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DORSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 15 OCTOBER 2020

Present: Cllrs Tony Alford, Jon Andrews, Mike Barron, Richard Biggs, Cherry Brooks, Dave Bolwell, Alex Brenton, Piers Brown, Graham Carr-Jones, Simon Christopher, Kelvin Clayton, Robin Cook, Janet Dover, Jean Dunseith, Matthew Hall, Paul Harrison, Sherry Jespersen, Carole Jones, Stella Jones, Andrew Kerby, Rebecca Knox, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Howard Legg, Robin Legg, Jon Orrell, Andrew Parry, Mary Penfold, Bill Pipe, Byron Quayle, Molly Rennie, Maria Roe, Jane Somper, Clare Sutton, David Taylor, David Tooke, Daryl Turner, Kate Wheller, Sarah Williams, John Worth, Jill Haynes, Mike Dyer, Mike Parkes (Vice-Chairman), Ryan Hope, Rob Hughes, Tony Ferrari, Beryl Ezzard, Andrew Starr, Derek Beer, David Walsh, Cathy Lugg, David Gray, Toni Coombs, Gill Taylor, Barry Goringe, Pete Barrow, Brian Heatley, Ryan Holloway, Pauline Batstone, Tim Cook, Nick Ireland, Andy Canning, Paul Kimber, Laura Miller, David Morgan, Louie O'Leary, Ray Bryan, Shane Bartlett, Val Potheary (Chairman), Belinda Ridout, Julie Robinson, Spencer Flower, David Shortell, Susan Cocking, Gary Suttle, Roland Tarr, Simon Gibson, Bill Trite, Les Fry, Peter Wharf and Rod Adkins

Apologies: Cllrs Emma Parker and Mark Roberts

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Susan Dallison (Democratic Services Manager), Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), Hayley Caves (Member Development and Support Officer), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Jacqui Andrews (Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services), Vivienne Broadhurst (Interim Executive Director - People Adults), Grace Evans (Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), Andy Frost (Community Safety and Drug Action Manager) and Theresa Leavy (Executive Director of People - Children)

19. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2020 were confirmed and would be signed by the Chairman at a date in the future.

20. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

21. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman reported on the death of Hon Alderman Andy Hutchings, who had served on the former Weymouth & Portland Borough Council. She paid tribute to him and his service to Dorset.

A minutes silence was held as a mark of respect.

22. Public Participation - Questions and Statements

Public questions, statements and the responses from the Leader of the Council and appropriate Portfolio Holders are set out in Appendix 1 attached to these minutes.

23. Public participation - petitions and deputations

There were no petitions or deputations.

24. Announcements and Reports from the Leader of Council and Cabinet Members

The Leader of the Council reported on a number of important matters which shaped council policy and direction of travel for the delivery of vital front-line services. He referred to the continuing budget pressures largely caused by the impact of COVID -19 and the need for further transformation following the creation of Dorset Council.

The Leader of the Council also updated members on a number of matters and reported:-

- that Cabinet had approved the draft Action Plan covering the period leading up to the council being carbon neutral by 2040.
- on the challenges and service pressures the council faced in preparation of the 2021-2022 budget.
- that the team at Public Health continued to monitor the situation following the increase in COVID case number in the area and stressed the importance to be vigilant and advised that the situation continued to be monitored locally
- on the work of the COVID Recovery and Reset and the Dorset Local Plan EAP's.

Following the last meeting of council, the Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services advised that she would investigate issues around missed domestic waste collection in and around the Wareham area and report back to this meeting. She reported that following a recruitment process, appointments had been made and new staff would be starting shortly. In addition following problems with vehicles having mechanical breakdowns, a number of replacement vehicles had now been ordered. She was now satisfied that appropriate steps had been taken to resolve the issues raised about the service in the Wareham area.

However so that members could better understand local issues and meet with depot supervisors, the Portfolio Holder was setting up a number of virtual meetings. She urged members to attend these sessions.

25. Questions from Councillors

Questions put by councillors to the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holders are attached to these minutes at Appendix 2, together with the responses.

Responding to a supplementary question from Cllr Ireland, the Portfolio Holder for Planning confirmed that the council must deliver a 5 year land supply to meet the needs of the community. However, it was important to provide the right type of land for housing within the right area. Work to meet this need continued.

26. Community Safety Plan 2020-2023

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Community Safety set out the recommendation from Cabinet. He reported that the Community Safety Partnership was required to produce a three year Community Safety Plan that was revised annually. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that Dorset Council was under a legal duty to work with the responsible authorities to identify and tackle community safety issues in its area and recommended the Plan for adoption.

In response to questions, the Portfolio Holder agreed to look at including method to measure progress including targets and timescales within the body any future Plan document.

It was proposed by Cllr G Carr-Jones seconded by Cllr B Pipe

Decision

That the Community Plan for 2020-23 be adopted.

