



Cabinet

Date: Tuesday, 7 November 2023
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Members (Quorum: 3)

Spencer Flower (Chairman), Gary Suttle (Vice-Chairman), Laura Beddow, Ray Bryan, Simon Gibson, Jill Haynes, Andrew Parry, Byron Quayle, Jane Somper and David Walsh

Chief Executive: Matt Prosser, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic Services Meeting Contact 01305 252234 - kate.critchell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting, apart from any items listed in the exempt part of this agenda.

For easy access to all the council's committee agendas and minutes download the free public app called Modern.Gov for use on any iPad, Android, and Windows tablet. Once downloaded select Dorset Council.

Agenda

Item	Pages
5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	3 - 10

Representatives of town or parish councils and members of the public who live, work, or represent an organisation within the Dorset Council area are welcome to submit either 1 question or 1 statement for each meeting. You are welcome to attend the meeting in person or via MS Teams to read out your question and to receive the response. If you submit a statement for the committee this will be circulated to all members of the committee in advance of the meeting as a supplement to the agenda and appended to the minutes for the formal record but will not be read out at the meeting. The first 8 questions and the first 8 statements received from members of the public or organisations for each meeting will be accepted on a first come first served basis in accordance with the deadline set out below. Further information read [Public Participation - Dorset Council](#)

All submissions must be emailed in full to

Kate.Critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on Thursday 2 November 2023.

When submitting your question or statement please note that:

- You can submit 1 question or 1 statement.
- a question may include a short pre-amble to set the context.
- It must be a single question and any sub-divided questions will not be permitted.
- Each question will consist of no more than 450 words, and you will be given up to 3 minutes to present your question.
- when submitting a question please indicate who the question is for (e.g., the name of the committee or Portfolio Holder)
- Include your name, address, and contact details. Only your name will be published but we may need your other details to contact you about your question or statement in advance of the meeting.
- questions and statements received in line with the council's rules for public participation will be published as a supplement to the agenda.
- all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

Cabinet – 7 November 2023

Question from the Public

1. Question from Cllr David Sarson

As mayor of Lyme Regis, I am conveying Lyme Regis Town Council's strong support of the recommendation from the Place and Resources Overview Committee to include in the Dog-Related PSPO the requirement for dogs to be kept on a lead on Lyme Regis Front Town Beach during the winter.

The town council wants to see a total ban on dogs on Lyme's front beaches all-year-round, a view we shared with Dorset Council but unfortunately has not been taken into consideration. This was not one of the options in the questionnaire and we have serious concerns about the integrity of the consultation. We were forced to choose a 'best fit' response, as I'm sure many other respondents were, which potentially skewed the survey results.

As local councillors, our opinion has been formed by talking to people in the community, by listening to the complaints we receive and with consideration of the tragic events related to dogs we are hearing of nationally. We were therefore very concerned the findings of the public consultation were informed by a large majority of non-residents. The town council is here for Lyme residents, 54% of whom favoured dogs on leads during the winter. I'm sure there are more but the silent majority cannot be accounted for.

The town council is responsible for people who use the public areas under our management and we want people to be prioritised over dogs. A dog off a lead is not under control and all we are asking is for dogs to be kept under control while using the Lyme's only sand beach. We feel it's reasonable to retain just one of our four beaches as a safe place for people to play, walk and relax without fear of being knocked over by a loose dog, or heaven forbid, being attacked by an out-of-control dog.

The argument that there are no other accessible places in Lyme Regis where dogs can have off-lead exercise is simply not true. There are many other open spaces, including beaches, fields and bridleways, which are safe and accessible.

The argument that Lyme's beaches aren't busy in the autumn and winter is also untrue. The 'winter period' would include October and February half terms, the Christmas and New Year break and often Easter, our busiest times.

As landowner of the sand beach, the town council is responsible for public safety, enforcement and cleaning; to help us fulfil these responsibilities, we feel it's absolutely essential dogs are not allowed to run loose on the beach.

If Dorset Council allows dogs off lead during the winter, will it take responsibility for public liability, enforcement and cleaning if an accident happens as a result of dogs running freely?

