

# Public Document Pack



## DORSET COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 20 OCTOBER 2022

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

**Apologies:** Cllrs Robin Cook, Janet Dover, David Gray, Andrew Kerby, Rebecca Knox, Howard Legg, Molly Rennie, Julie Robinson and Andrew Starr

**Also present remotely:** Cllrs Mike Dyer, Paul Kimber, Ryan Holloway and Gill Taylor.

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

Susan Dallison (Democratic Services Team Leader), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Matt Prosser (Chief Executive), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Jacqui Andrews (Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services), George Dare (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Joshua Kennedy (Apprentice Democratic Services Officer)

#### 29. Tributes to Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

The following councillors paid tribute to Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II: - Cllr Val Potheary (Chairman), Cllr Spencer Flower, Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Clare Sutton, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Bill Pipe, Cllr David Walsh, Cllr Louie O'Leary, Cllr Mary Penfold and Cllr Belinda Ridout.

This was followed by a minute's silence.

30. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Janet Dover, Molly Rennie, Robin Cook, Howard Legg, David Gray, Mike Dyer, Andrew Starr and Julie Robinson.

31. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2022 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

32. **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Mary Penfold declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of minute 41 because she was the Council's representative on SCOPAC – the Standing Conference on problems associated with the Coastline. She continued to advise that the Monitoring Officer had advised that as a decision about governance arrangements for harbours did not relate directly to the work of SCOPAC, she would speak and vote on the item.

33. **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements to report.

34. **Public Participation - Questions and Statements**

Public questions and the responses from the Leader of the Council or appropriate portfolio holder were set out in appendix 1 to these minutes.

35. **Public participation - petitions and deputations**

There were no petitions or deputations to report.

36. **Announcements and Reports from the Leader of Council and Cabinet Members**

The Leader of Council advised councillors that his bulletin would be published following the meeting and he report included the following: -

- Support in respect of the cost of living
- The 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme
- Investment Zones and
- The current budget challenges

37. **Questions from Councillors**

A copy of the councillor questions and the responses are attached at Appendix 2 to these minutes.

In a response to a supplementary question from Cllr Jon Andrews, question 2, the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment gave assurance to the Sherborne ward councillors that their concerns had been noted and a way forward was being addressed.

In response to a further supplementary question from Cllr Jon Andrews in respect of question 3, the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment would contact Cllrs Andrews and Hall after the council meeting.

In a response to a supplementary question from Cllr Clare Sutton, the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills, and Learning indicated that the Executive Director for People – Children had written to the Chairman of People and Health Scrutiny Committee confirming that a report would be coming forward in the future on Dorset schools' exclusion rates.

**38. Refreshed Council Plan 2022-24**

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Development and Transformation presented the refreshed Council Plan for 2022-24. The document set out the key strategic position and the councils aims, ambitions and key targets for the council going forward. In setting out the report, the Portfolio Holder proposed the recommendation.

The recommendation was seconded by Cllr S Jespersen.

In response to questions, the portfolio holder advised that the plan set out the strategic aims. The delivery plan, being presented at the all-member webinar, would set out the proposed actions. In response to a question relating to development and the local plan, the Portfolio Holder indicated the portfolio holder for planning had previously explained the current position in respect of this matter.

Decision

That the refreshed Council Plan 2022-24 and the new strategic delivery plan be approved.

**39. Community Governance Review: Parishes in the Vale of Allen group, the Winterborne Farringdon Group, Chickerell and Weymouth**

The Leader of the Council set out the procedural report and proposed its recommendations. This was seconded by Cllr Piers Brown.

Decision

That the terms of reference for a community governance review as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Council on 20 October 2022, be adopted.

40. **Update on role of Health and Wellbeing Boards in the Integrated Care System**

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health presented the report and proposed the recommendation.

The Director of Public Health advised that the recommendation aimed to ensure that the Health and Well-being Board developed into an effective interface with the integrated care partnership and the work of the new integrated care board to deliver the integrated care strategy. This work involved both Dorset Council and BCP.

The recommendation was seconded by Cllr Jane Somper.

Decision

That an addition to the terms of reference of the Health and Wellbeing Board be agreed, so that it becomes the strategic board for the place-based partnership developing in the Dorset Council area, as part of the Dorset Integrated Care System.

41. **Governance Arrangements for Harbours**

The Leader of the Council presented a proposal that Harbour Management become an executive function of Dorset Council, with the Portfolio Holder undertaking the responsibility of duty holder, and the existing Harbours Committee becoming an advisory committee making recommendations to the Executive.

In response to questions, the Chairman of the Harbours Committee advised that whilst the advisory committee would still benefit from the advice and expertise provided by the independent members, the proposed change would streamline and accelerate the decision-making process.

The Chairman of the Harbours Committee further confirmed that harbour related decisions would be able to come forward in the future to meetings of scrutiny committee for appropriate challenge.

It was proposed by Cllr Spencer Flower seconded by Cllr M Roberts

Decision

- (a) That the harbour function becomes an Executive function with the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment assuming the responsibility of Duty Holder.
- (b) The existing Harbours Committee becomes an advisory committee under Section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

**42. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee**

It was proposed by Cllr Nick Ireland seconded by Cllr M Hall that Cllr Richard Biggs be appointed Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

There were no other nominations.

It was proposed by Cllr Nick Ireland seconded by Cllr Beryl Ezzard that Cllr Robin Legg be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee.

It was proposed by Cllr Les Fry seconded by Cllr John Worth that Cllr Susan Cocking be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee.

In response to a point of order, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that council procedure rule 30 did not indicate that a vacancy could not be filled at the next appropriate meeting of council. Therefore, the vote to appoint a vice-chairman could continue.

Upon being put to the vote, Cllr Susan Cocking was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

Decision

- (a) That Cllr Richard Biggs be elected the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2022-23.
- (b) That Cllr Susan Cocking was elected Vice-Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2022-23.

**43. Dispensation Report**

It was proposed by Cllr Spencer Flower and seconded by Cllr Nick Ireland

Decision

That a dispensation for Cllr Janet Dover from attending meetings of the Council for a period of 6 months commencing on 12th November 2022, by reason of ill health, be approved.

