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DORSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2020

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

Apologies: Cllrs Rebecca Knox, Robin Legg, Jill Haynes, Ryan Hope, Andy Canning and Bill Trite

Also present:

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

Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Jennifer Lewis (Service Manager for Communications and Engagement), Jacqui Andrews (Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services), Elaine Tibble (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Vivienne Broadhurst (Interim Executive Director - People Adults) and Theresa Leavy (Interim Executive Director of People - Children)

58. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2019 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

59. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

60. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman reported the sad loss of Mike Lovell a former Dorset County Councillor and member for Purbeck District Council. She also reported on the death of former West Dorset District Councillor Michael Pengelly and advised that a Service of Thanksgiving had taken place at St Nicholas' Church, Abbotsbury on 13 January 2020.

Council took a moment to sit in silence as a mark of respect.

61. Public Participation - Questions and Statements

The public questions together with the response from Portfolio Holders are set out in appendix 1 attached to these minutes.

62. Public participation - petitions and deputations

There were no petitions or deputations to report.

63. Announcements and Reports from the Leader of Council and Cabinet Members

The Leader of the Council reported that considerable progress had been made by the cross-party Climate and Ecological Executive Advisory Panel (EAP) under the Chairmanship of Cllr R Bryan. Councillors and officers had been engaged with young people, communities, organisations and town and parish councils to explore opportunities to collaborate on this important work.

Task and Finish groups were taking forward ideas, including those on transport, buildings and assets, natural environment, leadership and influence and waste and energy.

He further advised that members of the public were invited to submit ideas on how the council might be able to tackle climate change and ecology concerns. The council had received over 500 ideas and many of those would contribute to the formation of the council's draft Climate and Ecological Change Strategy and action plan. This would be published for consultation in the summer.

Cllr R Bryan had also attended a Climate Emergency Conference in January and the Local Government Association made it clear it was committed to working with councils to get the appropriate support from central government to combat the impact of climate change.

The Leader further reported on the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards. The ceremony would take place on 18 March 2020 and Dorset Council had been shortlisted for four awards.

- Business transformation – Joint submission with BCP on the subject of creating two new unitary councils.
- Driving Efficiency Through Technology – Education Health and Care Plan Tracker
- Environmental; Services – Low Carbon Dorset
- Housing initiative – health Homes Dorset pilot project and the Warm Home Fund Initiative Strand

He indicated this was a celebration of excellence and that he was delighted to see Dorset Council in so many categories. He took this opportunity to wish everyone the best of luck at the award ceremony.

64. Questions from Councillors

Questions put by councillors to the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holders are attached to these minutes at appendix 2, together with the responses.

65. Dorset Council Plan Adoption

In recommending the Dorset Council Plan for adoption, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Change reminded Council that all members had been invited to attend a number of workshops and a series of seminars. Public conversations were also held in order to formulate the plan that was before members for decision.

Cllr M Roberts seconded the recommendation.

In response to questions and concerns raised regarding the link to climate change within the Dorset Plan, the Portfolio Holder advised that there were a number of actions around climate change underpinning wider actions for the council. He also acknowledged that social deprivation needed to be considered as part of the overarching action plan and performance would be continually monitored by Cabinet.

Decision

That the Dorset Council Plan be adopted

Reason for Decision

To provide clarity about the Council's priorities for the next four years.

66. Budget Strategy Report

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Assets set out the budget paper for 2020 – 2021. He welcomed the input given to the budget from the Scrutiny Café event which had been a constructive challenge to the budget process. He noted the transfer of additional resources to adults and children's social care, the movement of funding from back office to front line services and that the proposals set out a balanced budget for 2020/21 which supported those in most need in the community.

Cllr T Ferrari proposed the budget for 2020 – 2021 and this was seconded by Cllr S Flower.

The Chairman invited Group Leaders to respond to the budget proposals.

Cllr S Flower noted that it was a well presented budget which had been brought together with the cross party involvement of councillors including the key role of the scrutiny committees. He referred to work already undertaken to achieve initial convergence and further transformation work to be undertaken. Although there had been a need to increase council tax, this would enable investment in adults and children's services and the ability to safeguard services. He expressed full support for the budget as set out in the recommendations presented to Council.

Cllr N Ireland expressed gratitude that the budget proposals refrained from cutting services. He noted that the report was honest about the challenges faced by the council but felt that the budget did not cover all areas that needed to be considered, including funding for the council's response to the climate emergency. In particular he made reference to the use of reserves, the lack of funding from central government which did not acknowledge the need in social care, social mobility indices and noted that residents were being faced with the maximum council tax increase. He added that he expected the Leader to engage with all councillors and for there to be ongoing monitoring and challenge through the scrutiny process. The Liberal Democrat Group had established a Shadow Cabinet in order to work on and offer genuine options for consideration.

Cllr L Fry expressed thanks to all who had worked on the budget and a desire to progress action required.

Cllr C Sutton noted that since 2010, councils had suffered huge reductions in funding from central government. She welcomed additional funding for adult and children's services and noted that the budget process had been an inclusive process. She thanked all staff who had assisted the council but who were no longer with the council. She noted that the Green Group would be proposing amendments to the budget and it was felt that the budget could be more ambitious in the use of reserves.

Cllr P Kimber speaking as an individual, expressed a level of concern about where the budget was being spent and made particular reference to issues of deprivation and housing.

The following amendment was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr B Heatley:-

“Change the CPI (Consumer Price Index) inflation assumption underlying the budget in Appendix 6 (Page 165) for 2020/21 from 1.2% to 1.1%, and make all the consequential changes predicted by the spreadsheet to any figure affected in the budget by them. In particular this will reduce overall net expenditure by £260,643.

In Appendix 1, Table 1a (page 119) add to the figures in line 404, £261k in each of the pay and net budget columns, so the new figures are £6412k and £4845k respectively, and the budget overall is balanced at the same net expenditure.

In Appendix 1, 1h, Children's Services budget 2020/21 (page 126) add an additional line after the EHCP's transport line

Youth Work 260,643

Make any further consequential changes to the budget that are required"

In presenting the amendment Cllr Sutton advised that youth clubs/centres had reduced in number dramatically across Dorset and indicated that studies commissioned had shown a correlation between a reduction within youth services and increase in school exclusions and anti social behaviour. She further highlighted that the Police and Crime Commissioner had also expressed concerns. In proposing her amendment she stated that it was essential that the council invested in youth services to ensure clubs that had survived to date kept going in the future.

Cllr Heatley advised that it was important that the council started to return to supporting youth clubs that offered such a valuable service to young people in Dorset.

Although acknowledged as a worthy cause, the Leader of the Council stated that any change in budget should be considered through policy change and the most appropriate means to do this would be through the member scrutiny process.

Cllrs P Barrow and D Gray left the meeting prior to the vote on the amendment. Upon being put to the vote the amendment was LOST.

