



Cabinet

Date: Tuesday, 7 December 2021
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Teams Live Event

Membership: (Quorum 3)

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

Cabinet Lead Members (6) (are not members of the Cabinet but are appointed to work alongside Portfolio Holders)

Cherry Brooks, Simon Gibson, Andrew Kerby, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Byron Quayle and Jane Somper

Chief Executive: Matt Prosser, County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

For easy access to the Council agendas and minutes download the free public app Mod.gov for use on your iPad, Android and Windows tablet. Once downloaded select Dorset Council. **For more information about this agenda please contact Kate Critchel 01305 252234 - kate.critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**



For easy access to the Council agendas and minutes download the free public app Mod.gov for use on your iPad, Android and Windows tablet. Once downloaded select Dorset Council.

Due to the current coronavirus pandemic the Council has reviewed its approach to holding committee meetings. Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting and listen to the debate either online by using the following [Link to observe Cabinet of 7 December 2021](#)

Members of the public wishing to view the meeting from an iPhone, iPad or Android phone will need to download the free Microsoft Teams App to sign in as a Guest, it is advised to do this at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting.”

Please note that public speaking has been suspended. However Public Participation will continue by written submission only. Please see detail set out below.

Dorset Council is committed to being open and transparent in the way it carries out its business whenever possible. A recording of the meeting will be available on the council's website after the event.

A G E N D A

Page No.

1 APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interest as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their disclosure councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.

If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive questions or statements on the business of the committee from town and parish councils and members of the public.

Members of the public who live, work or represent an organisation within the Dorset Council area, may submit up to either 2 questions, or 2 statements or 1 question and 1 statement at each meeting. Sub divided questions count towards this total. All submissions must be sent electronically to kate.critchell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by the deadline set out below. When submitting a question please indicate who the question is for and include your name, address and contact details. Questions and statements received in line with the council's rules for public participation will be published as a supplement to the agenda.

All questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

The deadline for submission of the full text of a question or statement is 8.30am on Thursday 2 December 2021.

4 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

To receive questions submitted by councillors. The deadline for receipt of questions **is 8.30am on Thursday 2 December 2021.**

5	FORWARD PLAN	7 - 14
	To consider the Cabinet Forward Plan.	
	ITEMS IDENTIFIED FROM THE CABINET'S FORWARD PLAN	
6	SEND CAPITAL STRATEGY: EXPANSION OF BEAUCROFT SCHOOL	15 - 20
	To consider a report of the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help.	
7	ANNUAL ADOPTION REPORT	21 - 54
	To consider a report of the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help.	
8	OFSTED FEEDBACK	55 - 78
	To consider a report of the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help.	
9	HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRE (HRC) VEHICLE ACCESS POLICY	79 - 88
	To consider a report of the Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services.	
10	FUTURE REVENUES & BENEFITS SERVICE PROVISION FOR DORSET COUNCIL	89 - 104
	To consider a report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy.	
	Appendices 2 and 3 (not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of schedule 12A, Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended).	
11	SOUTH WALKS HOUSE - OPTIONS FOR FUTURE USE	105 - 118
	To consider a report of the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Assets and Property.	
	Appendices 1, 3 to 8 (not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of schedule 12A, Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972, as	

amended).

RECOMMENDATIONS

To consider a recommendation following the meeting of the Licensing Committee of 17 November 2021.

12 PARK HOME FEES POLICY

119 - 144

The Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services to report.

13 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE ON POLICY DEVELOPMENT MATTER REFERRED TO AN OVERVIEW COMMITTEE(S) FOR CONSIDERATION

Cabinet Portfolio Holders to report.

14 PORTFOLIO HOLDER - LEAD MEMBER (S) UPDATE SUMMARY

Cabinet Portfolio Holders and Lead Members to report.

PANELS AND GROUPS

To receive any minutes, recommendations or verbal updates from panels, groups and boards:

15 CLIMATE & ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY EXECUTIVE ADVISORY PANEL UPDATE

To receive an update from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment.

16 URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes.

17 EXEMPT BUSINESS

To move the exclusion of the press and the public for the following item(s) in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

The public and the press will be asked to leave the meeting whilst the

item of business is considered.

- | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| 18 | WEYMOUTH BOWL ACQUISITION | 145 - 148 |
| | To consider a report of the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Assets & Property. | |
| 19 | FUTURE REVENUES & BENEFITS SERVICE PROVISION FOR DORSET COUNCIL | 149 - 186 |
| | Exempt appendices associated with the report on “The future of revenues and benefits services at Dorset Council”. | |
| 20 | SOUTH WALKS HOUSE - OPTIONS FOR FUTURE USE | 187 - 276 |
| | Exempt appendices associated with the report on “South Walks House – Options for future use”. | |

This page is intentionally left blank



The Cabinet Forward Plan - January 2022 to April 2022 (Publication date 16 December 2022) For the period 1 DECEMBER 2021 to 31 MARCH 2022

Explanatory Note:

This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Cabinet and Council. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions

Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions of the Cabinet which are likely to -

- a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (**Thresholds - £500k**); or
- b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

In determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Cabinet Portfolio Holders 2021/22

Spencer Flower	Leader / Governance, Performance and Communications
Peter Wharf	Deputy Leader / Adult Social Care and Health
Gary Suttle	Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy
Ray Bryan	Highways, Travel and Environment
Graham Carr-Jones	Housing and Community Safety
Jill Haynes	Corporate Development and Transformation
Laura Miller	Customer and Community Services
Andrew Parry	Children, Education, Skills and Early Help
Tony Ferrari	Economic Growth, Assets & Property
David Walsh	Planning

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
January 2022					
Quarter 3 Financial Management Report Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To consider the Council's revenue budget position at the end of Q3 and the changes since Q2	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 18 Jan 2022		Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy	<i>Jim McManus, Corporate Director - Finance and Commercial J.McManus@dorsetcc.gov.uk Executive Director, Corporate Development - Section 151 Officer (Aidan Dunn)</i>
Quarter 3 Council Plan Monitoring Report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open Quarterly report on the delivery of the council's plan	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 18 Jan 2022		Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Transformation	<i>Bridget Downton, Chief Executive's Office bridget.downton@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Chief Executive (Matt Prosser)</i>
Budget Strategy Report Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The Council is required to set a balanced revenue budget, and to approve a level of council tax as an integral part of this.	Decision Maker Dorset Council	Decision Date 15 Feb 2022	Cabinet 18 Jan 2022 Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee 10 Dec 2021 People and Health Scrutiny Committee 10 Dec 2021	Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy	<i>Jim McManus, Corporate Director - Finance and Commercial J.McManus@dorsetcc.gov.uk Corporate Director, Legal and Democratic Services - Monitoring Officer (Jonathan Mair)</i>
Revised Highway Skid Policy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To approve the revised Highway Skid Policy.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 18 Jan 2022	Place and Resources Overview Committee 16 Dec 2021	Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment	<i>Michael Hansford, Highways Assets Manager michael.hansford@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (John Sellgren)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
<p>"ROC" Reducing Repeat Removals of Children into Care Project Procurement Approval</p> <p>Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open</p> <p>To seek procurement approval and delegations.</p>	<p>Decision Maker Cabinet</p>	<p>Decision Date 18 Jan 2022</p>		<p>Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health, Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help</p>	<p><i>Sam Crowe, Director of Public Health s.crowe@dorsetcc.gov.uk, Executive Director, People - Children Executive Director, People - Children (Theresa Leavy)</i></p>
<p>Revised Inter Authority Agreement for Joint Archives Service</p> <p>Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open</p> <p>The item is subject to internal governance at BCP Council and may be delayed if unable to progress in time for cut off dates at Dorset Council.</p>	<p>Decision Maker Cabinet</p>	<p>Decision Date 18 Jan 2022</p>		<p>Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services</p>	<p><i>Lisa Cotton, Head of Customer Services, Libraries & Archives lisa.cotton@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (John Sellgren), Corporate Director, Legal and Democratic Services - Monitoring Officer (Jonathan Mair)</i></p>
<p>Review of the Highways Asset Management Plan</p> <p>Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Fully exempt</p> <p>To review the Highways Asset Management Plan</p>	<p>Decision Maker Cabinet</p>	<p>Decision Date 18 Jan 2022</p>	<p>Place and Resources Overview Committee 16 Dec 2021</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment</p>	<p><i>Jack Wiltshire, Head of Highways jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (John Sellgren)</i></p>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
March					
<p>Annual Self Evaluation of Children's Services</p> <p>Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open</p> <p>To receive the annual self-evaluation report.</p>	<p>Decision Maker Cabinet</p>	<p>Decision Date 1 Mar 2022</p>		<p>Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help</p>	<p><i>Claire Shiels, Corporate Director - Commissioning, Quality & Partnerships</i> <i>claire.shiels@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Children (Theresa Leavy)</i></p>
<p>Anti-social Behaviour Public Space Protection Orders</p> <p>Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open</p> <p>A review of the existing Anti-social Behaviour Public Spaces Protection Orders for Weymouth & Portland, Dorchester, Bridport, West Bay and Lyme Regis as well as consideration of supplementary orders to tackle antisocial behaviour in additional areas as identified by the Community Safety Team in consultation with the Police.</p>	<p>Decision Maker Cabinet</p>	<p>Decision Date 1 Mar 2022</p>	<p>Place and Resources Overview Committee 10 Feb 2022</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety</p>	<p><i>John Newcombe, Service Manager, Licensing & Community Safety</i> <i>john.newcombe@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Place (John Sellgren)</i></p>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
<p>Procurement Forward Plan Report - over £500K (2022-23)</p> <p>Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open</p> <p>Cabinet is required to approve all key decisions with financial consequences of £500k or more. This report provides a list of anticipated procurement activity for the period 2022-23.</p>	<p>Decision Maker Cabinet</p>	<p>Decision Date 18 Jan 2022</p>		<p>Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy</p>	<p><i>Dawn Adams, Service Manager for Commercial and Procurement dawn.adams@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Corporate Development - Section 151 Officer (Aidan Dunn)</i></p>
<p>QE Leisure Centre Future Management</p> <p>Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Part exempt</p> <p>Feedback on the recent consultation of QE Leisure Centre and the Council's consideration to its ongoing role in the management arrangements at the centre.</p>	<p>Decision Maker Cabinet</p>	<p>Decision Date 18 Jan 2022</p>	<p>People and Health Scrutiny Committee 14 Mar 2022</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services</p>	<p><i>Paul Rutter, Service Manager for Leisure Services paul.rutter@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (John Sellgren)</i></p>
<p>Adult Social Care - Future Services</p> <p>Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Fully exempt</p> <p>To seek a decision on the provision of future services for Adult Social Care.</p>	<p>Decision Maker Cabinet</p>	<p>Decision Date 1 Mar 2022</p>		<p>Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health</p>	<p><i>Lesley Hutchinson, Corporate Director for Adults Commissioning Lesley.Hutchinson@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Adults</i></p>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
April					
Quarter 4 Council Plan Monitoring Report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open A quarterly report on the delivery of the council's plan	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 5 Apr 2022		Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Transformation	<i>Bridget Downton, Chief Executive's Office bridget.downton@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Chief Executive (Matt Prosser)</i>
May					
Dorset Council Air Quality Action Plan Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open A report summarising the findings from the Air Quality Action Plan Consultation together with an attached draft Air Quality Action Plan.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 17 May 2022		Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services	<i>Janet Moore, Environmental Health Team Leader and Health Projects Manager Janet.Moore@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (John Sellgren)</i>
June					
Finance report - outturn 2021/2022 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To consider the Council's performance against its revenue budget in 2021/22 and the impact this has upon reserves, including the general fund.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date		Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy	<i>Jim McManus, Corporate Director - Finance and Commercial J.McManus@dorsetcc.gov.uk Executive Director, Corporate Development - Section 151 Officer (Aidan Dunn)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
---------------------------	-----------------------	---------------------------------	--	-------------------------	------------------------

Private/Exempt Items for Decision

Each item in the plan above marked as 'private' will refer to one of the following paragraphs.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the shadow council proposes:-
 - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

Cabinet

7 December 2021

SEND Capital Strategy: Expansion of Beaucroft School – Statutory Consultation Outcome

For Decision

Portfolio Holder:	Cllr A Parry, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help
Local Councillor(s):	Cllr Janet Dover, Cllr Maria Rose, Cllr Shane Bartlett, Cllr David Morgan.
Executive Director:	T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children
Report Author:	Vik Verma
Title:	Director of Education and Learning
Email:	vik.verma@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

To agree and confirm that from September 2022 Beaucroft Special School will increase its funded capacity by an additional 80 places.

Reason for Recommendation:

The recommendation follows from item 51 (Cabinet Tuesday 27th July 2021) relating to the use of old Wimborne First School site to provide additional capacity to Beaucroft Special School as part of Dorset Council's SEND Strategy – see Appendix 1 for the report.

Section C of the report required the commencement of a 4-week statutory consultation required under Schedule 3 of the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and this has been undertaken and there have been no objections to the proposal.

1. Executive Summary

A consultation was launched on the 22 September 2021 as required under Schedule 3. The consultation lasted 4 weeks.

All Dorset Schools, neighbouring Local Authorities, the local town council (Wimborne Town Council & Colehill Parish Council), all parents and carers at Beaucroft School and all relevant Elected Members received communication on the consultation.

The consultation was also launched on the Dorset Council Website.

There were 19 responses, and none of these constituted a formal objection – (see Section 9 – Background papers for response details).

2. Financial Implications

The full implications of the expansion of Beaucroft School are detailed in the report to Cabinet – see Appendix 1

3. Well-being and Health Implications

The full implications of the expansion of Beaucroft School are detailed in the report to Cabinet – see Appendix 1

4. Climate implications

The full implications of the expansion of Beaucroft School are detailed in the report to Cabinet – see Appendix 1

5. Other Implications

The full implications of the expansion of Beaucroft School are detailed in the report to Cabinet – see Appendix 1

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

The full implications of the expansion of Beaucroft School are detailed in the report to Cabinet – see Appendix 1

8. Appendices

[Appendix 1 - Cabinet Paper 27 July 2021 - SEND Capital Strategy: Expansion of Beaucroft School](#)

9. Background Papers

Responses to the Consultation:

1.1 Wimborne Minster Town Council – “Please note that the Town Council supports the proposal to increase the capacity of Beaucroft Special School” – 18/10/21.

1.2 Dorset Resident – “I whole heartily agree with making provisions for 80 new spaces for Beaucroft School on the old Wimborne First School site. We had a child at Beaucroft’s Post 16 setting. It was brilliant, but to have a real community cafe with real work experience would have been so much more beneficial than the ‘protected’ in school cafe that our child learnt his catering skills in. Well done!” – 11/10/21

1.3 Dorset Resident – “As the mother of a 17 year old with autism who had not been able to attend school for some time due to anxiety, we desperately need an expansion of our secondary and post 16 education provision for young people with special educational needs. As a professional working with autistic children and using the fantastic Beaucroft outreach provision I wholeheartedly support this expansion” – 11/10/21

1.4 Wimborne Resident – “I do not have a direct stake in this plan, but my son (now 24) has a physical disability and went to mainstream school/college, with two years at Victoria Education Centre when we felt he needed a bit more specialist input. As you are well aware, this was an expensive, out-of-county option, which is why your plans are so exciting, both this one and St Mary’s. I wish to support the Beaucroft plan – I had friends with children at the school, and they became increasingly anxious about the post-16 provision for their children and the fact that far more wanted places to stay at Beaucroft than the current post-16 unit can accommodate. So, if you can increase this provision within the

local area, brilliant. It would be nice, too, to see the buildings still used for education – 11/10/21

1.5 Dorset Resident – “As a parent of a child at Beaucroft Foundation I am writing to fully support the plan to develop the former site of Wimborne First School to allow the expansion of Beaucroft by a further 80 places. This is a desperately needed facility for the families of additional needs children across Dorset and will benefit everyone by reducing the reliance on more expensive independent or out-of-county provision. To be fully realised the School must be supported every way to develop post 19 provision on this site. This provision is very poorly provided for across the county yet is vital to allow those with additional needs to fully realise their potential. Post 19 provision will help those with additional needs achieve as independent a life as possible, reducing the reliance on continued local authority or publicly funded support” – 5/10/21

1.6 Dorset Resident – “This seems to be an excellent proposal and should be encouraged. I have no professional expertise, but as the father of a SENCO (not in Dorset), I understand this sort of provision is needed throughout the country. Well done Dorset Council” – 1/10/21

1.7 Dorset Resident – “I think this is an excellent idea. This would be an ideal use of the former Wimborne First School site and would provide perfect facilities for Beaucroft Special school and it’s students. Let’s hope this plan can be put into place as soon as possible” – 1/10/21

1.8 Dorset Resident – “I heartily support the proposal to extend the work and the capacity of this much needed school. I have a son-in-law and a daughter-in-law who have contributed to the important work done by these schools, one in Kent and the other in Shropshire. The commitment of the staff of these schools is exemplary and, sadly, the need for more facilities for them to continue their valuable work is yawningly large” – 1/10/21

1.9 Dorset Resident – “Please, please get this up and running ASAP. Although I only have little personal experience in this area of education I do know that we must help the next generation in every way we can. For their sake and our own”.- 1/10/21

1.10 Dorset Resident – “I think this is an admirable use of the old Wimborne First School, especially when these places are so badly needed. Beaucroft school does a magnificent job with these special needs children and young adults”. – 1/10.21

1.11 Dorset Resident – “This is an excellent idea to use the old Wimborne First school, more facilities are desperately needed here, please get this the go ahead, I have a grand daughter who attends this school” – 4/10/21.

1.12 Dorset Resident – “A brilliant idea and wonderful use of the First School” – 4/10/21

1.13 Dorset Resident – “Having read of your proposal to expand Beaucroft by utilising the old Wimborne First School site I feel I should write to say that, in my opinion, this would be a positive step. I'm aware of a need for extra spaces for those with special needs, particularly the over 16s and this site, I believe, is ideal. I wish you luck with this project” – 1/10/21.

1.14 Dorset Resident – “I am very much in favour of this proposal. We are short of provision for SEN pupils. Vehicle access is tight but possible with care for the small number of pupils involved” – 1/10/21

1.15 Dorset Resident – “, I wish to express my full support for the proposal as set out in the consultation” – 26/09/21

1.16 Dorset Resident – “I have just seen the proposals to expand the provision of post 16 students under the Beaucroft 'umbrella'. As a mainstream Inclusion Manager who has sent several children to Beaucroft, this is such great news. The provision and support that they offer the SEN community is nothing short of a miracle. We have also used them for Outreach support for some of our current pupils. I whole heartedly support this proposal and wish the staff every success for the future” – 22/09/21

1.17 Allenbourn Middle School – “Thank you for the email regarding the consultation over increased capacity at Beaucroft. Speaking on behalf of AMS, I think this is a really positive move forward and have no doubt that it will support the provision of inclusive education in the area” – 22/09/21

1.18 Dorset Resident – “Fully in support of extra capacity but the traffic congestion in the morning and afternoon needs to be carefully thought out. Currently Wimborne Road at those times is a complete nightmare so extra provision will lead to extra vehicles possible another 40 if we average 2 pupils per vehicle . This must be part of the thinking and decision process” – 1/10/21

Dorset Council Responded:

Noting comments expressed by local residents and council highway officers over safety and traffic movements, the council is investigating using a local public car park, close to the site. This would enable minibuses to drop off and collect from

the car park, with students walking to and from the site via two safe walking routes. There will be parking for staff in the existing school car park off School Lane. A small area on the existing school site will be available for overspill parking for visiting professional specialists. This existing vehicle access point will be available for occasional visiting minibuses.

1.19 Cllr Paul Kimber – “Many thanks for your email regarding the consultation and asking for my thinking on the changes and my concerns.

- Do we have enough space for the increase in numbers, and will the school be able to cope with the changes, and is large enough.
- Do we have the staff for the increase or will they be transferred from other schools.
- Are any staff being made compulsory redundant.

Dorset Council Responded:

1. Beaucroft will have enough space for the increase in numbers, and will be able to cope with the change and will be large enough. This is because the proposal utilises the old Wimborne First School site in addition to the existing Beaucroft site.

2. Decisions on staffing will be a school decision. However, it is likely that the school will need to recruit as it expands. There are no plans to transfer staff from other schools.

3. No staff are being made redundant as this proposal seeks to expand provision.

In Addition:

- Cabinet – 8 December 2020 – Agenda item 19 Provision for Dorset Children (Exempt Business)
- Cabinet – 6 April 2021 – Agenda Item 7 Capital programme 2021/22

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Cabinet 7 December 2021 Adoption Annual Report

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Parry, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

Report Author: Sarah-Jane Smedmor/Michelle Whiting

Title: Corporate Director for Care and Protection

Tel: 01305 224511

Email: sarah-jane.smedmor@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation: That the Cabinet note and consider the progress and performance of Aspire Adoption Agency.

Reason for Recommendation: Aspire Adoption is a registered Adoption Agency. Adoption agencies are subject to the Adoption Agencies Regulations (AAR) 2005 (updated 2011) and the Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012; Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 and are subject to the National Minimum Standards (2014) which accompany the Regulations. Standard 25.6 of the National Minimum Standards requires the Adoption Agency to produce a report to be received by the agency Executive.

1. Executive Summary

Dorset Council has a duty under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 to establish and maintain an adoption service for its area and along with BCP Council discharges this duty through a delegation of functions to Aspire Adoption, a Regional Adoption Agency. Dorset retains overall responsibility for its adoption and special guardianship services, continuing to have parental responsibility for

its own Children in Care but most adoption and some special guardianship functions are delegated to Aspire Adoption.

The appended report is the fourth annual adoption report presented by Aspire Adoption, summarising the work of the agency in the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. The report was presented to People and Health Scrutiny on 8th June 2021.

It has been written to ensure and provides the Council with an opportunity to satisfy itself that the requirements of the Statutory Adoption Guidance 2013 and the Adoption Minimum Standards 2014 are met. This report provides a summary of the comprehensive self-evaluation of Aspire Regional Adoption Agency and provides an overview of the areas of strength and areas for development focusing on local authority statutory responsibilities in respect of adoption; division of roles and responsibilities between Aspire and the local authorities; headline activity data 01/04/20 to 31/03/21; Finance and Commissioning.

The 2020/21 Annual Report was written by the previous manager for the service and will be presented by the new service manager and Corporate Director for Care and Protection.

2. Financial Implications

The total budget for Aspire Regional Adoption Agency is £2,103,700 jointly funded by the BCP Council (59%) and Dorset Council (41%). Dorset Council contribution is £857,840 per year. As a condition of the interagency agreements, any underspend is transferred to an ear marked reserve and any overspend is a shared risk and so would be split proportionately between the 2 local authorities.

There was an overspend in the service in 20/21 of £167,000. Following the appointment of a new manager, an extraordinary meeting in May and an improvement in trading income, this position has stabilised for the financial year 21/22.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

Adoption offers an opportunity for children who cannot be cared for by their birth families the chance of securing a secure and loving home which provides an opportunity for long lasting health and wellbeing.

It is also important to note that although adoption is rewarding, it can also be challenging. It is important to provide effective matching and sufficient support to adoptive parents to meet these challenges in order to support their own wellbeing but also to avoid adoption breakdown which can have long lasting health and wellbeing implications for the child and the adoptive parents.

