

PLACE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2022

Present: Cllrs Shane Bartlett (Chairman), Andy Canning (Vice-Chairman), Jon Andrews, Barry Goringe, David Shortell and David Tooke

Apologies: Cllrs Mark Roberts

Also present: Cllr Tony Alford, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Graham Carr-Jones, Cllr Brian Heatley, Cllr Andrew Parry and Cllr Jane Somper

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

John Sellgren (Executive Director, Place), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director -Corporate Development S151), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Grace Evans (Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), Dawn Adams (Service Manager for Commercial and Procurement), Peter Hopkins (Corporate Director - Assets and Property), Antony Littlechild (Sustainability Team Manager), Steven Ford (Corporate Director for Climate and Ecological Sustainability), David Bonner (Service Manager for Business Intelligence and Performance), Wendy Carmichael (Corporate Sustainability Officer), John Miles (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice) and George Dare (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

36. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Mark Roberts.

37. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2022 were confirmed and signed.

38. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

39. Chairman's Update

The Chairman asked the Head of Legal Services to provide an update on land charges. The update is attached to these minutes.

The Head of Legal Services responded to questions from committee members and explained how the search times will be monitored and maintained.

Several members thanked the Land Charges Team.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel, and the Environment updated the committee on car parking. Committee members expressed concern around car parking machines and the loss of revenue from broken machines. A member felt the car parking charges were not competitive and they were too high.

The Chairman would raise the issues with the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee.

40. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

41. **Questions from Members**

There were no questions from members.

42. **Property Strategy and Asset Management Plan Update**

The Corporate Director for Property and Assets introduced the item and gave a presentation which is attached to these minutes. The purpose and the strategic priorities were outlined. The asset review was on track to be completed by 2024.

The committee asked questions and made comments on the update. The following key points were raised:

- There was sufficient officer resource to meet the date of the asset review.
- The council needs to be confident on the assets it owns because of the money it costs.
- There were assets with limited information due to the information transferred during local government reorganisation.
- The SWAP audit highlighted issues which have been addressed through the property and asset governance arrangements.
- There should be more consultation with local members about assets.
- Members have an opportunity for a 'ward walk' with a senior officer from the place directorate.
- Executive Directors needed to drive development and keep pressure on services to enable the asset review to be delivered on time.

- The asset management plan should have a 'RAG' system to help scrutiny monitor the plan in the future.
- A member felt the officer to desk ratio could create problems in the future.
- The council was not currently seeing a pressure on workspaces but there was a need for more collaboration space. Workspace need was reviewed on a team-by-team basis.
- Employees working from home needed a good level of broadband connectivity.

The committee agreed to create a task and finish group on agile working. It would add value to the organisation through members' own experience of agile working in their role as a councillor and reviewing how other organisations are working.

The Committee noted the intention to develop a new Strategic Asset Management Plan.

43. Commercialisation Transformation Programme

The Executive Director for Corporate Development introduced the report and outlined the four themes of the programme. A large number in the budge was for third-party spend. The council aimed to become more commercially minded and there was contract management training course and information available.

A non-committee member felt that there was a wealth of talent among members who had run successful businesses and members should be involved. There was a need for more commercial flexibility in local government.

The committee asked questions made the and comments on transformation commercialisation programme. Officers responded to questions. The following points were raised:

- The council was legally not allowed to make a profit on trade waste.
- Local authorities can create trading companies which are able to make profits.
- Dorset Council was part of a group of councils that look at opportunities for trading, however there were restrictions on trading in other local authority areas.
- The Commercial Board was an officer panel that looked at the implications and pressures of operational decisions. It was not a form of scrutiny.
- Some contract management training was specialist as well as delivered by networks.
- A webinar on contract management training and being commercially minded would be beneficial for members.

- Financial pressures on the council were created by inflation, the pay award, and an increased number of people discharged from hospital into care.
- Although senior officers were on the Commercial Board, they were there because of their commercial expertise.
- There was a further need to understand scrutiny's role in the Commercial Board.
- There was a market element in adult care bed provision, as beds could be bloc purchased or sold to private buyers.

Following the discussion, the committee requested:

- 1. An all-member webinar on contract management and being commercially minded.
- 2. That officers review/explore and produce a report on local authority trading companies for SEND and school transport provision.
- 3. That officers review the impacts of inflation and covid on transformation projects and budgetary requirement. Then provide feedback to the committee.

The committee noted the progress made and proposed future developments under the programme.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12.48pm and reconvened at 13.00pm.