27. Approval of Youth Justice Plan 2020-21

In proposing the Annual Youth Justice Plan for approval, the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help advised that the plan had been considered and supported by both People & Health Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

The recommendation was seconded by Cllr J Somper

Decision

That the Youth Justice Plan for 2020-21 be approved.

28. Children and Young People and Families' Plan 2020 - 2023

Prior to considering the report, a short film was played in which children and young people gave their views on what they'd like to see in Dorset to make it a great place to live. This was used to inform the new Children, Young People and Families Plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Change, who Chaired the panel for Strategic Alliance for Children and Young People, introduced the work of the panel and proposed the adoption of the Plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help seconded the adoption of the Plan which had identified priorities through needs analysis, an initial workshop and a series of think tanks. He asked the council to support its adoption.

Members welcomed and spoke in support the plan before them and the focus on improving outcomes for all children and young people through the six priorities detailed within the plan. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that in respect of the needs of care leavers, the council wanted to ensure that it could continue support their transition into adulthood.

Decision

That the Children, Young People and Families Plan 2020-23 be adopted.

29. Climate Change Notice of Motion

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment reported that he had intended to present a report on the Climate Change Notice of Motion. However, upon reflection, he considered the timings to be inappropriate and the item should be deferred.

Responding to the Motion at this time would result in a debate and potentially a decision being made around the climate strategy itself. This would not be appropriate at this time, as the public consultation had not yet started on the draft Strategy and Action Plan. Feedback from the consultation would help finalise the plan. Therefore it was not appropriate to discuss the report at this time.

30. Urgent items

There were no urgent items to report.

31. Exempt Business

There were no exempt reports.

Appendix 1 - Public Participation Q&A's
Appendix 2 Councillor Q&A's

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 8.55 pm

Chairman

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**Full Council
15 October 2020
Public Participation**

Question 1

Submitted by: Geoffrey Chopping

The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government produced a white paper entitled PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE in August 2020. The paper suggests some radical proposals to reform the planning process, in order to speed up the planning process, with land being classified as: Growth Areas; Renewal Areas; and Protected Areas.

Six paragraphs within the paper mention the Green Belt. It is clear, from those 6 paragraphs, that it is the intention of the Government that the Green Belt should be excluded from consideration as land for development.

The width of the green belt between Wimborne and Furzehill was approximately halved in 2014. The white paper proposes that the quantity and allocation of new housing, would be decided by an algorithm, (sometimes called the mutant planning algorithm) which proposes a large increase in development in the Dorset Council area. According to the current analysis by Lichfields, this is an increase of 41.7% on the current local plan annual requirement of 1464 rising to 2075 by the proposed new standard method.

Will Dorset Council accept the government proposal, that Green Belt Land should be protected from development, and consequently will Dorset Council confirm that current Green Belt areas, within Dorset and in particular around Wimborne and near Furzehill, will be classified as Protected Areas, where development is restricted, as stated on page 20 of the white paper?

Response by Councillor David Walsh

The proposed changes to the national planning system have been published for consultation and the council's response to the consultation was considered at the October meeting of Cabinet.

Green belt is strongly protected under current national and local planning policy, and this is expected to continue under the new system. It is however possible to amend the boundaries through the local plan process if there are exceptional circumstances to justify it, and this would be considered through the preparation of the local plan, including public consultation.

We do not yet know whether the White Paper proposals will be changed as a result of the consultation before they are implemented. But if the proposals are

implemented as set out, the council will need to meet a binding housing target, and will need to identify sufficient land as growth or renewal areas to meet that target. This land will need to be in locations that minimise the distances that people need to travel to meet their everyday needs.

It would be premature to commit now to the inclusion of specific pieces of land into any of the three categories. But consultation would take place at the start of the process to enable people to make proposals as to which category they believe certain areas of land should be in.

In relation to housing numbers and the standard methodology for calculating them, it is important to be aware that there are two separate government consultations that have taken place recently.

One of these sets out interim changes to the current national methodology for calculating housing numbers. These would need to be used before the White Paper changes come into effect, and it is these changes that result in the numbers that Lichfields have calculated and that Mr Chopping's question quotes. We will need to use these as the basis for progressing the local plan at the current time, but if the White Paper proposals come into effect then targets will be changed again.

The White Paper proposes that under the new system there would be binding housing targets. These would be based on a standard methodology, but one that takes account of environmental constraints as well as factors such as household forecasts, current housing stock and housing affordability. No further detail of this methodology has been published yet, but we expect there to be further consultation on it next year, and will make sure that we respond.

Question 2

Submitted by: Cllr Alistair Chisholm, Independent Councillor Dorchester Town Council

In what way, precisely, will the building of 4000 houses immediately beyond the water meadows of the river Frome north of Dorchester (a proposal very likely to feature in the Dorset Council Local Plan early in 2021) "enhance"* the landscape of Thomas Hardy's birth parish of Stinsford or, as he termed it in his writing, "Mellstock"?

