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DORSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 18 JULY 2024

Present: Cllrs Stella Jones (Chair), Les Fry (Vice-Chair), Jon Andrews, Jindy Atwal, Mike Baker, Shane Bartlett, Belinda Bawden, Laura Beddow, Derek Beer, Matt Bell, Richard Biggs, Bridget Bolwell, Dave Bolwell, Louise Bown, Alex Brenton, Piers Brown, Ray Bryan, Andy Canning, Will Chakawhata, Simon Christopher, Simon Clifford, Barrie Cooper, Richard Crabb, Peter Dickenson, Neil Eysenck, Beryl Ezzard, Scott Florek, Spencer Flower, Alex Fuhrmann, Simon Gibson, Barry Goringe, Jill Haynes, Hannah Hobbs-Chell, Sally Holland, Ryan Holloway, Ryan Hope, Rob Hughes, Nick Ireland, Jack Jeanes, Sherry Jespersen, Carole Jones, Paul Kimber, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Robin Legg, Cathy Lugg, Rory Major, Craig Monks, David Morgan, Steve Murcer, David Northam, Louie O'Leary, Emma Parker, Mike Parkes, Andrew Parry, Val Pothecary, Byron Quayle, Belinda Ridout, Julie Robinson, Steve Robinson, Pete Roper, David Shortell, Andy Skeats, Duncan Sowry-House, Andrew Starr, Gary Suttle, Clare Sutton, Roland Tarr, David Taylor, Gill Taylor, Andy Todd, David Tooke, Bill Trite, James Vitali, Claudia Webb, Kate Wheller, Sarah Williams, Ben Wilson and Carl Woode

Present remotely: Cllrs Toni Coombs

Apologies: Cllrs Chris Kippax, Jon Orrell and Jane Somper

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

Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Susan Dallison (Democratic Services Team Leader), George Dare (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Chris Harrod (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Jennifer Lowis (Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Matt Prosser (Chief Executive) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

19. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2024 were confirmed and signed.

20. **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr S Bartlett declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in minute 23 because of his wife's employment status in relation the Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre.

21. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reported the deaths of Honorary Alderman John Tory (former North Dorset District Councillor) and Jess Nagel (former Weymouth & Portland Borough Councillor). The Chair also advised that a short presentation from the Dorset Youth Council, would take place at the beginning of every council meeting going forward.

22. **Public Participation - questions**

There were seven questions received from members of the public and these are set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes. There were also 2 public statements and these can also be found in the appendix.

23. **Public Participation - petitions and deputations**

Petition – Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre

Mr Steve Parlour presented a petition requesting Dorset Council to “stop the closure of the Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre, Wimborne”. A copy of his full statement is attached at Appendix 2 to these minutes.

It was proposed by Cllr J Andrews and seconded by Cllr N Ireland that this matter be considered by Cabinet at its next meeting in September.

Some members expressed concerns around why this matter was not going to be considered by a scrutiny committee prior to a decision of Cabinet in September. The Director for Legal and Democratic Services advised that it was expedient to take the matter directly to Cabinet in September to avoid delay and for an early decision; he also confirmed that there was no requirement in the constitution, for a petition to be referred to a scrutiny committee prior to a decision made by any other committee.

Decision

That the petition be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

Deputation – Bibby Stockholm Barge

A deputation was submitted by Elaine White, Candy Udwin, Lucy Hardwicke, Sally Davidson and Giovanna Lewis on behalf of “Stand Up to Racism Dorset” in respect of the Bibby Stockholm Barge.

In response to the deputation, the Leader of the Council advised that Dorset Council remained opposed to the use of the Bibby Stockholm barge and to any extension of the contract between the Home Office and Portland Port. He confirmed that every opportunity would be used to engage with the new Government and new local MP to pursue the Council’s opposition. (A copy of the full response is attached at Appendix 3 to these minutes).

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

The Leader of the Council reported that Dorset Council was shortlisted in the digital transformation category of the MJ Awards 2024 for a planning convergence and transformation project. Dorset Council was “highly commended” in this category.

The Council was also shortlisted for a Royal Town Planning Institute (Southwest) – 2024 Award. The Leader of the Council advised that the Judges were impressed with the “root and branch” scope of the service delivery and the high aspirational self-imposed targets to the creation of their new Unitary Authority Status.

Following the recent King’s Speech for the Opening of Parliament, the Leader of the Council confirmed that there was still much to be clarified in terms of devolution, planning changes and adult social care.

In response to a question, the Leader of the Council confirmed that the function of scrutiny was important to his administration. He also advised that the discussions with neighbouring councils regarding devolution options would be taking place shortly.

25. Questions from Councillors

There were seven Councillor questions, as appended to these minutes at Appendix 4.

26. Adoption of Purbeck Local Plan 2018-2034

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning presented a report seeking the adoption on the Purbeck Local Plan (2018-2034) as part of the development plan for the Purbeck Area.

In presenting the recommendation, the Cabinet Member advised that the Purbeck Local Plan was submitted by Purbeck District Council prior to the creation of Dorset Council in April 2019. The Planning Inspectorate found the plan to be legally compliant and sound. He further advised that the plan, if adopted, would provide the framework for making decisions on planning matters in the Purbeck area until the emerging Dorset Local Plan. Failure to adopt the plan would leave the Purbeck area open to developer-led planning applications which were not consistent with PLP1 development strategy through the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Most members present acknowledged that, the current plan was significantly out-of-date and therefore the most appropriate action should be to adopt the plan.

It was proposed by Cllr S Barrett and seconded by Cllr J Andrews

Decision

That the Purbeck Local Plan (2018-2034) be adopted as part of the development plan for the Purbeck area.

27. **Youth Justice Plan**

The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Skills presented the report and proposed the recommendation that the Youth Justice Plan be adopted.

