



## GILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Hall, School Road, Gillingham, Dorset SP8 4QR

### FULL COUNCIL MINUTES

Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on **Monday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021** at The Town Hall, Gillingham, commencing at 7.30pm.

**Present:**

Cllr Paul Harris, QGM, Mayor  
Cllr Laura Ashfield  
Cllr Barry von Clemens  
Cllr Fiona Cullen  
Cllr Rupert Evill  
Cllr Alan Frith  
Cllr Mike Gould

Cllr Mick Hill  
Cllr John Kilcourse  
Cllr Graham Poulter  
Cllr Donna Toye  
Cllr Mark Walden  
Cllr Roger Weeks

**In attendance:**

Town Clerk, Julie Hawkins  
Project Administrator, Serena Burgess

**The following joined the meeting via Microsoft Teams:**

Cllr Alison von Clemens  
Cllr Val Pothecary  
Cllr Keith Wareham  
Michael Streeter, Gillingham and Shaftesbury News

In accordance with legislation councillors joining via MS Teams were not permitted to vote.

**650. Public Participation. Please note: a period up to a maximum of fifteen minutes will be allowed for public comments and questions restricted to items listed on the following agenda.**

There was no public participation.

**651. To receive apologies for absence.**

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** to accept the apologies for absence from Cllr Sharon Cullingford, Cllr Val Pothecary, Cllr Alison von Clemens and Cllr Keith Wareham who were unable to join the meeting in person due to personal reasons.

It was noted that Cllr Pothecary, Cllr A von Clemens and Cllr Wareham had joined the meeting via MS Teams but in accordance with legislation would not be permitted to vote.

**652. Declarations of Interest: Members are required to comply with the requirements of Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 disclosable pecuniary interests.**

Cllr Gould declared an interest in Agenda Item 13 and informed the meeting that he would leave the Council Chamber during the consideration of this item.

The Town Clerk declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 13 and informed the meeting that she would leave the Council Chamber during the consideration of this item.

**653. To approve the minutes as a true and accurate record of the last meeting of the Full Town Council held on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2021 and the Full Council Budget meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021.**

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Full Council held on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2021 and the Full Council Budget meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021. The chairman duly signed the minutes.

**654. Questions.**

There were no questions.

**655. To approve payments for the previous month.**

A list of payments had been circulated prior to the meeting. Please refer to [Appendix A](#).

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the payments for November 2021, as presented, are approved.

**656. To approve payments over £5,000 in accordance with Financial Regulations.**

There were no payments over £5,00 and below £9,999.

**657. To approve payments of £10,000 and above in accordance with the council's Financial Regulations.**

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** to approve the payment of £10,000 to Citizens Advice. Please refer to [Appendix B](#).

**658. To consider and adopt the following draft policies:**

**a) Tree and Bench Memorial Policy**

A copy of the Tree and Bench Memorial Policy had been circulated prior to the meeting.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the Tree and Bench Memorial Policy, as presented, is adopted.

## **b) Sponsorship Policy**

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that consideration of a Sponsorship Policy should be deferred until January 2022.

### **659. To re-instate the current Grants Policy which was suspended on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 (Minute no. 629).**

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** to re-instate the Grants Policy.

### **660. To consider setting up a Task and Finish Group to review the current Grants Policy**

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that a Task and Finish Group should be set up to review the current Grants Policy.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the following should form the Grants Policy Task and Finish Group: Cllr B von Clemens, Cllr Cullingford, Cllr Harris, Cllr Hill, Cllr Poulter, Cllr Kilcourse, Cllr Weeks and the Responsible Financial Officer.

### **661. To receive and consider draft tender documents for Street Cleaning Contracts.**

A draft tender document had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Members raised concerns regarding weeds in the town. The Town Clerk explained the areas of responsibility with regards to weeding and stated that she would ask Dorset Council Waste Services if they could help with weeding on the highway. Cllr B von Clemens stated that he would raise the issue at the next meeting of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the draft tender document, as presented, is approved for circulation.

