



Cllr's Christopher's E-mailed Report – 29 November 2021

I started writing this report on the evening of Saturday 27 November shortly after the Prime Minister has announced that details will be announced in the coming days, of a requirement to wear face masks in shops and on public transport. This is being driven by the new South African Covid variant

Our latest available Covid details as issued by Public Health Dorset are as follows:

| COVID-19 update - 26 November | | | | | Public Health Dorset |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Councils | | | | | #doyourbit |
| | Most recent 7 day period | | Last update (19 Nov) | | 7-day cases trend |
| | Cases | Case rate per 100,000 | Cases | Case rate per 100,000 | |
| BCP Council | 2,354 | 593.0 | 2,283 | 575.1 |  |
| Dorset Council | 2,231 | 587.4 | 1,994 | 525.0 |  |

Public Health update on COVID-19 in Dorset

We've seen cases rise again over the past week across Dorset. Rates in both Dorset Council and BCP Council are higher than the average for the South West region, and are significantly higher than England's average case rate. The number of people in hospital with COVID-19 across Dorset has also continued to rise.

Cases remain highest amongst school-aged children, which is why we've recommended additional measures for schools, but we are also seeing high rates among all ages. With the amount of cases we are seeing locally, it's important to recognise that there is an increased risk from COVID-19 at the moment.

The new advice on [lateral flow tests](#) is to take one before periods of higher risk. That might be going to an event, gathering or visiting someone who is more vulnerable to COVID-19. As we all start to socialise more during the festive period, it's also sensible to take a test before meeting family and friends.

Wearing a mask indoors or in crowded spaces and ensuring you have plenty of fresh air – either by meeting outdoors or keeping doors and windows open when indoors – remain key to [preventing the spread of the virus](#).

We continue to encourage anyone eligible to take up the offer of the [COVID-19 vaccine](#), including the booster, as this is the best way to protect yourself from serious illness caused by the virus.

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. Around one in ten people who contract the virus have persistent symptoms which can last for months (also known as 'Long COVID'), affecting their quality of life, relationships and ability to work.

Dorset HealthCare has established a Post-COVID Syndrome (PCS) Service, which will support patients with self-management or direct them to specialist advice or treatment.

People who have had symptoms for 12 weeks or more, are being urged to contact their GP. If tests rule out other causes, and more help is required, GPs can refer patients to the PCS Service for specialist support and guidance.

Common PCS symptoms include:

- fatigue
- breathlessness
- headaches
- brain 'fog'
- pain in the joints or chest.

[Find out more from Dorset Healthcare](#)

Council is making progress on planning applications

Dorset Council has cleared the planning validation backlog. This means that planning applications are now being validated within a few days of receipt. The council's planning transformation project has brought together planning data from five former district councils onto one planning database. This, combined with the introduction of more efficient processes, has enabled the team to clear a large validation backlog.

Nationally the construction industry has seen a huge surge during the pandemic. The housing market has also remained buoyant.

Validation is the first stage in the planning application process. It checks whether all the information required to process the application has been submitted.

If the application is considered valid then the application is placed on the planning register, allocated a planning case officer and given an application reference number. This is when the planning application is publicised, and people can make comments.

Following the consultation stage, planning officers will assess each application against Local and Neighbourhood Plans and National Planning Policy, considering any material considerations raised in submitted comments, to determine whether the planning permission should be granted or not. Most applications are determined by officers under an arrangement called delegated powers, while more complex or controversial applications may be presented to a committee of elected councillors for a decision.

Cllr David Walsh, Dorset Council Portfolio Holder for Planning, said:

“Clearing the validation backlog has been a huge task and well done to all concerned. But this means that a large wave of applications must go through the planning process.

“Our planning officers now have the huge task of assessing all the applications, and there will still be some delays in issuing decisions. Please bear with us while our team works hard to assess these applications and issue decisions”.

The transformation work continues, with a final phase of migration work due to be completed in the new year.

We will continue to develop our system and improve our online register. We will continue to reduce the processing time for planning applications and land searches with a view to providing the best possible service to our customers.

Nation-wide pressures on the planning system:

The past two years have seen increases in planning application numbers across the country. Many people had money to spend on their homes that they weren't spending on holidays or entertainment. Creating extra room for working at home or planning that extension that they had always wanted. Nationally in 2020 there was a 36 per cent increase in the number of applications, compared to 2019. And 2021 saw increases on top of that. More information can be found at the [Planning Portal](#).

Alongside this was the stamp duty holiday. The housing market became buoyant and land charge searches increased as a result. The government has a target of a maximum of 10 working days within which these searches should be returned to applicants. This target date has not been achieved for the whole Dorset Council area since October 2020.

I receive e mails in connection with traffic and pollution matters.

I set out below by way of example ,extracts from one particular e mail of concern and personally will be pleased when Chris Loder MP (who writes in the press about the A35) will meet with you.

- **Illegal levels of traffic related NO2 and Particulate Matter air pollution**
- **Road safety / Severance issues including: Areas where no pedestrian pavement exists / Areas of adverse pavement cambers (particularly dangerous for the increasing number of disabled users within the Village) / The severance of the village split into two halves north and south of Main Street (A35)**
- **Traffic noise / vibration within a few metres of all homes along Main Street (A35) of which over 35 are Grade II listed**
- **Adverse impact onto the local economy through unpredictable journey times if passing through Chideock**

David Sidwick the Police & Crime Commissioner has asked his PA Cathy Barfoot to liaise with me to arrange for him to visit other parish councils in the Marshwood Vale ward. I have suggested a joint meeting with Char Valley Parish Council and Charmouth Parish Council ie most directly impacted by the A35 west of Bridport at Wootton Fitzpaine Village Hall . His diary is , I understand, very hectic for the next few months, with only small pockets of availability, and Cathy is meeting with him to look at the potential options for such meetings. Clearly as we contemplate Covid developments on a daily basis , we are cautious about numbers attending and I hope you will think my above suggestion appropriate. Such a meeting will allow for discussion of a number of highly important points not least of which are road fatalities on the Dorset side of the Devon/ Dorset border and all matters relating to Chideock , not least which are the existing speed cameras and indeed average speed cameras.

Getting too good

Children's Services celebrate 'Good' Ofsted rating

Children's Services at Dorset Council have been judged as 'Good' by Ofsted, following an inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) in September.

Best regards

Simon

Councillor Simon Christopher
Dorset Councillor Marshwood Vale
07798833715