- the word used by Turnberry, the consultants employed by the North Dorchester Consortium.

Response by Cllr David Walsh

The new local plan is still being developed: Cabinet is due to consider a draft consultation document in December, before widespread public consultation in the New Year. So I cannot at this stage give precise details of what will be in it.

The previous consultation carried out on the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland local plan, however, included the land north of Dorchester and set out a draft policy indicating a wide range of requirements for any potential development in this location. These included significant copse planting to break up the built form in views from the AONB; the provision of a local nature reserve at the water meadows; and creating opportunities for heritage-led tourism and greater interpretation and appreciation of the heritage assets of the area.

A detailed assessment of the implications for the heritage associated with the north of Dorchester area is currently being prepared. This will enable any development in this location to understand fully and respond positively to the historic environment.

It is good practice to seek environmental enhancements in association with new housing development. This now includes the national expectation of 'biodiversity net gain' which we would be requiring on this and other development sites in the emerging local plan.

Question 3

Submitted by: Cllr Alistair Chisholm, Independent Councillor Dorchester Town Council

Given that West Dorset's Member of Parliament, Chris Loder, is opposed to the development of 4000 houses immediately north of Dorchester, how will you use this fact to Dorset's advantage in the protection of its remaining rich biodiversity and the fight against climate change – neither of which would be advanced by slavish adherence to the government's inflated housing targets for the county?

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

If Dorset Council is to plan positively for the future of its area and retain control over future planning decisions, it is vital that we have an up to date local plan that provides sufficient land for new housing, as well as setting out our requirements for biodiversity, transport and infrastructure. Local plans are independently examined and must demonstrate that they are meeting national policy if they are to progress to adoption. At the moment, the national methodology for setting housing requirements is the starting point, which should be followed unless there are exceptional circumstances. Under the proposals in the government's planning white paper, however, nationally set housing numbers may become binding on local councils.

Sustainable development is the aim of the planning system and there is much that can be done to make sure that development minimises future climate

change. Development in sustainable locations where people can access jobs and services reducing the need to travel by car is critical, and will be a guiding principle in our local plan. This is why the larger settlements such as Dorchester, which already have a wide range of facilities, are being considered. Energy efficiency in new buildings is also vital, and national building regulations are being strengthened so as to achieve this.

Dorset has exceptional biodiversity and this is a very high priority when considering development potential. Areas such as the Dorset Heathlands receive the highest level of national protection and we have local policies to mitigate against any harm to them, through the provision of alternative recreation areas in conjunction with development. And all development will in future be expected to provide a net gain for biodiversity including through the provision of green infrastructure.

**Full Council
15 October 2020
Councillor Questions and Responses**

Question 1

Submitted by Cllr Louie O’Leary

As someone who was proudly born in a council house under the former Weymouth and Portland housing board I know that housing is one of the most important jobs of local government. I believe that since the decline in social housing stock due to Right to buy a policy I wholeheartedly support and the remainder being taken over by housing associations councils no longer have housing committees and as a result I believe councillors and residents who are social housing tenants feel more and more powerless over the vital service of social housing. Members often find that families with genuine housing needs and local connections are overlooked angering local residents and seeing a massive breakdown in traditional communities such as mine that are strongly based around social housing provision. Will the council commit to creating a housing committee once again where members can hold housing associations and relevant officers to account on this vital issue as well as supporting the creation of resident led tenants associations to give residents a voice. Taxpayers money built these houses something that should not be forgotten. We must bring accountability to housing and re-build trust between ratepayers, tenants, members and housing associations.

Response by Cllr Graham Carr-Jones

We have identified ‘Suitable Housing’ as one of the five key priorities within the Council’s Plan for 2020 to 2024. In the plan, we state very clearly that we will work with registered housing providers, community land trusts and local housing partners to deliver affordable, suitable and decent housing. Housing Associations and Registered Providers (RPs) of housing are vitally important partners to the council in the provision of suitable homes for our residents, and also contributing to strong, healthy, safe and thriving communities.

Locally active Housing Associations and Registered Providers are all closely engaged with council officers and Lead Members. This includes regular meetings to monitor all of the work they do in our area, including the management, letting and maintenance of their housing stock. This also includes important joint work to fund and provide new affordable homes. As portfolio holder for Housing, I am close to these important relationships with the key partners and work with officers to make sure that the interests of residents and the council are promoted.

Registered Providers are independent organisations with their own systems of accountability in place – also being expected by their own regulator to take account of the views and interests of their tenants and leaseholders. In the event of a complaint, a tenant or leaseholder is encouraged to go directly to them in the first instance – with the Housing Ombudsman available where there is a question of service failure. Direct communications with a councillor or MP about an issue are expected to receive the appropriate response from parties concerned.

