

Full Council – 18 July 2019

Questions submitted for Public Participation Period

Question -1 Submitted by Mr P Jordan

Use of Council Buildings

Pre-amble:

My Question, follows the welcome & important changes that have led to Dorset Council's holding of this full Council Meeting, at this more democratically accessible evening time of day, in this Chamber i.e.

- NOT during, what is for many, the normal working day &/or

&/or

- NOT using SWH, that's not only too small, but also - despite holding a praiseworthy BREEAM status
- it was controversial before it was built, lacks good planning internally & externally e.g. by location:
- it's own access is difficult + makes Charles St "development" more problematic than it already was

So bearing the above in mind, & in the interests of further integrating & making Council work & related support more efficient

- perhaps in a Dorchester wide Property Review of Council (& other public?) land & property assets together with their uses & vital issues like communications, energy & asbestos etc – such that public assets are maximised in the public interest e.g.

Question:

"Is Dorset Council, also considering making full use of County Hall (Chamber & Committee facilities etc) & declaring SWH surplus? "

Response from Cllr Peter Wharf

"The Corporate Director for Economic Growth and Infrastructure is carrying out a full review of the Dorset Council's Estate. We are gathering information on all of the accommodation, depots and land which we own which will allow us to provide an Asset Management Strategy fit for the future needs of Dorset Council."

Question - 2 Submitted by Mr P Jordan

Climate Change

Pre-amble:

Thankfully, & though as you, Dorset Council, made your almost unanimous Climate Emergency Declaration this last May;

Given: the WHO (UN World Health Organisation) definition of "Emergency" i.e.

Emergency is a term describing a state. It is a managerial term, demanding decision and follow-up in terms of extra-ordinary measures (Oxford Pocket Dictionary, 1992). A "state of emergency" demands to "be declared" or imposed by somebody in authority, who, at a certain moment, will also lift it. Thus, it is usually defined in time and space, it requires threshold values to be recognized, and it implies rules of engagement and an exit strategy. Conceptually, it relates best to Response.

& given too your reported lack of Climate Emergency application, when making decisions on a range of matters, including e.g.

Neighbourhood Plans, your own Forward Plans & Government funding for Norchester – a "Greenfield site" of the type that one can't imagine being backed by the current Climate Change Committee Chair now, or for that matter as perhaps our most distinguished Environment Minister over 20 years ago (when he specifically backed brownfield site development)

Question:

"How & in what ways are you engaging/progressing towards sustainable success & for that matter equally sustainable exit?"

Response from Cllr Ray Bryan

"Dorset Council recognises the importance of dealing with the issue of climate change and since declaring a climate emergency in May 2019 at the first Full Council meeting of the new Council has started work to tackle this pressing issue. As the new Dorset Council develops there is a significant opportunity to fully embed action on climate change within Council services and our wider leadership role.

As a start, the Council has established an specific Executive Advisory Panel on Climate Change – who's role will be to develop the Councils policy and action on tackling climate change and make recommendations directly to the Councils Cabinet. The Advisory Panel first met on 2nd July and heard evidence of climate change the implication for Dorset and the need and opportunities for action.

To support the Council's work in this area a senior officer's technical group is being drawn together from across services to provide technical support to the advisory panel and shape climate action. The group will ensure that expertise will be drawn from across the Council particularly from services which will have a critical role in tackling some of the major challenges such as transport, waste, buildings and planning etc. Work has already begun at hast on developing a new local plan and a specific group will be looking at climate change.

Over the coming weeks members of the panel will be considering their key priorities for action and officers have also been gathering initial evidence of current action by the former Dorset Councils and opportunities to take climate action across Council services and responsibilities, as these take shape in the new Dorset Council. The Council has also committed to employing additional dedicated staff resource to assist in the coordination and development of Dorset Council response. Further meetings are also being held with representatives from extinction rebellion later this month, who have been invited to present to the next Advisory Panel in September 2019.”

