

**Questions for Full Council
16 May 2019**

Questions and Statements from members of the public

1. Mr Alistair Chisholm - Question

"Since the 'ALL for Dorset' group of Independent councillors are mindful that

(a) a Referendum on Council Governance was held in West Dorset in 2014,

(b) the West Dorset electorate voted convincingly by 2:1 (16,534 to 8,811) to change the one-party WDDC Executive Committee, or 'Cabinet', to a mixed-party Strategy Committee to reflect, far more democratically, the make-up of the full Council,

(c) the Executive Committee, or 'Cabinet', will be the most important policy-making committee of this new Council and should therefore reflect, as far as possible, the composition of the new Council, and

(d) the great majority of the Dorset Council electorate will share this latter view,

(1) what principles have guided, or will guide, the selection of the Executive Committee, or 'Cabinet', of the new, unitary Dorset Council?, and (2) has this decision already been made and, if so, what is that decision and what principles were applied in its making?"

Response from the Leader of Council:-

"The Order which established the new Dorset Council was very clear in requiring that the Council should adopt the Leader and Executive governance model. In the Leader and Executive model the Leader is elected by the full Council. I am extremely grateful for the confidence that fellow councillors have placed in me by electing me as Council Leader.

The Leader and Executive model gives me as Leader personal responsibility for deciding both the areas of responsibility to be filled on my Cabinet and which councillors should be appointed to those areas.

Conservative candidates were successful in being elected to the majority of seats on Dorset Council and I have drawn my Cabinet from the majority group. In making my decisions about areas of responsibility and who should fill them my guiding principles has been to identify not only the best person for the role but also a group of councillors who will be able to work together

effectively as a team. As part of that I believe that particular strength of purpose comes from forming a Cabinet of like-minded councillors drawn from the same political group.

Councillors from all political groups and ungrouped councillors will all play an important part in Dorset Council. I am committed to working with councillors from all groups and this is reflected in the announcement that I have just made about a cross party executive advisory panel to advise the Council on the implications of climate change in Dorset.”

The following questions all relate to Climate Change, the Chairman will ask all the members of the public to read out their questions/statement and a response will be provided by Ray Bryan after all of the questions/statement have been read out.

2. Mr Philip Jordan - Question

“Please to help solve the situation incorporating/using as an initial start point Energy Trust advice below*: can Dorset Council urgently agree an Environment & Climate Change Emergency , together with related solution/s, via sustainably resourced Problem Analysis/Action Plan development Meetings (as A, B or C above or similar – inside Council/out in Community)”

Energy Trust advice* <https://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/blog/climate-change-what-can-you-do-help>

3. Ms Caz Dennet – Statement on The Case for a Climate Emergency Declaration

Caz Dennett, on behalf of Extinction Rebellion

The science is clear. It is understood that we are facing an unprecedented global emergency. We are in a life or death situation of our own making. We must act now.

At the end of 2018, the UN Secretary General warned that:

- Humanity and life on Earth now face a ‘direct existential threat’
- The world must act swiftly and robustly to keep global warming under 1.5°Celsius and avoid utterly catastrophic impacts to life on Earth.

Human activities have caused the planet’s average surface temperature to rise about 1.1° since the late 19th century and most of this warming has occurred in the past 35 years.

Maybe 1 and ½ degrees doesn’t sound like much? We are at a tipping point, if we do not act now we seriously risk runaway or uncontrollable climate change. To put this temperature rise into context, for those of you with high school aged children (or grandchildren), the projected temperature rise when your child or grandchild retires is around 5 degrees.

Effects on global human society, if the climate and ecological emergency is not addressed, may spiral out of control.

- Mass species loss
- Sea level rise and Flooding
- Wildfires
- Water shortage
- Crop failure
- Extreme weather
- Millions of people displaced
- Disease
- Increased risk of wars and conflicts

Please be in no doubt that the **climate and environmental emergency is real.**

A mass extinction event is underway. Many current life forms could be wiped out or at least committed to extinction by the end of this century (when your child or grandchild retires). I think we would all agree **this is not the legacy we want future generations to inherit from us.**

We need environmental considerations and risk assessments to be **central to Dorset Council's decision making, actions and behaviors.** We need a proactive approach to preventing further environmental harms. If you can see a pipe is leaking flammable liquid, you do not watch and wait to see if it catches fire and only act once it has. But currently our government at all levels is doing precisely this. The pipe is already leaking, we have no time to wait and watch for the disaster to unfold.

This means taking actions and commitments that demonstrate environmental-based decisions, for example:

- Investment and support for **public transport** - we need early action to reinstate bus services that have been cut in recent years.
- Action on **air pollution**, such as the ongoing situation on Boot Hill , Rodwell Road in Weymouth where levels of NO2 have regularly exceeded legal limits causing serious harm to resident's health and wellbeing
- Planning consideration for **renewable energy schemes** - Navitus Bay Offshore Wind Park was refused planning in Sept 2015, this was a decision in the wrong direction to help reduce harmful emissions

We demand Dorset Council **RECOGNISE THE CURRENT CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL CRISIS BY DECLARING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY and ACT NOW** to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025.

Thank you for listening.

4. Ms Caz Dennett – Question (on behalf of Extinction Rebellion)

Declaration of a climate emergency in principle

You have kindly listened to the case for Dorset Council to declare a climate emergency.

Does any Councillor deny or doubt the climate crisis we are in, if not will this meeting agree to declare a **climate emergency in principle TODAY** and approve a written motion to formally declare a climate emergency at the earliest opportunity and with a sense of urgency?

