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DORSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 17 OCTOBER 2019

Present: Cllrs Val Potheary (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Tony Alford, Jon Andrews, Mike Barron, Pete Barrow, Shane Bartlett, Derek Beer, Richard Biggs, Dave Bolwell, Alex Brenton, Cherry Brooks, Piers Brown, Ray Bryan, Andy Canning, Graham Carr-Jones, Simon Christopher, Kelvin Clayton, Susan Cocking, Robin Cook, Tim Cook, Toni Coombs, Jean Dunseith, Mike Dyer, Beryl Ezzard, Tony Ferrari, Spencer Flower, Les Fry, Simon Gibson, Barry Goringe, David Gray, Matthew Hall, Paul Harrison, Jill Haynes, Brian Heatley, Ryan Holloway, Rob Hughes, Nick Ireland, Sherry Jespersen, Carole Jones, Stella Jones, Andrew Kerby, Paul Kimber, Rebecca Knox, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Robin Legg, Cathy Lugg, Laura Miller, David Morgan, Louie O'Leary, Jon Orrell, Mike Parkes, Andrew Parry, Mary Penfold, Bill Pipe, Byron Quayle, Molly Rennie, Belinda Ridout, Mark Roberts, Julie Robinson, Maria Roe, Jane Somper, Andrew Starr, Gary Suttle, Roland Tarr, David Taylor, Gill Taylor, David Tooke, Bill Trite, Daryl Turner, David Walsh, Peter Wharf, Kate Wheller, Sarah Williams and John Worth

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Mark Blackman (Corporate Director - Education and Learning), Susan Dallison (Democratic Services Manager), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), Sarah Parker (Executive Director of People - Children), John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Deborah Smart (Designate Corporate Director – Digital & Change), Helen Whitby (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Jennifer Lewis (Service Manager for Communications and Engagement)

31. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Pauline Batstone, Janet Dover, Ryan Hope, Howard Legg, Emma Parker, David Shortell, Clare Sutton, John Worth and Matt Prosser (Chief Executive).

32. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2019 were confirmed and signed.

33. Declarations of Interest

In respect of item 10 on the agenda, Cllr G Suttle declared a general interest as his family had interests in mineral sites. The Monitoring Officer advised that under the code of Conduct members had to declare pecuniary interests for themselves and their spouses and would need to leave the room whilst this was discussed. In this instance a general declaration was being made

and this did not warrant Cllr Suttle leaving the room whilst this item was discussed.

In respect of item 11 on the agenda and in relation to his question, Cllr B Pipe declared a general interest as he had been a Member of the Conservative Friends of Israel for the past 20 years.

34. Chairman's Announcements

The Vice-Chairman explained that the Chairman had arranged for Kaye Wright from Friends of Dorset Care Leavers to address the Council.

Ms Wright thanked members for their support prior to the meeting. She then explained how Friends of Dorset Care Leavers had been created to reduce isolation and promote work and care for care leavers; support they provided, particularly at Birthday and Christmas times; that many care leavers received universal credit; and that they had applied for charity status. Particular attention was drawn to National Carers Week which started on 28 October 2019 and this would include a sponsored head shave at County Hall Reception.

The Vice-Chairman wished the Charity well for the future and stated that members would do all they could to provide support.

The Vice-Chairman then reminded members of the Remembrance Service being held on 11 November at 10.45am and encouraged them to attend if they were not attending other services.

She then informed members of a change to the order of agenda items in that questions from Councillors would be brought forward to item 8, following the announcements from the Leader of the Council.

35. Public Participation - Questions and Statements

The public statements together with the responses from the Portfolio Holder for Planning were set out in Appendix 1 to the minutes.

36. Public participation - Petitions and Deputations

No petitions or deputations were received at the meeting.

37. Announcements and Reports from the Leader of Council and Portfolio Holders

The Leader reminded members that-

- the LGA Corporate Peer Review had taken place on 1-4 October 2019. Initial feedback had been received and the formal report would be available at the end of October/early November;
- he had written to the Chancellor regarding the lack of Central Government funding for Dorset. The provisional announcement was likely

to include additional funding for Education, SEND and Adult Social Care. No figures were yet available but the Chancellor's budget on 5 November 2019 might give more details.

