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Dorset Council

AGENDA SUPPLEMENT

Cabinet

Date: Tuesday, 10 November 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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To receive questions submitted by councillors.

Councillors can submit up to two valid questions at each meeting and sub divided questions count towards this total. Questions and statements received will be published as a supplement to the agenda and all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

The submissions must be emailed in full to kate.critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk 8.30am on Thursday 5 November 2026.

Dorset Council Constitution – Procedure Rule 13

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Questions from Councillors

1. Question from Cllr P Dickenson

The environment degradation occurring in Weymouth Bay and the surrounding Portland anchorages and specifically the long-term seabed damage caused by the detained Russian shadow fleet oil tanker, MT Smyrtos. This massive tanker has now been anchored off our coast for months. A vessel of this scale remaining static for such an extended period poses a severe and cumulative threat to our local marine ecosystem and fishing industries.

Marine experts say the heavy anchoring practices cause extensive and potentially irreversible scaring to the sea floor.
As a vessel like MT Smyrtos shifts its immense anchor chain dragging across the sea floor scraping away hectares of habitat.
While Dorset Council official statements note that national agencies are monitoring the vessel for pollution risks, the physical destruction of the seabed floor is happing out of sight.

The council's obligation under its climate and ecological commitments cannot allow the bay to become a long-term parking lot at the expense of our environment.

Question

As the Leader of the Council, what steps are you going to take to:

- Assess the specific seabed impact, shifting footprint of the MT Smyrtos since arrival.

- Advocate for the vessel's relocation to a less sensitive mooring or port facility if detention is to continue indefinitely.

- Ensure strict monitoring to ensure that its anchoring apparatus is not actively destroying protected reef structures and seabed.

Weymouth bay is the jewel of the Jurassic Coast. You must ensure that geopolitical enforcement actions do not inadvertently result in the scarring of our local marine sanctuaries.

2. Question from Cllr C Monks

Thank you to the Portfolio Holder for Place Services for his response to my recent correspondence regarding the Beaminster Tunnel closure.
The delay in progressing these works has been frustrating for the thousands of residents who rely on this route, both in Beaminster and across the wider area, and many residents, community groups and businesses have contacted me about the disruption. I am pleased that the emergency works are now finally due to begin.

However, one group that will be particularly affected during the construction period is our business community. Can the Portfolio Holder outline the planned programme of works, including the expected timescales and traffic management arrangements, and explain what support Dorset Council will provide to help Beaminster businesses through this challenging period?

3. Question from Cllr L O'Leary

The gateway to Weymouth is now covered in ugly graffiti all over the Littlemoor road bridge. I reported it to the council to be told because it is not offensive the council won't remove it. Surely this vandalism of our shared public space and the view it gives visitors to our towns is highly offensive. Will the council review its policy on graffiti removal and crack down on this menace?

4. Question from Cllr L O'Leary

Will the leader set out the time table for devolution including ratification by council on joining the Wessex Authority?

5. Question from Cllr P Brown

About the car park review.

- Can the Portfolio Holder explain the logic of having dynamic pricing for a service with inelastic demand?

6. Question from Cllr P Brown

And the other on a highways issue in my ward.

- What makes the portfolio holder think that after signs failed to make a difference to accident rates at the C2 pinch point in 2025 that speed limit sign will suddenly make a difference in 2027?

Statement from Portland Ward Councillors

Dorset Council Parking Review - Proposed Changes to Portland Car Parks

As Portland Councillors, we welcome Dorset Council's commitment to a more localised approach to parking policy and its recognition that individual car parks serve different purposes within their communities. We therefore ask that the Council carefully considers the specific circumstances of Portland before introducing parking charges at any currently free car park.

Many of Portland's car parks do not function primarily as visitor or tourist facilities. Instead, they provide essential parking for residents, local workers and businesses in areas characterised by narrow roads, terraced housing and limited off-street parking provision. Introducing charges at these locations would be unlikely to achieve the stated objectives of reducing congestion or improving parking turnover and could instead create significant parking displacement into surrounding residential streets.

Masonic Car Park

Masonic Car Park is a large facility but its location means that it experiences relatively low levels of demand compared with other town centre and visitor car parks across Dorset.

Importantly, this site was previously operated as a charged car park. Charging infrastructure was subsequently removed because revenue generated from the site was insufficient to justify its continued operation. This historic experience demonstrates the limited demand for paid parking at this location.

Reintroducing charges would therefore risk repeating a model that has already proven unsuccessful, while potentially reducing use of an otherwise valuable parking asset.

Lord Clyde Car Park

Lord Clyde Car Park is a small facility situated close to Masonic Car Park and is relied upon by nearby businesses, employees and residents.

The site would benefit from improvement and investment, including general maintenance and environmental enhancements. Councillors believe that improving the quality and appearance of the site should take priority over introducing parking charges.

Any charging regime is likely to displace vehicles into nearby residential streets and could have a disproportionate impact on local businesses and workers who depend upon the facility.

Hambro Car Park

Hambro Car Park serves primarily as a residential parking resource.

The surrounding area consists largely of terraced housing with limited private parking availability and narrow streets that are already under significant parking pressure. Consequently, the car park is used predominantly by residents rather than shoppers or visitors.

Introducing charges would place an additional financial burden on local households while doing little to influence visitor parking behaviour or improve turnover of spaces.

Fortuneswell Car Park

Fortuneswell Car Park performs a similar role and is principally used by residents rather than tourists or short-stay visitors.

The surrounding housing stock generates significant residential parking demand because many properties do not benefit from off-street parking. The importance of this facility is further highlighted by ongoing housing development in the immediate area.

Any proposal to introduce charges should be preceded by a full assessment of the impact that new residential development will have on parking demand. Dorset Council should also consider the availability of alternative parking provision for any vehicles displaced by future policy changes.

Wider Portland Considerations

Portland faces unique parking challenges that differ significantly from many locations elsewhere in Dorset. Historic housing patterns, constrained road layouts and limited opportunities for off-street parking mean that public car parks frequently perform an essential residential function.

The four car parks identified above are not comparable to high-demand visitor destinations or principal town centre car parks. They provide important support to local communities and help prevent additional on-street parking pressures in already constrained residential areas.

As Portland Councillors, we are concerned that introducing charges at these locations would:

- Increase pressure on surrounding residential streets.
- Transfer costs directly to residents who have limited alternative parking options.
- Impact local workers and businesses.
- Displace vehicles rather than resolve parking challenges.
- Reduce utilisation of off-street parking assets that currently help alleviate pressure on the highway network.

Conclusion

We therefore urge Dorset Council to retain **Masonic Car Park, Lord Clyde Car Park, Hambro Car Park and Fortuneswell Car Park as free-to-use facilities** and to recognise the important residential and community function they perform.

A one-size-fits-all approach would not reflect the realities of parking on Portland. Decisions should be based on the demonstrated local purpose of each car park, historical usage patterns and the likely impact on residents, businesses and surrounding streets.

This response is submitted jointly by the Dorset Councillors for Portland Ward in order to represent the concerns and experiences of residents, businesses and community organisations across the island.

Portland Councillors would welcome continued engagement with Dorset Council to ensure that any future parking strategy for the island is evidence-based, locally informed and supports the needs of our communities.

Signed

Councillor Rob Hughes
Dorset Councillor for Portland Ward

Councillor Pete Roper
Dorset Councillor for Portland Ward

Councillor Paul Kimber
Dorset Councillor for Portland Ward

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