We have established a strong system of governance within the council to oversee and scrutinise our Housing policies. It is not necessary to introduce a separate Housing Committee, as there is a good focus on the range of points you raise. There is also an ongoing process of overview and scrutiny to look at developing strategies, issues and matters for decision. This includes current plans to draw the work of Registered Providers into our Scrutiny programmes. A new Housing Allocations policy will be coming to Cabinet and full Council in November and December. This has been through a substantial period of public consultation, involving many elected members.

Question 2 submitted by Cllr Susan Cocking, Cllr Rob Hughes, Cllr John Worth and Cllr Louie O'Leary

We hear on a regular basis how Weymouth Portland and Chickerell is plagued by economic deprivation, a low skilled economy based around seasonal jobs and also state funded public sector jobs many of us and our families have seen the effects of de-industrialisation the decline of our fishing, engineering and shipping industry. With Portland port doing so well over the past couple of years, and a potential rebirth of our fishing industry on the cards as well as the need to protect the remaining high skills jobs we have many based on Portland and the Grandby Industrial estate will this council actively commit to fight for the Western relief road? This road has the backing of major industry, big business small business, the civic society, and many residents plagued by living in a congested mess on Weymouth's north side and low pay or insecure jobs on North side areas such as Melcombe Regis and Littlemoor. It's time to bring Weymouth Portland and Chickerell forward and complete this vital missing link in the puzzle of economic pro-growth and diversity. This road has other benefits it will take traffic out of residential roads in Rodwell and Wyke, make the school run in those areas safer for thousands of school children, stop the rat run along South Harbourside and Cross road, reduce air pollution on Boothill and return Lanehouse rocks road to a quieter state. Please commit to fight for this vitally important route we need to show central government that we mean business

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

Until the A354 between Weymouth and Portland is recognised by Government as being crucial to driving economic growth in Dorset and adds it to the Major Road Network, there will be no Government funding available for a new road to bypass it. Without this recognition and funding any proposed scheme is unachievable. Dorset Council has made this case but it has not been accepted.

Central Government has also made it very clear that road building should be the last resort in any area's transport strategy. Highway Authorities must exhaust all other opportunities to reduce traffic on the road that is proposed to be bypassed to reduce environmental damage. We need to be changing our outlook and behaviour to take unnecessary short-distance car journeys off the road by providing alternative, safe and reliable modes of travel.

In line with the Government's plans to de-carbonise our transport system and Dorset Council's Climate & Ecological Emergency Action Plan, our ongoing work along this route includes investment in walking and cycling options, review of parking and loading restrictions to help the flow of traffic - particularly to improve bus and HGV journey time reliability and consideration of junction improvements.

This year's pandemic has clearly affected travel behaviour and indeed whether people travel at all. Home working, online shopping, increased walking, cycling and staggered school times have changed travel patterns meaning less peak time congestion and improved journey times at certain times of day. Government is keen to lock in the health and economic benefits of improved air quality and increased physical activity by delivering active travel schemes and this is our current focus for Weymouth.

Question 3 submitted by Cllr Maria Roe

Tree Policy

In January 2019 Dorset Council added a Tree Planting and Climate Emergency paper on its website. It is still there.

It states that Dorset Council is investigating in-house tree planting on land owned by Dorset Council and a group has been established to make recommendations by April 2020. It also states that moving forward and in order to contribute effectively to the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency we will determine a realistic number of trees to be planted annually on Dorset Council land and identify a budget or alternative funding streams to carry out this work. Given that many councils have added doubling the amount of trees on their land to their climate emergency plans this is a positive statement. However, I cannot see anything in the action plan that gives us an indication of a budget or a number of

trees to be planted. The policy document states that within the current policies, there is an onus on us to replace every tree that we must remove for safety reasons on the highway verge. However, there is no specific budget allocation to replace these trees and this cost must be found from within the existing maintenance budget or from income that we have generated. This can mean that tree planting to replace the trees along the highway is not guaranteed.

I should like to know when we can expect a Dorset Council tree policy which includes the number of trees that it will plant on its own land with a timeline for this to be achieved?

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

The original Tree Planting and Climate Emergency paper was a holding response at the request of the EAP before the work on the Strategy was complete. The paper has now been superseded by the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plans that will shortly be published for consultation.

The updated Tree Policy is complete in draft and will be presented to Council for adoption in December. The Tree Policy deals primarily with the Councils approach to management of its tree stock, especially in relation to safety inspections and reactive works. The Tree Policy does include commitments around the planting of new trees but does not set any specific targets for new tree planting in relation to climate change.

The primary objective of tree planting in terms of Climate and Ecological Emergency response is to increase carbon sequestration and biodiversity value. Whilst tree planting does provide a valuable contribution towards these outcomes it is by no means the only option and in many cases not the most effective or suitable.