**44. Urgent items**

There were no urgent items

**45. Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business to report.

**Appendix 1 - Public Participation Q&A's**  
**Appendix 2 - Councillor Q&A's**

**Duration of meeting:** 6.00 - 8.52 pm

**Chairman**

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**Full Council  
20 October 2022**

**Questions and Statements submitted for the Public Participation Period**

**Question 1 – submitted by Miranda Tunnicliffe**

Maintenance of drains and gullies in the Park District, Weymouth.

At a public meeting on 7th October 2022, attended by Wessex Water, Dorset Highways, Local Councillors, BRIC, Dorset Council Flood Risk Managers and local residents, it was established there is a problem with the maintenance of drains and gullies in the Park District in Weymouth.

The gullies are the metal grates that cross the pavement and taking water from the household drainpipes into the road. The drains clear surface water from the road and alleyways.

The current maintenance procedure relies on a six monthly or annual inspection carried out by Dorset Highways.

An examination conducted by residents has concluded this is ineffective. Many drains are still blocked.

Due to the ineffective maintenance programme, residents are required to report each blocked drain to Dorset Highways on the DC website.

Highways then come out to clear the drain catch pits. If a vehicle is obstructing the drain this will get recorded. Highways will return to the obstructed site three times to see if it is accessible. If still obstructed, the job is abandoned.

As there is very limited parking in the area, it is rare that the operation is successful if the drain happens to be in a parking space. This explains the high number of blocked drains in the area. This current practice is totally inefficient and a waste of money.

Local residents are prepared to assist with clearing the cars, if we had prior notice. It would be easier if this work could be done on a street-by-street basis in the future to allow for effective and efficient maintenance of the drains. Which as you can agree is essential in this flood risk area.

Historically, there was a method of parking in the district in the 1950's which involved parking on one side of the street one day and the other the next. It was called 'odds and evens parking'. A version of this could help to make sure cars are cleared without inconveniencing drivers too much.

There also seems to be no schedule of works to clear the gullies throughout Weymouth. The majority of them are clogged with weeds, which is not a good look for the town.

**Question:**

Will Dorset Highways work with local residents to deal with the current blocked drains, start a programme for cleaning the gullies and review the clearly ineffective policy of returning to jobs in parking spaces three times without alerting the residents that they need access?

**Response from Cllr R Bryan Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment**

Dorset Council links the scheduled cleaning of gullies to the roads that are gritted as part of our winter maintenance works. Roads on the salted network have their gullies cleaned annually. Roads such as the Park District that are not on the standard salting routes, do not have their gullies cleared on a scheduled basis. Instead, these are responded to if any issues are identified. This is usually following routine inspection, or in response to enquiries raised by members of the public. This is in accordance with Dorset Council's Maintenance Plan. Members of the public who use our website to report issues with gullies are kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry through our digital asset management system.

We are committed to continue working with local residents on these issues. As an action from the public meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October, a walkabout has been arranged with the Community Highways Officer and representatives of the Community Group. This will take place at 9:30 on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October.

With regards to maintaining access to gullies needing to be cleared, we do contact residents where necessary and have provided cones to maintain access. It's good to hear that local residents are prepared to assist with clearing the cars. It would be a great help if the residents could assist with ensuring that the cones are not moved, and cars don't park when the cones are put out.

**Question 2 – submitted by Julie-Ann Booker on behalf of Dorset Action on Pensions****Government consultation on Local Government Pension Schemes in respect of reporting and accounting for climate change risks**

These questions were prepared for submission to the Pension Committee on 21 September which was postponed. It has yet to be rescheduled. The next set date for the committee is 29 November which is past the closing date for the Government consultation on local government pensions. For this reason it is being submitted to Full Council for a response.

On 1 September 2022 the Government published an Open Consultation on Local Government Pension Schemes governance and reporting of climate change risks (1). The consultation runs until 24 November 2022.

This consultation seeks views on proposals to require Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) administering authorities in England and Wales to assess, manage



and report on climate-related risks, in line with the recommendations of the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD).

The proposals set out in the consultation are broadly similar to the current requirements for private pension schemes, and encompass the same four areas of governance, strategy, risk management and metrics and targets. However, a key difference is that the proposed requirements will apply to all Local Government Pension Fund administering authorities from 2023/24, regardless of fund size.

The TCFD published a set of recommendations in 2017 with the aims of improving assessment, management, and disclosure of climate-related financial risks.

To achieve these aims in the LGPS, reporting will need to be clear, comprehensive and consistent, as well as timely, verifiable and comparable across the sector, in line with the TCFD's principles for effective disclosure.

The consultation sets out Government proposals to ensure that reporting both at administering authority and at scheme level meets these standards, and delivers proper accountability to members, locally and across the scheme.

High quality reporting on climate risks is central to the TCFD's recommendations. The aim is to enable stakeholders to understand as fully as possible their climate exposures and the administering authorities approach to addressing those risks, in the short, medium and long term.

**Questions:** The consultation proposals include improved transparency requirements in the future, open and accessible for all stakeholders and pension members. In the spirit of this, and on the assumption that Dorset Council will submit a response to the consultation, what arrangements are Dorset Council making to consult with Dorset pension fund members on the council's submission, and what is being done to make pension fund members aware of the Government's consultation and their right to make individual submissions?

- (1) <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-pension-scheme-england-and-wales-governance-and-reporting-of-climate-change-risks/local-government-pension-scheme-england-and-wales-governance-and-reporting-of-climate-change-risks>

### **Response from Cllr Peter Wharf**

Dorset Council is the administering Authority for the Local Government Pension Scheme and hosts the Pension Fund Committee. The Committee comprises not only members of Dorset Council but also members of BCP Council and a scheme member representative appointed by those trade unions whose membership includes members of the pension scheme. Decisions about the timing of its meetings and whether or how the Committee chooses to respond to any consultation are matters for the Committee and not for Dorset Council alone. In my capacity as vice Chair of the Dorset County Pension Fund I will speak with the Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Andy Canning, and seek his views to most appropriate way to respond to the consultation.

### **Question 3 - submitted by Helen Sumbler**

In response to a question I raised at Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee in 25 March 2021 about the lack of Implementation Plan 4 to cover 2020-23, the response was that “Instead of writing an Implementation Plan for an old Local Transport Plan written by predecessor councils (Dorset County Council and Bournemouth & Poole Borough Councils which no longer exist), Dorset Council with BCP Council has begun work on 1 new joint Local Transport Plan for 2022-2038 to align with the 2 new Local Plans for Dorset and BCP.”