The recommendation was seconded by Cllr R Legg

Decision

That the Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 be approved.

28. **Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checking**

The Leader of the Council presented the report and proposed the recommendation from the Audit and Governance Committee of 8 July 2024.

The recommendation was seconded by Cllr R Biggs.

Decision

That the Disclosure and Barring Service Checks for Councillors Policy be adopted.

29. **Planning and Licensing Committees**

In proposing the recommendations of the Audit and Governance Committee on 8 July 2024, the Chair, Cllr G Suttle reported that recommendation 3 should read “2024” not 2025.

The recommendations were seconded by Cllr S Flower.

Decision

- (a) That the Officer Scheme of Delegation, be amended, in the Constitution to change the process for determining which planning applications are referred to the planning committees (as shown in Appendix 1 of the report).
- (b) That the Protocol for Members and Officers on Planning Procedures in the Constitution, be amended, at paragraph 8.2 (as set out in Appendix 1 of the report).
- (c) That any Officer Scheme of Delegation Change take effect on 25 July 2024.
- (d) That the Constitution be amended to rename Licensing Committee as the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee, creating a separate General Licensing Committee and substituting Articles 8.28 and 8.29 of the Constitution with new Articles 8.28 – 8.31 (as set out in Appendix 2 of the report).

- (e) That the Chair, Vice-Chair and other Members of the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee also be appointed to the General Licencing Committee.
- (f) That sub-committees of the two licensing committees will be formed as and when needed from the membership of the relevant licensing committee.

30. **Timing of Meetings**

The Leader of the Council presented a report requesting Council to approve a minor change to the time Cabinet meetings were held throughout the year and to allow Chairs of People & Health Overview Committee, People & Health Scrutiny Committee, Place & Resources Overview Committee, Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Governance Committee the ability to change the meeting times of their committees.

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland and seconded by Cllr R Hope

Decision

- (a) That, as a change to the current Calendar of Meetings all future Cabinet meetings be held at 6.30pm.
- (b) That each of the Chairs of the 2 Overview Committees, the 2 Scrutiny Committees and the Audit and Governance Committee, in consultation with committee members, be given discretion to change the time of day at which their committee is to meet.

31. **Notice of Motion - The Nature Emergency**

Full Council received the following motion proposed by Cllr N Ireland, seconded by Cllr C Sutton and supported by Cllr David Taylor, Cllr Mike Baker, Cllr Belinda Bawden, Cllr Dave Bolwell, Cllr Sarah Williams, Cllr Simon Clifford, Cllr Steve Robinson, Cllr Richard Biggs, Cllr Gill Taylor, Cllr Claudia Webb, Cllr Scott Florek, Cllr Duncan Sowry-House, Cllr Kate Wheller, Cllr Louise Bown, Cllr Will Chakawhata, Cllr Andy Canning, Cllr Jack Jeans, Cllr Chris Kippax, Cllr Jon Orrell, Cllr M Bell, Cllr S Holland.

Motion narrative and action required

This council:

1. Declares that there is a nature emergency, recognising:
 - a. That nature is in long term decline and urgent action must be taken to reverse this, that the UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries - in the bottom 10% globally and the worst in the G7 - and with only about half its biodiversity left that it is far below the global average;
 - b. That a thriving natural environment underpins a healthy, prosperous society, that it benefits our physical and mental health, feeds us, cleans our air, moderates urban heat, alleviates flooding, absorbs carbon, makes

counties like Dorset beautiful and that its survival and diversity is essential to human life;

- c. That the nature crisis and the climate emergency are intrinsically linked and that the impacts of the climate crisis drive nature's decline, while restoring nature can help to tackle the climate crisis.

2. Notes the positive work already begun and planned by this council including:

- d. The strategic intent as encapsulated in its Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology strategy, alongside the council's role as responsible authority for the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the county of Dorset.
- e. The work already undertaken to promote biodiversity in the council's own country parks and greenspaces, farms, highway verges, watercourses, designated areas, woodland, local nature reserves and other natural areas.
- f. Hosting the Dorset National Landscape Partnership and supporting its nature recovery work with a wide range of stakeholders, including coordinating the Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve partnership and the West Dorset Rivers and Coastal Streams catchment, and making significant investments in nature through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

3. Commits to embed nature's recovery at the heart of all strategic plans, including the forthcoming Dorset local plan, policy areas and decision-making processes, building upon the climate decision-wheel and the Nature Recovery Dorset brand.

4. Having declared a climate emergency in 2019, commits to tackling the climate and nature emergencies together and investing in nature-based solutions to the challenges posed by climate change, including mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to increased climate risk such as flooding and extreme summer heat.

5. Facilitate the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Dorset, working with farmers, landowners, businesses, organisations and NGO's so that there are agreed priorities, opportunities and reportable actions to recover nature across Dorset.

6. Set clear strategic and measurable goals for nature's recovery by 2030 and its contribution towards mitigating carbon emissions and increasing our resilience to climate change, for example:

- a. Contributing to the national commitment to protect 30% of land for nature by 2030, in line with the UK's international commitment to biodiversity and the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology strategy and set out in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Dorset.
- b. Supporting the Dorset and Cranborne Chase National Landscapes to meet/exceed their apportionment of the Environmental Improvement Plan targets

- c. Making space for nature and the long-term maintenance and expansion of the Nature Recovery Network.
- d. Improving biodiversity on Dorset Council land including our farms, highway verge, country parks and other greenspace by, for example planting trees and hedgerows, lowering soil fertility on verges and encouraging community orchards and the establishment of allotments.
- e. Working with farmers, landowners, town & parish councils and other external partners to improve biodiversity, increase tree cover and woodland, and green our streets.
- f. Remove the use of glyphosate and chemicals damaging to ecosystems/nature where possible.
- g. Reducing pressure on wildlife and developing wildlife corridors.
- h. Improving doorstep access to nature, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those wards already identified as having the worst access to nature.
- i. Supporting communities and businesses to make better decisions and take action to support nature's recovery.
- j. Developing a strategic perspective on natural flood management solutions, working with key partners and stakeholders.