4. Climate implications

N/a

5. Other Implications

N/a

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW
Residual Risk: LOW

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

8. Appendices

Aspire Adoption Annual Report for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

9. Background Papers

People and Health Scrutiny Committee 8th June 2021: Aspire Adoption Annual Report

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

This page is intentionally left blank

Aspire Adoption Annual Report

for the period from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

Contents

Introduction

1. Local authority statutory responsibilities in respect of adoption
2. Division of roles and responsibilities between Aspire and the local authorities
3. Headline activity data 01/04/20 to 31/03/21
4. Finance
5. Commissioning
6. Appendix 1- Aspire Organisational Structure and Staffing
7. Appendix 2- Governance of Aspire Adoption
8. Appendix 3 -Registered Manager/Responsible Officer and Agency Decision Maker (ADM) Role
9. Appendix 4 -Aspire Adoption Panel
10. Appendix 5 -Panel chair's report April 2021

Introduction

This is the fourth annual adoption report for Aspire Adoption, summarising the work of the agency in the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. It has been written to ensure that the requirements of the Statutory Adoption Guidance 2013 and the Adoption Minimum Standards 2014 are met.

The 2014 Adoption Minimum Standards can be accessed at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/336069/Adoption_NMS_July_2014_for_publication.pdf

The 2013 Statutory Adoption Guidance can be accessed at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/270100/adoption_statutory_guidance_2013.pdf

1. Local authority statutory responsibilities in respect of adoption

- 1.1 In accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, all local authorities have a duty to establish and maintain an adoption service in their area, to meet the needs in relation to adoption, of children who have or may be adopted, of adults who have been adopted, parents and guardians of such children and persons who have or may adopt a child.
- 1.2 Since 1st July 2017, Bournemouth Borough Council, the Borough of Poole, and Dorset County Council have delegated most of those functions, along with some statutory responsibilities in relation to special guardianship, to Aspire Adoption, a Regional Adoption Agency. It was one of the first Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) to be set up nationally.
- 1.3 As a result of local government reorganisation in April 2019, Aspire is now funded by two councils, namely Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole Council and Dorset Council. On 1st April 2020, staff in Aspire were TUPE transferred to Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole Council, which now hosts the RAA. The Inter Authority Agreement was revised to reflect the change in council boundaries.
- 1.4 Each local authority retains overall responsibility for their adoption and special guardianship services, continuing to have parental responsibility for their own Children in Care, but delegating most adoption and some special

guardianship functions to Aspire Adoption. Regional Adoption Agencies are expected to work closely with colleagues in the voluntary adoption sector. Aspire Adoption works in partnership with Families for Children, a Voluntary Adoption Agency based in Devon.

1.5 The name “Aspire Adoption” reflects the aspiration to learn, to build on existing good practice and achieve practice improvements in the delivery of services for children, adopters and others who benefit from or are in need of adoption and special guardianship services in the area covered by the Regional Adoption Agency.

2. Division of roles and responsibilities between Aspire and the local authorities

2.1 Aspire has been delegated all of the local authority statutory responsibilities for adoption, other than the court work leading to Care and Placement Orders.

2.2 Aspire has responsibility for recruiting, assessing and supporting prospective adopters, for non-agency adoption work including partner adoptions and intercountry adoptions.

2.3 The local authorities retain overall responsibility for their Children in Care but have delegated case responsibility for the majority of children with adoption plans to Aspire following the granting of a Placement Order.

2.4 Aspire is responsible for family finding for all children with adoption plans. The RAA is also responsible for preparing children for a move to adoption, for preparing moving calendars or diaries, undertaking life story work and creating life story books.

2.5 Aspire undertakes special guardianship assessments for court on behalf of the local authority as part of care proceedings, or in private law applications.

2.6 Aspire provides support to all parties affected by adoption, including adopters, adoptive families, adopted adults and birth relatives, and also to special guardians, families created through special guardianship, and to the birth families whose children are subject to SGOs.

2.7 The table on the following page sums up the division of responsibilities between Aspire and the local authorities.

Function	Regional Adoption Agency	Local Authority
RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT		

Marketing and Recruitment Strategy	✓	
Adopter Recruitment and Enquiries	✓	
Assessment of Prospective Adopters – all Stage One and Stage Two functions	✓	
Completion of Prospective Adopter Report	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for approval of adopters	✓	
Post approval training	✓	
Matching	✓	
Post Placement training for Prospective Adopters	✓	
PERMANENCE PLANNING		
Early identification of a child possibly requiring adoption		✓
Tracking and monitoring the child possibly requiring a doption	✓	✓
Support and advice to childcare social worker on the adoption process	✓	✓
Sibling or other specialist assessments if commissioned by LA	✓	
Direct work to prepare child prior to placement	✓	
Preparation of the Child Permanence Report		✓
Agency Decision Maker for “Should be placed for Adoption” decisions		✓
Case management prior to the point agreed by the LA ADM		✓
Case management from point agreed by the LA ADM	✓	
MATCHING AND PLACEMENT		
Family finding	✓	
Looked After Child reviews	✓	✓
Shortlist and visit potential families	✓	
Organising child appreciation day	✓	
Ongoing direct work to prepare child prior to placement	✓	
Adoption Panel administration and management	✓	
Agency adviser role	✓	
Agency Decision Maker for Matching prospective adopters and child	✓	
Placement Planning meeting administration and management of introductions	✓	
Support to family post placement and planning and delivery of a doption support	✓	
Ongoing life story work and preparation of Life story book	✓	
Independent Review Officer monitoring of quality of child’s care and care plan		✓
Support prospective adopters in preparation and submission of a pplication for Adoption Order – including attending at court	✓	
Preparation of later life letter	✓	
ADOPTION AND SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP SUPPORT		
Assessment for a doption or special guardianship support	✓	
Developing and delivering adoption and special guardianship support plans	✓	
Agree and administer financial support to a doptive families pre and post Adoption Order		✓
Adoption and special guardianship support delivery including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support groups • Social events • Post adoption/special guardianship training • Independent Birth Relative services • Support with ongoing birth relative contact • Specialist Life Story practitioners • Adoption counselling and training 	✓	

Financial support to adopters and special guardians including adoption and special guardianship allowances		✓
SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDERS		
Receipt of application or court request for special guardianship		✓
Assessment of applicants for Special Guardianship	✓	
NON-AGENCY ADOPTIONS		
Step parent/partner adoption assessments	✓	
Intercountry adoption assessments and post approval and post order support	✓	

3. Headline activity data 01/04/2020 to 31/03/2021

- 3.1 Fifty-two children had decisions made by the local authority Agency Decision Maker that they should be placed for adoption (SBPA), compared to 73 the previous year. This is a significant decrease and is attributable to delays in care proceedings and restructures within the local authorities.
- 3.2 In 2020-21, 26 of the SBPA decisions were for children from the BCP Council area, and 26 from the Dorset Council area. Numbers each quarter fluctuated within each local authority, with eighteen in Q2 of 2020-21 in BCP Council, and only two in quarter three and one in Q4. Similarly, in Dorset there were ten in Q1 and Q3 but only three in Q4.
- 3.3 There is no clear pattern which can be identified within or across the local authorities in relation to numbers of SBPA decisions each quarter to manage workloads for staff in Aspire, or to manage the workload of the Agency Decision Makers in each local authority. A total of 251 SBPA decisions have now been made since Aspire went live in July 2017, an average of 16.7 SBPA decisions per quarter across the local authorities funding Aspire.
- 3.4 Forty-one Placement Orders were made by the courts from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021. Nineteen were for children from the BCP Council area twenty-two from the Dorset area. Following on from the local authority decision that a child should be placed for adoption, Placement Orders give social workers legal authority to place a child for adoption.
- 3.5 There continues to be a significant discrepancy between the number of local authority decisions that a child should be adopted and the courts making a Placement Order. This has been discussed with both local authorities, who have been given the relevant data to consider the reasons for this in relation to their permanency planning. It partly reflects the time lag between a SBPA decision and the final court hearing date, or a local authority change of plan before the final court hearing or the court making an alternative permanence plan for the child.

- 3.6 Fifty-two children in the care of the local authorities of Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Dorset were placed for adoption in the year, compared to 52 the previous year. Twenty-nine of these were from the BCP council area, and twenty-three were from the Dorset Council area. A total of 210 children have been placed for adoption since Aspire went live, an average of 14 per quarter.
- 3.7 Eleven children were placed on an Early Permanent (EP) basis in 2020-21, compared to nine in the previous year. Early Permanence means that children can be placed on a fostering basis with approved adopters who will go on to adopt them if the courts agree a Placement Order. All the children placed on this basis in 2019-20 either have or will be adopted by these families.
- 3.8 Of the 210 children placed for adoption between July 2017 and the end of March 2021, all but 5 remain in their adoptive placement or have been adopted. Disruption meetings are always held to learn lessons when a child placed for adoption does not go on to be adopted.
- 3.9 At the end of March 2021, of the 35 children waiting with Placement Orders but not yet placed, and where the plan continues to be adoption, seven children have been linked / matched to adopters, 2 children are in EP placements, the plan is that five children will be adopted by their foster carers, and we are actively family finding for five children.
- 3.10 There were 10 children where Placement Orders had been granted but the decision has been taken to rescind the decisions. Of these, 5 are boys, 5 are girls; 4 are in sibling groups. The reasons for rescinding the SBPA decisions are due to the children remaining with their foster carers or because adoption is no longer felt to be a viable plan.
- 3.11 It is clear that the most effective and efficient way to place children is for Aspire to recruit and assess their own families to take children with more complex needs. Recruitment activity has been the priority and targeted to recruit families who will consider the children currently waiting.
- 3.12 A total of 59 children were adopted in 2020-21, compared with 41 the previous year but with 36 children in adoption placements at the end of March 2021. Adoption applications are not usually lodged with the court until after the second Child in Care review after placement, about 3-4 months after a child has been placed with their adoptive family. Some prospective adopters need longer still before they feel ready to lodge the application, which can lead

to delay as the court application is the prospective adopters' application, not the local authority's application.

3.13 National adoption scorecards measure timeliness in adoption activity on a 3 - year rolling average. They are published by the Department for Education a year later than the activity they are reporting on. The available published data is for the 3- year period 2016-19. Care has to be taken as small numbers can result in significant swings in averages if just a few children take longer to place for adoption. The outcome for the child is a positive one but can reflect negatively on the data.

3.14 Aspire data for 2002-21 would suggest that for the Aspire local authorities, it took an average of 270 days (BCP) and 177 days(Dorset) between the local authority receiving court authority to place the child and the ADM deciding on a match to an adoptive family. The England average from the 2016-19 adoption scorecards is 178 days. It took an average of 301 days (BCP) and 333 days (Dorset) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family. The England average from the provisional 2016-19 adoption scorecards is 376 days.

A1 Days between a child entering care & moving in with their adoptive family (England average from the provisional 2016-19 scorecard is 382 days)

	2020			2021	Total
	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	
	443	202	365	348	301
		277	302	493	357
	443	227	331	389	321

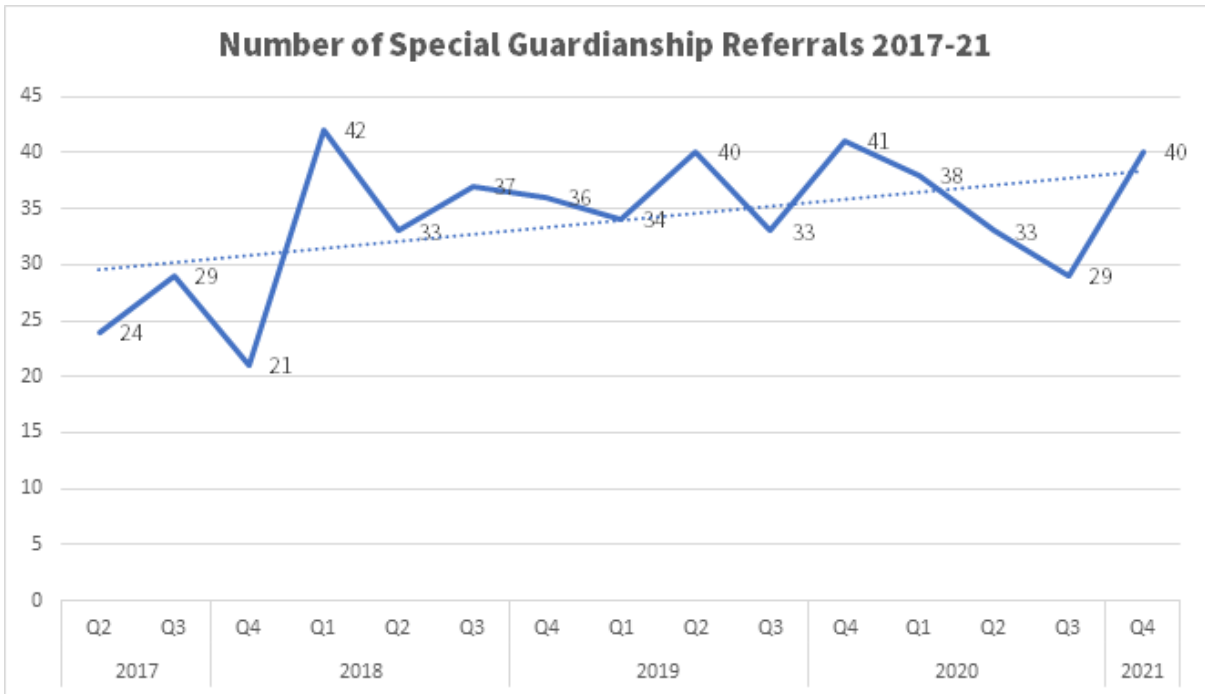
	2020			2021	Total
	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	
BCP	443	202	365	348	301
Dorset		277	302	462	333
Total	443	227	331	372	311

A2 Days between an LA receiving court authority to place & deciding on a match (England average from the provisional 2016-19 scorecard is 170 days)

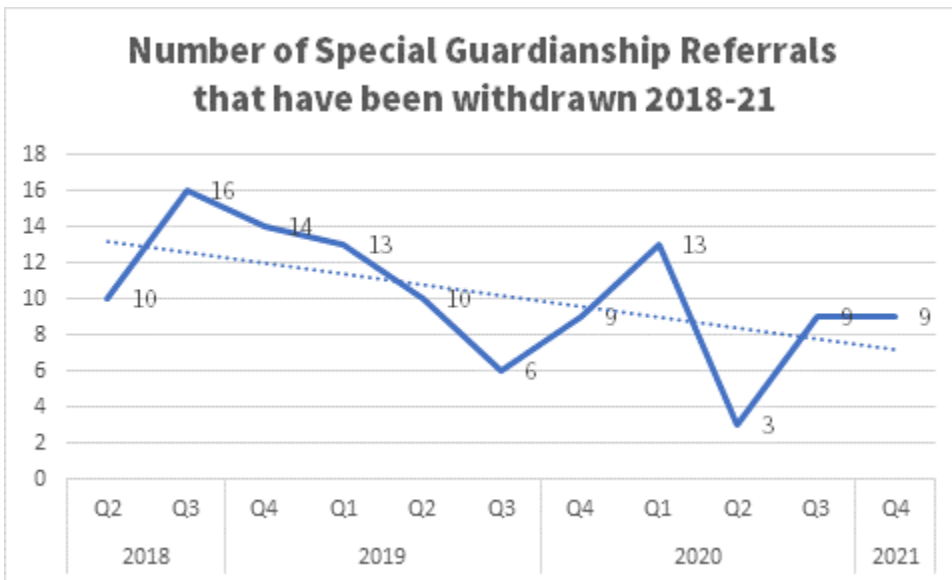
	2020			2021	
	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Total
BCP	206	464	163	128	270
Dorset		171	109	270	177
Total	206	355	133	162	238

3.15 Numbers of adopters approved in 2020-21 fell slightly short of the target for the year of 50 with 48 families approved compared to 60 in 2019-20. The reduction in number of approvals is attributable to the reduction in staffing in the R&A team during 2020-21. Sufficient recruitment allows for most Aspire children to be placed with Aspire assessed adopters, provides a surplus to meet national sufficiency needs and brings income into Aspire to offset the cost of any interagency placements which need to be purchased for Aspire children.

3.16 For the last 3 years, numbers of referrals for special guardianship assessments have settled to between 42 and 30 each quarter, and the total number of referrals for each year averages 134 with 140 in 2020/21 and an increasing trend line. The Special Guardianship Assessment Team were staffed and funded for no more than 100 referrals a year, so have been under considerable pressure in terms of capacity, especially as these reports are court ordered and timetabled to be completed in no more than 12 weeks, often less. Assessments of prospective special guardians take place across the country and not just in the wider Dorset area. In the last year, areas where assessments have been undertaken include the West Midlands, Oxfordshire, Somerset, London, Yorkshire, Sussex and Wales.



3.17 The number of withdrawals or discontinuations prior to the report being filed with the court has fallen in the last year from 38 in 2019-20 to 34 in 2020/21 with a downward trend line. This reflects the joint work between the local authorities and Aspire to ensure that viability assessments are more robust and that prospective special guardians have a clear understanding of what a Special Guardianship Order would mean to them their families and the child, as early as possible.



3.18 The provision of post order adoption and special guardianship support is a statutory requirement and where demand has been seen to be rising not just locally but on a national basis. Numbers of open adoption and special guardianship post order support cases in Aspire have remained high, with at least 259 open cases at the end of March 2021.

3.19 By the end of March 2021, caseloads were an average of 41 cases for full -time social workers or support workers. The case load weighting system evidenced that caseloads were far higher than advised and did not take into account the additional responsibilities of covering the daily duty rota, running monthly support groups, workshops or training, managing indirect contact (letterbox) cases, managing direct contact with birth relatives, or linking in with other professionals e.g. linking in with local schools.

3.20 The tables below illustrate adoption activity quarter on quarter for each local authority since Aspire went live in July 2017.

Adoption Orders	2019			Jan-Mar	2020			2021 Jan-Mar	
	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec		Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec		
BCP	6	6	8	5	2	15	5	16	63
Dorset	4	5	4	3	0	9	6	6	37
Total	10	11	12	8	2	24	11	22	100

Placements

	2019			Jan-Mar	2020			2021 Jan-Mar
	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec		Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	

BCP	7	9	8	9	8	8	6	7	62
Dorset	5	8	2	4	8	5	3	7	42
Total	12	17	10	13	16	13	9	14	104

PO's

	2019			Jan-Mar	2020			2021 Jan-Mar	
	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec		Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec		
BCP	8	9	5	5	3	7	8	1	46
Dorset	2	5	6	6	8	4	4	6	41
Total	10	14	11	11	11	11	12	7	87

SBPA

	2019			Jan-Mar	2020			2021 Jan-Mar	
	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec		Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec		
BCP	19	9	4	10	5	18	2	1	68
Dorset	5	6	14	6	10	5	8	1	55
Total	24	15	18	16	15	23	10	2	123

EP

	2019			Jan-Mar	2020			2021 Jan-Mar	
	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec		Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec		
BCP	1	1	3	1	3	1	1	1	12
Dorset	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	3	7
Total	2	1	5	1	4	1	1	4	19

Adopters	2017		2018				2019				2020			2021	
	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar
	9	12	15	11	3	12	7	16	14	17	13	13	15	10	10

4. Covid-19

- 4.1 During 2020-21 Aspire had to respond to the covid-19 pandemic. The majority of work changed to on-line including most visits to adopters and special guardians, court hearings, preparation courses, adoption panels, meetings and supervision. Staff have primarily been working from home with a limited number attending the office when required. Visits to children where Aspire holds case responsibility have continued.
- 4.2 Despite the restrictions Aspire continued to place children with adopters, assess and approve adopters and special guardians, and provide support throughout the lockdowns.
- 4.3 Aspire was assisted by a government grant of £55,504 to provide additional support to adoptive and special guardian families which included access to additional social work support, education advice, psychology support, workshops and subscriptions to the National Association of Therapeutic Parenting.

5. Finance

- 5.1 Aspire is funded by the local authorities for whom it undertakes adoption and special guardianship services.
- 5.2 The budget framework percentages agreed at the inception of the agency in 2017 were for contributions of 44.6% from Dorset County Council, 38.3% from Bournemouth Borough Council and 17.1% from the Borough of Poole. This was adjusted at the time of local government reorganisation in April 2019, to 59% from BCP Council and 41% from Dorset. This equates to a total budget of £2,102,700 with contributions of £857,840 from Dorset and £1,244,860 from BCP Council.
- 5.3 In the Inter Authority Agreement underpinning Aspire, it was agreed that any underspend would go into the Aspire Earmarked Reserve. In the Inter Authority Agreement it was agreed that any overspend was a shared risk and would be split proportionately between the local authorities.
- 5.4 The provisional Budget Monitoring position for the period April 2020 to March 2021 excludes the final end of year closedown adjustments that take place therefore these figures are still the draft position until the closedown is completed. However, they are not expected to vary considerably from this position.
- 5.5 It appears that Aspire will be £167,000 overspent in 2020/21, after the application of covid-19 funding towards the loss of income. There are several reasons for this including a reduction in the income generated from interagency fees, this was largely due to covid-19 and the reduction in family finding activity in many local authorities. It has also been necessary to

purchase adoption placements for children whose needs could not be met by Aspire adopters.

