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DORSET COUNCIL - CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 30 JUNE 2020

Present: Cllrs Spencer Flower (Chairman), Peter Wharf (Vice-Chairman), Tony Alford, Ray Bryan, Graham Carr-Jones, Tony Ferrari, Laura Miller, Andrew Parry, Gary Suttle and David Walsh

Also present: Cllr Pete Barrow, Cllr Shane Bartlett, Cllr Pauline Batstone, Cllr Cherry Brooks, Cllr Kelvin Clayton, Cllr Susan Cocking, Cllr Robin Cook, Cllr Jean Dunseith, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr David Gray, Cllr Paul Harrison, Cllr Brian Heatley, Cllr Rob Hughes, Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Paul Kimber, Cllr Rebecca Knox, Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cllr David Morgan, Cllr Louie O'Leary, Cllr Jon Orrell, Cllr Mike Parkes, Cllr Bill Pipe, Cllr Val Pothecary, Cllr Maria Roe, Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Andrew Starr, Cllr David Taylor, Cllr Gill Taylor, Cllr David Tooke, Cllr Kate Wheller, Cllr John Worth, Cllr Matthew Hall and Cllr Jane Somper

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

Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), Susan Dallison (Democratic Services Manager), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Theresa Leavy (Interim Executive Director of People - Children), Grace Evans (Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), Andy Frost (Community Safety and Drug Action Manager), Paul Iggulden (Consultant), Tony Meadows (Head of Commissioning), John Newcombe (Service Manager, Licensing & Community Safety), Karyn Punchard (Corporate Director of Place Services), Susan Ward-Rice (Equalities and Diversity Officer) and Dave Thompson (Corporate Director for Property & Assets)

154. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 May 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed at a future date.

155. Declarations of Interest

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

156. Public Participation

Four questions and one statement was received from the public. These were from Nigel Shearing, Penny Quilter, John Calvert, Averil Simmons and Annabale Gardner.

A shortened version of the questions were read out by Matt Prosser (Chief Executive) and Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director, Legal and Democratic

Services). A copy of the full questions and the responses are set out in Appendix 1 these minutes.

157. Questions from Members

There were two questions from members and these along with the responses are set out in Appendix 2 to these minutes.

158. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan was received and noted.

159. Update on Dorset Council's Response to Covid-19

In presenting the report relating the Council's response the Covid-19, the Chairman suggested that the Resources Scrutiny Committee may wish to post-scrutinise the update following this meeting. He advised members that an amended version of the report had been circulated as there had been a minor typing mistake at 9.27 of the report.

The Chairman reported that Dorset had experienced a very low number of cases and fatalities. However as of 4 June 2020 (date report was written) there had sadly been 279 deaths in the area (including care homes). He expressed his sympathy for the families who had lost loved ones.

The Chairman invited the Cabinet portfolio holders to address members on work being carried out in their respective areas of responsibility in relation to the Covid-19 response and update on the emerging arrangement for future planning.

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Health reported that the council had worked closely with Public Health to develop the test and track programme. She also referred to the council's responsibility, in partnership with Public Health and other local councils, to develop a Local Outbreak Management Plan. This plan set out what the council would do to identify and control any local outbreak in the council's areas. The Health and Well-Being Board would be supporting this work to give assurance that local services could manage any future outbreak and provide the best possible protection to local communities.

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health also reported on the importance of recovery and the health & care system. The need to look back and learn from how the council responded to the pandemic and in particular to focus on work with care homes across the system and learn valuable lessons.

In respect of local interventions, on 14 May 2020 all local authorities received a request from the Minister of State for Care to provide assurances regarding local interventions to support residential care homes. The Council was ensuring that all care settings were supported through the crisis. She further advised that shielding work continued and outlined the work around the distribution of PPE in the local area.

The Portfolio Holder for Education and Early Years reported that schools had remained open throughout the pandemic in cluster formation for the benefit of key workers and vulnerable children. Lesson plans were delivered to children working from home. Most early years provision had reopened from early June with the Council's support and provision of advice at appropriate.

The Council was also working with school leaderships to support the provision of school meals and pastoral care. He continued that some secondary school year groups were receiving face-to-face teaching and he took this opportunity to advise that the Council had continued to focus on safeguarding.

It was also noted, as anticipated, that the number of children in care during the pandemic had increased and this reflected a nationwide pattern.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment highlighted that the above average warmer weather had caused issues with overcrowding on beaches and impacted car parks. Some people had failed to follow the governments guidelines and this had put pressure on the local authority and other responding services. The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Skills reported on the business discretionary grants that had been distributed to local small businesses in recent weeks.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Assets set out the current financial situation following the impact of the pandemic. He highlighted that the Council's budget gap was 60 million pounds with the amount received from central government to date set at 21.1 million. He confirmed that members continued to lobby strongly to seek more financial support from central government.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Change advised that national guidance was being followed in respect of the recovery plan following a major event such as a pandemic. The recovery process would be led by the Local Resilience Forum and a recovery strategic plan providing a framework for recovery across Dorset had been established. He further reported on the work of the Recovery and Reset Executive Advisory Panel that was addressing issues around the recovery for the organisation and its employees.

In reply to a question regarding the detail and timescales of issuing a section 114 notice, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Assets advised that a detailed response would be circulated to all members following the meeting.

In response to a question regarding Pop-up cycle lanes, the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment advised that he would respond to this question in writing following the meeting.

A question was also asked about the provision of a hard copy information sheet in respect of Covid-19 to be circulated to residents in Dorset. The Leader of the Council confirmed that he would seek further advice from the Communications team and get back to all members with a response.

In response to concerns about GDPR, the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Health confirmed that it was important that the voluntary sector had all of the data available to them to carry out their service. She continued that it wasn't possible

to be 100% confident that all those who needed support were being reached, but she was confident that the service had 100% tried and would continue to do so.

Decision

- (a) That the continued COVID-19 emergency response in relation to the organisational reset and planned incident recovery be noted;
- (b) That a review of the Dorset Council Plan is considered in light of the organisational reset and recovery;
- (c) That the report be referred to the next meeting of Resources Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

Reason for Recommendation: To ensure that Cabinet is aware of the impact of COVID-19 on Dorset's vulnerable communities and responds accordingly.

160. **COVID-19: How well has Dorset Council responded to meeting the needs of vulnerable groups during 'lockdown'?**

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Change set out the report on how well the Council had responded to the Covid-19 pandemic in meeting the needs of vulnerable groups during the lockdown period.

Since the last meeting of Cabinet work had been undertaken on an initial assessment of the 'lockdown phase' including local and national research, discussions with partners and round-table meetings with Councillors. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that it was a qualitative exercise based on a constantly evolving situation and that the feedback from Councillors had been hugely helpful.

The EqIA should be viewed as a "live" document that was designed to inform decision-making during the coming phase of Covid-19, reset & recovery. The report had a level of pre-scrutiny due to the round table events but would also be considered by People Scrutiny Committee on 20 July 2020 with an update being reported back to Cabinet later in the year.

Additionally the EqIA had also been internally reviewed by the Equality Action Group. Members heard from officers who set out some of the detail findings for the action plan, including focusing on how to ensure that key messages reached vulnerable groups. In particular Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups were at greater risk than White Ethnic groups. There was a need to look at how the Council it would meet the requirements of these vulnerable groups going forward into the future.

In response to a question regarding rough sleepers, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety advised that some rough sleepers just didn't want to be housed during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, but he confirmed that officers continued to work with them with the support of outreach services to ensure that they were supported.

Members welcomed the report which was content rich but noted that it was also important to remember that many of those who were vulnerable and community shielding also wanted to make a contribution with the skills that they had to offer.

Decision

- (a) That the initial impact of the 'lockdown' phase of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups in Dorset (attached at appendix 1) be noted;
- (b) That the findings of a series of round-table discussions with Councillors as summarised at appendix 2, be noted;
- (c) That the an ongoing assessment of the impact on vulnerable groups through subsequent phases of the pandemic be agreed;
- (d) That the action plan outlined at section 5 of appendix 1 be agreed; and
- (e) That the initial assessment undertaken largely by staff 'released' from core roles to assist with the covid-19 response be noted and the actions set out in section 5 require appropriate resourcing and oversight.
- (f) That the report be referred to People Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

Reason for Recommendation: To ensure that Cabinet is aware of the impact of COVID-19 on Dorset's vulnerable communities and responds accordingly.