- a brief overview of progress on the 9 cross-Party EAPs was given: Climate Change Emergency, Local Plan for Dorset, Economic Growth and Skills, IT and Digital, Diversity, Inclusion, Relationships with Town and Parish Councils, Leisure Centre Review and Rural Access to Services . Members of all groups had made a positive contribution to the work of the EAPs which illustrated cross-party collaboration. Details of the EAPs' work were now available on the intranet, were regularly updated and played an essential part in creating change at pace. Completion dates would also be added to their forward plans. The LGA Peer Review commented on the cross-party involvement as being positive. The work of the EAPs would be referred to the Cabinet and relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee before being considered by Dorset Council for approval. He thanked members for their involvement and contributions during a challenging and difficult time.
- he was in the process of meeting neighbouring Council Leaders: he had already met with the Leaders of Wiltshire and Hampshire Councils to discuss matters of common interest and these had been well received. Meetings with Somerset, Devon, Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole, New Forest and South Somerset Councils were planned.
- he drew attention to awards won by the Council and where it had been praised for its efforts. Details were available on the Dorset Council Website. Although this performance was good, it could be improved and he drew particular attention to the Council's work on climate change where it was rated as one of the top 20 councils in the country. Wiltshire Council were top and he had gained information from its Leader which might help improve Dorset's current performance; and
- a Leader's bulletin would be published the following date.

Cllr N Ireland was glad that the Leader had written to the Chancellor about additional funding and asked whether there had been correspondence with local MPs. The Leader confirmed that his letter had been copied to them and that he had met them to ask for their support in getting a better deal for Dorset.

Cllr R Legg stated that in previous years there had been regular meetings between the Leadership, opposition groups and local MPs. The current cross-party unity could be used to show Dorset as a united authority and should be better funded.

Cllr P Kimber asked for the Leader's letter to be circulated again so that members could lobby the main opposition parties and their leaders. The Leader agreed to provide this again and welcomed any further lobbying efforts.

38. Questions from Councillors

Cllrs C Jones, B Pipe, B Ezzard, S Jones, P Kimber, L O'Leary and N Ireland asked questions of the Leader and Portfolio Holders for Finance, Commercial

and Assets, Children, Education and Early Help, and Highways, Travel and Commerce. These along with the responses were attached to the minutes at Appendix 2.

With regard to the question raised by Cllr N Ireland about Mountjoy School, Cllr R Knox, as Vice-Chairman of Governors, welcomed the opportunity to speak with Cllr Ireland following the meeting. She stated that the Governors were fully aware of the current situation and that all staff had some health qualification. The School were unable to fund a school nurse and there were also barriers to employing one. The Governing Body were clear about their responsibilities, steps were in place to mitigate the situation and the children were not at risk.

39. **Youth Justice Plan**

Cllr A Parry, Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Early Help, presented the report and recommendations. The Plan had already been approved by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, the Youth Justice Board and the Youth Offending Partnership Board.

Cllr R Legg referred to the graph on page 65 and asked whether the level of young people being referred into the youth justice system in Dorset had increased, when the graph showed that first time entrants were no worse than in 2013? The report also suggested that if grants had been applied for last year, this might have resulted in young offenders being diverted away from the youth justice system and not being counted in the statistics. He asked whether other local authorities successful in bidding for grants had reduced their statistics to show an improvement? The Portfolio Holder stated that this would require a technical response and he would provide this outside of the meeting.

Cllr B Pipe referred to page 57 of the report and links between the Youth Justice System and other plans and structures. He informed members that the Criminal Justice Board no longer existed and its work diverted to the Community Safety Partnership.

It was proposed by Cllr N Lacey-Clarke and seconded by Cllr S Jespersen

Decision

- (a) That the Youth Justice Plan be approved;
- (b) That an update be provided in 6 months-time on progress with the plan.

40. **Council Tax - Support for Care Leavers**

Cllr A Parry, Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Early Help, presented the report and recommendations. He referred to the address from the Friends of Dorset Care Leavers and that their work should be supported. The credit exemption would help care leavers living in the Dorset Council area and would provide them with the best opportunity in life going forward.

Cllrs T Coombs and B Pipe added that the Corporate Parenting Panel unanimously supported the exemption and urged members to support this.

Cllr R Legg asked whether any thought had been given to creating a small group of trained people to help care leavers with applying for exemptions or to direct them to those with relevant training.