In accordance with procedure rule 19.6 a recorded vote was taken. Those who voted in favour of the amendment:- Cllr J Andrews, M Barron, S Bartlett, D Beer, R Biggs, D Bolwell, A Brenton, K Clayton, S Cocking, T Cook, J Dover, B Ezzard, L Fry, M Hall, B Heatley, R Holloway, R Hughes, N Ireland, S Jones, P Kimber, H Legg, D Morgan, J Orrell, M Rennie, M Roe, A Starr, C Sutton, R Tarr, D Taylor, G Taylor, D Tooke, S Williams and J Worth.

Against:- Cllrs R Adkins, A Alford, P Batsone, C Brooks, P Brown, R Bryan, G Carr-Jones, S Christopher, R Cook, T Coombs, J Dunseith, M Dyer, T Ferrari, S Flower, S Gibson, B Goringe, P Harrison, S Jespersen, C Jones, A Kerby, N Lacey-Clarke, C Lugg, L Miller, L O'Leary, E Parker, M Parkes, A Parry, M Penfold, B Pipe, V Potheary, B Quayle, B Ridout, M Roberts, J Robinson, D Shortell, J Somper, G Sutte, D Turner, D Walsh, P Wharf and K Wheller.

There were no abstentions.

The following amendment was put by Cllr K Clayton seconded by Cllr B Heatley:-

"Amend paras 1.1 and 1.2 of the Budget Report (page 103) as follows (new text in *italics*, deleted text with strike- through):

1.1 The Council's budget provides a financial framework for the Council to achieve its priorities *and its cross-cutting commitment to addressing the climate and ecological emergency*. These priorities are described ...

1.2 The Council's budget strategy is based on a commitment to deliver these priorities *and action on the climate and ecological emergency* within the resources it has available...

Amend para 4.4 (page 106) as follows

... An investment fund of £5m has been established to finance transformation projects which *either* have a material, lasting and positive impact on the revenue budget, *and/or reflect the extra costs of doing something in a way that materially mitigates or adapts to climate change and/or improves Dorset's ecology*.

Amend para 12.4 (page 114) as follows:

12.4 The work so far indicates that Dorset Council will be able to establish a prudent level of earmarked reserves and will work towards releasing some of these for investment in future service capacity and improvement once the direction of future funding is clearer. *In particular, a priority for such released reserves will be the Transformation Fund (para 4.4 above) and the Council will decide in Autumn 2020 whether it is in a position to release a further £5m for this fund.*"

Cllr P Barrow returned to the meeting.

In presenting the amendments, Cllr K Clayton stated that this was a modest proposal and the first part of the amendment giving the Climate and Ecological Emergency a place in the financial framework was analogous to the Corporate Plan priorities. The second part of the amendment gave substance to the first part by extending the scope of the Transformation Fund to include climate change and ecological projects and increasing its size by a further £5m in Autumn 2020 if Dorset Council's reserves position so permitted.

Councillors discussed the amendment and particular reference was made to why the figure of £5m had been chosen? In response it was noted that the amendment was about putting climate change in the budget which would allow the opportunity for related projects to be considered in a similar way to transformation items. A request was made for there to be more ambition in this area which would require available funding.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Assets recognized the aspiration of the amendment but noted that the Council should not commit money to a single issue as this could limit the ability of the Council to transform in the future. He provided examples of action already being taken in respect of climate change issues.

Upon being put to the vote the amendment was LOST. In accordance with procedure rule 19.6 a recorded vote was taken.

Those who voted in favour of the amendment:- Cllrs J Andrews, P Barrow, D Beer, R Biggs, A Brenton, K Clayton, T Cook, J Dover, B Ezzard, L Fry, M Hall, B Heatley, R Holloway, N Ireland, S Jones, P Kimber, H Legg, D Morgan, J Orrell, M Rennie, M Roe, A Starr, C Sutton, R Tarr, D Taylor, G Taylor, D Tooke and S Williams.

Those who voted against the amendments:- Cllrs R Adkins, T Alford, S Bartlett, P Batstone, C Brooks, P Brown, R Bryan, G Carr-Jones, S Christopher, S Cocking, R Cook, T Coombs, J Dunseith, M Dyer, T Ferrari, S Flower, S Gibson, B Goringe, P Harrison, R Hughes, S Jespersen, C Jones, A Kerby, N Lacey-Clarke, C Lugg, L Miller, L O'Leary, E Parker, M Parkes, A Parry, M Penfold, B Pipe, V Potheary, B Quayle, B Ridout, M Roberts, J Robinsons, D Shortell, J Somper, G Suttle, D Turner, D Walsh, Peter Wharf, K Wheller and J Worth.

Abstentions:- Cllr M Barron

Proposed amendment Youth Centres

The following amendment was proposed by Cllr L Fry and seconded by Cllr N Ireland.

Amend item 5.2 (page 8 of report, page 106 of agenda).

5.2 Additional resources are being put into the budget to provide for increasing levels and costs of support for children and young people with more complex needs. In addition, any positive balance from the budgeted amount and actual national pay award will be directed towards provision for youth services, in the form of grants to properly constituted youth centres across Dorset. The Council is also examining how it might better use its capital budget to develop some of its own solutions to financial pressures caused by a limited national market where councils are competing for finite resources that can provide some of the services required.

Councillors discussed the issues arising from the amendment and during discussion the following points were raised:

- A point was raised that this was a modest amendment which would not commit funding until money was available. It would form a statement of intent and recognise the area as a priority
- A discussion was held in respect of the different ways that youth clubs could be supported
- A point was raised that the amendment should have been brought up and discussed during the budget scrutiny process
- The support for youth services and the intention of the amendment were recognised however it was planned to establish an executive

advisory panel to look at youth services support moving forward. This was felt to be a more appropriate way of progressing the issue

- Various councillors shared their experiences of working with youth clubs within the council area
- Those councillors supporting the amendment urged the Council to vote in support so that work in this area could be progressed
- A point was raised that the amendment and the work of the executive advisory panel to be established could work alongside each other
- A point was noted that the amendment had been put forward as there were currently no proposals for youth services
- The need to support young people was recognised but a point was noted that it needed to be considered in a structured way.

Cllr P Barrow left the meeting prior to the vote taking place.

Upon being put to the vote the amendment was LOST. In accordance with procedure rule 19.6 a recorded vote was taken.

Those who voted in favour of the amendment:- Cllrs J Andrews, M Barron, S Bartlett, D Beer, R Biggs, D Bolwell, A Brenton, K Clayton, S Cocking, T Cook, J Dover, L Fry, M Hall, B Heatley, R Holloway, R Hughes, N Ireland, S Jones, P Kimber, H Legg, D Morgan, J Orrell, M Rennie, M Roe, A Starr, C Sutton, R Tarr, D Taylor, G Taylor, D Tooke K Wheller, S Williams and J Worth.

Those who voted against the amendments:- Cllrs R Adkins, T Alford, P Batstone, C Brooks, P Brown, R Bryan, G Carr-Jones, S Christopher, R Cook, T Coombs, J Dunseith, M Dyer, T Ferrari, S Flower, S Gibson, B Goringe, P Harrison, S Jespersen, C Jones, A Kerby, N Lacey-Clarke, C Lugg, L Miller, L O'Leary, E Parker, M Parkes, A Parry, M Penfold, B Pipe, V Potheary, B Quayle, B Ridout, M Roberts, J Robinsons, D Shortell, J Somper, G Suttle, D Turner, D Walsh and Peter Wharf.

There were no abstentions.

Members returned to the original motion. Councillors thanked all those who had been involved in preparing the budget. The budget setting arrangements including the Budget Scrutiny Café had provided for a transparent process and allowed a high level of engagement.

Cllr T Ferrari proposed that the vote be taken.

Those in favour of the recommendation:- Cllrs R Adkins, A Alford, J Andrews, M Barron, S Bartlett, P Batstone, D Beer, R Biggs, D Bolwell, A Brenton, C Brooks, P Brown, R Bryan, G Carr-Jones, S Cocking, T Cook, R Cook, T Coombs, J Dover, J Dunseith, M Dyer, T Ferrari, S Flower, L fry, S Gibson, B Goringe, P Harrison, R Holloway, R Hughes, S Jespersen, S Jones, C Jones, A Kerby, P Kimber, N Lacey-Clarke, H Legg, C Lugg, L Miller, D Morgan, L O'Leary, J Orrell, E Parker, M Parkes A Parry, M Penfold, B Pipe, V Potheary, B Quayle, M Rennie, B Ridout, M Roberts, J Robinson, M Roe, D

Shortell, J Somper, A Starr, G Suttle, R Tarr, D Taylor, D Turner, D Walsh, P Wharf, K Wheller, S Williams and J Worth.

Those who voted against the recommendation:- Cllrs B Ezzard, M Hall, N Ireland and G Taylor.

Abstentions:- Cllrs K Clayton, B Heatley and C Sutton

Decision

- (a) That the revenue budget summarised in Appendix 1 of the report to Council of 18 February 2020 be approved;
- (b) That the increase in general council tax of 1.995%; to levy 2% as the social care precept, providing a band D council tax figure for Dorset Council of £1,694.79 be approved and
- (c) That the full council tax recommendation as set out in Appendix 2 of the report be approved;
- (d) That the capital strategy set out in Appendix 3 and the capital programme set out in Appendix 4 of the report be approved;
- (e) That the treasury management strategy set out in Appendix 5 of the report be approved;
- (f) That the assumptions used to develop the budget strategy and MTFP as set out throughout the report to Council of 18 February 2020 and summarised in Appendix 6 be approved;
- (g) That the recommended balances on earmarked reserves and on general funds, including the minimum level of the general fund be approved;
- (h) That the application of council tax premiums as set out in the report, for long-term empty properties, to encourage those homes back into use, be approved;
- (i) That the responses to the recommendations and comments made as part of the budget scrutiny process (Appendix 8) be agreed;
- (j) That the cost reductions flowing from reorganisation, summarised in Appendix 7 be received and noted.

Reason for Recommendation:

The Council is required to set a balanced revenue budget, and to approve a level of council tax as an integral part of this.

The Council is also required to approve a capital strategy, a capital programme and budget, and a treasury management strategy.

The draft budget proposals have been considered and endorsed by the four Dorset Council scrutiny committees (People, Place, Resources and Health).

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman of Council advised that a ten minute adjournment would be held.

Councillor Stella Jones left the meeting at this point.

The Council reconvened at 21.24pm.

The Chairman sought the agreement of Full Council to continue beyond 3 hours, as set out in the Constitution. This was agreed by those present.

67. **Review of the Constitution**

The Leader of the Council presented a report and recommendation to amend the Constitution of Dorset Council which was adopted by the Shadow Council in April 2019.

The review of the Constitution had been brought forward after consultation with Group Leaders, the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer. This would enable any changes to the structure of committees and the roles of members to be approved by the Council, to be implemented at the Annual Council Meeting in May so that they take full year effect.

It was proposed by Cllr S Flower seconded by Cllr C Sutton

Decision

That the Council:-

- (a) Supports the changes to the Constitution set out in the following sections of the report to Council of 18 February 2020:
 - (i) 10.4 To enable the Leader to designate up to six members from the controlling group as Lead Members to work alongside portfolio holders.
 - (ii) 11.10 To replace the existing four overview and scrutiny committees with two overview committees and two scrutiny committees.
 - (iii) 11.11 That the Chairmen of the two scrutiny committees shall be members of the largest opposition group and the vice chairmen shall not be members of the controlling group.
 - (iv) 11.12 That People and Health Overview Committee should include the statutory education co-optees (for education business only) and that the People and Health Scrutiny Committee should exercise the Council's statutory health scrutiny and crime and disorder functions
- (v) 12.3 to 12.6 To simplify and clarify the role and composition of the Staffing Committee when making senior officer appointments.

- (vi) 13.1 To add the arrangements for the appointment and terms of office of co-opted members of the Harbours Committee.
- (vii) 14.3 To implement the recommendation of a multi-agency task and finish group that the pan-Dorset Community Safety & Criminal Justice Board be disbanded.
- (viii) 15.1 To delete the interim arrangements which operated between 1 April 2019 and the first elections to Dorset Council.
- (iv) 15.2 To make other consequential changes including to Council Procedure Rule 9 (Public Participation) to reflect the importance of the voice of Parish and Town Councils and the experience of the Chairman of Council and Democratic Services in operating the rules.
- (x) 16.1 To give the Leader authority after consulting the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee to make necessary drafting changes prior to publication of the Constitution.

(b) And that the Council

- (i) Ask the Audit and Governance Committee to determine any changes needed to those parts of the Constitution which contribute to the internal control environment.
- (ii) Ask the Independent Remuneration Panel to include the outcomes of the review the Constitution in their review of the Scheme of Members' Allowances.
- (iii) Agree that the next major review of the Council's governance arrangements should not take place before February 2022.

Reason for Recommendation:

To provide the Council with the good governance arrangements needed to enable the Council to be effective and efficient and achieve its ambitions for Dorset's communities - Member led and governance lite.

68. Appointments of Co-Opted Independent Members of the Harbours Committee

It was proposed by Cllr K Wheller and seconded by Cllr S Williams

Decision

That Lee Hardy be appointed as a Co-opted Independent Member of the Harbours Committee for an initial term of three years.

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure the membership of the Harbours Committee is in accordance with the Dorset Council Constitution and industry best practice.

A vacancy existed after 3 of 4 Co-opted Independent Members transferred from Weymouth's Harbour Management Board to Dorset Council's Harbours Committee. The vacancy was advertised widely in the usual way.

A selection panel comprising the Chair of the Committee Cllr Kate Wheller, Cllr Rob Hughes and Cllr Mark Roberts, supported by Weymouth Harbour Master, interviewed 5 candidates for co-opted membership of the Harbours Committee on 14th October 2019. The panel concluded that Lee Hardy be recommended for approval by the Harbours Committee and Full Council. Lee lived in Dorset and had wide experience in marine affairs, management and business.

69. Pay Policy Statement

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Change advised members that, in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, Council was responsible for approving the annual pay policy statement for 2020/21.

