**Gillingham Ward Monthly Report**

 **Cllr Belinda Ridout – August, 2025**

**Dorset Local Plan / Local Transport Plan** – public consultations have been launched on these two major strategies, that will shape the county over the next 15-20 years. The Local Plan sets out where new homes and businesses could be developed and includes new site options for housing across the county. And, alongside it, the Local Transport Plan, developed with Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council, will look at how to make travel across the county safer, clear and more reliable.

**The public consultations will run for 8 weeks, until 13th October**. You can find both plans online at: dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-is-changing.

**A drop-in event will be held at Gillingham Town Hall, Thursday, 25th September, 2-7pm**, when planning officers will be present to discuss your views and take your comments. Local ward councillors will also be present. These are long documents but very important and all comments made will be taken into consideration when compiling the final documents.

**It is important everyone has their say**, as it affects your local area as much as the whole of the Dorset Council area and paper copies of the response form will be available in local libraries, which can be filled in and emailed to planningpolicyconsult@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk or posted to Planning, County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ. I am more than happy to help any parish or individual with their responses and will, if required, organize additional drop-in sessions for that reason.

**Design Code Cross Party Executive Advisory Panel EAP** – We had our first meeting with the appointed consultants, based locally. It was an interesting meeting, explaining the strategy used to compile the new Dorset Design Code. There will be full town and parish council consultation throughout. It is hoped to have a draft Design Code by December this year. It will eventually become either a part of the Local Plan or sit alongside the Local Plan as a supplementary document and will be viability tested alongside the Local Plan. Not all Neighbourhood Plans include design codes but the new Dorset Design Code will strengthen Neighbourhood Plan development policies. The new Design Code will be a policy document, rather than a ‘guide’, to which developers will need to adhere to when submitting planning applications.

We were even given some ‘homework’, to think and make comment about key opportunities and key issues in our own ward areas, which will feed into stakeholder discussions.

**Parking survey opened 6th August** – residents, businesses, workers and visitors are invited to take part in a new parking survey, which is part of a comprehensive parking review, assessing how well the current parking arrangements are working and opportunities to improve. The review covers all 117 council-operated car parks and on-street parking. Views are sought on the current 3-tier parking pricing structure, parking permits, resident-only, evening and overnight parking and suggestions for improvements including EV charging, permit flexibility and signage. The Survey is open till 4th September and can be completed online: Dorset Council Parking Survey. Paper copies are available upon request by phoning 01305 221000.

**Annual canvass** – the Annual Canvass to update the electoral register is underway and if you receive an email from elections@elections.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, it’s not a scam. Forms will be sent to households over the next month to those properties which do not have an email address.

**Smart sensors to improve Dorset Council services –** this is interesting. Doret Council is introducing smart sensor technology in libraries and soon, public toilets. Small, discreet sensors are part of a growing network of everyday objects that can send useful data to help improve how services are delivered, eg. doors, desks, counters can provide anonymous information about how and when they’re used. Sensors in libraries, at the entrance, desk and help counters, will track areas most used, how long people are staying and where improvements can be made. Sensors at the entrances to public toilets will allow cleaning and maintenance teams to respond more efficiently, improving hygiene standards. But don’t worry, privacy is fully protected. The sensors do not contain cameras, microphones or any technology capable of identifying individuals. They detect only movement or body heat, never images, audio or personal data. Data is used solely to improve public services.

**Latest update on progress made on Dorset’s Climate & Nature Emergency Response** – Dorset Council has reduced emissions by 31% since 2019 and on track to meet target reductions by 2026.

County wide emissions fell by over 13% by 2022, compared to 2017.

Work has continued to improve Dorset Council owned buildings, making plans to reduce carbon emissions at 120 properties and identifying 50 places that could use renewable energy. The council has also started using cleaner fuels and electric vehicles in its fleet, swapping diesel in the bigger vehicles for hydrotreated vegetable oil. This summer, 75% of non-electric vehicles will be running on HVO, that can reduce carbon emissions by up to 90%.

Dorset Council continues to have the best recycling rate of all unitary councils in the UK, currently at 60.5%, well above the national average. New draft plans have been created to guide future work, including a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, a Local Transport Plan and a Workplace Travel Plan. A climate risk assessment has been completed and work to produce a county-wide Climate Adaptation Strategy is now underway. Support for residents and businesses continues through schemes like Healthy Homes Dorset, Dorset Solar Together and Low Carbon Dorset. Farmers have also received grants to support nature-friendly practices and reduce flood risks. Schools and communities are getting involved through the Climate Ambassadors Network run in partnership with the Met Office.

**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**