In presenting the motion the Leader of the Council proposed and set out the following amendment and this was also seconded by Cllr C Sutton.

To Delete 6(f)

- f. ~~Remove the use of glyphosate and chemicals damaging to ecosystems/nature where possible.~~

And replace with

- f. *Remove or restrict the use of glyphosate and other chemicals damaging to ecosystems/nature and commit to a glyphosate reduction plan.*

And add new paragraph 6(k)

- k. Extend the ban on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on Dorset Council owned land to include new tenancies of our county farm estate.

In accordance with the Procedure Rule 14.3 (a) the Notice of Motion (as amended) was debated and upon being put to the vote the amendment was **CARRIED**.

Following further debate of the substantive motion, it was proposed by Cllr R Bryan and seconded by Cllr S Flower "that this matter be deferred to a future meeting of Council, until after an all-member webinar had been held and a programme for the proposal had been fully costed."

Upon being put to the vote the motion to defer was **LOST**.

EXTENSION OF MEETING BEYOND 3 HOURS (Procedure Rule 8)

In accordance with the Constitution, it was agreed to continue the meeting beyond 3 hours.

The Chair invited members to continue the discussion on the substantive motion and upon being put to the vote the motion was **CARRIED**

Decision (substantive)

That this council:

1. Declares that there is a nature emergency, recognising:
 - (a) That nature is in long term decline and urgent action must be taken to reverse this, that the UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries - in the bottom 10% globally and the worst in the G7 - and with only about half its biodiversity left that it is far below the global average;
 - (b) That a thriving natural environment underpins a healthy, prosperous society, that it benefits our physical and mental health, feeds us, cleans our air, moderates urban heat, alleviates flooding, absorbs carbon, makes counties like Dorset beautiful and that its survival and diversity is essential to human life;
 - (c) That the nature crisis and the climate emergency are intrinsically linked and that the impacts of the climate crisis drive nature's decline, while restoring nature can help to tackle the climate crisis.
2. Notes the positive work already begun and planned by this council including:
 - (d) The strategic intent as encapsulated in its Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology strategy, alongside the council's role as responsible authority for the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the county of Dorset.
 - (e) The work already undertaken to promote biodiversity in the council's own country parks and greenspaces, farms, highway verges, watercourses, designated areas, woodland, local nature reserves and other natural areas.
 - (f) Hosting the Dorset National Landscape Partnership and supporting its nature recovery work with a wide range of stakeholders, including coordinating the Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve partnership and the West Dorset Rivers and Coastal Streams catchment, and making significant investments in nature through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.
3. Commits to embed nature's recovery at the heart of all strategic plans, including the forthcoming Dorset local plan, policy areas and decision-making processes, building upon the climate decision-wheel and the Nature Recovery Dorset brand.

4. Having declared a climate emergency in 2019, commits to tackling the climate and nature emergencies together and investing in nature-based solutions to the challenges posed by climate change, including mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to increased climate risk such as flooding and extreme summer heat.
5. Facilitate the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Dorset, working with farmers, landowners, businesses, organisations and NGO's so that there are agreed priorities, opportunities and reportable actions to recover nature across Dorset.
6. Set clear strategic and measurable goals for nature's recovery by 2030 and its contribution towards mitigating carbon emissions and increasing our resilience to climate change, for example:
 - (a) Contributing to the national commitment to protect 30% of land for nature by 2030, in line with the UK's international commitment to biodiversity and the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology strategy and set out in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Dorset.
 - (b) Supporting the Dorset and Cranborne Chase National Landscapes to meet/exceed their apportionment of the Environmental Improvement Plan targets.
 - (c) Making space for nature and the long-term maintenance and expansion of the Nature Recovery Network.
 - (d) Improving biodiversity on Dorset Council land including our farms, highway verge, country parks and other greenspace by, for example planting trees and hedgerows, lowering soil fertility on verges and encouraging community orchards and the establishment of allotments.
 - (e) Working with farmers, landowners, town & parish councils and other external partners to improve biodiversity, increase tree cover and woodland, and green our streets.
 - (f) Remove or restrict the use of glyphosate and other chemicals damaging to ecosystems/nature and commit to a glyphosate reduction plan.
 - (g) Reducing pressure on wildlife and developing wildlife corridors.
 - (h) Improving doorstep access to nature, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those wards already identified as having the worst access to nature.
 - (i) Supporting communities and businesses to make better decisions and take action to support nature's recovery.

- (j) Developing a strategic perspective on natural flood management solutions, working with key partners and stakeholders.
- (k) Extend the ban on the use of neonicotinoid pesticides on Dorset Council owned land to include new tenancies of our county farm estate.

32. Election of Vice-Chair Western & Southern Planning Committee

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland and seconded by Cllr S Bartlett

Decision

That Cllr N Eysenck be elected Vice-Chair of the Western & Southern Planning Committee.

33. Urgent items

There were no urgent items to report.

34. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business to report.

Appendix 1 - Questions and statements from the public

Appendix 2 - Statement from Mr Parlour regarding Petition - Queen Elizabeth Centre

Appendix 3 - Deputation Statement and Response from the Leader of the Council

Appendix 4 - Councillor Questions and Responses

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 9.38 pm

Chairman

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Full Council

18 July 2024

Public Participation – Questions from Members of the Public

Question 1: - Submitted by Richard Lonsdale

Dorset Council was formed by merging Weymouth & Portland, four District Councils and the County Council. As such Dorset Council took on the responsibilities of all those councils.

