

Cllr Simon Christopher's Report to Chideock Parish Council

29/3/2021

I thought I would begin by thanking you for your kind invitation to speak with you earlier this month. This was really helpful

We are now over a year since the first lockdown, and I think it is fair that the essential high profile care services and indeed environment services i.e., waste collection has continued to be well delivered despite all the challenges

It is however fair to say there is concern , and indeed justified concern re delays in dealing with planning applications and local land charges searches which is disturbing for residents who are suffering genuine difficulties as a result and that this is having an impact on professional firms linked to the property market

With respect to Highways, we look forward to receiving the thoughts of Highways England on matters such as pavements and crossings and the issue of speeding motorists.

There is, I would reiterate, a meeting of Dorset Councillors who represent wards impacted by the A35 in April .I will keep you informed.

In the meantime, I would like to thank those who have written to me with thoughts and pollution issues which I have relayed to appropriate officers and other politicians . I have invited Transport Minister Chris Heaton Harris to visit us

I welcome the Governments desire to see increased spending on rural bus services .I also welcome portfolio holder Ray Bryan's commitment to Dorset Council deploying more electric vehicles. Ray Bryan has expressed his pleasure about the Dorset Council commitment to roll out increasing numbers of electric charging points.

Dorset Council Chief Executive Matt Prosser has congratulated our MP Chris Loder for all his efforts leading Dorset MPs in the demand for better connectivity . This has led to Dorset being announced, in the middle of March, as one of the first Council areas to participate from additional £5 billion of HM Government funds. The funds are from Project Gigabit and aims to bring the fastest broadband to the most rural of areas.

I have contacted Dorset Council officers to encourage them to investigate the state of Mill Lane. After inspection I discussed this with a number of Chideock residents who also voiced their concerns. While I also talk with a number of residents who have businesses who will benefit from a busy summer, there is perhaps a dominating current local concern. That concern focuses on how busy Dorset will be with increased number of tourists, whether staying here or passing through. These concerns have quite rightly been picked up by the Senior Leadership Team and Dorset Police.

Last week a meeting was held with the local Police Superintendent who explained that training had been undertaken to simulate difficult events which may take place this summer that the emergency services would have to deal with. In the very short term, we have the Easter weekend . The superintendent appreciated my question as to the need to uphold the law as tourists will not be able to stay legally in the area over the weekend. Last Easter I had a number of concerned residents contact me about tourists flouting the lockdown and the need to contact the police. You appreciate that some local residents are more volatile than others when they perceive the tourists are flouting the law when their own lives have naturally been restricted for over a year. There are genuine concerns about possible unruly behaviour, drunkenness, bad driving, and crime generally, together with increased littering. With respect to the littering the Council has already started a community exercise in dissuading people from littering

The consultations have now concluded in respect of the following

- The draft local plan
- The Climate and Ecological Emergency
- St Mary's School site Shaftesbury with the aims to include that of improving the delivery of education for SEND children and young people (Special Educational Educational Needs and Disabilities)

The responses to the consultations will now be considered

I must stress that we are still living in a time of great uncertainty where it is not known how the economy will be placed in a post summer post furlough environment .In the short term we do not know which community events will take place . I understand that the Directors of the Melplash will take a decision this week as to whether a show will be held in August

I have not commented on the impact of the new changes to support for farmers as a result of changes to be made in payments from the the Rural Payments agency . There is current consideration of a new sustainable farming incentive . I will attempt to answer any questions at the meeting

Finally, at the meeting I would be pleased to give my thoughts on the possible closure of the Dorset Council offices at South Walks House in Dorchester and the impact on the County Town. I know that there are concerns given the closure of shops in the town, particularly chain stores