There are many areas in Dorset where due to landscape character, habitat type (unimproved grassland or heathland as examples), ground conditions or practicalities (highway verge or land use classification) considerations there are many other options to provide carbon sequestration and biodiversity improvements.

In order to capture the technicalities and deliver the most effective biodiversity and carbon sequestration benefits we have actioned the work as follows in the Climate and Ecological Action Plan – which will in all cases include tree planting wherever possible.

- 'Identify areas on Dorset Council land to enhance ecological value, carbon sequestration and climate resilience (surface water runoff and natural flood management)'

- 'Develop a scientifically robust approach to identify & monitor carbon sequestration values of council owned open space'
- 'Creation of suitable high ecological value areas on council land (incl. bee-friendly, wild flower, hedge & woodland planting zones) & areas for carbon sequestration & climate resilience'

Work on these actions will begin as a priority following public consultation and be published as part of the ongoing monitoring and review process in 2021

Question 4 submitted by Cllr Cathy Lugg

I have had a number of complaints recently, from residents, about dog fouling in Ferndown.

One of these was about a dog waste bin which had been removed from a local nature reserve, Slop Bog, and the pile of dog waste bags that were now building up at the site.

Thinking it easy to resolve, I contacted DWP to find out when a replacement would be installed. Oh, that it was only that simple. I am told that when our waste service transferred to DWP in 2012, dog and litter waste bins were not formally part of the contract. Dog waste bins, DWP have, informally, continued to replace bins with black wheelie bins. These are better because they can be used for litter and dog waste, emptied during normal bin deliveries and can go to normal depots to be emptied. However these bins need new stands and concrete fixings to stop them disappearing, and there is no budget for this. Various means have been used. Where there is a Countryside and Greenspace Ranger, and the site is vulnerable to dog waste, there might be money in their budget. Towns and Parish Councils might be willing to fund, especially if they would prefer dedicated dog waste bins, but there is no consistency. With less and less money available this gets trickier and some bins are not being replaced, leaving unacceptable dog fouling. I have had several reports from residents that dog walkers are putting their waste in accessible household bins, including garden waste bins. Not very fair if you don't have a dog. In an ideal world responsible dog owners would take their waste home to dispose, however we all know this doesn't always happen. What are we doing about this as a council? If we are considering asking Towns and Parish Councils to pay for replacements, can we please have those conversations now before budgets are set for next year? As a matter of urgency, can I please ask the Cabinet member concerned to look into this matter, before Ferndown disappears under a tide of dog waste?

Response by Cllr J Haynes

The dog bin at Slop Bog was removed because the post had rotted through and when the new post has arrived this bin will be replaced with a wheeled bin that can be used for dog waste and general litter. During the time that the bin is not there any waste left there will continue to be collected. We not aware of any other dog bin related issues in that area.

Dorset council waste services continue to service the bins which came across to DWP when the district and boroughs joined. In 2015 the then DWP joint committee approved the replacement of dog bins with wheeled bins where waste could be mixed. This practice is continuing today.

Any additional bins requested by a town or parish council are charged as a paid service to the respective council. Funding is available in each operational depot for posts and installation.

Dorset Council encourages responsible dog ownership – if there isn't a dog waste bin, the bag can be put in any suitable litter bin, or alternatively taken home and deposited in the household refuse bin. Failure to clean up after your dog in any area that is open to the public may result in a fixed penalty fine.

Questions 5 & 6 submitted by Cllr Nick Ireland

A planning decision last week concerning the village of Loders in West Dorset highlighted the fact that many Neighbourhood Plans which have been adopted or 'made' are now essentially worthless and carry no weight. In simple terms, if they are more than two years old and the vestigial planning area that they 'belong' to i.e. North Dorset, West Dorset etc. doesn't have a demonstrable five-year housing supply, then the Neighbour Plan goes in the bin. I know full well how much time, effort and financial cost is involved in taking a Neighbourhood Plan from birth to adoption and our local communities have been actively encouraged to pursue the process.

The current government webpage on NPs states ...

“Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. They are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to plan for the types of development to meet their community's needs”

... and so it is galling for our local communities to find out the fruits of their hard work and hopes for increased local democracy have a shelf-life of two years through no fault of their own.

There are approximately 20 adopted local plans in our council area, some of which are now regarded via the current situation as 'out of date' and many more about to be similarly 'shredded' next year. Another 10 or so are in various states of progress (including some in the final referendum stage, postponed until at least May 2021).

It seems that the lack of a five-year housing supply will likely get worse, at least for several years, rather than improve, and hence there is no prospect of this form of local democracy being returned to the towns and parishes of Dorset. There is also the possibility of NPs being essentially extinguished at the stroke of a Minister's pen if the planning White Paper proceeds to legislation.

My two questions are thus:

What cunning scheme does the portfolio holder have to restore the Neighbourhood Plan back to its proper place in the planning decision process?