### **662. To consider a report from the Estate Management Subcommittee.**

A confidential report, with a recommendation, had been circulated prior to the meeting. There was no discussion.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that Gillingham Town Council has already submitted its views regarding land north of Common Mead Lane and no further comments will be given at this time.

Cllr Gould abstained from voting as he had declared an interest.

### **663. To receive and consider written reports from outside bodies, if available, for consideration and approval:**

**a) Gillingham Town Team**

There was no report this month.

**664. To receive and consider reports from sub-committees and task and finish groups, as follows:**

**a) The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Task and Finish Group**

A report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Please refer to [Appendix C](#)

The Mayor referred to the request to find a piper, and asked Cllr Toye to send a draft press release to the Town Clerk for consideration prior to circulation.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that Cllr Laura Ashfield is co-opted to join the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Task and Finish Group.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that Gillingham Town Council should appeal for a piper via various media that the Town Clerk feels is applicable.

**665. To receive and consider a Health and Safety Report**

The Health and Safety record for November / December 2021 was circulated to members prior to the meeting.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the Health and Safety record for November / December 2021 is noted.

A report regarding the changes to the COVID-19 Regulations was circulated to members prior to the meeting. Please refer to [Appendix D](#)

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that a COVID safe, socially distanced, face-to-face Full Council Meeting is held on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022, subject to government guidelines and subject to a quorum, to enable the approval of the Budget and Precept for FY 2022/23. The meeting to take place at covid safe premises at a cost of £60 to be funded from FY 2021/22 Budget No. 6203 Civic Costs - Mayor General.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that with immediate effect 'Group meetings' are held via Microsoft Teams in line with the current schedule of meetings and the Proper Officer is delegated to action any decisions in accordance with the council's temporary scheme of delegation.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the Registrar is permitted to use the Council Chamber, free of additional charge, on a temporary basis, on a Tuesday and Wednesday until 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022 when the charging issue will be reviewed.

A draft policy on controlling the risks of infectious diseases was circulated to members prior to the meeting. Several amendments were suggested and agreed.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the Policy on controlling the risks of infectious diseases is approved and adopted, as amended.

A draft Health and Safety Policy was circulated to members prior to the meeting.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the Health and Safety Policy, as presented, is approved and adopted.

A draft Health and Safety Handbook was circulated to members prior to the meeting.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the Health and Safety Handbook, as presented, is approved and adopted.

**666. To receive and consider the final report from the Dorset Parish Independent Remuneration Panel.**

The recommendations of the Dorset Parish Independent Remuneration Panel regarding member's allowances had been circulated to members prior to the meeting.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that Gillingham Town Council will not pay a member's allowance.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that Gillingham Town Council will not pay an enhanced basic allowance to the Chairman.

The Chairman informed members that the Dorset Parish Independent Remuneration Panel recommends that individual councils agree a list of approved duties for the payment of travel and subsistence allowances.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that travel and subsistence allowances will be reviewed as part of the Pay Policy review in August 2022.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that a list of approved duties for the payment of travel and subsistence allowances for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor will be reviewed as part of the Mayor's Handbook review in February 2022.

The Chairman informed the meeting that the Dorset Parish Independent Remuneration Panel recommends that where any council adopts a scheme of allowances the commencement of such scheme should be payable from the commencement of the next municipal year; however, as Gillingham Town Council's expenses policy is included within the Pay Policy, and based on HMRC recommended rates, the council does not need to adopt a scheme of allowance.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that Gillingham Town Council does not adopt a scheme of allowance.

**667. To receive and consider the Quarterly Newsletter (Winter Edition), prior to circulation.**

The Quarterly Newsletter was circulated prior to the meeting.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the newsletter is approved for circulation. The newsletter is available to view on the Town Council's website, [here](#)

**668. To receive a report on the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's civic activities**

A report was circulated prior to the meeting. Please refer to [Appendix E](#).  
The report was noted.

