

Councillor Questions

Questions from Cllr N Ireland

1. Agenda Item #7 – Q2 Performance Update

“I note with some concern that in the latest performance update against our council’s plan there is a significant shortfall in the number of affordable homes delivered. Ignoring for now the fact that the 300 homes per annum is a wholly inadequate target given the housing list extends to something like 5000, the facts are that we’ve only achieved 75% in the first half-year, leaving another 186 before year end just to break even. As a member of one of this council’s planning committees, I observe that most of our meetings have at least one item asking for a reduction or the complete removal of the provision for affordable housing in a development previously approved. What is this council going to do in the remaining 3+ years of its term to ensure that not only we meet the 300/year target of affordable homes, but significantly exceed it for the benefit of our residents?”

2. Agenda Item #9 – Local Plan Consultation

“The Ward I represent in Dorset Council is entirely rural, ranging from small settlements such as Upton and Ringstead to the largest village of Crossways. Apart from the latter, all the settlements I represent are regarded under the current Local Plan as unsustainable and recently, post Dorset Council’s emergence, these villages have been subject to a strict application of a sustainability rule and essentially denied any opportunity for new builds, unless perversely for ‘holiday accommodation’ when it’s apparently OK. In virtually all cases these proposed residential developments, many profoundly towards the “Eco” and affordable end of the spectrum, have been fully supported by the local parish councils and residents as they realise that without development of suitable housing, their communities will atrophy, their village shop close, their children leave. This council’s proposed Local Plan does not address these issues. It persists with notions of 15 miles sustainability when most people don’t work in their local town, it ignores the fact that rural bus services won’t suddenly emerge as a panacea for all when we have absolutely no policy to inject the funds or subsidies necessary to sustain the service levels required (and whilst we also shamefully continue to pay the bare minimum possible for bus pass use), and it completely ignores the fact that ICE vehicles are banned from sale in 10 years’ time - BEV journeys have zero emissions assuming the charging source is RE friendly i.e. distance doesn’t matter. The proposed Local Plan places the communities I represent all in Tier 4 bar one i.e. no housing. A more suitable policy would be to allow development within or adjacent to such settlements if they meet a suitable standard, for example Passivhaus. Will the Cabinet endorse and enact this proposal?”