Cllr M Rennie highlighted that members did not necessarily know which officers to approach with regard to welfare benefits and it was often by chance that they found the appropriate officer.

Cllr D Beer added that the Citizens Advice Bureau might provide the necessary support.

It was proposed by Cllr T Coombs and seconded by Cllr N Lacey-Clarke

Decision

that Dorset Council agrees to exercise its discretionary powers, under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, to award Council Tax discounts, effective from 1 April 2020, in the following cases.

a. that a 100% Council Tax discretionary discount be awarded in respect of those cases where the care leaver is under the age of 25 and is solely responsible for the Council Tax

b. that where a care leaver, who is under the age of 25, lives with someone else who is responsible for the Council Tax, they are disregarded for the purposes of determining whether a 25% single person's discount applies.

c. that support will only be provided in respect of those care leavers:

- i. for whom Dorset Council has a corporate parenting responsibility, and
- ii. who live in the Council's area

d. that, in the case of a above that support will be automatically awarded where the care leaver is in regular contact with Children's Services. In all other cases the Taxpayer will be required to apply for the discount or disregard.

41. **Adoption of the Dorset and BCP Mineral Sites Plan**

Cllr D Walsh, Portfolio Holder for Planning, introduced the report. He reminded members that the Dorset and BCP Minerals Sites Plan had taken four years to produce, including consultation with the public and stakeholders. An examiner had been appointed by the Secretary of State and, following two hearings, it had been deemed "sound" to be adopted. The Plan could not be changed and, when in place, would protect areas such as heathlands. He commended the Plan for adoption.

It was proposed by Cllr J Andrews and seconded by Cllr J Haynes

Decision

1. That the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Dorset Mineral Sites Plan be adopted subject to its inclusion of the main modifications that are appended to the Inspector's Report;
2. That the formal adoption date will begin two weeks from the date at which both BCP Council and Dorset Council have resolved to adopt the plan;
3. That delegated authority be given to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, after consultation with the Executive Director for Place:
 - (a) any additional (non-material) modifications to the Plan which were the subject of consultation, together with any other additional modifications which benefit the clarity of the Plan;
 - (b) authority to expedite any technical/procedural matters associated with adoption of the plan, including those connected with Dorset Council's role as the Competent Authority on matters relating the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Plan.

42. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

43. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 8.00 pm

Chairman

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Full Council – 17 October 2019

Questions submitted for Public Participation Period

Question -1 Submitted by (Dr) Kevin Shillington

Climate Emergency – Solar Panels

“According to *Dorset Council News* (Summer 2019), the Council recognises that it needs to be more ambitious in following up its declaration of a climate emergency in the Dorset Council Area.

An emergency requires emergency action and Dorset Council must not be found wanting on this.

So, will Dorset Council follow the lead of Camden Council in London and make it a requirement for obtaining planning consent on all new structures that solar panels be installed on the roofs of all new domestic, industrial and commercial premises, *with immediate effect*, even if that entails going beyond national planning regulations and if necessary standing up to central government and developer company lobbyists?

Will you take up this challenge?”

Response from Cllr David Walsh:

“Dorset Council recognises the importance of action to tackle a warming climate, and our declaration of a climate emergency is a clear demonstration of the commitment to make a positive difference within the remit of our responsibilities. We are reviewing our policies and activities in the light of the climate emergency to ensure we take appropriate action to reduce Dorset’s carbon footprint and to this effect the Council has set up a Climate Change Executive Advisory Panel. The example of Camden in taking a lead on the climate emergency has been mentioned. As I understand it, Camden is home to the country’s first climate assembly and it was reported in the national press that the assembly ‘...has agreed on 17 proposals for action to tackle the climate crisis, including installing solar panels on all available roofs and cutting fossil fuels out of local government developments’¹. In fact the 17 actions include a range of measures, one of which is to ‘fit solar panels on as many homes as possible’.

The Camden Citizens’ Assembly on the Climate Crisis is an important forum for residents and the action plan it has prepared provides a valuable community steer for the local authority, businesses and residents in developing their

strategies and taking any necessary actions. None of these actions proposes that all new buildings needing planning permission be required to install solar panels with immediate effect. Nor do the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly have the status of statutory planning policies.

