

Gillingham Ward Monthly Report
Cllr Belinda Ridout – July 2020 (updated 24th July)

Virtual Meetings:

Youth Advisory Executive Advisory Panel. It was agreed at a full council meeting on 18th February that there would be benefit in setting up a cross-party Youth EAP to focus on the council's youth offer, the findings of which should be reported through the People Scrutiny Committee and onto cabinet. As a trustee of Gillingham Youth Foundation, which now looks after and maintains the buildings of the Gillingham Youth & Community Centre and directly involved with the handover from DCC in 2016, I was asked to be a member of this EAP. The purpose of this EAP is to identify learning from the transfer of youth and community centre assets commenced by the predecessor council, DCC and to explore the current offer for young people in Dorset. The first meeting took place on, Monday, 13th July, primarily to agree the terms of reference, with the following aims:

- i) To identify learning from the transfer of property assets to communities and make recommendations for addressing these;
- ii) To identify any outstanding issues that exist following the asset transfer and make recommendations for addressing these;
- iii) To develop an understanding of the universal youth offer for young people including the provision of youth clubs, places to go and things to do;
- iv) To develop an understanding of the targeted and specialist youth offer for young people including meeting the needs of the most vulnerable;
- v) To agree the outcomes that we are seeking to achieve for young people and develop an understanding of best practice in the delivery of these outcomes;
- vi) To ensure the above dovetails with the development of the Children, Young People and Families Plan;
- vii) To develop an understanding of the wishes and views of young people.

The EAP will gather information and evidence through conversations and visits to existing youth provision, using online or virtual visits where face to face visits are not possible.

I welcome any concerns/views regarding youth provision which can be fed into discussions.

Climate & Ecological Emergency Executive Advisory Panel (EAP). The Place Scrutiny Committee considered the draft Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and recommended it goes to Cabinet on 28th July, for approval for public consultation, August/September (6-8 week period).

Members Webinars:

Homelessness, Thursday 15th July COVID has exacerbated and highlighted the homelessness situation in Dorset with people having to move out of their rented rooms due to landlords having to shield through COVID. At the same time, hotels, B&B's, caravan parks closed under Government guidance, causing a severe shortage of rented/available accommodation during a time of unprecedented demand. As at Monday, 15th July, 335 households in temporary accommodation.

Empty properties – properties remain empty for all sort of reasons. DC can offer:

- Financial assistance – loans to bring properties back into use or sell.
- Private sector leasing – Council pays a lease on the property and rents to people on the housing register.

DC has ways in which to bring empty properties back into use by:

- ASB Legislation (community protection notices).
- Planning Law – detriment to the amenity of the area.
- Empty dwelling Management Order - Council takes control of property and rent for 7 yrs.
- Compulsory purchase.

DC identifies empty properties by: council tax records, Public reports/Officer reports, Local representatives.

Long term empty properties can be reported to the Housing Standards Team, housingteam@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk.

Recovery & Reset Executive Advisory Panel - Thursday, 23rd July – members updated on work of the first meeting on 10th June to identify priorities, including flexible planning during COVID, tailored support for High Streets, continuance of the ‘shielded’ programme, green transport, homelessness accommodation, future members' webinars and the continuance of the employee ‘skills audit’, which has proved to be very useful and inspiring during the pandemic and may prove to be job enhancing, both mentally and physically, post pandemic.

Updated by James Vaughan, Dorset Police Chief Constable and chair of Dorset Local Resilience Forum (DLRF), which delivers a coordinated response in emergencies. Since the major pandemic declared 11.3.20, the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG), DC being part of this group, has met 41 times and Tactical Command Group (TCG) has met 36 times. Estimated that over 20 support sub-groups and cells have been set up, delivering day-in, day-out response, e.g. warning, PPE and informing groups. 98 daily/weekly situation reports to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local government.

DLRF have reached ½ million people on Twitter and 3/4m on Facebook with the ‘Think Twice’ and ‘Respect & Communities’ campaigns. As well as tackling the pandemic the DLRF has to also manage simultaneous incidents, e.g. Wareham fire.

DLRF receiving a minimum of 2 central drops of PPE every week, as well as managing supplies and distribution to agencies: from care homes to prisons, GP’s to funeral directors.

DLRF has received regional and national recognition as exemplar partnership working with a high level of coordination, working alongside an incredible volunteering force.

Face-coverings: James Vaughan confirmed that the police will support the opening up of the economy and, if necessary, will respond to requests to deal with/enforce people wearing face coverings in shops, issuing fixed penalty notices (FPN’s) if necessary, unless the person has a medical exemption to not wear a face mask. There is useful guidance on GOV.UK on how to make a cloth face covering.

Update by Same Crowe, Director of Public Health in Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Councils. Cases remain very low with one positive case per day in DC and BCP. . Now planning for winter – seasonal flue, possibly even resurgence of Covid. Care-homes

accounted for 50% of the national outbreak. Local Authorities are now responsible for local outbreaks. **Local Outbreak Control Plan** has been published. Dorset Council's Health & Wellbeing Board will function as the Local Outbreak Engagement Board. This is supported by a Test & Trace Grant worth £1.28m to DC and £1.8m to BCP. Three levels to the plan:

1. Business as usual – day to day outbreak response in specific setting;
2. Several outbreaks with potential to spread into the wider community requiring additional community engagement, possible DLRF involvement.
3. Local outbreak with national significance.

Ports and borders are being carefully monitored through the Ports and Borders Group.

Future Council Meetings On 5th April this year, new regulations came into force giving flexibility to Local Authorities to hold virtual meetings, which will remain in force until May 2021. New Government advice in July on the safe use of council buildings, Section 3(c) recommends that: 'Where meetings can take place digitally, without the need for face to face contact, they should do so. Where council buildings need to be used for physical meetings, these meetings must be managed within the social distancing guidance and principles set out'. DC is equipped to hold digital meetings and so no meetings will be face to face or hybrid meetings at this time.

The guidance from NALC continues to strongly advise that local councils continue to meet remotely, without the need for face to face contact, unless they are unable to conduct council business any other way. There is a link on the front page of the DAPTC website to guidance published by NALC. Jonathan Mair, Corporate Director, Legal & Democratic, will be contacting town and parish clerks on the above.

Dorset libraries re-opening Since 8th July residents have been able to use an 'order and collect' service at 22 of Dorset Council's 23 libraries, but from Monday, 27th July, 9 Dorset Council libraries will reopen. This will allow local people to browse the library shelves and use the public computers, which will be available for a 45 minute session but need to be pre-booked. Gillingham library will be open from 9.30am to 1pm, Monday to Saturday, excluding Wednesday. The online library services will continue to offer a programme of activities.

Dorset workplace update – From 1st August the Government will give employers more discretion to decide how staff can work safely, which could include allowing more employees to return to 'covid-secure' workplaces. DC advice to all employees is to continue working as they are now until at least the end of September. For many, this will mean continuing to work from home. A 'Dorset Workplace' group is looking at future ways of working as an organisation.

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>**