One of those responsibilities was to hear representations by members of the public concerning issues in their area. Now, those voices can only really be heard in Dorchester. There is an exception – the area planning committees.

Using petitions as an example, until today, only one petition has reached the threshold to be discussed at Full Council. That was on Weymouth Parking charges. Potentially another is coming up in a few minutes on an issue related to East Dorset. I doubt someone living in Alderholt has much opinion about Weymouth parking charges. Equally I doubt someone in Bridport is overly concerned about a leisure centre in Pamphill.

Could consideration be given to the formation of area committees, as with planning, to offer more local access and provide more flexibility over the nature of petitions, time for questions and statements and access to full council if necessary?

Answer – Cllr Nick Ireland

The creation of area boards was a topic of discussion in the Shadow Authority which preceded the creation of Dorset Council, and it was expected to be taken up by the newly elected administration after May 2019. I don't recall a formal decision being made on area boards after that date but instead it was quietly shelved.

When listening to our residents and parish councils over the past five years, many perceive a gap between the local representation desired and that Dorset Council provides. However, I should highlight the fact that Dorset has many town councils with populations of around 10,000 or more that already have the authority and resources to deal with many local issues, and to provide robust representation for their communities.

A key item of the Liberal Democrat manifesto for the elections this May was, and I quote ...

“Create a well-run council with vision and ambition; making decision-making as local and democratic as possible; listening more to local residents and creating a genuine partnership with town and parish councils.”

We have already commenced several strands of work towards achieving these outcomes.

Initial discussions have been held with DAPTC to understand how we may leverage their connections better.

We are changing the planning scheme of delegation tonight to ensure the views of parish and town councils, and their local ward members, are better considered.

We are running a series of eight Big Conversation engagement events across our area from late July to mid-September to give residents an opportunity to talk with local councillors and cabinet members in-person about the issues that really matter to them.

An independent study and review is currently underway by Graham Sansom, (Adjunct Professor at the UTS Institute for Public Policy and Governance) & Dr Graham Morris (Exeter University), investigating the interaction of our larger parishes and town councils with Dorset Council; this is due to report back later this year.

And finally, we have in place a work stream to look at how other authorities, both in the UK and elsewhere, collaborate more closely with their lower tier authorities and residents for the mutual benefit of all. It's too early to give any definitive outcome but it's probably fair to say one model across the entire DC area probably won't work due to the differences and demands of our urban and rural communities, and instead we're likely to end up with a hybrid solution. We plan to have a pilot scheme for Sherborne and its surrounding parishes up and running soon, hopefully before the end of this year once the details have been ironed out.

Question 2: - Submitted by Hannah Small

I am sure that the council members agree with Dorset Councils Social Care recommendations to "Be more active with exercises or activities for wellbeing," that access to physical activity is paramount to keeping the population fit, physically and mentally healthy and able to work. One of the most effective ways for people to recover from short term injury, support mental health, keep long term disabled people active and working, and help older people continue in good physical health for longer, is access to a swimming pool. Swimming is scientifically proven and promoted by the NHS and Dorset Council Website as one of the best ways to achieve this. Specialist exercise therapy classes in a gym studio environment are also vitally important and many people with health issues use a mixture of both to maintain fitness levels, prevent further issues occurring and gain social and community support from peers thereby improving mental health. The majority of people with long term health conditions are unfortunately some of the poorest in society due to lack of access to supported employment and higher costs as a direct result of their condition. They are also the most likely to need to use public transport and need Social Care support to access physical activities that are suitable for their condition. Closing the facilities at Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre has had a negative impact on the disabled population of Wimborne and its surrounding rural villages, resulting in a loss of access to relevant therapies including Exercise Therapy and Aqua Therapy. There is no replacement service of the same accessibility and quality within a reasonable and affordable distance of QELC, and

no rural public transport links for those who cannot drive due to ill health. Those that are available are oversubscribed and lack important accessibility features such as steps, ramps, hoists, changing facilities and a multi depth pool for deep water therapy. This has vastly increased the health inequality that is already a huge problem for disabled and older community members. It has increased costs to Social Care who are having to fund non local therapies, and the poorest members of the community who are having to find extra money to travel to and access basic physical exercise therapies in multiple locations across East Dorset, BCP and into Ringwood Hampshire. In light of the previous council's decision to close Queen Elizabeth Leisure centre and the resulting health inequality for disabled and elderly people, does the council have a plan to address this disparity?

Answer - Cllr. Jon Andrews

Thank you for your question. I think we all appreciate the benefits of being active and how this can have a positive impact on our physical and mental wellbeing. As a Council, we are particularly keen to ensure that we have an equity of leisure provision across the Dorset Council area and target health inequalities. Active Dorset's physical activity strategy – A Movement for Movement which was adopted by Dorset Health and Wellbeing Board last year, provides excellent guidance on how to build in activity in everyday life. Whilst we appreciate that the Council's decision to exit the management agreement and the new way in which the school is operating their leisure centre will have an impact on some, we are still fortunate to have access to 8 public leisure centres within this catchment area. All of these facilities provide GP referral schemes for those in our community that have health issues and may need additional support. The Council also commissions Livewell Dorset which is free to all residents and offers help to anyone wanting to increase their activity levels, as well as advice on where to access activities.

