



# Cabinet

**Date:** Thursday, 9 October 2025  
**Time:** 6.30 pm  
**Venue:** Council Chamber, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

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**Interim Chief Executive: Sam Crowe**, Dorset Council County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

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## A G E N D A

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#### 4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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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](mailto:Kate.Critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk) by 8.30am on **Monday 6 October 2025**

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.
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## Cabinet – 9 October 2025

### Questions from the Public

#### 1. Question from Mr Geoff Chopping

I am Geoffrey Chopping and although I am a Holt Parish Councillor, I am not asking this question on behalf of Holt Parish Council.

Following a Community Governance Review, all of the Furzehill Settlement and its surrounding area is now part of Holt Parish and therefore the Furzehill Settlement, with its defined settlement boundaries within the Green Belt, can neither be legally described as being part of the Wimborne Minster and Colehill Settlement, nor part of Wimborne Minster or Colehill Parishes.

In the current Dorset Council Local Plan Consultation, some settlements are listed for Tiers 1 and Tiers 2 within the text, whilst Tier 3 Settlements are listed in Figure 3.2. Furzehill is not included among those settlements.

Paragraph 3.2.8 states: *All other areas are either rural in character or comprise small villages/hamlets that do not have a sufficient services or facilities for everyday needs to be met locally. These areas are unlikely to be suitable for growth in line with National Policy.*

This is consistent with National Policy, as although Furzehill has a village store it is generally remote from existing infrastructure and facilities in Wimborne.

However, 4 sites (totalling over 500 homes) that appear in the subordinate Appendix A, touch or are very close to the Furzehill Settlement boundaries. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment confirm the unsuitability of these 4 sites because of the remoteness and accessibility issues. All four also happen to be within the Green Belt, although that was only mentioned for one of the four.

**CONCLUSION:** The exclusion of the legally recognised separate Furzehill Settlement from Tiers 1, 2 and 3 as listed within the Dorset Council Local Plan Consultation 2025, automatically excludes the Furzehill Settlement from significant development other than that proposed in the 2014 Core Strategy document.

**QUESTION:** Will Dorset Council please confirm the above Conclusion or supply its legal reasoning for rejecting it?

## 2. Question from Karen Tippins

It is now clear from this report that the Shaftesbury Town Council proposal has changed materially since the original approved in Oct 2024. The project costs has risen from £876k to approx. £1.44 million, an increase, as I stated back in July, of £500,000 and several key conditions set by Cabinet in Oct 2024 have only partially been met. The report in agenda 12 states now that the STC proposal is only 78% funded; this proves that the decision made in Oct 2024 by cabinet was based on a flawed s106 submission - that claimed 100% funding. The proposal now includes, as I stated in July, a requirement to resubmit a new planning application to Dorset Planning which complies with Building and H&S regulation and revised parking (due to residents complaints).

Importantly on 11th March 2025, Full Council, STC passed a resolution formally requesting that Dorset Council reconsider the basis of the STC proposal, and instead switch to the STC award to the tried and tested Stourpaine Hall tried and tested proposal lead by Barry Coupe. This concept has a 700 signed petition with parking arrangement already endorsed by local residents. This alternative scheme was fully costed and deliverable, no shortfall of funding and would fulfil the s106 purpose of providing a community facility located in the East of Shaftesbury.

To date there has been no evidence that Cabinet were consulted the 11th March 2025 STC resolution states...,'submit a request to Dorset Council to advise how they would consider adopting the Barry Coupe design for Mampitts Hall', as it was known and published by STC that the STC proposal was not Building Control and/or Health and Safety compliant from the tender responses plus all tenders stated the s106 estimates submitted by STC were flawed and shortfalls of £500,000 quoted.

The Cabinet paper also introduces using the halls first floor for employment purposes; stating DC are to use this hall and s106 contributions for a Dorset Council Family Hub. No resident has asked for this and to be used for employment by DC is inconsistent with the developer contribution contractual terms.

In addition, the cabinet paper proposes early draw down of 10% of s106 funds before conditions of the award have been satisfied. This weakens the financial safeguards and exposes the Council to avoidable risks, particularly when the proposal already faces a funding deficient and untested delivery model. The cafe element also mirrors Newton Abbot Community Hub cafe which closed after only five years, demonstrating how fragile such operating assumptions can be.

