**DORSET COUNCILLORS REPORT FOR VALE OF ALLEN PC**

**TUESDAY 9th MARCH 2021**

**Council budget 2021/21**

The full council annual budget meeting took place on the 16th February. Every year budget setting has become more challenging and 2021/22 is certainly no exception. The twin uncertainties of a one-year settlement and the serious short to medium impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has created shortfalls in funding which have had a real impact on the revenue budget and on our ability to maintain discretionary services, which are very visible and valued by our residents. Increasing pressures in the needs-based services - Adults and Children's Social Care - has created the greatest challenge. We have a balanced budget for the next council year, which depends on increasing council tax and ensuring that the transformation of services moves forward at pace.

There was overwhelming support across the chamber for the proposals as set out (agenda and reports all available on the council website). Recommendations included an increase in general council tax of 1.997%, and to levy 2.995% as the social care precept. The direct effect of this is that council tax was set at £1779.39 for a band D property. Added to this of course will be the police precept at £255.58, the fire authority figure at £77.88, and last but not least, the local parish/town council precept. In the Vale of Allen group the parish precepts vary between £23.27 and £30.23 and should be added to this to make the grand total for a band D property – for information range £2136.12 to £2143.08. Council Tax bills for 2021/22 are being sent out from the 8th March.

**COVID-19 update**

We have continued to see a fall in local COVID case rates, hospitalisations, and deaths over the past week.  
  
The situation in Dorset has improved thanks to the hard work of local people following the rules - every action makes a difference. We have seen over the past few months how quickly the situation can change so we must carry on working together to drive transmission down even further. We are still in a national lockdown and everyone must continue to follow the rules and stay at home except for essential reasons.

**Stay at home and stay local** - only leave your home where necessary. The stay at home restrictions will be in place until at least 29 March.

**Travel to vaccination appointments safely**

Over a quarter of a million local people have had at least one dose of the vaccination! This is great news that more and more people across Dorset are getting their vaccine and we are aware that many residents in the priority groups will be anxious to get their appointment when offered. Please remember, the safest way for someone to get to their vaccination appointment is to travel in their own car or with someone from their support bubble. If this is not possible, then COVID-secure taxis are a good option.

If you are thinking of offering to help by taking someone from outside of your household or support bubble, please think twice. COVID-19 can spread easily in a car – remember around one in three people with COVID do not show any symptoms, so you could have it without knowing and spread it to others.

**Do you, or anyone you know, need support?**

If you don’t have family, friends or a support network that can help you get the things you need [we can help you](https://dorsetcouncil.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=c39535cf4f9d1ca66af8d2b44&id=a0e499c702&e=57a7a98ffc)– complete our online form on the Dorset Council website alternatively telephone 01305 221000.

**Testing update**

Public Health Dorset, on behalf of Dorset Council, have set up a Dorset Rapid Community Programme for local business employees who cannot work from home due to the public facing nature of their role. 463 businesses and organisations have already registered and getting testing under this service.

Businesses and organisations open under current government restrictions and employing fewer than 50 people (including the self-employed) should register their interest in weekly lateral flow device testing. Employees must sign up to six weeks of testing.

Full information about this initiative can be found here

<https://dorset-self.achieveservice.com/service/Community-Rapid-Testing>

**Organisational Revenue Support Fund**

A number of voluntary and community sector organisations across Dorset will benefit from funding support in the coming new financial year.

From 1st April 2021, 17 organisations will be supported with up to three years funding, locally these include Walford Mill, East Dorset Heritage Trust and Wimborne Minster Folk Festival. For full details follow the link.

[**https://news.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/2021/02/25/voluntary-and-community-organisations-boost**](https://news.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/2021/02/25/voluntary-and-community-organisations-boost)

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**Cllr Robin Cook 9th March 2021**

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