

## **Dorset Council Report October 2023**

We have recently held the first of a series of 'Budget Cafes' which are a great opportunity for all members to be involved with building next year's Budget - always challenging. We will update as we move through this process.

As we move into the colder months, we do see casework around highways and housing issues increase, and are always happy to help.

We are also leading on a campaign where some residents (who are on private sewerage treatment plants owned and operated by Aster) find themselves with astonishing price increases. We have requested a meeting with Aster's Regional Director, along with Richard Drax MP, and will keep everyone posted. We are compiling an email circulation list for updates so let us know if you are affected by this and would like to be added.

### **Digital Champion Roadshow**

The Dorset Council's volunteer digital champion service is ten years old and to celebrate is holding a 'get online' roadshow.

During national 'Get Online' week (16-20 October) the council's volunteers will be manning stalls in Sherborne, Bridport, Wool and Wimborne and anyone needing help to navigate the digital world are urged to come along.

The volunteer digital champions will be able to answer any questions people have and visitors will also get the chance to try out some tablets and take part in fun interactive quizzes.

And everyone who visits one of the volunteer digital champion stalls will be able to enter a free draw with the chance of winning a tablet of their own.

The volunteer digital champion service was set up in 2013 when Dorset Council's Superfast team realised that rolling out broadband to people was not enough to get people online. With take-up figures of the new Superfast broadband lower than expected, the team realised that some people needed to be motivated and supported to take up the new technology now at their disposal. And the volunteer digital champion scheme was born.

Initially set up with the help of Skills and Learning, the first few digital champions were recruited and based in some of the council's libraries to provide face to face support to people needing help.

Since then, the army of volunteers grew and there are now 45 digital champions based at 39 locations across the county – from Verwood in the east to Lyme Regis in the west; and from Weymouth in the south to Gillingham in the north.

And in the last decade they have helped around 15,000 people in their face-to-face appointments and a further 3,500 over the phone since the Digital Hotline was launched in 2020.

## **Preventative treatments for Dorset's roads in October**

Work continues in October to preserve more of our roads using a preventative treatment called [micro-surfacing](#).

Micro-surfacing seals the road, improves the texture and prevents water ingress. It is a cost-effective treatment for worn, but not structurally failing, roads that keeps them in good condition. It also adds reinforcement to the existing surface.

The work will be carried out by our contractors, Kiely, and affected households will receive a [leaflet](#) before the works start.

Due to the equipment size and number of vehicles used to carry out the work, roads will be closed for the treatment to be carried out.

Road closures will be from 8am to 5pm. An onsite team member will be available to address any queries.

Please look for advance notice signs which will be put out before the start of work. The signs will also contain contact information. Residents will also be asked to not park vehicles on the road/verges when the work is due to start: 'No parking' boards will be erected 2-3 days in advance.

A note about micro-surfacing

On application, the micro-asphalt may look 'open' with some loose chippings. However, after a few weeks (or longer, depending on traffic volumes) the material will bed in. It is not recommended that the material is rolled as this brings the 'binder', which sits below the surface, to the top; this would affect the final texture and performance. The contractor may sweep up any excess chippings.

## **Dog-related PSPOs – Latest consultation results published**

[A recent consultation](#) gathered views from residents, visitors, businesses, and other organisations about a dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) across the Dorset Council area.

[These views](#) will be used to create a new Order that will give clarity and consistency for both dog-owners and non-owners. Councillors will make the final decision on the controls to be included in the new Order.

[The consultation](#), that was open for 10 weeks, was available online and paper copies were available in libraries and on request.

4,221 responses were received. 80% of responses were from local residents, with 16.5% from visitors and 2.8% from other. 62% of responses came from dog owners. 9.5% of the respondents considered themselves having a disability.

Questions were asked about whether dogs should be kept on leads in certain areas, and if dogs should be permitted into cemetery graveyards, public gardens and sports pitches. There were also questions about how people felt about restrictions on specific beaches across Dorset.

The one significant change this time is that the current restriction to keep dogs on leads on Lyme Regis's Front Town Beach during the winter is not recommended for inclusion in the new order.

The full report and recommendations will be going to [Place and Resources Overview Committee on 5 October](#) and then to [Cabinet on 7 November](#).

If the [recommendations](#) are agreed, and the order is not appealed, the new dog-related PSPO will come into effect on 1 January 2024.

To view the complete report, [visit the Dorset Council website](#).

### **Bright Spots for Dorset Children in Care**

Results of a recent survey show that the majority of children in care in Dorset feel their life has got better since coming into care.

The 'Bright Spots' survey, which was commissioned by Dorset Council, was carried out by Coram Voice and asked the views of children and young people in care between the ages of 4 and 17.

The report set out six factors associated with wellbeing: trusted and available social workers, having good friends, liking school, seeing siblings as often as they want, feeling safe and settled, having trusted and sensitive carers.

For all children and young people having good friends and trusting and supportive relationships were really important. This included trusted carers and social workers. Liking school influenced well-being for all age groups and feeling safe where they lived and settled was also important for children in care whether they were aged 4 or 17.

Seeing mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters as often as they wanted was highlighted by all age groups.

82% of children in Dorset in the age range 8 to 17 who had been taken into care felt that their life had got better since coming into care.

All of the primary school children aged between 8 and 11 had a trusted adult in their life. One child commented: 'I love my life now and I don't want to change it because I love my carers and my dog.'

The survey also compared some of the findings with national studies to give an indication of how Dorset compares with other local authorities.

47% of young people (11-17) had had the same social worker for the last 12 months, compared to 34% in other local authorities.

97% of young people (11-17yrs) answered that they were taught life skills at least 'sometimes' (like cooking healthy food, washing clothes or using money). This was higher than the average proportion in other local authorities (89%).

There were also some areas for improvement which will be picked up as actions over the coming year.

### **Is your child due to start Secondary or Upper school in September 2024?**

Parents/carers will need to apply by Tuesday 31 October 2023 for the best chance of getting a place at their preferred school. This applies to all children moving from primary to secondary school, or middle to upper school in September 2023.

Finding the right school place for your child is important for any parent/carer. [The admissions pages](#) will provide you with all the information you need to apply, and you can also check out our [parents' guide](#) for information about the different types of schools and the way to apply to each one.

### **School application deadlines:**

If your child is due to start secondary or upper school in September 2024, you should [apply now](#) to avoid disappointment. Parents/Carers must apply by **31 October 2023**.

If you're not able to apply [online](#) you can download a Word document from the [admissions pages](#) or contact the School Admissions Team on 01305 221060, or email:[admissions@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:admissions@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

For further information or SE Purbeck Ward queries, please contact

**Cllr Cherry Brooks**

[cllrcherry.brooks@dorset.gov.uk](mailto:cllrcherry.brooks@dorset.gov.uk)

07512897908