2. Question from Debbie Conibere

I fully support the initial recommendation from the Consultation Report point 1.7.3 to harmonise all Dorset Beaches by permitting dogs off leads on the Lyme Regis Town Beach in the winter period, noting that the majority were in favour of dogs off leads. Given that Officers have found the adjacent beaches are not suitable for anyone with mobility issues it is extremely important that dogs are permitted off lead on the Lyme Regis Town Beach to allow those with mobility issues or disabilities to have a safe and accessible space to exercise their dog off lead as per the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Permitting dogs off leads works well on all the other Dorset Beaches under the PSPO and to include Lyme Regis Town Beach would bring consistency across Dorset.

To not permit dogs off leads would go against the majority in favour of dogs off leads and question the reliability of participating in future Consultations should the majority be ignored. It would also go against the statement in point 1.6.1 in gaining consistency across Dorset. A dogs on leads restriction would be neither appropriate nor proportional given the findings in point 1.7.3 that there is no evidence of significant use of this beach compared with other Dorset beaches without restrictions. For the past 2.5 years I have taken daily photographs of the empty Lyme Regis Town Beach which I have submitted as evidence that confirms there is no significant use of the Town Beach during the winter months. Given that many with mobility issues already face huge obstacles in their life being refused to have their companion dog off lead could impact negatively on mental well-being.

I ask Cabinet to please adhere to the initial recommendations from the Consultation Report for dogs off leads on the Lyme Regis Town Beach. This would support a harmonisation of restrictions and would provide an inclusive space for everyone, including law abiding dog owners, especially those with mobility issues or disabilities, to exercise their dogs off leads.

What can Cabinet do to ensure that Lyme Regis Town Beach is in harmony with the other Dorset Beaches under the PSPO to become an inclusive space for everyone to address the issues of those with mobility issues?

3. Question from Richard Daw

Since I have become disabled myself with severe mobility problems, I have realised that Lyme Regis does not have any safe suitable places to walk my dog off lead except the Town Beach and Dorset Council Officers have agreed with this. 54% of respondents were in favour of dogs off leads, leading to the initial recommendation for dogs off leads as per point 1.7.3 of the consultation report which I fully support. To have dogs off leads on the Lyme Regis Town Beach would harmonise all Dorset Beaches . It is extremely important that dogs are permitted off lead on the Lyme Regis Town Beach to allow those with mobility issues or disabilities to have a safe and accessible space to exercise their dog off lead as per the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Permitting dogs off leads works well on all the other Dorset Beaches under the

PSPO and to include Lyme Regis Town Beach would bring consistency across Dorset.

To not permit dogs off leads would go against the majority in favour of dogs off leads and would cause people to believe that democracy does not work. If the majority of respondents were ignored then one would question what would be the point of participating in any future consultations. To not permit dogs off leads would also go against the statement in point 1.6.1 in gaining consistency across Dorset beaches. Given the findings in point 1.7.3 a dog's on leads restriction is not proportionate especially given there has been no evidence of usage between the Town Beach and other Dorset Beaches that do permit dogs off leads.

Living with a disability is already difficult, by not providing a safe and accessible space for dog off lead exercise has a severe negative affect on mental well-being as it feels the decision makers do not care for those who with mobility issues

Please could Cabinet consider those who are less mobile and go with the initial recommendations from the Consultation Report for dogs off leads on the Lyme Regis Town Beach. This brings all beaches in line with the restrictions and would provide an inclusive space for all to enjoy.

I wish to ask Cabinet how will you ensure the Officers concerns about adjacent unsuitable beaches are taken into account when deciding about year round dog off lead access on the Lyme Regis Town Beach (as a disability doesn't vanish in the summer), taking into consideration those with disabilities so that we are not treated like a second class citizen due to not providing us with a safe and accessible space for dog off lead exercise?