It was proposed by Cllr P Wharf seconded by Cllr L O'Leary

Decision

- (a) That the provisions of the Localism Act and content of the Pay Policy Statement for the 2020/21 financial year be noted
- (b) That the Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21 be approved.

Reason for Recommendation:

The Full Council is responsible for approval of the annual pay policy statement.

70. Urgent items

There were no urgent items to report.

71. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Public Questions and Responses - Appendix 1
Councillor Questions and Responses - Appendix 2

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 9.32 pm

Chairman

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Full Council – 18 February 2020

Questions and Statements submitted for Public Participation Period

Question - submitted by Paul N Tomlinson, Chairman of the former Dorset, Poole & Bournemouth Local Access Forum

Local access forums

“Section 94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires each local highway authority to establish an independent advisory body, known as the Local Access Forum. Once appointed by the authority the Forum’s primary function is to advise the authority and other public bodies as to the improvement of public access to land in its area for the purpose of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area.

The legislation provides for the establishment of joint Local Access Forums to serve adjacent authorities and in the early 2000s Dorset County Council and Bournemouth and Poole Borough Councils set up the Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole Joint Local Access Forum. Forum members represent a range of local interests concerned with improving public access to the countryside, including both users of local rights of way or access land - such as walkers, horse-riders and cyclists and also owners and occupiers of access land or land used by local rights of way.

When the three local authorities became two this created a need to revise the membership and administrative arrangements for the LAF. What concerns the members of the earlier Forum is that we have been unable to get any information at all from the two Unitary Authorities as to their plans to reconstitute the LAF, so that its members can continue to address their statutory role. The information on Dorset Council’s website about the Local Access Forum is some years out of date, and since it last met in November 2018 none of the members of the earlier LAF have received any communication about how the Forum will be reconstituted. Dorset Council officers may need to have to undertake discussions with their counterparts in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council about whether they wish to continue with a joint forum, but existing Forum members cannot understand why this has taken so long, and why they have not been kept informed of progress. This is despite members of the Forum (and organisations with an interest in its work) having repeatedly asking officers and members of both councils for information.

Leaving aside the fact that the Council has a statutory duty to maintain a Local Access Forum, the advice that a functioning Forum would be able to provide would directly support the priorities set out in the draft Dorset Council Plan. The sections concerning the “unique environment” and “strong healthy communities” both fit well with the LAF’s role. For example access to rights of way, country parks and countryside are specifically mentioned under “strong healthy communities”. It is also puzzling that despite its statutory role the LAF is not mentioned in the Plan as a body with which Dorset Council will work.

Question:

Members of the LAF, as it existed at the end of 2018, ask the Council for a timetable for the re-establishment of the LAF, either a discrete LAF for Dorset Council or a joint LAF with BCP Council.

Thank you.

Response from Cllr Ray Bryan

With the merger of the 6 councils to form Dorset Council and 3 councils to form Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council - the Dorset Local Access Forum has been put on hold to take the opportunity to put in place the necessary resources to adequately support it.

The Council recognises the invaluable role of the Dorset Local Access Forum as a statutory independent advisory body to a wide range of decision-making organisations – including local authorities – about making improvements to public access – public rights of way and greenspace – for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel.

The work of the Forum is increasingly pertinent with regards to current social, environmental and economic issues such as public health, climate change and tourism. Current preparations will ensure that the Forum is aligned with structures and services across the new Dorset Council – recognising the Forum's integral role helping to address and move forward this important area of work.

The Forum will continue as a joint body and will be contacted regarding recruitment and a timetable for subsequent future meetings. We anticipate the next meeting of the Dorset Local Access Forum to be in May.

Statement by David Redgewell (South West Transport Network)
To be read out by John Collingwood

“We are unhappy with proposed cuts to the Crewkerne - Beaminster - Bridport hospital bus services from May 2020.

First Wessex have withdrawn operations on their portion of service 6 but First South West have still maintained their part of the route. Buses of Somerset are maintaining Yeovil bus services.

Will Dorset County Council work with Somerset County Council, Bridport Town Council, Beaminster Town Council and Crewkerne Town Council to maintain and improve services between Bridport - Dorchester South - Lyme Regis - Axminster and Yeovil as well as ensure that buses services are provided on Sunday's and weekday evenings.

Currently, it seems as though there will be no Sunday services until the 1st May 2020.

We would like to see progress on disabled access to Dorchester South and Dorchester West stations, also at stations on the Bristol - Weymouth line rail partnership as well as a lift at Wareham station.

The £299000 subsidy allocation from the DFT is most welcome and we would like it to be used on improvements to local bus services.

We would also like to see through ticketing on the service 30 between Taunton and Axminster”.

Question submitted by Prof Tony Walter

Dorset's 2020-2033 Waste Plan embraces the **waste hierarchy** – the priority is waste reduction, then re-use and recycling, then recovery of materials or energy, and only then disposal. The plan accepts **incineration** as a means of **energy recovery** from residual waste *so long as it does not mean burning waste that otherwise would or could be managed further up the waste hierarchy* (Policy 6.b, p. 76).

I have two concerns about this:

1) Evidence from across the UK has shown incineration can reduce recycling rates. In her recent report *A Burning Problem: How Incineration is Stopping Recycling*, Baroness Jenny Jones writes: 'There is a logic to generating energy from the waste that we cannot recycle, or reuse, but it is meant to be the last resort. What we have created instead is a market driven system of incinerators which constantly need to be fed. Many councils have signed long term contracts with incinerators and these have some of the worst recycling rates in the country. In fact, many of these councils have gone backwards and recycle proportionately less than they did six years ago.'

2) The Waste Plan (3.13) aims to 'contribute towards a **zero waste** economy' - a **circular economy** (3.17) in which waste is designed out of production and consumption, so resources can be used for as long as possible – but currently impeded by lack of national policy. Prof Ian Boyd, DEFRA's chief scientific adviser, is concerned that building new incinerators that last 30-40 years could– by destroying resources - undermine a circular economy once national policy and new technology enable this. *

I therefore ask:

- How would DC ensure that the proposed Portland incinerator would not undermine a) Dorset's good record of recycling and b) its long term aspiration for a circular economy?

* <http://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/9c6b4590-5882-4464-a945-29783d4af339>
(from 15:17:12)

Response from Cllr Tony Alford

Dorset has one of the best recycling rates in the country, with a recycling rate of 59.6% in 2018-19. These high recycling rates have been achieved through the implementation of the waste hierarchy where waste is reduced, reused and recycled before it is treated and ultimately disposed of. These principles are underpinned in our Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Dorset which sets out how we will deal with our waste until 2033.

Over the last 15 years Dorset has reduced the amount of black bag waste collected by nearly 50%. This has largely been achieved through the introduction of the recycle for Dorset collection service through the Dorset Waste Partnership, where we increased the amount of recyclable and compostable material we collect at the kerbside and restricted the amount of rubbish we collect. This high performing collection service, along with our ongoing education and behaviour change activities, will continue to maintain Dorset's high recycling performance irrespective of our waste treatment and disposal arrangements for black bag waste.