Dorset Council recognises that the planning system has a key part to play in tackling climate change and we are embarking on a new local plan which will set out a strategy and policy framework for the sustainable use and development of land in Dorset, having regard to the critical importance of minimising the climate impact of human activity. In advance of the new local plan, we will continue to promote and secure carbon reduction measures in new developments where appropriate and feasible to do so.

To insist on measures that are not supported by planning policy or other legislative mechanisms would expose the Council to a greater risk of planning appeals and associated claims for costs by appellants. This I fear would deflect our limited resources away from responding effectively to the climate emergency, which we intend to do via the development of well-evidenced policies, strategies and actions that will enable the Council to make a meaningful difference to Dorset's carbon footprint and foster resilient places."

[The Guardian](#), 21 July 2019

Question - 2 Submitted by Alistair Chisholm

Housing numbers for Dorset

"A recent independent report, commissioned by the Devon group of the CPRE, questioned the Government's figures for the housing needs of the county. The Government figures in question were produced before three hugely significant reports; The State of Nature report by the UK National Biodiversity Network, the UN report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and the UN report on Climate Change. The figures also pre-date this Council's Declaration of a Climate Emergency made early in June this year. This independent Devon report concluded that the Government's target numbers were hugely over-estimated. Most of the new homes were planned to be built on green field sites and, furthermore, two-thirds of Devon's new housing will be bought by people moving into the county. Government targets did little to address the real housing needs of the county yet the Housing minister avoided answering questions on this matter when he spoke at a housing seminar in Exeter in March 2019 to launch the report. Indeed, it later transpired that he had not even read this professionally produced, independent report.

What plans, if any, does this council have to question the unrevised housing numbers for Dorset proposed in 2014 by central Government?

If, as seems increasingly likely, the numbers have not only been hugely over estimated but do little or nothing to address the real and urgent needs of our county for truly “affordable” homes (for rent, purchase or a mix of the two), why should the Council tax payers go along with/accept any Local Plan for Dorset which simply feeds the voracious appetite of developers and landowners and does little or nothing for either the county’s residents or its precious countryside?”

Response from Cllr David Walsh

“The council has not yet made any decisions about whether to challenge the housing numbers proposed under the national standard methodology.

The numbers are produced using two inputs, the Office for National Statistics household forecasts, and the most recent affordability data for the area. Both of these figures change regularly and so the number will change during the plan preparation process.

These numbers provide the starting point for identifying local housing need in a local plan, and where they are used as the local housing need figure in the plan, there should normally be little debate on the issue at the examination. Councils do have the option of arguing for a different figure, though this would need to be robustly defended at the local plan examination. As councils are required to plan for the needs of all sectors of the housing market, any arguments based around meeting the needs only for affordable housing, or only for the needs of the currently resident population, are not likely to succeed.

Dorset also needs housing in order to support the local economy, as we need people to be able to move into the area to take up employment.”

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Full Council – 17 October 2019

Questions from Councillors

Question 1 – submitted by Cllr Carole Jones

Home Education

“We have around 500 children in Dorset that are either missing in education or being home educated. Could I please ask exactly whether we are actively monitoring those receiving home education. I believe the council may make an informal enquiry to check a child is getting a suitable education, and can serve a school attendance order if it is believed the child should be taught at school. Can I ask please whether this process is firmly in place & how many informal enquiries we may make on an average monthly basis? And, in terms of those missing in education – do we have a number and any action in this respect?”

Response by Cllr Andrew Parry

“Dear Cllr Jones

Thank you for your question.

As of 15th October 2019, there are 440 children registered as home educated in Dorset. 86 of these resulted in visits in the last twelve months with further visits planned.

I can confirm that Dorset Council has issued 3 school attendance orders in the last month, for families where the home education was not found to be of sufficient quality.

If a family receiving a visit is found not to be providing a suitable education, the parents are served with an informal notice to improve and revisited after 3 months. If education is still unsuitable at that point, the school attendance order processes would start. This is a legal process compelling the family to return the child to school based education. Obviously under such circumstances, Dorset Council would wish to work with them, to find an appropriate school.

As part of the transformation of Children’s Services we are consulting on increasing the resource provision for visiting families when children are home educated to ensure proper quality of provision.