However, in the new Delivery Plan for 2022 to 2024, reference is made to the old Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Local Transport Plan 2011 to 2026, despite the lack of a current implementation plan in support of this LTP.

As the adoption of the Dorset Council Local Plan has been delayed to 2026, what are the milestones for the preparation, consultation and publication of the joint Local Transport Plan for 2022-2038 that aligns with this new Local Plan?

### **Response from Cllr Ray Bryan Portfolio Holder for Highways Travel and Environment**

The production of LTP4 has been delayed while the council awaits new Local Transport Plan guidance from the Department for Transport. The new guidance had been expected in spring 2022 but the latest government announcement is that a consultation on the new guidance will be launched in autumn 2022. A detailed programme will be developed to produce and publish a new LTP once the guidance is available.

### **Question 4 – submitted by Helen Sumbler and as the Co-ordinator of the Dorset CAN Transport Team**

In the absence of a current implementation plan, how is Dorset Council going to publicise and inform members of the public about expenditure on the transport network, and about projects and their priorities, until the new Local Transport Plan and its accompanying Implementation Plan are published?

### **Response from Cllr Ray Bryan Portfolio Holder for Highways Travel and Environment**

A review of LTP3 is currently being undertaken. This forms part of initial baselining and evidence gathering that will help to inform the development of the new joint LTP. A report will be submitted to the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee in Spring 2023.

### **Question 5 - submitted by Peter Robertson**

Given that all three of Dorset Council's proposed Investment Zones are each adjacent to nationally and internationally protected sites for nature, will the Council follow the lead set by Solent Freeport and only accept Investment Zone status for any of these sites on the basis that the full suite of current environmental protections are maintained with no dilution to the planning process?

### **Question 6 – submitted by Peter Robertson**

Will you also commit to consulting with Natural England, Environment Agency, the RSPB (who manage Radipole Lake nature reserve), Dorset Wildlife Trust (who manage Winfrith and Tadnoll Nature Reserve) and Portland Bird Observatory (who manage land on Portland) on the development of proposals for these three Investment Zones at the earliest opportunity?

### **Response by Cllr Spencer Flower**

#### **Investment Zones**

Dorset Council has been named as one of 38 authorities that Government recognise as being keen to be involved. The paper is not saying that these areas will benefit from an Investment Zone and is clear on the process by which Zones are allocated or awarded other than to say they want to deliver Zones across all parts of the UK.

Historically the process of awarding Enterprise Zone status and Freeports has been competitive and expect any selection process to require Dorset to set out the benefits to government of awarding Investment Zone status.

Dorset Council has on Friday submitted three Expressions of Interest to government for potential Investment Zones in Dorset. These are:

- 1) Weymouth – several regeneration sites around the waterside at Weymouth harbour and marina. The proposal is to redevelop disused sites to provide homes and jobs, with opportunities for commercial and leisure developments. These sites are within the adopted Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan.
- 2) Portland – the port area, offering opportunities for commercial and business operations, and a residential site in Castletown. It should be noted that the proposed location for an energy recovery facility at Portland Port (currently going through the planning process) is explicitly excluded from the Expression of Interest.
- 3) Wool – a site adjacent to the existing Dorset Innovation Park to build on the success there by offering further investment and development opportunities for key sectors including advanced engineering and manufacturing.

Currently the guidance accompanying Investment Zones states “when proposals come forward for Investment Zones, they will benefit from a liberalised planning

process.” There is, as yet no detail about what this process may be or how it will be implemented alongside the existing planning process. Local Development Orders (LDO's) are referenced within the expression of interest documentation and may be a mechanism used to prepare Investment Zones. LDO's require engagement and formal consultation with the statutory agencies and public before implementation and are also required to comply with both the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and the Habitats Regulations. Should any of the council's submitted sites be successful in reaching the next stage of the process the council will examine both the process and any accompanying guidance before formally committing.

It is understood that these new Investment Zones will accelerate development of infrastructure to drive economic growth by offering tax breaks for potential investors and simplified, reduced regulation and planning processes. The aim is to attract new investment to create jobs.

It is not yet known when the government will announce decisions on Expressions of Interest for Investment Zones.

We should welcome any opportunity to attract investment, improve infrastructure, and create jobs here in Dorset. The three proposed locations offer great potential for economic development and are suitable for this kind of activity.

Our Expressions of Interest do not represent a commitment by government or by Dorset Council. We await further detail from government so we can assess the potential pros and cons of an Investment Zone before making any formal commitment following council processes.

Any opportunities should support and enhance the ambitions set out in the Dorset Plan and meet the economic development aspiration leading to improved social mobility, the latter being of particular concern to members across this chamber.

## **Question 7 – submitted by Caz Dennett**

### **Is it time for Dorset Council to invest for good?**

In May this year I publicly withdrew my services as a Senior Safety Consultant at Shell. I could no longer tolerate their unwillingness to address the harms they know their operations are doing to our environment.

Continued dangerous plans to expand and extract new oil and gas reserves, which the International Energy Agency say must stay in the ground to halt greenhouse gas emissions, is already enough reason to end relations.

However, their operations are also inherently unsafe and irresponsible, failing on Environment, Social and Governance expectations. Their disregard for the health, safety and well-being of their operational environments is immoral, and according to some court action outcomes, illegal.

Operations in the Niger Delta, Nigeria, sees millions of litres of oil spilled, making the area completely unsafe as a human and wildlife habitat, extensive water and land

contamination mean people cannot farm or fish, or access clean drinking water. Local ecology is devastated, the UN have ordered these companies to repair the damage and restore the environment, which they ignore.

Last month the BBC published their investigative documentary Under Poisoned Skies, an expose of excessive and undeclared gas flaring in the Basra oil fields in Iraq. Unnecessary and preventable flaring causes deathly air pollution, unliveable communities and is directly related to high cases of childhood leukaemia and cancers. The oil companies flare gas (a by-product of oil extraction), because it is more profitable to burn it than to capture, store and use it for energy.

The people who live in the communities that are now surrounded by oil production facilities say they are merely sacrifice zones.

**How comfortable are Councillors and the Council, knowing that investments the Council has in oil & gas is funding childhood leukaemia and cancers, unliveable environments and sacrificed communities?**

**Now is the time to use our council tax money to fund something for good, such as a sustainable liveable future, therefore will Dorset Council set a plan to move all its finances i.e. pension investments, bank accounts, insurance policies, etc to sustainable accounts and financial products?**

References:

Under Poisoned Skies BBC Documentary  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0d34rtt>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-62917498>

Niger Delta spills: In total (all operators) between 2015 and 2021 there were almost 5,000 spills = 235,000 barrels / 37 million litres of oil (Source: National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) / [www.nosdra.oilspillmonitor.ng](http://www.nosdra.oilspillmonitor.ng))

**Response from the Cllr Peter Wharf Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health**

Thank you Ms Dennett for your question.

Dorset Council does use Council tax money to fund something good – it uses the money to fund local services for local people.

Any surplus balances are invested in accordance with the treasury management strategy which is agreed annually by full Council. The Council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income.

The primary duty of the Pension Fund Committee is to ensure that contributions to the pension fund by scheme members and their employers are invested appropriately to make returns sufficient to pay pensions and other scheme benefits

as they fall due. The Pension fund committee is currently reviewing its long-term investment strategy as part of a planned three yearly review. The strategy will be formally approved by the Pension Fund Committee in the middle of next year and will need to strike the right balance between equities and fixed income, UK and global investments, public and private markets, active versus passive investments as well as taking into account the Climate Emergency, sustainability and other environmental, social and governance issues.

#### **Question 8 – submitted by Jenny Lennon-Wood Secretary of Dorset Trades Union Council**

##### **Question**

Weymouth and Portland's economy has been in decline since the 1990s, leaving a deprived community dependent on low-paid, insecure jobs. Dorset Council has repeatedly dismissed proposals by Dorset Trades Union Council (DTUC) and Weymouth and Portland Action on Wages (WeyPAW) to address the resultant poverty and deprivation. Can you provide substantiated evidence of any Dorset Council actions that have created, or enabled the creation of, well-paid, good quality jobs in Weymouth and Portland (W&P) or succeeded in persuading local employers to improve the pay and conditions of existing jobs?

##### **Statement from Jenny Lennon-Wood**

In 2019, DTUC and WeyPAW sought Dorset Council's leadership on social mobility. We presented proposals for the Council to assess and tackle poverty incomes and job insecurity in W&P. We were told that our proposals would be considered during the development of the Economic Growth Strategy. When published, this strategy acknowledged concerns about deprivation in W&P but offered no specific remedial measures and ignored our proposals. As the Council had shown no interest in investigating poverty in W&P and seeking solutions, we undertook the research ourselves. Our report, *Forgotten Towns – Weymouth, Portland and the coastal economy*, traces the economic decline from major job losses following the 1990s closure of Navy and MoD sites, through government and local authority decisions that left the community dependent on tourism, to the current deprivation and lack of opportunities. We identify areas requiring more research: the experiences of those affected by the economic decline; the continuing efforts of local people to mitigate its effects; and the community's desire for genuine involvement in decision-making.

#### **Question 9 – submitted by Professor Philip Marfleet**

##### **Question**

A new report, *Forgotten Towns – Weymouth, Portland and the coastal economy*, provides detailed, compelling evidence of economic decline and increased social deprivation in South Dorset. Will Dorset Council finally accept responsibility for its negligence in addressing these issues and undertake to join, without delay, a task force to focus actively upon remedial policies?

## **Statement**

Dorset Council has on several occasions declined to recognise the acute economic and social problems in Weymouth & Portland. It seems that councillors of the majority group wish to avert their eyes from the reality. We are providing an opportunity for the Council to take a different approach.

Our new report sets out in detail the record of decline in South Dorset over several decades starting with the loss of 6,500 jobs at defence sites and in many private businesses in the 1990s. The report presents compelling evidence of the predicament of local communities, and particularly of young people who face a “cul-de-sac” effect in which low wages and thin job prospects prompt them to leave – often, they never return.

The implications for Dorset are alarming. We have an aging population and a workforce in which the young are voting with their feet. Years ago, planners in Dorset talked about a “demographic timebomb” ... and the timebomb is ticking relentlessly.

In February 2019 Councillor Gary Suttle told this meeting in a personal statement that for decades the Council and its predecessor had failed to provide policies that could address economic decline and social deprivation, and that inadequate infrastructure held back development. Almost three years later there’s been no progress. Weymouth & Portland is still among the coldest of “cold spots” in the UK for social mobility, with levels of family poverty that shame us all.

Economic policies based upon neoliberal principles have since the 1990s played the key role in determining the fate of Weymouth & Portland, asserting that “the market” will provide growth and prosperity. It’s against this background that local authorities and development agencies have abstained from constructive engagement, producing in South Dorset a record of headlong economic decline and multiple deprivation.

Nationally, it’s clear that discredited neoliberal policies lie behind the paralysis and near-collapse of the present Government - with profound implications for many members of this Council. We can learn from these failures – nationally and locally. Our report proposes a series of sustained interventions to provide critical infrastructure and support for the most disadvantaged in a low-wage, seasonal economy. An “investment zone” won’t do the job – the last thing we need in Weymouth & Portland is a bonfire of planning regulations and more ill-paid, highly exploitative employment.

Dorset’s Local Enterprise Partnership – the LEP – has agreed to join a task force to look urgently at the crisis in Weymouth & Portland. Will this Council accept the findings of our report and do the same?

Finally - even since our report was written, the cost-of-living crisis has intensified alarmingly. Hardest-hit are the most vulnerable families. Councillors - doing nothing or implementing piecemeal measures - is not an option.

## **Response from Cllr T Ferrari Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Assets and Property (Joint response to Questions 8 & 9)**

This report has already been aired in the press, can I read my comment to the Echo about its contents:

I understand Weymouth quite well, I live here, Weymouth and Portland do need support.

I welcome every intervention that highlights the support that Weymouth and Portland needs. As Dorset Council, supported actively by our MP, we have been having conversations with Government. Our argument, during the first round of Levelling Up was that W&P needed Levelling Up just as much as many northern towns. The Navy leaving us was just as serious an economic impact as a mine or a steel works closing. Our case was that the Government's measure was not fine grained enough. Dorset may be wealthy on average but Weymouth and Portland are not. In the latest round of Levelling Up the Government supported our argument and improved our category so we have more chance of money in this round.

Having said we welcome all evidence that supports our case, the report itself is disappointing.