4. Question from Helen Davey-Smith

Given that the Consultation Report findings have led to the recommendation for dogs to be permitted to be off lead during the off-season months of 1st October - 30 April in line with other Dorset beaches, a recommendation that I would like upheld, and that the Consultation Report was the result of Dorset Council's transparent democratic online Consultation that resulted in 54% voting in favour for the current PSPO restriction of dogs on lead in those off season months to be removed, what would be the reason for ignoring that 54% majority requesting dogs to be permitted off lead - as Lyme Regis Town Council seems to want?'

5. Question from Martin and Kay Pennycott

The consultation for the new PSPO, as stated in your terms of reference, "will be a chance for people, residents, business owners, organisations and visitors, to have their say on where and when they think there should be restrictlons on dogs in public places, including beaches". The consultation closed on Friday 25th August 2023 with no further comments accepted.

Question - Can the council confirm that all the above views from all stated parties will be included and honoured from the consultation and that any information submitted outside of the above timeframe (including any supplementary information from the

LRTC following the meeting on Thursday 5th October 2023) will be discounted and will not influence the recommended decision in anyway?

For Lyme Regis, this would mean going with your own officer's recommendations - a majority vote of 54% for off lead on Sandy Beach in the winter months when the beach is much, much quieter; allowing those with mobility issues to have access to a safe space (alternatives are not safe nor accessible) and will harmonise Lyme Regis with all other areas in Dorset.

Lyme Regis Town Council have a very negative view of dog ownership and seem to be allowing personal opinions to influence their recommendations, which is not representative of all residents at all. Stating that all constituents are against dogs being allowed off lead in the winter months is not my experience nor those of the many people I talk to - both dog owners and non dog owners. Lyme Regis, outside of the Town Council's bubble, is generally a very dog friendly and welcoming place with many of the restaurants, cafes and shops all being dog friendly. The Town Council's view is contrary to this and should not be allowed to sway the decision of a fair and open consultation process.

6. Question from Shaun McConnell

Preamble:

I am in the process of moving to Lyme Regis from Derbyshire. One of the reasons for choosing this delightful town as a place to live is its dog-friendliness, in that the vast majority of shops, pubs and restaurants in Lyme Regis welcome dogs with open arms.

Question:

What direct and documented evidence has been presented to the Cabinet, which would go against the recommendation for permitting dogs off leads in winter, on the front beaches in Lyme Regis?

Cabinet – 7 November 2023

Statements from the Public

1. Statement from Linda Stevenson

Since 2017 DogFriendly. Social have been making people aware of PSPOs, including where locals and visitors can find information. We look to our members to engage in consultations which impact on our ability to exercise our legal duty to look after our pet's welfare.

We encourage members to be environmentally aware, using compostable bags to pick up after our dogs. Members will carry extra bags and freely give these to those in need. Many of our members pick up litter while out walking, often removing items that could cause injury to people as well as dogs.

We engage with the dog warden service, advising members on contacting the dog warden service where that is required.

Dog Friendly have been active in the Weymouth community, attending local events

Bark in the Park 2022 Radiople Park
BIG Walkies Event April 30th 2021 2022 2023
Big Walkies Event October 1st 2021 2022 2023
The Marsh Community Events 2021 2022 2023
Expo Weymouth
Dog Sausage and Cider Festival 2021 2022 2023
Margaret Green County Show Dorset 2023
Paws 4 Fort and Dorset Dog Friendly Business Awards 2022 and 2023. With more events planned in 2024

In 2023, we have Dog Friendly Groups in the following locations within Dorset:

Weymouth and Portland.
Dorchester and Poundbury
Bridport and West Bay
Swanage and Purbeck
Lyme Regis

Dog friendly were pleased to see that Dorset council have looked to have a consistent approach to restrictions throughout the county. We were also happy to see that the question of access early or late in a day was included in the consultation.

We were disappointed that the approach to 'timed access' failed to use information from Cornwall council. The question should have been split into 2 distinct questions. One on the duration of the ban (May to September, June to August sort of thing) and another looking at whether timed access was supported.

We hear comments about blue flag beaches and cleaning the beach at specific times. Neither of these have been an issue in Cornwall

It should also be noted that if the timed access was introduced, this would actually give the ability to dog walkers to use Dorset's beaches at quieter times and be better for our dog's welfare.