My question is therefore as follows:-

Given that the STC proposal is now significantly over budget, under funded, and dependent on revised planning consent, including Dorset Council Family Hub tenancy inconsistent with community use requirements and ignores STC own resolution FC134 to ask Dorset Council to adopt the architect Barry Coupe design - modelled on the Stourpaine Community Hall - why is DC Cabinet not acting on the

Shaftesbury Town Council resolution and formally re-evaluating the allocation rather than extending milestones and approving early drawdown for a project whose costs, scope and purpose have materially changed?

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## **Statement from George Dunn, Tenant farmers Association**

Please find below some thoughts that we believe the Cabinet should consider as it debates the new management strategy for the county farms estate.

### **Background**

The agricultural units now owned and managed by Dorset County Council (referred to as County Council Smallholdings) have their origins in UK Government policy of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century when there was a major concern about the decline in agricultural employment. This led onto a wish to provide farming opportunities for returning ex-servicemen from the two world wars.

The 1970 Agriculture Act embodied the further evolution of the holdings as units to provide a much wider franchise of individuals with opportunities to farm in their own right. In 1984, the House of Lords, in debating what would become the 1984 Agricultural Holdings Act, emphasised the role of these holdings acting as “starter units” which would encourage tenants to move onto larger holdings elsewhere in due course. As a consequence of this, the concept of succession was excluded for these types of holdings.

The question now is what role these farms play in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Today’s challenges are very different to those of a century ago. Local authorities have many more competing demands on their scarce resources and society’s link with farming and agriculture has become significantly weaker as we have developed into an ever more urban-centric country. However, food production is still important as is the management of our countryside and there are still many looking to get into farming but who lack the capital to purchase land or to take on larger tenancies offered in the private sector to make their first step.

### **The Challenge**

The TFA is concerned that in recent times there has been an unhealthy focus, in some local authorities, on the capital value of their farm estates which leads to calls for them to be sold to find resources for other challenges being faced in local communities. The TFA believes that with a more strategic approach to their farm estates, local authorities could benefit significantly in financial terms, continue to provide opportunities for those who want to farm in their own right and be a major driver for rural and wider economic development in their localities.

### ***Meeting the Statutory Objective***

The rules for administration of statutory smallholdings are set out within Part III of the UK Agriculture Act 1970. Councils in their role as statutory smallholding authorities have a duty under legislation to make it their general aim to provide farms to those who wish to be farmers in their own right. This stems from Section 39 of the 1970 Act which reads:

*"Having regard to the general interests of agriculture and of good estate management, [smallholding authorities] shall make it their general aim to provide opportunities for persons to be farmers on their own account by letting holdings to them".*

1. In order to meet that objective, the TFA believes that Dorset and other local authorities with a smallholdings estate have both to offer opportunities to new entrants and to work to sustain existing tenants in their farming career into the long term be that on

the local authority estate or in the private sector. Research has shown that county farms are the principal route into farming for new entrants. However, it is not sufficient to merely oversee a conveyor belt approach where new entrants come on at one end and fall off at the other if they cannot make the transition to the private sector. Either smallholdings authorities need to put resources into ensuring that their tenants can make the transition to the private sector or, if this is not possible, to look at extending existing tenancies and providing longer term tenancies for the security of and investment of those granted initial opportunities. In this respect, the TFA is concerned that there is too much of a focus on new entrants and not enough on progression within the draft management strategy. The vision should be to create a stable, long-term framework for the profitable management of County Council farms to ensure that County Council farms provide their principle function of providing opportunities for individuals to be farmers in their own account.

To assist with progression, the TFA believes that there would be merit in investigating the potential for greater networking and collaboration in the management of County Council Smallholding Estates in other parts of England and Wales.

### ***Development Opportunities***

The TFA recognises that the council can realise significant sums through the sale of individual farms or pieces of land with development potential. The TFA does not oppose such sales as it recognises the benefit of the capital receipts to the County Council whilst maintaining (and possibly enhancing) the bulk of the agricultural estate.

However, once farms are sold, they are gone forever. It would be inappropriate to treat capital as revenue to fund frontline services on an ongoing basis. Value from the local authority estate needs to be harvested rather than mined in accordance with a strategic plan. The TFA would advocate that Dorset looks to take a longer term, strategic and patient approach to disposals which will enable maximum benefit with minimum disruption. Importantly, at least some of the receipts from such disposal should be earmarked for investing in new or existing smallholdings within the local authority. This is something which the TFA believes should be coordinated and encouraged at an all-Wales level by reference to a previously agreed good practice guide endorsed by farming and professional bodies which can be accessed by [clicking here\[1\]](#).