Upon reconvening, it was agreed to continue the meeting beyond 3 hours.

44. Dorset Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy - Progress report Autumn 2022

The Sustainability Team Manager introduced the progress report and gave a presentation which is attached to these minutes. Key areas of progress included the public sector decarbonisation scheme, developing climate and ecological branding, webpage development, communications support, and partner engagement. The next steps included a refresh of the climate and ecological strategy and action plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel, and Environment felt that this was some of the best climate and ecological work done by councils and it was something to be proud of.

The committee reviewed the progress report and asked questions of the officers and portfolio holder. During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- There was a need to start using measures that had better value for money.
- The refreshed strategy would be used to develop the action plan further.

- There was some data being produced for every local authority area, however there were some elements of data that the council needed to improve at collecting.
- A member asked for the video shown during the presentation to be put on social media and circulated to parish councils.
- Local members were essential for raising climate and ecological opportunities in their wards.
- Wind power was a reliable source of energy.
- There would be a future piece of work on tree planting. The was a need to see what level of priority it would be.
- Grants from funding outside the council were being used for tree planting.
- If the right kind of trees are not planted, then they would not be as effective.

The Chairman asked to receive further information on how the failure to receive grant applications and the loss of experienced officers would impact on achieving the carbon neutral target.

The Chairman asked for the review on tree planting opportunities to be progressed earlier than planned.

45. **Performance Scrutiny**

The committee considered the performance dashboard and highlighted some areas of concern. These included:

- Staff turnover and the reasons for this.
- Quarterly results for RIDDOR reportable accidents.
- Staff sick leave, although this was showing a green direction of travel.
- The number of overdue subject access requests.

A statement would be brought to the committee on the number of overdue subject access requests. The Executive Director of Place would bring a report to the committee on staff sick leave, the causes of it, and what is being done.

46. Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan

Members were aware of the forward plan and have informal meetings to discuss it. There were some items raised to add to the forward plan during this committee. There was a need to prioritise items on the plan.

47. Cabinet Forward Plan

The Committee reviewed Cabinet's forward plan and identified potential items to review.

The committee would receive a statement on the 20mph policy 6 months after it has been implemented.

The Fees and Charges Policy was identified as a potential item to review.

A member raised the item Updated Children in Care Strategy and Plan which included a proposal to increase fees for foster carers. This would be raised with the People & Health Scrutiny Committee.

48. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

49. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 2.40 pm

Chairman

.....

Land Charges Service Update for the Chair of Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Chairman's announcement:

Over the last 12 months the Committee has received updates about Land Charges Service response times.

As a reminder, the Council is responsible for processing land charges search requests, which are commonly made as part of property purchases.

The government has a target of a maximum of 10 working days within which these searches should be returned to applicants.

I am pleased to inform you that for the first time since October 2020 searches are being returned to applicants within 10 working days. The average response time for October 2022 was 8 working days. 82% of searches were returned within target. This has taken a huge effort by the team, supported by colleagues particularly in planning and transformation.

To remind you of some context, I first reported to your Committee in September 2021. At that time a delay in response times had built up due to a combination of an unexpected and sustained surge in the housing market and staff vacancies, while the service was migrating to a new system. At the time of my report, vacancies had already been filled, additional staff had been employed and were being trained, and response times were published on the Council's website.

Your Committee agreed with proposed actions to reduce waiting times, and since my first report I have provided regular updates to your Committee on progress; including updates on response times, the completion of system migration, refinements to search processing and creation of a single email address for enquiries.

Shortly after my first report to your Committee in September 2021 response times hit their peak of 62 working days. However, since October 2021 response times have reduced as planned and are now at 8 working days.

The Committee may be interested to know that in each of the last 3 years we have received and processed at least double the number of searches per year than pre-Covid. We have not yet seen signs of search numbers dropping.

The team also continue to look for improvements to search processing. They work closely with the Planning Transformation Project, and in the coming months will be arranging for searches requests to be submitted and paid for online and to review, converge, and harmonise the legacy land charges registers.

I again apologise to those people whose searches were delayed. I want to thank the officers in the team and colleagues in other services for their work and support to improve response times and make improvements to the service and I hope that those buying and selling houses and the Committee are reassured by the progress that has been made. This page is intentionally left blank





Property Strategy and Asset Management Plan

Update autumn 2022

Peter Hopkins Corporate Director for Assets & Regeneration



Changes.....