In terms of children deemed to be “Missing in Education”, I can confirm that in this academic year so far we have been notified of seventy two new cases where children are suspected to not be in education. We have investigated and closed 86 cases in this term. There are a number of cases where investigations are continuing.

The majority of the children in this category are referred by schools as they are refusing to attend or, at the time of recording, have no school place allocated. Some may be “between schools” but legally they remain on a school roll until they are transferred to a new school, so are deemed to be missing as they have not yet started in the new school.

Dorset Council will contact other authorities and agencies including housing, police, social care and the border agency, for example, to track down children who are missing education. Most cases are resolved this way. If the child is known to still be in Dorset, we have an officer who will visit families at home and work with them to get the child back to school.

Through the transformation programme in Children’s Services we are to creating locality based services which will enable better multi-agency responses to the provision for all children who are either not in a school or being home educated. We aim to minimise the vulnerability of children who are not in school and to ensure that families who choose to home educate their child are appropriately monitored in terms of quality and the arrangements for safeguarding children.”

Question 2 – submitted by Cllr Bill Pipe

National Holocaust Memorial Day

“I would like to ask that Dorset Council recognise National Holocaust Memorial Day on the 27th January 2020 in light of it being the 75th anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz/Birkenau in 1945 and the 25th anniversary of the terrible Genocide in Bosnia in 1995?”

Response by Cllr Spencer Flower:

“Dorset Council works with a local community organisation ‘South West Dorset Multicultural Network’ to organise a Holocaust Memorial Event, this will take place on Friday 24 January 2020 at the Corn Exchange, Dorchester at midday. A planning group which consists of Dorset Council officers and community members will be meeting shortly to organise this. The planning group is in regular contact with the Holocaust Memorial Trust and uses their resources when organising the event. The theme for 2020 is ‘Stand Together’ to mark 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the 25th anniversary of the genocide in Bosnia, this serves as a timely opportunity to reflect, learn, commemorate and bring communities together. I understand from officers that all Dorset Council members will be invited to the event, along with all employees and members of the SLT.

In addition, Dorset Council supported the Gypsy & Traveller community to organise their annual Roma Holocaust Memorial Event earlier this year (8 August) to remember the 2897 Gypsies who died on that fateful day of the 2 August 1944 and to also remember all who suffered and died in the Holocaust

and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.”

Question 3 – submitted by Cllr Beryl Ezzard

On-going Funding for Voluntary organizations and especially Citizens Advice

“Will the Council ensure that on-going funding for the current Voluntary organisations, continue after this current year 2019/20? This is especially crucial for the Citizens Advice Organisations in the Dorset Council area. The Citizen Advice have always had a special partnership working arrangement with the District/Borough Councils who supported and appreciated their valuable work and dedication. This is very much appreciated by the families who receive help and support, especially the homeless and those in need. I cannot emphasis enough the extra mile the staff of the Citizen Advice go, to carry out their roles in conjunction with DCC and now DC staff. Please can you give assurance that the level of funding will continue to focus on early intervention now, to save costs down the line.

I very much hope that a decision will be made as soon as possible, to give confidence to our Citizen Advice to carry on, with very valuable staff retention, especially regarding homelessness, as a serious partner working to support the vulnerable and needy citizens of the Dorset Council area.”

Response by: Cllr Tony Ferrari

“Historically all of the former Councils have supported the Voluntary Community Sector and recognise their outstanding contribution to delivering the Council’s priorities and outcomes.

Citizen’s Advice has been supported by all 6 of the Sovereign Council’s equating to a joint annual investment of £550,000.

Apart from commitment to the Citizen’s Advice, the funding offered to the wider Community sector, including provision for Arts and Heritage; Museums and Social Voluntary Sector has differed greatly between District area.

In September 2018 the Shadow Executive agreed to carry forward funding to all existing Voluntary Sector grant recipients while Officers and Members undertake a full and thorough review and make proposals to how Dorset Council will continue to support key organisations who assist us to deliver our corporate priorities. This review is currently underway, and proposals will be discussed in detail at Cabinet on the 5th November, following which a period of consultation with the community will take place.