161. **Statement of Licensing Policy 2021-2026**

In presenting the report the Portfolio Holder for Customer, Community and Regulatory introduced John Newcombe, the new Service Manager Licensing & Community Safety.

Members were advised that the Council was required to publish a Statement of licensing policy at least every five years and the purpose of the policy statement was to define how the Council would exercise its responsibilities under the Licensing Act 2003. This was Dorset Council's first statement of Licensing Policy issued under the Act and prior to this formation of Dorset Council, each of the predecessor District and Borough Councils had their own Statement of Licensing Policy.

The Licensing Committee had considered the draft policy at an informal virtual meeting and it had also been shared with all councillors at a recent members briefing. Following a period of consultation, should responses to the consultation be received, officers would recommend appropriate amendments to the draft policy or give reasons why suggested alterations are not made. The outcome of the consultation would be considered by the Scrutiny Committee followed by consideration of the Licensing committee who would recommend its adoption by Full Council.

The Vice-Chairman of the Licensing Committee confirmed that the committee had met virtually to consider the policy and recommended it to go out to public consultation.

In respect of the policy document the following comments were also made;- expression of importance of a Cumulative Impact Area in the Weymouth area and that there was an argument that there should be a late night levy introduced by the Council.

The Chairman advised that these matters would be reflected upon as part of the consultation process.

Decision

- (a) That the draft Licensing Policy 2021-2026 (as set out at appendix A to the report) be published for a period of public consultation of not less than 12 weeks.
- (b) That the proposed Cumulative Impact Area, as detailed in Appendix A of the Draft Licensing Policy, be published alongside the Cumulative Impact Assessment and Violent Crime Analysis from Dorset Police as part of the public consultation.
- (c) That, subject to there being no relevant representations, the Service Manager for Licensing & Community Safety in consultation with the Chairman of the Licensing Committee recommends to the Council the adoption of the Draft Licensing Policy.
- (d) Should relevant representations be received, which require consideration of one or more significant amendments to the policy, Officers be instructed to bring a further report to the meeting of the Licensing Committee with the outcomes of the consultation.

Reason for Recommendations

To comply with legislative requirements,
To ensure openness and transparency in the Council's decision making, and To ensure that those persons affected by the policy are given the opportunity to have an input into it.

162. Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy 2021-2024

The Portfolio Holder for Customer, Community and Regulatory set out that the Council, as the Licensing Authority under the Gambling Act 2005, was required to publish a Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy at least every three years. The policy statement defined how the Council would exercise its responsibilities under the Act.

Members were advised that the draft policy had been considered by an informal meeting of the Licensing Committee prior to coming forward to Cabinet for consideration and would also be subject to a period of public consultation before

the outcome was reviewed by Scrutiny and recommended for approval by Licensing Committee to Full Council.

The Vice-Chairman of the Licensing Committee confirmed that members had considered the draft policy and commended that it now go out to public consultation.

Decision

- (a) That the draft Gambling Policy 2021-2024, as set out in appendix A, be agreed and published for a period of public consultation of not less than 12 weeks;
- (b) That, subject to there being no relevant representations, the Service Manager for Licensing & Community Safety, in consultation with the Chairman of the Licensing Committee recommends to the Council adoption of the Draft Gambling Licensing Policy;
- (c) Should relevant representations be received, which require consideration of one or more significant amendments to the policy, officers be instructed to bring a further report to the meeting of the Licensing Committee with the outcomes of the consultation.

Reason for Recommendations:

To comply with legislative requirements,
To ensure openness and transparency in the Council's decision making, and
To ensure that those persons affected by the policy are given the opportunity to have an input into it.

163. Community Safety Plan 2020-2023

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety advised that Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) were required to produce three-year Community Safety Plans that were revised annually. The Dorset CSP agreed its 2020-2023 Plan at its meeting on 9 March 2020.

Members were further advised that the Plan had been developed by analysing information and data and was informed by the findings of public consultation. Place Scrutiny Committee had also considered the process by which the CSP would develop the Plan at its meeting on 30 January 2020. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that Dorset Council was under a legal duty to work with the responsible authorities to identify and tackle community safety issues in its area and recommended the Plans adoption.

Recommendation to Full Council

That the Community Safety Plan 2020-23 be recommended to Dorset Council for adoption.