What advice does he give to those still in the process of creating a Neighbourhood Plan when indications are that it may well all be for nought?

Response by Cllr David Walsh

Neighbourhood plans, like local plans, form part of the statutory development plan for the council area.

Under current national planning policy, a local planning authority that does not have the required five-year supply of land for housing is not able to give as much weight to its local planning policies relating to the supply of housing, in making decisions on planning applications.

This applies to policies in neighbourhood plans as well as local plans, but there is an additional protection for neighbourhood plan policies, as referred to in the question. Where there is a neighbourhood plan, that has been made within the last two years and that makes allocations of land for new housing development, its policies only lose weight if the housing land supply is below three years.

Having a neighbourhood plan is definitely an advantage for its first two years, if the council does not have a five year land supply.

But the neighbourhood plan does not become worthless after the two years. It is only the policies relevant to housing supply that start to carry less weight. And if the council regains its five year land supply then the policies could be given full

weight again – though it must be recognised that all plans need to be reviewed and will not last forever.

The consultation on the planning white paper leaves many questions unanswered in relation to the intended role of neighbourhood planning, though it does support their continuation. We have raised this matter in our consultation response as considered by Cabinet last week.

And in terms of advice to groups considering starting work on a neighbourhood plan, the council has always stressed the fact that neighbourhood plans are about planning positively for future development in their areas, and a neighbourhood plan that makes provision for development is more likely to be effective.

Question 7 submitted by Cllr Robin Legg

The Government's online guidance note about the Rule of Six restriction which is set out in Covid-19 (safer public places) says in section 2.7 that those running events following Covid-19 secure guidelines should take additional steps to ensure the safety of the public and prevent large gatherings or mass events from taking place.

With Remembrance Sunday approaching many will be left wondering whether this important event can be marked in the traditional way.

However, there is a confusing gap between the online advice and the law as set out in the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No.2) (England) Regulations 2020. It would appear that many large gatherings are lawful if the event is one which can pass the "excepted gathering" test. It seems to me that if acts of remembrance are to take place then we may be called upon to decide if highways are premises operated by a public body, if a public outdoor space is the same thing as a public outdoor place (which includes a highway) and whether a parade is a relevant outdoor activity. Unlike the advice the regulations are far from simple.

Is the Leader similarly confused by this mixed message from the Government and will appropriately organised and risk assessed acts of remembrance be possible next month?

Response by Cllr David Walsh

Although rates of transmission of covid-19 within Dorset remain low the situation faced nationally and globally is a very serious one. If there is confusion then this may reflect what is a rapidly changing situation. Regulations and guidance in

place at the time when Cllr Legg submitted his question may well have changed by the time of the full Council meeting.

The Royal British Legion has prepared a 2020 Remembrance Overview. This suggests that under current restrictions we all have to think differently about how we engage and interact with our neighbours or our wider communities. To ensure that national and local acts of Remembrance can still take place the overview provides some ideas for how we all might want to consider remembering this year whilst keeping ourselves and others safe. I encourage all members to look at the 2020 Remembrance Overview on the Royal British Legion website.

As will be the case across the country during this pandemic, the Dorset Council Remembrance Service this year will be very different from the remembrance service that we are all used to. Staff and Councillors of Dorset Council will not be invited to attend what will be a short, socially distanced service at the Cenotaph at County Hall, Dorchester led by Revd John Yarrien with a maximum of eight wreaths being laid. A bugler will be attendance standing away from others on the raised platform behind the Cenotaph. The Lord Lieutenant and Major Dan Tanner will read the Exhortation and Kohima respectively, and invitations have been strictly limited with a maximum of 14 persons in attendance.

The Chairman will ensure that the service complies with any restrictions or guidance in place at the time of the Service.

Question 8 submitted by Cllr Robin Legg

I note with astonishment and concern that at the meeting of the cabinet earlier this month members were faced with an agenda and associated reports running to 812 pages. In less than three months cabinet members have comfortably read more pages than are contained in Tolstoy's epic "War and Peace". Does this feat cause the Leader to reflect with pride on their achievement or raise a doubt in his mind about how the effective management of the authority can be properly conducted through a cabinet governance structure.

Response by Cllr Spencer Flower

The benefits of Cabinet style local government is acknowledged to deliver greater efficiency, transparency and accountability to the decision-making process. That is the general view shared across the Local Government Sector. Members should all be very proud of what we have achieved in the past 18 months. Dorset Council governance was acknowledged during the LGA Corporate Peer Review, which took place during the Autumn of 2019, as having created a well-functioning Cabinet and governance structure supported by a strong cross-party ethos of collaborative working across the chamber.

Cllr Legg's question concerns the Cabinet meeting of the 6 October. The agenda for this meeting did have an exceptional number of items. This resulted in the meeting lasting a few minutes short of three and a half hours.