One of its four recommendations is that Dorset should implement the Real Living Wage. Dorset, supported by the Trade Unions, joined the collective bargaining agreement for all Councils. We don't negotiate our staff's salaries, it is done nationally. If they agree the Real Living Wage that is what we will pay. If not we don't intend to break the collective bargaining agreement.

They also recommend the LEP should promote meaningful investment in road, rail and infrastructure. The LEP has been closed down, for some time now, as a Government vehicle for delivering finance. About 80% of their staff have moved on. They never had a major role in rail or road policy, now they have none.

The last two recommendations are exactly what Dorset should not be doing. The report recommends "undertaking a review", "establishing an action group", "commissioning a wider review", obviously the first review wasn't enough and "creating a liaison group". This is Weymouth at its worst, lots of talk and no action.

So what should be happening in Weymouth? Actually exactly what Dorset Council is doing now. We have taken out the rails, done a fabulous job on improving Customs House Quay, worked with partners to improve the station forecourt and with it the first experience of visitors arriving by train, opened a Children's Home on Dorchester Road to keep Weymouth children in need of accommodation closer to family, friends and school, underpinned Old Castle Road to stop it collapsing cutting off the houses at the end, gave a new allotment in Preston to Weymouth Council, put solar panels on a number of schools and Council buildings around town, these reduce our carbon footprint and also replace (the now very expensive gas), buildings include Westfield College, Bincombe Valley and Conifers schools, opened the Nest shop for families finding times tough in Littlemoor and agreed with Government that they will give Weymouth £100m to raise and repair the harbour walls to cope with the effects



of climate change, an enormous some of money about equal to Weymouth Town Council's budget for the next 30 years.

This is the sort of practical improvement that Dorset Council should be doing, not setting up commissions and action groups to waste more time and more money.

We don't need another commission, we know what needs to happen and we are proud of our track record of steadily delivering major improvements to the town.

Can I add just a few brief comments to address Jenny Lennon-Wood's question regarding jobs.

The council continues to support job creation in Dorset. Specifically in Weymouth and Portland the council have:

- Relocated the Chesil Children's Locality Team (approximately 115 staff) from Dorchester to the Weymouth office;
- Approved planning permissions for a range of residential, commercial and leisure developments including:
  - o 500 houses at Littlemoor Road, Weymouth
  - o New commercial developments at Osprey Quay in Portland
  - o New retail units at Mercery Road, Weymouth

Which will bring hundreds of permanent, high quality jobs to town.

As mentioned above we have progressed or completed the rails, Customs House Quay, the station forecourt, the Children's home, Old Castle Road and won Government support for the absolutely enormous harbour wall improvements. Added to the works on the approved planning applications, these projects will deliver hundreds of jobs for contractors and local suppliers lasting for decades into the future.

#### **Question 10 – submitted by Tracee Cossey**

Along with the RSPB, the Wildlife Link and the National Trust, DorsetCAN has serious misgivings about the introduction of 'investment zones' as a way forward for **sustainable** growth within Dorset.

The fact that Dorset Council is delaying their own Local Plan by two and a half years exposes Dorset communities, our wildlife and our environment to unwanted speculative developers taking advantage of out-of-date policies and capitalising on difficulties in demonstrating a 5-year land supply. On top of this, investment zone legislation proposes the removal of cumbersome planning regulations.

DorsetCAN/I supports an agenda of sustainable growth so that we can meet our county target of net zero by 2050. In the light of the objections nationwide as well as the precariousness of our own situation, can we have a commitment from Dorset

Council that you will not allow any environmental standards to be relaxed in the name of 'investment'?

**Response from Cllr Spencer Flower**

**See response to Qs 5&6**

**Question 11 – submitted by Tracee Cossey**

We know that Council has been committed to a **Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy** since 2021. I feel that the fact that this is an Emergency is being forgotten by us. Can the **Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy** please be included in the 'Strategies that support all 5 themes' column, of the Dorset Council Delivery Plan, rather than at the top of the (renamed) 'Protecting our natural environment, wildlife and ecology column' so that we can be sure that all the priorities within the Council Plan need to consider their impact on our commitment to Net Zero by 2050 for the whole county?

**Response from Cllr Ray Bryan Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment**

The refreshed Council Plan 2022-24 sets out our commitment and continued focus on the Climate and Ecological Emergency as one of our five overarching priorities. This means that our commitment to drive the ambitions within the strategy will be approached at the most strategic level, influencing how we transition our own operations and how we develop policies that impact on Dorset. This priority reflects our commitment to the natural environment with outcomes related to carbon neutrality and climate risks, positive land management including the protection of local wildlife, efficient management and maintenance of our highways, coasts and greenspaces and an improved harbour service offer. As highlighted in the council plan, many of the priorities are cross-cutting and our commitment to embed the principles of the climate and ecological strategy into how we run as an organisation remains steadfast.

**Question 12 – submitted by from Vicki Elcoate**

The Government has made a recent policy statement (September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2022) which relaxes the approach to planning for onshore wind energy developments. Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy says that: "deployment of onshore renewable energy [has] stagnated since 2016 due to planning restrictions imposed & removal of all subsidies". The Government's current Growth Statement says: "The government will unlock the potential of onshore wind by bringing consenting in line with other infrastructure". Will Dorset Council now adopt a more proactive approach to the development of onshore wind developments, where appropriate, and help deliver clean, cheap and renewable energy for Dorset more rapidly?

### **Response from Cllr David Walsh Portfolio Holder for Planning**

The Government's Growth Plan is seeking to accelerate delivery of infrastructure, including prioritising the delivery of National Policy Statements for Energy and bringing onshore wind planning policy in line with other infrastructure. This is a positive commitment to changing the current position and we are awaiting further detail and associated updates to national planning policy in order to enable changes at the local level. In the meantime, planning decisions need to accord with the current National Planning Policy Framework. Dorset Council remains committed to securing a carbon-neutral Dorset and work will continue on reviewing existing development plan policies, in tandem with the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy, to secure this commitment. This is likely to be through a package of measures aimed at maximising energy efficiency, delivering renewable energy through the most appropriate sources for Dorset, enhancing our natural places and biodiversity and promoting climate change resilience.

