Dorset Councillor report April -May 2025

As Spring is in full flow and the weather has cheered up, we can get complacent about Nature. However the last month without rain has dried the heath and forest out greatly. There have been fires in Studland and Upton and Canford Heath. Wareham forest is very vulnerable, fire breaks have been scoured out along the roads to help prevent any fires spreading and the Forestry workers have been 'mulching the Rhododendrons to open out the glades among the trees. But we must still be vigilant and be prepared to spot and report any fires. **FireWise** is a group which gives advice and support to householders who may be at risk. If you think your community would benefit from being part of Firewise, contact the Dorset Heaths Partnership on 01202 642787 or email **firewiseuk@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

A PSPO is an order which bans open fires and BBQs in an area. There is one in place for Wareham Forest since the big fire of 2020 but a draft order is proposed to covers areas of forest and heathland in more parishes.

Dimmer is good? Have you found that some new cars have headlights which dazzle and confuse at night? There has been much discussion at Dorset Council over the brightness of new LED streetlights installed in many areas. At the time of installation the blue spectrum bright lights were recommended, now the advice is that the bright blue tinted lights can alter sleep patterns for residents possibly increasing health problems. Harm is also caused to nocturnal wildlife Moths Bats and Mammals leading to poor feeding and breeding patterns, probably contributing to the ecological crisis. The light spectrum of LED lighting can be changed and any new street lights are likely to be reduced to a 'Warm White'. Some car manufacturers have been warned about the overbright headlights. It is worth us all thinking about reducing the outside lighting around our houses, and using shades to control upward glare. Dark skies allow us to watch the stars, and nature to have a rest from our activities.

Dorset Council is trying to extend help for families working with other Agencies and Charities. Working families in Dorset can now benefit from extended childcare hours, thanks to funding provided to schools for before and after school childcare. Local primary schools and childcare providers, such as activity clubs, preschools and nurseries are offering new or expanded before and after school childcare hours. This is also known as wraparound childcare. Family Hubs such as at Wareham Youth club are gathering all child based agencies and projects together, so it is easier to find information. Pineapple Project for example is extending to Lytchett Minster School, Find out through the LAG Find out more at https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/news/more-families-will-benefit-from-wraparound-childcare

Great to see Dorset Council working closely through local alliance groups to help community groups, schools, and volunteer organisations! Funding is now available to kick-start projects that empower local young people. Whether applying as an individual (up to £5,000) or in partnership (up to £20,000), each project can make a real impact. 🚀 💡
Find out more and apply at https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/lag-funding-for-projects-25-26

Housing . The newly active Housing board is a task and finish group working on new ways to provide temporary homes , through leasing empty homes from private landlords for subletting on short term tenancies to homeless families, in order to clear the backlog of families in Bed & Breakfast. We are also revising our policy for bringing long term empty private homes back in use and working on ideas to start providing effective Council housing.
The Bus Shelter Project now has several self-contained rental units in Weymouth for single homeless who can move on from the Bus Shelter(converted Double decker bus) where they have to learn to budget- pay rent – organise themselves.
My inbox is largely to do with housing issues and queries about Dorsets Green agenda .