

## **PLACE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 25 MARCH 2021**

**Present:** Cllrs Shane Bartlett (Chairman), Andy Canning (Vice-Chairman), Rod Adkins, Brian Heatley, Mike Parkes, Mark Roberts, Maria Roe, David Shortell, David Tooke and Bill Trite

**Apologies:** Cllrs

**Also present:** Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Richard Biggs, Cllr Cherry Brooks, Cllr Graham Carr-Jones, Cllr Simon Christopher, Cllr Robin Cook, Cllr Janet Dover, Cllr Jean Dunseith, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Tony Ferrari, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr David Gray, Cllr Matthew Hall, Cllr Rob Hughes, Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Sherry Jespersen, Cllr Carole Jones, Cllr Stella Jones, Cllr Paul Kimber, Cllr Rebecca Knox, Cllr Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Cllr Howard Legg, Cllr Andrew Parry, Cllr Val Potheary, Cllr Molly Rennie, Cllr Jane Somper, Cllr Andrew Starr, Cllr Roland Tarr, Cllr Gill Taylor, Cllr David Walsh, Cllr Peter Wharf, Cllr Kate Wheller and Cllr John Worth

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

John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), Jim McManus (Corporate Director - Finance and Commercial), Karyn Punchard (Corporate Director for Place Services), Ken Buchan (Head of Environment and Wellbeing), Matt Reeks (Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace), Antony Littlechild (Community Energy Manager), Dave Thompson (Corporate Director for Property & Assets), David McIntosh (Corporate Director (HR & OD)), James Potten (Communications Business Partner - Place) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

**38. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2021 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

**39. Declarations of interest**

S Bartlett declared an interest in respect of agenda item 6 and the scrutiny request received with regard to the local plan, as he had been a member of the Local Plan Executive Advisory Panel.

**40. Chairman's Update**

There were no updates from the Chairman at this time.

**41. Public Participation**

A number of questions had been submitted from members of the public and local organisations. A copy of the questions read out at the meeting and the responses provided, is set out at Appendix 1.

#### **42. Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan**

Councillors reviewed the committee's forward plan and noted items to be considered at the next meeting of the committee on 11 May 2021.

The committee considered a scrutiny request received from Councillor Roe with regard to the consultation process for the Local Plan. Councillor Roe provided an overview of the request and in response, Councillor Walsh provided an overview of the current local plan process. The Monitoring Officer advised the committee that the decision in respect of the local plan consultation had been taken by Cabinet on 8 December 2020 and had been subject to the usual Call-in process. No request to call-in the decision had been made during the relevant time and as such the decision had been implemented. Therefore the committee was not able to change or extend the consultation period. During discussion it was suggested that the committee could undertake a general review of how consultation was undertaken by Dorset Council and that this could be added to the committee's forward plan at an appropriate time.

#### **43. Cabinet Forward Plan and Decisions**

The committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan and decisions taken at recent meetings.

#### **44. Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy Consultation results and recommended changes to final draft**

The committee considered a report of the Sustainability Team Manager, which set out the findings of the recent consultation exercise and proposed changes to the Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action plan for approval by Cabinet and Full Council.

D Tooke declared an interest as he had been a member of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy Executive Advisory Panel.

The following issues arising from the report were raised, which included:

- How the consultation had been undertaken including the use of the short survey, engagement with younger persons and lessons to be learnt
- The need to consider qualitative information from the survey
- The future role for Place and Resources Overview Committee in this area
- Ensuring the timeframe for actions were both realistic and achievable

- Request for further information to be available for Cabinet to consider.

It was proposed by B Heatley seconded by M Roe

- 1) That Cabinet consider the outcomes of the consultation and amendments to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plan and recommend its final approval to Full Council
- 2) That a one page document be produced giving the reasons for and against a target of zero emissions by earlier dates as compared to the dates in the plan
- 3) That there is recognition that the plan is incomplete on adaptation, other greenhouse gases and ecology. The Council should resolve to complete these areas by mid 2023.

