

Cabinet

Date: Thursday, 29 January 2026
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Chief Executive: Catherine Howe, Dorset Council County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

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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 by 8.30am on Monday 26 January 2026.

When submitting your question or statement please note that:

- You can submit 1 question or 1 statement.
 - a question may include a short pre-ambble 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 29 January 2026

Public Participation

Questions

1. Question from James Gillet

PREAMBLE

I have reviewed Section 11.1e of the Transforming Public and Community Transport report, which sets an 'hourly' target for core routes. In the Dorchester and Weymouth areas, busy services like the 1, 2, and 10 already run every 12–15 minutes; reducing these would be a major downgrade for this vital public transport link. Furthermore, residents are frustrated by First's aging fleet of buses and the lack of reliable, frequent direct links to major regional hubs like Poole and Yeovil, which restricts local job opportunities. I also support cheaper fares for 16-25s and a unified ticketing system to modernise our network in line with the high-quality Morebus model seen elsewhere in Dorset.

QUESTION

To achieve the modern vision in Section 4.3, will the Council commit to maintaining 10–15 minute high-frequency targets for busy urban routes across both Dorchester and Weymouth and include requirements for newer vehicles, a restored frequent and direct link to Poole and Yeovil for commuters, and a unified ticketing system rather than applying the lower hourly standard to these vital services?

2. Question from Karen Tippens

Statement on Use of Council Tax Where Section 106 Funding Exists

The proposed 12% increase in Shaftesbury Town Council's precept is not being driven by unavoidable costs, but by the use of Council Tax to fund projects that already have allocated Section 106 developer contributions and which, under proper governance, should not be impacting residents' council tax at all.

1. First, the Mampitts Hub.

Dorset Council Cabinet agreed in October 2025 that this project would be subject to strict project cost control and that early drawdown of Section 106 funds would be available. Despite this, over £60,000 of Council Tax has already been used to fund Mampitts Hub costs, with only a partial Section 106 reimbursement claimed. There is no evidence of a ringfenced project account, no clear reconciliation between Council Tax and Section 106 expenditure, and no published cost-control framework, despite Cabinet direction.

2. Second, Wincombe Recreational Park.

Dorset Council Cabinet papers confirm that £200,000 of Section 106 funding has been agreed with Shaftesbury Town Council for this project. Despite this, the Town Council has added £164,000 of Council Tax to the precept for Wincombe, without published project plans, delivery dates, or cost breakdowns. This represents Council Tax being used in place of developer contributions, contrary to the purpose of Section 106.

3. Third, the Youth Club.

There is £128,000 of Section 106 funding allocated, yet the Town Council has added £5,000 of Council Tax for this project. Again, Council Tax is being used where ringfenced developer funding already exists.

In addition, the precept includes:

- £19,000 in 'Professional and Legal' Cost Centre for “Dorset Council devolution”, with no definition, scope, or supporting agreement published.
- £25,000 for High Street traffic management under Ear Marked Reserve, despite Dorset Highways previously indicating that surveys could be undertaken at no cost to the Town Council.

Taken together, these decisions show a pattern where Council Tax is being used as a substitute for Section 106 funding, rather than Section 106 being used to reduce pressure on residents' bills.

This matters because Section 106 contributions are intended to be spent as a priority in towns like Shaftesbury, which have experienced rapid housing development. When substantial Section 106 funding is allocated and available, Council Tax precepts should not be rising to fund the same infrastructure.

Question to Dorset Council Cabinet

Given the Cabinet decision of October 2025 requiring strict cost control on the Mampitts Hub, and given the confirmed allocation of Section 106 funding for Wincombe Recreation Park and the Youth Club, what action will Dorset Council now take to ensure that Section 106 funds are properly ringfenced, transparently accounted for, and used to reduce — rather than increase — Council Tax for Shaftesbury residents.

The North Dorset Trailway Network is a registered charity working closely with Dorset Council to establish an uninterrupted off-road route (the Trailway) along the course of the old Somerset & Dorset Railway line, through the centre of Dorset between Stalbridge and Corfe Mullen, eventually to connect with the Castleman Trailway at Broadstone. The section of Trailway between Sturminster Newton and Spetisbury is of course now well established, and we are encouraged by the fact that the recent joint Dorset Council and BCP Council Local Transport Plan consultation included specific reference to completing the Trailway as a strategic objective. The Somerset & Dorset Railway once linked Bath and Poole and its closure in 1966 was one of the most controversial cuts of the Beeching Plan. Its repurposing today as an accessible cross country trailway could potentially be transformative. Most of the station sites may have been redeveloped, but the route of the old railway between the urban areas remains to a very large extent free of obstruction. The cost of repurposing a derelict railway route as a trailway for inclusive community use is significantly less costly than comparable travel schemes.

The Dorset Council Greenspace Service team, and all officers and councillors we meet or speak with are very supportive of our aims and appreciate the tremendous amenity and value to public health and wellbeing that a completed Trailway would provide. Proactive extension strategies are in place, both northwards from Sturminster Newton and southwards from Spetisbury. Completion of the southern extension to Sturminster Marshall would leave a tantalisingly 1.4 mile short gap to the A31, south of which the old railway trackbed is already Dorset Council owned and now used as a permissive path. Completion would also enable a far safer traffic free link between Wimborne and Blandford than the existing NCN 25 through the Stour Valley which utilises country lanes via Cowgrove, White Mill, Shapwick and Tarrant Crawford. This route can often be intimidating due to speeding traffic using the narrow lanes as a 'rat run'.

We welcome the proposed approval of the Active Travel Infrastructure Plan at today's Cabinet meeting. However, we are disappointed that the North Dorset Trailway, and its extensions north and south, have low, or non-existent profiles. With the increase in developments (and residents) in Stalbridge, the impetus to link with Sturminster Newton is overwhelming, yet this is not included. Spetisbury to Sturminster Marshall, where extensive new housing developments are proposed, and the new off-road section from Blandford St Mary to Wards Drove are both included as '**Long**' timescale schemes in the Blandford Forum delivery plan. We would therefore respectfully request that the priority of extending the North Dorset Trailway be increased. Thank you.

(447 words)

Mark Woolley

Secretary, North Dorset Trailway Network

Email: secretary@northdorsettrailway.org.uk

Tel: 07775 976559

Registered charity number 1145442

25th January 2026