**669. To receive and note reports from Dorset Councillors, if available.**

Dorset Council agenda and minutes are available to view [here](#)

A report from Cllr Belinda Ridout was circulated prior to the meeting. Please refer to [Appendix F](#)

**670. To receive matters pertinent to this meeting. Note: Members are advised that inclusion of any item is at the Chairman's discretion and that a Council cannot lawfully decide upon any matter which is not specified in the summons (agenda).**

- a) The Chairman informed the meeting that notification had been received from Dorset Council Highways of proposed works on the B3092, Peacemarsh Road in Gillingham. To enable Dorset Council to carry out maintenance work the B3092 Peacemarsh Road will be closed between 21<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022. The road will be closed daily between the hours of 09.00 and 16.00 but it will be open overnight and at weekends. During the closure periods there will be no street parking available.
- b) The Chairman informed members that Citizens Advice had submitted their accounts ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 that these had been circulated to all members for information.
- c) The Chairman reminded members that the Town Carol Service would be taking place at the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December, subject to government guidelines in place at the time.
- d) The Mayor took the opportunity to wish everyone a Happy Christmas and New Year.

The meeting closed at 20.35

Full Council Meeting – 13 December 2021

Minute no. 655

**Gillingham Town Council - Bank payments: November 2021**

Ref	Supplier	Date	Details	Amount paid (including VAT where applicable)
8954	Dorset Council	01/11/2021	Non domestic rates	26.00
8955	Dorset Council	01/11/2021	Non domestic rates	81.00
8956	Dorset Council	01/11/2021	Non domestic rates	127.00
8957	Dorset Council	02/11/2021	Non domestic rates	429.00
8958	Dorset Council	01/11/2021	Non domestic rates	811.00
8959	Dorset Council	01/11/2021	Non domestic rates	1,286.00
8960	Water2Business	01/11/2021	Water rates & sewerage	48.87
8961	Water2Business	01/11/2021	Water rates & sewerage	77.93
8962	SSE	01/11/2021	Electricity Roman Court	132.05
8963	SSE	01/11/2021	Electricity WC/Town Bridge	168.99
8964	Opus	01/11/2021	Electricity various sites Sept 21	219.97
8965	Water2Business	01/11/2021	Water rates & sewerage	231.46
8966	Water2Business	01/11/2021	Water rates & sewerage	240.78
8967	SSE	01/11/2021	Gas Town Hall	949.68
8968	Water2Business	01/11/2021	Water rates & sewerage	1,043.86
8975	Right Fuel	08/11/2021	Fuel	266.33
9027	Staff expenses	11/11/2021	Staff mileage	26.55
9028	Staff expenses	11/11/2021	Staff mileage	103.50
9029	Western	11/11/2021	Consumable items	60.96
9030	Tincknell Fuels	11/11/2021	Diesel fuel	648.38
9031	Sydenhams	11/11/2021	Bricks	13.52
9032	Plant World	11/11/2021	Gardening items	62.82
9033	Dorset Council	11/11/2021	Dorset Waste	213.20
9034	BB Motors	11/11/2021	MOT Van	54.85
9035	Fine Memorials	11/11/2021	Balance cleaning Milton war memorial	360.00
9036	Amazon	11/11/2021	Frame and H&S poster	25.78
9037	Brunel Occupational Health	11/11/2021	Staff welfare	325.00
9038	Creative Catering	11/11/2021	Catering Freeman ceremony	248.00
9039	Ellis Whittam	11/11/2021	Annual HR insurance	283.56