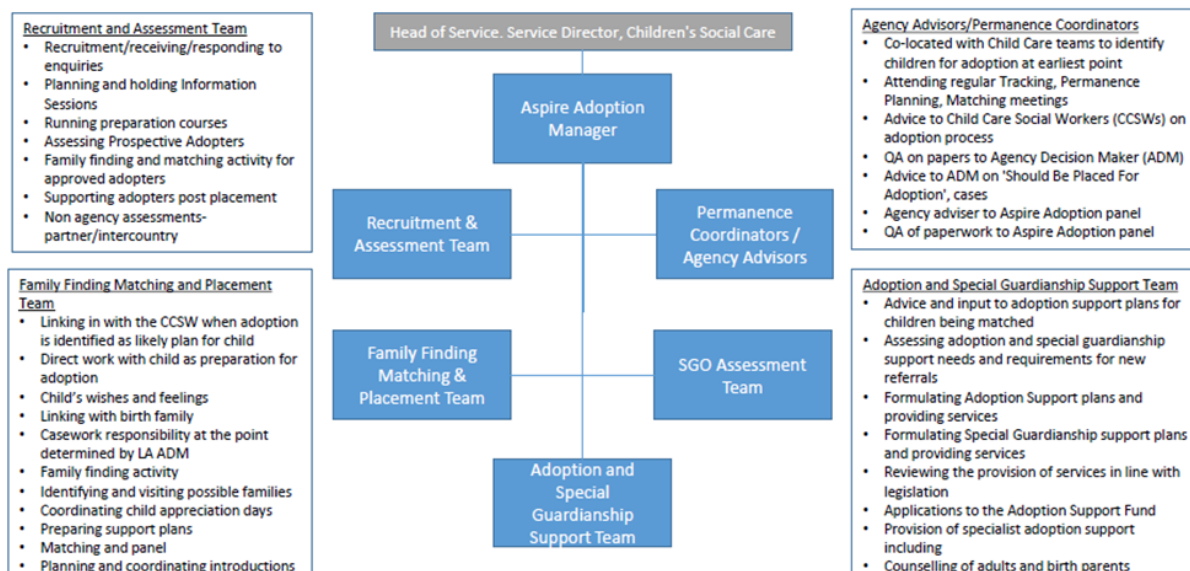
- 5.6 Since Aspire went live in 2017 the staffing budget has not increased, however, the cost of staffing has increased each year due to increments and pay awards. The intention was that the staffing costs would be offset by interagency fee income and in last two years the budget has balanced, however, with increasing staffing costs and reduced ability to sell placements this financial year has been challenging and has led to a significant overspend.
- 5.7 In order to balance the budget the staffing levels in Aspire were contracted which resulted in increased caseloads, reductions in the number of adopter assessments, and difficulties with allocating special guardianship assessments.
- 5.8 Aspire does not currently carrying any reserves to help smooth the position, however the advantage of sharing the costs in this partnership means the risk of overspend is shared proportionately by each authority.
- 5.9 The board being aware of the unstable financial position commissioned an external review to examine the quality of the service it provides and in particular whether it offers value for money.
- 5.10 The external review reported in December 2020. It concluded that Aspire offers high quality services for adopters and children and is value for money for the authorities. (Removing children from the care system through adoption represents a significant saving for local authorities. The University of Bristol have estimated costs of £34,320 a year for every year a child remains in foster care.)
- 5.11 It should be noted that whilst cost pressures for staffing and external placements remain a new service manager was appointed on the 6th of April 2021 with a remit of working with Dorset and BCC to stabilise the future financial position whilst retaining the quality of services. An extraordinary board was set for the 17th of May to review the financial arrangements.
- 5.12 Having reviewed the various options the Board were happy at this point to accept the financial modelling for a one-year budget. There needs to be clear times frame of the strategic position and how it is going to be carried out.
- 5.13 By September 2021, there need to be a clear business case and model mapped out for next 3 years which harmonises the staffing position to be able to build into the budget plan.

6. Commissioning

- 6.1 Most of the services which are the responsibility of Aspire are provided by staff directly employed by the RAA, other than an independent support service for birth families whose children have been adopted, and services provided by external therapeutic providers funded by the Adoption Support Fund.
- 6.2 The independent support service to birth relatives affected by adoption is commissioned out to Families for Children, the Voluntary Adoption Agency which is partnered with Aspire. Quarterly contract review meetings are held. The current contract runs to 31st September 2021 and the plan is to review the contract during the first quarter of 2021/22.
- 6.3 Applications are made to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) (funded by central government) to pay external providers, when families need therapeutic services which Aspire cannot provide in house. Providers are checked out by the Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole Access to Resources Team (ART). The ASF generates income for Aspire for therapeutic services provided in house which can also be claimed via the ASF, generating £3020 in the year.

Appendix 1 Aspire Organisational Structure and Staffing

Aspire Adoption - Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) – Organisation Structure



7. Staffing

- 7.1 There are 42.61 permanent full -time equivalent posts in Aspire (reduced from 45 in April 2020), with the permanent staffing establishment supplemented by

those on casual or fixed term contracts to increase capacity where needed. Many of the staff work part time, with the total number of staff comprising of social workers, support workers, and business support staff totalling about 54.

- 7.2 The service is led and managed by the Aspire Adoption Service Manager, Jennifer Warr, Jennifer Warr is a qualified social worker, has a management qualification and is registered with Social Work England.
- 7.3 The Recruitment & Assessment Team comprises of a team manager, practice manager, 0.5 Family Support Practitioner and 5.69 social workers. This is a reduction of 1.31 FTE Social Workers since April 2020. All are registered with Social Work England
- 7.4 The Family Finding, Matching and Placement Team comprises of a team manager, 0.81 FTE practice manager and 4.3 social workers (a reduction of 1.2 social workers since April 2020) FTE social workers, all of whom are registered with Social Work England, and 3.64 FTE family support workers.
- 7.5 The Special Guardianship Assessment team has a team manager, practice manager and 4.27 social workers – this is a reduction of 1.23 FTE social workers since April 2020. One FTE social worker is on maternity leave and is only backfilled with 0.5 FTE social worker meaning that the actual number of staff in the team currently is 3.77 FTE social workers. All are registered with Social Work England.
- 7.6 The Adoption & Special Guardianship Support team has a team manager, 0.81 FTE practice manager and 4.31 FTE social workers, which is a reduction of 0.69 FTE social workers since April 2020, all of whom are registered with Social Work England. The team also has 2 FTE family support workers, and a 0.4 FTE clinical psychologist.
- 7.7 There are 2 FTE Permanence Coordinators, who also act as Agency Advisers to the Aspire Adoption Panel and Aspire Agency Decision Maker, and to the Agency Decision Makers in the local authorities in relation to decisions as to whether a child should be adopted.
- 7.8 The service is supported by 6 FTE business support staff including a senior business support officer, a panel administrator, and a marketing, media and monitoring officer.
- 7.9 All of the social workers employed by Aspire are registered with Social Work England, and many of the staff, including support workers, have additional qualifications including skills in a variety of therapeutic interventions such as

theraplay, sensory integration, mindfulness and DDP (Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy).

- 7.10 Aspire also has access to dedicated clinical psychology support for staff and service users.
- 7.11 No agency staff are employed, and any vacancies attract a high standard of applications across all areas of the work undertaken by Aspire. Casual staff add capacity for one off pieces of work in the Recruitment and Assessment Team and the Special Guardianship Assessment Team. The 3 fixed term contract staff in place at the beginning of the year have now transferred into permanent positions as they became available when staff left. There is one part time social worker contracted to cover maternity leave and another full-time social worker contracted to cover a vacancy.

8. Staff training and development

- 8.1 Staff in Aspire have access to training and courses run by Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole Council as the host authority paying for these from the Aspire training budget of £8,000 a year. They have access to external courses, but only dependent on budgetary restrictions. In 2020/21 12 members staff attended Dyadic Developmental Parenting training.
- 8.2 Staff have monthly supervision and annual appraisals, and regular team case and practice reflection sessions are facilitated by the clinical psychologists
- 8.3 A staff forum for all staff in Aspire is held every 4 months to update on Aspire performance data, local and national issues relating to the service and to develop the team service plans.

Appendix 2 - Governance

The following is taken from the Inter Authority Agreement

SCHEDULE 2 – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Governance Structure



Part 1 – Strategic Partnership Board

1 Name:

The name of the Board for Aspire Adoption shall be the **Strategic Partnership Board** which is established pursuant to an Inter Authority Agreement between Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council and the Borough of Poole ("the Councils") for the creation of a Regional Adoption Agency.

2 Role:

The Board will provide advice, oversight and endorsement of the strategic direction of Aspire Adoption.

3 The Board will:

- 3.1 Provide and review the strategic direction of Aspire Adoption;

- 3.2 Oversee, review and endorse budget setting and make recommendations to the Councils for Aspire Adoption;
 - 3.2.1 Oversee, review and endorse the Business Plan annually and make recommendations to the Councils for Aspire Adoption;
 - 3.2.2 Attempt to resolve disputes between the Councils under the terms of the Inter Authority Agreement.

4 Accountability and Responsibility:

- 4.1 Each Local Authority is responsible for ensuring that their nominated representative(s) (or named substitute) are available to attend all Board meetings, which will be scheduled in advance.
- 4.2 All members of the Board will be in a position to make decisions within their respective organisation, where appropriate.
- 4.3 All members of the Board will be responsible for reporting to their organisation, through their respective governance arrangements.

5 Meetings of the Board

- 5.1 The Board will meet every six months or at a greater or lesser frequency if it so decides.
- 5.2 The Board will elect a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson from amongst its members.
- 5.3 The Chairperson will agree the dates, times and venues for the meetings of the Board. The meeting timetable will be scheduled over the year, to reflect both planned monitoring and evaluation requirements.
- 5.4 The Chairperson shall normally preside at all meetings of the Board.
- 5.5 The Chairperson will be responsible for agreeing meeting agendas and draft minutes for circulation.
- 5.6 Agendas and papers for the meeting will be sent out at least five working days prior to the meeting in order to provide time for members of the Board to read them and identify actions for their own organisations.
- 5.7 Minutes of meeting will be circulated within 5 working days after the meeting with an action list.

6 Membership:

- 6.1 The Board will consist of:
 - 6.1.1 Portfolio Holder and Executive Director for Children's Services for Bournemouth Borough Council;
 - 6.1.2 Cabinet Member for Learning, Skills and Children's Safeguarding and Corporate Director for Children's, Adults and Community Services for Dorset County Council;

- 6.1.3 Portfolio Holder and Strategic Director for Children's Services for the Borough of Poole Council.
- 6.2 The Board will consult (so far as it considers proper and appropriate to do so):
 - 6.2.1 Representatives from local Voluntary Adoption Agencies/Families for Children; and
 - 6.2.2 A representative from Stakeholders.
- 6.3 Members of the Board should:
 - 6.3.1 Commit to attending the majority of meetings or nominate a suitable substitute who can attend in their place who will be expected to exercise the powers of the Member for whom they are substituting. Only Board members or their named representatives can attend Board meetings;
 - 6.3.2 Uphold and support the Board decisions and be prepared to follow through actions and decisions for the Board proposals and declaring any conflict of interest should it arise;
 - 6.3.3 Be prepared to represent the Board at stakeholder events and support the agreed consensus view of the Board when speaking on behalf of the Board to other parties.

7 Voting – Quorum

- 7.1 No quorum is necessary for the routine business and the receiving of reports. However, where the Chairperson determines that a critical decision is required there must be a representative from all the Councils.
- 7.2 In the spirit of effective collaboration and partnership working, the Board will always seek to come to agreement through consensus and unanimity following debate and discussion where all the members will be encouraged to participate.
- 7.3 The Members of the Board will be expected to subscribe to the seven principles of public life in their work and decision making. The principles are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- 7.4 Members will be expected to declare any personal interests in the business of the Board and to withdraw from participation where such interests are prejudicial or pecuniary.

Part 2 – Operational Management Board

1 Name:

The name of the Board for Aspire Adoption shall be the **Operational Management Board** which is established pursuant to an Inter Authority Agreement between Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council and the Borough of Poole ("the Councils") for the creation of a Regional Adoption Agency.

2 Role:

The Board will provide support, advice and management to Aspire Adoption to ensure that statutory requirements and the Business Plan is delivered effectively.

3 The Board will:

- 3.1 oversee the implementation of the Aspire Adoption Budget and Business Plan;
- 3.2 oversee the commissioning arrangements and operational performance against agreed local priorities and targets and in line with national priorities and targets.

4 Accountability and Responsibility:

- 4.1 Each Local Authority is responsible for ensuring that their nominated representative(s) (or named substitute) are available to attend all Board meetings, which will be scheduled in advance.
- 4.2 This Board will report to the Strategic Partnership Board.

5 Meetings of the Board

- 5.1 The Board will meet quarterly or at a greater or lesser frequency if it so decides.
- 5.2 The Board will elect a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson from amongst its members.
- 5.3 The Chairperson will agree the dates, times and venues for the meetings of the Board. The meeting timetable will be scheduled over the year, to reflect both planned monitoring and evaluation requirements.
- 5.4 The Chairperson shall normally preside at all meetings of the Board.
- 5.5 The Chairperson will be responsible for agreeing meeting agendas and draft minutes for circulation.
- 5.6 Agendas and papers for the meeting will be sent out at least five working days prior to the meeting in order to provide time for members of the Board to read them and identify actions for their own organisations.
- 5.7 Minutes of meeting will be circulated within 5 working days after the meeting with an action list.

6 Membership:

- 6.1 The Board will consist of:
 - 6.1.1 Service Director for Children's Social Care for Bournemouth;
 - 6.1.2 Assistant Director – Care and Protection for Dorset;
 - 6.1.3 Head of Children & Young People's Social Care for Poole; 6.1.4
Children's Services Commissioners from each of the three Parties;
- 6.1.5 Adoption Aspire Manager.
- 6.2 Members of the Board should:
 - 6.2.1 Commit to attending the majority of meetings or nominate a suitable substitute who can attend in their place who will be expected to exercise the powers of the Member for whom they are substituting. Only Board members or their named representatives can attend Board meetings;

- 6.2.2 Uphold and support the Board decisions and be prepared to follow through actions and decisions and declaring any conflict of interest should it arise;
- 6.2.3 Be prepared to represent the Board at stakeholder events and support the agreed consensus view of the Board when speaking on behalf of the Board to other parties.

7 Voting – Quorum

- 7.1 No quorum is necessary for the routine business and the receiving of reports. However, where the Chairperson determines that a critical decision is required there must be a representative from all the Councils.
- 7.2 In the spirit of effective collaboration and partnership working, the Board will always seek to come to agreement through consensus and unanimity following debate and discussion where all the members will be encouraged to participate.
- 7.3 The Members of the Board will be expected to subscribe to the seven principles of public life in their work and decision making. The principles are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- 7.4 Members will be expected to declare any personal interests in the business of the Board and to withdraw from participation where such interests are prejudicial or pecuniary.

Appendix 3 - Registered Manager/Responsible Officer and Agency Decision Maker (ADM) Role

- 8.1 Until 1st April 2019, the Registered Manager/Responsible Officer for Bournemouth Borough Council, under regulation 5 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003, was one of the service managers in Bournemouth. In Poole, the role was undertaken by the Head of Children and Young People's Services. In Dorset, the role was undertaken by the Senior Manager, Placements and Resources. All are members of the Aspire Operational Management Board. From 1st April 2019, the role was undertaken for BCP Council by the Service Manager for Aspire Adoption, and by the Senior Manager, Placements and Resources for Dorset Council and since 1st April 2020 the role has been undertaken by senior managers in BCP and Dorset.
- 8.2 In 2020-21, the Agency Decision Maker for approvals of prospective adopters was the Aspire Service Manager. There were also Agency Decision Makers in each local authority for Should Be Placed for Adoption (SBPA) decisions for their Children in Care and for matches of those children.
- 8.3 All of the Agency Decision Makers have social work and management qualifications and are registered with Social Work England and previously with HCPC.

Appendix 4 - Aspire Adoption Panel

- 9.1 Aspire Adoption operates an Adoption Panel, constituted in accordance with legislation, regulations and guidance. The panel has an independent chairperson, and 16 members on a Central List from which each panel is drawn. There is no legal maximum number of panel members at each panel but in practice, a maximum of 6 or 7 attend each panel, including the panel chair and a social worker. The designated doctor for looked after children in the local authorities funding Aspire is also the agency medical adviser and is a full member of the panel.
- 9.2 The panel is serviced by a panel administrator and has access to legal advice if needed. The professional advice to the panel is provided by the two Permanence Coordinators, one of whom attends each Panel to ensure the smooth running and to advise on policies and procedures.
- 9.3 Current membership includes individuals with personal experience of adoption as adopters and adopted adults. It also includes experienced social workers with direct experience of adoption work, a psychotherapist with experience of working in a child and adolescent mental health setting, and panel members with experience of working in an educational setting.
- 9.4 Members of the Central List from which individual panel membership is drawn reflect the diversity of modern society as far as possible, and include those who are single, in heterosexual and same sex relationships. One panel member on the Central List has personal experience of disability. There is some diversity in terms of age, with panel members in their 30s and others who are retired. Although most panel members are of white British ethnic origin, one panel member is of black African ethnicity and another is of Indian descent.
- 9.5 The functions of the panel in relation to adoption matters are

- to recommend whether prospective adopters are suitable to adopt a child;
 - to recommend whether a proposed match between a child and prospective adopters is a suitable one.
 - In circumstances where a child is relinquished for adoption and no Placement Order is applied for, the panel will recommend whether the child should be placed for adoption
- 9.6 The panel can also give advice about the numbers and ages of children in relation to prospective adopters, also about post adoption contact, delegated parental responsibility and adoption support. The panel has a consultative role regarding the agency's policies and procedures, and a monitoring role regarding quality assurance and ensuring that the time scales set out in the Adoption & Children Act 2002 are met.
- 9.7 The Aspire Adoption Panel makes recommendations based on detailed written reports prepared by the child's social worker and adoption social worker, and the social worker and team manager's attendance at panel to clarify points if needed.
- 9.8 When considering the approval or deregistration of prospective adopters or a match between prospective adopters and a child, adoptive applicants have the option of attending panel in person, to provide scope to discuss and clarify any issues relevant to the application. Applicants who decide not to attend in person are not disadvantaged in any way and no judgement is made from their decision not to do so although every effort will be made to assist their attendance.
- 9.9 The recommendations and advice of the panel are referred, along with the final agreed minutes of the meeting, to the Agency Decision Maker, for a decision to be made and conveyed to all parties within the time scales laid down in the Adoption & Children Act 2002.
- 9.10 The Panel chair is independent, is an experienced chair and an adopter of 2 children. He attends the Aspire Strategic Partnership Board and presents a report to the Aspire Operational Management Board and Strategic Partnership Board every 6 months in line with standard 17 of the Adoption Minimum Standards, on the quality of reports being presented to the panel. This includes whether the requirements of the Restrictions on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005 have been met, and whether there is a thorough, rigorous, consistent and fair approach across the service in the assessment of whether a child should be placed for adoption, the suitability of prospective

adopters and the proposed placement. His most recent report is included as Appendix 5

- a. In 2020/21 the Adoption Panels have all been held virtually due to the covid 19 pandemic. The panels have adjusted well to the new way of working and business has been uninterrupted.

Appendix 5 - Panel chair's report April 2021

Aspire Adoption Panel Chair's Bi-Annual Report

June 2020 - March 2021

Introduction

At the meeting of the Strategic Board in January 2021 we agreed that the Panel Chair's Report should move to a six-monthly cycle aligned with Aspire's Financial Year. This report therefore reflects data for the twelve months to 31st March 2021 and also panel performance between 1st July 2020 and 31st March 2021.

Panel continues to operate virtually, having also completed training and appraisals using this format over the last few months.

Our focus continues to be the best interests of the children for whom we approve adopters and agree matches. I would like to pay tribute to my Panel colleagues and the Aspire staff with whom we work, who have universally shown incredible resourcefulness, resilience and good humour in adjusting our practices to ensure no interruption to our work, while reflecting changing Government guidance.

Panel

Panel met on twenty-five occasions between July 1st 2020 and March 31st 2021.

There are currently 17 members on the Central List, of whom 9 members including the chair and two vice chairs are independent members.

Panel membership has changed in the last nine months to a greater extent than at any time during Aspire's existence. This has been largely as a consequence of changes to team structure in BCP and Aspire and the loss of social work members who had been working in both organisations. This vulnerability was identified in the autumn and recruitment was undertaken for more independent social work

members, of whom panel now has four, reducing the reliance on the remaining social work members from within Aspire.

Two of our adopter members also retired, leaving the two male members of Panel as the remaining adopter members. A further recruitment process has just been concluded where an additional, female, adopter has been recruited.

Membership of Panel now consists of:

- An independent chair who is also an adopter.
- Two medical advisers.
- 15 women and 2 men.
- 15 are white, 13 British and 1 Canadian. 2 panel members are black British. One panel member has a partner who is Polish.
- 3 panel members are gay.
- 1 panel member is registered disabled.
- 1 panel member is currently a single parent to dependent youngsters. 2 others have experience of having been single parents.
- 3 panel members were adopted as children.
- 2 panel members are adoptive parents. Their children were placed aged between 18 months and 4 years and are now aged between 7 and 15. One of the adopters also has birth children.
- 6 panel members are registered social workers. Of these 2 work for Aspire and 4 are independent social workers. One independent social worker was previously a CAFCASS guardian, two were managers within Aspire, one was a senior manager in Children's Services for Dorset Council.
- 2 additional members have medical backgrounds.
- 1 panel member was a magistrate in the family court.
- 1 panel member has a background in education.
- 1 panel members is a psychotherapist.

The panel members come from a range of social and economic backgrounds.

Covid-19

During July 2020, Panel continued to meet virtually using Skype as the platform for contact. In August we moved to using Microsoft Teams, which has been a more versatile and user-friendly medium.

From attending Panel Chairs' meetings arranged by both Coram BAAF and SWAC it has become clear that Aspire's Panel has been unique in continuing to operate normally throughout the Pandemic.

Many other agencies stopped holding Panel meetings during the first lockdown. Most now have resumed but in a different format, often with the questions prepared in advance and asked by the Chair only.

We have not followed this route, rather operating as normal with each Panel member asking their own question and with time built in to discuss questions before speaking to applicants.

A unique, and I feel essential, part of our maintaining a 'normal' Panel routine online has been the introduction of a Teams call between the Chair and prospective adopters ahead of Panel. This has enabled any technical issues to be resolved, a description of how the Panel will work to be given and management of expectations around timescale and virtual meeting etiquette.

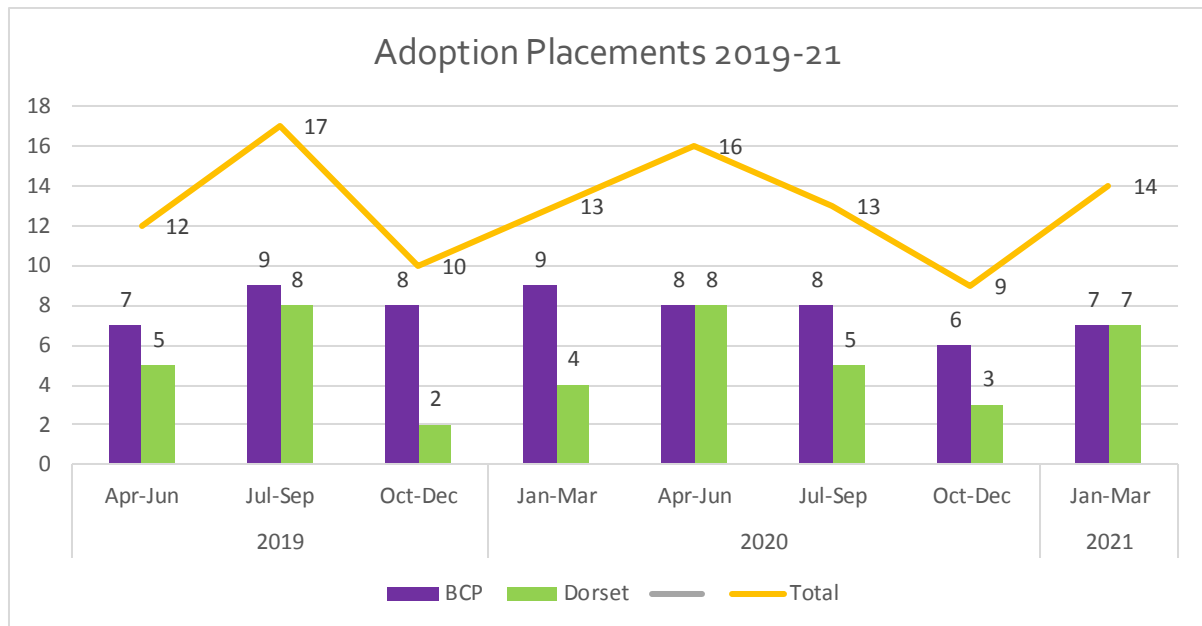
Panel Business

Aspire's Adoption Panel has undertaken the following business over the past nine months:

	July 2020 - March 2021	January - June 2020	July - December 2019	January - June 2019
Approvals	33	28	31	23
Approvals deferred	2	0	2	1
Matches	34	26	27	25
De-Registration	3	3	3	1
Should be placed for adoption	1			
Review of Adopters	1			
Total	74	57	63	50

Matches of children with adopters

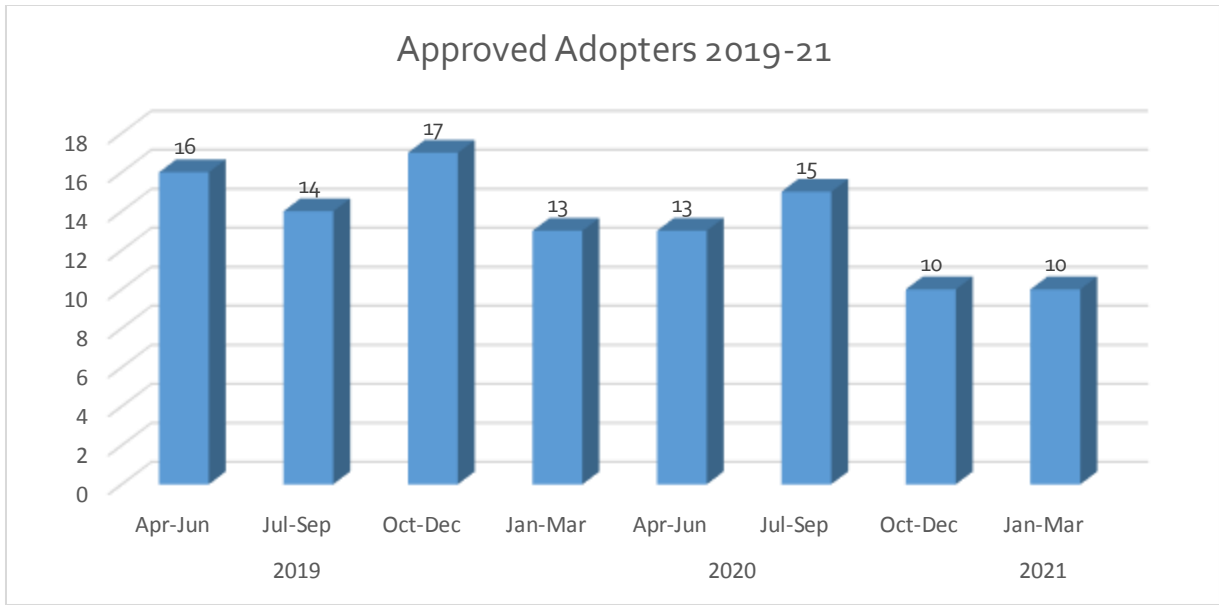
The statistics for Adoption Placements show the number matches to have remained consistent in the last 12 months.



Adopters

Panel considered 34 recommendations for approval in the period July 2020 to March 2021, all those presented were approved with the exception of two applicants. A single adopter was deferred by ADM after being approved by Panel as a consequence of additional information coming to light post Panel. The second case was that of a couple whose approval was deferred at the end of March 2021. This case is being re-considered with the additional information required provided, at the April 7th Panel.

Those approved included 29 heterosexual couples and 7 same sex couples. Additionally, there were four single carers presented for approval to Panel during the period.



Appraisals

Annual appraisals for all Panel members commenced in January 2021 and all but one member’s appraisal have been completed at the time of writing this report.

Quality of Social Worker Reports

The quality of social worker reports remains high. The feedback system established in October 2019 continued until lockdown. Obtaining feedback from Panel members was challenging during 2020. I am pleased to say that a system for managing the feedback process was agreed at the beginning of 2021 and has been operating effectively since then.

Training

There have been three Panel training events held remotely between July 2020 and March 2021.

Focus has been on disruptions, medical advice, particularly in the respect of obesity, questioning and Panel feedback.

The Future

Feedback from other Panels points to there being a preference to remain virtual as the effects of the pandemic diminish. Having discussed our future arrangements with both Panel Advisors and members there is a strong feeling that we should return to meetings in person as soon as it is safe to do so.

Subject to Government restrictions it is our intention to operate in person from August or September 2021. The universal feeling being that meeting adopters provides an additional level of understanding and insight.

Virtual Panels will still be used where requested by adopters, where we need to consider cases at short notice and where adopters are geographically remote.

Conclusion

Despite the enormous challenges for us all over the last year, I am proud to report that Aspire's Panel continues to work well.

We have been able to offer appropriate scrutiny and challenge, reports are of a good standard. Our Panel Advisors and administrators have provided outstanding support to Panel and have approached the challenges of switching to virtual meetings with pragmatism and proactivity.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jayne, Karran, Angela and Tanya for their support, advice and good humour.

Cabinet

7 December 2021

Feedback from Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (27th September to 8th October 2021)

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Parry, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

Report Author: Claire Shiels

Title: Corporate Director, Commissioning, Quality and Partnerships

Tel: 013053224682

Email: Claire.shiels@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

Cabinet is asked to note and consider Ofsted's published report of the recent Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services in Dorset and the next steps.

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure Cabinet are briefed on the outcome of this inspection and the planned next steps.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 An Inspection of Dorset Local Authority Children's Services took place from 27th September 2021 to 8th October 2021. The inspection was undertaken as part of Ofsted's framework for inspecting services for children. Her Majesty's Inspectors carried out the inspection under section 136(2) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA).
- 1.2 This was the first full inspection of all Dorset children's services since the inception of the new Unitary Authority in April 2019. The last full

inspection of all services for children in Dorset was undertaken in 2016 and through Dorset's predecessor council, Dorset County Council.

1.3 Inspectors were on site in Dorset Council offices for two weeks to undertake an extensive and thorough review of: Overall effectiveness; the experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection; the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers; the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families. The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services is a graded inspection. Inspectors make their graded judgements on a 4-point scale: Outstanding; good; requires improvement to be good; inadequate.

1.4 Ofsted have judged Dorset Children's Services as follows:

Overall Effectiveness	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding

1.5 Ofsted have determined services for children and families in Dorset are of good quality and are continuing to improve, finding that senior leadership has a proven determination to give every child in Dorset a brighter future. They have acknowledged the strong political and corporate commitment to improvement, the pride that staff take in their work and that good work is expected, delivered and celebrated. Inspectors have noted the scaffolding for further improvement is firmly in place.

1.6 Dorset Council is now one of:

- Only 17% of Local Authorities (26 out of 151) who have received an outstanding judgement for the impact on leaders on social work practice with children and families.
- 34% of Local Authorities (51 out of 151) judged to be good or outstanding for overall effectiveness with other judgements good or outstanding.
- 50% of Local Authorities (76 out of 151) to be judged either good or outstanding for their overall effectiveness.

1.7 The inspection has followed an extensive programme of work to strengthen and improve services for vulnerable children in Dorset, through the Dorset partnership Strengthening Services Plan with oversight by the multi-agency executive level Strengthening Services Board. Progress has been reported to Elected Members throughout the journey of

improvement. These improvements have been seen by inspectors and acknowledged throughout the published report of the Inspection.

- 1.8 The strong commitment to continuous improvement is embedded in services for children in Dorset, within children's services and the wider partnership. One area for improvement has been identified in this inspection: *Oversight of arrangements when care leavers move in and out of emergency or temporary accommodation.*
- 1.9 This area for improvement and wider learning from this inspection is already being incorporated into a new plan that will support the partnership in its next phase to deliver excellence for children and families in Dorset.
- 1.10 In accordance with the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007, the local authority is required to write and submit an action plan to Ofsted that responds to the findings in the Inspection report within 70 working days of receiving the final inspection report (by 2nd March 2022).

2. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

Good quality children's services lay the foundations for essential health and wellbeing of children, young people, and families.

4. Climate implications

There are no climate implications arising directly from this report.

5. Other Implications

This report provides feedback on external regulatory assurance of safeguarding services for children and Corporate Parenting arrangements.

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

N/A

8. Appendices

Ofsted's Report of Inspection of Dorset Local Authority Children's Services
[Ofsted | Dorset](#)

9. Background Papers

Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACs) Framework [Inspecting local authority children's services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services)

10. Introduction

10.1 An Inspection of Dorset Local Authority Children's Services took place from 27th September 2021 to 8th October 2021. The inspection was undertaken as part of Ofsted's framework for inspecting services for children. Her Majesty's Inspectors carried out the inspection under section 136(2) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA). This was the first full inspection of all Dorset children's services since the inception of the new Unitary Authority in April 2019.

11. Background

- 11.1 The last full inspection of all services for children in Dorset was undertaken in 2016 and through the Dorset's predecessor council, Dorset County Council. The 2016 Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers found services to be requiring improvement to be good.
- 11.2 In 2018 a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to child sexual exploitation, children associated with gangs and at risk of exploitation and children missing from home, care or education in Dorset, also under Dorset's predecessor council, Dorset County Council, identified areas of priority action and areas for improvement for the partnership.
- 11.3 An Ofsted Focused Visit to Children's Services in October 2019, reviewing the local authority's arrangements for children in need and those subject to a child protection plan, identified areas for improvement.
- 11.4 Culture of Self-assessment and Strengthening Services – In January 2020 Dorset Council Children's Services embarked on and implemented a rigorous process of Self-Evaluation of its services for vulnerable children as part of its annual strategic planning cycle. A Self-Evaluation in February 2020 informed the development of the Strengthening Services Plan. The Self-Evaluation was further updated in February 2021 to inform Dorset's Annual Conversation with Ofsted. This was presented to People Health and Scrutiny Committee (20th April 2021) and was presented to Cabinet on the 18th May 2021. A further report providing progress since the implementation of the Dorset Children Thrive model was reported to People Health and Scrutiny Committee on the 20th September 2021.

- 11.5 The Strengthening Services Plan brought together short and medium-term actions that the partnership needed to take to strengthen and improve services for vulnerable children and families in Dorset. Robust governance arrangements were established to ensure the plan was delivered with rigour and pace. Close monitoring arrangements were put into place to ensure improvements were sustained and embedded.
- 11.6 The multi-agency executive level Dorset Strengthening Services Board was established in summer of 2020 to lead and have oversight of the implementation of the Strengthening Services Plan. The Board is chaired by the Chief Executive of Dorset Council and attended by senior partners from Dorset Council, elected members, Dorset CCG, Dorset Police, health providers, education, schools and early years, Probation, voluntary and community sector representative, parent carer representative and CAF/CASS. The Board supported by many front-line managers and staff, have worked relentlessly together as a partnership to deliver the Strengthening Services Plan. These improvements have been seen by inspectors and acknowledged throughout the published report of the Inspection. The Board is the place-based delivery arm of the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

12. ILACs Inspection 2021 activity

- 12.1 Inspectors were on site in Dorset Council offices for two weeks to undertake an extensive and thorough review of:
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection***
Scope included: early help, identifying and responding to need and appropriate thresholds, making good decisions and providing effective help, management oversight, participation and direct work, identifying and responding to all types of abuse and recognising vulnerability of specific groups.
- The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers***
Scope included: making good decisions for children, participation and direct work with children in care and care leavers, helping and protecting, health, learning and enjoyment, stability and permanence, care leavers and transitions.
- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families***
Scope included: strategic leadership, learning culture, performance management, workforce including workforce development.
- 12.2 Nine representatives from Ofsted took part in the inspection including 6 HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectors) supported by an Ofsted Quality Assurance Lead for the inspection and Ofsted Analytical Officer. An additional HMI Designate attended to shadow the inspection.

- 12.3 Inspector's findings were informed by:
- Attending over 76 meetings and meeting with over 200 people including front line staff, managers, partners, children and young people and parents.
 - Considering over 250 children's circumstances.
 - Reviewing over 365 documents including strategies and plans, policies and procedures, performance data and quality assurance documents.

13. Summary of Report findings

13.1 Ofsted have determined services for children and families in Dorset are of good quality and are continuing to improve, finding that senior leadership has a proven determination to give every child in Dorset a brighter future. They have acknowledged the strong political and corporate commitment to improvement, the pride that staff take in their work and that good work is expected, delivered and celebrated. Inspectors have noted the scaffolding for further improvement is firmly in place.

- 13.2 Dorset Council is now one of:
- Only 17% of Local Authorities (26 out of 151) who have received an outstanding judgement for the impact on leaders on social work practice with children and families.
 - 34% of Local Authorities (51 out of 151) judged to be good or outstanding for overall effectiveness with other judgements good or outstanding.
 - 50% of Local Authorities (76 out of 151) to be judged either good or outstanding for their overall effectiveness.

13.3 Overall effectiveness: summary

Overall effectiveness	Good
<p>Headlines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ofsted have judged that 'services for children and families in Dorset are of good quality and continuing to improve' recognising strong leadership with determination to give every child in Dorset a brighter future, and political and corporate commitment to the improvement agenda that supports an environment where good social work can flourish, and children are increasingly better protected. • Ofsted recognised the pace and effectiveness of change in Dorset, particularly in the context of Dorset being a new unitary authority established in 2019 and the Covid-19 pandemic. • Ofsted have reported they found a stable, permanent workforce and that manageable caseloads are enabling constructive relationships to be built with children and families. 	

- Ofsted have reported staff take pride in their work. Good work is expected, delivered, and celebrated.
- Ambitious projects have already had a positive impact on children including the Harbour that is already safeguarding children on the edge of care and at risk of being exploited.
- Ofsted have reported that children in care and care leavers receive the same high standard of care whether they live in or outside of Dorset, although clearer expectations of workers are needed when care leavers live in emergency accommodation.

13.4 The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: summary

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
<p>Headlines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children receive the help that they need at the right time. Families benefit from a broad range of early help services, tailored to their needs in the places where they live. Partnership working is well developed, offering a range of options that build on family’s strengths and which can be provided without delay. • The challenges posed by Covid-19 have been turned into opportunities to develop stronger relationships with partners, schools in particular, to make safeguarding children everybody’s business. • The Children’s Advice and Duty Service model helps families to receive the right support at the right time. When children are, or may be, at risk of significant harm, social workers investigate quickly, with the support of key partners, including the police, when needed. • Since the Ofsted focused visit in October 2019, when inspectors look at arrangements for children in need or subject to a child protection plan, children have received a more consistently good service. • Social workers and managers are now intervening more effectively and decisively in families where children have been living for some time in unsafe and neglectful situations. Assessments are of good quality. The child’s experience is captured in assessments and in the majority of plans, including those for disabled children. • Ofsted have reported that senior managers are acutely aware of some specific areas where practice is not universally good, and strategies to embed good practice are already proving effective. For example, there is a short delay in escalating some cases when risks change, although this does not have an impact on the ongoing work with the child and family. 	

- Ofsted noted that the pre-proceedings process of the Public Law Outline is used effectively. It was noted that some letters to parents are not sufficiently clear, but better ones are using language that parents can easily access.
- Children are seen regularly, on their own and in settings where they feel comfortable. These arrangements continued during the pandemic and staff were inventive in finding ways to see the children they were worried about.
- Managers supervise worker regularly and they reflect carefully on the best way forward for families. Ofsted noted this discussion, including a review of contingencies, is not consistently captured on the child's record, but noted there is no discernible impact of this on the quality of social work practice and senior managers are already addressing this.
- Children who are missing from education and those who are home educated are tracked well. When child protection concerns are identified, they are addressed with appropriate statutory intervention. A strong and joined up approach between schools and children's social care in this instance keeps children safer.
- When children return from going missing or are at risk of exploitation, their personal safety is addressed quickly. Targeted youth workers, police officers, schools and other agencies also work together to map out who else may be at risk putting in place effective measures to disrupt and prevent further exploitation. The multi-agency Harbour programme is noted as being fundamental to the success of these interventions. Children on the edge of care or on the edge of exploitation or criminal activity can remain in their families as a result of tenacious and trusting relationships between them, their workers and local community groups.

13.5 The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers: summary

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
<p>Headlines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children come into care at the right time for them and make good progress while in care. Arrangements for children to return home are managed well, and children only return home if it is safe to do so. • Children in care and care leavers who live outside of Dorset receive the same support and services as those who live within the local authority area. • Ofsted noted that historically the number of children in care has been higher than the places available for them to live in Dorset, however Ofsted noted an increase in the number of older teenagers remaining at home, the 	

commissioning of new provision, the repurposing of existing council premises and brokering arrangements with local providers are beginning to resolve this issue. In the meantime, children are supported to remain in the places where they have strong attachments and that best meet their needs.

- Whenever possible, children in care stay in touch with their family, their brothers and sisters, those important to them and their pets. Children are encouraged to pursue a wider range of hobbies and interests. They have positive and enduring relationships with their independent visitors and receive good advocacy support.
- Permanence arrangements are confirmed with children as soon as possible, so that they know where their long-term home will be. If this is not the plan, they know what their options are and why.
- Most children in care live in foster families. The foster carers are recruited, supported and trained by experienced and aspirational social workers who support them to understand the trauma that children may have faced earlier in their lives.
- The virtual school is highly ambitious for children in care, wherever they live. A particular strength is the impact of more aligned working in the six localities; headteachers, designated teachers and staff at the virtual school work together to secure creative and beneficial outcomes for children.
- Children are helped to understand their life story at a time that is right for them.
- Children in care who are at risk of exploitation are supported well. The information gathered when they return home is put to good use in developing intelligence about risks to both themselves and to other children. Key partners, including local businesses and community leaders, come together in response to the dangers of county lines.
- An increasing number of children's reviews are written directly to children, an important part of helping them to understand key moments in their lives and their story through childhood. Children's voices, either directly or through their advocates, are clearly heard within reviews.
- Disabled children in care receive a consistent and thoughtful service which is responsive to their needs. Communication in all its forms is well understood by the social workers in the specialist teams. Parents are engaged positively in the plans for their children.
- Health assessments are of good quality and children's health needs are well considered. Tenacious efforts by lead officers in health and social care have resulted in a marked increase in the quality and timeliness of health assessments, despite the pressures of Covid-19.
- Children have continued to receive the mental health support that they need without undue delay, which is testament to strong partnerships and advocacy. Care leavers have also benefited from the introduction of a dedicated phonenumber that offers support with isolation and anxiety.
- Adoption is considered carefully and promptly for all children who are unable return home to their birth families who need a permanent

alternative. Senior managers, through regular oversight, assure themselves that children receive an effective service from the regional adoption agency.

- Care leavers are supported well by dedicated personal advisers who work hard to keep in touch with them and offer the support they need, when they need it. This includes those care leavers who are over 21 and, in some cases over 25. The teams working with care leavers are strengthened by working partnerships with the Department for Work and Pensions, housing, adults services and adult mental health.
- Ofsted noted that, young people in more complex situations are prioritised but their written plans are not routinely updated when risks or situations change, however it was acknowledged that work is already happening to address this with senior leaders working alongside care leavers to establish the best way to capture modified plans in a meaningful way.
- It was noted that housing options for care leavers are currently limited with some care leavers housed in temporary accommodation, including a very small number living in bed and breakfast arrangements on an emergency basis. Ofsted have noted that oversight of these arrangements is not sufficiently robust.
- Ofsted noted that senior leaders have responded to the lack of housing options through internal and external commissioning that involves corporate and business partners. Dedicated flats for care leavers, partnership arrangements to increase the number of children’s homes and residential beds at the Harbour are all nearing completion.
- The local authority’s offer to care leavers is underpinned by what care leavers say they need most, it is explained and accessed effectively. An increasing number of care leavers are at university, in college or have a job. An apprenticeship scheme within Dorset Council, for which care leavers are guaranteed interviews, is a good example of how young people are supported by their corporate parent.

13.6 The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: summary

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
<p>Headlines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders at all levels and elected members recognise and prioritise the needs of children. An ambitious transformation programme is well underway and is having a positive impact on the experiences and progress of children. • Innovative approaches such as the Harbour project, supporting the development of the care leavers’ charity and the purchase of affordable 	

accommodation, accompanied by a forensic focus on practice, are improving the lives of children and increasing staff satisfaction.

- In a time of scarce resource and additional demand, children have an increasing range of options as a result of imaginative and cohesive commissioning.
- The blueprint for change and the move to a strengths-based locality model of delivery has reaped significant rewards for children and their families. Senior leaders have made rapid and sustainable progress, despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. In some cases, the challenges of the pandemic have created fresh opportunities to build trust and cohesion with partners, and this has increased the pace of change.
- Council leaders had recognised that services needed to change significantly and have given backing, including financial support, to establish the new ways of working.
- Senior leavers know their strengths and weaknesses well. They have a comprehensive understanding of the aspects of the service that still need to improve, and a clear strategy for improvement. The scaffolding for further improvement is firmly in place.
- Peer review, learning from research and input from other good authorities add scrutiny and depth to the extensive performance dashboards and locality meetings that identify emerging themes. Live reporting is used effectively at all managerial levels and enables an agile response if concerns arise. Ofsted noted this intense level of scrutiny is less well evidenced in the care leavers' service where the quality and recording of supervision is not completed to the same high standard. However, Ofsted noted the work to set 'gold standards' for care leavers and actions arising from the associated self-assessment clearly identify the route to improvement.
- The 'triple lock' approach to quality assurance, which adds additional layers to the moderation process to drive improved practice, is adding value. The prime focus of audits is maturing from an emphasis on compliance to a more reflective consideration of quality. Ofsted noted that the involvement of children and families in audits is less strong but learning from the experiences of children through consultation, commissioning, complaints and serious incidents is fully embedded in the development of services. Ofsted noted that participation and advocacy, have a clear focus on strengthening the involvement of all children.
- Ofsted have reported that staff described the new strategic direction and value base as 'transformational' and that they have felt well supported especially during the pandemic. Ofsted have noted that staff have maintained a tireless focus on seeing families, escalating concerns with partner agencies such as housing and health and ensuring that risks are reduced for children.
- Recruitment and retention of staff have been a priority. Social Workers now have manageable caseloads and the workforce is largely permanent.

- When skilled practitioners are identified, they are supported both financially and professionally to be suitably qualified. Work of good quality is recognised and celebrated. Professional development is tailored to core skills and also to Dorset's prime imperative, which is to focus on building resilience in families and in the communities in which they live.

13.7 What needs to improve? Inspectors have identified one area of improvement: *Oversight of arrangements when care leavers move in and out of emergency or temporary accommodation.*

14. Continuous improvement and next steps

14.1 A strong commitment to continuous improvement is embedded in services within children's services and the wider partnership. Learning from this inspection is already being incorporated into a new plan that will support the partnership in its next phase to deliver excellence for children and families in Dorset.

14.2 In accordance with the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007, the local authority is required to submit an action plan to Ofsted that responds to the findings in the Inspection report within 70 working days of receiving the final inspection report (by 2nd March 2022).

14.3 Learning from the October 2021 ILACs Inspection to be incorporated into the new plan includes:

- ILACS 2021 area for improvement: strengthen oversight of arrangements when care leavers move in and out of emergency or temporary accommodation.
- Ensure that any changes to plans, including plans to temporary accommodation and the arrangements for a long-term plan, are specifically recorded and updated in the young person's Pathway Plan and electronic case record.
- Strengthen quality and recording of supervision within the care leavers' service.
- Continue work to ensure there are sufficient suitable housing options for care leavers in Dorset.
- Ensure that escalation is consistently timely when risks to children change.
- Ensure that letters to parents in pre-proceedings are consistently written in a way that is clear and accessible to them.
- Continue work to strengthen recording of reflective supervision on children's records.
- Continue work to strengthen the involvement of children and families in audits.

