

Gillingham Ward Monthly Report
Cllr Belinda Ridout – April 2022

Dorset's NHS Services - Residents and visitors to Dorset this Easter are asked to use Dorset's NHS services wisely and to think about the most appropriate service for them before they seek help. Our hospital emergency departments continue to be under extreme pressure, with increasing Covid-19 cases continuing to have an impact on staffing levels.

Seven ways you can support the NHS this Easter:

- **Use NHS services wisely to get the right treatment, in the right place, at the right time.**
- **Think NHS 111.** If you have an urgent need that cannot wait until you access your GP, visit 111.nhs.uk or call 111.
- **Speak to your GP where you live if you are visiting Dorset.** Contact your own GP practice for support or advice on ongoing or minor health issues.
- **Get prepared. In advance of the Easter weekend, contact your own pharmacist or GP practice for ongoing or minor health issues,** or to get your repeat prescriptions – make use of online services such as eConsult and remote consultations.
(Take it from me, local pharmacies will be extremely busy leading up to and after Easter, make sure you have everything you need well in advance).
- **Use Digital Health services as an on-demand alternative to in person services.**
 - **The Digital Health App Library** recommends apps to help with a wide range of health conditions from joint and muscular problems to mental wellbeing.
 - **Our Dorset Video Library** provides advice and guidance on a range of conditions and general health.
 - **Healthier Together** provides advice for parents, young people and pregnant women.

Covid-19: Although the legal requirement to self-isolate has now ended, the public health advice remains the same. Anyone who tests positive or has Covid symptoms to continue to stay at home and avoid contact with others. This will help to protect the more vulnerable.

Dorset Council Car Park Changes - as from Monday, 28th March, new car parking charges came into force in council-owned car parks across the county. This is to make car parking charges consistent across the Dorset Council area and included a review of on-street car parking charges, council car park prices and car park permits. Residents and workers in Dorset can benefit from cheaper prices through two new car park permits, which are now available to purchase and replace 76 existing old district/borough permits. The **short stay car park permit** provides parking for 2 hours every day in the majority of Dorset Council short stay car parks and costs £78 for 12 months. The **flexi stay car park permit** provides unlimited parking in the majority of Dorset Council long stay car parks and free parking for 2 hours every day in the majority of Dorset Council short stay car parks. The flexi permit costs £25 a month or £260 for 12 months. Car parking charges and fines fund the operation of the Council's parking services department. Any surplus goes into the highways service, helping to fund drainage works, reactive pothole repairs, car park safety and general maintenance.

Planning Website - As part of the ongoing planning convergence and transformation project, the Dorset planning website will be unavailable from 5pm Monday, 25th April to the end of Wednesday, 27th April (as long as the data transfer goes to plan). Consultation deadlines that fall within the downtime, will be extended to allow people additional time to respond. The next part of the programme is transformation, involving talking to agents, town and parish and Dorset Councillors and other users to explain how they can be involved to design tools and functions that will help improve the service.

Electric Vehicle EV Charging Infrastructure Update – Phase 2 & 3 – orders have been placed for Phase 2 of the EV charge-point installation programme and should be up and running by summer 2022. This is for up to 44 more fast chargers (sockets) and 7 more rapid chargers (*some being 150kW ultra-rapid chargers, capable of providing 200 miles of driving range in about the same time as it takes to enjoy a cup of tea!!*) at 24 new locations around the county. Most of the Phase 2 sites will be in Dorset Council run public car parks. Phase 3 involved inviting town and parish councils to express an interest in EV charge-points and there is now a good list of potential Phase 3 sites. Its not too late to submit an expression of interest in community charge-points. For more information or to suggest a site location, email electricvehicles@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk.

Road Closures for Queen’s Platinum Jubilee 2-5th June 2022 – Dorset Council is welcoming applications to close roads for street parties. If you wish to close a road or pavement, there is a process you need to follow. Everything about closing a street can be found online and applications should be in **by Thursday, 21st April**.