164. Options for Prohibiting the Use of Disposable Barbeques

Members were advised that there had been a number of incidents of fire damage across Dorset as a result of the use of and/or disposal of BBQ's or other social activity and of people having bonfires close to dry wooded and heathland areas.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment expressed the importance of bringing forward this report following a number of incidents including a serious fire at Wareham Forest which affected 180 hectares of heathland and was declared a major incident by the Fire and Rescue Service.

The serious impact to human health and Dorset's habitat, ecology and wildlife was also highlighted. The Portfolio Holder advised that the report sought approval of a group of Dorset Council officers, to link with the Fire and Rescue Services and other stakeholders to proceed with detailed work to look at the range of options to prohibit or control the use of BBQ's and other sources that caused fire.

Members were further advised that there was little risk associated with carrying out the proposed options report. However, once options for the control of fire risk were chosen the desired outcome would be to significantly reduce or stop the potential for accidental fires starting.

The Chairman of the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Authority welcomed the report as good in partnership working across the authorities to deal with this matter. She wanted to draw members attention the increase in the number of small fires relating to disposal BBQ's and how that had impacted on the fire service provision. It was important to remind retailers and visitors on how to use and dispose of disposal BBQ's safely. She asked Cabinet to consider if it was possible for the consultation to start immediately in order to bring forward a Public Spaces Protection Order earlier. The Portfolio Holder agreed to discuss this request with legal services.

Decision

That working with Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue and other partners
Cabinet:-

- (i) Authorise officers to proceed with detailed work to establish an options paper that looks at both the legislative as well as other alternatives available to control or prohibit barbeques and other fire related activities relating to Dorset Council area.
- (ii) Continue to support, until any further formal measures are put in place, the ongoing publicity campaign throughout the summer months in conjunction with partners. This will include the continued use of targeted signage at certain locations as well as supporting a range of social media campaigns

Reason for Recommendation:

To protect:

- Dorset's habitat, ecology and wildlife
- Human health
- Dorset Council's and private property
- And to support the safety of Dorset's emergency services and Dorset Council staff

165. **Capital funding of embankment improvements to the River Brit at West Bay**

The Portfolio Holders for Finance, Commercial & Assets and Highways, Travel & Environment set out a report seeking authority to implement riverbank improvements to the River Brit with the work planned to commence in October 2020. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Assets advised that the funding proposal for the project presented no significant cost to the Council whilst also producing an enhanced annual rent payable by the tenant of good covenant. The Portfolio Holder for Highways Travel & Environment reported that he fully supported the recommendation.

Decision

- (a) That the implementation of riverbank improvements to the River Brit to commence in October 2020, be approved;
- (b) That officers be instructed to complete an extension of the lease to the site operator of the Campfield Holiday Park at West Bay until 31st January 2074 on terms described in the confidential appendix which will fund the cost of the project works.

Reason for Recommendation:

A decision is required to progress the riverbank reinforcement project to the River Brit in West Bay, to address the risk of river flooding to the Campfield Holiday Park and adjacent properties in Forty Foot Way.

The Council is the freehold owner of the Campfield Holiday Park which is leased to Parkdean Resorts who have been the Council's tenant for 53 years. Parkdean Resorts are prepared to fund the estimated project costs from a capital premium in return for granting a 50 year lease extension that will encourage the tenant to continue to invest in a sustainable business in West Bay.

166. **Climate & Ecological Emergency Executive Advisory Panel Update**

The Climate & Ecological Emergency Advisory Panel would be shortly considering the detail of the Climate and Ecological Strategy report. A Place Scrutiny Committee had been arranged to scrutinise the report later in July followed by it being presented to Cabinet on 28 July 2020.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the strategy would go out to public consultation following the above process and that he would only be able to support realistic and achievable actions.

167. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

168. **Exempt Business**

Capital funding of embankment improvements to the River Brit at West Bay -
Exempt Appendix

Appendix 1 - Public Participation
Appendix 2 - Questions from Members

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.12 pm

Chairman

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Public Questions for Cabinet 30 June 2020

Question from Nigel Shearing

Given the Coronavirus restrictions and impacts on the town centre's economy, can the committee give an assurance to a local action group, RESPECT WEYMOUTH, looking after the interests of residents living behind the North Harbourside and up, that emerging support for invigorating licensing and hospitality will be lawful, balanced and respectful without adverse impacts on people's right to enjoyment of their private space and home. Particularly given this is a Cumulative Impact Area. There are serious concerns that the balance is not going to be achieved. Licensees are attempting to permanently introduce things on the back of the restriction for the worse. And residents have been suffering considerable impacts for too long already.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Customer, Community and Regulatory Services

Can I thank Mr Shearing for his timely question.

We all wish to see our economy in Dorset make a good recovery including the hospitality sector which is key to the lives of our town centres. I know that officers are working with partners including Dorset Police; business groups and operators to help manage the implications of the easing of restrictions and the re-opening of our high streets and licenced premises.

You may be aware that the Government are temporarily relaxing restrictions on the use of public space around such premises and highways officers have been working to ensure that public safety is not compromised by implementing additional traffic management measures in our high streets. We will also take account of the need to protect residents from disturbance.

In conjunction with our partners, we will monitor and assess the situation and take action to address any significant issues that arise.

I would also refer Mr Shearing to the item on our agenda today about the launch of a public consultation on Dorset Councils draft Statement of Licensing Policy.

This is an opportunity to help shape local controls around the sale and consumption of alcohol and to help achieve a balance between the enjoyment of licenced premises; safeguarding public health and the protection of resident's rights.

Question from Penny Quilter, Fiona Marlow and Anne Cucinella (Weymouth)

On 23rd May 2020, Secretary of State for Transport Grant Shapps, made a statement via foreword to the Traffic Management Act 2004: network management in response to COVID-19. "The coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has had a terrible impact on the lives and health of many UK citizens, as well as severe economic consequences. But it has also resulted in cleaner air and quieter streets, transforming the environment in many of our towns and cities"

"Active travel is affordable, delivers significant health benefits, has been shown to improve wellbeing, mitigates congestion, improves air quality and has no carbon emissions at the point of use. Towns and cities based around active travel will have happier and healthier citizens as well as lasting local economic benefits."

"The government therefore expects local authorities to make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians. Such changes will help embed altered behaviours and demonstrate the positive effects of active travel."

On 4th June 2020 Dorset Council announced that they had been awarded £577k of the £225m emergency active travel fund. With £115k for the short-term immediate measures and £462k for medium-term or permanent measures.

Question

Given the urgent need to change travel habits before the restart takes full effect, the Government has called for measures to be taken as swiftly as possible, and in any event within weeks. That was already over 5 weeks ago (as at 30th June) since when the restart has commenced, and levels of road traffic have rapidly risen. Dorset Council has called for public suggestions, but set an end date for that consultation of 31st July by which time it will be 10 weeks since the Government called for swift action. Given that the urgent measures called for are not new but rather interventions that are a standard part of the traffic management toolkit, **what measures have DC already put in place in response to the Government's call for action, and by when do they anticipate having spent the money made available by the Government ?**

References

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reallocating-road-space-in-response-to-covid-19-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities/traffic-management-act-2004-network-management-in-response-to-covid-19>

<https://news.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/2020/06/04/pop-up-walking-and-cycling-routes-coming-to-dorset/>

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and the Environment

The announcement on the 4th of June confirmed an indicative allocation of £115,000 for the short term and an additional £462,000 for medium-term or permanent measures. This was not a formal allocation and Dorset Council has been working hard to both deliver on some essential schemes and prepare bid documents for the government to secure a formal allocation of money to deliver them. The first stage was intended for relatively small scale, quick wins, and a submission was made to government on 4th June for this money. The formal allocation of this phase one money was only given on 25th June and it has not yet been received. Thanks to the hard work of our officers the final allocation for phase 1 is £128,000 and in excess of the indicative £115,000. Despite this money not having been formally secured until 25th June, Dorset Council has been delivering necessary schemes, effectively at risk, throughout June. These include;

- **High Street / East Street, Wimborne** - footway widening;
- **High Street, Shaftesbury** - part-time closure (0900-1600) for social distancing and public realm improvement;
- **West Bay bridge, Bridport** - footway widening and bus stop move for space for queueing at food kiosks;
- **Salisbury Street, Blandford** – footway widening into carriageway;
- **Market Cross, Sturminster Newton** – parking removed for sitting out space;
- **The Esplanade, Weymouth** - footway widening using Kings Statue bus stop at pinchpoint.