Question 3 – submitted by Rebecca Ilghany

It was argued by the previous council that there is plenty of leisure provision within a 20 minute driving distance of Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre. This raises concerns with the environmental impact this has and goes against government targets to reduce emissions. Furthermore, since the closure of QELC, other local fitness providers have been overwhelmed with people unable to get on to now over subscribed classes with waiting lists. Such lack of exercise provision will only impact on the NHS, Public Health Dorset and Council's Adult Social Care. With respect to the 82 newly democratically elected council members, in comparison, we are presenting the largest ever submitted to Dorset Council with around 7000 signatures from irate constituents opposing the closure of QELC, a facility that has served the public since 1976 and been at the heart of generations within our community. This petition is endorsed by our local MP. From figures obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, after much scrutiny, it is clear QELC was under marketed and under priced in line with other local leisure centres and when considering the increase in population to the area, the largest conurbation, if this was managed correctly, QELC would have been in a much better position financially. With this in mind, will the

newly elected councillors listen to the will of the people and agree to work with Initio (who have recently issued a statement requesting such) and the local community to find a way forward for a new leisure centre to be opened as soon as possible on the site of QELC?

Answer – Cllr Jon Andrews

Thank you for your question. National policy identifies an accessible leisure catchment area as being **within** a 10-mile radius or 20 min drive time and is the reason that this has been used as a reference. We are fortunate that within the catchment of QE Leisure Centre, there are 8 alternative public leisure facilities, and as someone who represents an area of North Dorset, it would be wonderful if other parts of the Council area also had this level of exercise provision.

Unfortunately, given the age of the QE facility and the high levels of local competition, the centre has understandably required a large revenue subsidy over the years.

During the two-year notice period, Dorset Council have worked with Initio Learning Trust to identify ways in which the school's leisure facilities can still be accessed by the school and local community. The Council has also provided £881,000 towards centre improvements and the replacement of the all-weather pitch and will continue to support the trust as it and looks to maximise community usage following the completion of the building works.

Question 4 – submitted by Felicity Frost

We would like to draw your attention to a case in which the Scottish Borders Council were found to be acting illegally by closing a day care centre in 2022 without properly conducting an equality impact assessment.

We understand that while an Equality Impact Assessment on the closure of the Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre was drafted, it was not completed and signed off. We question whether suitable alternative provision is really available for disabled service users in the local area, resulting in further disadvantage and health inequality. Given the huge impact of the closure of QELC on disabled people can you clarify the situation regarding the Equality Impact Assessment?

<https://brodies.com/insights/government-and-public-sector/court-of-session-finds-councils-closure-of-day-care-service-unlawful/>

Answer – Cllr Jon Andrews

Thank you for your question. QE Leisure School and Leisure Centre is owned by QE School Foundation Trustees and managed by Initio Learning Trust. Prior to the 1st April this year, the Council operated the leisure centre under a dual use management agreement. As the operators of the site, the Council had the option to withdraw from the management agreement on the provision it gave notice of 2 years.

The Council took this decision in March 2022 following a public consultation. The conclusions of the consultation were that there are 8 alternative public leisure within a 10-mile radius of QE and this level of provision was much higher than all the other parts of the Dorset Council area. All these alternative facilities provide access for disabled users and operate a GP referral scheme for those with health issues. As part of the Equality Impact Assessment review, we identified a shortfall in Aqua therapy and as a result have provided funding for this to be delivered at another local centre.

Although the school have been unable to engage a new operator, the facilities remain open for school and community club use. We will continue to work with Initio to identify ways in which the facilities can be maximised for community usage.

Question 5 – submitted by Roger Hussey

Why are Officers still enforcing an outdated scaffolding policy on Dorchester's High Street?

As a Dorchester based architectural Practice we are presently working on Nos 51, 52, 53, 57 & 64 High West Street together with the Museum.

All of these buildings are Grade 2 Listed and sit within the Conservation Area.

With the exception of the Museum all of these buildings were once fine town houses, for many years they have been offices but now, with the lack of demand for office accommodation, they are slowly returning to their original purpose, albeit apartments and maisonettes rather than grand houses.

Very little gets spent on keeping commercial premises in good repair so it is inevitable as part of any conversion that significant external refurbishment of elevations and roofscapes is necessary. Such schemes of work require scaffold and here lies the problem.

Dorset Council has a policy that limits scaffold erection in the High Street to two hours each evening and Sundays. We understand this has been in place for over 30 years and we believe dates from when the High Street was the trunk road (A35).

This policy is long overdue a rethink. The High Street is no longer a trunk road. Focussing scaffold erection into Sundays in an area that is becoming increasingly residential is not pleasant for those already living there and hoping to enjoy a 'day off'.

Significantly, this legislation places huge increased scaffold cost on property owners – money that would be much better spent on the buildings themselves to preserve and enhance Dorchester's architectural heritage. As a real example scaffold is being erected on our own offices at No 57 in August – the increased cost of doing this over several Sundays and outside of normal working hours is £18,800 excluding VAT.

There is no good reason to continue to enforce this outdated policy. If Members will not relax it completely at the very least scaffold erection should be allowed to take place between, say, 9.30am and 4.00pm, thus avoiding any perceived 'rush hour'.

To continue as things stand in the face of escalating construction costs is unacceptable.

Answer – Cllr Jon Andrews

The policy regarding the restriction of scaffolding erection times is not exclusive to High West Street in Dorchester, it is implemented across the entire unitary area. Officers evaluate each situation on a case-by-case basis, with the primary concern being the potential impact on highway users. This approach aims to mitigate risks and minimise disruption to traffic by imposing conditions that mandate erection at times when the road is quieter.

Question 6 – submitted by Annie Webster

Re: 14. Notice of Motion - The Nature of Emergency

Proposer:- Cllr Nick Ireland

Re: No.6 f. - Remove the use glyphosate and chemicals damaging to ecosystems/nature where possible.

I request that glyphosate and chemical herbicides damaging ecosystems/nature are removed completely NOT 'just where possible'.