- Property Strategy & Asset Management Plan adopted by cabinet in November 2020
- Restructure of Assets & Property 2021
- New Corporate Director, January 2022
- Integration of Growth & Economic Regeneration
- Backdrop of external factors Brexit, Covid, Ukraine crisis, cost of living crisis (and associated inflationary pressures)



Role of Assets & Regeneration

- Key role in supporting Dorset Council achieve its strategic priorities:
 - To underpin a financially and environmentally sustainable council
 - To become a high performing team and culture with an underpinning operating model
 - With an effective corporate landlord model and successful capital programme



Page 12

Assets & Property Purpose and Strategic Priorities



Purpose: To provide and sustain operational and investment property portfolios, that are safe, flexible and value for money: enabling the Council to deliver its policies and services to our clients, partners, and stakeholders to benefit the residents of Dorset.

Our Strategic Priorities:

Embed revenue savings and income generation targets, and improve our net financial position and enhance our value for money offer to the Council Our for the council artfolio consolidation, seek to deliver economies of scale and reduce over head costs across the property

portfolio optimising the use and opportunities of the estate

Seek to maximise A&P's contribution to Net Zero by enhancing the environmental performance of the operational estate by 2030

Enhance the user experience by implementing major capital and service improvement programmes to benefit our clients, stakeholders, and residents. We achieve our purpose and deliver our priorities by:

Establishing our operating model – ensuring clear lines of accountability and transparency for service delivery, underpinned by effective governance and risk management.

Being client driven – improving our understanding of council services and stakeholder needs, and consequently to better forecast and deliver to your requirements.

Working with the supplier market – to promote the Dorset pound and harness the capabilities of the supply chain that enables A&P to become responsive to change and transfers those risks better managed by external expertise.

Engaging effectively with our stakeholders and partners – working collaboratively within and across DC and with other public authorities and voluntary, community and faith-based organisations to identify and deliver asset-based opportunities.

Managing performance – developing and reporting on our key performance metrics that demonstrate delivery against the key principles in the Property Strategy and Asset Management plan 2020 and any other strategic priorities for the council and our stakeholders.

Embracing Dorset's unique environment- supporting the Climate strategy and protecting the local environment by identifying, developing, and embedding sustainability at the heart of decision making to support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021 and our commitment to become a carbon neutral County by 2050.

New Strategic Asset Management Plan

- South West Audit Partnership audit of existing PSAMP and plans for new SAMP
 - "The current Property Strategy and Asset Management Plan (PSAMP) does not support services to achieve the Council's ambitions within the Dorset Council's Plan 2020/24."
 - "There are satisfactory building blocks in place for the development of the new SAMP to ensure that it supports services to achieve the ambitions within the Dorset Council's Plan"
- Development of new SAMP by May 2023, extensive engagement planned with senior managers and leaders.



Page 14

Action 1 **Operational Asset Reviews**

- Asset review process and timetable in
- Asset reviews commenced in relation to operational asset categories engagement with services
 - Programme of rapid asset reviews to report in spring 2023



Action 2 Service Property Strategies

- Series of engagement sessions with Corporate Directors to understand service strategies in autumn 2021
- Ongoing engagement, but dependent on services sharing forward operational plans, operating models and property requirements.



Action 3 Agile Working

- Dorset Workplace ways of working implemented.
- Council Plan 2023-24 A&R lead hybrid ways of working.
- Further occupancy/utilisation studies planned.

