

Cllr's Christopher's E-mailed Report – 26 September 2021

A few thoughts prior to the September 2021 Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 28 September.

If a week is a long time in politics, so a month can be most eventful time, with the extended holiday season and HGV and other labour shortages, and some garages out of fuel.

Meetings

In recent times I have arranged for Mr. Ben Hampson of National Highways, (previously Highways England) to meet with Chideock Parish Councillors and also Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner Mr. David Sidwick.

I have e mailed Graham Duggan Head of Community and Public Protection at Dorset Council and Councillor Ray Bryan Portfolio Holder for roads, but also footpaths and cycleways , in the hope that they will visit Chideock and meet with Chideock Parish Councillors and myself

A35

A recent incident West of Chideock and road closure impacted Chideock and also surrounding villages .

I made Mr Sidwick aware of frustrations arising from this and am aware that our local MP is aware. I look forward to discussing this and indeed all matters relating to the A35 at length on Tuesday.

Covid Public Health Update

Case rates in Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole continued to decline but we have seen a small uptick in the last few days. This is reflective of the regional and national picture. Our local case rates are above the South West average but remain below the England average. In line with the decrease in case rates in recent weeks, we've also seen COVID-related hospital admissions start to fall. There are currently 26 people in hospital with COVID-19 in Dorset.

With COVID-19 continuing to circulate in our communities, it's really important that anyone with symptoms gets tested and self-isolates whilst they wait for the result. Regular rapid testing when you haven't got symptoms is also key to stopping the spread as you can check you're not infectious and potentially passing the virus on to others. Anyone who hasn't yet had their first or second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine can still book an appointment to get their jab.

Latest data on Covid Summary

Summary of the most recent data:

- 7-day case rates per 100,000
 - o BCP: 227.0 (compared to 246.4 in last update on 17 September)
 - o Dorset: 253.6 (compared to 254.1 in last update on 17 September)
- Confirmed cases in last 7 days
 - o BCP: 901 (compared to 978 in last update on 17 September)
 - o Dorset: 963 (compared to 965 in last update on 17 September)
- Current COVID-19 patients in hospital beds in Dorset: 26 (compared to 30 in last update on 17 September)

Future Dorset Council Meetings

Notwithstanding the above, I believe that it is of the greatest importance that Dorset Council returns to normal working without delay.

As things stand this will not happen with Dorset Council meetings as of 1 October 2021.

This has led to divisions I have to say with some other predominantly older Councillors as clearly I wish to see the Dorset Council be less cautious in the way it works and in my view better reflect working arrangements in the wider society. I say working arrangements but it is more than this as local organisations from the Chideock Farmers discussion club to the Bridport Literacy returning to normality. Nationally we are seeing crowds returning from events as diverse as Last Night of the Proms to the Party Conferences to nightclubs.

I have to say my actions in calling for a change in mind set has not made me widely popular and I have perhaps by my calling for change become the most controversial Dorset Councillor of the last week .

I feel I have made enemies in leading the demand for a move back to face to face meetings of Dorset Council now, rather than just reflect on survey results dither and delay yet again.

I am however cheered by reflecting on the words that some have attributed to Churchill.
"You have enemies? Good. You've have stood up for something ,sometime in your life"

Dorset Council Household Recycling Centres

The opening hours of all 10 of the Dorset Council Household Recycling Centres (HRCs, or "the tip") will change from Friday 1 October.

From 1 October to 30 March, HRCs would usually be open from 10am to 4pm. From Friday 1 October, all HRCs will now open an hour earlier at 9am.

From next year, 1 April to 30 September, HRCs will still open at 9am but close at 5pm. The revised times will bring Dorset Council's HRCs in line with those in the BCP Council area and better reflect the demand for these services.

Average daily traffic data shows there is far more demand for HRCs between 9am and 10am (around 427 vehicles per hour) than there is between 5pm and 6pm (227 vehicles per hour). To reflect this behaviour and make things simpler for customers, our HRCs will now open at 9am all year round but keep the earlier 4pm closing time in the winter to address site safety as it gets darker earlier.

The move to open earlier will especially help during March, as we experienced higher numbers of visitors dropping off garden waste due to the early onset of warmer spring weather this year. Services struggled to cope as HRCs didn't open until 10am but visitors had started arriving much earlier, and the facilities were only operating for six hours each day

It is hoped the earlier opening times in winter will smooth demand throughout the day, matching visitors' travelling patterns and reducing morning queue times

Afghanistan and Military Veterans

With over 58,000 military veterans in Dorset, Dorset Council is reminding current and former members of the Armed Forces, and their families, that support is available for them.

Whether they served in Afghanistan, or in other conflicts, news of the withdrawal of military forces has significantly impacted on the wellbeing of many veterans and their families.

Through its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and links to health and wellbeing services including charities, Dorset Council is encouraging anyone affected to reach out for support

Cllr David Walsh, Chairman of the Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Board, said:

"The scenes pictured on the TV and in the media have brought back memories and raised questions for our Armed Forces that have served, or are serving.

"There are a number of organisations, in Dorset and further afield, which can offer support or just listen. If you are affected by recent events please reach out.

“The whole nation has a moral obligation to the Armed Forces, and their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment. Through the Dorset Armed Forces Covenant we are working to ensure all members of the armed forces, past and present, are treated fairly.

Please let me know if you would like details of the many organisations offering support

Finally a message about energy firms and energy bills....

Worried about energy bills? Seek advice and support now

With recent news coverage about energy firms going bust and rising utility costs for consumers, many of us will be feeling worried about the months ahead.

If you're already struggling to pay your energy bills, or are concerned about how you're going to meet rising utility costs this winter, seek advice and support now.

Call Dorset Citizens Advice on Freephone 0800 144 8848 or visit www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/reaching-out

Best regards

Simon

Councillor Simon Christopher
Dorset Councillor Marshwood Vale
077988 33715