### ***Wider Benefits***

Ownership of County farms also assists the council directly in meeting wider objectives in relation to countryside and environmental issues, access to the countryside, learning outside the classroom, planning policies, greenbelt management and assisting in the management of flood risk. Without the retention of the land bank, these benefits will be lost.

### ***Management***

It is essential to have consistent, enthusiastic proactive staff who are able to engage both with the tenants on the estate and with potential new entrants. The estate management team should also be proactive in reaching out to private estates as possible routes to progression for tenants on the council estate. The estate management team must not be passive or just reactive, they very much need to set the agenda.

### ***Rental income***

The TFA notes that the council has benchmarked its rental income per acre with other local authorities. We do not consider that this is a valid comparison given the extent to which rent varies for many reasons including the level of fixed equipment, repairing obligations, quality of the land, enterprise choice and many others. Rental incomes must be set on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration all relevant factors on the subject holding.

### ***Code of Good Practice and Commissioner of the Tenant Farming Sector***

The county council will be aware of the recently agreed code of Good Practice for Agricultural Landlords and Tenants and the appointment of the Commissioner for the Tenant Farming Sector. The TFA will encourage the county council to include the code of practice within its tenancy agreements (existing tenancy agreements can incorporate code of practice by memorandum) and to include provisions which allow alleged breaches of the code of practice to be put to the Commissioner.

### ***Principal Conclusions***

1. Dorset should review its County Council smallholding estate as an important, strategic, asset that should be retained.
2. More effort should be made to support existing and future tenants to sustain their businesses either within the council or, in the future, in the private sector.
3. There should be greater collaboration with other County farm estates.
4. The council should seek to manage disposals of land from its smallholding estate within the context of a properly thought through asset management plan in order to maximise revenue from development sales whilst not undermining the principal objectives of the estate. Some of this development profit should be used to re-invest in the smallholdings estate.
5. The council should pay greater attention to the wider benefits derived from owning and managing its smallholdings estate.
6. The county farms estate needs a vibrant management team.
7. The agricultural landlord and tenant code of practice should be incorporated into all the council's farm tenancy agreements either when newly let all by memorandum allow all alleged breaches of the code to be referred to the Commissioner.

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**Statement from Greg Williams, deputy Mayor and Chair of the Mampitts Advisory Committee on behalf of Shaftesbury Town Council.**

Thank you for taking the time at cabinet to consider the next stage of the Mampitts project. The residents in the east of Shaftesbury have been promised this community hub for nearly a decade, and we are now at a point where it is closer to reality than ever before. It might not initially seem like that given the change to the condition timelines being recommended by officers, but this new timeline has had the benefit of professional project manager and architectural input in a way the initial application lacked.

To mature the project and develop this more pragmatic plan, Shaftesbury Town Council (STC) has invested nearly £30,000 in this project to date, at risk. This sum excludes the costs of STC personnel time. We have reached the budgetary position where we need early draw down of S106 funds to progress further.

The draw down will enable us to reach RIBA Stage 4 and launch the construction invitation to tender. On receipt of these tenders, we will have much greater certainty of the outturn costs - something I know we are all keen to ascertain considering the increases in the project to date, which we acknowledge.

We make no apology for our ambition for the project to include a first floor, which has driven the cost increase, and from which we can provide space for sorely needed family hub and healthcare services. The eastern ward of Shaftesbury, which I represent along with three other councillors who lead on this project, has its social challenges. These challenges are only going to be compounded by the implementation of the bus gate, further isolating the development from the rest of town.

We must show that STC and DC, working together, can deliver for the whole of Shaftesbury. This project does that. I am also particularly enthused by how we have now forged a closer partnership with DC officers in order to improve delivery certainty.

We recognise the need for stakeholder contributions and grants to close the £0.5m gap between the S106 allocation and the projected outturn. In addition to potential contributions from DC's family hub programme, we have appointed a grants specialist who has experience of the National Lottery Communities Fund in particular. It is in reflecting on their advice that we have not rushed into making the grant application before having evidence of DC's commitment to the project, via this early draw down request in front of you today. Alternative funding sources are also available, as discussed with officers, but in line with the original condition of the S106 award to pursue grant funding, this is what we are prioritising.

Community engagement with the project remains high, and impatient. We have expanded our Mampitts Advisory Committee to members of the public, and together we are looking to move the car park to a safer location behind the hall that also preserves more of the village green space. I could summarise the wider community sentiment in five words – 'just get on with it.' Shaftesbury Town Council asks for the cabinet's consent to do just that.

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