It's disappointing to see the council glibly saying that this can be looked at in another 3 years. It's 3 more years of near deserted beaches in the early morning and late evening.

We also note that the situation at Lyme Regis, is being influenced by the town council. The closeness of the vote for dogs on leads in winter being discontinued needs to be respected. If memory serves the restriction was introduced on a similarly close vote.

There needs to be strong evidential support for the dogs on leads during winter to be retained. It goes against a stated aim of consistency across Dorset. Doing so without this would be damaging to the view of the consultation as a democratic process. It could even lead to the PSPO legality being challenged.

2. Statement from Cllr Caroline Aldridge, Chair Lyme Regis Town Council Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee

Recommendation 1.7.3 Lyme Regis Front Town Beach – proposed change in arrangements to allow dogs off leads 1 October to 30 April.

I strongly object to this proposal which would mean that a relatively small number of dogs and their owners were prioritized over the health, safety and wellbeing of the people of Lyme (and their visitors), many with young children and vulnerable relatives who use the small, sandy beach throughout the year to play in the sand and swim. This is the only sandy beach in Lyme.

I challenge the statement at para 1.1.9 that the consultation had a good representation of respondent dog owners and non-dog owners. Para 1.1.13 states that two thirds of responses were from dog owners. PDSA statistics 2023 state 29% of UK adults are dog owners. Statistics from the Animal and Plant Health Agency (2016-2019 being most recent) show 25% of households owning a dog. That same agency has 2023 postcode information for Lyme Regis (DT7) showing 0.22 dogs per household. Thus a survey where 62% of respondents were dog owners is not representative. This was admitted at the Place and Resource Committee discussion on 5th October as was the fact that no attempt had been made to adjust for this imbalance. Additionally 49% of respondents were not local people with a high percentage of these non residents wanting dogs off the lead. This is therefore not representative of the views of the local population.

It is untrue that there is limited suitable alternative space to exercise a dog off lead on the flat during the winter months and shows that the authors of this report are not familiar with Lyme, there are suitable beach, river and field walks.

It is stated “ there is no evidence of significant use of this beach by families and children compared with other beaches in Dorset...” Families use it regularly in winter because it is quieter than in summer. It is accessible and safe for young children and vulnerable elderly – dogs being allowed to race and play there will destroy that opportunity for many families as they will fear being knocked over, attacked or pollution from the beach and sea being used as a dog lavatory.

As Chair of LRTC Tourism Committee, I have seen many complaints about poorly controlled dogs being aggressive, knocking people over and sometimes injuring them, frightening small children by grabbing their toys, attacking other dogs and fouling, with their owners often managing this poorly.

We need this restriction to keep our vulnerable safe.

3. Statement from Mrs Cynthia Sharp

As an older (mid-70's) resident of Lyme Regis, I am extremely concerned about the possibility of dogs being allowed off leads on the sandy beach in the winter months.

I already witness many dogs along the seafront completely ignoring their owners pleas not to jump up, even though they are on leads, and on more than one occasion I have been almost knocked over as I pass them.

My balance is not good and, especially in the colder months, the sandy beach is one place where I can walk safely, alone or with my peers, as pebbles are difficult for me.

I recently saw one young mother yelling at her children as they were scrabbling about on the pebbles in the exact spot where a dog had deposited a dropping just minutes beforehand. Though it was picked up, the surrounding pebbles were wet and of course contaminated with the remains of the faeces.

The sandy beach is known as a safe space locally, and, particularly when the tide is in, there is just not enough space for families, people like myself and loose dogs to enjoy themselves.

I met a local single friend recently who had ended up in hospital after falling on a beach not far from Lyme due to a large dog leaping up at her. She was off work for several weeks and was badly affected mentally. I am very afraid this may happen to me.

There are so many other places to exercise dogs in Lyme including along the River Lym to Uplyme, along Ware cliffs, on Monmouth beach and on Timber Hill.

Please may we keep a few spaces for older residents, many with small grandchildren, where dogs are under control.