In 2019 Dorset sent approximately 70% (60,000 tonnes) of "black bag" residual waste to waste treatment. The remaining 30% (of the residual) is landfilled and is from the Household Recycling centres and other bulky wastes.

The waste treatment involves a mechanical and biological treatment (MBT), where recyclable material such as metals are recovered and organic material composted, and the remainder is bailed and sent to Energy from Waste facilities (incineration) as Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF). RDF contains materials that are too contaminated for recycling to be economically or practically feasible.

Since 2011 Dorset's recycling rate has risen to and maintained around 60%, and there is no indication that the use of waste treatment facilities has had a negative impact on Dorset's recycling performance.

The proposal at Portland is being promoted by Powerfuel. The proposal is for the management of Refused Derived Fuel (RDF) not black bag waste.

To date the Waste Planning Authority has engaged with Powerfuel and provided pre-application advice. No planning application has yet been made for Powerfuel's intended proposals for an Energy Recovery Facility on Portland. If, and when a planning application is submitted, it, and the accompanying environmental statement, will be subject to full public consultation. Any future consideration of a proposal would have full regard to local and national planning policies, including the policies relating to waste minimisation, re-use and recycling, the protection of the environment and local amenity and climate change.

Managing waste through energy from waste facilities should support, not compete with, increased diversion from landfill and increased recycling.

Question submitted by Kira Robinson

On May 16th 2019 the Dorset Council recognised a state of Climate Emergency stating

“We have an opportunity and an obligation to demonstrate leadership – thinking globally about the implications of climate change and acting locally to help address it in our communities.

In December Dorset Council took the initiative to make a request for ideas from the public to help tackle the task ahead. Around this same time South Western Energy Ltd (SWEL) submitted plans to drill a single vertical oil well near the village of Puddletown.

This proposal is obviously inconsistent with the Councils efforts to move towards a more sustainable future for Dorset. It also contradicts the wishes of the Puddletown Parish council, who have rejected the plan stating it “will have an adverse effect on the natural environment, biodiversity and rich wildlife.” And expressing concerns that the “track” used as access for up to 8 tankers is in fact a public bridleway, already congested from vehicular use.

The local community have also rejected the idea of drilling for dirty oil on their doorsteps. To date, the planning application has directly received over 100 objections on the councils website. An online petition has collected more than 800 signatures with paper petitions adding over 100 more.

The Governments own wildlife adviser, Natural England, Dorset Wildlife Trust and the environment agency have all criticised the applications flawed ecological assessments especially regarding the threat of pollution to potable water supplies, nearby river Piddle and to the areas sensitive chalk stream, Devils Brooke.

The Dorset councils draft 4 year plan sites “It is clear that the climate and ecological emergency must inform the council's decisions and actions for the foreseeable future”.

To that end I ask;

Will Dorset Council demonstrate leadership and influence and say no to South Western Energy and say no to new fossil fuel extraction in Dorset?

Response from Cllr David Walsh

You have rightly mentioned that Dorset Council is working towards a more sustainable future. This must be considered in the context of what a local authority has the remit to influence. Minerals and energy are subject to national policies which Dorset Council is not at liberty to change. The National Planning Policy Framework

states the following: *'It is essential that there is a sufficient supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that the country needs. Since minerals are a finite natural resource, and can only be worked where they are found, best use needs to be made of them to secure their long-term conservation'* (para. 203). It adds that *'Minerals planning authorities should...when planning for on-shore oil and gas development, clearly distinguish between, and plan positively for, the three phases of development (exploration, appraisal and production)...*' (para. 209).

The adopted Minerals Strategy sets out policies for hydrocarbons in Dorset which are consistent with national policy and reflect the fact that Dorset hosts nationally important energy minerals which society is still dependent upon until such times as human energy needs can be entirely decarbonised. It is a matter of law that planning applications for the exploration, appraisal or development of onshore oil and gas must be considered on their merits, having regard to the adopted local plan and national policy. Therefore, Dorset Council is not in a position to refuse planning permission for oil and gas development on climate grounds. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Dorset Council would be able to change its local policies to resist hydrocarbon development on climate change grounds unless and until there is a change in national policy. To refuse applications on these grounds alone would most likely result in an appeal to the Secretary of State and in all probability an award of costs against the Council. For these reasons Dorset Council will continue to focus its efforts on working positively to deal with the climate emergency within the remit of those matters it is able to affect or influence. This does not prejudice the responsibility of the Council to determine planning applications objectively having regard to relevant material planning considerations.

Statement by Prof Marfleet

All Dorset councillors will now be aware of the pressing question of income poverty in the county – and especially in South Dorset. You may not, however, be aware of all the implications:

- persistent low wages have a cumulative impact on households, and especially on children. This explains why in some areas of the county child poverty now exceeds 40 per cent;
- there's a close correlation between poverty wages and ill-health, including problems of mental health. Did you know that suicides increased by almost 40 per cent in Dorset last year, the highest level since records began ... and that suicides are concentrated in the areas of greatest deprivation in the county? Here's food for thought ... while suicides in Dorset increased at an alarming rate, the number of suicides in the BCP area **fell** significantly!
- chronically low wages are driving away our young people. Many of those who can leave - especially if they have appropriate qualifications - do leave, and don't return. Among those who remain, job opportunities are depressed by employers who take advantage of the low-wage economy by violating the law

on pay, contracts and in-work benefits. This is becoming a systemic problem, especially in South Dorset – and especially in leisure, hospitality, retail and the care sectors, which dominate the local economy;

- out-migration is a key factor driving Dorset's impending demographic crisis. Do you know that in a few years the ratio of those employed in the county to those who are not economically active (mainly those retired) will be 1:1? This is the dependency ratio – and at 1:1 it is not sustainable – it will leave the county in deep trouble;
- chronically low wages have their impact on local businesses – less to spend, less commercial income and more business failures. This is part of the syndrome which leads to a collapse in new business starts. Weymouth & Portland dominates the Dorset Council area demographically ... but here, where wages are lowest, the number of new companies is a fraction of those established elsewhere in the county and in BCP.

Other councils in our region have recognised similar problems and have intervened, using their local powers. The key issue is the **minimum wage**. We need to put a floor under wages. **Cornwall** shares many economic and social problems with Dorset – and there the council has become a Living Wage employer, guaranteeing the Real Living Wage (that's £9.30 an hour) to all its employees and all those on contracts issued by the council. **The City of Bristol** is also an accredited Real Living Wage employer ... and has showed real leadership by contacting hundreds of local businesses and asking them to do the same 180 have so far followed this lead (in contrast, in the whole of south and west Dorset there are just 12 Living Wage employers).

Next door to us in **Devon**, East Devon District Council is discussing a poverty strategy that addresses issues of incomes, rent, rural isolation, debt and general well-being. So if you live in Honiton or Axminster the council is actively engaged in addressing your problems. If you live over the border in Lyme or Beaminster – or if you're in Sherborne or Wyke or Swanage or Ferndown ... bad luck!