Other schemes are in the process of planning or delivery in Beaminster, Dorchester, Gillingham, Lyme Regis, Sherborne, Swanage and Wareham. Other steps are being examined in detail in Weymouth. In addition, stencil kits to support social distancing have been sent to all town councils, and are being used by Dorset Council teams in key locations, including bus stops and high priority locations.

Dorset Council will have 8 weeks to spend the phase 1 allocation from the date of receipt.

The government are asking for submissions for the phase 2 element of funding although we have not yet been given details for this submission by the DfT. It is intended that these schemes are larger semi-permanent or permanent schemes and the bid may have to be accompanied by business case and cost benefit analysis depending on the scheme. Tranche 2 is focussed towards a 'green reset' and providing additional schemes for promoting increased walking and cycling. This funding is also prioritised in areas where there were previously high levels of public transport use which in Dorset includes Weymouth, Dorchester and areas of South East Dorset, although we are also investigating schemes elsewhere. The additional scale, complexity and cost of these schemes as well as the need for local consultation means that the delivery timescales will be longer. While we have an indicative allowance for tranche 2 we do not yet know when the Department for Transport will formally request submissions or when the subsequent allocation these funds will be.

Dorset Council would encourage residents who have specific social distancing or active travel proposals to add them to the Dorset Safe Streets webpage in order that they can be considered alongside other proposals.

Question from John Calvert

As an interested resident of the Dorset Council Area I waited until the Agenda for the Cabinet meeting of June 30th appeared on mod.gov on Tuesday 23rd June then looked for details. There were no papers on Tuesday 23rd June but they

appeared on mod.gov on Wednesday 24th June i.e. today. I was astonished to see that questions had to be submitted by 8.30 on Thursday 25th June.

Can the leader of the Council explain how constructive questions can be raised by the public with less than 24 hours to scan a document with over 250 pages? Surely the process can be better planned to give members of the public more time to read at least those areas which interest them.

Response from the Leader of the Council

Cabinet agendas are published online eight calendar days before the day of the meeting. We also publish a forward plan of the Cabinet's intended business a month in advance so that people know ahead of time what issues we will be deciding at our meetings. I am sorry that the questioner could not find the agenda for today's meeting. The agenda was published and it was available online on Monday 22 June and not Wednesday 24 June and I notice that we have five questions or statements to the Cabinet today.

Question from Averil Simmons

Is it possible to fine offenders at least for the cost of the call outs where firefighters and police are called out to extinguish barbecues and camp fires?

If people are from out of the area then can their details be verified through their vehicle number plates?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment

I thank Averil Simmons for her question. We were all very distressed by the recent scenes from Wareham Forest and by similar events in other areas of Dorset. These incidents appear to be becoming more frequent and the Council must do what it can to prevent them. Our thanks go to the emergency services, landowners, council staff and members of the public who responded to limit the damage to our environment and risk to life and property.

There is a report on our agenda today outlining our early thoughts on what more the council can do in conjunction with our partners. I fully support this work and will ensure that your suggestions are considered and that a detailed report with recommendations is brought back here as soon as possible.

Statement from Annabale Gardner

I am in favour of the Prohibition of Disposable BBQs, but there needs to be some serious fines – to deter people from using them in public spaces, especially high fire risk areas!

Not only do carelessly discarded disposable barbecues cause fires, callously-disposed ones (e.g buried under the sand) cause horrific injuries – usually sustained by a child (see attached photo).

I am also in favour of asking all retailers to become responsible – withdraw sales of disposable barbecues. This approach has been started through the Nationwide campaign – Leave the BBQ at home. The aim of this campaign is to encourage and persuade retailers, local and national, to voluntarily remove these items from sale.

Whilst I appreciate that this approach may be drawn out over a long period – e.g the supermarkets putting profit the environment – we need to persevere with putting pressure on retailers until these disposable barbecues are withdrawn from sale.

In the meantime, another option could be for the retailers to increase the price of disposable barbecues with a significant percentage going towards the Fire and Rescue Service and the landowner's cost for restoration.

Questions from Councillors for Cabinet 30 June 2020

Question from Cllr J Orrell

COVID-19: How well has Dorset Council responded to meeting the needs of vulnerable groups during 'lockdown'?

The prompt action of all councils across England in providing hotel accommodation for the street homeless under government mandate within 48 hours saved lives at the peak of the pandemic. One notes that the availability at the offered prices came from parts of Weymouth with the highest deprivation. The majority have accepted help and some have been rehoused. A small minority however are concentrated in a narrow area and have caused much anti social behaviour. Now the peak is passed and other providers are opening it is time for urgent action. Those with no local connection need to go back to their towns where they have support services, mental health teams , addictions workers and housing options.

1) Can I have a firm date in July by which time only persons with a genuine link to Weymouth will remain in Richmoor/Mon Ami/Riviera hotels?

(optional extra question if first one does not give firm date)

2) Can the council immediately use it's existing estate and identify buildings that can be rapidly converted into hostel use, with the same speed and rigour as shown by those who build the Nightingale Hospitals, so they are ready by August ?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety

In answering this question I think it useful to provide some context. The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017, places a legal duty on local authorities so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to meaningful help, irrespective of their priority need status, as long as they are eligible for assistance.

Under the Homelessness Reduction Act, everyone in a local housing authority's district should be able to access free information and advice on:
preventing homelessness

- securing accommodation when homeless

- the rights of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and the duties of the authority
- any help that is available from the authority or anyone else
- how to access that help.

Dorset Council is the housing authority and has to treat anyone coming to the Council for support from Dorset and will establish a local connection to Dorset. It cannot take into account which part of Dorset the person is from, although it does need to consider what support a person would have from friends and family in their local community. It is not legally possible to restrict the placement of a homeless household to a particular town, but where possible this is always the preferred option if following discussions with the individual a preference is specified. However, a shortage of suitable temporary accommodation in Dorset does limit the options available to the Council.

It should be noted that if a person is accepted to join the housing register currently they have to be nominated to a former district or borough area as the old system from the legacy council days is still in operation. Going forward, once the new housing allocations policy is adopted, restriction to an area may not apply as it is proposed there will be one single Dorset connection rather than to the former district or borough.

The Council has now secured the use of a hostel in Purbeck area and a number of people are and will be moving across to this accommodation, particularly those that have identified a link to the East of Dorset.

Therefore it is not possible to give a date to the specific question as legally the Council cannot do what is requested.

Officers from property services are looking at the existing estate to see if there are opportunities to convert something to a hostel. Any potential site identified

would need to meet building regulations and planning criteria, but everyone is aware speed is of the essence in identifying alternative accommodation solutions.

Question from Cllr G Taylor

Would the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety agree that the COVID pandemic has shone a light on the homeless problems in Dorset. It is a disgrace that in the 21 century we have over 300 individuals and families who are in temporary accommodation and I'm sure this is still an under-estimate. COVID however has given us the opportunity to change this and to have a positive outcome but it needs this council to take and own the issue. These are all our residents, they are not imported from elsewhere, they are all individuals and they all have stories that have led to them being in this situation, they should be treated with respect.

Would the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety:

- Propose positive steps in a timely manner to increase our temporary housing provision, and also the support required to enable tenants to retain tenancies. Can I have assurances that this council is investing in increasing the amount of temporary housing and are actively seeking grant funding from Government to help us take these residents permanently off the street. In addition to this, in the review of the Housing Allocation Policy, can he consider how social housing can be used to provide more accommodation for homeless people although in this, I am mindful of the need to still provide housing for those who are not adequately housed.

This virus shines a light on how many additional properties we need, just to house our residents. I hear time and time again from residents that we don't need any more houses in Dorset; that we have enough. This is appalling, unacceptable and is from residents who have a roof over their heads.

Would the Portfolio Holder for Planning

- Ensure that the planning authority listens to the needs and gives due weight to the silent minority – those who do not have a roof over their heads. These residents do not attend our planning meetings or bombard councillors with emails but they are still our residents and are equal to all other residents. We need to build our way out of this mess and planners and the planning committees need to take note of the needs of all our residents.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety (in respect of the 1st part of the question

The Council is working in partnership with a number of agencies such as citizens' advice to ensure there is advice and information available to those who are concerned about paying their rent and losing their tenancy. This includes signposting advice to benefit support and credit unions and trading standards advice about avoiding loan sharks. We are also engaging with private sector landlords to remind them of their legal responsibilities regarding eviction proceedings and asking them to contact us if they have concerns about a tenant so everyone can work together to prevent a household becoming homeless.

The drive to increase the amount of properties for use as temporary accommodation remains a key priority for the housing team. The Council offer a private sector lettings management service and any landlord with a property can lease their property directly to the council for them to manage on their behalf. We are working on promoting this scheme in order to secure more properties for use as temporary accommodation.

Following the announcement on the 24th June that the Government is providing a further £105 million to support local authorities in ensuring that people currently accommodated in emergency accommodation do not return to the streets, officers will be working with colleagues from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to prepare a number of bids to increase the accommodation options for homeless households such as supported housing and hostels.

Discussions have taken place with our 3 main registered housing providers (RP) and they have offered to directly let a number of properties to the Council for use as temporary accommodation. This does however mean that for every property offered one less is available for social rented opportunities so there is a fine

balance to be struck. However, the council can let rooms individually as a house share which a RP cannot do.

In light of the high numbers accommodated in B&B accommodation and to move people into longer term settled accommodation any property advertised on Dorset HomeChoice will take priority for housing in the short-term. This will include anyone in hospital who cannot return home and anyone in a refuge. It should be noted however, that although priority is given to those in temporary accommodation this does not include those properties with a s106 or rural connection criteria in place.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning (Part 2 of the question)

Question from Cllr B Heatley

The table below shows in summary form the impact of Covid on the finances and the consequential proposed action for Dorset Council and two neighbouring comparable unitaries, BCP and Wiltshire.

Council and source	Addition al spending £m A	Received from central government £m B	Fundin g gap £m C = A - B	D Free reserves year start £m	Multiple reserves would be spent C/D	Proposed Action
BCP Cabinet paper 24 June pp 145-186	52 based on 24 weeks	22	30	15	2.0	Proposals for a budget mitigation strategy for full Council in July
Wiltshire Cabinet Paper 9	80 based on 6 months	30	50	15	3.3	Potential Sn 114 unbalanced budget

June pp 27-34 + Draft minutes						situation. In year mitigating action will be required.
Dorset Cabinet paper 30 June, pp 40-41	60 based on 4 months, £15m a month	21	39	28	1.4 but 2.5 if 6 months and spend is 90	?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Assets

While our funding gap is a smaller multiple of free reserves than the other two councils, it is still significant and our estimates are based on a four month additional spending period and their's on six months. Should not we too be facing up more explicitly to a situation where our budget has become unbalanced?

The question illustrates, only too clearly, the difficulty in planning in a world with so little certainty about the future. Your first point is about peer comparisons. Our position is clearly better than many in our peer group, we did enter the pandemic in better financial shape than many other Unitaries. Your second concern was the period we have used for modelling our recovery. The end point of C19's impact will not be a sudden step back to normality at either 4 months or at 6 months. There will be a progressive and inconsistent recovery which we are clearly already seeing take place. Some recovery will be faster than 4 months, we are already collecting some car parking income, for example. Some will take longer than 6, we anticipate a long recovery in council tax and business rates to reach pre covid-19 levels. Overall we are comfortable that the 4 months we have

used for modelling gives us a position that reasonably represents the challenges we are facing.

Having said that we are taking steps to mitigate the financial position. We are cutting expenditure wherever possible, for example we have given notice on the Allenview House and Princess St buildings. We have more rigorously considered the allocated reserves, particularly those inherited from predecessor councils. This will make more general reserves available. We have curtailed the current capital program. We are still making tactical investments but we no longer believe that the sorts of substantive projects we were considering will be the priority for a post Covid-19 administration. We have immediately started work on what will emerge as the 21/22 Capital Program, part of the budget exercise. We are also still vigorously addressing Government both via our MPs and the various Council networks to ensure the reality of Local Government Finance is understood at Westminster.

None of these approaches will fix the problem. The 21/22 budget will be very different from that which we had anticipated at the beginning of the year but we do not believe that precipitate action is necessary and we can manage the undoubtedly uncomfortable future using our normal business processes.

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