

Beacon Ward ANNUAL Report to Parishes

Dorset Council

Cllr Jane Somper

DECEMBER 2025 – JANUARY 2026

Household Recycling Centres Changes to Access

You will remember that it was announced earlier this Autumn that the Household Recycling Centre in Shaftesbury would require residents to book a slot online from October before attending with their items for recycling rather than turning up.

This has not yet come in to force there appears to be some ‘technical’ issues!!

Planning Enforcement

The council has a Development Management Local Enforcement Plan in place, which sets out how planning breaches are handled. The aim is always to resolve issues through negotiation first, wherever possible. This is set out in law.

It is important to note that although someone may breach planning regulations, this does not always mean they have committed a criminal offence. Planning enforcement is discretionary, and the council must act proportionately when deciding how to respond.

Some inconsistencies have been found across different area teams. However, officers now have access to a range of high-tech tools and often receive photographic evidence from the public, meaning a site visit is not always needed at the start. This helps officers contact individuals more quickly before deciding whether a visit is necessary.

A public Section 188 register will soon go live online for ward members. It will show the notices that have been issued, the locations involved, and the requirements for each case. This should be available within the next six months. Elected members will also receive a login to check whether an enforcement notice exists for a particular address. This will help us respond to enquiries more effectively and keep parish councils updated.

The North Dorset team is currently managing around 191 live cases, while the Minerals and Waste team separately handles about 40 cases. Officers use a set of clear priority criteria to determine which cases require immediate action. This helps streamline and speed up the overall enforcement process.

Residents can report planning enforcement concerns online using the council’s webform [Planning enforcement - Dorset Council](#) or by emailing planningenforcement@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk. If someone does not wish to make a formal complaint themselves, particularly because their identity could become public in the event of a court case, a concern can instead be raised by the Parish Clerk or by me on their behalf.

Renters Rights Act 2025

The Renters Rights Act 2025 is a major piece of reform committed to strengthening the rights of tenants in private sector housing and imposing greater obligations on landlords on respect of rented homes. The act passed royal assent on 27th October 25 and will be introduced in phases.

Phase 1 – From 1-5-2026

From this date there will be the removal of section 21 – so called “no fault” evictions. All tenancies will become periodic. There will be reform of possession grounds to make it fairer to both parties. Reform includes:

Ban on bidding wars for properties.

Landlords cannot discriminate against renters who have children or who are on benefits.

Landlords must consider requests to keep a pet.

Only one rent increase per year will be permitted.

There must be a written tenancy agreement.

Rent cannot be requested in advance.

Two other changes come into force in phase 1 To ensure all notices to quit provide reasonable time to find alternative accommodation, and there will be stronger protection against “back door” evictions. There will be enforcement powers of up to £40K without prosecution and this will be administered by councils housing teams.

Phase 2 of the act is expected to come into force in 2028. This will roll out a compulsory database of all landlords and include contact details, property information and details of safety checks. A new private sector rented housing ombudsman will be appointed.

Phase 3 – no date for implementation as yet but will set out response times for landlords to remedy property condition complaints. It is also expected that Decent Home Standards will be applied to all private rented properties.

It is anticipated that there will be considerable extra workload for the councils housing team to enforce the act but yet there is no additional funding to deliver the legislation.

Layers of Bureaucracy

In recent months and week there has been a lot of talk of devolution and a possible combined authority with Dorset joining Somerset and Wiltshire. There are several issues with this situation, firstly Swindon is refusing to join and it wants to be part of a grouping being more London centric, so Central Gov are not happy about a split area. This is one of the reasons that the grouping has not been put forward as one of the combined authorities in the first tranche to be agreed. Secondly the Government are insisting a combined authority would need a directly elected mayor introducing another layer of bureaucracy creating top-heavy. There are also discussions from DAPTC about Dorset Council devolving powers to towns and parishes giving them increased responsibilities. I feel that certainly in my smaller parishes there is very little appetite to take on more commitments and even less for forming local area boards centred

around our larger towns. With any funding given to the boards requiring a bidding process there could be a bias to the larger towns with greater capacity to write bids and just another, dare I say, “talking shop” for the smaller parishes to attend.

For any ward work, please contact me at CllrJane.Somper@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk.