

Gillingham Ward Monthly Report
Cllr Belinda Ridout – January, 2024

Wishing you a Happy New Year!!

Household Support Fund (HSF) re-opened for applications on Wednesday, 3rd January 2024 for low-income households in the Dorset Council area. The support will be in the form of supermarket vouchers. Citizens Advice allocate this fund on behalf of Dorset Council. Please make sure you have not applied for a previous HSF payment since July 2023, as further vouchers cannot be issued. The application form can be found at <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/household-support-fund> or call Customer Services on 01305 221000.

Cost of living help – a reminder that there is free, confidential and impartial support available on money worries, accessing affordable food, housing and employment rights and looking after your mental health. Dorset Council works with Dorset Citizen’s Advice to offer this support. Call Freephone North Dorset Citizens Advice, 0800 144 8848 or visit to book an appointment at 4 Newbury Court, Gillingham, SP8 4QX on Monday’s and Thursday’s, 10am to 12pm, 1pm to 3pm, or Tuesday’s and Wednesday’s, 10am to 12pm.

Dog related Public spaces Protection Order (PSPO) - a new PSPO across the Dorset Council area came into force 1st January, 2024 for three years. This helps to keep specific beaches and open spaces free from dog fouling and safe to use by all. Insisting that dogs are kept on leads in particular areas means that owners have adequate control over their dogs and do not cause issues with other people or dogs. The order is in response to extensive consultation gathering views from everyone, with a total of 4,221 responses, 80% from local residents, 62% of which came from dog owners.

Planning for Climate Change - Dorset Council has recently published three guidance documents:

- Planning for climate change: Interim guidance and position statement.
- Sustainability statement and checklist for planning applications.
- Listed buildings and energy efficiency: what you can do for climate change.

The guidance can be viewed on the Dorset Council website at: Planning for climate change – Dorset Council.

The sustainability statement and checklist will come into effect from 15th January, 2024.

This follows a consultation from April to June last year, which contributed to amendments to the guidance documents.

Council Tax – Dorset Council has published its initial proposals to deliver a balanced budget for 2024-25. Proposals will ensure frontline council services continue to be provided to residents and businesses. Dorset Council provides around 450 different services to just under 380,000 residents, including adults and children’s social care, road maintenance, waste collection, housing support and libraries. Around 60% of the budget will support vulnerable children, families, older people and those with disabilities. The proposals would see an increase in council tax next year by just under

3% and to levy the adult social care precept of 2%. The increase would be equivalent to £1.82 extra per week for a Band D property. The proposals are to be considered by the two scrutiny committees, (as a member of the People & Health Scrutiny Committee, we are reviewing this on 12th January), and then submitted to Cabinet with any recommendations, going to Full Council in February for final approval. It would appear that the recently announced £64bn funding boost to local authorities with the Local Government Finance Settlement 2024-25, is not quite so generous as it sounds in reality and much of what the government refers to as “Core Spending Power” for councils is in fact the power to increase council tax locally by up to 5% to fund council services. The settlement does not provide specific funding to address significant cost and demand pressures on the council budget, such as for social care and children’s services, like many councils across the country.

Is your gas hob safe? Ward Councillors have been asked to share this alert with as many residents as possible. Dorset Council Trading Standards is helping the Office of Product Safety and Standards to raise awareness about checking if your gas hob needs work to make it safe. It has been found that 12 UK gas hob manufacturers may have a fault in their gas hob elbow joints, potentially causing a serious risk of poisoning, burns or gas explosion and/or fire. Please check your gas hobs, the companies involved are Apelson Appliances UK Ltd., Buy It Direct Ltd, Glen Dimplex Home Appliances, Kingfisher International Products Ltd, Lancaster Holdings Ltd, Maurice Lay Distributors Ltd, Midea UK Ltd, Product Care Trading Ltd, Samsung Electronics, Shop Direct Home Shopping Ltd, Stax Trade Centres Ltd and The Wright Buy Ltd. The companies will visit every home to make affected hobs safe. Information about the brands and models are available via the companies’ websites. Should your model be included or if you are not sure of your gas hob model, please contact the Freephone numbers on line for each manufacturer, where an advisor can assist with checking your model and providing further information between 8am and 6pm 7 days a week. Alternatively go to <https://gashobrepair.mktpoint.com> to enter your details.

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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>