The plan will also include areas already identified by the partnership that will build upon the strong foundations put in place. These include:

- Implementation of enhanced reporting of Early Help.
- Continued joint work regarding Domestic Abuse.
- Continued work to ensure robust responses to sexual abuse including on-line abuse.
- Work in response to national and local strategy on violence against women and girls.
- Pathways of support and early support for children and young people at risk of anti-social behaviour.
- Implementation of substance misuse and mental health toolkits.
- Continue to build on Children's Advice and Duty and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub arrangements.
- Continued focused work on strengthening emotional wellbeing and mental health service pathways, services and responses for children and young people.
- Implementation of plans for 0 to settled adulthood.
- Further enhancing support and information for care leavers.
- Ensure the voice of children and young people is fully embedded at the heart of everything we do.
- Continuing to build on the offer of support for Dorset Council Foster Carers.
- Implementation of additional local placements for children in care.
- Continued relentless focus across the partnership in delivering excellence in practice across all services.

14.4 Progress of the new plan will continue to be monitored through the robust and embedded methods in place both within children's services and the partnership. These include leadership and oversight of the plan by the partnership's Strengthening Services Board, Quality Assurance and Performance Management Frameworks and by seeking continual feedback from children, young people and families.

14.5 Further reporting to Elected Members will continue through the Council's senior leadership performance dashboard. The annual Self-Evaluation of children's services will be prepared early 2022 and will also be reported to Elected Members.

Recommendation:

Cabinet is asked to note and consider Ofsted's published report of the recent Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services in Dorset and the next steps.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Inspection of Dorset local authority children's services

Inspection dates: 27 September to 8 October 2021

Lead inspector: Steve Lowe, Her Majesty's Inspector

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

Services for children and families in Dorset are of good quality and are continuing to improve. The senior leadership team is an impressive and successful force for change, with a proven determination to give every child in Dorset a brighter future. Strong political and corporate commitment to the improvement agenda supports an environment where good social work can flourish, and children are increasingly better protected.

The pace and effectiveness of change in the context of a local government reorganisation in 2019, resulting in a boundary change and the creation of Dorset unitary authority, and the COVID-19 pandemic, are particularly impressive. Senior leaders have taken the challenges presented by the pandemic as an opportunity to engage partners more firmly in the wider safeguarding agenda and in the vision of making Dorset the best place it can be for children to thrive. A stable, permanent workforce and manageable caseloads enable constructive relationships to be built with children and families. Staff take pride in their work. Good work is expected, delivered and celebrated. Several ambitious projects, including some still at an early stage, have already had a positive impact on children. The targeted youth work offer from the Harbour is already safeguarding children who are on the edge of care and at risk of being exploited. Children in care and care leavers receive the same high standard of care whether they live in or outside of Dorset, although clearer expectations of workers are needed when care leavers live in emergency accommodation.

What needs to improve?

- Oversight of arrangements when care leavers move in and out of emergency or temporary accommodation.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: good

1. Children receive the help that they need at the right time. Families benefit from a broad range of early help services, tailored to their needs and in the places where they live. Partnership working is well developed, offering a range of options that build on family's strengths and which can be provided without delay. The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have been turned into opportunities to develop stronger relationships with partners, schools in particular, to make safeguarding children everybody's business.
2. The ChAD (children's advice and duty service) model helps families to receive the right support at the right time by clarifying the concerns with referrers and activating local solutions whenever possible. The 'front door' provides a calm, well-organised service, where timely and appropriate decisions are made about how to protect and support children most effectively. Parental consent is obtained if appropriate, and families are not subjected to statutory intervention unnecessarily. However, when children are, or may be, at risk of significant harm, social workers investigate quickly, with the support of key partners, including the police, when needed.
3. Since the Ofsted focused visit in October 2019, when inspectors looked at arrangements for children in need or subject to a child protection plan, children have received a more consistently good service. The effective application of thresholds at key decision-making points is underpinned by the regular professional discussions held by advanced practitioners and their managers. In parallel, a well-structured suite of multi-agency meetings prioritises those children who are most at risk from domestic abuse and exploitation in all its forms. As a result, shared intelligence is used well to identify and disrupt networks of abusers when children are missing from home or otherwise vulnerable.
4. Child protection concerns are investigated appropriately. In their investigations and ongoing work with families, social workers make good use of research, specialists and each other to identify childhood trauma and how best to support victims of abuse. Senior managers are currently looking carefully at section 47 enquiries that do not result in a child protection plan, to ensure that children and families are not subject to unnecessary intervention.
5. Social workers and managers are now intervening more effectively and decisively in families where children have been living for some time in unsafe and neglectful situations. They escalate concerns appropriately and with confidence, enabling children to be better protected.

6. Assessments are of good quality. Parenting assessments are strong, analytical and thorough. They capture the impact of parenting from a child's point of view. They also include consideration of absent parents, whether father or mother. Importantly, restorative work starts during the assessment, enabling change to take place at an early stage. When children have no speech, social workers use triangulated observation to get a better understanding of how they communicate their feelings. The child's experience is captured in assessments and in the majority of plans, including those for disabled children. Advocates are available for children subject to a child protection plan; their independence adds authenticity to reviews when children choose not to attend in person.
7. Senior managers are acutely aware of some specific areas where practice is not universally good, and strategies to embed good practice are already proving effective. For example, there is a short delay in escalating some cases when risks change, although this does not have an impact on the ongoing work with the child and family. Similarly, quality assurance reviewing officers (QAROs) are beginning to ensure that social work reports for child protection conferences are written to children in the first person, to help them to understand why social workers are involved, although this practice is not yet consistent.
8. The pre-proceedings process of the Public Law Outline is used effectively to focus clearly on and identify what needs to change to make children safer. As a result, many children remain with their families. Some letters to parents are not sufficiently clear, but the better ones use language that parents can easily understand. Ultimately, many families are diverted out of pre-proceedings and can see where they have made progress.
9. Children are seen regularly, on their own and in settings where they feel comfortable. These arrangements continued during the pandemic, and staff were inventive in finding ways to see the children that they were worried about; this strengthened the relationships that they have with them. This creativity and care are illustrated by schemes such as giving hampers to young carers and their families at Christmas, providing them with food for several days to reduce pressure on the families and to lessen the risk of exposure to COVID-19.
10. Managers supervise workers regularly and they reflect carefully on the best way forward for families. This discussion, including a review of contingencies, is not consistently captured on the child's record, but there is no discernible impact of this on the quality of social work practice. Senior managers are already considering the best way to capture more reflective conversations.
11. Children who are missing from education and those who are home educated are tracked well. When child protection concerns are identified, they are addressed with appropriate statutory intervention. Dorset saw an increase in children being electively home educated in the context of the pandemic. However, the numbers of children being electively home educated have now

returned to pre-pandemic levels. A strong and joined-up approach between schools and children's social care in this instance keeps children safer.

12. When children return from going missing or are at risk of exploitation, their personal safety is addressed quickly. Targeted youth workers, police officers, schools and other agencies also work together to map out who else may be at risk, putting in place effective measures to disrupt and prevent further exploitation. For example, young people in Weymouth who were being targeted by unsafe adults made good use of the relationships they have with outreach workers to help to keep themselves safe. The Harbour programme, based on North Yorkshire's 'No wrong door' model, working with children on the edge of care, is fundamental to the success of these interventions. Children on the edge of care or on the edge of exploitation or criminal activity can remain in their families as a result of tenacious and trusting relationships between them, their workers and local community groups.

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers: good

13. Children come into care at the right time for them and make good progress while in care. Arrangements for children to return home are managed well, and children only return if it is safe to do so. Submissions to the family court are thorough, and include specialist assessments when necessary and well-considered recommendations. Preparedness for court and progression through the various stages are tracked effectively and supported by an experienced legal team.
14. Children in care and care leavers who live outside of Dorset receive the same support and services as those who live within the local authority area. Other local authorities are notified promptly that a child is moving to their area, and social workers ensure that services are in place to meet the child's needs before they move. Historically, the number of children in care has been higher than the places available for them to live in Dorset. An increase in the number of older teenagers remaining at home, the commissioning of new provision, the repurposing of existing council premises and brokering arrangements with local providers are beginning to resolve this issue. In the meantime, children are supported to remain in the places where they have strong attachments and that best meet their needs, including making use of 'staying put' arrangements as they become more independent.
15. Whenever possible, children in care stay in touch with their family, their brothers and sisters, those who are important to them and their pets. Family arrangements, which are often complex, are handled sensitively. Children are encouraged to pursue a wide range of hobbies and interests, from acting to academia, forest school to football. They have positive and enduring relationships with their independent visitors and receive good advocacy support.

16. Permanence arrangements are confirmed with children as soon as possible, so that they know where their long-term home will be. If this is not the plan, they know what the options are and why. Foster to adopt arrangements are commonplace, as well as two or three options being explored in parallel that take account of each child in a family and where they feel most safe and secure.
17. Most children in care live in foster families. The foster carers are recruited, supported and trained by experienced and aspirational social workers who support them to understand the trauma that children may have faced earlier in their lives. Through the challenges of several lockdowns, foster carers have been supported well to build and maintain relationships with children.
18. The virtual school is highly ambitious for children in care, wherever they live. They have an accurate analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of educational provision for children in care and care leavers. A particular strength is the impact of more aligned working in the six localities; headteachers, designated teachers and staff at the virtual school work together to secure creative and beneficial outcomes for children. At times, this has included working with school governors to reverse permanent exclusions. The pupil premium, linked to personal education plans, is used creatively. In the context of COVID-19, this support has extended to extra-curricular activities that benefit children's mental health and help to create the right environment for learning.
19. Children are helped to understand their life story at a time that is right for them. On several occasions, sensitive work to address past trauma has enabled children to settle in a permanent home after several moves, as they more fully understand what has happened to them. Specialist practitioners support colleagues to complete this work to a good standard. Children's unique identity, be it their culture, sexuality or race, is valued and explored with curiosity and care.
20. As with children who go missing from home, children in care who are at risk of exploitation are supported well. The information gathered when they return home is put to good use in developing intelligence about risks to both themselves and to other children. Key partners, including local businesses and community leaders, come together in response to the dangers of county lines. Given the transient tourist population, concerns about children arriving from other areas are addressed with the same level of urgency.
21. An increasing number of children's reviews are written directly to children, an important part of helping them to understand key moments in their lives and their story through childhood. Independent reviewing officers, known as QAROs in Dorset, have regular oversight of children's lives and the plans for their future. Children's voices, either directly or through their advocates, are clearly heard within reviews.

22. Disabled children in care receive a consistent and thoughtful service which is responsive to their needs. Communication in all its forms is well understood by the social workers in the specialist teams, with clear efforts to synchronise augmented communication techniques between home and school. Parents are engaged positively in the plans for their children, whether periods of care are for short breaks or on a longer-term basis.
23. Health assessments are of a good quality and children's health needs are well considered. Tenacious efforts by lead officers in health and social care have resulted in a marked increase in the quality and timeliness of health assessments, despite the pressures of COVID-19. The impact on children's mental health in the same context is a concerning issue in Dorset as much as everywhere else. Children have continued to receive the mental health support that they need without undue delay, which is testament to strong partnerships and advocacy. Care leavers have also benefited from the introduction of a dedicated phoneline that offers support with isolation and anxiety.
24. Adoption is considered carefully and promptly for all children who are unable to return home to their birth families and who need a permanent alternative. Senior managers, through regular oversight, assure themselves that children receive an effective service from the regional adoption agency. This includes post-adoption support that is tailored to the history of the children and their clearly identified support needs.
25. Care leavers are supported well by dedicated personal advisers who work hard to keep in touch with them and offer the support that they need, when they need it. This includes those care leavers who are over 21 and, in some cases, over 25. The move to introduce personal advisers at 16 has been well received and is allowing these relationships to develop sooner. As a result, pathway plans are increasingly constructed alongside young people. The teams working with care leavers are strengthened by working partnerships with the Department for Work and Pensions, housing, adult services and adult mental health. Young people in more complex situations, including when they are in custody, dependent on drugs and alcohol or vulnerable to exploitation, are prioritised, but their written plans are not routinely updated when risks or situations change. Senior leaders are working alongside care leavers to establish the best way to capture modified plans in a meaningful way.
26. Housing options for care leavers are limited. Some care leavers are housed in temporary accommodation, including a very small number living in bed and breakfast arrangements on an emergency basis. Oversight of these arrangements is not sufficiently robust, particularly in terms of visiting arrangements, supporting young people with everyday needs and seeking alternative housing.
27. Senior leaders have responded to the lack of housing options through internal and external commissioning that involves corporate and business partners. Dedicated flats for care leavers, partnership arrangements to increase the

number of children's homes and residential beds at the Harbour are all nearing completion.

28. The local authority's offer to care leavers is underpinned by what care leavers say they need the most. The offer is explained and accessed effectively. An increasing number of care leavers are at university, in college or have a job. An apprenticeship scheme within Dorset Council, for which care leavers have guaranteed interviews, is a good example of how young people are supported by their corporate parent. Although in its infancy, it has the potential to add new options for young people to pursue their careers.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: outstanding

29. Leaders at all levels and elected members recognise and prioritise the needs of children. An ambitious transformation programme is well underway and is having a positive impact on the experiences and progress of children. Corporate decision-making, which takes account of the views of key partners and community leaders, is informed by an in-depth knowledge of the needs of the local population. Innovative approaches such as the Harbour project, supporting the development of the care leavers' charity and the purchase of affordable accommodation, accompanied by a forensic focus on practice, are improving the lives of children and increasing staff satisfaction. In a time of scarce resource and additional demand, children have an increasing range of options as a result of imaginative and cohesive commissioning.
30. The blueprint for change and the move to a strengths-based locality model of delivery has reaped significant rewards for children and their families. Senior leaders have made rapid and sustainable progress, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In some cases, the challenges of the pandemic have created fresh opportunities to build trust and cohesion with partners, and this has increased the pace of change. Council leaders had recognised that services needed to change significantly and have given backing, including financial support, to establish the new ways of working.
31. Senior leaders know their strengths and weaknesses well. They have a comprehensive understanding of the aspects of the service that still need to improve, and a clear strategy for improvement. For example, the implementation of the domestic abuse toolkit, learning from a full review of sexual abuse in Dorset, and an increased emphasis on achieving permanence, are all starting to take effect. The scaffolding for further improvement is firmly in place.
32. Peer review, learning from research and input from other good authorities add scrutiny and depth to the extensive suite of performance dashboards and locality meetings that identify emerging themes. Live reporting is used effectively at all managerial levels and enables an agile response if concerns arise. This intense scrutiny is less well evidenced in the care leavers' service,

where the quality and recording of supervision is not completed to the same high standard. However, the local authority was fully involved in the government initiative to set 'gold standards' for care leavers, and actions arising from the associated self-assessment clearly identify the route to improvement.

33. The 'triple lock' approach to quality assurance, which adds additional layers to the moderation process to drive improved practice, is adding value. The prime focus of audits is maturing from an emphasis on compliance to a more reflective consideration of quality. The involvement of children and families in audits is less strong, but learning from the experiences of children through consultation, commissioning, complaints and serious incidents is fully embedded in the development of services. Participation and advocacy services have been recommissioned relatively recently, with a clear focus on strengthening the involvement of all children, including those placed out of county or with additional learning needs. Learning reviews are intelligently targeted and timely, with practitioners and partners included in achieving consequent improvements.
34. Staff describe the new strategic direction and value base as 'transformational'. They have felt well supported, especially during the challenges of the pandemic. They have maintained a tireless focus on seeing families, escalating concerns with partner agencies such as housing and health, and ensuring that risks are reduced for children. The recruitment and retention of staff have been a priority. Social workers now have manageable caseloads and the workforce is largely permanent, helped by the recruitment of experienced practitioners from overseas. Maintaining stability through a large-scale reorganisation has been achieved with minimal disruption due to clear, open and consistent messages from the leadership team.
35. When skilled practitioners are identified, they are supported both financially and professionally to become suitably qualified. Work of good quality is recognised and celebrated. Professional development is tailored to core skills and also to Dorset's prime imperative, which is to focus on building resilience in families and in the communities in which they live. Opportunities to learn from practice reviews, research and successful approaches in other local authorities are clearly identified and acted upon.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021

This page is intentionally left blank

Cabinet 7 December 2021 Household Recycling Centre (HRC) Vehicle Access Policy

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr L Miller, Customer and Community Services

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

Report Author: Ian Manley
Job Title: Contracts Team Leader
Tel: 01305 228669
Email: ian.manley@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

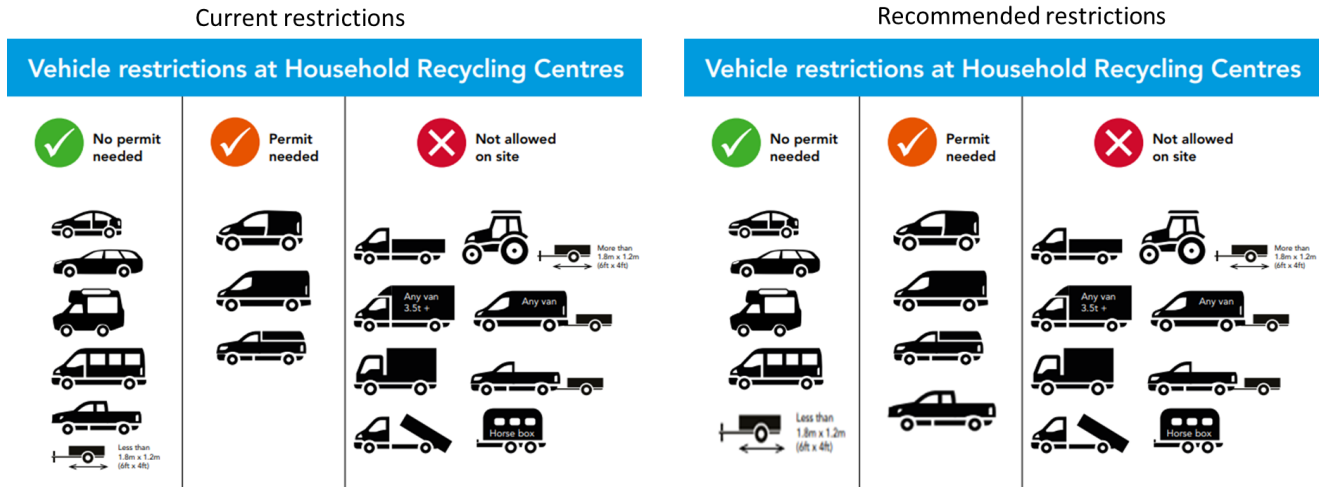
Recommendation:

That Cabinet review and acknowledge the recommendation from the [Place and Resources Overview Committee 19 October 2021](#) (Minute 27.) and approve the following changes to the Household Recycling Centre (HRC) Vehicle Access Policy: -

- 1. That sole vehicle visits are limited to 12 visits per year, this is currently unlimited.** *Sole vehicles are when there is only one vehicle belonging to a household and this vehicle requires a permit. – see Infographic 1. This vehicle cannot be commercially registered, or sign written.*
- 2. That weekend access for limited entry permits is allowed and increase visits to six per year.** *Limited entry permits are defined by the policy for where there is more than one vehicle belonging to a household or the vehicle is commercially registered, or sign written. Currently only three visits are permitted. - see Infographic 1*
- 3. That dual crew cab, 'pick up' type vehicles are added to in the 'needs a permit' list**

4. That an annual declaration for permit renewal is required rather than automatic renewal of all permits

It is anticipated that these changes will be implemented from 1 April 2022 after appropriate communication with residents.



Infographic 1. – [HRC Vehicle Restrictions](#)

Reason for Recommendation:

Evidence provided from public consultation and officer assessment have identified that the existing vehicle access policy requires refinement. The amendments proposed seek to provide a fairer approach to accessing HRCs by legitimate users to deposit their household waste alongside limiting the potential for trade waste abuse.

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Dorset Council operates a policy to manage the types of vehicles which can use HRCs to deposit household waste. This allows legitimate users to access the HRCs and to limit the potential for commercial waste abuse and minimise congestion.

1.2. The current vehicle access policy has been in operation for 11 years and has ~4,200 live permits. Vehicle ownership has changed but the policy has not evolved to reflect this. Public consultation and officer feedback indicate that some aspects of the policy do not meet the needs of Dorset Council residents.

- 1.3. This paper details the review process of the policy and recommends amendments to refresh and update the restrictions in place.
- 1.4. These changes have been recommended by the Place and Resources Overview Committee. The outcomes from this committee are detailed in section 14.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1. This policy and its requirements are directly linked to Dorset Council's waste disposal budget. Seeking only to manage recycling and waste that the council is legally required accept at its HRCs. It aims to manage and prevent the misuse by individuals depositing, commercial waste (waste from a business) at a HRCs. The costs for administering this policy are small – less than £10,000 per year and the monitoring and recording of permit use are contractual requirements of the HRC operator.

3. Wellbeing & Health

HRCs provide a safe and environmentally sound outlet for bulky household waste which needs to be removed from residents homes.

4. Climate implications

- 4.1. Managing waste as a resource is the heart of the services Dorset Council provides. HRCs provide a valuable resource to Dorset Council residents to separate, reuse, recycle and deposit their household waste.
- 4.2. Improving access to legitimate users seeks to maximise the amount of household waste that is reused, recycled or composted via the HRCs.
- 4.3. In the case of the Sole Vehicle Permit detailed in 15.1 permit holders will only have 12 visits per year which should encourage them to fill their vehicles to make the visit more worthwhile, as opposed to more frequent visits with less items in the vehicle each visit.

5. Other Implications

N/A

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW
Residual Risk: LOW

Concerns of increased fly tipping have been raised from the public consultation. Recommendation two improves access to HRCs allowing legitimate users a greater availability to access the service. This includes use at weekend and an additional three visits per year. Limiting sole vehicle permits to 12 visits per year although a reduction for unlimited access is supported by usage monitoring and consultation responses as a reasonable number of visits for most users over a 12-month period. These policy amendments are therefore not considered to increase the risk fly tipping with the Dorset Council area.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

An equalities screening assessment has been conducted and has not identified any negative impacts.