Members will be aware that due to the unprecedented COVID-19 Pandemic a significant amount of the 'business as usual' items had to be put on hold, to allow officers to be seconded to deal with the crisis, which has and will continue to impact on the number of individual reports coming to Cabinet.

The importance of the key roles played by the Audit and Governance Committee, the Overview Committees and the Scrutiny Committees cannot be overstated. It is worth noting that a significant number of the reports before Cabinet on the 6 October had been seen, commented on and/or endorsed by one or more of these committees. Two reports, notably the Climate and Ecological Change and the review of Leisure Provision had benefited from a significant involvement by cross party EAP's both over a prolonged period of time.

This level of member involvement cross-party is extremely helpful to Cabinet and demonstrates the healthy checks and balances which are so essential in ensuring the council maintains a sound and progressive governance structure fit for the 21 Century and the size of Dorset Council, which has a net budget exceeding £300.0m pa.

Question 9 submitted by Cllr Brian Heatley

The Draft Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy issued on 15 July 2020 sets out on page 21 a proposed trajectory for Dorset's emissions from now down to zero by 2050 and claims that this trajectory produces total emissions from now up until 2050 that fit within the budget of 21mt required from 2017 to contain global temperature rise by no more than 1.5 deg C.

This trajectory has the following levels of emissions at certain intermediate dates

2025	1.396mt
2030	0.872 mt
2040	0.349 mt
2050	0 mt

I have sought to reproduce the underlying figures in the attached table, assuming about .07 mt reduction per year for the years 2017-2020 by looking at the dots on the graph on page 21.

My table below shows that this trajectory exceeds the budget in 2034, and will break the budget by nearly 4mt by 2050.

Since it is this trajectory which justifies the proposal that the Council adopts a target as late as 2050 rather than the earlier targets proposed in motions to Council from Cllrs Turner and Clayton, perhaps the Portfolio holder would like to comment on my arithmetic?

Appendix to question attached.

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

As noted, the graph within the strategy aims to plot a trajectory to achieve a 2050 target for the whole Dorset Council AREA while keeping within a total 21 Million tonne carbon budget. The data behind this graph was not explicitly provided with the strategy in order to keep the strategy publicly accessible and understandable, but a review of the annual emissions data shows total emissions (from 2017 to 2050) of 20.7 Million Tonnes of CO₂, just below the budget identified.

Comparing this to figures provided by Cllr Heatley shows a close approximation, but a slight over estimation of total emissions. This gives a total emissions figure of 24.9million tonnes, 4 million tonnes over the budget. This difference is due to the slight variation in assumptions used in Cllr Healeys emissions trajectory leading to over estimations of annual emission early on in year 2020-2029.

Critically, these large difference in overall emissions from just slight differences in emissions trajectories shows how important it is to reduce emissions quickly early on. It is not the target end date which is important; it is the path that is followed to get there! It is also important to note that the target date for Dorset Council ITSELF to become Carbon Zero is 2040.

Question 10 submitted by Cllr Mark Roberts

The Prime Minister's announcement a few weeks ago that Dorset County Hospital will see a new community hospital, emergency department and intensive care unit is great news for my residents, as well as all the residents of Dorset who use, or might need to use, the hospital's extraordinarily good services.

What does this new investment mean for the integrated care system in Dorset - particularly with regard to our partnerships with our acute hospitals?

Response by Cllr Laura Miller

Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has been allocated £62.5million of Government funding to expand key clinical services on its Dorchester site as part of the national Health Infrastructure Plan.

This is a long-term project which will take four to five years to deliver. It includes a new build expansion of the Emergency Department (ED) and Intensive Care Unit (ICU), and a new build integrated acute, community and primary care services hub to better join up health and care services to improve patient experience and outcomes and reduce demand, based on the existing Dorset County Hospital site. The developments will help further facilitate and embed closer integrated working - exact clinical models and infrastructure plans are being worked up at the moment.

Further background information about site development plans can be found here: <https://www.dchft.nhs.uk/about/site-development/Pages/default.aspx>

Dorset Council welcomes the new facilities at Dorset County Hospital. As part of the Dorset Integrated Care System we are working with our partners to deliver improved outcomes for people receiving emergency and planned health interventions. The larger and improved facilities will enhance not only the 24/7 emergency services offered, but will also be a pivotal facility for community services to operate from. These community services could potentially include staff and services from a variety of organisations to create an integrated hub focused around a person's health and social care needs.

Question 11 submitted by Cllr Clare Sutton

In light of acting CEO John Sellgren's comment that "we [Dorset Council] do not tolerate disrespectful behaviour and take racism very seriously" it is important that the public can have full confidence that we adhere to this. In this context, are there occasions when group leaders should take steps, in addition to applying The Code of Conduct, in order to uphold values which we all share?

