

Public Questions and Statements – Cabinet 28 July 2020

Question 1 from Sarah James, Chief Executive, the Arts Development Company

Draft Dorset Council Economic Growth Strategy, agenda item 10:

Arts and Culture in Dorset is an essential component in supporting both economic growth and the development of higher paid, year round, skilled jobs and in attracting tourists to our county as well as an essential ingredient in what makes our towns and our county an attractive place to live, work, leisure and invest in. Dorset LEP's Industrial strategy now includes the Creative and Culture as 1 of its 4 priority areas.

Why then is arts and culture not mentioned nor name checked in the draft Economic Growth Strategy as a key industry contributing to Dorset and one which needs supporting through the recovery plans?

Question 2 from Julie-Ann Booker (on behalf of Extinction Rebellion, Dorset)

When will costs and timetable be available

We welcome the release of this draft strategy and it's clear that a lot of time and effort has gone into researching, preparing and writing it. And on first review, the threats we face from this climate and ecological emergency are clearly stated. Dorset Council openly state we only have 8-10 years at the current rate of carbon emissions to take action to avert this crisis and avoid the worst impacts.

The first half of the document provides a well-researched, easy to understand and read analysis of the current scientific thinking. Indeed it could act as a 'stand-alone' document.

A strategy should be a document that shapes the future. Setting out and describing a vision of the end goal and actions for reaching it. Unfortunately, the draft strategy's second half sets out little more than a 'wish list' around a number of themes. Without any priorities, costs, targets or detailed action plans. Given how long it has been since Dorset Council declared an emergency this is indeed disappointing.

The document has been honest on this point by saying (p.57) "This strategy is a start at setting out the general direction of travel that is required within the County". This is not the ambitious statement that is needed to deal with a declared 'emergency'.

Question

When will Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Strategy include a fully costed and timetabled action plan?

Question 3 from Len Herbert

TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CLIMATE & ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY

I am pleased Dorset Council has released its Climate and Ecological Emergency draft strategy and I commend all involved on its scientific content about the facts of Climate Change. But only a minority in Dorset will read the document in full. When Extinction Rebellion presented to the Inquiry Day on 4th March, we provided 5 practical ideas for Dorset Council Tell the Truth.

Question:

So I ask Dorset Council that the next step is to communicate the climate and ecological emergency in a letter to all Dorset residents, businesses and institutions, telling the truth in a concise format about the crises facing us and the actions we must all take to avoid its worst implications.

Question 4 from Michael Tunbridge

"I very much welcome the publication of Dorset Council's Draft Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy on the 15th July 2020. There was much to appreciate in this thorough and professionally produced document.

As a long-standing member of the Dorset Pension Fund I was very disappointed to find no commitment or statement of intent on fossil fuel divestment.

It may have been argued by the authors of the strategy that fossil fuel divestment does not relate directly to a narrow calculation of Dorset's carbon footprint. However, fossil fuel divestment certainly does relate to a wider understanding of the Climate Emergency - an understanding demonstrated in the excellent, analytical first half of the Strategy. Maintaining investments in fossil fuel and carbon intensive industries is incompatible with the declaration of a climate emergency.

I appreciate that the chain of authority is complicated, in that it is the Dorset Pension Committee that is the administering authority for the Pension Fund. The committee also includes BCP members and union representation. Despite similar complexities, some councils have chosen to send a powerful message as part of their strategy.

I particularly commend to you the motion passed on 16th July 2020 by Conservative-led Shropshire Council (42 in favour : 1 abstention). This motion calls on Shropshire pension fund to 'set a three year timescale for the reinvestment of funds currently invested in fossil fuel dependent assets'. This motion also recognises that fuel investments constitute part of the council's carbon footprint and resolves that this element should form part of the regular reporting.