9040	Ellis Whittam	11/11/2021	Annual combined HR support	4,558.94
9070	SSE	15/11/2021	Electricity 2b Roman Court	32.36
9071	Sage	16/11/2021	Monthly Sage accounts & payroll	276.60
9092	Petty cash	12/11/2021	Petty cash top up	95.07
	Royal British Legion			
9094	019804	12/11/2021	Poppy wreath	25.00
9095	L Prill 019805	12/11/2021	Signwriting	31.00
9096	DVLA	12/11/2021	Vehicle tax van	275.00
9100	Ofcom	24/11/2021	Annual radio licence	75.00
9110	British Gas	19/11/2021	Elect CCTV Hardings Lane	31.17
9128	Vodafone	25/11/2021	Internet Town Bridge office	9.99
9129	Talk	26/11/2021	Internet Chantry & Roman Court	58.74
			Electricity & de-energiser meter 1d	
9135	SSE	29/11/2021	Roman Court	136.69
9136	Opus	29/11/2021	Electricity various sites October 21	259.27
9218	Payroll Nov 21	30/11/2021	Net pay	21,313.17
			<b>Total</b>	<b>35,744.04</b>



Full Council Meeting – 13 December 2021

Minute no. 657

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<b>GILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL December 2021</b>			
<b>INVOICES AND PAYMENTS OVER £10,000</b>			
		<b>Detail</b>	<b>Total Including VAT where applicable</b>
06/12/2021	Citizens Advice (Invoice no. 199 1/11/2021)	Annual Grant 2021/22	<b>10,000.00</b>
		<b>Total</b>	<b>10,000.00</b>

## **Gillingham Town Council**

### **The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Task and Finish Group Report**

**Author: Cllr Donna Toye**

The Group has had two meetings and has made some progress working through plans. Unfortunately, one meeting was cut short due to illness so full meetings are planned as per the dates below.

Much work is ongoing and the original plan that Gillingham Town Council only organise the Civic Parade and provide co-ordination and assistance to other organisations for the other events remains unchanged.

Timetable remains as per previous reports and the national information is found [here](#) although timings are still unspecified.

Cllr Laura Ashfield has requested to join the Task and Finish Group and we are very happy to have an extra pair of hands as the group is set to become much busier over the coming months.

Finding a piper is proving difficult with many groups having disbanded during the pandemic. The group would like to ask all Councillors and staff to let us know if they are aware of anybody who can assist us.

Dates of next meetings:

- 16 December 2021 7pm Teams Meeting
- 18 January 2022 7pm Teams Meeting

### **Recommendations**

- **That Cllr Laura Ashfield is co-opted to join the Task and Finish Group**
- **That GTC appeal for a piper via the various media, that the Town Clerk feels is applicable.**

**APPENDIX D**

**Gillingham Town Council**  
**Health and Safety Report (2 of 2)**  
**Changes to the COVID-19 Regulations**  
**Author: Town Clerk**

**1. Background**

On 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021 the government announced that England will move to Plan B in response to the risks of the Omicron variant. Updates to reflect the new plan B measures have been considered and the Town Council's Risk Assessment has been amended accordingly.

There is still much uncertainty around how legislation or COVID risks and restrictions may change over the coming weeks and months. It is therefore recommended that with immediate effect the Town Council meet remotely via MS Teams under the temporary scheme of delegation approved by the Town Council on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Details available [Here](#)

**2. Scheme of Delegation to the Clerk**

It is recommended that the scheme of delegation continues in line with the current meetings schedule. As before, this means that standing committees and Full Council meetings would become 'group meetings' and the 'group' will make recommendations on decisions to the Proper Officer<sup>1</sup>, who will then enact those recommendations under the temporary scheme of delegation. The scheme will remain in place until the council decides that a return to face-to-face meetings is safe, or that the delegation should cease for any other reason. This scheme will be reviewed pending government guidelines. Face-to-face meetings will need to be held in order to consider items that cannot be delegated to the Proper Officer, this includes levying or issuing a precept.

**3. Financial Implications**

If the Council decide to hold a face-to-face meeting at a larger venue to approve the Budget and Precept, the cost of room hire will be in the region of £60.