5. Mr Scott Morrison - Question

West Dorset Friends of the Earth:

You may have received an email from our group recently.

I think everyone in this room is convinced that all of us must change our behavior in response to climate change and biodiversity collapse. So I am asking today that this council like many others in the UK declares a Climate Emergency.

A declaration is a statement of intent: what will our community, our county, look like in 10 years time, what will it look like in 50 years time. The declaration is easier to make than to convert into policies that will sustain us, but first we need that intent.

10 years ago councils were busy enshrining sustainability into their frameworks. If only we had felt the urgency then that we now share. Our responses were not bold enough, we behaved as if we could solve climate change with slight of hand accountancy; that we could still squeeze the last drops of fossil fuels from our land while solving this.

But as someone said a century and a half ago:

The **dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate** to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise -- with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disentrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.

We don't have the luxury any longer to wrap ourselves up in labels of left or right; we need to shed our self-constraints and act to give Greta Turnberg and her generation a future. It is not good enough for our legacy to them to be just an apology.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

Recent statements and reports by both the Committee on Climate change and the UK Parliament have all highlighted the significant concerns and risks associated with climate change to our environment, our society and our economy.

As the new Dorset Council, we have an opportunity and an obligation to demonstrate leadership - thinking globally about the implications of climate change and acting locally to help address them in our communities.

Councils in Dorset have historically taken some large steps. We have the most energy-efficient schools in the country and Dorset was an early adopter of low-energy street lights. We need to continue this good work but in doing so we need to be more ambitious and implement new initiatives to bring about significant reductions in our carbon emissions.

The crucial need to tackle climate change is something that we can all agree upon. It is an issue which transcends party politics and after discussions with the other Cllrs we have agreed on the need to create a cross-party Panel on Climate Change. That Panel, led by myself as Environment Portfolio holder, will have the task of developing policy for Dorset Council. That policy needs to take into account:

- the most recent science
- the recommendations of the UK Committee on Climate Change
- and the national approach

but it also needs to reflect the particular concerns about and the impacts of climate change upon our own communities in Dorset.

The Executive Advisory Panel will report back to the Council and the Cabinet on progress and the development of the policy.

I am committed to putting sustainability at the heart of the organisation. I hope that you will support us in putting Dorset at the forefront of councils working to tackle climate change.

6. Mr Phillip Jordan

“Please to also help solve the situation can Dorset Council reconsider the 3,500 new homes proposed for just North of Dorchester, made in 2018’s LPR Preferred Options: with all due respect, these proposals fail in Heritage & many “Environmental” ways, as they just stretching the built Environment in the same old same old way, as over a century ago led Octavia Hill to be one of 3 founders of the National Trust e.g.

Among unanswered queries they raise, LPRPO proposals like “Norchester” (& elsewhere in Dorset), don’t tackle the Environment & Climate Change crisis e.g. though use of floors over shops is in the LPR, there’s an unmet need for active official promotion of say
- residential use of the many under used upper floors above Dorchester shops, & land used or zoned for things other than housing!

Similarly, 2018’s LPR Preferred Options have little on utilising/maximising use of the currently under used existing Rail network e.g.
- relating new development to the Railway & adjacent brown-field land;

- encouraging much better use of the existing Rail infrastructure + walking & cycle (& other public transport) routes promoting healthy exercise, greater biodiversity & less carbon costs & impact!”

ADAPT = A Dorset Action Plan Together to help solve the Environment & Climate Change Emergency

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

The Dorset Council is required to have a new local plan, covering the whole area, in place by April 2024, and the Shadow Executive Committee agreed in February that the Council should aim to have this adopted by April 2023. A report on the programme for its preparation will be brought to Cabinet at the end of June.

The new local plan will need to provide for the housing numbers generated by the national standard methodology for the area. It is also possible that it will need to provide for housing need that cannot be met in adjoining council areas.

Work on the new plan will include reviewing all the options that have been previously considered, to decide on the most appropriate distribution of development across the council area. It is however already clear that the housing needs cannot all be met through the efficient use of land within the urban areas, and that further greenfield development will be required as well.

Sustainable development is the aim of the planning system, and factors such as accessibility by public transport, walking and cycling, and impact on biodiversity, will be important considerations in making decisions about the location of development. Concentrating development at the larger settlements with more facilities and public transport, such as Dorchester, is likely to be more sustainable. The text in the 2018 local plan consultation document relating to the North Dorchester development refers to creating easy access for pedestrians and cyclists, reducing carbon emissions from buildings, and enhancement of biodiversity as part of the development.

7. Sara Greenhalf

With Aspirations Academy Trust, currently running with insufficient reserves, and with the situation at Atlantic Academy - Allstars nursery provision under threat of closure due to profitability and a drop in numbers attending the school, which has led to a drop in the PAN - how does this bode for Budmouth College's future?

Job losses are imminent at Budmouth, with redundancies paid for by Dorset Unitary. The curriculum is under threat of loss of subjects. No Ofsted inspections have been carried out since September.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Early Years

All Stars is the Atlantic breakfast and after school club for children from reception year upwards. This provision is certainly under threat of closure, but Dorset Council has no information on what this might mean for the future of Budmouth College. The circumstances surrounding the College are very different to the All Stars situation and it is very difficult to draw conclusions at this stage. It is, however, apparent that closure could impact on Atlantic's intake as parents may chose this school because this provision enables them to work.