### **Question 13 – submitted by from Vicki Elcoate**

The planned closure of one of Bridport's long standing and popular businesses has shone a light on inflexible policies about renewables and energy conservation in old buildings. Leaker's Bakery in Bridport said in a statement: "Sadly the current climate of escalating costs puts us in a position of uncertainty. In tandem with rising costs of raw ingredients, our energy costs particularly are unsustainable – our plans for solar panels were not allowed (conservation) and any heat reclamation has been ruled out in our old building". In Dorset Climate Action Network's response to the new Local Plan we argued for a more flexible approach in Dorset Council's policies on renewables and energy conservation in Conservation Areas and on historic buildings. Will Dorset Council now adopt a more flexible approach and make it easier to install renewable energy – such as solar - on older buildings?

### **Response from Cllr David Walsh Portfolio Holder for Planning**

Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plan aims to secure a carbon-neutral future for Dorset. However, we also have a statutory responsibility to give great weight to the conservation of designated heritage assets. These need not be conflicting objectives and so it is important to find sensitive solutions to reduce fossil fuel energy use in ways that minimise harm to such assets, whether through improved energy efficiency measures or appropriate renewable energy installations. In order to achieve this outcome we intend to provide more guidance to affected owners and tenants to help with finding solutions which reduce carbon emissions and energy costs but in ways that are appropriate to the heritage asset

### **Question 14 – submitted by Jane Ashdown**

Earlier this month (October 4<sup>th</sup>), Cabinet members approved a recommendation from Councillor Walsh to adopt a revised timetable for the production of the Dorset Council Local Plan. This revised timetable pushes the prepublication submission

date to the last quarter of 2024. The statement by Councillor Walsh to Cabinet makes no commitment to any form of public consultation during the two years that the new Plan will be in preparation, but only that, “it **may** (my emphasis) be necessary to add additional consultation stages” (1.14). Public consultation should be at the heart of this next phase of Plan development in order to achieve what Councillor Flower has called “the best possible Local Plan that reflects the needs and aspirations of Dorset’s residents.” What is the Council’s plan for public engagement and consultation over the period of Plan preparation?

**Question 15 – submitted by Michael Allen**

It is now 18 months since Dorset Council received over 9,000 responses to the public consultation on the draft Local Plan. The Council has acknowledged that many of those responses were highly critical of the Local Plan and of the Development Strategy that lies at its heart; and has stated that the Local Plan should change to reflect this strong expression of public opinion. But the Council has not published an overview of the public critique, nor a clear statement of what changes will be needed in the Plan, in the way that was done with the separate and earlier document the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy. The effect of this silence by the Council is that the citizens, organisations, local authorities, landowners and potential developers are all kept in ignorance of the thinking which will affect both the future Plan and the well-being of the County. The new Local Development Scheme timetable, approved by the recent Cabinet Meeting, implies yet further delay and uncertainty. When does DC intend to publish its summary of the consultation and tell the public in more detail how it intends to respond to the comments?

**Question 16 – submitted by Peter Bowyer Dorset CPRE**

Has the Dorset Council obtained government permission to extend the period for the Dorset Local Plan?

**Question 17 – submitted by Peter Bowyer Dorset CPRE**

When will the full Council be discussing the proposed delay to the Dorset Local Plan?

**Question 18 – submitted by Giles Watts**

The Council has announced a delay to the Local Plan of two-and-a-half years. The Dorset Deserves Better (DDB) Alliance remains concerned about the length of the delay and how this may lead to unwanted, speculative development. Nevertheless, we are pleased that the Council will now have the time to respond fully to the public consultation, to the additional evidence that has been gathered, and to the changes in planning guidance and national legislation which are planned by the Government. Taken together, these factors appear to be so radical as to justify a complete re-think of the Local Plan, and therefore a fresh round of public consultation. Will the Council

publish a detailed timetable for what it intends to do between now and December 2024 and what further public consultation will take place?

**Response to Qs 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 from Cllr David Walsh Portfolio Holder for Planning**

As several questions have been submitted covering the same issues around the local plan timetable, I intend to give a single answer covering them all.

In relation to our previous discussions with Government, we are waiting to hear from the new Minister, Simon Clarke, and will let you know as soon as we do.

The programme for the next stages of local plan preparation is set out in the revised Local Development Scheme that was agreed by Cabinet this month.

At the 'publication' stage, a full draft plan will be published, and everyone will have the opportunity to make comments. All the representations received at that stage will be considered by the inspector who holds the public examination into the plan.

As recognised in the questions, we had a large number of responses to the previous consultation, all of which will be taken into account in revising the plan. The changes to the plan will need to be agreed by Cabinet and Full Council, and officers' recommendations for changes will be in the papers for those meetings.

As stated in the report to Cabinet, if it is later decided that an additional stage of consultation is needed before coming to these decisions, then a further amendment to the programme would need to be agreed by Cabinet.

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**Full Council  
20 October 2022**

**Questions submitted by Councillors**

**Question 1 – submitted by Cllr Maria Roe**

UK homes leak the most heat in Europe primarily because of lack of insulation. This costs people even more money and the cost of heating a home has almost doubled even with the recent government support.

People are having to make the choice between heating or eating. Health issues amongst the vulnerable and elderly will increase because of lack of heating this winter. In Dorset the most badly affected areas are West Dorset with 28% and North Dorset with 23% of homes insulated.

Upgrading homes with insulation is the cheapest way to solve these problems.

The performance report for Healthy Homes in Dorset over a 15-month period from March 2021 to June 2022 is as follows:

In Dorset 20 homes have had cavity wall insulation installed. 107 homes have had loft insulation, and 24 homes have had both cavity wall insulation and loft insulation.

Enquiries to Healthy Homes Dorset from the public have rapidly increased but more money is urgently needed from government. This is an emergency.

What is Dorset Council doing to lobby government so that the people of Dorset are supported to insulate their homes?

**Response from Cllr Ray Bryan**

Dorset Council is committed to influencing government on this issue. It influences government not only directly through responding to public consultations and contributing when invited to comment on policy and funding mechanisms, but also indirectly through its membership of the Association of Local Energy Officers (ALEO) and National Energy Action (NEA), the national fuel poverty charity.

**Question 2 submitted by Cllr Jon Andrews & Cllr Matt Hall**

On behalf of your two Sherborne Town Dorset council members would like collaboratively to ask the following questions.