**4. Conclusion**

Gillingham Town Council will continue to update risk assessments in accordance with government guidelines and will continue to ensure that any physical meetings take place

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<sup>1</sup> The Local Government Act 1972 confers certain responsibilities to be undertaken by the council's "Proper Officer", meaning an officer appointed for a particular purpose. The Proper Officer has certain statutory obligations, for example, signing and serving a summons with an agenda to attend council meetings.

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safely and enable the public to view the meeting without placing restrictions on the number attending.

Certain decisions, including the setting of a budget/precept cannot be delegated to the Proper Officer and require a decision by Full Council. It will therefore be necessary to hold a face-to-face COVID secure meeting to deal with this on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022. A larger venue will be needed to accommodate this meeting safely.

Gillingham Town Council will continue to update risk assessments in accordance with government guidelines to ensure the safety of staff, councillors and visitors. With immediate effect staff based at the Town Hall will work from home, if and when possible. An appointment system will be available to members of the public whose enquiries cannot be dealt with satisfactorily over the phone or via email.

Dorset Council has updated their risk assessment and to ensure the safety of their staff and visitors to the Town Hall they have asked if the Registrar could use the Council Chamber for registrations each Tuesday and Wednesday until further notice.

## 5. Recommendation

- **That a COVID safe, socially distanced, face-to-face Full Council Meeting is held on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022, subject to a quorum, to enable the approval of the Budget and Precept for FY 2022/23. The meeting to take place at covid safe premises at a cost of £60 to be funded from FY 2021/22 Budget No. 6203 Civic Costs - Mayor General.**
- **That with immediate effect ‘Group meetings’ are held via Microsoft Teams in line with the current schedule of meetings and the Proper Officer is delegated to action any decisions in accordance with the council’s temporary scheme of delegation.**
- **That the Registrar is permitted to use the Council Chamber, free of additional charge, on a temporary basis, on a Tuesday and Wednesday until 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022 when the charging issue will be reviewed.**

## APPENDIX E

Full Council Meeting – 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Minute no. 668

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## Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's Civic Activities

### Mayor's Report November/December 2021

November 2021 is a five Monday month, one of a few every year. This means that the Full Council meeting takes place sometime before the end of the month. As a result, I am reporting on events that happened in November after the last Full Council meeting (and report), as well as December (up to the December Full Council on the 13<sup>th</sup>)

#### 24<sup>th</sup> November – The Rifles Awards Dinner 2020 & 2021, Guildhall London

The Rifles have the Freedom of the Town of Gillingham, which they inherited from the Devon and Dorset Regiment on their formation on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2007. The Rifles have five Regular and three Reserve Battalions. Alongside these two pillars, 20% of the Army's cadets are cap badged RIFLES. As an organisation it has 71 civic privileges across England.

The Rifles held a Biennial Awards Dinner in the Guildhall, London on 24<sup>th</sup> November. The event brought together guests from across the Rifles recruiting region to celebrate the outstanding contribution in 2020 and 2021 of some selected Riflemen from within the Battalions and associated Cadet Force. Three hundred and seventy guests sat down to enjoy a magnificent dinner in the resplendent surroundings of the Guildhall London. The event was hosted by the Colonel Commandant, General Sir Peter Sanders KCB CBE DSO ADC Gen in the presence of Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall.

The Duchess was attending her first Awards Dinner in her role as Colonel-in-Chief of the Rifles; a role she inherited from His Royal Highness Prince Phillip The Duke of Edinburgh on 22 July 2020. Six other members of the Royal family were also present, each in their personal role as the Royal Colonel of one of the Rifle Battalions. There were ten separate awards made to Riflemen, five each for 2020 and 2021. One Rifleman won the Champion Regular shot award for both years. Indeed, the individual has won the same award for the past 7 years. Fifteen Colonel-in-Chief Commendations were made in recognition of an outstanding act or meritorious service. Two of the Commendations were for saving life.