Addressing the ecosystem/nature first, glyphosate, a neonicotinoid, where upon, it is said that a single teaspoon is enough to kill 1.25 billion bees, is seriously disrupting and therefore killing out right, pollinators especially bumble and honey bees. Also disrupting the small insects at the base of the food chain with ever increasing devastating effects. We need to encourage pollinators to thrive not just to survive. Unless we stop using these chemicals because of loss of pollinators, we will suffer food chains breaking down.

Scientists throughout the world have long been concerned with the effects of glyphosate on humans. It is a neurotoxin and an endocrine (hormone) disrupters, which causes cancerous tumours, birth defects and other developmental disorders i.e. ADHD and autism. The WHO lists glyphosate as 'probably carcinogenic'.

The Monsanto Roundup lawsuits in America bears out just how dangerous glyphosate is, with settlement agreements to the tune of approx \$11 billion, with approx another 54,000 claims against Monsanto in the pipeline.

So, basically, glyphosate is a killer and therefore has no place in threatening the lives of any residents or any domestic animals in the Dorset areas. Roads, pavements, public gardens, playgrounds/areas need to be chemical free.

As other places in the country have already done, let's make Dorset a glyphosate and other chemical herbicide free county. And switch to non-chemical methods of weed control in all areas used by the public.

Question 7 – submitted by Caz Dennett

The Nature Emergency motion is a most welcome step towards acknowledging
“That nature is in long term decline and urgent action must be taken to reverse this”

However, the motion proposes to continue use of glyphosate. Glyphosate is a non-selective systemic herbicide, known commonly as weed-killer. Non-selective means it does not target specific species of plant, but kills all plant-life that is in the spray-zone.

Section 6 in the motion, lays out the goals for nature’s recovery by 2030, and says

- f. Remove the use of glyphosate and chemicals damaging to ecosystems/nature where possible.

The term “where possible” is too open. It doesn’t convey an ambition to prevent, reduce, restrict, or control glyphosate usage. I contacted nature expert, campaigner, and TV presenter Chris Packham for advice, and he sent me this message of encouragement for Dorset Council.

To the members of Dorset Council

I applaud that Dorset Council has a motion to declare a nature emergency- using the right language at critical time- a time when our wildlife locally and globally is suffering catastrophic declines. But to continue using Glyphosate across Dorset's urban areas is simply mind-boggling.

We know Glyphosate-based products have the potential to cause significant damage to human health and to the environment- why take that risk?

Wilder urban areas are better for nature and people- who can argue that our parks, streets and towns are only boosted by the presence of bees and butterflies.

In a biodiversity crisis we need leaders- this is a huge opportunity for the council to lead and demonstrate that emergency situations require ambitious, bold action.

I love Dorset, we’ve filmed many of the Spring/Autumn watches in Arne- let’s keep the buzz in Dorset!

I urge Dorset Council to be an ‘authority of action’ for nature, and rise to the challenge by reducing and restricting glyphosate usage.

Thank you



Chris Packham

TV Broadcaster and Environmental Campaigner.

14.07.24

To become a top performer in nature protection and restoration I ask this Council to commit to reducing and restricting glyphosate usage within an agreed timeframe. I recognize this is a challenge, we all recognize this is a challenge. However, the nature emergency demands we change our practices, because nature needs our critical care to recover, and to restore good health.

Q. Will Council members consider amending Item 6.f to:

Reduce and restrict the use of glyphosate and chemicals damaging to ecosystems/nature?

Answer to Qs 6&7 – Cllr Nick Ireland

The continued use of glyphosate, both by local authorities, and in other realms such as agriculture for example, is the cause of both continued debate and concern, not just in the UK but also in Europe and beyond. The WHO did indeed designate it as a possible carcinogen and our own **Dorset Council Pollinators Action Plan 2019 – 2024** states that “*research now appears to have found links between the use of this herbicide and the decline of bees*”. On the flip side, national governments have insisted that its use is safe when applied correctly, but we also know that they don’t particularly have a great track record when it comes to past public health and nature issues.

Dorset Council’s existing use of glyphosate is minimal when compared to agricultural use in Dorset where entire fields are sprayed before sowing. However, that doesn’t mean that as a responsible authority, we shouldn’t seek to reduce or even eliminate its application. Our current deployment of the herbicide is essentially in spraying sealed surfaces (aka pavements and kerbs) plus the very focused use on certain invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed and others where use is directed by Natural England to protect SSIs (and I’m aware that is counterintuitive).

We are working to reduce the use through various means such as removing soil and detritus from sealed surfaces combined with ensuring that when pavements and footpaths are replaced, the new surface is designed to be as weed resistant as possible.

Many other authorities in the UK have banned the use of glyphosates only to have to retract to various extents. We won't issue a ban now because for us it simply is not practical, but please be assured that Dorset Council is dedicated to tackling both the climate and nature emergencies and I will be amending the motion later to more accurately reflect what Dorset Council is both doing now and more importantly, committing to going forward.

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Full Council

18 July 2024

Public Participation – Statements from Members of the Public

Statement submitted by Ross Bowell, Director of Resources, Initio Learning Trust

Initio Learning Trust statement regarding Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre (QELC)