Question 3 – submitted by Linda Poulson

Garden Communities Fund

Question:

“In the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2018, the North Dorchester Area was classified as a 'no potential development' area. Considerable evidence was provided for the 2015 Local Plan to show how development here would damage the landscape, community, heritage, hydrology and so on. The evidence hasn't altered, consultation on the review is incomplete, so when West Dorset District Council applied for funds from the Government's Garden Communities fund, did it consider sites across the District or only the proposed 'North Dorchester' site?”

Response from Cllr David Walsh

“West Dorset District Council argued during the preparation of the 2015 local plan that the area north of Dorchester was not suitable for development. The inspector however concluded that in the review of the local plan the council should identify land to meet long term development needs at or in the vicinity of Dorchester, and required this commitment to be stated in the plan to ensure that it was sound. He also commented that it was not obvious that there were other or better alternatives to this site.

The 'preferred options' consultation document for the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan review, published for consultation in 2018, suggested the land north of Dorchester as a potential area for development.

There is more work to be done to test the area's suitability for development, including for example further work on the heritage implications and infrastructure requirements. The Garden Communities initiative will help to fund this more detailed work, and will also provide assistance and support in ensuring quality of development, infrastructure provision, and delivery arrangements

The Garden Communities funding was only available for larger development sites and there were no other sites that had been considered in the local plan consultation that were regarded as eligible for the funding. “

Question 4 – submitted by Kate Hebditch

West Dorset Area Local Plan Review

Question:

“I note from the minutes of the Cabinet meeting on 25 June that work on the Local Plan Review for the West Dorset area has ceased. Will the responses from the public consultation on that Review be published? And if so, when?”

Response from Cllr David Walsh

“The responses from the public consultation have all been collated now and are due to be published on the website this week. The results of consultation on the area local plan reviews will be taken into account in preparing the new Dorset Council Local Plan.”

Question 5 – submitted by Professor Marfleet

Economic Development Executive Advisory Panel

Question:

“What is the status of motions passed by the Full Council and which are referred to the Panel?”

Response from Cllr Gary Suttle

“Some motions are debated at the first full Council meeting following receipt of a motion and a decision is made by the Council about the motion at that first meeting. Such a motion, if agreed, becomes the decision or policy of the Council. Examples of such motions to be decided at the first available meeting are those concerning Safe Passage Dorset and Budmouth College, both of which will be considered today.

Other motions are presented to the full Council and then referred to a committee or panel to consider the detail and make recommendations back to a later Council meeting. Motions referred to a committee or panel have not been passed by or supported by the Council but are referred straight on to the committee or panel without a debate having taken place. They are referred to a body able to consider the detail on behalf of the Council and make recommendations to be decided later by the Council. Examples of such motions are those concerning climate change and social mobility, all three of which will be presented today and then referred to executive advisory panels for detailed consideration.

Our procedure rules require the proper officer to decide in consultation with the Chairman of Council whether a motion is to be included on the full Council agenda to be debated straightaway or referred to a committee or panel which will make recommendations to be considered and decided upon later by the Council.

There is no prescribed timescale for the recommendations referred to another body to be brought back to full Council. This will depend upon complexity of the issues raised by the motion and the work programme of the committee or panel. “

Question 6 – submitted by Carolyn Emmett

Bus link between Bridport and Crewkerne

Pre-amble:

The car usage of myself, and other people in the Beaminster area, has increased dramatically since this particular bus has stopped passing Colfox at school finish time. In fact the lack of a sensible bus service in general between Bridport and Yeovil has led to a huge increase in car usage in general; and at the same time a greater isolation for those who can't drive. Dorset Council declared Climate Emergency a couple of months ago, as humanity is facing extinction if we don't take urgent action on Climate Change and the other unfolding Ecological Disasters that we face. Given this, I would suggest that the disintegrating public transport system in Dorset is something that needs addressing urgently. An efficient public transport system is a good way of reducing carbon emissions; as well as supporting our younger, older and more vulnerable residents – and others who can't drive.