Months ago our community campaigns made policy proposals to the Executive Advisory Panel. They involve three sorts of measures:

- For the Council to declare **publicly** its commitment to meet legal requirements on the National Minimum wage, Equal Pay for women, and terms and conditions of employment – and its expectation that all employers with contracts serving the Council will do the same. This sends out an important message.
- The Council to prepare to introduce the Real Living Wage – as in Cornwall, Bristol and elsewhere – and take the lead in encouraging others to follow suit.
- The Council to take the lead in educating our young people about rights at work - providing our schools and colleges with sessions on wages, contracts and entitlements – and backing these up with local workshops and advice.

I hope the response from the Cabinet is not: “we can’t afford it – we’re not going there”. Please do not tell your constituents that what’s good enough in Avonmouth or Truro or Sidmouth can’t be done in Weymouth or Portland or Sturminster Newton.

Our current prime minister has said he’s intent on “levelling up” economic and social circumstances in the UK. Setting aside my scepticism about his agenda, I note the words – “levelling **up**”. This means starting at the base – and it’s essential that this Council takes on the challenge ... if you won’t, Councillors, it’s grim message for your constituents ... who are after all the people who elect you and judge you on your record.

Question submitted by Prof Marfleet

In July 2019 I asked the Council to address as a matter of extreme urgency the crisis of poverty incomes and collapsing social mobility in South Dorset. There is no tangible evidence of progress: most important, there is no sign of policy proposals from the Executive Advisory Panel charged to report on these issues. Other local authorities are intervening directly to tackle wage poverty and social deprivation.

Why is Dorset Council apparently unable to take the initiative?

Response from Cllr Gary Suttle

To advise that he will read out his detailed response after Jenny Lennon-Wood’s statement and question.

Statement by Jenny Lennon-Wood

Councillors, I am asking you to take a few moments to consider the daily lives of people whose pay is so low that they don’t earn enough to live on, or whose jobs are so insecure that they can’t be sure from day-to-day whether they will have work and be able to fund their living costs. Many people in our county work in low-waged, seasonal jobs like catering, leisure and retail. Many more work in the care sector where employers are notorious for refusing to treat travel between service-users as paid working time. Others, living in rural areas are unable to travel to low-paid jobs because public transport has either been cut or is prohibitively expensive. For these workers, daily life is a struggle: will income cover necessities like a home, food, heating and clothing? Unforeseen costs like medicines or housing repairs can tip the balance. Parents frequently go without food so that their children can eat. Even so, children often go to school hungry and, during school holidays, food banks do their best to make up for the loss of the main daily meal. Hungry children can’t get the best out of their education and impoverished parents can’t afford extras like school trips. So the one-third of Dorset’s children who live in poverty are doubly disadvantaged in the education system. Dorset Council’s Health and Wellbeing

Strategy 2016-2019 asserts that “reducing inequalities remains a priority for the Health and Wellbeing Board. This is because many of the patterns of ill-health and early deaths that we see are linked with inequality in Dorset.” So taking a lead to end the inequalities that stem from poverty pay and poor quality jobs has to be a Council priority. Another inequality that needs to be addressed is Dorset’s increasing gender pay gap, which currently stands at 29%, in shocking comparison with the 8.9% national average. Undoubtedly this reflects the fact that women are among the worst affected by poverty pay. I note, from Dorset Council’s submission to the House of Lords Report on the Future of Seaside Towns, that “There is a drive to increase the productivity, skills and wage levels across the County and in particular in some of the coastal towns (e.g. Weymouth & Portland) which have the lowest wage levels.” There seems little evidence of this “drive” in the parts of the county where low pay, insecure jobs and zero-hours contracts are rife. Here, low paying employers are being subsidised by taxpayers through the benefits that their employees are forced to claim to survive. This grim situation serves only to bring down the economy of the county as a whole. I urge Dorset Council to ensure that the Economic Development Executive Advisory Panel considers WeyPAW’s proposals without further delay so that policy to tackle poverty pay and the associated unjust inequalities can be implemented urgently.

Question submitted by Jenny Lennon-Wood

The Full Council meeting on 18 July 2019 considered a motion requiring the Council to provide effective leadership to improve social mobility in Dorset. This motion was referred to the Economic Development Executive Advisory Panel. Subsequently, in September, Phil Marfleet gave a presentation to the panel on behalf of Weymouth and Portland Action on Wages (WeyPAW) and provided panel members with some proposals to address the problems of poverty pay and insecure jobs in our county. For thousands of people living in poverty and struggling to make ends meet, this is a matter of great urgency. So my question is: how soon can we expect a report from the EAP?

Response from Cllr Gary Suttle to Prof Marfleet and Jenny Lennon-Wood

The original question on social mobility was referred to the Economic Growth Executive Advisory Panel. The Panel has focused its efforts on: -

- researching and developing the Economic Growth Strategy for Dorset Council, reflecting the corporate priority included in the Council Plan, and engaging with the business community and other stakeholders. The final draft strategy will be brought to Cabinet for approval in the near future
- informing and influencing the Local Industrial Strategy for Dorset (LIS) developed by the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership, and submitted to Government in December 2019 for approval and publication

The Panel reviewed evidence on social mobility, looking at indicators and geographic spread across Dorset, including a presentation from Professor Marfleet. The draft strategy indicates that the five foundations of productivity (as highlighted in the Government's Modern Industrial Strategy) are also the foundations of inclusive growth, and as such provide an appropriate basis upon which to tackle the issues. The draft strategy states that inclusive growth is essential for Dorset, with the benefits of increased productivity and prosperity being experienced across Dorset and especially in areas experiencing multiple deprivation and challenges to social mobility.

The Economic Growth Strategy and the LIS will provide the strategic framework for improving social mobility across Dorset. This will require long-term interventions to achieve a positive and sustainable outcome. In the short-term the Council is providing leadership to drive improvement and is working with partners to deliver interventions such as the work of the Careers Enterprise Company. In tandem with the Careers Hub focussed on Weymouth & Portland this will raise aspirations amongst young people, develop linkages between schools and business, and identify appropriate pathways for progression. Other initiatives aimed at raising aspirations of young people are the Big Bang in Dorset (18 March 2020 raising awareness of career opportunities related to STEM subjects, and 'Building Careers in Construction' (14 May).

In his submission to the Council and the Executive Advisory Panel Professor Marfleet referred to the impact of low wages and the need to educate young people about rights at work. He also asked for the Council to declare publicly its commitment to meet legal requirements on the National Minimum Wage, equal pay for women, and to prepare to introduce the Real Living Wage. The full implications of these proposals for the Council and its partners in the delivery of services will need to be fully appraised, and if considered appropriate could take significant time to deliver.

The Council's draft Economic Growth Strategy will be presented to Cabinet for approval in Spring 2020. This will provide the basis for a sustained approach to addressing the issues of social mobility. In the short-term the issues are already being addressed through existing interventions such as the Careers Enterprise Company and Careers Hub. The Council will provide leadership, collaborate with appropriate partners and seek to secure additional resources to improve social mobility across Dorset.