8. Appendices

[Place and Resources Overview Committee 19 October 2021 – Minute 27](#)

9. Background Papers

1. [Household Recycling Centre Access Policy Review – Consultation Response Report – July 2021](#)
2. [Surrounding Local Authority Vehicle Restrictions](#)

10. Current Policy Background

10.1. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 provides the statutory obligation for the Council to arrange for places to be provided at which persons resident in its area may deposit their household waste and each place is available for the deposit of waste free of charge by persons resident in the area ([section 51](#))

- 10.2. Most councils operate some form of restrictions policy which may include height barriers, van and trailer bans, weight restrictions and permit systems to control access to their HRCs
- 10.3. These schemes have proved successful in their aims and this has become increasingly important as the cost of waste treatment and disposal continues to rise and the temptation for traders to misuse household waste facilities increases
- 10.4. This is a challenging area to control and police as a lot of commercial waste is in nature very similar to household waste, for example waste from gardeners and independent trades people. It is difficult to distinguish from legitimate waste produced from householders, but it is more likely to be delivered via a trade vehicle.
- 10.5. Vehicle restrictions at HRCs were first introduced in January 2003 when a ban on all vans except where there were the sole means of transport in a household was enforced. This was amended in October 2009 when limited entry was permitted for some commercial vehicles and hire vans. The focus of these restrictions was and still is to tackle trade waste abuse.
- 10.6. Where permits are required under the current policy two options exist:
- a) The Sole Vehicle Permit - where this vehicle requires a permit but is only the vehicle belonging to a household, is not commercially registered and is not sign written. Permit holders can make unlimited visits on any day of the week
 - b) The Limited Entry Permit – where there is more than one vehicle belonging to a household or the vehicle is commercially registered, or sign written. Only allowed for use during weekdays (excluding bank holidays)
- Both types of permit are for Dorset Council residents only and only one permit can be issued per household.
- 10.7. Permit checking at HRCs is conducted via smart devices and not via Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR). This technology is however being investigated by officers in order to improve accuracy and to provide real time monitoring of permit use.

11. Provisions for trade waste

- 11.1. Currently Dorset Council provides outlets for trade waste at its waste transfer stations in Bridport and Sherborne and the HRC in Swanage. These services are charged for.
- 11.2. All other Dorset Council waste facilities have been assessed for similar services but have been deemed not fit to effectively provide and administer.
- 11.3. All future HRC and waste transfer stations are being designed with dedicated trade waste facilities to allow proper access, segregation, weighing and charging to take place.
- 11.4. Provision of such services is not only recognised as a commercial opportunity for Dorset council but also to provide convenient local outlets for small business to manage their waste effectively.

12. Policy Review

- 12.1. An officer working group has critically reviewed the existing policy. This has involved investigating how all neighbouring Councils implement similar restrictions ([See Background Paper 2](#)). This work identified the following issues with the existing policy:
 - a) The current policy has been in operation for 11 years
 - b) Vehicle ownership has changed but the policy has not - e.g. greater ownership of crew cab vehicles and camper vans
 - c) Lacks detail in some area and is over complicated in others – leading to challenge and escalated complaints
 - d) Is considered unfair for certain people when certain vehicle access is not permitted at weekends
 - e) The policy was ratified by a council that no longer exists and there is a target to review all existing policies within Dorset Council by 2022

13. Consultation

- 13.1. The recommendations of this paper are informed and supported by results obtained from a public consultation exercise. This ran between 28th May 2021 and 11th July 2021 and received a total of 3,289 responses.

13.2. Of the total amount of respondents 535 had used the existing scheme to access an HRC with a permit for a vehicle. Based on the total amount of 'live' permits this represents ~12% of all current permit holders.

13.3. A range of questions relating to the HRC service were asked including specific question relating to the existing vehicle permit scheme. Full details of the consultation can be viewed in [Background Paper One](#)

14. Place & Resources Overview Committee 19 October 2021

During the committee meeting the following points were noted and then discussed with the Portfolio Holder:

14.1. Clarification was requested on what was meant by a 'sole vehicle'.

- The wording for this definition has been amended

14.2. Consideration as to whether a charge could be made for more than 12 visits a year.

- Access to HRCs is legally required to be free of charge to residents within the area and therefore only a fee covering the cost of administration could be made
- The number of visits recommended (12) is considered fair based on usage and consultation data. Additional visits may be subject to abuse by commercial waste operators

14.3. Requests for support for town and parish councils and other community groups with waste issues

- This matter is considered out of scope of the report but will be addressed between members and officers

14.4. A request made for guidance to be included in the policy for waste in connection with second homes used as holiday lets

- Where permits are applicable these are only issued to Dorset Council residents whose main home is in the Dorset Council area and can only be used for the deposit of their own household waste

14.5. A future discussion around fly tipping would be welcomed

- This matter is considered out of scope of this report but will be addressed and members will be briefed in due course

14.6. Provision of weblinks on the Dorset Council website to offer useful information available in this area.

- This matter will be addressed by officers

15. Detailed Recommendations

15.1. **Recommendation 1.** That sole vehicle visits are limited to 12 visits per year, this is currently unlimited.

15.1.1. Unlimited access for sole vehicle permit holders – has the potential for abuse and anecdotally does get abused by small businesses and trades people. Evidence from enforcement activity also supports this. High usage of sole vehicle permits is regularly investigated, and permits have been revoked.

15.1.2. The council's permit database shows that of the current sole vehicle permit holders (1,901 in total) only 9% of holders use the HRCs more than 12 times per year.

15.1.3. Results from the public consultation show that 84% of respondents visit an HRC up to 12 times per year. Of these respondents who currently use permits only 11% use an HRC more than 12 times per year.

15.1.4. Limiting to 12 visits is considered reasonable for the majority and restricts the potential for abuse.

15.1.5. Limiting residents to 12 visits per year will encourage them to fill their vehicle and make the visit more worthwhile, as opposed to more frequent visits with less items in the vehicle each visit.

15.2. **Recommendation 2.** That weekend access for limited entry permits is allowed and increase visits to six per year

15.2.1. The current system only allows weekday use with the limited entry permit. There are currently 2,297 live permits. This has often been the source of complaints and is cited as impractical for working people. Allowing access at weekends makes the use of commercially marked vehicles for household waste delivery possible when working residents are more likely to have the free time to make the journey. This also spreads the traffic load and allowing for improved social distancing

15.2.2. This approach correlates well with the responses received within the consultation. With van users, identifying the weekends as the best time to use the HRCs.

15.2.3. Of those respondents who had used the limited entry permit 63% didn't feel this had met their needs. The main reasons attributed to these judgments were the limit of three visits per year and not being able to use the HRCs at the weekend.

15.2.4. Overall, this increase in availability is seen as an improvement for legitimate access to HRCs. Allowing residents to make use of van or another permitted vehicle for the occasional large load.

15.3. **Recommendation 3.** That dual crew cab, 'pick up' type vehicles are added to in the 'needs a permit' list

15.3.1. Currently only single cab pickups require a permit. Dual crew cab pickups type vehicles have large carrying capacities and are often used by commercial businesses. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest these vehicles are being used to circumvent existing restrictions. Putting them in scope to require a permit seeks to limit the impact of commercial waste abuse at the HRCs while allowing reasonable access for legitimate users. This also provide parity across all pick up classifications.

15.3.2. Consultation results do not fully support this inclusion with only 41.3% of respondents identifying Double cab pickups as vehicles

currently not requiring permits as needing one. However, of the options provided for vehicles which should require a permit they were the most frequently identified.

15.3.3. This update would also provide continuity with most of neighbouring authorities who currently require these vehicles to have permits.

15.4. **Recommendation 4:** That an annual declaration for permit renewal is required rather than automatic renewal of all permits

15.4.1. The need for permit holders to provide an annual declaration gives the opportunity to refresh and agree to the conditions of use with the service users.

15.4.2. The accuracy of the live permit holder data would also be improved, resulting in more effective monitoring of system use and a more robust data set for future policy development, providing the ability to better understand uptake and use of the system. This will also provide more robust GDPR compliance.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Cabinet

7 December 2021

The future of revenues and benefits services at Dorset Council

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr G Suttle, Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy

Local Councillor(s): N/A

Executive Director: A Dunn, Executive Director, Corporate Development

Report Author: Jim McManus
Title: Corporate Director, Finance & Commercial
Tel: 01305 221235
Email: jim.mcmanus@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status:

Part Exempt

Recommendation:

Cabinet is asked to

1. Agree that Dorset Council makes the necessary arrangements to leave the Stour Valley & Poole Partnership (SVPP) and brings these services in-house to be delivered by an expanded Dorset Council Revenues & Benefits Team as set out in the business case attached at appendix 3;
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Corporate Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy, to implement recommendation 1, including authority to give notice to terminate the Council's involvement in the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership;
3. Request that the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee oversee the future Service's integration into Dorset Council, where it can support further transformation, insight, strategic service development and performance, as set out in the business case.

Reason for Recommendation:

The creation of a single revenues and benefits service for Dorset Council will provide a better level of customer service for Dorset Council residents, with a single process and contact details, making it easier, clearer and more accessible for people to pay council tax and make benefits claims. As such, it is the best strategic fit for Dorset Council. It will give direct access and control of customer information to Dorset Council, presenting the opportunity to create a single customer account for all residents, in line with the agreed customer service strategy. Having direct control over the service will enable the Council to realise financial savings of over £730k per annum, whilst giving the opportunity to rapidly respond to changing national policies such as Universal Credit, Business Rates and the plans for health and social care.

Furthermore, the establishment of a single Dorset Council service creates the opportunity to integrate services such as customer services and the financial assessment team.

SVPP has been an effective partner in their work for Dorset Council and predecessor authorities. Looking to the future, as a unitary authority, the Council now needs to provide its own revenue and benefits service to take advantage of service integration opportunities rather than part of the service being delivered via a partnership arrangement.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Dorset Council is responsible for setting the revenues and benefits policies which apply to Dorset residents – there are no current proposals to change those policies. This paper is about ensuring the effectiveness of the administration of those policies.
- 1.2 While the responsibility for Dorset Council's Revenues and Benefits Services currently sits entirely with Dorset Council, the day to day administration is split, with the in-house service delivering the administration for the areas of Purbeck, West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland and with the areas of East and North being provided under a collaboration agreement with Stour Valley and Poole Partnership. The latter is hosted by BCP Council following Local Government Reorganisation and is governed by a partnership board.
- 1.3 Between them, Dorset Council and SVPP teams process over half a million transactions for Dorset residents each year:
 - 305,000 council tax bills
 - 104,000 business rate bills
 - 88,000 housing benefits claims
 - 26,000 council tax support claims
- 1.4 Having two delivery methods for an administrative activity is unusual and brings about an inherent complexity and risk. It can cause confusion for Dorset Council residents as to which administrator they should contact.

This is a legacy of the arrangements of the predecessor district and borough councils.

- 1.5 When Dorset Council and BCP were established as unitaries in 2019, the majority of services were set up separately for each council. For example, there are separate finance departments, HR departments and IT departments, adult care and children's care services are separate as are the majority of place based services. However, for some services shared arrangements have continued where there it makes sense to do so on grounds of scale and/or synergy. (e.g. public health, safeguarding and archives).
- 1.6 The review of the arrangements for the administration of revenues and benefits services has been delayed by the pandemic, but it is now time to consider the most effective way of administering revenues and benefits in the future.
- 1.7 Broadly, there are two options under consideration; an in-house model, where Dorset Council administers the revenue and benefits service for all Dorset Council residents, or a jointly governed partnership model hosted by BCP Council.
- 1.8 The partnership option under consideration is an extension of the existing SVPP model, where BCP Council would administer the revenues and benefits service for all Dorset residents, with oversight provided by a joint committee of Dorset Council and BCP councillors.
- 1.9 Each option has its merits and risks. The SVPP option suggests economies of scale by creating a larger service for the whole of Dorset, whilst the Dorset Council option has the advantage of control and flexibility, enabling it to rapidly adapt and integrate with other Dorset Council services to improve the customer experience whilst making considerable savings.
- 1.10 In order to identify a preferred option for Dorset Council, each proposal was assessed against the following criteria:
 - Strategic fit – does it align with Dorset Council's operating model, vision for customer experience and other plans and strategies?
 - Cost effectiveness and value for money
 - Responsiveness - ability to adapt quickly to changing national policy and local circumstances
 - Opportunity for further benefits through service integration and transformation.
- 1.11 Assessing the proposals against each of the criteria identifies that the preferred option for Dorset Council is to transfer the work currently undertaken by SVPP into Dorset Council. The existing Dorset Council team can be quickly scaled up to absorb the additional administration, processing and customer demand.

- 1.12 The transfer is estimated to save Dorset Council over £700k per year but, more importantly, it will enable all Dorset Council's residents' data to be brought together in GDPR compliant systems, which is a key plank in the development of the Customer Account.
- 1.13 Both Dorset Council and BCP, working with SVPP, have credible track records of managing change and service delivery. We are confident that by establishing a programme managed working group we will effectively manage the smooth transition and disaggregation process.
- 1.14 On 10th November 2021, the Place and Resources Overview Committee received and considered a report which set out the details and recommendations of the future provision of revenues and benefits service for Dorset Council. Councillors considered the issues arising from the report and discussions were had (Overview notes can be seen in Appendix A).
- 1.15 It was noted that the additional words 'and performance' would be included in recommendation 3, and the report was then proposed by Cllr. V Potheary seconded by Cllr. C Jones.
- 1.16 The Executive Director of Corporate Development, having heard the debate, confirmed the 'minded to' Recommendation to Cabinet, under delegated powers on behalf of the informal meeting of the Place and Resources Overview Committee.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 Financial implications are set out in this paper and in the appendices and alongside the options available for future service delivery.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

- 3.1 Careful consideration needs to be given to staff wellbeing throughout this process. Both SVPP and Dorset Council revenue and benefits staff having been working under considerable pressure throughout the pandemic, supporting local businesses through Covid business grants, in addition to their regular duties.
- 3.2 Uncertainty about the future arrangements for revenues and benefits has brought added anxiety to a number of staff in both organisations.
- 3.3 It is important to recognise that the proposals considered in this report are in no way an indication of poor performance of either the SVPP or the Dorset Council teams. Both are highly regarded. The issue at hand is which arrangements provide the most effective administrative arrangements for Dorset Council in the future.

4. Climate implications

- 4.1 None relevant to this decision.

5. Other Implications

5.1 None.

6. Risk Assessment

6.1 There is a level of risk inherent in the transition arrangements for both options being considered in that the loss of key personnel may result in a deterioration in operational performance which could impact on customers. This risk will be mitigated through careful operational management.

6.2 Beyond that, the level of risk of the future service provision is entirely dependent upon the option chosen for the future delivery of the revenues and benefits service. Officers' assessment is that the in-house option has a lower risk profile in that it strongly aligns to Dorset Council's strategic priorities.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been considered for bringing the revenues and benefits service in-house and is deemed unnecessary at this stage. The option to scale up the current Dorset Council operational service is considered to have minimal impact on employees or customers.

7.2 Once a decision has been made and the future service is designed, taking into consideration Dorset Council's customer promise and customer principles, an EqIA will be completed to ensure that our future customer access provision is equivalent or improved.

7.3 There is no risk to employment at Dorset Council within the recommended option. BCP Council working with SVPP will be required to complete their own impact assessments in terms of current employment and future structures to support their own service delivery.

7.4 A future working group will consider impact on both councils' employees once a decision is made and consult with employees and relevant trade unions on any necessary change.

8. Appendices

1 - Dorset Council Customer Service Strategy

A – Extract of note of Informal meeting of the Place and Resources Overview Committee on 10th November 2021

2 - Dorset Council in-house proposal for future service delivery
(Not for Publication)

3 - SVPP proposal for future service delivery (Not for Publication)

9. Background papers

None

10. Service contexts, history and earlier business cases

10.1 Prior to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Dorset, revenues and benefits services were carried out by three organisations:

- Stour Valley and Poole Partnership (SVPP) – services for Borough of Poole, Christchurch, East Dorset, North Dorset. This service was hosted by the Borough of Poole, which acted as the employer.
 - Westwey Partnership – services for Weymouth & Portland, West Dorset and Purbeck. This service was hosted by the Dorset Council Partnership (DCP).
 - Bournemouth Borough Council – services for Bournemouth Borough Council.
- 10.2 SVPP and Westwey both had their own Joint Committees to which officers reported as part of the respective partnerships’ governance arrangements. These arrangements for Westwey ended with the establishment of Dorset Council and the service assimilated into the Finance & Commercial division of the Council. The SVPP Joint Committee arrangements continued due to the Partnership basis of service delivery, and those members involved have been strong advocates of the service. Ultimately, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy has responsibility for and political oversight of revenue and benefits administration for all Dorset Council residents.
- 10.3 As part of the work to prepare for reorganisation of local government in Dorset, a business case was established to consider the establishment of a pan-Dorset revenues and benefits service. A competing case also went into development for each unitary council to deliver its own services but, given that the new councils had yet to be established and would need to make their own decisions about future service delivery, work was unable to progress at that stage. The Shadow Councils also agreed that during their first year of business, they would not take any decisions that would disrupt existing partnership working.
- 10.4 Following this, the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded and colleagues in revenues and benefits services across Dorset (and nationally) were very heavily involved in the business grants distribution work and in the delivery of high levels of support to individuals and businesses across Dorset, meaning it was not feasible to consider reorganisation until now.
- 11. Local government reorganisation (LGR)**
- 11.1 LGR established two new, unitary councils in Dorset on 1 April 2019. The result was that the partnerships delivering revenues and benefits services did not align with the Dorset Council and BCP Council boundaries.
- 11.2 Since that date, SVPP Joint Committee has given its approval to expand SVPP to incorporate services for former Bournemouth Borough Council customers, meaning that all of BCP Council’s customers will ultimately be serviced by the same team. This work has not yet been completed and brings an additional complexity to critical path were a pan-Dorset service chosen.

11.3 Meanwhile, the fragmented nature of the current arrangement continues to cause complications and delays with key projects such as the alignment of all of Dorset Council's predecessor databases into a single system. Officers are required to work on multiple systems with different rules and processes determined by the sovereign Councils for what is currently an indeterminable period.

12. The case for change and options available

12.1 The "do nothing" option is still technically available to Dorset Council and we could continue to have East and North Dorset customer business transacted within SVPP, whilst directly providing services to other Dorset Council residents. However, having two delivery methods for an administrative activity is unusual and brings about an inherent complexity. This is a legacy of the arrangements of the predecessor district and borough councils. The current arrangements will not deliver any further efficiencies and potentially inhibit the transformation ambitions of the Council.

12.2 There are therefore two options under consideration; an in-house model, where Dorset Council administers the revenue and benefits service for all Dorset Council residents, or an arms-length model, where an external party provides the service on behalf of Dorset Council.

12.3 Key characteristics of the Dorset Council proposal are:

- Transfer of arrangements for East and North customers from SVPP to Dorset Council
- Scaling-up of the current Dorset Council Service to accommodate this
- Increase staffing by 22 posts, net base budget savings of £731k compared with current cost of operations (including net contract fee paid to SVPP)
- Future operating model determined and designed by Dorset Council and the needs of its residents and businesses
- No initial transformation work to complete, single dataset and PCR15-compliant system
- Database, processes and procedures already aligned, recruitment and training progresses as early as possible
- Potential to rapidly integrate the service into other Dorset Council support services. This will facilitate the development of a customer account and customer services to give residents a single 'council' experience, as well as bringing greater insights into residents and their needs. This integration may bring further cost efficiencies.

12.4 The partnership option under consideration is an extension of the existing SVPP model, where BCP would administer the revenues and benefits service for all Dorset residents, with oversight provided by a joint committee of Dorset Council and BCP Councillors.

12.5 Key characteristics of the SVPP proposal (Option 3A as detailed in Appendix 3) are:

- To bring together a pan-Dorset revenues and benefits service through the SVPP
- The SVPP to support each council's transformation objectives by working alongside their customer services departments to automate processes and gather and process data to support service provisions for residents
- To be able to provide all revenues and benefits functions and, subject to a business case and further investment, provide specialist services as requested that blend with the service, such as social services financial assessments and all areas of sundry income collection and administration
- To deliver, inclusive of additional expenditure by each council of customer access services, annual savings of £1.5 million – split in line with an agreed cost share agreement (Dorset Council's share would be approximately £690k)
- These savings could be achieved within the partnership, with the potential to support the further transformation savings targets of each council.

13. Dorset Council Future Service Requirements

13.1 The key requirements for Dorset Council from its future revenues and benefits service have been identified through discussions with its Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and relevant Cabinet members. These are:

- a) Strategic fit – does it align with Dorset Council's future operating model, and other plans and strategies? (see Appendix 1)
- b) Cost effectiveness and value for money – does the option represent value for money for the Dorset taxpayer
- c) Responsiveness - ability to adapt quickly to changing national policy and local circumstances
- d) Opportunity for further benefits through service integration and transformation.

1. Evaluation

	Dorset Council Service	SVPP Proposal	Comment
Strategic fit with Customer Service Strategy	✓	–	Appendix 1 details Dorset Council's customer service model and ambition to integrate systems and data to provide a joined-up customer experience. The Dorset Council based revenue service will be fully compliant with this.

			<p>The SVPP proposal is based upon the partnership working directly with both councils' Customer Access Teams to deliver transformation. All face-to-face and telephony services to be provided by each council's Customer Access Teams and not through the partnership.</p> <p>The partnership would act as the 'back-office', dealing with complex enquiries and processing accounts where not automated through BCP Council or Dorset Council customer transformation. In customer terms they would consider they are dealing directly with each council through their Customer Access Teams. However, this proposal will fall short of full customer service integration.</p>
Cost effectiveness and value for money	✓	✓	<p>The Dorset Council proposal delivers base budget savings of £731k with a high degree of certainty. Initial transformation work around systems and processes is complete. The cost of the new service is a straightforward scaling-up of the existing Dorset Council service to deal with additional requirements for East and North Dorset customers.</p> <p>The SVPP proposal suggests a similar level of savings through standardisation and economies of scale.</p> <p>The Dorset Council option is likely to incur one off costs as part of exiting the partnership, but beyond the establishment of the Dorset Council model there is the potential for further savings through transformation, such as integration with the customer service model.</p> <p>The SVPP model is likely to require some investment/additional costs from Dorset Council, such as redundancy costs, that would fall to Dorset Council as a result of the adoption of a pan-Dorset model (referenced in the SVPP documentation as a post transfer piece of work) and no consideration is given to the level of</p>

			stranded costs that Dorset Council would incur and which would have to be managed out of the system.
Responsiveness	✓	–	<p>Having an in-house service gives Dorset Council absolute control over all operational and strategic aspects of the service, its work and future developments. Initial cost savings are important, but the real value comes in the integration of the intelligence that comes from a single dataset that is immediately available and nurtured to help shape future services.</p> <p>By its very nature, partnership work involves the dilution of control and therefore means Dorset Council's ability to get the best from the service is compromised. We have seen this under the existing arrangements whereby work priorities have to be agreed between partners and there is tension between competing priorities and objectives of each partner. Each change request comes with a cost because, in order to standardise, the service has inherent inflexibility of the operating model.</p>
Opportunity for further benefits through service integration and transformation	✓	–	<p>With an in-house service, it is straightforward to link with the existing and emerging transformation plan. Dorset Council's own transformation governance and programme office are well established and managed internally.</p> <p>The SVPP (BCP-hosted) model might well move in directions which do not support Dorset Council objectives or strategies.</p>

			The governance arrangements proposed under the SVPP model mean transformation cannot necessarily progress in the same direction at the same pace as the rest of Dorset Council. Everything would involve agreement and additional resourcing. SVPP has yet to integrate with the former Bournemouth Borough Council Revenues & Benefits Team and this may cause further complications in any transformation.
--	--	--	--

13.2 This high-level options evaluation identifies that the Dorset Council in-house service is the best strategic fit for the Council.

14. Cost of separation

14.1 The SVPP partnership is governed by a Collaboration Agreement (signed in April 2014) which details the action to be taken in the event of the partnership ending.

