

**Full Council  
16 February 2021  
Questions from Councillors**

**Question 1 – submitted by Cllr Andrew Kerby**

During the COVID pandemic, the majority of Dorset residents have followed the law by staying at home and only leaving for essential reasons. The lockdown for many, including myself has been particularly difficult, with families split and children unable to attend school. Though I get frustrated with the lockdown, I understand the need to reduce the amount of interactions to slow the spread of Coronavirus.

I find it exasperating that over lockdown and the tier restrictions that a minority of holiday lets and guesthouses are still remaining open for business, in clear breach of COVID measures. This is wrong and I feel very little seems to be done to enforce those rogue businesses and individuals. Additionally, I believe that many of these 'rogue' let's have claimed government grants designed to support closed businesses over the tough lockdowns. This is fraud and is taking funds away from legitimate struggling industries.

My concern is that Dorset Council is not being proactive enough in identifying rogue businesses, nor acting on information passed to the council from residents and the police. There is the additional worry that Dorset Council is failing to use its own data to identify potential fraud – particularly around government grants. I ask for assurance that Dorset Council is taking all necessary steps to ensure that our residents are safe and that fraud to the taxpayer is swiftly acted on.

Upon doing my own research, I have found just how easy it is to book a property online using some well-known national websites, with no questions asked to whether my stay was legitimate. I ask members to join me in condemning those online holidays letting websites, that are still operating and putting the lives' of our residents at risk.

**Question 2 – submitted by Cllr David Tooke**

The current Local Plan Consultation strategy largely relies on people having access to, and sufficient familiarity and experience with, the internet.

Whilst there are copies lodged with local Libraries people need to be able to book, collect, read and return these in a short space of time. Given the three-week loan period it's likely that each copy will only be read by two, or at most three people, in the time available.

Many people are suffering extreme hardship and stress, many juggling home working whilst having to home educate children, many battling with grief, or loss of their livelihood. A great number of people do not have access to on-line facilities or are simply unable to engage with it. This is not the time to be

conducting a "public consultation" when a large number of local residents are unable to participate.

I am sure the whole Council would prefer a fully franchised, democratic process, which would lend significant weight to the eventual published plan, rather than the democratically limited process currently in hand.

In light of this, should the Council not extend the Consultation until later in the year, when we hope to be able to have some face to face contact and the ability to run well-structured road shows, and fully involve as many of our residents as possible?

### **Question 3 – submitted by Cllr Beryl Ezzard**

We have always been conservationists and conscious of reducing our carbon footprint year on year, but will our actions be fast enough? Members on this Council agreed to the Climate & Ecological Emergency in May 2019 in an urgent call to action. We need action now to slow down and reverse the current temperature rising.

Why, when other Councils nearby has, this Council has not, budgeted for Climate & Ecological emergency action in the coming year? A £100,000 at the very least, should be a priority for this Council; although we face many difficulties and trials currently, we need to focus on the objective of being carbon neutral by 2030 not by 2040.

We need to give the Dorset Community a solid commitment to quicken our pace, to reverse the trend and save our only Planet for future generations. It may mean the initial outlay is more expensive using renewal energy; solar and wind, however, within a few years, reduced heating costs and pollution will give priceless return for future generations to enjoy.

There are several budget items of lesser priority, in our opinion, that would allow for this Fund. Will the Council now act and amend the Budget Statement to include £100,000 for the Climate & Ecological Emergency action this coming year?

Thank you