Question:

So the question I want to ask is – within the understanding that Dorset Council is operating on a miniscule budget – what measures can be taken to reinstate a bus journey between Bridport and Crewkerne (via Broadwindsor) to enable kids to get home from Colfox School? There must be some negotiation with First, tweaking of timetables, etc that could be done. Any action taken urgently needs to happen by September 2019, ready for the new school year. In fact any action on reducing fossil fuel emissions needs to happen urgently because we will all be dead if we don't.

Response from Cllr Ray Bryan

“At the Place Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9 July 2019 which was attended by a representative from The Western Area Transport Action Group (WATAG), the route between Bridport, Beaminster, Crewkerne and Yeovil (service 6) was discussed.

The committee has agreed to set up a working group to look at reductions in subsidy for public transport (and the viability of routes) across the county in the context of the climate change emergency. This will include service 6. Until the group has been set up and the review completed, further changes to this service are unlikely to be made. I understand the frustrations caused by the lack of a journey from Colfox School back to Beaminster, Bridport and Crewkerne at the end of the school day but these communities are not in the catchment area for

the school and students are attending by choice, so there is no requirement for the Council to supply transport. The current timetable that is in place does not accommodate this journey.”

Question 7 – submitted by Caroline Lester

Budmouth Sports Centre and Playing Fields

Pre-amble

“The twelve acres of playing fields at Budmouth College are used by the school and are a well-established amenity for local sports groups and organisations at the weekends. You might consider them key to the success of the school and the extra-curricular activities that they currently offer. They are also very important for the local community and form a green lung in the increasingly built-up area in Chickerell. We have received very many questions and comments about this substantial community and educational asset, in particular the issue that they should not be built on further.

The sports centre halls and gym at Budmouth are essential for providing a wide range of indoor physical activities provision for the school and for the wider community. We understand there are historic and ongoing serious subsidence issues with the sports centre, with August 31st floated to staff as a date that the centre would close.

Oliver Letwin MP wrote to us recently to say he would be ‘focussing his attention’ on making the ‘requirement’ to the DfE that Budmouth’s twelve acres of playing fields would only pass to Aspirations Academies Trust on exchange of their Osprey Quay site, for use as Dorset Council’s new special school. As you can perhaps imagine, this is no consolation at all to the many of us who do not welcome the forced academisation of Budmouth. In fact, it is cold comfort indeed, as it could appear that Budmouth’s playing fields are being ‘swapped’ as an asset for the convenience of Dorset Council and their new special school.

Question:

We ask, should Aspirations Academies Trust take over Budmouth College on September 1st, can Dorset Council guarantee:

that the Sports Centre will be maintained and will stay open?

that the land transfer agreement will include a clause that the twelve acres of playing field land will be protected from future development and retained for community use as an amenity in perpetuity?

If the answer is 'no' to either of these points, we suggest that the continued conversion process is most definitely not in the best interests of the school and the local community with regard to these assets, and that further time is essential to ensure that these assets are protected."

Response from Cllr Andrew Parry

The sports centre is part of the school premises and is owned by the Governing Body of Budmouth School. The Governing Body is required to transfer the school premises to the Academy Trust on conversion; under the Academy Act 2010 and in accordance with the Secretary of State's Academy Order. As the Council is not the owner of the school premises it will not be a party to the transfer.

The playing field land at Budmouth School also forms part of the school premises and is owned by the Governing Body. School playing fields are protected by legislation. Should the owner wish to make any transfer or change of use of the playing fields, they would be required to comply with legislation, which may include the need to obtain the Secretary of State's prior approval.

The conversion of Budmouth School has been ordered by the Secretary of State and in accordance with the Academies Act 2010 the Council has a duty to take all reasonable steps to facilitate the conversion of the school into an Academy.