

Gillingham Ward Monthly Report
Cllr Belinda Ridout – August/September 20

With the 'holiday season' about over, although like most people, I haven't felt like there was a 'holiday season' as such, Councillors were updated on plans for working arrangements. Based on advice from Public Health Dorset, the decision has been made to extend current working arrangements, for staff and councillors, through to the end of March 2021. This decision has been made for infection control with the priority to keep the workforce and councillors safe and minimise risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus, thereby ensuring that essential services are protected and continue to serve local residents and communities.

Virtual Meetings:

Climate & Ecological Emergency Executive Advisory Panel (EAP) -Tuesday, 25th August. Cllr David Walsh, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Ed Gerry, Community Planning Manager, informed and discussed with members the **emerging Local Plan for Dorset Council** and key opportunities and challenges in addressing key climate and ecological issues, covering the main five topic areas: renewable energy, buildings, water, natural assets and transport. An **Energy Infrastructure Delivery Plan** forms part of the Local Plan which includes looking at EV charging points, renewable energy and grid performance. There is no policy in existing local plans for EVCP's in new development. Wording in the new Local Plan would have to cover any eventuality to meet future need. The **Local Plan Consultation** has been slightly delayed, October/November rather than September, for an extended period of 8 weeks. Mitigating the impact of Climate Change is the first priority of the Local Plan, although this will not be enforceable until adoption in Spring 2023. The passage of the Government's **Environment Bill**, albeit strong in biodiversity net gain, has been halted due to COVID. **A strong point coming out of the EAP meeting is that it is very important for everyone (i.e. Dorset Council, parish and town councils, groups and individuals) to lobby MP's/government to push for national direction and standards in the form of a National Policy Framework.** Cllr. Ray Bryan, portfolio holder for Highways, Travel & Environment and Chair of the CC EAP has been invited to sit on a Government committee set up to address climate change and therefore has the opportunity to speak on behalf of DC and will report on the first meeting to be held very soon. Members also received a brief overview of the **Waste and Minerals Local Plans** with an opportunity to question and discuss the specific policies addressing climate change. For example, one particular idea put forward is to re-use old quarry pits for reservoirs. The next EAP meeting in September will discuss the **Climate Change Action Plan** details before going to Cabinet. December's meeting will be considering the responses from the **Climate Change Strategy Consultation**, with a revised Strategy Document to Cabinet early 2021.

Dorset Council has just signed a contract for 53 fast charging electric vehicle charging points in 23 car parks across Dorset, to be installed from the autumn. The contractor made no charge to DC to fit the devices.

Annual Meeting of Council - Thursday, 3rd September A meeting with 82 councillors was by no means an easy job for the chairman or technical staff, with some sound issues, but all in all a very successful meeting, albeit it lasted three and a quarter hours!

Congratulations to Cllr Val Potheary for being elected Chairman of Council for 2020/21 and Vice-Chairman, Cllr Mike Parkers (Ferndown).

Cllr Spencer Flower (Portfolio Holder for Governance, Performance & Communications) re-elected as Leader of the Council and Cllr Peter Wharf (Portfolio holder for Corporate Development & Change) re-elected as Deputy Leader.

Three changes to Cabinet: Cllr Toni Ferrari now Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Assets and Property; Cllr Garry Suttle, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy and Cllr Jill Haynes, Portfolio holder for Customer & Community Services.

As previously agreed, the Constitution, under Governance Arrangements, allows up to 6 Lead Members to be appointed by the Leader of Council to give support to the respective Cabinet members (Portfolio-Holders). This is a new approach by Dorset Council, but is a well tried and tested way nationally of ensuring there is sufficient capacity for Cabinet Members to cope with their individual portfolios. Members voted to approve the appointments as follows:

Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel & Environment – Cllr Ray Bryan

Lead Member for Highways – Cllr Cherry Brooks

Lead Member for Environment, Travel and Harbours – Cllr Noc Lacey-Clark

Portfolio Holder for People - Children, Education, Skills & Early Help – Cllr. Andrew Parry

Lead Member for Education – Cllr Byron Quayle

Lead Member for Safeguarding – Cllr Jane Somper

Portfolio Holder for People – Adult Social Care & Health – Cllr. Laura Miller

Lead Member for Care – Cllr Simon Gibson

Lead Member for Health – Cllr Piers Brown

Members voted *not* to approve a £500 increase to members' basic allowance of £13,000, the main reason being that during a pandemic is not the right time.

Appointments to committees and panels were agreed. I remain on the Northern Planning Committee (Cllr Sherry Jespersen and Cllr. Mary Penfold remaining as Chair and Vice-chair), the Strategic Planning Committee and the Minerals and Waste Policy Joint Advisory Committee.

Public Health update on COVID -19 - on 24th August, five confirmed cases of COVID-19 cases in the Purbeck area (around Bovington, Wool and Lulworth) between August 15th and 21st. All are self-isolating at home and all the contacts of these cases have been followed up and following advice by NHS Test and Trace. According to recent data from Public Health England, there have been 652 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Dorset since the start of the pandemic. Confirmed cases remain low in Dorset.

Help for vulnerable residents to stay active during COVID-19. Dorset Council and key offer. partners are working together to make sure residents can get help to continue to live independently in their homes. The council has asked volunteer 'befrienders' working on behalf of Age UK, to help spot the signs that a person may have become more frail or likely to fall because of reduced ability to exercise and keep active in the wake of COVID-19. If there

are concerns, a befriender can ask the vulnerable person if they consent to being referred to the reablement services on offer from the council's care provider, Tricuro. There is no charge for this service and a wide variety of support is on offer.

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>