Following direction from the Corporate Senior Leadership team, the review will aim to offer longer term facility for those in receipt of future funding to allow stability for the sector, this will also apply to the delivery of the Information, Advice and Guidance services currently delivered by Citizen’s Advice. The paper going on the 5th November to Cabinet will be seeking an interim measure of extending the current grant arrangements to the CAB’s for a period of either 6 or 12 months (dependant on what cabinet agree) whilst DC consult on future provision with the aim of creating longer term stability.

We will communicate to them regarding this extension to their current grant arrangements directly after the cooling off period (or sooner if the Monitoring Officer is able to authorise waiving the cooling off period which he is currently considering).

The review will also address the discrepancy in funding between the former district areas to give organisations delivering council priorities in all areas equal opportunity to apply for support. It will also aim to allow other funders to support Dorset's Voluntary Sector organisations.

I can assure Members that where there is a variation to an organisation's funding following the review, then full consultation and sufficient notice of will be given to those organisations affected to enable them to plan and prepare accordingly.

Question 4 – submitted by Cllr Stella Jones

Dorset Council Plan

“The draft Dorset Council plan has a strapline which says “Dorset is a great place to live, work, and visit”. And it is a great place.

However one reason it is so good is the cultural activity which makes a positive contribution to the Dorset economy.

Culture attracts tourists who appreciate our history and heritage, but has an even more significant effect on the health and wellbeing of residents.

The Council should support the passion and energy of many people who work and volunteer in our museums, arts centres, and attractions.

Yet in the plan there is no mention of the arts or museums and the word heritage only appears once.

I would like to ask that a new section is added to our plan – a cultural strategy.”

Response by Cllr Spencer Flower:

“Firstly, I would like to thank Cllr. Jones for her question. Following Cabinet on Tuesday the 1st October 2019 the Council has now commenced a period of engagement and conversation with the community regarding the Dorset Plan, which runs until the 20 December 2019. The points you have raised will be included in the final analysis of the feedback before the final draft is brought back for Full Council sign off on Thursday 13 February 2020.”

Questions 5 – submitted by Cllr Paul Kimber

Train services from Bournemouth to Weymouth and Weymouth to Bristol. SWR and GWR

“The population in Dorset over the next 5 years is set to rise significantly in Littlemoor/Dorchester /Crossways putting more stress on our very busy transport infrastructure on roads and rail, therefore I'd like to ask these 2 questions to update our communities in Dorset.

1. The line between Bournemouth and Weymouth is single track in places namely outside Weymouth and Dorchester. Can I be assured that we are working to have this line doubled all the way from Bournemouth to Weymouth, and fully electrified. Could I have an update on any work that is due to take place, and is this council lobbying all authorities to bring about a more efficient rail system.

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

“The Weymouth railway line has three main track constrictions, one a single track link between Moreton and Dorchester, the power supply west of Poole, and the Weymouth Throat - the approach to Weymouth Station.

Rail infrastructure improvements are very costly, in 2014 a 12.5 miles stretch of track between Kemble and Swindon cost £45 million. We want to be certain that the outcomes we want to achieve, better connectivity, more frequent services, more resilient and reliable services, improved journey times are deliverable and that we are making the right infrastructure improvements. We need to be clear what are we hoping to achieve by dual tracking, and should this be a priority over power supply issues west of Poole or the expansion of the Weymouth Throat which would benefit the Heart of Wessex line also? The answer may be yes, but there is still some work to do.

We are actively talking with the train operating companies - Great Western Railway (GWR) and South Western Railway (SWR) and Network Rail which has resulted in us (Dorset) being a priority for the next round of NR's Continuous Modular Service Plan (CMSP) in 2020 which is the process for producing strategies for specific routes and areas. It is anticipated that this work will answer our queries regarding what infrastructure improvements are most achievable and give the most benefit.

It also means that schemes identified can be submitted to the DfT's Rail Network Enhancement Programme (RNEP) to secure funding. Some form of match funding is likely to be required.”

Questions 6 – submitted by Cllr Paul Kimber

“The trains between Weymouth and Bristol are diesel powered. Can I be informed if there are any alternatives being worked upon regarding powering the engine on this line “

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

On the Weymouth – Bristol line (Heart of Wessex) line bi-mode trains are used on services for the northern section, diesel trains are used on the Weymouth – Bristol services as the line is not electrified. There are no further plans for electrification of the network after the government paused the programme due to cost overruns and delays, and on 8 November 2016 the

government announced that several elements of the Great Western Main Line electrification programme would be indefinitely deferred.