The committee discussed the timescale proposed in recommendation 3 above and with the agreement of the proposer and seconder, the wording 'The Council should resolve to complete these areas by mid 2023' was removed from the recommendation.

#### **Recommendation to Cabinet**

- 1) That Cabinet consider the outcomes of the consultation and amendments to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plan and recommend its final approval to Full Council
- 2) That a one page document be produced giving the reasons for and against a target of zero emissions by earlier dates as compared to the dates in the plan
- 3) That there is recognition that the plan is incomplete on adaptation, other greenhouse gases and ecology.

#### **45. Dorchester Office Strategy**

The committee received and considered a report of the Corporate Director of Property and Assets, which outlined the Council's proposals for its office estate within Dorchester and how those assets that were considered surplus should be repurposed. It set out for approval, a programme of work with regard to the future use of the Dorchester office portfolio together with a clear action plan with regard to the reshaping and re-purposing of that element of the Estate.

It was noted that the report contained a number of exempt appendices and councillors noted that the committee would need to move into exempt business if there was to be discussion on the contents of these appendices.

A number of points were raised in connection with issues set out in the report, which included reference to the following:

- Energy efficiency of the buildings and funding available in this area
- The need to consider wider issues including the circumstances in other towns in addition to Dorchester, the economy of the towns, staff issues etc.
- Staff travel between Weymouth and Dorchester and links to the climate strategy work
- A point was raised that there was a need for more scrutiny before a decision was taken by Cabinet, however, it was noted that there had been previous consideration by scrutiny including as part of the budget discussions
- The need for consultation with the Dorchester ward councillors before the report was considered by Cabinet and Dorchester Town Council and residents
- Reference was made to a separate work stream to the office strategy work, with regard to the Dorset Workplace. Consultation had been undertaken with managers and service areas and it was noted that the workplace was changing which resulted in the council having more offices than required. The report and recommendations provided a route for further work to be taken forward.

It was proposed by A Canning seconded by M Roe

Each recommendation below was considered and voted upon by roll call:

That Cabinet:

1. Agree to the principle of consolidating the Council's office requirements on the County Hall/Colliton Park site as a 'public service civic hub' subject to the Council ensuring that it takes due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 **Carried**
2. Agree to the principle of utilising any surplus space within the County Hall/Colliton Park site for use by third sector and other public sector bodies and to review the possibility to repurpose and refurbish any such assets currently leased to and in use by them for residential purpose or for disposal **Carried**
3. Agree to retain the Library facility in South Walks House with a Customer Access Point **Carried**
4. Support Places & Resources Overview Committee establishing a task & finish group with a remit to further investigate the repurposing of South Walks House and South Annexe to include the establishment of a hotel and maximising the number and variety of affordable homes **Lost**
5. Request the team working on the new Local Plan prioritise the production of a Dorchester Town Centre masterplan **Lost**
6. Reaffirms the principle that we are a member-led authority and that local Members should always be consulted on issues affecting their Wards **Carried**

**Recommendation to Cabinet**

That Cabinet:

1. Agree to the principle of consolidating the Council's office requirements on the County Hall/Colliton Park site as a 'public service civic hub' subject to the Council ensuring that it takes due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010
2. Agree to the principle of utilising any surplus space within the County Hall/Colliton Park site for use by third sector and other public sector bodies and to review the possibility to repurpose and refurbish any such assets currently leased to and in use by them for residential purpose or for disposal
3. Agree to retain the Library facility in South Walks House with a Customer Access Point
4. Reaffirms the principle that we are a member-led authority and that local Members should always be consulted on issues affecting their Wards.

At this point in the meeting, the Monitoring Officer noted that the committee was coming up to the 3 hour point and that there would need to be a motion to continue the meeting if required, beyond 3 hours and specify an end time for the meeting.