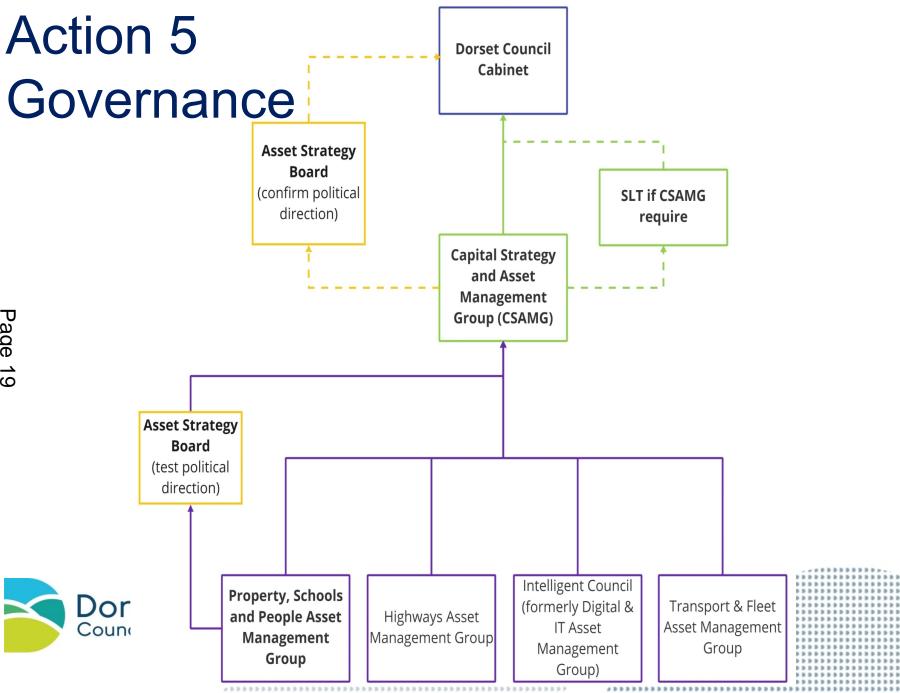




Action 4 Corporate Landlord

- Corporate landlord model adoption ongoing.
- Asset Strategy Board Established.
- $\frac{3}{2}$ Data Management System defining scope.





Action 6 Resourcing

- New Corporate Director instigated review of A&P.
- Outcome identified additional resources required.
 - Recruitment plan initiated.



Action 7 Project Delivery

- Full list of property projects in place
- Priority Assessment Tool in place.
- Options Analysis Tool being defined
 Finance Business Tool being defined



Actions 8 & 9 Review of Commercial Portfolio & Other Assets

- Asset Review process and timetable in
- Page place.
- On track to complete by 2024
- Programme of rapid asset reviews to report in spring 2023
- Appointment of external consultants to



Action 10 One Public Estate

- Operating as part of our delivery strategy
 - South Walks House Dorset County Hospital NHS Trust lease
 - Battlelab MOD
 - Shared office spaces examples include Dorset Healthcare, Natural England
 - Co-located service delivery spaces e.g. Libraries with co-located partners (Skills & Learning, Citizens Advice)



Page 23

Action 11 Joint Ventures

- Options appraisal work commenced, expected to generate draft options by May 2023
 Public Insights Consultants appointed to
 - Public Insights Consultants appointed to advise.



Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

10 November

Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy Progress Update Autumn 2022



Antony Littlechild | Sustainability Team Manager

Progress - highlights

Dorset Council (operational)

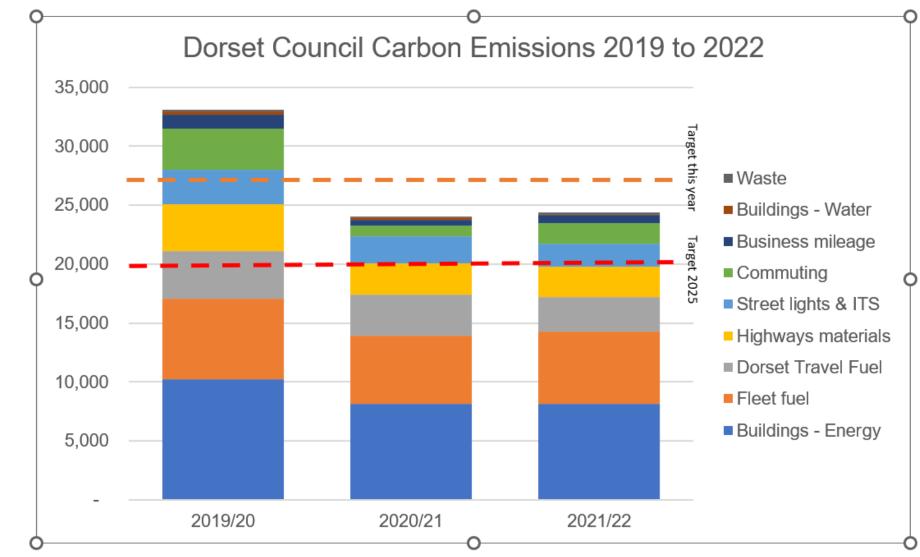
Carbon Neutral by <u>2040</u>

Our footprint **reduced** approximately **26%** to 24,325 tonnes County-wide (facilitation)

Carbon Neutral by <u>2050</u>

County footprint **reduced** by **18%** to 1,4 million tonnes between 2017 & 2020







