

Gillingham Ward Monthly Report
Cllr Belinda Ridout – December 2020 / January 2021

Wishing everyone a very Happy & Healthy New Year!! I hope you managed to have a nice Christmas, despite the challenge of not being able to see many family or friends. 2021 looks set to be another full-on year with COVID, EU Exit and pressures upon services as a result of winter weather conditions.

REMINDERS: Draft Climate & Ecological Emergency Consultation ends on Wednesday, 20th January, 21. Dorset Local Plan Consultation coming out soon.

COVID update – Dorset Council has worked with Dorset Health partners to bring COVID vaccinations through Dorset County Hospital, Dorchester. 300 frontline care workers were vaccinated in the first week of receiving the vaccines and this will continue week on week, some becoming Vaccine Champions to help with the vaccine roll out. The Oxford vaccine, will start to be rolled out from Monday 4th January 21, alongside the Pfizer vaccine. This will hopefully bring us a step closer to some kind of normality as we go forward into the new year. As we all know, the Government announced that as of Thursday, 31st December, Dorset is now in tier 3 and BCP Council in tier 4. There has been a significant increase in both the number of cases and rate of infection in Dorset (DC: 154 cases per 100,000 population and BCP: 271 cases per 100,000 population. Key advice from Public Health Dorset is:

- Don't travel unless you absolutely have to and walk or cycle where possible.
- Avoid sharing a vehicle with anyone not in your household.
- Local means staying within your town or village where you live.
- Stay at home as much as possible.
- People must not travel to or from a tier 4 area (eg. Somerset) unless it's for a permitted reason, such as work if they cannot work from home.

More details can be found on the government website.

Business Support Grants are available during both Tier 2 and 3, offering continued financial support. Please see the DC website.

Update guidance on schools and child care returning to school in January can be found on the DC website. The web pages are updated in line with Government announcements, often on a daily basis. Although there will be a staggered return for most secondary school pupils, (apart from vulnerable or critical worker children for whom schools remain open), school transport will continue as usual from 4th January.

Care Homes. In tier 3 outdoor visiting and 'screened' visits are permitted. The advice is, unless visiting a family member or close friend, you are recommended not to be visiting care homes or hospital at this time.

Full Council, 10th December – agenda items:

- **Statement on Harbours Revision Order, Bridport and Lyme Regis**, to consider a recommendation by the Harbours Committee to support an application to the Marine Management Organisation for a Joint Harbour Revision Order (last order made in 1584!) in respect of Bridport and Lyme Regis harbours to consolidate and modernise the current applicable legislation, saving approximately £17,500.

- **Terms of Reference for Dorset Council Harbours Consultative Groups.**
Both recommendations above by the Harbours Committee were approved.
- **Statement of Gambling Licence Policy, 2021-2024**
- **Statement of Licensing Policy, 2021-2026**
- **Statement of Dorset Council Housing Allocations Policy 2021-2026 (Social housing).**

All three statements above were approved, bringing all former district and borough policies into one Dorset Council area policy. Policy details can be found on the Dorset Council website. A note of interest: holding Full Council virtually created a saving of £3,048 on members' mileage allowance and avoided the release of 866kg of carbon into the environment.

Climate Emergency & Ecological Emergency Consultation - in light of the Prime Minister's recent vow to cut Co2 emissions by 68% by 2030, an update on Dorset Council's programme post consultation: Consultation results to be analysed, debated and amended if necessary through the Executive Advisory Panel in February, which is open to all councillors to make comment. A paper of findings and suggested revised strategy will go to the People & Health Scrutiny Committee on 25th March and to Cabinet on 6th April. **Final Strategy and Action Plan to be signed off 15th April 21.** The Sustainability Team continue to ensure that 'actions' will be delivered as per the Action Plan and have applied for £30m grant money to take this forward. **Low Carbon Dorset** continues to receive many requests for help with Low Carbon Projects across the Dorset Council area.

Notice of Motion put forward by Cllr Loui O'Leary and Seconded by Cllr Bill Pipe: On Remembrance Day when as a nation we pause to recognise the sacrifice made by those who serve to defend our democratic freedoms and way of life activists from Extinction Rebellion hung a climate change banner in front of the Cenotaph. That Dorset Council condemns the behaviour and actions of Extinction Rebellion for their actions at the Cenotaph and their total disregard of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice; and for their continued disregard of the law. After much debate about the right and wrongs of bringing forward the Motion under the Dorset Council Constitution, Procedure Rule, para. 14.3 (a) and concerns about making the matter political, the Motion was supported, particularly in view of the high number of veterans and forces personnel living and working in the Dorset Council area. A recorded vote was taken.

Member's Briefing, Tuesday, 15th December – Strategic Green Belt Review. This is a background study to be published January 2021, along with the Dorset Local Plan Consultation. A single Strategic Review for the whole of Dorset, working jointly with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole as both council areas share Greenbelt land to some extent. The aim of the Review is an independent assessment of the Greenbelt, looking at how all land in the Greenbelt performs against the purpose of the Greenbelt and potential harm to the Greenbelt should land in certain locations be released for development (only in exceptional circumstances through the Local Plan process after all other possible options considered, ie. existing brownfield sites, other more suitable sites). The Review does not identify suitable sites to develop or consider exceptional circumstances for removal of land from the greenbelt but focusses on the 5 main purposes of the greenbelt as laid out in the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework):

1. check unrestricted spread of large built-up areas;

2. Prevent neighbouring towns merging;
3. Safeguard countryside from encroachment;
4. Preserve the setting/special character of historic towns;
5. Assist in regeneration by encouraging recycling of derelict/urban land.

The first part of the assessment shows the variation of contribution of greenbelt land, broken down into 'Purposes' 1 – 4 above and part two gives an assessment of the harm of releasing land within the greenbelt, with contribution ratings to indicate the impact of contribution to greenbelt purposes.

To consider new greenbelt land, the local authority would have to go through a strict strategic testing process. If greenbelt land is given up for development, the NPPF requires local authorities to enhance existing greenbelt land, e.g. through habitat improvements. Most of Dorset's greenbelt is around the conurbation in the south-east of the county.

Dog related Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) – new rules for dogs in open spaces come into force from 1ST January. In the first few weeks the council will focus on advice and guidance to dog-owners, explaining the new rules. The order replaces a number of existing dog-related PSPO's across the council area. The intention is that the new Order will provide clarity and consistency across the area for dog owners and non-owners alike about dog controls on public open spaces such as beaches, sports fields and other public areas.

Highways briefing to members took place before Christmas. The majority of Dorset Council highways works is delivered through Dorset Council's own in-house team in partnership with Hansons, who provide a top-up resource as and when required, providing a cost-effective and efficient service. This is a reciprocal arrangement. Local examples being Gillingham Highway Improvements Works and Principal Street (to start Feb/March 21) and Blandford Waste site (summer 21). Environment and Ecology are very important considerations. An energy reduced asphalt is now used on Dorset's roads (Hanson Reduced Emission Asphalt (REA) along with Hanson warm mix asphalt and materials with longer life and less maintenance. Old tar based arisings (road surface waste) are low level carcinogens and costly to dispose of, but these waste arisings are now recycled by being crushed and bounded in cement to neutralise and put back into the network as construction materials, i.e. used as a base layer in new roads. To date, DC has recycled 11,000 tonnes of old tar based arisings in this way, saving Dorset Council £1.8m. Highways also assist charities across Dorset, free of charge by, e.g relaying access roads, filling in pot holes, laying the base for playgrounds.

Highways is now completely digital which allows informed decisions and real time improvements to be made; collection and sharing of data (materials to site, where mixed, weather conditions, etc); health and safety improvements for the team/risk assessments; improved asset management.

Help and Support for Dorset Residents

Help to deal with financial struggles: Dorset Citizens Adviceline on Freephone 0800 144 8848. Support also available online: www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/reaching-out.

Coping with Isolation and Loneliness: Dorset Together Team, support including food shopping and delivery, collection of prescriptions, dog walking and befriending. Help can be

accessed via an online form on the Dorset Council website or by calling the **Dorset Together helpline on 01305 221000**, 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Digital Hotline – people with queries about getting online or improving online skills can call the **Dorset Digital Hotline on 01305 221048** , Monday to Friday from 10am to noon. Outside of those times you can leave a message and a Digital Champion will get back to you.

If you are on a low income and do not have a broadband connection or device at home to connect to the internet, it may be possible to help you to get set up.

The Dorset Council website is an invaluable tool for finding out the latest information and about essential services affecting the public. 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. Dorset Council website: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>