Full Council – 18 February 2020 Questions from Councillors

Question 1 – submitted by Cllr John Worth

“In the light of the on-going pressures on the council budget, would it not be more prudent, that rather than continuing with the sale of assets inherited from the legacy councils, Dorset Council, where appropriate and possible, forms its own development company in order to maximise profits and create an ongoing revenue stream?

After all you can only sell an asset once whilst a prudent investment can keep giving”.

Response from Cllr Tony Ferrari

In order to provide for the needs of Dorset Council, now and in the future, a mixture of both capital receipt and revenue income will be required from our property assets.

The Council holds a significant number of income producing assets in locations with strong occupier demand and rental growth prospects. Examples include the significant number of industrial estates across the County that, as well as generating a positive income return provide economic development benefit in providing suitable space for local businesses. The sale of income producing assets is generally only proposed where there is considered to be a significant risk to the income stream with a lack of growth potential or where there may be an opportunity to release enhanced value as highlighted by the proposed asset sales list.

Generally the type of assets identified on the list do not have obvious potential to obtain change of use to generate a positive income stream without significant investment and development risk.

As part of the work we are currently undertaking in preparation for the first draft of the Council’s new Asset Management Plan, we are pulling together a wide range of information regarding the properties which the Council owns in order to inform our future property policies. This piece of work will identify which properties give a positive benefit for the Council and the tax payer and which do not. We will be looking at the investment potential of the properties, together with development potential, including economic regeneration.

We will now go into a broad consultation in respect of all of the properties we are intending to sell. We will be informing MPs, Councillors, Town and Parish Councils and local interest groups to obtain their views. In some instances it will be difficult to work out which groups might be interested in the property so we will contact the local councillors to ask them who else we should add to the consultation list. As part of this process we will consider all opportunities, including those for retaining the asset to provide an income stream and we would welcome proposals from councillors to that effect.

The Council has the in house capability to design and build on sites that it owns and the ability to secure finance at competitive rates if suitable alternative use can generate positive returns from further investment. We have considered development company options in the past and might again in the future but there is little justification for the administrative effort and cost for the projects we are currently pursuing. This may change in the future as plans for our assets evolve.

Question 2 – submitted by Cllr Maria Roe

“Wimborne Town Football Club was founded in 1878 and has a long and proud history of achievements. The Magpies are in the Southern League Premier Division South. It is a committed community club that runs teams for 250 boys and girls, a ladies team, and it has two teams for people with disabilities. The club has several paid employees and runs a successful clubhouse with functions throughout the year.

The Football Club is located in an area known as Cuthbury which is to be developed into a housing estate. The club is due to move to a new football ground off the Leigh Road at Parmiter. The original S.106 agreement made in 2018 imposed a number of obligations on the developer which had to be complied with before development started on the new site. One requirement was that the new football ground at Parmiter had to be completed before the development of the site began at Cuthbury to ensure a smooth transition for the club.

A member of the public contacted me in late November to say that the situation had changed significantly. I discovered in December 2019 that a Deed of Variation had been made which enabled the developer to start work on the existing site before completing the new football ground in Parmiter leaving the club potentially homeless. This means that there is now a very high risk that the football club may have nowhere to play; for a semi-professional team, and also the local community, the consequences of this are catastrophic.

The Deed of Variation was carried out through delegated powers without any scrutiny or consultation. The football club was not informed, the ward members were not informed, town council and parish councils were not informed, and this is simply not acceptable.

My question to the portfolio holder is simply this: what will Dorset Council do to put this situation right?”

Response from Cllr David Walsh

The deed of variation allows the commencement of development, and the occupation of affordable housing, on the Cuthbury ground before the Parmiter ground is completed. However the developer remains obliged to evidence progress with the new football ground, with requirements that a detailed specification for the stadium is agreed with the Council before any development on the Cuthbury ground takes place. No market units can be occupied on the Cuthbury ground until the new ground is completed.

We are aware the developer has chosen not to renew Wimborne Town Football Club's lease at the Cuthbury site when it runs out in May. This is a legal matter between landlord and tenant over which the Council has no control and a route which the developer was always entitled to take to enable site clearance and preparation to take place.

The Council is seeking to work with the developer to ensure the timely completion of the new football ground. We understand that the developer is currently aiming to hand over the football pitches to the football club in August, with the club house due to be handed over in September. We acknowledge that there is a period of uncertainty for the football club in the interim and officers will be exploring options with the developer and the football club, as a matter of urgency, to seek a position where the football club has certainty for the interim period.

Question 3 – submitted by Cllr Nick Ireland

Agenda item 13 (Pay Policy Statement) highlights the fact that Dorset Council as an employer pays a lowest salary of £17,364 per annum, which equates to an hourly rate of £9.02 at the council's 37 hours working week.

By contrast, according to the Living Wage Foundation, the real, minimum living wage is currently £9.30/hour (outside of London).

Other unitary authorities, Cornwall being a prime example, have not only moved to pay all their staff a minimum of the foundation real living wage but have gone much further in insisting their contractors and suppliers do the same as contracts come up for renewal. This encourages staff retention and loyalty and brings benefits the local economy.

Given the regular appearance of various localities of Dorset Council's demesne in indices of child poverty, social deprivation and low-wages, and considering the much repeated aspiration for Dorset Council to be 'an employer of choice', will the Leader as a minimum commit to ensuring all Dorset Council employees are paid at least the real living wage as established by the Living Wage Foundation and that this is revised appropriately on a yearly basis?

Response from Cllr Peter Wharf

The Council is required, under the provisions of the Localism Act to publish a Pay Policy Statement. The purpose of this is one of transparency so that anyone who is interested can see the numerical relationship between the highest paid and those at the median. It is therefore simply a matter of fact.

In producing the Statement, I have not reviewed the approach to setting pay levels. To do so properly would be a very significant task and not one that would be undertaken on an annual basis.

As the Member points out the Council aspires to be an Employer of Choice. There is already a good deal of work underway and which will continue for the next few years in order to underpin this aspiration.

One important aspect is to review the employment offer that is the terms and conditions the Council puts in place in order to recruit and retain the best workforce possible. Although we are at an early stage I would welcome the input of the appropriate Committee. This would give us all the opportunity to better explore all of the issues in the round, including the level of pay and how that relates to the Living Wage.

I'm happy to discuss further with Cllr Ireland outside of this meeting.

Question 4 – Mike Parkes

Ferndown Town Centre – Regeneration Strategy

In 2016 the former East Dorset District Council, working with Ferndown Town Council and Dorset County Council, commissioned consultants to investigate the feasibility of regenerating Ferndown Town Centre which involved extensive surveying of the buildings, open spaces, businesses, traffic flows and analysis of pedestrian footfall. The research culminated with a series of consultation sessions with key stakeholder groups and members of the public.

Following completion of the report, the Ferndown Town Centre Regeneration Strategy was approved by the sponsoring Councils in April 2017.

The strategy document identified seven projects which contribute towards a first phase of implementation with a second phase to be developed subsequently.