Across the GWR network the average train age has halved and more efficient trains have been brought into service. Turbos are now used on the Heart of Wessex line which has reduced emissions.

Trials of hydrogen powered trains are being held elsewhere in the country. These trains could play a role on the network where electrification is impracticable or not economically justified. Recent rail industry reports have confirmed that hydrogen will not be a viable substitute for diesel on heavy-duty freight and maintenance trains or long-distance high-speed routes in the near future.

Question 7 – submitted by Cllr Louie O’Leary

North Quay

“I would like to ask what the situation is with the North Quay development in Weymouth?”

Response by Cllr Tony Ferrari

“Dorset Council is currently reviewing all of its property assets.

A recent planning application for the demolition of the former council office building at North Quay was unsuccessful, and in light of concerns raised by members of the Planning Committee consideration is being given to a revised application that would contain information about sustainability that was requested.

The possibility of grant funding from Homes England to assist with redevelopment exists and discussions with a registered provider of affordable accommodation have taken place.

The Council is not actively marketing the site at the moment. Unsolicited offers have however been received and acknowledgments have been sent to those who have expressed an interest.”

Questions 8 – submitted by Cllr Louie O’Leary

Western Relief Road

“What is situation with the western relief road? Which is very important to Weymouth and has been stalled for several years?”

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

Western Relief Road (A354 Portland Road relief road)

“This road scheme will need to be revisited through the proposed new Dorset Local Plan and Local Transport Plan for 2023. Infrastructure proposals need to meet the government tests of being high value for money, needed, deliverable, funded and of a scale appropriate to the level of growth being planned for an area. An evidence led approach will be taken by officers in their recommendation to councillors who in turn will decide whether the council intends to pursue the scheme any further.”

Question 9 – submitted by Cllr Nick Ireland

Mountjoy School

“It has been brought to my attention last week by a concerned parent that there are children with complex and severe physical needs attending Mountjoy School, yet the school has no nurse or other suitably trained members of staff available to intervene if required.

There are three children at the school with gastrostomy buttons. If the button comes out of the stoma, there is a short period of time for it to be reinserted else an operation is required. The school has nobody trained or allowed to perform the reinsertion, and Mountjoy is essentially marooned in the centre of a void of healthcare provision. One child has been withdrawn from school until a solution is in place.

The school has at least six children with severe epilepsy. One child recently had a seizure on a school trip with no suitably qualified staff at hand. Another had a seizure at school and it took four hours for an ambulance with trained staff to arrive.

One has to question the efficacy of the care plans and risk assessments in place for these children.

The school has insufficient funding to enter into contracts with, or employ directly, those that could remedy the situation. Our own council has very recently committed to pay for training for some staff as an interim solution (to be hopefully recouped from Public Health).

However, the wider picture is that until adequate funding is provided on an ongoing basis, this entirely avoidable risk to our children will persist.

I therefore request that the Cabinet member with responsibility for this area escalates the issue to all relevant partners and reports back to the next Full Council as to how it has been permanently resolved.”

Response by Cllr Andrew Parry:

“As portfolio holder, I can reassure you that the welfare of all children remains my priority and that of those who work in Children’s services.

In all our special schools, there are staff trained in first aid and some medically related procedures.

I am acutely aware, of the very complex needs in some cases, and pay tribute to high levels of professionalism of everyone involved in the managing them.

Where a medical procedure is required that is beyond the training and capability of school staff, an ambulance will be called.

In respect of funding, Mountjoy School posted a budget surplus last year and is currently forecasting one for this year as well. Local decisions around school staffing and how funding is allocated are the responsibility of the governing body.

Dorset Council is keen to develop our partnership working with the school and health colleagues in order to ensure that children receive appropriate health care when this is necessary and would support a greater contribution from health colleagues in meeting the aspiration to improve the care for young people. “

Question 10 – submitted by Cllr Nick Ireland

Climate Change

“It was just over a year ago that the UN IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) warned that we as a species had just over a decade to limit global warming to 1.5°C, beyond which the world faces significantly worse risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people.

To meet this target requires urgent and unprecedented changes: in May this year, Dorset Council recognised this by joining with many other local authorities and organisations in declaring a climate emergency.