Queen Elizabeth's School, Wimborne is continuing to provide excellent sports provision for students, community clubs and group hire on the refurbished artificial grass pitch and hard courts. However, we are acutely aware that the 31 March closure of the QELC facilities to the public, including the swimming pool, has been detrimental to our local communities. We disagree with the council's briefing note assertion that "the future subsidy at QELC could be in excess of £850K" per year. For example, we received correspondence in June 2024 from a credible local leisure provider advising that "Whilst we recognise that time may have passed and circumstances change; we still believe that given the right setup, investment and staffing levels, a successful leisure operation is possible on the premises." Accordingly it will be informative to provide further detail on the briefing note comment that "QE school had two years to find a new operator or arrange to manage the facilities directly themselves. They were unable to find another operator so have opted to manage the site under a different operating model." Supported by a specialist leisure consultant, in 2023 Initio ran an open tender for the continued running of QELC as a dual-use leisure centre and received two bids from regional leisure providers which indicated that with one-off capital investment to bring QELC up to modern standards the centre was potentially viable. In May 2023 we had asked Dorset Council to provide additional capital investment and £150,000 revenue support over 2 years to support the continued operation of the leisure centre. An extract of the response in June 2023 is below: "Thank you for setting out your formal request for additional funds to alter and improve the facilities at QE Leisure Centre. Your specific request of an additional £1.557m capital investment from Dorset Council and £150,000 revenue support for 24/25 and 25/26 was reviewed by the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Culture, the Director of Place Services and the Head of Environment and Wellbeing...Dorset Council is not able to provide any capital or revenue funding above what it has already committed to do." Initio Learning Trust invites the new Dorset Council leadership to reconsider its approach to QELC. Our market engagement suggests that with a one-off capital investment and little or no revenue subsidy the council could successfully and viably recommission QELC as a public leisure centre operated by a specialist third party leisure provider while protecting QE school's access to the facilities to support high quality educational provision to Dorset children.

Statement submitted by Peter Webb

Purbeck Local Plan

Council should seriously consider rejecting the proposal to adopt the Purbeck Local Plan 2018 – 2034

Other than some further consultations on a few relatively specific issues raised by the Inspector, the bulk of the work and evidence that has gone into the Plan was carried out and collected prior to 2018, with some dating back prior to 2015. That is nine years or more ago. The Plan was prepared using housing number projections that were universally seen as illogical given where Purbeck is and its attraction to those migrating from elsewhere in UK driving up prices and to the exclusion of local people

It would be wiser to stick with the currently adopted Purbeck Local Plan until the new Dorset Local Plan has been prepared.

While the extant Purbeck Local Plan has less weight than it did, the reality is that development in Purbeck is constrained by both Green Belt, Natural Landscapes and Environmental regulations. There will not be a free for all by developers on the parcels of land not constrained. They will await what the new Labour Government actually delivers. So should Dorset Council before preparing its Local Plan for the whole of Dorset, utilising new evidence collected and realistic housing projections.

Incorporating old evidence and consultation results for Purbeck while using new evidence for the rest of the County is both illogical and potentially unfair and distorting.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this petition to council this evening. The petition was set up to protest the proposed closure of Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre in Wimborne and we continue to campaign for the reopening of the centre. While collecting signatures, I found that there is astonishment and dismay that it has come to this. We are grateful for the support of several local councillors and the new MP for Mid-Dorset and North Poole.

Wimborne is the fourth largest conurbation in Dorset and is growing rapidly but has no leisure centre or swimming pool. The growing population, with the right management, promotion and perhaps a public cafe means a well run health and fitness facility could be a profitable asset for the local community. Opportunities to market centre were missed; prices were kept the same for years. Run down dirty facilities and broken equipment meant it's not surprising that footfall decreased even prior to Covid.

The closure of QE will increase health inequality as those with additional needs are particularly affected. The closure of the pool means disabled people having to drive, if they can drive and have access to a car, as far as Blandford to access a suitable accessible pool. Surely this isn't realistic, as some people need to use the pool more than once a week to keep mobile? GPs can no longer refer people to leisure centre either, meaning more travel and inconvenience for those with health issues.

For those of us in good physical health, closing QE has meant the removal of all the many activities offered there. Being able to pop into the gym when it fits into your day, use the climbing wall, which is unmatched as far as Southampton, go for a swim or take part in a fitness class are things that we could enjoy and benefit from. Now we are told to find a suitable alternative, an additional 20 minutes from the centre that stands mainly unused. How does this line up with the Climate Emergency declared by the council? For the carless, health inequality rears its head. QE is a reasonable walk or cycle from the town and could be provided with a bus stop with only a small diversion from an existing bus route.

Our growing community with diverse ages and abilities could come together to benefit our physical and mental health at a reopened leisure centre. The community spirit was demonstrated in 1976 when the pool was partly funded by the people of Wimborne, who raised £7500 by public appeal and sponsored events. This petition shows that the community spirit is still strong.

The previous operators, Initio Learning Trust, are keen to engage with Dorset Council to reopen the Queen Elizabeth Leisure Centre and we would ask you to take this opportunity and refer the petition to Committee and find a way to reopen this valuable community asset.

Thankyou.

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Response from Cllr Nick Ireland, Leader of Dorset Council to a Deputation from Stand Up to Racism Dorset and the Portland Global Friendship Group

Thank you for coming as a deputation to the Dorset Council meeting this evening and for telling the Council about your concerns and suggestions.

Dorset Council remains opposed to the use of the Bibby Stockholm barge. We are also opposed to any extension of the contract between the Home Office and Portland Port, and we will use the opportunity of a new Government and a new local MP to pursue our opposition.

While the barge is here, the council will continue to work constructively with the Home Office and other partners to ensure the safe running of the vessel for everyone residing on it and to assist with effective integration with the local area and communities.

With appropriate council officers, I would like to meet you to discuss your concerns and proposals. I welcome such a conversation and want to continue to find a positive way forward.

In the meantime, the Multi Agency Forum (MAF), consisting of representatives from all agencies involved including local councils, Dorset Police and NHS, and chaired by Dorset Council, continues to meet regularly and provides a constructive way to engage and influence Home Office management of their project.

The Community Impact Group, also chaired by Dorset Council, meets weekly. Any issues are raised at these meetings and discussed with solutions identified and appropriate action.