On February the 10<sup>th</sup> 2022 a section of a house wall was damaged on one of the narrowest parts of the 274-mile long A30 that runs through Sherborne. This caused a safety issue that needed to be fixed ASAP. The road safety team did an excellent job were onsite on the 11<sup>th</sup> and made the decision to shut the A30 and consequently the narrow Cornhill. The road was closed for approximately 2.5 months until the site was surveyed, and possible solutions were sought and scaffolding repositioned. The road

is now partially open but after eight months the issue has not been resolved and temporary three-way traffic lights control the traffic causing huge delays on the A30. Unfortunately, this wall is part of a private residence and due to current legislation around confidentiality the details of any negotiation or repair has to be kept confidential.

This matter has caused extreme disruption to the people and businesses of Sherborne as it one of only two routes from west to east through the town and being an ancient market town and one of the most historic and beautiful towns in Dorset with narrow streets, has seen large numbers of cars and commercial vehicles clogging up the streets as some of you might have experienced when attending the recent civic service in honour of the late Queen Elizabeth.

The public naturally are exasperated as to why this issue has taken so long to fix as we are now into the ninth month. I know the local MP has been asking questions and I would ask that Dorset Council firstly explain to the public all the negotiation with the property owner that have gone on. Also, why the Temporary Traffic regulation order (TTRO) has been extended until September 2023 and most importantly when work will start on the Kitt Hill issue?

### **Response by Cllr Ray Bryan**

I recognise how disruptive the closure and traffic light control has been for people wanting to use the A30 through Sherborne. After the wall forming part of the main building for 52 Acreman Street was hit on 10 February 2022, we have sought to keep everyone using the road safe while we work with the landowner to provide a permanent solution. Once the wall had been temporarily stabilised, we removed the diversion and setup traffic lights to reduce the disruption. Rebuilding the wall is a complex and technical task, for which there are only a limited number of specialist contractors with the right experience to carry out the work.

I can confirm that officers and myself have been in continual dialogue with the owners of property since the unfortunate accident that damaged the wall. Both Highways and Building Control have provided continued guidance so that the highway is kept safe and that the owners of the property can arrange for the necessary repairs. We are continuing our dialogue over this matter I can assure colleagues and the community of Sherborne that we are seeking a resolution as quickly as possible.

I would also like to clarify that the 18 month traffic notice that runs until September 2023 is the same as it's always been (it hasn't been extended) and has never been an indication of how long we expect the disruption to last.

### **Question 3 submitted by Cllr Jon Andrews & Cllr Matt Hall**

Due to the ongoing problems on the adjacent Kitt Hill and the traffic control that was already in place it was decided that the major junction improvement work on the Newell in Sherborne would be brought forward which was a sensible suggestion. I have to say I am very impressed with the Dorset highways team for the effort and work they have put into this project so far. However, it seems that the anticipated



finish date of mid to the end of October will come and go. This is not only frustrating the highways team but also local residents. I understand that during the initial stage of the work in August of this year, whilst excavating the site that an 11000-volt cable was discovered and luckily was not broken during excavation. This could have resulted in extreme injury or even fatality. This I am informed s because the electricity companies plans were not correct. I am now being informed that the electricity company cannot complete the movement of this cable until mid-November. Can the portfolio holder for highways update council as to when the movement of this cable will commence, and the workforce can get back to the excellent job they are already doing?

### **Response by Cllr Ray Bryan**

It is extremely frustrating that the electric company's plans were inaccurate. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2022, a high voltage electricity cable was discovered on site at the Marston Road Junction Improvement Scheme. This cable was not on the plans provided by the electricity company (SSEN).

Unfortunately the cable position meant that it would need to be moved to allow certain sections of the works to proceed, and prompt action was taken to notify SSEN. Works on site continued on the areas not affected by the uncharted cable.

SSEN officers have visited the site and passed the work to their contractor. The timescales involved for the mobilisation of SSEN means that the junction works will now most likely not be complete by 14<sup>th</sup> November. We are pushing SSEN to progress this work as quickly as possible. Once we have the SSEN date, we will then be able to programme the remaining works and provide an updated programme.

### **Question 4 & 5 submitted by Clare Sutton**

On 21<sup>st</sup> September the Dorset Echo reported on Dorset schools' exclusion rates. The four with the highest rates were all in Weymouth and Portland, that is, ALL our secondary schools. Of these, the exclusion rates of the 'top two', one of which is in my ward, were 5 times the England average.

Whilst I completely understand that exclusions are sometimes necessary for the benefit of other pupils and the school as a whole, and that Dorset Council has limited influence in relation to Academy schools, there is clearly a pattern here. For all the talk of 'Levelling Up', I think we're all aware that Social Mobility scores for Weymouth and Portland are among the very worst in the country, and those who have read the Forgotten Towns report by Philip Marfleet and Jenny Lennon-Wood will have a better understanding of why.

In this context, my questions are:

1. What support does Dorset Council provide to excluded young people and their parents/carers to enable them to have a successful school life when they return to education?

2. What more can Dorset Council do to ensure that the disparity of opportunity between young people from Weymouth and Portland and their counterparts elsewhere in Dorset is reduced?

### **Response by Cllr Andrew Parry**

Dorset Children's Services are delivered locally by a multi-agency team, including family workers, Educational Psychologists, Specialist Teachers, Inclusion Leads and Youth Workers, who are able to wrap around schools, children and families. Each school has a link family worker, Inclusion Lead, EP and Specialist Teacher. Joint planning meetings are held in each school termly and follow the graduated approach.

The Dorset Education Board (DEB) is a system leadership board for education in Dorset, independently chaired by the former Education Minister, Stephen Twigg. The Board has a number of foci, particularly to promote multi-agency and close peer working to raise standards, to close the disadvantaged attainment gap and to ensure all our children and young people thrive in their education. Board members include representation from Chesil.

We have developed strong and trusting relationships with all of our academy trusts, including the ones in Chesil. This has led to good collaboration, support and challenge. The academies in Chesil work closely with their Education Challenge Lead and other locality staff. An example of this is the excellent reading project which was trialled across Chesil schools and due to its success is growing further this year.

Local Inclusion Partnership meetings take place monthly in each locality. The one in Chesil is attended by the Chesil schools and locality staff. They focus on children who are at risk of being permanently excluded, those with a high number of suspensions and those who are at risk of missing education. The locality suspension and exclusion data is shared with the schools at this meeting, and decisions are made in relation to individual children who need additional support to ensure they have a successful school life. In addition, each school has regular Inclusion meetings and Inclusion Panels attended by their link Inclusion Lead.

