

**Gillingham Ward Monthly Report**  
**CLr Belinda Ridout – October 2021**

**COVID update** – Latest available update, 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2021, the case rate for the Dorset Council area is 335.4 per 100,000 population (up from 325.2 the week before) and for BCP, 223.7 per 100,000 population (up from 215.90 the week before). Case rates in both the Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council areas have seen small increases on last week, but on the whole remain relatively stable. DC's case rate is similar to the England average but above the South West average, whilst BCP Council's rate is below both the regional and national averages. The number of hospital admissions as a result of Covid-19 have increased since last week but the number of people becoming seriously ill or dying after contracting the virus is much lower than during previous waves, demonstrating that the vaccine is having a significant impact on protecting people against Covid-19. It's not too late to get your vaccine, book an appointment via the National Booking System or by calling 119 or go to a walk-in clinic. People (adults aged 18+) and those aged 16-17 yrs old can now walk in and get vaccinated without needing to book an appointment in advance. Our nearest walk-in in Dorset is Wareham Hospital, Streche Road, Wareham BH20 4QQ. Check the times before you go. 01929 552433. **Please continue to do your bit – get vaccinated, get tested, self-isolate when required. Lateral Flow tests available at all Gillingham pharmacies.**

**Free Digital Advice** –Dorset Council provides a volunteer **digital champion service** in most libraries, including Gillingham, which is every Saturday, 9.30am to 1pm. Face to face advice sessions have now resumed, which gives free technical advice. In addition, the council's Digital Hotline phone service – 01305 221048 – is open five mornings a week 10am to 12 noon, for anyone who would like help over the phone. All sessions must be booked by contacting the library or by calling the Digital Hotline.

**Aquaculture Innovation Centre for England** – Dorset Coast Forum (DCF) has successfully secured funding from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to develop the concept of an English Aquaculture Innovation Hub. Aquaculture is one of the fastest growing industries and sustainable development of the sector can help contribute to national food security while helping to meet lower carbon emissions from our food. The five-month project starts next month, undertaking a nationwide study on the potential positive economic impacts of an English Aquaculture Innovation Hub in Dorset. The work is supported by Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Dorset Council. The English aquaculture sector will be very different from that of Scotland and its more likely that seaweed and shellfish will be farmed near shore, perhaps with the addition of high value fish farmed in tanks on shore. Poole Harbour is already home to a thriving Aquaculture sector where shellfish are grown on the seabed and its hoped this study can give a route to a Hub that will provide jobs and drive innovation in Dorset and across the English industry.

**Briefing by David Sidwick, Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC)** – this was a very interesting briefing and below are some notes I took from that briefing. The PCC has been in office for 100

days. During his campaign for the role he carried out a public survey and the findings of that survey has formed his **Police & Crime Plan**, priorities being:

- 1. Cut crime & anti-social behaviour** – a £50k fund, Operation Relentless Community Fund to address anti-social behaviour. Particularly concentrating on catalytic converter theft, pet theft, drink-drive campaign post lock-down, E-scooter awareness campaign, school education and support for young people. Burglary, Fraud and cyber-crime.
- 2. Make policing more visible and connected** – more police on the streets; engagement and connectivity; customer service; recruitment; neighbourhood policing and engagement commitments; police cadets; special constables and cultural change. First tranche of additional police September 21 with the majority of officers going to Neighbourhood Policing. There are now three sets of Police cadets and a 25% increase in special constables.
- 3. Fight violent crime and high harm** (drugs & addiction, violence reduction unit, domestic abuse and stalking, child abuse, modern slavery). Having a background in veterinarian and pharmaceutical, the PCC is the portfolio lead for alcohol and substance misuse. A gap analysis has been conducted to show the gaps in domestic abuse services across Dorset. A vulnerability lawyer to deal with stalking protection orders and funding for independent stalking advisors. Operation Vigilant and Safer Streets fund to help fight violent crime.
- 4. Fight Rural crime** – 28.7% of rural crime is farm thefts. There are now 3 rural policing teams. Scoping carried out to identify rural crime risk ‘hot-spots’, with county ‘Watch’ schemes, connecting with parish guardians. Tackling fly-tipping, wildlife crimes. Unauthorised encampments. Cross border working being very important in tackling the above.
- 5. Putting victims and communities first** – review of the criminal justice and restorative justice systems underway. Emphasis on tackling hate crime in particular and supporting the vulnerable. Bus related crime, shop lifting and cyber-crime. The PCC is chair of the Dorset Criminal Justice Board.
- 6. Make every penny count** – funding efficiency, evidence based policing. Wise spending of public money essential. Review of estates as to ‘fit for purpose’ to achieve the best connection/relationship with the public. Reviewing town policing. Review of governance. New Chief Constable of Dorset Police, Scott Chilton, was appointed, August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

The **Dorset Police & Crime Panel**, a panel of 12 members drawn from DC, BCP and independent members will make recommendations on the draft plan before it goes live at end of October. The Chief Constable has put together an operation plan for early in the New Year.