The Guildhall was laid out so that guests sat on tables of ten. I was honoured to sit next to Field Marshal His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent KG GCMG GCVO ADC throughout the event and engage in interesting conversation.

#### 28<sup>th</sup> November – Magic of Christmas, Riversmeet

I attended, and opened, the first of the Christmas Fairs for 2021 at Riversmeet. The Magic of Christmas was an event where all stall holders had to guarantee that their stock was handmade. The event was spread across two halls in Riversmeet, the smaller hall for stall

holders who were attending their first event, the larger one for those who were returning to sell again to Gillingham residents. After the opening, the Mayoress and I walked around each stall and talked to each of the stall holders. It was good to meet up with the recipient of the second prize in the Countryside Area, craft and country stands at the Gillingham and Shaftesbury Show. His metalwork remains an inspiration and reminded me why I awarded him that prize back in August.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> December – Gillingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry Dinner**

The Mayoress and I were invited to attend the Gillingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry Christmas dinner at the Dolphin Inn on 2<sup>nd</sup> December. It was an intimate event, with a small number of the members dining in a private reserved area within the pub. There was excellent conversation throughout the evening. Before the evening closed, I was pleased to accept, on behalf of the Town Council, a cheque to the value of £1150.00. The Chamber had determined that they would fund all the small Christmas trees in the high street for the 2021 festive lights event. It was a superb gesture which was accepted with pleasure.



### **3<sup>rd</sup> December – Switch on Gillingham Festive Lights**

The annual festive light event returned with gusto this year. After having to cancel the event last year, due to the pandemic (though the lights were on for the Christmas period) the festive lights subcommittee organised an event suited to the current situation. It had been decided that the event would take place solely on the Town Meadow to negate the need to close the road. The subcommittee were conscious of the need to mitigate the potential health issues of the continuing pandemic, but also to provide a great experience for our residents, and particularly the children.



The final programme included Rokit Choir, The Gillingham Imperial Silver Band, a short prayer from Rev Peter Greenwood and of course Father Christmas switching on the tree lights (thanks to Martin, our deputy works manager who was working hard in the background!). The main part of the event was held using a purpose made trailer and surround sound system provided through Slick Events. Father Christmas was able to re-join his sleigh after the tree lights were switched on. Food and drink were available on the meadow throughout the event. The weather was a little unfriendly, but it didn't stop everyone having a great time.

Events such as this rely on many unsung helpers and we were particularly fortunate to have the help of the GMS Lions and the Gillingham Carnival marshals to help with the event. Our own grounds staff and our Office Manager all worked very hard both before the event and particularly on the night. Our Town Clerk contributed in many ways, including singing with the choir during the evening. Well done, everyone!

## **9<sup>th</sup> December Weldmar Hospice Care Service, Orchard Park**

A short, moving “Light up a Life” service was held at Orchard Park in the early evening of Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December. Weldmar is well known in the town as they have a fundraising shop in the high street. The event was hosted by the CEO Weldmar Hospice care, Caroline Hamblett. Weldmar is 27 years young and has helped over 20,000 patients and family members through one of life’s most difficult journeys. The lights adorn a large Christmas tree which will remain at the entrance to Orchard Park until after Christmas. It is easy to spot as it is guarded by a moose!

## **APPENDIX F**

Full Council Meeting – 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Minute no. 669

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Full Council Minutes 13/12/21    Signed ..... 24/01/22

## Gillingham Ward Monthly Report

Cllr Belinda Ridout – December 2021

**REMINDER:** The Library public consultations, for adults and children, both close on Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2022. It only takes a few minutes to complete and there is the chance of winning a prize!! Your comments will help Dorset Council to develop and deliver a library service that meets the needs of local residents and communities over the next 10 years.