We hold fortnightly inclusion oversight board meetings which are multi-agency and prioritise vulnerable groups. The board focuses on ensuring that rapid action is taken where a child is not in full time education. We also have weekly Inclusion Team Manager briefings where there is strong focus on children with a social worker who are not in full-time education.

These processes have led to improvements in several areas, for example in our work with children missing education (CME). In August of last academic year, 97% of CME were no longer missing education. This is an increase of 10% on the previous academic year.

Permanent exclusions from Dorset schools reduced to 31 in the academic year 2021/22, with zero primary age permanent exclusions. This is a significant improvement on previous years, brought about through a whole system focus on

good inclusive practice and building the skill and capacity of school staff to meet the needs of the children in their schools. This has included therapeutic thinking training, a relational practice forum and a Dorset-wide Inclusion Conference. Permanent exclusions in Chesil have decreased by two thirds since 2018 /19.

Suspensions in Dorset, including in the Weymouth and Portland area, have been increasing, as they are nationally following the disruption of the pandemic. The work that locality teams are doing with all our partners, including schools and academies to improve inclusive practice continues to be a focus. We are collecting live attendance and suspension data from our schools, which allows us to have a more robust focus on children with repeated suspensions.

### **Question 6 – submitted by Cllr Kelvin Clayton**

There has been much talk about growth recently. In January 2021, the Royal Town Planning Institute published a research paper *Net Zero Transport*. For a county like Dorset it provides a vision of the near future that has “net zero transport at the heart of its growth, while protecting and enhancing the rural character of its villages...and surrounding countryside.” Based on the idea of ‘15-minute communities’, “areas of growth are planned to achieve high levels of self-containment and facilitate local living.” “Car ownership is discouraged through the design of the public realm”, through the development of “integrated, frequent and affordable public transport on strategic mobility corridors” and through the repurposing of secondary country roads into car-free ‘living lanes’ that “enable residents of smaller towns and villages to access essential services, facilities and mobility hubs by bike without fear of fast moving traffic”.

Has Dorset Council considered placing such a vision at the heart of its growth strategy?

Doing so would, of course, require the total integration of its Local Plan, its Local Transport Plan, and its Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy. Is such an integration something this Council would consider?

### **Response by Cllr Ray Bryan**

Thank you for your question.

Taking action to address the Climate and Ecological Emergency and deliver economic growth requires a joined-up approach across the council and with wider partners.

There are important synergies between the Dorset's Economic Growth Strategy which recognises the role that transport plays in creating healthier lifestyles, better access to jobs, combating climate change and improving air quality; the council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy which commits to helping Dorset become a carbon-neutral County by 2050; the emerging Dorset Local Plan which plays a key role managing the location of development and promoting the provision of active travel and the use of public transport; and the Local Transport Plan which considers improvements to all major forms of transport to support the economic,

social, and environmental improvement of the Dorset area. The council is awaiting new Local Transport Plan guidance from the Department for Transport before starting work on producing a new LTP. Following delays in publishing this guidance it is now expected in Spring 2023.

Further integration of these strategies will be explored during their preparation and review. However full implementation of many interventions within these strategies would be dependent on securing significant funding.

### **Questions 7 & 8 – submitted by Cllr Belinda Bawden**

1. Volunteers in Lyme Regis and Charmouth have been working with the West Country Rivers Trust to monitor water quality and liaising with water companies, the Environment Agency and local councils to investigate and mitigate the effects of excess sewage discharges. Since the 'Citizen Science' work of the River Lim monitoring group and the Lower Char Community Project got underway this year, unacceptable numbers of sewage discharges have been identified in the rivers and the sea and frightening levels of e-coli and intestinal enterococci have been reported in the sea.  
In this context, my questions are:

Could Dorset Council help us locally by engaging with the water companies, Environment Agency and river monitoring groups to ensure the best water quality monitoring processes are put in place, that any problems are swiftly investigated and that the mechanisms already requested (by a fellow river monitor to the Head of Planning on 12<sup>th</sup> October – see attached) in the planning system to ensure all natural and man-made mitigations and improvements to environmental health are undertaken to be put in place **before** applications are approved?

2. Would Dorset Council write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to urge the government not to scrap environmental and health protections but instead strengthen them to ensure we protect and enhance our natural freshwater and marine resources to boost the opportunities for nature-based solutions to the climate and ecological crises and for the natural environment of Dorset, upon which the economy and health and well-being of our residents depends?

### **Response from Cllr David Walsh - Q1**

Dorset Council, in its role as the local planning authority, engages with water companies, the Environment Agency, the local flood risk authority and a host of other stakeholders when preparing statutory development plans to ensure that effective planning policies are in place for managing planned future growth. We also consult such organisations on certain planning applications which have implications for the water environment. In reaching decisions, the local planning authority will consider the expert advice of specialist consultees and, where it is deemed necessary, can refuse applications if they are likely to lead to unacceptable harm. We may also require mitigation to be put in place prior to development commencing if this is needed to ensure the development is acceptable, as long as it is capable of coming

forward in a timely manner. This is not always justified and in such situations we would not be in a position to withhold planning consents. There are also occasions where the longer term delivery of key infrastructure is funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy whereby each development contributes a proportionate cost towards its future delivery, and we can secure this through a legal agreement. We therefore need to consider each case on its merits. However, the local planning authority should not duplicate the statutory responsibilities of other bodies or organisations and we will take advice from expert consultees if there is any doubt about where responsibilities lie.

### **Response from Cllr Ray Bryan - Q2**

Working closely with organisations such as the Environment Agency that has a key role in maintaining and improving water quality, Dorset Council is committed to delivering on the ambitions contained within its climate and ecological emergency strategy. There are a number of legislative frameworks within which we can operate and we also continue to liaise with government on how existing environmental protections can be enhanced. Under the Environment Act 2021, there is a mandate for a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Dorset Council also responded to the government's recent 'Nature Recovery Green Paper: Protected Sites and Species' consultation in May 2022. This included future options for wildlife designated sites. In the consultation response we supported options which provided even greater protection to the most important wildlife sites emphasising the need for protected sites to be given the same level of protection that is currently given to European sites. Dorset Council places great value upon the protection and stewardship of our unique environment, reflected in commitments expressed in our policies, including statutory local plans and our Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy.

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