It was proposed by D Tooke seconded by M Roe

### **Decision**

That the meeting continue beyond 1.00pm but should end by 1.45pm.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted original recommendation 3, as set out in the officer report, with regard to the need to seek agreement for planning permission in connection with South Walks House and South Annexe for residential use.

It was proposed by M Parkes seconded by M Roberts

### **Recommendation to Cabinet**

5. Agree to the Council seeking planning permission to repurpose South Walks House and South Annexe for residential use through a process of refurbishing or redeveloping the existing buildings whilst retaining the Library facility in South Walks House and a Customer Access Point.

#### **46. Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

#### **47. Exempt Business**

The committee did not go into exempt business at this meeting.

#### **48. Dorchester Office Strategy - exempt appendices**

The exempt appendices associated with the report 'Dorchester Office Strategy' had been made available to members of the committee, however, the committee did not move into exempt business in order to discuss the information at the meeting.

## **APPENDIX 1 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### **Agenda item 5 - Public Participation**

#### **Questions relating to agenda item 8 – Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy Consultation Results and Recommended Changes to Final Draft**

##### **1. Questions from Councillor Josephine Parish (questions submitted as an individual councillor and not on behalf of Corfe Castle Parish Council)**

###### **Question 1.**

When I opened my council tax bill this week, I felt disappointed to find that Dorset Council had yet again missed the opportunity to engage with every householder and business rate payer, on the Climate and Ecological Emergencies (CEE). An information leaflet could easily have been added inside each tax payer's envelope. This opportunity has been suggested regularly since 2019 to Dorset Council by Dorset-based climate and environmental advocacy groups; the inclusion in the Council Tax bill envelope comes with obvious cost savings on postal costs. A well-thought through Communications Plan has even been presented to Dorset Council by one of these groups. These Dorset-based groups are demonstrating their keenness to help the Council crack the challenge of engaging with this largely unengaged group of residents. Since Covid-19, Dorset Council have not held any genuine 2-way public engagement on the Climate and Ecological Emergencies. In contrast these local groups and some Parish Councils have been holding virtual People's Assemblies and virtual public meetings where the public can turn up virtually and 'have their say' at the event live; and without having to submit questions in advance. In terms of responses to the CEE Strategy Consultation these unengaged people make up around 99% of the residents of Dorset. This is a huge challenge but there is light at the end of the tunnel as these local groups are offering to help Dorset Council overcome this challenge. Given the response rate of less than 0.5% of residents that Dorset Council achieved in its consultation process, will the Scrutiny Committee recommend that Dorset Council work closely with Dorset-based climate and environmental advocacy groups and organisations (including Parish & Town Councils) which are clearly able to reach – and communicate with – concerned residents more effectively and are working up ways to reach those residents who are largely unengaged with CEE?

##### **Response from the Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace**

Dorset Council has undertaken an extensive programme of communication and engagement since the declaration of a Climate and Ecological Emergency in 2019 and the consultation exercise itself was subject to one of the most prolific communication campaigns ever mounted by Dorset Council. Communication and engagement activities have included articles in the Dorset Council News magazine (delivered to every house in the Dorset Council area), online advertising, social media campaigns, Call for Ideas events, Inquiry Days, Webinars for Town and Parish Councils and regular e-newsletters to over 30,000 recipients.

The challenges of engaging with most residents around the climate emergency will remain and it is everyone's responsibility to push the conversation into the wider public consciousness. That said, we appreciate the efforts of outside organisations to communicate the seriousness of the Climate and Ecological Emergency. The 'Making it happen' section of the strategy and action plan highlights several actions to ramp up communication and engagement activities over the coming years with the aim of engaging with wider organisations and residents and encouraging behaviour change.

#### Question 2.

In relation to the CEE Strategy Consultation Results and Recommended Changes to the final draft Report, does the Scrutiny Committee think it wise to use the quantitative analysis to conclude [10.2] "that significant changes are not required to the strategy and action plan" when the detailed, informed and expert recommendations from a "number of relevant partner organisations" [9.8] clearly specify "a wide range of significant changes" are required?"