**Avian influenza** – as if we haven't had enough with Covid-19, from Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> November all poultry and captive birds must be housed to protect them from avian influenza. For further details see the latest England declaration: Avian Influenza Prevention Zone including housing measures (England) declaration. The risk of avian influenza H5 in wild birds has increased from high to very high for England. The risk of poultry exposure to H5 across Great Britain has changed from medium to high where there is poor biosecurity. Keep your birds safe.

**Help for those suffering COVID-19 after-effects** -a new service has been set up to help people across Dorset recover from lingering after-effects of COVID-19. About 1 in 10 people who contract the virus have persistent symptoms which can last for months. Dorset HealthCare has established a Post-COVID Syndrome (PCS) Service and anyone who has had symptoms for 12 weeks or more are being urged to contact their GP, who can refer patients to the PCS Service for specialist support. Symptoms include fatigue, breathlessness, headaches, brain 'fog' or pain in the joints or chest. If in doubt, get checked out.

**Progress on Planning** – good news that the planning validation backlog has been cleared, which means that planning applications are now being validated within a few days of receipt, as long as all the right information has been submitted, before being added to the planning register.

The Council's Planning Transformation project, bringing the planning data from 5 former district councils onto one planning database, combined with the introduction of more efficient processes, has enabled the team to clear the backlog and now begin the huge task of assessing all those applications. So, there will still be some delays in issuing decisions.

**Dorset Council Budget 2022/23** - all members have been attending budget seminars (virtually) which have been very detailed, involving everyone through the whole budget making process. Portfolio Holders are responsible for their own budgets and it was interesting to hear from them all as to their budget constraints and pressures. There is significant financial economic uncertainty (pandemic), services under pressure and only a 1-year government settlement this time. The starting point has been the base budget for 21/22, taking into account underlying budget pressures, inflation, growth for known services, income assumptions and adjustment for council tax and business rate assumption. It is not an easy task, but Dorset Council's priorities as laid out in the Dorset Council Plan will drive the budget priorities and along with the transformation plans currently underway to make all areas as efficient and cost effective as possible, will help



the council to reach a financially sustainable position. The council is required by law to set a balanced budget which means its expenditure must be balanced by income without unsustainable use of one-off or short-term sources of finance. Dorset Council faces a budget gap of just under £36.1m in 2022-23, significant but not out of step with other councils. It is hoped that the proposed balanced budget will close this gap to £4.5m by applying a wide range of savings, aiming to improve efficiency even further and protect front line services. The council proposes to increase council tax next year by just under 2% and to levy the adult social care precept of 1% - in line with the Government's Spending Review. This is equivalent to £1.02 extra per week for a Band D property. It is anticipated that the remaining shortfall of £4.5m will be closed when the Government announces the final allocation of funding in late December. Draft proposals to deliver a balanced budget next financial year, 2022-23 will go to the Scrutiny Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> December, to Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> January and to Full Council on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

**New Commercial Strategy for Commissioning and Procurement** – Cabinet recently approved the revised 'Commercial Strategy for Commissioning and Procurement', supporting the council to become more commercially minded in its activities.

It outlines steps to be taken to strengthen commercial arrangements and contracts to provide greater value for money for the council and ultimately for residents, and support contract managers and leaders to become more commercially aware. Basically, behaving in a more business-like way, adopting some of the positive culture and behaviours that are associated with commercial organisations; being business friendly to promote local growth and prosperity; commissioning as One Council, to be more cost-effective and making money – doing something that generates profit.

**Free Parking at Dorset car parks to all staff and volunteers at Covid-19 vaccination clinics.** Participants just need to provide their vehicle registration details to their clinic manager, who will pass the information to the DC parking team. These vehicles will be added to the database, so officers can ensure they are not issued with a fine if they don't purchase a parking ticket.