Response by Cllr Spencer Flower

I would like to thank Cllr Sutton for her question because it gives me the opportunity to endorse John Sellgren's statement publicly.

I think we can agree that sometimes group leaders can and do take steps in addition to those available through the Code of Conduct. However, I will not be answering questions or commenting on individual councillors.

I certainly share the view that we must all take member behaviour very seriously indeed and that we are all reminded annually about our responsibilities as elected members of this council.

Arrangements are now in place for Unconscious Bias Training facilitated by an outside organisation. Members will be advised of the date for this training shortly.

Questions 12, 13 & 14 submitted by Cllr Kate Wheller (Urgent question in 3 parts accepted by the Chairman of Council)

On Monday I was startled to read on the front page of the Dorset Echo that Dorset “**has a 75% chance of being among the UK’s worst hotspots by October 25th.** “

This was based on predictions from Imperial College, but when I looked at their data I found that they didn’t say any such thing. Rather, they predicted that by the end of this month we would be seeing more than 50 new cases per 100,000 population in the Dorset Council area. That is the threshold for a ‘hotspot’ as defined by Imperial College, so we are expected to become a hotspot on that definition.

But even then we would fall far short of being among the UK’s worst hotspots as the Echo claimed.

Nottingham	800+ new cases per 100K population
Liverpool	~600
Newcastle	~500

By Tuesday, the Echo had swung the other way, and as well as stating that the latest weekly figure for Dorset is 37 per 100K, they pointed out that the cumulative rate in Dorset is far lower than the England average.

Obviously we mustn’t be either alarmist or complacent. So what steps are we taking –

- 1. To monitor local infection rates against ongoing projections from Imperial College?**
- 2. To provide accurate and timely information to local media?**
- 3. To ensure that adequate track and tracing is being carried out within the Dorset Council area?**

Responses from Cllr Laura Miller

Question 1

The director of public health has access to daily reports produced by Public Health England that show our infection rates, compared with other Council areas within the South West, and England. In addition, we undertake specific pieces of work to model and project where Dorset might be over the next few weeks, using the EpiCell group, which reports to the Health Protection Board each week. The hotspot threshold referred to was 50 cases per 100,000, which several weeks ago would have seemed very high for our local area – today we are not far off that figure, not just in Dorset but for the SW region as a whole. We are very careful when issuing any figures to the public to be clear about their origin, and not to rely on projections or modelling because they can be subject to variation and misinterpretation.

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Question 2

Public Health Dorset publishes a briefing on its website every Thursday which is in the public domain, updating on the latest cases, and infection rates, and also showing how this has changed over the past few weeks. We regularly issue press releases to local media outlets about our current situation. In addition, the Director of Public Health and members of the public health team publish regular video briefings on the current situation. We also use a range of social media channels to update the public, as do both of our Councils.

We provide regular system updates which are currently published weekly on our website and shared with a whole range of stakeholders. We promote this on all social media channels across the Local Resilience Forum and direct to people through a range of e-newsletters including Dorset Council, Health and Wellbeing and our new Trusted Voices network reaching a variety of community leaders.

We arrange regular interviews with local and regional media and share audio clips of all our videos with community radio stations.

We issue regular press releases from Public Health Dorset as well as joint releases with the council and LRF wide releases on behalf of all public sector partners.

All local media outlets follow our social media channels and we have worked hard to increase that following tagging them in various posts so that they have timely information.

We have held and would look to hold more online press briefings and are planning to do a live Q&A session with the public in the next couple of weeks.

Question 3

EpiCell routinely monitors performance of the Test and Trace system in the Dorset Council area, to ensure that it is following up people and ensuring completion of information on contacts. The completion rate for the last week for which we have data was 70 per cent. Bear in mind this was based on reaching an increasing number of contacts compared with previous weeks, which has led to a slight fall in performance. In addition to contact tracing via Test and Trace, Dorset Council now calls all positive cases to offer support with any immediate welfare needs, and to make it as easy as possible for people to complete their self-isolation period.

Question 9 submitted by Cllr Brian Heatley

Appendix

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043	2044	2045	2046	2047	2048	2049	2050
Total emitted that year	1.75	1.68	1.61	1.54	1.51	1.48	1.45	1.42	1.40	1.29	1.19	1.08	0.98	0.87	0.82	0.77	0.72	0.66	0.61	0.56	0.51	0.45	0.40	0.35	0.31	0.28	0.24	0.21	0.17	0.14	0.10	0.07	0.03	0.00
Budget left year end	21.00	19.33	17.72	16.19	14.68	13.20	11.75	10.32	8.93	7.64	6.45	5.37	4.39	3.52	2.70	1.93	1.21	0.55	-0.06	-0.62	-1.12	-1.58	-1.98	-2.33	-2.64	-2.92	-3.17	-3.38	-3.55	-3.69	-3.79	-3.86	-3.90	-3.90

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