14.2 The formal requirement requires a council which is exiting the partnership to give a financial year's notice. To end the SVPP for 31 March 2023, would require notice to be given by 31 March 2022. The terms of the agreement also state that the Council that served notice shall be responsible for any costs arising as a result of the partnership ending. This approach contrasts with the principle which applied to all other services when the Unitary Councils were formed, in that as services were separated the 'stranded costs' were absorbed by the organisations which incurred them.

14.3 SVPP have indicated that ending the Partnership will place a base budget pressure on BCP Council in the region of £465,000. BCP have in turn indicated that, whilst not supportive of ending the SVPP arrangement, should it be the chosen direction of Dorset Council then in order to enable an 'amicable separation' their request is for Dorset Council to make a one off payment to BCP Council of £1,665,000. This is effectively three-years' worth of base budget pressures plus some redundancy costs. Further work and negotiation are required before Dorset Council can agree any payment. It should be noted that the costs of continuing with SVPP would also be substantial and likely also be a key decision for Cabinet, but they cannot be estimated yet because the detailed work required is not clear from the business case. Even at some £1.665m, the payback period of the in-house option is acceptable at 2.27 years.

14.4 BCP will be considering the future of their Revenues and Benefits service in January 2022 and, depending on the respective Cabinets' decisions, the intention would be for Dorset Council and BCP Council to end the

partnership on an amicable basis following a timetable which supports both councils' transformation plans and with an approach to cost minimisation which is in the best interests of BCP and Dorset Council taxpayers.

15. Summary and conclusions

- 15.1 Dorset Council recognises the value that all partnership arrangements - and the colleagues working in them - have brought to the respective councils, customers, taxpayers and residents of Dorset up to this point. But the arrangements are no longer suitable for Dorset Council's future journey and the aspirations that we have articulated in our various strategies for customers, staff and residents. Acknowledging SVPP's own view that the current model is unsuitable for the future, we must seek change.
- 15.2 There are two options for Cabinet to consider. These are summarised in this document and are supported by detail set out in Appendices 2 and 3.
- 15.3 The move to a Dorset-wide service could lead to some financial savings for both Dorset Council as well as BCP Council. However, these could also be obtained, to some degree, were the East and North Dorset areas to be integrated into the existing Dorset Council service.
- 15.4 Ultimately, the return of the full service to Dorset Council control would allow for greater integration with the corporate whole and other tangible (and intangible) advantages that could not be achieved with an external provider.
- 15.5 Whichever option is chosen, the Corporate Director for Finance & Commercial reporting to the S151 Officer will be the lead officer for Dorset Council. If the in-house option is chosen, he will lead the implementation programme with the support of the revenues and benefits team, DC head of customer service and colleagues from SVPP. If the SVPP option is chosen, he will be best placed to be the client lead for Dorset Council. For either option chosen, it is recommended that Scrutiny maintain oversight of the transition and subsequent implementation.

Aidan Dunn

Executive Director of Corporate Development

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Transforming the Dorset Council customer experience

1. Dorset Council has a customer access strategy which articulates how the council will engage with its customers in the future. Our plan is to make a real difference to the lives of all our customers, businesses and visitors by providing easy access to services, consistent service standards and an excellent experience.
2. The Council has engaged with Dorset residents and is using their insight to develop our vision and platforms. We adopted a [Customer Promise](#) in 2020, which was co-created with our people panel and our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has agreed the principles and outcomes to shape a future 'one Dorset Council front door' operating model.
3. Our principles for customer transformation include our commitment to:
 - provide a single front door approach and the use of Dorset Direct (our central customer services team)
 - invest in libraries to further develop its role as a community service
 - improve the customer experience and
 - enable services to deliver savings in their areas.
4. These have now been translated into our strategic outcomes:
 - **Working together:** cross service and partnership working to provide capacity to support those with complex needs or vulnerability
 - **Improved customer experience:** embedding positive customer experience at the heart of everything we do
 - **Consistent, easy to access services:** delivering more at the first point of contact through a *one council front door* approach
 - **Establish One Dorset council hubs:** integrate services with libraries and other community spaces to provide a multi-service offer.
 - **Digital customer first:** our customers' choice helping us reduce demand and cost through innovative 'once & done' service design
5. Our transformation plans are fully supported by SLT and Councillors having received recent presentations. The developing strategy will demonstrate how plans contribute towards meeting council plan priorities whilst also aligning with our digital, enabling communities, equality & inclusion and library strategies. Customer transformation underpins how we will operate in the future, including our new Customer Platform, which will drive our website, customer account functionality and will be our customer management solution.

6. All future Dorset Council service transformation or convergence must embed the transformation principles within system, solution, process or structural changes supported by our digital, change and customer transformation business partners. This is to ensure that when customers contact us, we resolve all low-medium complexity enquiries via our customer platform either by self-serving or assisted through Dorset Direct or our Libraries.
7. Our data strategy is also developing, which will ensure that we use and share data in the most efficient way, which will also require our services and systems to be much more joined up in the future.
8. Integration of systems, processes and data will be key to everything we do in future and as the revenues and benefits services touches a huge number of customers in the Council area, the inclusion of these services in this work is essential.

Extract of notes of Informal meeting of the Place and Resources Overview Committee on 10 November 2021

The future of revenues and benefits services at Dorset Council

The Chairman noted that there were two exempt appendices associated with the report and that the committee would need to resolve to move into exempt business if councillors wished to discuss these.

The Executive Director of Corporate Development introduced a report which set out proposals for the future provision of revenues and benefits services for Dorset Council. The report recommended the creation of a single revenues and benefits service for Dorset Council, to provide a better level of customer service for residents, with a single process and contact details, making it easier, clearer and more accessible for people to pay council tax and make benefits claims. A short film was shown to the committee to set out the vision for future customer service.

Consideration was given to the issues arising from the report and during discussion the following points were raised:

- Opportunities to integrate council services
- Discussion around potential timescale for operation on single customer accounts – work was ongoing and timescales would be managed through the transformation programme
- A request was made for a councillor webinar on this area of work
- A point was noted that Overview should keep a watch on debt recovery issues in the council
- Arrangements for scrutiny of the revenues and benefits service moving forward. Recommendation 3 in the report recognised the role of the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee in this area and it was noted that performance could be incorporated into recommendation 3
- The movement of the eastern and northern areas onto the new system would be carefully managed
- Further discussions would need to be held, including around financial implications, once the report had been through the democratic processes.

It was proposed by V Potheary seconded by C Jones

It was noted that the additional words 'and performance' would be included in recommendation 3.

'Minded to' Recommendation to Cabinet

1. Agree that Dorset Council makes the necessary arrangements to leave the Stour Valley & Poole Partnership (SVPP) and brings these services in-house to be delivered by an expanded Dorset Council Revenues & Benefits Team as set out in the business case attached to the report at appendix 3;

Appendix A

2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Corporate Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy, to implement recommendation 1, including authority to give notice to terminate the Council's involvement in the Stour Valley and Poole Partnership;

3. Request that the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee oversee the future Service's integration into Dorset Council, where it can support further transformation, insight, strategic service development and performance, as set out in the business case.

The Executive Director of Corporate Development, having heard the debate, confirmed the 'minded to' Recommendation to Cabinet, under delegated powers on behalf of the informal meeting of the Place and Resources Overview Committee.

Cabinet

7 December 2021

South Walks House – Options for Future Use

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr T Ferrari, Economic Growth, Assets & Property

Local Councillor(s): Cllr Andy Canning, Cllr Les Fry

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

Report Author: Ade Adebayo

Title: Interim Service Lead Assets and Property

Tel: 01305 221338

Email: ade.adebayo@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Part Exempt

Recommendation:

That Cabinet:

- i) Agree that Dorset Council should grant a 20-year lease to Dorset National Health Service (NHS) institutions for use of South Walks House for clinical and office use on terms to be agreed by the Executive Director for Place in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Assets and Property.
- ii) Note that the governing boards of the various NHS institutions planning to move into South Walks House will be making their decisions in February and March 2022.
- iii) Agree that officers should immediately commence discussions to proceed with the second-ranked option should the NHS institutions decide not to proceed with the lease or are unable to come to a decision by the 31 March 2022.

Reason for Recommendation:

The investigation into and analysis of options for the future use on South Walks House has been detailed and exhaustive. This has involved taking advice from specialist consultant firms on each of the options considered and assessing and ranking the options to establish which one would be the most financially advantageous to the Council after also taking into consideration the

wider economic and social benefits of the recommended option. It is believed that the proposed use by the NHS for a combination of clinical and office purposes, which provides a central and easily accessible location for the NHS, allows it to widen its service provision for Dorset's residents, whilst providing the best financial return to the Council.

1. Executive Summary

The Cabinet agreed an office strategy for Dorchester at its meeting of the 6 April 2021, which included the principle of consolidating most of the Council's office requirements at the County Hall Campus site. This decision made South Walks House and some other offices in the town surplus to the Council's requirements.

Regarding South Walks House, Cabinet requested that in addition to seeking planning permission for residential use, further exploration and investigation of alternative uses be undertaken.

The outcome of these further investigations is set out in this report. This has involved establishing a shortlist of options for detailed appraisal against criteria considered important for this decision. The criteria used – financial evaluation, economic impacts, and time are consistent with the Council's priorities of Economic Growth, Strong and Healthy Communities and its core values of spending time and money wisely. The four shortlisted options are:

- Disposal for a capital receipt
- Use of South Walks House by a group of NHS organisations for clinical and office use
- Conversion by the Council as private rented residential accommodation
- Conversion for hotel use

This report recommends use by NHS organisations as the best outcome of the options assessed as it provides both the best social and economic impact as well as the best financial return to the Council.

Details of the options appraisal undertaken for this report are set out in the confidential report attached as Appendix 1.

2. Financial Implications

Financial performance was given the greatest weighting out of the evaluation criteria used for assessing the options. The financial implications of each of the assessed options are detailed in the report. The Council currently incurs approximately £316,000 per year while the building remains unoccupied in rates and running costs. The ability to transfer responsibility for the building to a third party not only saves the current budget expenditure but also will bring additional income into the Council's budget.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

This report recommends that South Walks House should be leased to the NHS organisations that are proposing to use it to expand clinical capacity in Dorset. In addition to the direct health benefits this additional capacity brings, the economic impacts will also contribute to general well-being of the community.

4. Climate implications

The Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency and is committed to taking direct action to reduce the negative environmental impact of our services.

The recommended option retains use of the existing building, which contributes to overall sustainability. In addition, South Walks House is a relatively new building which was designed and built as a sustainable building that integrates passive design with low energy technologies. The mechanical and electrical services installations maximise natural ventilation, natural day lighting and minimise energy consumption and the associated production of CO2 emissions.

5. Other Implications

Establishing a beneficial and sustainable long-term use for South Walks House is one of key objectives of the Dorchester Office Strategy, aimed at consolidating and making the most efficient use of the Council's office buildings.

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Moderate

Residual Risk: Moderate

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

Equality impact assessments (EqIA) ensure that a policy, project, scheme or service does not discriminate against anyone and where possible equal opportunity is promoted. They enable us to consider the likely impact on different groups of people as required by legislation.

A draft EqIA for the future use of South Walks House is attached at Appendix 2. This is an initial high-level review covering all options. A more detailed assessment will be required as the project progresses.

The four options are judged mainly to result in neutral impacts with regards protected characteristics and other groups.

Potential positive impacts are identified in relation to all four options regarding socio-economic deprivation.

Additionally, option 2 (clinical/office space for the NHS) may result in some positive impact on certain groups relating to waiting times for treatment

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Options Appraisal (Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local government Act 1972)

Appendix 2 - Draft Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 3 - Sibbett Gregory Office Review (Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local government Act 1972)

Appendix 4 – Savills Review of Care and Retirement (Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local government Act 1972)

Appendix 5 – Economic Impact Analysis (Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local government Act 1972)

Appendix 6 – Weighted Ranking assessment of Options (Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local government Act 1972)

Appendix 7 – Savills Review of Residential Development Option (Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local government Act 1972)

Appendix 8 – Knight Frank Hotel Update Report (Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local government Act 1972)

9. Background Papers

Property Strategy and Asset Management Plan 2020-2024
Dorchester Office Strategy – Cabinet Report 6 April 2021

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

This page is intentionally left blank

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Template

Before completing the EQIA please have a look at the [Dorset Council style guide](#) and also use the [accessibility checker](#) to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to read.

Use the [Hemingwayapp](#) to check the readability of your document, to do this, click the edit button on the top right of the hemminwayapp screen, paste your text and the app will highlight if there are any problem areas.

Some key tips

- avoid tables and charts, if possible please provide raw data
- avoid pictures and maps if possible.
- avoid using bold, italics or colour to highlight or stress a point
- when using numbering or bullet points avoid using capitals at the beginning unless the name of something
- date format is dd month yyyy (1 June 2021)
- use clear and simple language
- where you need to use technical terms, abbreviations or acronyms, explain what they mean the first time you use them
- if using hyperlinks, make sure the link text describes where the link goes rather than 'click here' Please note equality impact assessments are published on the Dorset Council [website](#)

Before completing this form, please refer to the [supporting guidance](#). The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to consider the equality implications of your policy, strategy, project or service on different groups of people including employees of Dorset Council, residents and users of our services and to consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality.

Where further guidance is needed, please contact the Inclusion Champion or the [Diversity & Inclusion Officer](#).

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

South Walks House – options for repurposing / redevelopment

The proposals are aligned with the [Property Strategy and Asset Management Plan](#), and the [Dorchester Office Strategy](#), which in turn is aligned with the [Dorset Workplace](#) hybrid working model.

This is an initial EqIA, containing high level information and analysis. The EqIA will be revisited and further developed on identification of a preferred option.

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

New policy, project, strategy, project or service

~~Review of policy, project, strategy, project or service~~

~~Other (please explain)~~

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

~~Internal (employees only)~~

External (residents, communities, partners)

~~Both internal and external~~

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

The cabinet paper to which this EqIA is associated details four options with regards the future of South Walks House, and makes recommendations taking into account commercial, social and economic best value. The four options being:

1. Disposal for a capital receipt
2. Use of South Walks House by a group of NHS organisations for clinical and office use
3. Conversion by the Council as private rented residential accommodation
4. Conversion for hotel use

The cabinet paper provides an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal

On [6 April 2021 cabinet](#) considered and approved the [Dorchester Office Strategy](#), including the principle of consolidating the council's office requirements on the County Hall campus, and, as such, the vacation of South Walks House, with occupying teams being relocated to County Hall, and the customer access point relocated to Dorchester Library and Learning Centre.

The cabinet decision also directed officers to continue to explore and investigate alternative uses for South Walks House so as to ensure that the council achieves best commercial, social and economic value. This has resulted in the four options referenced above.

A previous EqIA ([Dorchester Office Rationalisation EqIA](#)), prepared as part of the development of the [Dorchester Office Strategy](#), considered the impacts of vacating South Walks House.

Evidence gathering and engagement

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

For this initial EQiA the following data and evidence has been considered:

- Economic development data
- Hotel economic impact assessment
- Anecdotal evidence from NHS colleagues concerning impact of pop up Orthopaedics Clinic currently located at South Walks House, and future potential clinical space.

Further, more detailed analysis in relation to the preferred option will be undertaken once identified.

7. What did this tell you?

Initial data gathering has particularly highlighted the positive economic impacts of options 2, 3 and 4 on the Dorset Council area. All with likely associated positive impacts on economic sustainability and growth in Dorchester town centre, especially in the context of COVID recovery.

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

Engagement has occurred with key stakeholders in relation to each option. This includes internal stakeholders including finance, legal and economic development colleagues. External stakeholders including NHS representatives, hotel representatives, and independent estate agents.

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

Not at this stage

Is an EQIA required?

Not every proposal will need an EqIA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqIA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqIA, please answer the following question:

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require an EqlA because (provide details):

This is an initial EqlA, containing high level information and analysis. The EqlA will be revisited and further developed on identification of a preferred option.

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.
- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different [protected characteristics](#).

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Option 1 – neutral	
	Option 2 – potentially positive	Potential to reduce NHS back logs / waiting lists through increased clinical capacity, has a potentially positive impact on age related ill health
	Option 3 – neutral	
	Option 4 – neutral	
Disability	Option 1 – neutral	
	Option 2 - potentially positive	Potential to reduce NHS back logs / waiting lists through increased clinical capacity, has a potentially positive impact on disability related ill health
	Option 3 – neutral	
	Option 4 – neutral	
	Option 1 - neutral	

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Option 2 – neutral	
	Option 3 – neutral	
	Option 4 - neutral	
Marriage or civil partnership	Option 1 - neutral	
	Option 2 - neutral	
	Option 3 - neutral	
	Option 4 - neutral	
Pregnancy and maternity	Option 1 - neutral	
	Option 2 – potentially positive	Potential to reduce NHS back logs / waiting lists through increased clinical capacity, has a potentially positive impact on pregnancy related ill health
	Option 3 - neutral	
	Option 4 - neutral	
Race and Ethnicity	Option 1 – neutral	
	Option 2 – neutral	
	Option 3 – neutral	
	Option 4 – neutral	
Religion and belief	Option 1 – neutral	
	Option 2 – neutral	
	Option 3 – neutral	
	Option 4 – neutral	
Sex (consider men and women)	Option 1 – neutral	
	Option 2 – neutral	
	Option 3 – neutral	
	Option 4 – neutral	
Sexual orientation	Option 1 – neutral	
	Option 2 – neutral	
	Option 3 – neutral	
	Option 4 – neutral	
People with caring responsibilities	Option 1 – neutral	
	Option 2 – neutral	
	Option 3 – neutral	
	Option 4 – neutral	
Rural isolation	Option 1 - neutral	
	Option 2 – neutral	
	Option 3 – neutral	
	Option 4 – neutral	
Socio-economic deprivation	Option 1- positive	Retail and residential development will contribute to wider growth / sustainability of the town centre
	Option 2 – positive	Use as office space / clinical space will increase footfall in the

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		town centre, and contribute to economic growth / sustainability
	Option 3 – positive	Residential development will contribute to wider sustainability of the town centre. Additionally, there is potential to include some affordable rented accommodation in this option.
	Option 4 – positive	Hotel development will increase footfall to town centre, including a positive impact on tourism and tourist related businesses, contributing to economic growth / sustainability
Armed forces communities	Option 1 – neutral	
	Option 2 – neutral	
	Option 3 – neutral	
	Option 4 – potential positive	Potential to address identified lack of hotel accommodation for armed forces facilities such as those located at Dorset Innovation Park

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

As can be seen in the above table, the four options are judged mainly to result in neutral impacts with regards protected characteristics and other groups.

Potential positive impacts are identified in relation to all four options regarding socio-economic deprivation.

Additionally, option 2 (clinical/office space for the NHS) may result in some positive impact on certain groups relating to waiting times for treatment.

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Jessica Maskrey

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Jessica Maskrey, Ade Adebayo, Ben Lancaster, Paul Scothern, Mark Osborne

Date of completion: 10 November 2021

Version Number: 1

EqIA review date: TBC

Inclusion Champion Sign Off:

Equality Lead Sign Off: Becky Forrester

Next Steps:

- the EqIA will be reviewed by Business Intelligence & Performance and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.
- EqIA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to [Diversity and Inclusion Officer](#)

This page is intentionally left blank

Recommendation to Cabinet from the Corporate Director of Housing

following consideration by the Licensing Committee – 17 November 2021 and their ‘minded to’ recommendation.

Park Home Fees Policy

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr L Miller Customer and Community Services

Local Councillor(s): N/A

Executive Director: V Broadhurst, Interim Executive Director of People - Adults

Report Status: Public

Recommendation to Cabinet

1. That Cabinet approves the adoption of the Park Home Fees Policy attached at **Appendix 1** to the report to Licensing Committee of 17 November 2021.
2. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director Housing and Community Safety in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Customer and Community Services to:
 - (a) Make minor amendments to the policy to comply with changes in legislation or to reflect increases or decreases in the cost of administering the functions described in the policy.

Reason for Recommendation:

The Council is required by law to adopt and publish a park home fees policy under the Mobile Homes Act 2013. In addition, The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of Site to be Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020 require the Council to have a published fees policy regarding registration to a Fit and Proper Person Register.

This policy describes how these fees will be charged and how they are calculated.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Report to Licensing Committee of 17 November 2021 including: appendices 1. Park Home Fees Policy & 2. Equality Impact Assessment.

Appendix 2 – Extract minute of Licensing Committee – 17 November 2021.

Background Papers

- a. The Mobile Homes Act 2013 – a Guide for Local Authorities on Setting Licence Fees and Mobile homes:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-homes-act-2013-a-guide-for-local-authorities-on-setting-licence-fees>
- b. A guide for local authorities on setting fees for the fit and proper person test <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-homes-fit-and-proper-person-test-guidance-for-local-authorities/mobile-homes-a-guide-for-local-authorities-on-setting-fees-for-the-fit-and-proper-person-test>
- c. [Agenda papers for Licensing Committee on Wednesday, 17th November 2021, 10.00 am - Dorset Council](#)

Licensing Committee

17 November 2021

Park Home Fees Policy

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Portfolio Holder: Cllr L Miller Customer and Community Services

Local Councillor(s): N/A

Executive Director: V Broadhurst, Interim Executive Director of People - Adults

Report Author: Richard Conway
Title: Housing Standards Service Manager
Tel: 01929 557267
Email: richardconway@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

The Licensing Committee recommended that:

1. Cabinet approves the adoption of the Park Home Fees Policy attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.
2. Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director Housing and Community Safety in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Customer and Community Services to:
 - (a) Make minor amendments to the policy to comply with changes in legislation or to reflect increases or decreases in the cost of administering the functions described in the policy.

Reason for Recommendation:

The Council is required by law to adopt and publish a park home fees policy under the Mobile Homes Act 2013. In addition, The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of Site to be Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020 require the Council to have a published fees policy regarding registration to a Fit and Proper Person Register.

This policy describes how these fees will be charged and how they are calculated.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This policy sets out the fees that the Council will charge for a variety of licensing functions for park home sites including new site licences, annual site licences and amendments to existing licences.

1.2 There are 45 licenced park home sites in Dorset with approximately 1850 mobile homes representing about 1% of the total housing stock (Census 2011 ONS). Mobile homes are considered an affordable housing option for older people with many sites providing a secure (gated) community environment, many in attractive areas of Dorset close to ANOB and other protected environments. Most park homes sites have rules that restrict occupancy to older people, 98% of residents taking part in a recent consultation stated they were over 50 years of age.

1.3 A public consultation was carried out earlier this year to seek the views of site owners and residents about the fees. 98 responses were received to the consultation which is considered a high return. Most responses were from residents, one from a resident's association and one from a site owner. It was noted that annual site licence fees (which may be passed on to residents through ground rent) disproportionately affected smaller sites and following some reanalysis the cost was adjusted down on these sites to make them more comparable to larger sites.

2. Financial Implications

The fees are calculated based on the officer time required to administer the regime, as a result the overall income received by adopting this policy will not significantly change from that of previous years. (2019/20 annual fees charged was £12,759). This policy will be reviewed on a 3 yearly basis to ensure that any profit or loss incurred in that period is reflected in future fees.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

The Council carries out several functions on park home sites that help ensure the health and wellbeing of residents. The Council works proactively with site owners to ensure that they are safe and that the amenity of residents is maintained. Activities include regular site inspections, joint visits with other agencies such as

Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, investigation of complaints, providing residents and owners with advice and guidance, administration of new site licences, the lodging of site rules and administering fit and proper person applications.