Some key areas of progress





Dorset

Council







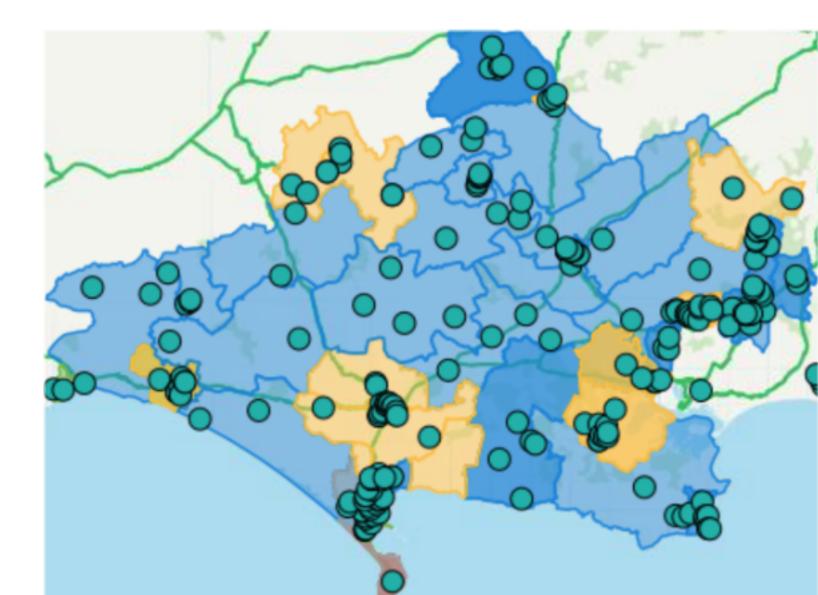


Dorset Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme

- Over £18million PSDS Grant Spent
- Focus on Decarbonising Heating
- Over 350 Decarbonisation Projects Delivered
- Over 200 different properties benefitting
- Over 1500 tonnes CO2 savings per annum



