

With respect to the workforce of Dorset Council they are clearly impacted by the lockdown . One practical example is where a Dorset Council employee has children and there are child care issues schools and even playgroups having closed. In such circumstances childcare is very much shared between spouses or partners. The result is an increase in what you might call flexi time and inspection of bridges footpaths etc may happen at times which may change at short notice. All of this is totally fair enough and understandable provided the work is done. If there are concerns re highways issues I want to see this addressed straight away. There are rare occasions when major work is required. This may involve more complicated consideration of how the work is done and quotes obtained from specialist firms.

The roll out of the vaccine continues and the reaction of those I speak with is very largely that this is very well organised. Covid support grants have again been paid out for the third lockdown and on an automatic basis according to Government rules. Such grants are what I call very much premises based ie where businesses are not able to open their premises, while there are other business people who have been impacted through loss of work , work cancelled etc

Work is continuing in relation to the declared climate emergency and also to improve broadband. I point out for example the difficulty parish councillors have due to poor broadband. I have again contacted relevant councillors at Dorset Council and officers tasked with producing improvements.

I have requested improvements from our MP and will be contacting the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Broadband and MP for North Devon Selaine Saxby

I am conscious of how long people are spending in our local hospitals, not helped by the fact that the availability of carers is at such a premium

During the month I attended the meeting of the local WATAG group, who wish to promote improvements in public transport bus and rail primarily. I have known the chair of WATAG for a great many years and look to continue to be a channel of communication between the group and Dorset Council Officers and Transport portfolio holders and our employees.

There are considerable delays with Local Authority land charges searches and I have been corresponding with both the Leader and Chief Executive to resolve matters.

Finally the money!

You will have read the wide coverage that has been given to the financial difficulties that Local Authorities face and the impending impact on the level of Council tax I will be pleased to answer your questions at the meeting . This will reasonably include Local Government reorganisation being so quickly followed by the pandemic , issues around non council tax income being impacted and the need to take a realistic approach to building etc inherited from predecessor councils whilst having the central objectives to preserve services and look forward to a post Covid world of economic growth and prosperity