4. Climate implications

There are no identified implications for climate change associated with this report.

5. Other Implications

There are no other identified implications associated with this report.

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

The policy has been subject to consultation with the Dorset Council Equality & Diversity Action Group. No negative impacts were identified for any protected characteristic. The assessment is attached as **Appendix 2** of this report.

8. Appendices

- 1. Park Home Fees Policy**
- 2. Equality Impact Assessment**

9. Background Papers

- 9.1 The Mobile Homes Act 2013 – a Guide for Local Authorities on Setting Licence Fees and Mobile homes:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-homes-act-2013-a-guide-for-local-authorities-on-setting-licence-fees>
- 9.2 A guide for local authorities on setting fees for the fit and proper person test <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-homes-fit-and-proper-person-test-guidance-for-local-authorities/mobile-homes-a-guide-for-local-authorities-on-setting-fees-for-the-fit-and-proper-person-test>

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.



Dorset
Council

Park Homes Fees Policy
(Draft to be added upon
Council approval)



1. Park Homes Fees Policy Summary

1.1 Introduction

This policy sets out the fees for “Relevant Protected Sites” (Park Home Sites), how they calculated and reviewed in the future. Table 1 below is a summary of the fees the Council will charge. The fees are calculated with reference to published guidance to local authorities.

Table 1 Summary of the Fees charged on Relevant Protected Sites in Dorset.

New Park Home Licence	£753 (per licence)
Annual Licence Fee per site	Bands 1 - 5
Band 1 (1-10)	£81
Band 2 (11- 35)	£134
Band 3 (36-71)	£274
Band 4 (71 – 106)	£442
Band 5 (107 - 142)	£552 (Thereafter additional £114 per multiple of 35 units)
Minor Amendment of a Licence	£45
Major Amendment of a Licence (Including change of ownership, change conditions or site layout)	£156
Deposit of Site Rules	£50 (per set of rules)
Application to the Fit and Proper Person Register	£257 per application
Additional conditions applied to an applicant to be registered as a fit and proper person	£57

1.2 Exemptions to this policy

Sites exempted from this policy are those that are;

- for holiday use only
- are only allowed to have caravans stationed on them at certain times of the year
- not “relevant protected sites”

1.3 Enforcement Fees

Enforcement fees are not included in this policy. The Council may reasonably charge for the costs incurred in carrying out enforcement on Relevant Protected Sites, such as the service of compliance notices. These costs and how they will be administered are set out in the Dorset Council Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.

2. About the Policy

2.1 Setting Fees

The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 introduced a licensing system for park home sites. The Mobile Homes Act 2013 amended this legislation and allowed Councils to charge fees for certain activities including:

- Applying for a new site licence
- Transferring an existing licence
- Revising site licence conditions
- Annual licence fee.
- Depositing site rules

Site owners may recover the cost of annual fees through an increase in pitch fees if they choose to do so. Fees have been calculated with reference to guidance: [The Mobile Homes Act 2013 – a Guide for Local Authorities on Setting Licence Fees](#) and [Mobile homes: a guide for local authorities on setting fees for the fit and proper person test](#)

2.2 Publishing a policy and how the fees are calculated

The Mobile Homes Act 2013 requires Dorset Council to publish a policy for these fees and show how they were reasonably calculated. Appendix 1 in this this policy shows how the fees were calculated on a cost recovery basis. The relevant considerations include; administering applications, issuing licences, carrying out annual inspections, stationery costs, postage, and time spent consulting with other organisations, legal advice, licensing software and travel costs.

2.3 Review of Fees

Fees will be amended annually in line with other Council fees to take into account inflation. The policy and the fees contained within it will be reviewed at three-year intervals from the date of adoption with adjustments made up or down accordingly if a deficit or surplus has been accrued.

2.4 Enforcement activities not included

The Council may from time to time take enforcement action to remedy breaches of site licence conditions. Charging rates and the considerations considered do not form part of this policy.

2.5 Site Rules

Site rules are an agreed set of rules for a specific site and are made between the site owner and the residents of a park. Site rules are not the same as site licence conditions and not all sites have adopted a set of site rules. Properly agreed site rules may be deposited with Dorset Council and are made available to view upon request. A fee for depositing site rules is set out in this policy.

2.6 Fit and Proper Person

Regulations regarding a register of fit and proper persons for managing relevant protected sites was published in June 2021. All site owners or persons wishing to manage sites must apply to register by September 2021.

3. Fees

3.1 New Site Licence Fee

The Council will charge a fee of £753 in respect to a new application for a Relevant Protected Site licence. See Appendix 1 for cost calculations.

3.2 Annual Licence Fees

The Council will charge an annual licence fee based on the banding of sites in Dorset into five categories. The band range is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Banding of sites	
Number of mobile homes	Band
1-10	Band 1
11- 35	Band 2
36-71	Band 3
71 – 106	Band 4
107 - 142	Band 5
Sites greater than 142 homes: thereafter any sites larger than 142 will pay an additional amount per multiple of 35 homes	

Fees are calculated using the template shown in Appendix 1 and relate to the time taken to perform various steps in issuing the annual licence. As sites increase in size the average time taken to administer the annual site licence increases. Thus, banding site fees is a fairer way of attributing the cost incurred by the Council. The cost of an annual licence for each band is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Annual Site Licence Fee	Cost of Licence
Band 1 (1-10)	£81
Band 2 (11- 35)	£134
Band 3 (36-71)	£274
Band 4 (71 – 106)	£442
Band 5 (107 - 142)	£552
(For sites larger than 142 an additional £114 per multiple of 35 units)	

(Total fees are rounded to the nearest pound)

3.4 Charging of Annual Site Licence Fees.

The Council intends to invoice each Relevant Protected Site in August of each year. The amount payable will cover the Annual Licence Fee for the calendar year the invoice was raised in.

3.5 Transfer or Amendment of a Licence

The Council will charge two fees to amend a licence.

- A minor amendment fee of £45 will be charged where the amendment is trivial, has no material effect to the licence and does not require an officer to visit the site.
- A major amendment fee of £156 will be charged if the work required to carry out the amendment takes significantly longer to complete. This would include for example a change of ownership request, site boundary change or request to amended conditions. See Appendix 1 for cost calculations.

3.6 Deposit of Site Rules

Councils are required to deposit site rules that have been properly adopted by relevant protected sites using the prescribed process. Copies of individual deposited site rules will be provided by the Council upon request. The Council will charge a fee of £50 to deposit a set of site rules.

3.7 Application to the fit and Proper Person register.

3.7.1 About the regulations

The Mobile Homes (Requirements for Manager of Site to Fit and Proper) (England) Regulations 2020 introduced an assessment to ensure that the person responsible for managing a “Relevant Protected Site” (a park home site) is suitable and of good character, and as such does not pose a risk to the welfare or safety of persons occupying mobile homes on the site.

It is an offence for a site licence holder to operate a park home site unless they, or their appointed manager, are a fit and proper person.

3.7.2 New Applications

Forms to apply for new applications to the Register can be downloaded from the Council's website. Completed application forms should be sent to Dorset Council, Housing Standards Team, County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ

Or emailed to: caravantentparksite@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

For existing sites, applications must be made by midnight on 30 September 2021.

3.7.3 Other Applications

Site owners have 3 months to make an application if the circumstances relating to the nominated fit and proper person change in relation to an existing caravan site, for example:

- If there is a transfer of a site licence
- If there is a change in management of a site
- If a person has been removed from the register by the local authority

3.7.4 Fees

The fee accompanying every application is £257

Yearly fee for existing entry on the Fit and Proper Persons register:

- £0 standard conditions only
- £57 for each additional specific condition
- In the event the Local Authority appoint a site manager, all reasonable costs incurred in making the appointment will be recovered.

3.7.5 What will be considered

To be sure that the relevant person is a fit and proper person to manage the site, and to add them to the register, The Council will consider:

1. the owners past compliance with the site licence
2. the long-term maintenance of the site
3. whether the person has a sufficient level of competence to manage a site
4. the management structure and funding arrangements for the site or proposed management structure and funding arrangements

We also consider whether the relevant person:

1. has the right to work within the UK
2. has committed any offence involving fraud or other dishonesty, violence, arson or drugs or listed in Schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (offences attracting notification requirements)
3. has contravened any provision of the law relating to housing, caravan sites, mobile homes, public health, planning or environmental health or of landlord and tenant law
4. has contravened any provision of the Equality Act 2010 in, or in connection with, the carrying on of any business
5. has harassed any person in, or in connection with, the carrying on of any business
6. has had an application rejected by any other local authority
7. is or has been personally insolvent within the past 10 years
8. is or has been disqualified from acting as a company director within the last 10 years

We will also consider the conduct of any person associated or formerly associated with the relevant person (whether on a personal, work or other basis), if it appears that person's conduct is relevant. We will also consider any evidence/information on any other relevant matters.

Appendix 1 Calculation of Fees

All fees are rounded to the nearest pound. Detailed breakdown of time and activity is available on the Council's website.

A New Site Licence: The factors that have been considered in calculating on average a new site licence fee are as follows:

Calculation of New Licence Fee	Hours	Rate	Sub Total
Team Leader/ Senior EHO	18.5	38.29	£708.37
Housing Technical Support Officer	2.0	22.34	£44.68
			£753.05

The Annual Licence Fee: The factors that have been considered in calculating the average annual site licence fee for each band are as follows:

Calculation of Licence Band	HTO hrs	Rate	Sub Total	Management	Rate	Sub Total	Total Fee rounded to nearest pound
Band 1	3.333	22.34	£74.47	0.167	38.29	£6.38	£81
Band 2	5.583	22.34	£124.73	0.250	38.29	£9.57	£134
Band 3	11.000	22.34	£245.74	0.750	38.29	£28.72	£274
Band 4	18.083	22.34	£403.98	1.000	38.29	£38.29	£442
Band 5	22.417	22.34	£500.79	1.333	38.29	£51.05	£552

Amendments to Licences

Calculation of minor amendment fee	Hours	Rate	Total
Housing Technical Support Officer	1.6	22.34	£35.37
Team Leader/ Senior EHO	0.25	38.29	£9.57
Total			£44.94

Deposit site rules

Lodge site rules	Hours	Rate	Total
Housing Technical Support Officer	1.8	22.34	£40.96
Team Leader/ Senior EHO	0.25	38.29	£9.57
Total			£50.53

Fit and Proper Person

Fit and Proper Person Application	Hours	Rate	Total
Technical Support Officer	2.8	£22.34	£62.55
SEHO/Team Leader	4.3	£38.29	£164.65
			£227
Administration and management oversight +15% (Cost of printing, postage, management oversight, further reporting)	Total		£257

Additional specific conditions

Additional specific condition	Who	How long (Mins)	How long in hrs	Grade	Hourly rate	Total
Check site records (e.g. site licence compliance and long term maintenance of the site).	SEHO	45	0.8	13	£38.29	£29
Draft/Review Specific Condition	SEHO	45	0.8	13	£38.29	£29
Total						£57

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Before completing this EqIA please ensure you have read the guidance on the intranet.

Initial Information

Name:	Richard Conway
Job Title:	Service Manager Housing Standards
Email address:	Richard.conway@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
Members of the assessment team:	
Date assessment started:	
Date of completion:	
Version Number:	V2

Part 1: Background Information

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Existing	
Changing, updating or revision	✓
New or proposed	
Other	

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Internal (employees only)	
External (residents, communities, partners)	✓
Both of the above	

What is the name of your policy, strategy, project or service being assessed?

Park Home Fees Policy

What is the policy, strategy, project or service designed to do? (include the aims, purpose and intended outcomes of the policy)

This policy sets out the fees the Council will charge for functions under the Mobile Homes Act 2013. The policy covers park home sites also known as relevant protected sites as defined by the Act but does not cover holiday caravan or tented sites.

The policy includes fees for:

1. New Park Home Licence
2. Annual Park Home Licence
3. Amendments to existing park home licences
4. Lodging of Park Home Site Rules
5. Fit and Proper Person application

The policy states how fees are calculated and how they will be reviewed in the future.

What is the background or context to the proposal?

The Mobile Homes Act 2013 introduced a regime where Councils could charge for a number of activities, they carry out on park home sites. In order to charge fees, the council must have adopted a policy to show how they will calculate and charge these fees.

Legacy policies and public consultation: When Dorset Council was formed in 2019 four different policies novated from the legacy district and borough councils. These policies now cease to have effect and must be replaced by a new single policy for Dorset.

Fees are paid by site owners however residents may have a proportion added to their annual "pitch fee". Guidance on how annual fees are calculated allows different methodologies to be used thus allowing councils to adopt the most appropriate for their area. The four legacy policies used different methodologies and there was significant variance in how fees were calculated across Dorset. The aim of the new policy is to introduce a single method of calculation. This meaning that this year some site fees for similar sized sites will rise whilst others will fall, the overall income received from fees remains unchanged.

The actual amount potentially charged to each resident (by the site owner) for the annual fee is small (on average under £10 per year) a public consultation has been carried out to allow residents and site owners to give their views and for officers to understand the impact of the new policy.

New Regulations came into force in June 2021 mean that all owners and persons managing park home sites must now apply to be added to a "fit and Proper Person" register administered by the Council.

Part 2: Gathering information

What sources of data, information, evidence and research was used to inform you about the people your proposal will have an impact on?

Information about the park home stock and the opinions of park home residents and site owners in Dorset is primarily from historical surveys, national statistics, local knowledge and local statistics gathered in the course of administering site licences on sites.

In 2010 a survey of all park home sites in Dorset was conducted specifically looking at the condition and levels of insulation in park homes. This survey also gathered information about the age and financial status of residents living on sites.

In March 2021 a public consultation was carried out by Dorset Council seeking the views of stakeholders on the impact of the policy whilst gathering information about the age, gender and ethnicity of respondents.

What did this data, information, evidence and research tell you?

About the Sites

- There are currently 45 licenced park home sites in Dorset with approximately 1850 mobile homes situated on them. This equates to just over 1% of the total housing stock in Dorset (Census 2011 ONS).
- Mobile homes are considered as an affordable housing option for older people. Many park home sites provide a secure (gated) community environment and many are in attractive areas of Dorset close to ANOB and other protected environments.
- Virtually all mobile homes are owned by residents who rent a plot from the site owner. Legislation provides residents with security of tenure on their plot, specific protection from harassment similar to that protecting tenants in rented “bricks and mortar” properties.
- All 45 mobile home sites (defined as “Relevant Protected Sites” by the Mobile Homes Act 2013) are currently licenced by the Council.
- Each site licence contains conditions related to the maintenance of standards and safety on sites.

About the residents

- 88% of residents reported they were over 60 years of age (Site Consultation 2010 Legacy Councils). In 2021, 97.8% of residents reported they were older than 55 years of age. (Consultation 2021 Dorset Council)
- 45% were in receipt of a means tested benefit (Consultation 2010)
- 12% of respondents said they had a disability, the average for Dorset being 5% (Consultation 2021 Dorset Council)
- 96.7% of respondents to the consultation in 2021 identified as white British, 1.1% identified as “other ethnic group”

About the policy

The Council is legally allowed to recoup the cost of administering the park home licensing function. The policy brings together several legacy policies of the former district and borough councils so that will be consistency across Dorset. This means in some areas, fees may rise and in others they may fall compared to how they were previously calculated. Overall there is will be no significant change in the total income the Council receives from administering this function.

The policy also includes new requirements for site owners and the managers of sites to apply to be added to the fit and proper person register administered by the Council.

Is further information needed to help inform this proposal?

It is considered that the Council has enough information to inform this proposal.

Part 3: Engagement and Consultation

What engagement or consultation has taken place as part of this proposal?

A public consultation was carried out between 1 February 2021 until 21 March 2021. The consultation consisted of:

- An online consultation survey (also available in paper format) and larger print if requested.
- A landing page on the Council's website giving information about the consultation and a link to the survey.

A communication plan was implemented to publicise the consultation.

The lead member for Licensing provided a press release and various social media releases were made over the time the consultation was live.

Site owners were each sent a printable poster to place on site notice boards

Site owners were contacted by email and letter with a link to the survey.

All residents living in registered addresses on existing park home sites in Dorset were sent a letter informing them about the consultation.

About the consultation

98 responses were received to the consultation which is considered a high return. Most responses were from residents, one from a resident's association and one from a site owner. The consultation report is provided as an appendix to this EQIA.

Representations were received from 1 or more residents on 26 of the 45 sites in Dorset.

- There was a small majority in favour of the policy overall (all those residents opposing the policy (33) lived on sites where the site fee would rise).
- There was a majority in favour of each of the proposed fees.
- There was a majority in favour of how the annual licence fee was calculated (banding sites into 5 groups)
- Concerns were raised by several respondents opposed to the annual fee structure that smaller sites paid proportionately more than larger sites.
- It was proposed that more bands should be added to "smooth out" the impact to residents on smaller sites.

Changes to the proposed policy:

Comments were received that residents on small sites would pay more than those on large sites. As a result, the fees have been reviewed resulting in Bands 1 and 2 (smaller sites) being reduced. Band 3 remaining unchanged, Bands 4 and 5 being increased. The result of this change means that most residents will on average be charged £4 - £6 annually.

The 5 bands and the size of each band has remained the same, but the cost of each band has been amended.

How will the outcome of consultation be fed back to those who you consulted with?

It is intended that once the policy is approved and implemented a newsletter will be sent to all residents outlining the new policy and including other matters related to the management of park homes sites in Dorset.

Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment Guidance before completing this section.

Not every proposal will require an EqIA. If you decide that your proposal does **not** require an EqIA, it is important to show that you have given this adequate consideration. The data and research that you have used to inform you about the people who will be affected by the policy should enable you to make this decision and whether you need to continue with the EqIA.

Please tick the appropriate option:

An EqIA is required (please continue to Part 4 of this document)	✓
An EqIA is not required (please complete the box below)	

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require an EqIA because:

Name:

Job Title:

Date:

Please send a copy of this document to [Diversity & Inclusion Officer](#)

Next Steps:

- The EqIA will be reviewed by Business Intelligence & Communications and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- If not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.

Part 4: Analysing the impact

Who does the service, strategy, policy, project or change impact?

- If your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option. Please cut and paste the template accordingly.

For each protected characteristic please choose from the following options:

- Please note in some cases more than one impact may apply – in this case please state all relevant options and explain in the ‘Please provide details’ box.

Positive Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Appendix 2

Age:	<i>Choose impact from the list above</i>
What age bracket does this affect?	People aged 55 and over Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	Park home sites across Dorset generally have rules that permit only people above 55 to be in residence. For sites where annual fees are passed on to residents, there will be small changes to the amount charged annually. The policy has been amended to reduce the impact on those living on smaller park home sites.
Disability: (including physical, mental, sensory and progressive conditions)	<i>Choose impact from the list above</i>
Does this affect a specific disability group?	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	The policy has been assessed to have no significant impact on this protected characteristic
Gender Reassignment & Gender Identity:	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	The policy has been assessed to have no significant impact on this protected characteristic
Pregnancy and maternity:	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	See above regarding age restrictions on park home sites.
Race and Ethnicity:	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	The policy has been assessed to have no significant impact on this protected characteristic
Religion or belief:	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	The policy has been assessed to have no significant impact on this protected characteristic
Sexual orientation:	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	The policy has been assessed to have no significant impact on this protected characteristic
Sex (consider both men and women):	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	The policy has been assessed to have no significant impact on this protected characteristic

Appendix 2

Marriage or civil partnership:	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	The policy has been assessed to have no significant impact on this protected characteristic
Carers:	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	The policy has been assessed to have no significant impact on this protected characteristic
Rural isolation:	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	The policy has been assessed to have no significant impact on this protected characteristic
Single parent families:	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	The policy has been assessed to have no significant impact on this protected characteristic
Social & economic deprivation:	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	The policy has been assessed to have no significant impact on this protected characteristic
Armed Forces communities	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	The policy has been assessed to have no significant impact on this protected characteristic

Part 5: Action Plan

Provide actions for **positive**, **negative** and **unclear** impacts.

If you have identified any **negative** or **unclear** impacts, describe what adjustments will be made to remove or reduce the impacts, or if this is not possible provide justification for continuing with the proposal.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Desire for residents to be kept informed on licensing issues	A newsletter will be drafted and sent to sites post implementation of the policy. The newsletter will cover the issues raised by residents in the consultation and other ongoing issues related to park home site management.	Richard Conway	1.1.22
Keeping the policy up to date	The policy will be formerly reviewed on a 3 yearly basis	Richard Conway	September 2024

Page 140

EqIA Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA:	Richard Conway	Date:	16.8.21
Equality Lead:		Date:	
Equality & Diversity Action Group Chair:		Date:	

Next Steps:

- Please send this draft EqIA to: [Diversity & inclusion Officer](#)

Appendix 2

- The report author will be invited to an Equality & Diversity Action Group (these are held monthly - dates are available on the intranet)
- The Equality & Diversity Action Group will review the EqIA and you may be asked to make some alterations
- EqIAs are signed off and published
- The report author is responsible for ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

This page is intentionally left blank

Extract minute of Licensing Committee held on 17 November 2021.

Park Homes Fees Policy

The Housing Standards Service Manager introduced the report and the policy setting out the fees that the Council would charge for a variety of licensing functions for park home sites including new site licences, annual site licences and amendments to existing licences.

The Council was required by law to adopt and publish a park home fees policy under the Mobile Homes Act 2013. The new policy replaced 3 former district and borough council's policies and standardised how the fees were calculated and paid by sites for the services provided by the Council.

Additionally, The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of Site to be Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020 required the Council to have a published fees policy regarding registration to a Fit and Proper Person Register.

In summary the policy set fees for:- new sites, annual fees for existing sites, amendments to licences, lodging of park rules and applications for the fit and proper register.

Details of how fees were calculated were set out in the appendix to the document,

In response to committee questions The Housing Standards Service Manager advised that fit and proper person entailed DBS checks and set a range of issues that applicants needed to advise the council of. For example, any past formal actions taken on sites, planning breaches or prosecution against enforcement notices.

Once passed the applicants would be added to register, if refused they would have the right of appeal.

The government had issued guidance on how fees should be calculated and required the council to review the fees on a three-yearly basis, the starting point being 1 April 2019 and would be reviewed next year.

Members were pleased to see the fit and proper person register within the policy

Proposed by Cllr Carole Jones, seconded by Cllr Derek Beer

On being put to the vote the Licensing Committee were minded to approve the recommendations within the report.

Cllr Jon Andrews had declared an interest in the item and did not take part in the debate or vote.

The Corporate Director for Housing confirmed that under his delegated authority the decision would be determined in line with the committee's minded to decision.

Recommendation of the Corporate Director for Housing to Cabinet:

1. That Cabinet approves the adoption of the Park Home Fees Policy attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
2. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director Housing and Community Safety in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Customer and Community Services to:
 - (a) Make minor amendments to the policy to comply with changes in legislation or to reflect increases or decreases in the cost of administering the functions described in the policy.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank