

Gillingham Ward Monthly Report
Cllr Belinda Ridout – June 2024

A busy month training with the new councillors and attending webinars on a mix of topics.

'Love Your Verge' campaign this summer celebrating Dorset's roadside verges as havens for biodiversity and wildlife. The campaign by Dorset council and Litter Free Dorset raises awareness of the council's work to increase biodiversity in verges as part of a greater aim to make more space for wildlife in the county, whilst making sure junctions and lines of sight are kept clear for road users. You will see colourful roadside signage with bees and butterflies and the slogan: 'Making Space for Nature'. An increase in cut and collect mowing has reduced soil fertility, slowing grass growth and thereby creating a better environment for wildflowers. Where safe to do so, verge cutting has been reduced throughout the rural road network to allow more flowers to complete their life cycles before being cut. *(I have particularly noticed an increase in what I call 'Red Campion' (Silene Dioica) in the verges).* This approach benefits insects and particularly the pollinators, contributing to overall ecosystem resilience. Dorset Council is currently working alongside BCP Council and Natural England, with residents, communities and organisations to create a new local nature recovery plan, to help grow, improve and connect nature locally, crucial in helping Dorset reach its '30 by 30' goal, a target set by the Government aiming to see 30% of land, rivers, and seas protected for nature by 2030.

General Election – 4th July – make sure you are ready to vote. Don't forget you need accepted forms of ID to vote; passport, driver's licence, some concessionary travel passes or an Oyster 60+ card. You can use expired photo ID if you are still recognizable from the photo. Check where your allocated polling station is because there have been changes, which caught some people out for the local elections in May.

Local Alliance group funding – community groups, education settings and volunteer organisations can now apply for funding through their local alliance group, to create initiatives aimed at making a difference in the lives of local young people. Individuals can apply for up to £5,000 and partnerships (two or more organisations, eg. a school and a charity coming together) can apply for up to £20,000. To apply, visit the North Dorset Local Alliance group page: <https://dorsetcc.sharepoint.com/sites/NorthDorsetFPZ>. You can also access the application form directly at: <https://forms.office.com/e/vjnaMwZ76>. Funding requests will be considered by the Local Alliance Group and a decision given within 6 weeks of the request being made. If you wish to discuss any funding before submitting please contact: northlocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, 01258 474036

Cost of Living Help – from September, 2024, working parents with children aged 9 – 23 months are eligible to apply for 15 hours of funded childcare, providing essential support to families. To find out if you are eligible, visit: childcarechoices.gov.uk.

Bourton 30mph speed limit – I'm very pleased to have received notification that a Traffic Regulation Order has been 'made' following Bourton's application for a 30mph speed limit, the operational date being 21st June, 2024. The effect will be to revoke lengths of existing 40mph speed limits and

introduce new 30mph speed limits on the following roads: New Road, High Street, Tan Lane, Olde Fairfield, Silton, Road, Mill Lane, Brickyard Lane, West Bourton Road, Old Pound Court, Church Track, Woolcott Lane and Chaffeymoor Hill. This will significantly make highway use safer for all.

Library opening hours – following public feedback from the extensive library consultation, new hours in Dorset’s libraries come into force on 1st July. For Gillingham library, this means: Monday, Thursday and Friday, open 10am to 5pm. Tuesday, Midday to 6pm. Saturday, 10am to 1pm. Closed Wednesday and Sunday.

Be Tick Aware –the warm weather encourages us to be outdoors and going for walks in our beautiful countryside, but please be tick aware. Tick activity is at its peak during the spring and summer months. Avoid getting bitten by covering up your arms and legs, use insect repellent, don’t dwell in long grassy areas and importantly, inspect yourself and others after walks, checking your skin and clothing for ticks. We have had a surge of tick bite concerns at the pharmacy where I work, so I know there is a real risk of being bitten. Don’t forget your pets!

EV Charging points – I was asked to look into a very good point regarding disabled access to charging points, with particular reference to the charge points installed in Gillingham town car park. I have assurance from the Council’s EV project manager that both Joju, the installer and Mer, the chargepoint operator, are required to comply wherever possible with the guidelines set out in the BS Institutes PAS 1899 document developed with OZEV and Motability. As standard practice, all Dorset Council’s car park charging bays are extra wide to allow for access (taking 3 standard parking bays to create 2 charge bays). Sometimes it is physically impossible to meet the guidelines, e.g. sloping or unsurfaced car parks, meaning PAS 1899 standards are not met, but these locations are very few. The chargepoints installed in Gillingham will comply with the PAS 1899 guidelines and accessible for all users.

Beachgoers survey – I know we are the furthest away from Dorset’s lovely beaches (although we do have the ‘Welcome to the Jurassic Coast’ signs at our border) but this summer, Litter Free Dorset and Dorset Coast Forum have launched a new survey to discover how and where you spend your beach days and want to know all about your top beach spots, favourite activities and thoughts on litter and water cleanliness. Your input will help to inform future projects on the Dorset coastline, addressing issues such as beach access, facilities and water quality monitoring. Go to: <https://dorsetcoasthaveyoursay.co.uk>.

Getting help with mobile data – help is available through the Good Things Foundation to provide free SIM cards that last for 6 months, offering up to 20GB of data per month to individuals who cannot afford data and have limited or no access to the internet. Recipients must be aged 18 or over and come from low-income households. For more information or to refer someone, email: digitaldorset@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk or phone Digital Hotline 01305 221048.

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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>