Since then, we've seen the establishment of a Climate Change EAP under Cllr Ray Bryan (which has met twice so far) and some signs are emerging that our officers are considering and incorporating carbon reduction strategies into their decision making.

However, "it is no longer enough to have some green policies. In a world where we must move to zero-carbon, every policy must be green".

Whilst Cllr Bryan has picked up the climate emergency baton with the enthusiasm and focus that those of us who've worked with him previously would expect, I am concerned that when combined with his Cabinet role, this council will not achieve what it must due to the scale and enormity of the task ahead.

As has been mentioned by many recently, we need Apollo moon-landing levels of ambition to make this work and that requires a different, higher echelon of commitment.

I ask that Dorset Council recognises this and commits to establishing a Cabinet role straddling all directorates, with the sole remit to address our organisation's move to net zero carbon.”

Response by Cllr Spencer Flower

“Can I thank Cllr. Ireland for his question on the important topic of Climate Change. The decision to form an Executive Advisory Panel [EAP] was well founded, as it offers the level of member resource to assist the Cabinet Member with the significant task set by Council when adopting the Climate Change Emergency Resolution at Annual Council on Thursday 16 May 2019.

He will be aware that a significant amount of work has already been undertaken by the panel and the key officers involved in this vitally important subject. Two meetings have already taken place and a third meeting is scheduled for Friday. Also this morning there was a Panel Member/Officer meeting. Going forward EAP meetings will now be scheduled monthly. On the

19 November there will be an Inquiry Open Day for Town and Parish Councils dealing with Climate Change. On the 29 November there is a planned inquiry day which will be open to all members to attend.

In addition, there has been a considerable amount of additional time and effort invested in preparation and research by both officers and members.

The work of the panel, with membership drawn from all political groups has, I am informed, has been very productive and a great credit to those members involved in driving the Climate Change agenda forward and importantly at pace.

The ambition of this Council could not be higher and rightly so. Climate Change has been afforded the highest priority. I can therefore offer a reassurance to Cllr. Ireland that this council anticipates achieving its commitment to the task ahead in a timely and diligent manner.

Cllr. Ireland mentions establishing a Cabinet role straddling all directorates, with the sole remit to address our organisation's move to net zero carbon. The work of the EAP under the Cabinet Member – Ray Bryan and the outcome of policy and working practice changes will in any case, have an impact across all areas of the Council.

The Cabinet consists of the Leader plus a further nine Members, which is the maximum size permitted by the Local Government Act 2000. Given the enormous task ahead it was felt appropriate to ensure that the Council had the democratic member capacity to cover the work of the services, which were previous County and District responsibilities.

However, given the importance of Climate Change and the other vital services provided by this Council we will obviously be keeping matters under constant review, but at this time we should be commending the work of the cross-party Executive Advisory Panel for the timely progress made to date.”

Question 11 – submitted by Cllr Brian Heatley

Mineral Sites Plan

“The Dorset Heaths are internationally important wildlife sites currently recognised under the European Union Habitats Directive. They lie in an area of many mineral sites identified in the proposed Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Mineral Sites Plan. If the United Kingdom leaves the European Union the UK may be free to adopt in due course less stringent standards of protection for these wildlife sites. In that event, will it be Dorset Council's policy so far as is legally possible to maintain the present level of protection against mineral extraction for these unique Dorset heaths?”

Response by Cllr David Walsh:

“Dorset is home to some unique and valuable habitats whose protection stem from international legislation including the EU Habitats Directive. Implicit in Councillor Heatley’s question is that the act of leaving the EU could pose a threat to the continued protection of such habitats. By way of reassurance, it is important to recognise that the UK has enacted its own legislation (Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994) which transpose the Habitats Directive into national law. This is also true in the case of the EU Birds Directive (via the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 2010). We also have the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Consequently, even if we depart the EU, the UK will retain its own laws that enshrine the protection of flora and fauna to the degree that is required in the Habitats Directive. Furthermore, the legislative framework has been incorporated into national planning policy guidance (the National Planning Policy Framework) and, in turn, has been translated into policies within local plans that will remain in force, including the Minerals Strategy and Mineral Sites Plan, as well as all other local plans covering Dorset. Therefore, Dorset Council does not anticipate the issue of membership of the EU having any direct bearing upon our ongoing commitments to the protection of valuable habitats.”

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