**Dorset's Volunteer Heroes** – throughout the pandemic, volunteers across the country have played an essential part in helping people stay safe and have kept our communities going. Over 3000 people have volunteered in Dorset alone! These are amazing people who stepped up when there was a need, and I had the pleasure of meeting many of them on their rounds to our local pharmacies. Dorset Council has launched the Dorset Volunteer Heroes Awards to formally recognise their efforts and achievements. If someone made a difference to you during the pandemic or if there's someone close to you who you think should be recognised, then please get in touch. There are three award categories to choose from:

1. Individual volunteer heroes;
2. Young volunteer heroes (for individuals aged under 25);
3. Heroic community groups.

You can nominate to more than one category but please complete only one form per nomination. Closing date is 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022. Award recipients will receive a letter of thanks and a certificate from the Chairman of Dorset Council and be invited to help plant some fruit trees in chosen locations across the county. If you struggle getting online, call the Dorset Digital Hotline on 01305 221048 or if you prefer a paper copy, nomination forms

can be found in the winter edition of the Dorset Council magazine, sent to all households. If all fails, contact myself.

**Draft Air Quality Action Plan** – Have your say on the Draft Air Quality Action Plan. The plan outlines how Dorset Council will tackle air quality issues across the Dorset Council area and how DC will work with regional and central government on policies and issues beyond DC's direct influence. Although the action Plan has been created because of the declared Air Quality Management Area in Chideock for nitrogen dioxide, it is recognised that air quality (especially particulate matter) is an area of concern to both residents and visitors, so the action plan also outlines measures to improve air quality for both nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter in the whole of Dorset Council's area between 2022 and 2027. These measures link into the work the council is doing as part of its declared climate change emergency. The consultation can be found on line and closes on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

**Can you provide a home for unaccompanied children?** – Dorset Council is looking for people who would be willing to foster or provide supported lodgings for unaccompanied children. In the year ending September 2021, the UK received 3,103 applications for asylum from unaccompanied, or separated, children and many more are arriving each day. Along with other local authorities, DC has a responsibility to provide a warm welcome and meet their needs. Full training will be given and support, advice and guidance available throughout with an allowance to assist with day-to-day living costs. To find out more email [supported-lodgings@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:supported-lodgings@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk) or call 01305 225809 and ask for Val Clark. More information on the DC website.

**Bin collections over the Christmas period** – With Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day falling on the weekend this year, rubbish and recycling collections will be on their usual day of the week over the Christmas period, even on bank holidays. Please refer to your calendar or look on the DC website to check your usual collection days. Please note:

- DC will collect up to 2 extra sacks of rubbish beside your bin on your first rubbish collection after Christmas Day;
- No garden waste collections between Christmas Day and Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January;
- Household recycling centres will be open from 9am to 4pm daily, except Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day;
- Extra recycling, including glass and food will be collected on your recycling collection day, provided it is separated correctly and placed in suitable, sturdy containers that can be easily lifted by one person (no bags or cardboard boxes).

**Financial support for Dorset residents in need**, including vulnerable families, will help with the cost of food and heating and other essentials this winter. DC has been awarded £2,294,941 from the Government's Household Support Fund, to help vulnerable households in need of financial support. Some of the money will be used for children's food vouchers over the Christmas period. One-off winter energy vouchers of £200 will be made to households in receipt of Universal Credit with limited capability for work or earnings below the free school meals and free prescription threshold. Other targeted emergency local assistance will include support for care leavers, homeless or risk of

homelessness and people using food banks. More information available on the Dorset Council website or call 01305 221000.

**Two-year-old childcare funding** covering up to 15 hours of childcare a week (for 38 weeks a year) and can be used with a childminder, in a pre-school or at a day nursery. If residents are on certain benefits or low income, then they may be entitled to claim. Residents can claim on line or contact the Family Information Service: [familyinfo@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:familyinfo@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk) or 01305 221066.

This has been a difficult year again for everyone and still very uncertain times, but I hope we can all manage to have some worry-free time over the festive period and enjoy quality time with family and friends. I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year!

**Cllr. Belinda Ridout,  
Councillor for Gillingham Ward**

[Cllrbelinda.ridout@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:Cllrbelinda.ridout@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk) 07496413114

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>