be receiving a webinar about this shortly. In the absence of a national campaign, this is something to bear in mind.

**Donate Children’s coats** – With cost of living and winter fast approaching, many families in Dorset are feeling the strain. Dorset Council is encouraging residents to donate clean and undamaged children’s coats, hats and gloves for those aged 0-16. Residents can drop off their donations at The Shaftesbury Children’s Centre, Wincombe Lane, Shaftesbury SP7 8PZ, Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm. A designated donation box is located at the entrance. Thank you, a great cause.

**Helping young people leaving care** – if you feel you could provide supported lodgings to a young person leaving Dorset Council care, giving them a safe and secure environment during their transition to adulthood, please get in touch. Supported lodgings is usually for young people aged 16-25, who need a small level of support to help them experience the transition to adulthood in a supportive home environment. It is possible for hosts to combine this with a career or busy lifestyle as you do not need to provide full-time care. To find out more, visit the Dorset Council website or contact fosteringenquiries@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk.

Similarly, Dorset Council would like to hear from organisations and businesses to lend their support to young people in care or leaving care, as they head into adulthood. Many care leavers face the challenges of pursuing their studies or finding employment, while developing life skills. This is often without the support that other young people receive from family and friend networks. Dorset

Council has a responsibility as a corporate parent for all children in care and retain a responsibility until they are 25. There are currently 515 care leavers in Dorset aged between 18-25 years old. To find out more about Dorset Council’s care leavers or to offer support and opportunities, please contact: Lucy.Benham@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk.

**Doorstep residents’ survey 2023 -** this November, doorstep interviewers are asking for views about the council and the services provided. The survey is being conducted by ‘Information by Design’. Interviewers will knock on doors between 10am and 8pm and will carry an official ‘IbyD’ identification card with their photograph. Should you have any concerns about who you are talking to, you can look them up on the internet or give them a call on 01482 467467 or call Dorset Council

on 01305 221000 to confirm it is a council survey. All data collected is being held in line with the data protection laws and held securely and will not be passed onto any third party or other company. The data will only be used to create a report to be used by the council, which will be available to view on line. The survey closes at the end of November.

**Local Plan Executive Advisory Panel –** the first meeting of the cross-party panel took place on Thursday, 26th October. It was essentially an overview of all the new planning legislation coming forward, through the Levelling Up Regeneration Bill, (LURB), introducing a new Infrastructure Levy to replace the current system of developer CIL and Section 106 contributions and changes to the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPF), including changes to housing targets and the potential impact of all of this on the emerging Local Plan for Dorset. The Government’s proposed changes to Plan Making include a slimmed down version of the Local Plan which will include more National Development Management Policies covering detail, with the option for including Local policies to respond to specific local circumstances, produced over a 30 month period with review every five years. It was clear that there are many ‘unknowns’ at this stage and hopefully there will be further clarity over the coming months now the LURB has received Royal Assent. Going forward, Panel meetings will be by topic, the next meeting focusing on the Local transport.

**Budget cross-party Task & Finish Groups** – I have been assigned to the Children’s Budget Task & Finish Group and will be meeting shortly to receive an overview, with the opportunity for discussion and recommendation on budget setting within this important directorate.

**Belinda Ridout, Councillor for the Gillingham Ward**

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**For those residents not on line, who have important questions or concerns, call Dorset Council on** **01305 221000, 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week or email:** **communityresponse@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk****. All minutes of meetings can be found on the Dorset Council website: https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**