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/mgAi.aspx?ID=14947>

<https://www.shropshirelive.com/news/2020/07/16/shropshire-council-makes-historic-decision-to-divest-pension-fund-from-fossil-fuels/>

On 16th July 2020 Shropshire Council took the lead and called on Shropshire County Pension Fund to divest from fossil fuels within three years and resolved to include fossil fuel investments in their carbon footprint accounting. Will Dorset Council take similar steps?"

Question 5 from Bridget Joslin

I understand that it is possible to ask a question or make a statement before the meeting on July 23. I have read the document as best I can and applaud the work the committee has done on seeing a way forward.

My comment and question all in one is: are these targets ambitious enough? The Climate Change Commission's report to government in July 2020 spoke of only 4 out of 21 targets being met to be carbon zero in 2050, a date which many people believe is at least 15 years too late. Of 31 milestones 14 have made no progress at all, 15 have been met partially and 2 have been fully met. By 2050 runaway climate change will be unstoppable. All your hard work as a Council will be wasted. I believe we must be much more ambitious and be prepared for our lives to change as they have had to do with the Covid crisis. I recognise central government is blocking the path but lobbying must continue much more forcefully to clear the way. We also have a duty to inform the public what we must expect in the years ahead.

Thank you for this opportunity for me to voice my grave concerns.

Question 6 from Dave Warren

On Page 55, under The Waste section of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy paper, is an Indirect Action to "*Establish appropriate infrastructure to support circular economy as part of Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Dorset 2008 – 33*".

In Section 9 - Residual Waste, of the same 2008 -33 report there is a league table that ranks Energy from Waste Incineration (aka Direct EfW) as the Council's No1 preferred option for the future management and treatment of residual waste (page 39 of 2008-33 report).

Even though it has been roundly criticized in two parliamentary debates this year with high profile MP's like Priti Patel, Dr Therese Coffey and Sir Ian Boyd (Defra Chief Scientific Adviser), all openly criticising the impact it has on the environment, local recycling rates and the circular economy, Energy from Waste Incineration appears to be the Council's No1 choice for treating Dorset's residual waste. I was also surprised that while tacitly stating it will establish this infrastructure, the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy paper makes no direct reference to energy from waste. **Please could the climate and environmental Advisory Panel publish their findings and recommendations concerning the environmental and ecological effects of EfW incineration?** Because, if this is truly a forward looking document, it needs to advise on both current and potential future events that will impact the County's ability to achieve its climate targets.

Question 7 from Dave Warren

To protect investors from misleading claims by Finance Houses, who claim that their products only contain environmentally friendly investments, The EU have recently passed a set of laws and regulations that list (by name), all environmentally sustainable economic activities. Along with nuclear and fossil fuel activities, The EU have excluded energy from waste incineration from it's Green List, as they have established that it is neither a sustainable or an environmentally friendly activity. These laws and regulations come into effect next year, with "comply or explain" rules scheduled for June 21. One of the reasons The EU have given to justify its decision is that EfW activities act as an obstacle to the development of the circular economy, and as we know, The Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Dorset 2008 – 33 and the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy paper, makes regular reference to the importance of moving to a circular economy.

I'm sure the Advisory Panel would agree with the EU's Technical Expert Group's findings, as there is a wealth of information available in the UK and across the rest of Europe that correlates the reduction in recycling rates with council areas that have contracts that commit them to supply specified levels of RDF to Energy from Waste Incinerator plants. Sadly, in some councils, recyclable materials end up being incinerated in order to avoid contractual penalty costs.

As this is a forward looking initiative, Dorset's environmental strategy document should be bold and clear on its position regarding the environmental impact of energy from waste activities, and be used to provide other departments within the council with guidance when considering future planning applications to build

energy from waste incinerators in Dorset. However, on speaking with one of the council's planning officers, they didn't believe that the findings of this Strategy document would be used to shape, influence or redefine Dorset's planning process. If, like The EU, this document identifies EfW activities as unsustainable, environmentally unfriendly and detrimental to the circular economy, **will the council revisit their position on the future use of EfW as a method to manage Dorset's residual waste?**

Question 8 from David Redgewell

To provide transport choices in Dorset buses are now funded by the Department for Transport. Covid 19 bus operator grant

We welcome the partnership on Transforming Transport funding of £79 million for sustainable transport in South East Dorset .

