

Monthly bulletin from Dorset Council March 2020

Dear Clerks, Chairman & Members,

Please find some news from Dorset Council for March or can I say “Spring”, I realise I’ve sent additional updates in “Real Time” already this month, and a bout of “man flu” has prevented me from attending a couple of your meetings, but remember in these uncertain times “Sneezes spread diseases” and I’m not taking any risks with your health!

As ever if there are ward issues that require my attention or input, please don’t feel the need to wait until our next meeting of your Council.

Kind regards,

Cllr. Graham Carr-Jones:

Ward Member Stalbridge & Marnhull

Cabinet Member Housing & Community Safety.

Have your say on our draft Housing Allocation Policy

Dorset Council is drafting a new policy looking at how people access social housing in the area. The new policy will come into effect on 1 April 2021 and aims to:

offer people seeking accommodation a choice about where they live

be fair and easy to use offer solutions to those most in need while making the best use of the housing stock available

It will replace the Christchurch and East Dorset Joint Housing Allocation Policy and the Dorset Homechoice Common Allocation Policy.

The policy proposes some changes that might affect people currently on the housing register in Dorset.

Much of the content of the policy is set by law, but there are some key areas which the council can decide, such as: Who can apply to be on the register.

How to prioritise applications

How many bedrooms to allocate to a household

How to support homelessness applications

In completing this first draft the council created a cross party elected member panel from all the former district council areas. The panel looked at all the current policies as well as best practice from across the country to create this draft version.

[Find out more and complete our survey.](#)

The consultation is now live and runs until Monday 25 May.

Paper copies of the survey are available from your local council office or library.

Green light given for residential care home and accommodation for young care leavers

Dorset Council’s Cabinet approved plans to build a new residential care home, contact centre, activity space and residential accommodation for children and young people in the county.

Two sites are earmarked in the outline plans. One will be a purpose-built residential care home with a contact centre and activity space for children and young people who are being looked after by the local authority.

The second site, a 13-unit building will be refurbished to provide residential accommodation for young people who are leaving the care of the council and who will be able to live independently.

There is a lack of suitable accommodation and care provision in Dorset, something that needs to be addressed. Currently, much of the children's residential care provision is out of county, costly and not good for our children and young people.

The council is committed to making sure that all children and young people in Dorset have the best chance in life, with outcomes that are relevant to them. We know that this is most likely to happen in a family setting, so we're focusing on recruiting more foster carers across the county.

However, we also know that many children who are looked after by the council have complex needs, which is why we're investing in this support.

It will also put an end to all use of unregistered settings, meaning the highest level of standards can be maintained to look after children and young people in the county. The Government is introducing new legislation. There has been a lot of coverage nationally about unregistered and unregulated settings in recent weeks and Dorset is making sure it's ahead of the curve to put a stop to this.

Free arts activities for people living with dementia or mental health conditions

Free creative activities are on offer to vulnerable people in Dorset as part of a pilot scheme. My Creative Life is an innovative new programme set up by The Arts Development Company to bring free arts experiences to those living with dementia or mental health conditions.

The programme gives a choice of different creative activities for people to take part in outside of usual day care settings.

The events and creative workshop courses aim to combat isolation and loneliness, lack of confidence, low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. Locally events are in **Stalbridge, Sturminster Newton Shillingstone**. Check the web link for further details:

<http://theartsdevelopmentcompany.org.uk/my-creative-life/>

School Admissions

Most students, more than 98 per cent, have been offered their first choice of secondary or upper school. A total of 97.7 per cent of pupils due to start secondary school (Year 7) have been offered their first choice. For those starting upper school (Year 9), 99.9 per cent have been given a place at their preferred school.

This is an increase on 2019, when 96.9 per cent of students gained their first choice.

Parents and carers will be able to log onto their online account from 9:30am to see the outcome of their application. Letters have also been sent and will arrive on or soon after 2 March.

Dorset Council processed a total of 3,499 applications from Dorset residents. Online applications increased again this year. A total of 95.8 per cent of people applied digitally.

Dorset's £4.3 million to boost rural mobile connectivity

A bid led by Dorset Council has been awarded £4.335m to help understand how rural communities could benefit from next generation mobile connectivity. A consortium of council, local, national and international partners plans to show that mobile infrastructure can be delivered cost effectively and sensitively to benefit rural businesses and communities.

The Dorset project is one of seven across the UK to be funded by the Government's Rural Connected Communities competition over the next two years.

The total cost of the 5G Rural Dorset initiative is £6.675m with the council contributing £150,000. The rest will come from industry and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Four trials in the county will look at innovative public, social and business uses of improved mobile coverage. They will test whether this connectivity can be delivered cheaper and quicker using existing masts, buildings and fibre wherever possible to minimise visual and other impacts on communities.

Agri-tech – new wireless technology on existing masts and fibre owned and operated by internet service provider Wessex Internet to allow innovative agricultural uses. These may include ‘smart’ farm controls, crop and livestock monitoring and using drones to spray more precisely and minimise chemical run-off into local water courses.

Lulworth Estate – new mobile services to unlock social and commercial benefits. These will include Vodafone bringing enhanced mobile phone coverage to the area for locals and the 1 million visitors who visit each year. Additional possible uses from tourism and education to healthcare will be considered.

Connected coast – improved safety along a section of the coast by upgrading access to digital communications for first responders and supporting organisations.

5G Innovation Accelerator – at Dorset Innovation Park, Winfrith. This Local Enterprise Zone and advanced-engineering centre already supports large and small companies that develop innovative connected products and services. New connectivity will support businesses operating in the county and across the supply chain to test and develop products in a collaborative and secure way.

Could you be our Bournemouth Digital Champion?

We are urgently seeking a ‘digitally savvy, people person’ with up to four hours a week free to join our Bourne Digital project team as a volunteer Digital Champion.

This vital role will help underemployed and unemployed people in Bournemouth gain the digital skills they need to get into training or enter the workplace.

Digital exclusion is a rising national issue: 11.3 million UK adults lack at least one digital skill and 4.3 million people have no digital skills. In Dorset around 21% of people are not confident using the internet – that’s around 150,000 people across Dorset and 70,000 of these have never been online.

Age and background for this role don’t matter – but experience, commitment and a willingness to connect with adults who need independent support is essential.

You will act as an adult friend and adviser and meet regularly with digital learners in Bournemouth to teach them the digital skills they need, help them gain confidence and belief in themselves and set them on the path to start training or enter the working world.

Perhaps recently retired from a public focused career or maybe a student at University you are very comfortable with all things digital yourself and want to make a difference to others. It’s a long-term relationship so a commitment of a year, of up to 4 hours a week is needed. There will be good opportunities to gain experience in a wide range of skills and a reference can be provided.

The role is part of an exciting new project called Bourne Digital which is part of Power Up, an initiative by Good Things Foundation, with the financial support of J.P Morgan.

The volunteers will be recruited, trained and supported through a digital inclusion project based at Dorset Council. Training will be provided to help you in this role and expenses will be paid.

Please ring us for an informal chat about the role: Lyndsey Trinder, Digital Dorset (Monday – Thursday) on 01305 225174 or Penny Syddall, Digital Dorset (Monday – Friday) on 01305 225065 or leave a message with contact details. Email digitalchampions@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk with your full contact details and we will send you the job description and person specification.