The advent of LGR meant that the only one of the seven projects was feasible for implementation prior to the council changes and money was ring-fenced from the former East Dorset District Council to make improvements to the Barrington Centre.

The work on the Barrington Centre is shortly about to commence, however at the time it was recognised by the representatives from each of the councils that this was one of the lower priorities but at the time was the most likely to be delivered.

Notwithstanding this all were expectant and assured that the plan would move across the new Dorset Council.

Ferndown, like many other town centres across the country, has an economy that continues to decline and is unappealing to residents and visitors. The town struggles to retain existing businesses and is unlikely to attract new business without urgent investment that is needed to revitalise a dated town centre that has had little or no attention since the early 1980's.

Can I please have an assurance that there is still a commitment to implement the Ferndown Town Centre Strategy and how the priorities contained within it will be overseen by Dorset Council, with an indication of what funds will be made available and the timescales for implementation of the various stages?

Response from Cllr Gary Suttle

The need for the regeneration of Ferndown Town Centre was recognised and addressed in the Strategy, which was received by the former local authorities ahead of local government reorganisation.

The importance of vibrant and sustainable towns was highlighted recently as the Council consulted on its Draft Economic Growth Strategy. There are many towns and High Streets across Dorset facing challenges and needing investment to improve infrastructure, viability and productivity. The new Council will need to take stock of the situation across Dorset and evaluate how it can best enable an appropriate response at a strategic and more local level.

Following the creation of Dorset Council, the various Directorates impacted by the strategy and responsible for the provision of services to the Ferndown area are being reviewed and restructured to make them fit for purpose. The outcome of the reviews and implementation of blueprints for change will have implications for how services are delivered, and the buildings used for these purposes. Combined with the review of Council assets and properties this requires that the Ferndown Town Centre Strategy be reviewed within the wider context of service provision, economic growth and Council resources.

Question 5 submitted by Cllr Ryan Hope

Question - Crematorium and the high levels of Nitride Oxide being produced

Weymouth Crematorium is located within my ward Westham, an area described statistically as an area of deprivation. The Crematorium is a very built up area and is close to four schools, three being primary schools, and Budmouth Academy.

There was recently a press release in the Dorset Echo regarding Weymouth Crematorium and the high levels of Nitride Oxide being produced.

Around 95 per cent of coffins used in cremations are made from chipboard/MDF and funerals using these types of coffins produce the same amount of NOx gas as a car driving 2,280 miles or 3,650 cars driving past the crematorium during the course of a cremation.

People exposed to nitrogen oxides over a long period may experience respiratory issues and reduced lung function that can limit an active lifestyle. As well as the health implication this council declared a climate emergency July 2019 and oxide is a greenhouse gas.

Please can you tell me:

- 1) What plans do DC have for installing NOx filters into the Weymouth Crematorium and others in Dorset to reduce the levels of Nitride Oxide currently being exposed to our communities in Dorset?
- 2) What information is being given to bereaved families to equip them with the information they need to make more environmentally friendly, informed choices when saying goodbye to their loved one?

Response from Cllr Tony Alford

Weymouth Crematorium is the only crematorium operated by Dorset Council and it operates under an Environmental Permit imposing stringent Government levels on emissions to ensure public safety. The Crematorium was amongst the first in the UK to install modern emission control technology and uses continuous monitoring to demonstrate compliance.

Nitrogen oxides are not included in current Government emission control requirements but this may change in the future.

There are very few crematoria that have emission controls for nitrogen oxides and these tend to be new facilities where the abatement plant is installed as part of the build. However, the council is in discussion with manufacturers to assess the feasibility of retro-fitting at Weymouth Crematorium and the likely cost. I will ensure that the outcome of this work is reported to Council.

Bereaved families make arrangements for their loved ones through Funeral Directors and the Council has less influence here. However, there is a growing trend for more environmentally friendly funerals and we will continue to liaise with Funeral Directors on this issue.

Question 6 submitted by Cllr Andrew Kerby

Dear Chair,

We are incredibly lucky in the new Dorset Council to have elected members that genuinely care about our younger people. I know that many of the fresh – and not so fresh faces are actively involved in providing a youth service for our young adults, teenagers and children. Whether that be directly through youth work, running a charity or in many cases, both.

I'm fortunate enough to volunteer with my young people, a role I take incredibly seriously. We have some excellent youth centres – many are far more successful now than they ever were under the former Dorset County Council (DCC) and I very much recognise the hard-work and dedication that paid staff and volunteers contribute to ensuring our young people have a safe space to learn and grow.

This success of our community youth provision is made even more remarkable considering that many of the youth charities and groups, still, after all these years, have serious unresolved issues as a direct result of what I believe was a badly planned and implemented transfer. Officers responsible for executing the dissolution of Dorset County Council's former youth service currently view the transfer programme as a success, including the transfers where through no fault of the community groups or children, youth centres sat empty for years. Other youth charities have been left to pay thousands in fees, to rectify legal situations following botched transfers – taking money that should have been spent on providing frontline services.

Can we as Dorset Council acknowledge that there **are** and have been serious issues in the transfer of the youth service provision by the former Dorset County Council to the community, and that these problems are causing difficulties to community groups and are consequently damaging to our younger people.

Does Dorset Council agree to launch a full (no stone left unturned) review into the former DCC youth service transfer, not with an aim to reverse a decision, but to ensure learning takes place and is embedded into the new Council? Where the review encounters issues caused by the youth service transfer, I ask that steps are taken to rectify the problem and if necessary, funding from Dorset Council is sought to remedy the situation, so that no young person should mis-out or be made vulnerable as a result of poor administration and execution of policy by this council or previous councils.

Response from Cllr Andrew Parry

I am grateful for the question raised by Councillor Kerby, also for the warm welcome I was given by staff, volunteers and young people when I recently visited the Blandford Youth Club. I share his sense of achievement where community groups have been able to develop thriving youth clubs in assets which the former County Council had agreed to transfer to them, along with the huge range of sports, uniformed, and performing arts groups and others in Dorset which provide things to do, places to go, and opportunities to make a positive contribution.

But it is regrettable that he feels the need to raise issues of concern about the transition arrangements for the transfer of youth centres. I would ask him to supply updated details to the Executive Director – People – Children, so that she can investigate these concerns.

Children's Services is about to create new locality teams which will be community based and bring together a range of professionals in an integrated service. Crucial to this will be the role of targeted youth workers who will be using their unique skills to focus on the contextual safeguarding of teenagers, that is understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families.

In discussions with the Leader & Executive Director for Children, we recognise the benefits in the setting up a cross-council Executive Advisory Panel (EAP), tasked with examining the predecessor Council's youth offer. On the advice of the Monitoring Officer, the findings from this EAP, should be reported through the Peoples Scrutiny Committee and onto cabinet.

I will be formalising these arrangements with the scrutiny committees Chairman Cllr Somper, this week. I hope Cllr Kerby and other Councillors with a keen interest in Dorset Council's commitment to children & young people, will wish to participate, so that, going forward we can all have renewed confidence in our Youth Offer.

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