We are also unclear as to where the £300 000 rural bus grant is going to be used. The bus network needs improvements with investment required in evening and weekend services.

Key links need to be developed in the in the bus network map regarding service 6 Bridport to Yeovil bus station.

Dorchester South station to Brloport, Lyme Regis and Axminster station needs a 7 days a week bus service on routes X51 and X53 run by with a connection at Axminster for bus service 30 to Taunton and South West Railway services to London Waterloo and Exeter St Davids.

Lyme Regis to Exeter bus station is a key regional bus link service 7. Other important links are Weymouth, Blandford x12, Blandford Forum and Salisbury on services 20, Bournemouth, Poole to Swanage service 40 Poole to Weymouth X54 via Wareham

Poole to Blandford Forum X8 , Blandford Forum to Shaftesbury X3, X9 /and Blandford Forum to Yeovil bus station x10.

Bournemouth Poole links to Verwood but the map fails to show the importance of Ringwood in Hampshire as a key interchange with National Express Coaches to London via Southampton or the X3 Express bus service from Bournemouth to Salisbury.

The plan does not look at the role of park and ride services in Weymouth, Nordon on the Swanage railway and Lyme Regis and ways of reducing private car usage in those towns centres.

The plan lack details of National Express Coaches services serving Bournemouth and Dorset. The plan shows no investment in transport interchange facilities yet new bus/railway station interchanges are planned by Network Rail at Weymouth and Dorchester South stations. Or bus Station s such as Bridport or swanage. Or with in western gateway transport plan.

It's not clear how the public transport part of the climate change strategy will be addressed with covid 19 .and whilst the strategy talks about walking cycling and active travel funding its not clear on public transport or school buses service s which may not be open to the fare paying passengers other School and college students due to social distancing.

How Dorset council is is going to ask the department for transport fund the public transport strategy?

Question 9 from David Redgewell

The Department for Transport are now managing railway funding through direct management contracts until September and has suspended all railway franchises. The plan is not clear on railway investment projects such as upgrading the Weymouth town station to Upwey, Dorchester West, Maiden Newton, Thornford, Yetminster, Chetnole, Yeovil Pen Mill, Castle Cary, Bruton, Frome, Westbury to Bath Spa and Bristol Temple Meads station route. It is important that there is clear investment in this important railway line both at Weymouth Town station and Dorchester West where disabled access is required to the hospital from the Bristol bound platform improved access to Dorchester South station for disabled passengers and houly train service to Bristol and Exeter.

The Wessex railway partnership or Blackmore Vale Railway Partnership are not mentioned.

Investment is required in the Weymouth to Poole Bournemouth and London Waterloo route with the track doubled through Moreton on the electrified section. The Wareham to Swanage route needs a daily rail service and Wareham station should have proper disabled access with a lift, footbridge, disabled toilets and improvements in bus/rail integration.

Increasing the amount freight carried by rail should be a priority for the county to meet global emissions targets and investment is required in facilities at Weymouth, Wool and Hamworthy.

The Exeter St Davids, Exeter Central to Honiton, Axminster, Chard Junction, Crewkerne, Yeovil Junction, Sherborne, Templecombe, Gillingham Tisbury,

Wilton, Salisbury, Basingstoke, Woking and London Waterloo route need a double track section between Yeovil and Salisbury as well as modern hybrid trains as being developed by south west railway first group MTR .The route needs electrification

What bid is the council making with the western gateway transport board to fund vital railway improvements and services in the plan.?

Question 10 from Luke Wakeling

In these unprecedented times, many more people are working from home, and more than ever, we are all relying on a strong internet connection.