55,000 crimes were recorded in Dorset pre covid and 46,000 during Covid. With regard to the National Funding Formula, Dorset is 40<sup>th</sup> out of 41 forces for funding. Adding the local precept, Dorset comes out at 28<sup>th</sup> of 41 forces. The PCC is looking at this, particularly for coastal and rural areas which need more funding. Dorset received scarce additional funding from central Government for e.g. violence reduction or alcohol tagging. Dorset has a much higher percentage of organised crime groups than other larger forces which puts a greater pressure on Dorset’s Police, estimated to be three times the national average.

**Virtual tour of ‘Energy from Waste’ (EfW) facility** – in light of potential applications coming forward for ‘Energy from Waste’ facilities in Dorset, members of the Strategic Planning

Committee were given a presentation and virtual tour of an EfW facility operated by MVV environmental Development Ltd in Devonport, Plymouth. A German based utility company with 5 main facilities in Germany operating in coal, EfW, biomass, biogas and wind. In the UK they operate solely EfW plants in Devonport, Plymouth, Baldovie, Dundee and Ridham Dock, Sittingbourne (which is wood waste only). EfW sits in fourth place in the waste hierarchy: reduce, re-use, recycle, **EfW recovery** and lastly landfill. Dorset Council has a very good track record on recycling, with a comparatively small percentage going to landfill. The Devonport plant diverted 257,454 tonnes of waste from landfill during the last year. EfW plants dispose of all the waste that cannot be reduced, re-used or recycled by burning at a very high temperature, which heats water to create steam to drive the turbine and produce electricity, and in this case, sending some steam direct to the dockyard for heating. Any harmful metals are removed from the ash before its goes for recycling, being used as secondary aggregate in construction. We were shown graphs of facts and figures along with briefing on the company's health and safety procedures with regards to fire risk, noise pollution and eliminating contamination into the atmosphere. It was good to hear that the company has good community links, regularly making air quality data public. It was an eye opener and very worthwhile exercise, giving members all the necessary knowledge to ask the pertinent questions when such a EfW plant comes before the Strategic planning committee.

**Re-register by 1<sup>st</sup> December to stay on Dorset's Housing List** – any resident on the current housing register, needs to re-register on the new **Dorset Council Home Choice System** no later than **Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> December** to keep their place on the housing list.

**Local Heritage List Campaign** – Dorset Council has appointed Land Use Consultants (LUC) to manage the Local Heritage List Campaign, which allows communities of all ages and backgrounds across Dorset to nominate locally important buildings, sites, monuments and features to be included on new Local Heritage Lists. Project funded by a grant of £70,00 from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Local Heritage Lists will provide a free publicly accessible record of non-designated heritage assets, whose conservation will then be a material consideration in planning decision. The campaign will provide a baseline Local Heritage List which will be regularly updated with new additions with the records of all assets being added to Dorset's Historic Environment Record. **Look out for a public call for nominations later this autumn**, along with guidance on the criteria for assessment, which will be guided by Historic England's standard criteria for Local Listing, but opportunities will be taken to identify local criteria that are specific to Dorset's wide range of communities and heritage.

**Bus Back Better** – you will recall I reported previously on the Government's 'Bus Back Better' campaign launched March 2021, a new national bus strategy for England. It requires each local authority to produce a **Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)**, which is a long term strategic plan to coordinate services. Following analysis of the public and stakeholder surveys and detailed discussions with public transport providers, Dorset Council has identified FIVE primary aims for the BSIP:

- 1.** To significantly increase the number of people using local buses across Dorset.

- 2.** To increase daily service availability with a mix of fixed and flexible services across rural and urban areas of Dorset
- 3.** To specifically develop a range of on-demand public transport services delivered by a mix of operators
- 4.** To continue to protect Dorset's environment by moving to a decarbonised local bus fleet.
- 5.** Create and maintain a comprehensive network of travel options to link up communities and reduce rural isolation.

### **Six Key Themes of the Dorset BSIP**

- 1. Better Network coverage and scale** – buses that run more often, to more places and for longer daily periods. Increasing frequency and extending times when local bus services are available, i.e daily 7am to 7pm, 30 minute core service network with additional evening and night time services. Strategic hub and spoke feeder network and new demand responsive transport services, suitable for more rural areas.
- 2. Better integration between modes** – buses that provide better integration between rail services and all other modes with regard to timetable coordination, collective information and ticketing. Multi-Modal transport hubs; seamless travel.
- 3. Better and clearer information** – bus information that is easier to obtain and understand, consistent and in one place. Dorset travel information portal.
- 4. Better journey time reliability** -buses that leave on time, remain on time and provide faster and more reliable journey times across the network.
- 5. Better value and integrated fares** – bus services to operate simple to understand fares, fewer fare products and targeted fare products to create and maintain a mode shift to greater bus use, particularly focussing on youth and young people ticket options, operator group/family tickets and operator day ticket/daily fare cap.
- 6. Better vehicle standards and lower emissions** (feeder network may find this a challenge due to costs involved) – buses that are cleaner (emissions) and configured better for different passenger groups.

It was made clear that it is vitally important to push the **RURALITY** of Dorset as opposed to the urban focus and to produce a robust BSIP to government with achievable and ambitious schemes that are deliverable. I made the point that this is a great plan and I do so hope it will be awarded the necessary funding by government but the focus is very much on digital information and processes and not to forget those who cannot access online and need physical timetables.

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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](mailto:communityresponse@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk). All minutes of meetings can be found on the Dorset Council website: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>**