

Cllr Christopher's E-mailed Report – 27 June 2022

A short interim report.

It was good to meet with you and Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner David Sidwick last week.

This week sees the first face to face Local Government Association Conference since 2019.

I will be contacting Dorset councillors Spencer Flower and Ray Bryan for an update on Trailway matters on their return from the LGA Conference.

One of the items that may exercise the mind of attendees at the LGA conference is the income to be received by HMG from electric cars.

I say this as I understand that HMG presently receives some £35 billion from motorists annually and the yield from the taxes is set to reduce as the UK transitions to electric vehicles.

Road pricing is much discussed and can cut congestion,
It is interesting that the Transport Select Committee recommended that HMG set up an arm's length body to make proposals for a national road user charging system by the end of 2022.

The levelling up and Regeneration bill envisages that greater weight will be given to Local Authority local development plans where 5-year housing criteria have been met and the plan is up to date.

It is also interesting to learn of the intention to have mandatory infrastructure levy requirements.

The Social Housing Regulation Bill envisages the larger social housing providers facing regular inspections and unlimited fines.

There has been much coverage of plans to extend Right to buy to housing association tenants . This might help more people to own their own homes but at the expenses of more reductions in the number of affordable social houses (homes!).

Reducing the leaching of nitrates and phosphates into protected rivers, wetlands and streams and coastal habits in England and Wales has become a popular topic, especially so since a European Court of Justice decision in 2018 which determined that new development should not have a significant effect on any designated nature conservation site.

At the same time the Environment Agency are I understand looking to recruit some 50 officers to undertake farm inspections to assess phosphate problems associated with agriculture on a farm by farm basis.

The last day of the LGA conference is also the first day of the Devon County Show
Secretary of State George Eustace is scheduled to speak.

Act early with Cost of Living help

People who wouldn't usually ask for help are being encouraged to reach out for support early as the cost of living rises. Cost of Living Help is a new webpage which puts advice and support on money, access to food, housing, support for children, mental health and wellbeing and employment, all in one place.

Read the full story on how Dorset Council is working with its partners to signpost people to the right place to meet their circumstances.

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Residents who wouldn't usually ask for help are being encouraged to reach out for support early as the cost of living rises and Dorset Council is working with its partners to signpost people to the right place to meet their circumstances.

While many people who have needed help before may be confident reaching out to government services and voluntary organisations for support, the cost of living is now impacting people who may not know where to start.

Cost of Living Help is a new webpage from the council which puts advice and support on money, access to food, housing, support for children, mental health and wellbeing and employment, all in one place. People can check if they're eligible for benefits, free school meals, low tariffs for their utilities, and charitable grant schemes. There's also advice on housing and employment.

Specialist help is also available over the phone, in person and online from Dorset Citizens Advice. The council is working with Dorset Citizens Advice who provide specialist help on the phone, in person and online. Citizens Advice provides free, confidential and impartial advice on money, consumer, housing and other issues and is available for everyone.

Older residents are being supported by Age UK (North, South and West Dorset), which the council also works with, to ensure older people can access advice and financial help. Those in fuel poverty (spending over 10 per cent of their household income on energy costs) or on a low income, can apply for supermarket vouchers. There is an online application form or help completing the form can be obtained from the council's Digital Champions. Visit Household Support Fund for more details and the application form.

Cllr Laura Beddow, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Communities and Customer Services said: "We are once again pulling together with our partners at Citizens Advice, Age UK, Help and Kindness and all the foodbanks, community shops and community fridges, to put in place help where it is needed most.

"I understand it is a particularly worrying time for people who do not usually ask for help but now is the time to act. Our website provides links to a wide range of information and financial advice, so I urge people to start there. If you need to talk to someone there's links to telephone and text support too."

Daniel Cadisch, Chief Officer Citizens Advice Central Dorset said:

"It's vital people do not worry alone and instead get expert advice and support early to prevent problems getting out of hand. We can help with money worries including applying for benefits, managing unpaid bills and repayments and advise people on employment and housing matters. Our advice is free, impartial and confidential and available in person, online and over the phone. Call 0800 144 8848 or visit www.citizensadvisedorset.org.uk to find our offices around Dorset."

David Thorp, Chief Executive Officer for Age UK North, South and West Dorset, said:

"The cost of living is a particular worry for older people who typically have fixed, and often, very low incomes. Many older residents are already choosing food or fuel but there is help, including financial support, available to prevent this. We are working with Dorset Council to ensure older residents of Dorset have access to the advice and support they need, as well as the benefits they should be claiming."

To contact Age UK North, South and West Dorset visit www.ageuk.org.uk/northsouthwestdorset, email enquiries@ageuknswd.org.uk or call 01305 269444.

To contact Age UK in East Dorset, visit www.ageuk.org.uk/bournemouthpooleeastdorset, email enquiries@ageukbped.org.uk or call 01202 530530.

You can get advice and support for the cost of living at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/cost-of-living-help

Please let me know if you have concerns accessing this information.

Best regards

Simon

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