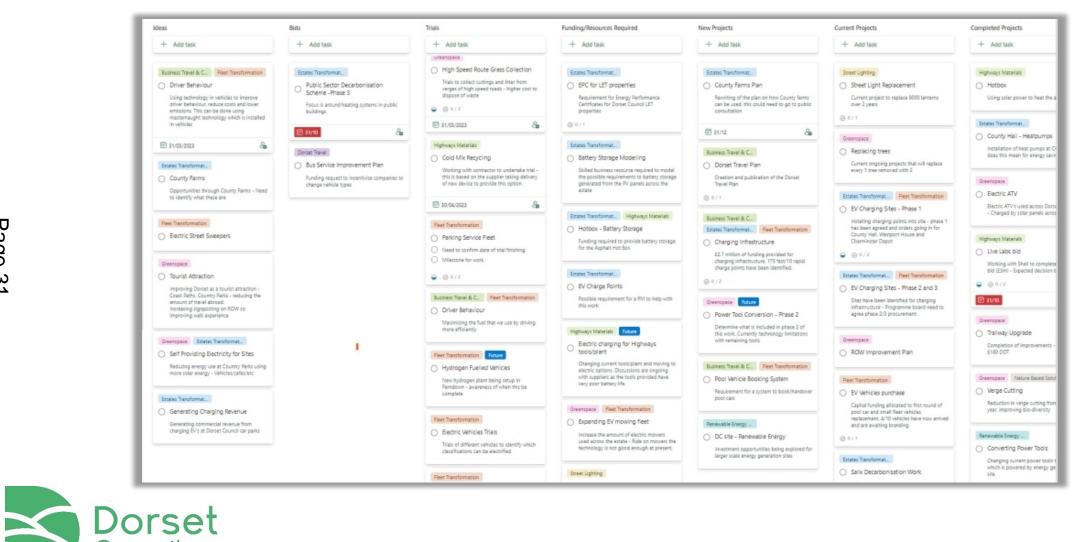
Page 29



Roadmap for delivery – climate operational

Operational Work Streams	Programmes	Reduction against Baseline 202	25 target	Progress in last period	Workstream Challenges	Summary of carbon savings and other benefits	
1 8% CO2e, 2281 tCo2	Street Lighting Energy Efficiency Programme	33%	40%	Capital allocated from the £10m climate change capital programme to replace further 9000 lights with LED over 5 years. Continued work around using the £250K funding replacing the most inefficient lanterns with LED	Requirement of £15m to reduce carbon to its minimum.	Investment programme estimated to reduce emissions by 368 tC02e Reduction in nation carbon intensity of electricity, helping reduce emissions.	Ca
Page 30 14%	Business Travel & Commuting Travel Plan	40%/50%	%/40%	Significant reduction in business travel through home working and hybrid working arrangements , facilitated by ICT system Risk travel may increase as more staff return to work, but not anticipated to reach previous levels.	 Enforcing & resourcing the Travel Plan Continued avoidance of business and commuting through active encouragement of home/hybrid working Need to build travel behaviours into staff terms and conditions and HR processes 	Continued work on the sustainable transport plan and promoting biodiversity as part of the construction and development	
29%	Estates Transformation & Decarbonisation	Energy 21%	40%	Charging point feasibility study completed, with funding allocated from the £10m climate change capital programme to install additional EV charging points across DC estate. Procurement to obtain a provider for charge point infrastructure has started. Work under the Salix decarbonisation funding of nearly £19m as part of the grant provided to Dorset Council	Lack of resource for EPC work on LET properties Lack of Capital funding restricting options to reduce carbon Generating commercial revenue from charging EV at car parks	Reduction in national carbon intensity of electricity aids reducing emissions. Carbon emission reductions being calculated.	
22%	Dorset Travel	28% (estimated)	40%	Limited current scope to address emissions reduction – unlikely to reach 2025 target. Study commissioned to explore options to maximise use of DC fleet to deliver service, and discussions ongoing regarding possible decarbonisation of elements of fleet.	Lack of investment into public transport as part of the bus service improvement plan Dorset Travel reliant on other service decisions	* Indicative only. Data based on estimated mileages from range of contracts. Possible carbon savings being calculated.	

Programme management approach



Page ω

Council

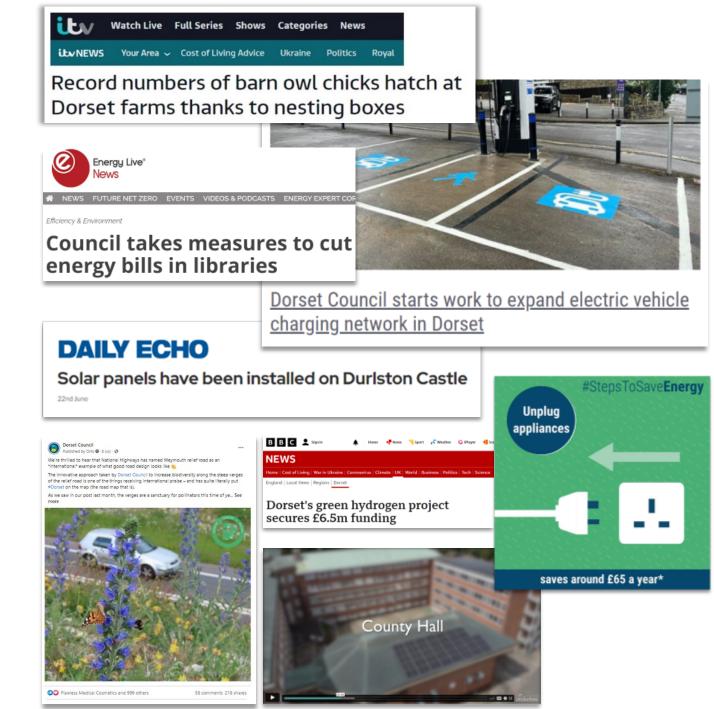
Comms support

- Media coverage (local and national)
- Development of climate & ecology sub branding
- Behavioural change & awareness campaigns
- Resident updates
- Engaging social media content
- Collaborative campaigns inc. energy

Up next...

- Further development & embedding of subbranding
- Update to council's climate web pages
- Spotlight on PSDS programme achievements
- People Stories
- •And lots more...





New web pages

- •Engaging content
- Progress updates
- Advice & signposting
- •Shared resources
- •Resident stories

ယ္လ

•Partnership programmes





Partner engagement

- Joint sessions with the Dorset Chamber of Commerce
- •Town and parish council webinars & outreach (circa 25% have declared climate emergencies)
- יש Public-sector decarbonisation group set up
 - - •Work with other strategic partners such as SGN and SSEN
 - •Close working with BCP and other regional local authorities



We can all make a difference



What's next

•Refresh of strategy and action plan

- •Accelerate operational delivery in key areas such as fleet, EV infrastructure, street lighting and estates transformation.
- Policy focus
- •Decision-making •Widen engagement

•Deepen focus on ecological and adaptation – update at next meeting







Page 37



This page is intentionally left blank