#### **Response from the Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace**

All responses received through the online consultation process have been analysed and included within either the quantitative or qualitative analysis and some key comments raised by specific organisations have been included in the main report (Appendix A)

Due to the high level of net agreement, the quantity of text comments and the detail of many of these responses we have adopted a practical approach to including recommendations to the strategy and action plan.

Dorset Council has to balance the response to the Climate and Ecological emergency with the many other statutory and valued services the Council is responsible for in a way that is meaningful, practical and realistic. As a result, it is not accommodating all the suggested changes to the strategy and action plan, some of which were contradictory to others, as it would be unfeasible to do so without compromising its effectiveness, estimated budget requirements and realistic timeframe.

## **2. Questions from Vicki Elcoate on behalf of Dorset Climate Action Network**

### Question 1

The report to the committee recognises the low level of support for the 2040 and 2050 targets but promises to move 90% of the way to net zero 10 years earlier. We welcome the statement in the paper to the Scrutiny Committee that “the intention is to achieve an 80-90% reduction in emissions 10 years before these dates”. When and how will we see the specific targets for the areas that will deliver that level of 80-90% carbon saving by 2030 for the Council's own operations and how will they be scrutinised and monitored?

### **Response from the Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace**

Specific carbon milestones are set out in the Strategy document section, ‘Carbon Budgets – pathways and trajectories’ (pages 21-22). This section sets a series of 5 year carbon milestones towards both the 2040 and 2050 target.

As yet unknown additional technological and funding opportunities (such as the Salix fund) will become available over the course of the action plan so it is impossible to track an exact path to carbon neutrality and it is vital that there is the flexibility to react and adapt the plan to meet emerging opportunities.

More detailed road maps setting out how each of the areas covered by the strategy can contribute to the overall targets will be published as part of the regular agreed 6 monthly reporting framework. These will be informed by some of the further investigative and planning work underway.

### Question 2

Given that the report acknowledges the low level of public support for the 2050 target, which is the most significant in terms of delivery of the majority of carbon savings required, how will the targets set by other organisations who will deliver these savings be scrutinised and monitored by Dorset Council to ensure they are urgent and ambitious enough?

### **Response from the Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace**

The strategy sets out the Councils roles and responsibilities to achieving a carbon neutral Council and County. Dorset Council can have an indirect and influencing role in helping the County become carbon Neutral by 2050, but has limited, if any powers to enforce others to act. Setting of any mandatory standards for organisations to follow will need to come from central government.

The Council can have a key role in encouraging others to take action by showing leadership, putting in place a positive policy framework where we can, and working with partners to facilitate behaviour change.

### **3. Question from Annerose Weiler on behalf of XR Dorset Advocacy**

On behalf of XR Dorset Advocacy, I am submitting the following question (source of information is [www.dorsetecho.co.uk](http://www.dorsetecho.co.uk); 6 March 2021):

Question RE: Specifics of how £19 million Salix grant will be spent

This month Dorset Council announced they had received £19 million of central government grant funding to help tackle the climate and ecological emergency. Dorset Council have expressed that the money will be targeted specifically at four areas:

1. All properties supplied by oil or LPG, suitable for heat pump heating solutions
2. Leisure centres eligible for advanced heat-pump technology for pools and air handling, as has been installed at Gillingham
3. A selected number of larger gas-supplied properties where heat pumps or hybrid heat pump solutions are suitable. These will include some larger offices and Tricuro sites
4. Installation or upgrade of our Building Energy Management System equipment across most of the estate, enabling improved or continued energy efficiency savings.

It is expected that each project will change heating systems from fossil fuels to electric heat pumps, and backed up by energy reduction through improvements to building fabric (insulation etc.) and switching to LED lighting. Each building will also have renewable energy generation in the form of roof mounted solar panels.

Dorset Council also stated that all works under this grant must be completed and commissioned by September 2021, which is at most only 6 months away.

Replacing heating systems is likely complex and takes time, often requiring the building(s) to be shut down or at least parts to be out of action.

Can the Scrutiny Committee establish how the £19 million is apportioned to each of the named projects (how many millions for each of the four areas), and is there any contingency plan for spending some of the money on other projects e.g. C&EE community initiatives, should it become apparent that the work cannot be completed in the required time frame?

Considering the recent rise in Council Tax, this could be felt to be a sensitive issue by Dorset taxpayers and may therefore carry reputational risk to Dorset Council.

## **Response from the Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace**

The funding comes from a government grant programme the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme which sets strict criteria for how and when the funds need to be spent. September 2021 is the deadline set by this scheme to complete the work. A great deal of work is going on to plan this work to meet this deadline

The final spread of costs is still to be finalised but will be roughly split -  
£5.5m for off-gas grid  
£2m for sport centres  
£9.5m for big on-gas-grid buildings  
£1.5m for building controls

Money cannot be allocated to other things; it is based on a specific plan for a specific set of buildings that meet the criteria of the grant fund. If the money is not spent on those things in that timeframe, it needs to be returned.

### **4. Question from Julie-Ann Booker on behalf of Dorset Action**

#### **Due Diligence to embed the CEE Strategy across all strategies**

In February 2020 Dorset Council adopted their overall Council Plan 2020 – 2024. During the consultation process there was strong representation that having declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) in May 2019, one of the key priority themes for the Council Plan should be the CEE.

Council decided that rather than being a separate priority, the CEE would be a cross cutting theme included across the entire plan.

Minutes of 18 February 2020 full council meeting record that: “People were generally supportive of the five overall priorities and following consultation changes had been made to reflect that CEE was a cross-cutting theme that must be emphasised across the entire the plan”.

The Council Plan (p.7) noted that in 2011 renewable energy produced in the Dorset area was only 1% of demand. By 2016 this had only risen to 5.5%.

The draft CEE strategy has a specific Action Plan for Renewable Energy.

One action is to “Lobby central government over the major hurdles to renewable energy deployment, the Navitus Bay decision, investment needed on grid infrastructure and future of heat”.

Another action is to “Work with renewable energy developers in Dorset to secure new renewable energy generation to meet (and exceed) needs of Dorset Council.

Following consultation on the CEE strategy the report being considered today makes no changes to either of these actions having taken account of comments received during consultation.

However the draft Local Plan, recently out for consultation, states (3.7.6.) “When refusing the proposed Navitus Bay Wind Park, the Secretary of State accepted that the proposals would change how the WHS (World Heritage Site) would be experienced or enjoyed in its surroundings, and so would have adverse implications for the site’s significance and OUV (Outstanding Universal Value). Consequently, how a development could adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the World Heritage Site will be a consideration when determining planning applications”.

This implies that Dorset Council is proposing, as part of the Local Plan, to oppose any off shore wind farms visible from the Jurassic Coast (as well as any other development that affects the 'enjoyment' of the coast’).

This seems to be in direct contradiction to the draft CEE strategy and illustrates that the draft Local Plan (surely a key council strategy) has not embedded the CEE strategy so does not meet the clear requirements and framework of the overall Council Plan.

**Question: Is Scrutiny Committee satisfied there are sufficient due diligence processes and links in place to ensure that all key strategies embed the CEE Strategy and if not what recommendations will you make to rectify this?**

#### **Response from the Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace**

Ensuring climate and ecological concerns are ‘Embedded at the heart of decision and plan making’ is identified in the strategy as a key objective. The Making it Happen Action Plan identifies a range of measures to achieve this, many of which are underway. Specific examples include - Climate Change considerations on all committee reports, integration into Councils performance management framework, embedded in service planning and procurement strategy and processes, considered in key strategies and development of a climate impact tool.

The Strategy and Action Plan will also be subject to 6 monthly monitoring which will be published (as per results of consultation) and will be reviewed by the Policy and Oversight Committee

#### **5. Question from Andrew Carey (submitted as company director, individual Char Valley parish councillor and resident)**

A number of responses to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy Consultation, including the collective response from Dorset Climate Action Network and the response from Char Valley Parish Council, called for Dorset Council to champion local ideas, initiatives and knowledge in order to create a “Vision for Dorset” and position itself as a visionary and far-sighted 'climate-

progressive' authority. In this way the council could engage with the public, galvanise action by local businesses and individuals and create momentum for change. Does the Scrutiny Committee agree that the '*Report on the Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy Consultation results and recommended changes*' (Agenda Item 8) misses a very important opportunity to adopt this (very low cost) idea.

### **Response from the Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace**

As work continues on the delivery of the action plan the suggestions raised through the call for ideas exercise and the consultation will be further considered. Ideas such as this will be considered with others in relation to the wider communication and engagement activities to deliver the Strategy.

### **6. Question from Dr Sandra Reeve**

On page 103 of the report, informed organisational response reveals that the proposed action on the Climate Emergency is not matched by action on the Ecological Emergency. For example, Dorset Wildlife Trust is quoted as saying: 'The action plans have a column for CO2 saving, but nothing for ecological gain. There is no ecological equivalent to the section Action Against Climate Change which runs from p16-17 or Carbon Emissions and Achieving Net Zero p18-20 or Carbon Budgets – pathways and trajectories p21-22.

Does the Scrutiny Committee think that this is an admissible omission within a Climate and *Ecological* Strategy and Action Plan in 2021?

### **Response from the Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace**

Carbon Dioxide Emissions are recognised as one of the key contributors to global Climate Change, which in itself is one of the root causes for ecological decline. The need to reduce carbon emissions is the key drive behind Government statutory 2050 targets and there are well defined mechanisms in place to measure and monitor progress on the reduction of emissions.

Overall, a wide number of actions within the strategy will not only reduce emissions but will also have ecological benefits and contribute to ecological net gain as noted by the co-benefits symbols within the action plan.

At the current time there is no standard mechanism for measuring or monitoring progress in tackling the ecological emergency as it is incredibly difficult to measure success as a single factor similar to 'carbon emissions reduction', especially over such a wide and diverse area as Dorset.

### **7. Questions from Caz Dennett**

#### **Question 1 on C&EE Strategy Consultation Survey Quality**

The C&EE Consultation Results and Recommended Changes to Final Draft says, “The lowest level of positive net agreement was around the target dates of 2040 and 2050 although when the results from the short survey are included the level of support dramatically increases. Some respondents questioned the urgency of the targets and suggested that the dates should be moved forward” [9.10].

- long survey: “Do you agree with the target?”
- short survey: “Dorset Council wants to be carbon neutral by 2040... Do you think it is a great idea?”

This latter question leaves no room for a respondent to say “it is a good idea in principle but the target date is wrong”. It is commonly **bad practice** in survey design, to ask leading questions that state a desired position or outcome. The Market Research Society (professional body for research, insight and analytics), gives very clear guidelines on this (page 19 of the MRS Guidelines for Questionnaire Design)

<https://www.mrs.org.uk/pdf/2014-09-01%2520Questionnaire%2520Design%2520Guidelines.pdf>

*“Researchers should take particular care to ensure that participants are not lead to a particular answer...**Positive phrases such as “the proposal is a good idea” in a question without a balancing negative phrase may lead the participant to a positive view of the proposal under consideration**”*

The poor questionnaire design of the short survey, places a question mark over the reputation of Dorset Council to be able to seek public opinion in a fair and balanced way. By the Council’s own admission, the results from the flawed question in the short survey significantly changed the outcome of the consultation with regard to the target dates by which the Council and the county should be zero-carbon.

**Does the Scrutiny Committee recognise that the conclusion in the report is invalid because the two surveys asked significantly different questions and the short survey question is leading and biased according to opinion research guidelines?**

### **Response from the Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace**

The purpose of the short survey was to engage a wider audience (particularly young people) to get a snapshot of views and primarily to encourage greater uptake of the formal online consultation. Though the results of this shorter survey are useful in helping us formulate our ongoing approach to climate change, they were not considered as part of the formal consultation process and are not included in the results of the consultation. The short survey has not yet been closed.

Prior to the closure of the consultation, it was made clear at the end of the Short Survey that if participants wished to provide additional information they could follow the links provided to take part in the formal consultation process.

### **Question 2 on decision not to adjust target dates**

In the graph titled: Overall Net Agreement (all questions) on page 5 of the Consultation Response Report, the Net Agreement for the target dates is significantly lower than that for all other aspects of the Strategy and Action Plan that have used a quantitative measure.

Reliance on Net Agreement scores masks the true public response; a great many respondents indicated that they agreed with the Council's approach whilst calling for changes/amendments especially to target dates.

**Given the comparatively low Net Agreement for the target dates of zero carbon for Dorset Council by 2040 and 2050 for Dorset overall, and the highly questionable design of the short survey which lead participants towards a positive response, will the Scrutiny Committee ask why Dorset Council concludes "The target dates will remain as 2040 Dorset Council itself and 2050 for the wider Dorset Area" and recommend they bring the dates forward?**

### **Response from the Service Manager for Coast and Greenspace**

The results of short survey are not included in the net agreement comparisons.

The Net Agreement scores are a recognised way of interpreting survey data and rightly conclude that against the binary questions around agreement with the target dates the majority of respondents chose agree or strongly agree as the basis to leave any further comment as opposed to disagree or strongly disagree.

The strategy sets out targets which the Council feels are realistic and achievable but notes there is a clear intention to achieve these targets earlier if at all possible.

The strategy also sets a number of interim targets for 2025, 2030 and 2035 as a carbon budget and the intention is to achieve an 80-90% reduction in emissions 10 years before these dates, reflecting the difficulty and expense of tackling the last 20%.

## Questions relating to agenda item 9 – Dorchester Office Strategy

### **8. Question from Mary Calvert**

South Walks House is central and accessible with good public transport links, whilst County Hall is relatively hidden away, remote and inaccessible.

In the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), what public access problems have been identified for:

1. the physically impaired
2. the partially sighted and blind
3. the hearing impaired and deaf?

Are you satisfied that these have been given sufficient attention and weight in this proposal?

### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Assets and Property (read by Corporate Director of Property and Assets)**

Based on independent assessments an extensive programme of surveying and work was carried out within County Hall by predecessor Councils following the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 which has now been superseded and incorporated within the Equality Act 2010. The Council has continued, where necessary, to make 'reasonable adjustments' since that time based on representations made and any complaints received in accordance with the legislation.

As part of the rationalisation and consolidation exercise currently being undertaken across its estate the Council has commissioned a further programme of Access Audits and Reviews of its proposed primary office locations some of which are also accessible to the public to ensure that all barriers to access have been recognised and an action plan established, where necessary and reasonable in order for them to be reduced and removed. Any actions arising will be recorded and remedied as part of a planned programme of repair and maintenance works.

It should be noted with regard to Dorchester, in particular, that a customer access point will also be retained within the Library.

Given that we are commissioning and undertaking a fresh series of Access Audits using a community interest company established by disabled people, older people and carers whose work is informed by the Social Model of Disability we believe that we are paying sufficient attention and weight to ensure we meet the reasonable needs of those that may be physically impaired, partially sighted and blind and with a hearing impairment and deaf.

## **9. Question from John Calvert**

I have been a resident of Dorchester for 10 years now and have appreciated the building of South Walks House putting facilities in a central position in the town. Indeed I attended a meeting of the Shadow Unitary Council in that building and asked if the Council was going to rely on its staff expertise or spend money on consultants and was assured the former.

In item 9 the Council mentions the use of at three consultant firms at least looking at various aspects of the proposals.

One to look at Colliton Park, and two others to look at South Walks House. So no overall advice.

My question is - How much will the Council pay for these reports because the cost is not obvious in item 9, surely the Council is spending our money to learn how to spend more money?

### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Assets and Property (read by Corporate Director of Property and Assets)**

A number of specialist property agents were commissioned to provide an insight into particular aspects of the property market (eg residential, office, health etc) in order to help determine trends, changes and movements in the marketplace and the potential uses for the buildings.

This advice and guidance would provide Councillors with an independent view of and advice on market conditions together with the necessary assurance that a range of options have been considered and assessed in order to reach the conclusions and recommendations contained within the report.

The costs of such an exercise was less than £25k and given the financial significance of the recommendations being considered it was believed that this represented 'value for money'.

### **Questions related to other issues**

## **10. Questions from Helen Sumbler**

### Question 1

Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) Implementation Plan Four was due to be published in April 2020 to cover 2020 to 2023. As a resident who has worked in public transport for over 38 years, and given that transport accounts for the highest percentage of carbon emissions by both Dorset Council and the County as a whole, that the Dorset Local Plan includes commitments to "focus travel onto active travel and public transport options", and critically that the draft Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy states, in terms of progress so far, that "Dorset's Local Transport Plan already demonstrates a strong

commitment to sustainable transport policies and carbon reduction”, could I ask the Scrutiny Committee to explain why it is acceptable that no current Implementation Plan exists for LTP3 and what actions are being taken by Dorset Council, in conjunction with BCP Council, to address this significant omission?

### **Response from Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment**

Instead of writing an Implementation Plan for an old Local Transport Plan written by predecessor councils (Dorset County Council and Bournemouth & Poole Borough Councils which no longer exist), Dorset Council with BCP Council has begun work on 1 new joint Local Transport Plan for 2022-2038 to align with the 2 new Local Plans for Dorset and BCP.

During 2019 and 2020 Dorset Council has been putting their resources into planning, designing and delivering the following projects which demonstrate our continuing “strong commitment to sustainable transport policies and carbon reduction” as outlined in the Local Transport Plan -

- The Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) programme – a £100M package of sustainable transport schemes across SE Dorset including footway, cycleway, public transport access improvements,
- Creating a new Electric Vehicle charging network of 80 charge points across the county to help encourage the switch to electric vehicles to reduce vehicle emissions,
- Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic by ensuring social distancing measures were delivered in our towns to keep people safe whilst encouraging our businesses to reopen. This included widening footways, providing sitting out areas for cafes and restaurants, providing cycleways etc
- Working on the council’s travel plan and fleet review to ensure the council’s emissions are reduced
- Providing the transport input to the Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy
- Gathering transport evidence for the new Local Plans to create a transport strategy to align with future development and infrastructure needs,
- Delivering footway and cycleway enhancements to encourage active travel across Dorset for example Ham Lane, Ferndown cycleway, Institute Road, Swanage town centre enhancements including footway widening, removal of redundant railway lines and resurfacing of the carriageway in Commercial Road Weymouth to improve cycle safety.

### Question 2

Could I also ask how work is progressing to produce an updated Rights of Way Improvement Plan (the existing Dorset County Council plan runs from 2011 to 2021) and when this new plan might be published?

### **Response from Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment**

The Environment Advice Team are currently working on the revised ROWIP to ensure it captures all the relevant opportunities for the development of the Rights of Way Network, especially in light of the emerging Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plan. Dorset Council intends to start gaining evidence from others in April/May and produce a draft for consultation later in the year '

**Duration of meeting:** 10.00 am - 1.27 pm

**Chairman**

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