

Dorset Council, West Purbeck, April 2020 Report

Coronavirus

The Council is prioritising its workforce to help the most vulnerable in society who may be finding life difficult at the moment. We can add nothing further to the advice that is being issued by the Government and would urge people to watch the news for the latest developments. There is a great deal of advice on how people can protect themselves online at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

Tax on Empty properties

Most people will be aware that we have a very major housing shortage in Dorset. At our recent full Council meeting we approved a variety of incentives designed to encourage people with houses not to leave them empty for long periods of time thereby bringing them back into the Housing market. One of the approved initiatives relates to long-term empty properties incurring an increase in council tax. Councillors approved, in addition to the existing premium on properties empty for more than two years to charge a council tax premium of 200%, effective from 1 April 2020, if the dwelling has been unoccupied and unfurnished for at least 5 years and to charge a council tax premium of 300%, effective from 1 April 2021, if the dwelling has been unoccupied and unfurnished for at least 10 years. At the date of writing this article, there are approximately 176 properties that have been empty for at least two years.

Broadband

I have informed BTOpenreach that we are very dissatisfied with their service and I will be talking to our MPs and hopefully to a Minister to try to get a greater appreciation of the difficulties with communications in our rural areas and to get government to provide greater support to Dorset. We are left with little real alternative to BT for Broadband installation, so we need to put real pressure on them. Please email me with any examples you may have, and I will pass them on where I can.

Domestic Abuse

We have been awarded nearly £1Million to address Domestic abuse.

The funding has been awarded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to continue work focused on early intervention and education, breaking down barriers faced by those in our most hard to reach communities and support people experiencing domestic abuse and keep them safe in their homes. Since starting, the project has already trained more than 170 champions across Dorset, made nearly 100 homes safer and increased awareness across health services and the community. Anyone who is experiencing domestic abuse can contact the confidential, free 24-hour helpline on 0800 032 5204 or by visiting www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dvahelp

The Asian Hornet

They are an unwelcome invader they will eat all kinds of pollinators, but their favourite food is honeybees. They also have a very nasty sting. The Asian Hornet is about the size of a wasp. They are dark black/brown with an orange band on the fourth segment of their abdomen, they have yellow legs and an orange face, their wings are slightly longer than their body. The queens will come out of hibernation in the next two months and start laying eggs in nests which can be found in towns and the countryside. Sightings of the Asian hornet should be reported to

alernnonnative@ceh.ac.uk with details of the location and a photo of the insect. A bee inspector will be come out to verify the sighting and call in a team to eradicate the nest.

Peer Review

We recently completed a Peer review where a small team of members and officers from across the country reviewed our services and our ambitions. We were very pleased to report that they are pleased with our progress to date and the attached links give details of the issues they suggest we should explore and also the action plan we have developed in response to their findings. This has been shared and agreed with all members.

Link to Peer Challenge Feedback Report - <https://moderngov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/s17910/2020-01-28-cabinet-peer-challenge-appendix1-feedback-report.pdf>

Link to Peer Challenge Action Plan - <https://moderngov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/s17911/2020-01-28-cabinet-peer-challenge-appendix2-action-plan.pdf>

Dorset Plan on a Page

For those of you with access the attached file is the agreed “plan on a page” for the Dorset Council which will shape all our service plans and budgets for the next 5 years.



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Surgery

We frequently and happily hold meetings with our constituents at a time and place that is mutually convenient to one or other of us. However, for the moment, we are restricting our meetings to a minimum, however we would be delighted to ring and talk to you. We will respond to any email or telephone request. Please ring or email us with the subject matter so that we can prepare ourselves. Peter’s email address is peterwharf@hotmail.com telephone 07986600799 and Laura’s is cllrlaura.miller@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk telephone 07814 569563.

Peter Wharf & Laura Miller, Dorset Councillors for West Purbeck