

Parish Report for April 2021

Jill Haynes Chalk Valley Ward. Dorset Council

The third Lockdown seems to have had the right effect in Dorset and the figures for the last week in April were 11.5 per 100K in the Dorset Council area. There was sadly one death and four people were in hospital. The rate continues to fall week on week through the month. Social distancing still needs to be maintained but the measures are gradually being relaxed. The government ruling that no longer allows councils to hold virtual meetings is very unsatisfactory. We simply do not have the spaces to have appropriate social distancing. For example, the large auditorium which is the county hall council chamber can only have 18 people socially distanced. For a cabinet meeting there are some 25/30 people without any members of the public so it looks as if we will have to have the 9 Cabinet members in one room and a video link to officers and clerks possibly a third room for the public. Wembley stadium isn't big enough for the full council!!

In Children's services there are some very positive results coming through from the new transformation work with children and their families. The numbers of children in the council's care, including foster children, has fallen from 525 before Christmas to 442 this month. Dorset Council purchased a private school, St Marys, in December. The school is based on the Dorset /Wiltshire border near Shaftesbury. After an 8 week consultation the council has been given the go ahead to turn the school into a centre of excellence for children with special educational needs. The school has superb facilities and is ready to go with virtually no alterations. This will give the council the opportunity to provide for these children locally and we hope to bring many of those who are educated out of county, and who have to travel very long distances for their special educational needs, into the school. Providing this in-house setting should make considerable savings for the council as the out of county private provision is extremely expensive. In some cases, as much as £15k per week for a child.

Dorset Council has just opened up a new Community and Culture fund the link for the grants is here [Community and Culture Project Fund - Dorset Council](#) Please share this as widely as possible in your community. There are some quite strict criteria so please read all the documentation through before making an application.

As the virtual meeting stop on 7th May the Full council meeting has been brought back to the evening of 4th May. Unfortunately five of my parishes are also having their meetings on this night too so I am sorry that I will not be able to be with you but please email me if you have any queries

Let's hope it gets a bit warmer soon! Best wishes, Jill