In Dorset Council's largest conurbation (Chickerell, Portland & Weymouth) you are lucky to get a 50Mbps download speed. However, if I lived in Bournemouth, I could get Cable internet upto 350Mbps and in some areas Fibre internet upto 1000Mbps. (See attachments)

The Weymouth area receives internet speeds that are orders of magnitude slower than in the neighbouring authority. Our communities, already suffering from poverty and deprivation, are being left further behind every day.

Looking at Think Broadband's stats by Council, Ultrafast (>100Mbps internet) is available to just 7.9% of Dorset Council's residents- that ranks us 380 out of 419 councils - putting us in the bottom 10% of areas for ultrafast internet availability. Dorset Council's area is suffering from digital poverty.

I know that DC is still working to get 24Mbps internet to some areas, however my questions pertain to the delivery of the next generation internet to our urban areas.

Questions

What are you doing, and when will we see results, to bring the next generation of internet access (ie. greater than 100Mbps) to the residents of Dorset?

What do you say to the young people of Dorset who are looking for jobs and opportunities in technology, and think they need to leave our beautiful county to succeed?

Statement from Paula Klaentschi

1. I would like to **thank the DC team** for getting this formative clear communication this far.
2. I ask that **2. Financial Implications** identifies the potential rewards to DC by Generating Renewable Energy in contrast to the costs. That DC promote Dorset expert manufacturers/remanufacturers using Council Tax incentives to lead in new circular economy initiatives.
3. In **3. Climate implications** add to Current/ Residual Risk the Inevitable Risk [what we have to prepare for] predicted rise in sea level, back flooding low ground and swamping Weymouth.
4. In **7. Background Papers** add:
 - 4.1 **Energy.** support the local economy to phase out all carbon fuels in energy generation. DC to stop directing RDF to EfW MSW Incineration and preventing new plants being built. Because incinerators emit more GHGs than a gas power station and crucially undermine the Circular Economy. Richard Drax wrote 07.07.20: “to the Secretary of State at DEFRA. I have pointed out that you have concerns about the whole issue of air pollution and the UK Government’s inadvertent proliferation of harmful emissions from EfW Incineration and the incorrect designation of this form of energy as being renewable. I have also highlighted your concerns that the Environment Agency should have the power to refuse permits on the grounds that a proposal is inconsistent with the declared Climate Emergency and that an Incineration Exit Strategy should become UK Government policy as soon as possible.”
 - 4.2 **Waste** is material, it is part of our diminishing resources. DC can incentivise the circular economy by its purchasing power. Dorset manufacturers need support to adapt to use only materials that can be readily reused or recycled.

Today legacy landfill is being rewilded and turned into leisure and nature reserves. Landfill activity has moved to Incinerator with a green wash on the energy generated. DC can lead the way and control about what is fed into an incinerator so that nothing reusable is pushing GHGs into the air. Professor Ian Boyd, Defra Chief Scientist advises *“If there is one way of quickly extinguishing the value in a material, it is to stick it in an incinerator and burn it. It may give you energy out at the end of the day, but some of those materials, even if they are plastics, with a little ingenuity, can be given more positive value. One thing that worries me is that we are taking these materials, we are putting them in incinerators, we are losing them for ever*

and we are creating carbon dioxide out of them, which is not a great thing. We could be long-term storing them until we have the innovative technologies to reuse them and turn them into something that is more positively valued.”

Statement from Jasmine O’Hare

Raise the Roof is a partnership between The Arts Development Company, Wessex Community Assets, Common Ground and Bridport Town Council.

Working with experts such as Assemble and local farmers, we are developing practical ways of how we can utilise sustainable local materials such as timber and start re-growing hemp (as it used to be grown in the area), to be processed into hempcrete for local housing materials, as opposed to high carbon materials such as concrete.

The design and build of these will be done by the local artists, designers, architects and builders. We will also be opening up opportunities for the local communities to get involved, so that they can learn practical skills in terms of helping to inform and build their own environments and how we can all make positive changes locally.

We would welcome the opportunity to share our learning with Dorset Council, as we see this as a way forward to address the climate emergency, as well as helping the affordable housing agenda.