Renewable Energy Generation – Dorset Council is in the top 15% of over 400 local authority areas in the UK for renewable electricity generation. Approved renewable energy schemes has aided an increase of 250% in renewable energy generation between 2014 and 2020. In 2020, Dorset generated enough electricity to supply over 110,000 average sized households for a year. Three recently approved solar farms (within the last 6 months), are expected to provide enough energy to power a further 29,000 homes each year. Construction of the North Fossil Farm Solar project, just south of Tadnoll, will begin this year and generate enough power for 14,000 homes. The Higher Stockbridge Solar Park, south of Sherborne, recently approved by the Strategic Planning Committee, is estimated to generate energy for around 10,605 homes a year. The Blandford Hill Eco Hub project’s approved proposal includes a 15-megawatt ground-mounted solar farm and a 3-megawatt battery storage facility, installed to the south of Blandford, generating energy for 4,000 homes.

South Walks House, Dorchester – Dorset Council and Dorset County Hospital have agreed a 20-year lease for use of the ex Council Offices (South Walks House) for a combination of clinical and office purposes, providing a central and easily accessible location, enabling the hospital to maximise the use of clinical space on its main site. The library and learning centre on the site will continue to operate as normal. The building has been successfully used over the past 6 months by Dorset County Hospital and NHS partners as an Outpatient Assessment Centre.

Support for local charities and community organisations – Dorset Council has distributed more than £143k to 52 organisations from the Dorset Council Community Impact Fund and the Dorset Council Coronavirus Recovery Funds. Twenty registered charitable organisations received grants as well as many more community groups, town and parish councils and other establishments working in the community to help vulnerable people. Help with recruitment and management of volunteers being the top priorities for many of the organisations applying for grants, as well as help with IT, digital transformation and business planning for the future.

Support for parents/carers worried about their child's progress – The Dorset Education and Advice Line is a phone line for parents, carers and professionals, who support children who may have special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND). Residents can call freephone 0800 140 4041 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm) or fill out an online form to make an appointment.

Death Registrations now need to be in person due to the withdrawal of national Covid legislation. As from 25th March, anyone registering a death will have to make an appointment at one of Dorset Council's registration offices. Appointments can be made at two full-time offices in Dorchester and Weymouth or at part-time offices closer to home in Blandford and Gillingham. The Sherborne office remains closed for the time being.

Tour of Britain – West Bay and Ferndown are to host the Tour of Britain's first-ever Dorset stage. The Dorset stage (stage 7) takes place on Saturday, 10th September and will start at West Bay and finish at Ferndown via a 180 kilometre (112 mile) route. The course will initially parallel with the West Dorset Heritage coast before passing through Dorchester, West Lulworth and Corfe Castle, before heading inland towards Wareham, Milton Abbas and Wimborne Minster.

Bus Back Better – Dorset Council applied for funding from the government for this national strategy, putting forward a very robust Bus Service Improvement Plan, which took many hours of officer time and consultation with transport partners. Unfortunately, DC was not included in the first release of this funding, which is very disappointing. However, we have been notified that further funding will become available. I will keep you posted.

New Household Recycling Centre HRC for Blandford. At the Strategic Planning Meeting held on Monday, 4th April, a new Household Recycling Centre and Waste Management Centre was approved on land south of the Sunrise Business Park, Blandford (accessed off the A350). This site will replace the current HRC in Blandford town, providing a state of the art split level HRC and a Waste Management Centre, where kerb-side waste is bulked-up for onward transfer for treatment, including recyclables, garden waste, black bag residual and food waste. The site will provide a fit for purpose, safe and accessible facility, ready to serve a growing population in north Dorset. What I particularly like about this is a dedicated *and covered* re-use centre. Solar panels will be installed on the re-use centre and in time on all suitable buildings across the site. The site will be fully landscaped to screen from the highway and views from the nearby Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, AONB.

Wishing everyone a very enjoyable Easter Holidays.

Cllr. 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>