Monthly updates from the MAF are posted on the Dorset Council website and shared with all partners and local communities and continue to be a trusted source of accurate information regarding all partners' involvement with the Bibby Stockholm.

I look forward to meeting with you when we can pick up the issues raised.

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**Full Council
18 July 2024
Agenda item 6 – Petitions and Deputations**

To consider the following deputation submitted by Stand Up to Racism Dorset.

Deputation Leader: - Elaine White, to be accompanied by Candy Udwin, Lucy Hardwicke, Sally Davidson and Giovanna Lewis

Statement for Deputation: -

It is now over a year since the announcement that the Bibby Stockholm barge would be used in Portland Port to house up to 500 people seeking asylum. This announcement was made without consultation with Dorset Council and was opposed by them.

Since then

- Dorset council received the first 25% of the funding from the Home Office amounting to £437.5k on 1st November 2023.
- Dorset council received a one off sum of £377000 for the Voluntary and Community Sector in relation to the barge.

OUR CONCERNS AND PROPOSALS

1. THE BIBBY STOCKHOLM IS NOT A SUITABLE OR HUMANE PLACE TO HOUSE REFUGEES SEEKING ASYLUM

See the Inquiry Report produced by Care4Calais, Stand Up To Racism Dorset and Portland Global Friendship Group which details the serious impact that the security, segregation and other aspects of barge life has on the residents. <https://care4calais.org/bibby-report>. This impact has only worsened since the number of residents has recently increased to over 400.

We remember Leonard Farruku who took his own life on the barge in December, and believe that all steps should be taken to prevent such a tragedy happening again.

PROPOSAL ONE

Dorset Council should continue to call for an end to the use of the Bibby Stockholm at Portland Port.

Specifically, the Council should:

- a) Insist that it is consulted before any extension to the original 18 month contract.
- b) Consider how to take any possible steps to end the barge's use.

2. THERE ARE NO ADDITIONAL RESOURCES PROVIDED FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

We understand that some of the £437.5k so far received by the Council from the Home Office has been spent on staff costs and additional security.

Additional funding for GP provision has been provided to the NHS for a GP practice in Bournemouth.

PROPOSAL TWO

The Council should:

- a) Use the funding provided by the Home Office, which could total up to £1.75 million, to benefit local residents as well as those on the barge, which would help integration and break down barriers. One example would be by providing community or sports facilities that could be used by all.
- b) Support the campaign to fully reopen Portland hospital with services for local residents as well as those on the Bibby Stockholm.

3. SUPPORT FOR BARGE RESIDENTS IS INADEQUATE

A Community Liaison Coordinator has now been appointed by the Council and this has led to some increase in the support and activity being organised by the Council. However there are still huge gaps in the provision which Portland Global Friendship Group (PGFG an entirely voluntary group set up on the Island a year ago, without any funding support from the Council) has been trying to fill.

ACTIVITIES & INTEGRATION

PGFG provides the majority of English lessons, conversation clubs, volunteering opportunities, sporting cultural and social activities available to the residents.

CLOTHING, SHOES & OTHER REQUIREMENTS

The Council originally planned to commission a charity to run a "Dignity Shop" to provide the residents with clothing, shoes and toiletries. We understand this did not proceed because of problems with finding a venue.

This means PGFG has had to provide the residents with these through donations, crowdfunding and some support from charities. We have also been providing Sim cards, and second hand phones since the provision of laptops on the barge is completely inadequate and the wifi often does not work. This is done through entirely voluntary effort without the provision from the council of either funding or venues, often using people's own homes for storage of items. We are unwilling to see residents who do not have a jacket or shoes go needy, but especially with the increased number and turnover of residents on the barge, we are no longer able to meet everyone's needs.

OTHER SUPPORT

There is also a huge need for support with dealing with various practical tasks and form filling, registering to work, hospital appointments etc. We have tried to organise this. There is no current plan from the council to provide such support.

PROPOSAL THREE

The Council should urgently reinstate the plan to commission the provision of clothing, toiletries and other items, as well as consider how other support required is provided.

4. INCREASE IN RACIAL TENSION IN WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND

At the time of the Bibby Stockholm's arrival in Portland last year, there was a large amount of ignorance and fear about its impact locally. This was fuelled by the language used by the government at the time, by some individuals locally, and by visits from right wing groups from out of Dorset such as the Patriotic Alternative. During last summer, attempts to organise local people against refugees with slogans such as "stop the invasion" reached their height.

Stand Up To Racism Dorset held public meetings, demonstrations, street stalls and other events to argue that the barge was not right for asylum seekers or local people, but that the refugees were not to blame and should be welcomed. Any racist statements were publicly called out. Portland Global Friendship Group was formed and organised public welcomes for the refugees when they arrived. Overall, this led to the organised public opposition to the refugees largely subsiding or becoming more hidden.

However, there is still a huge amount of misinformation, and sometimes open hatred, shared about the Bibby residents both online and in the community. This includes the lies that Bibby residents have harassed local children (confirmed by the police not to be true), or that they have harassed, or even raped or murdered local women (again with absolutely no substance). Volunteers who support the refugees have been abused on-line and in person. This has led to the arrest of one Portland resident for harassment. There is now a situation where racism towards local people of colour has increased, and the refugees could be put at risk if tensions escalated.

We believe this situation requires education and community integration, not increased security. Bibby residents have been to visit and speak in some local community, education, religious and workplace settings. Community events or activities which bring people together break down barriers and undercut stereotypes.

PROPOSAL FOUR

Dorset Council should urgently consider a public campaign to welcome refugees (this should include all those in the area, not just on the Bibby stockholm). This could include an education program for local community organisations, schools and others, as well as public rebuttals of some of the misinformation that is circulated.

Procedural note for members:-

Extract from the Council's Procedural Rules:-

10.10 Presenting a deputation at the meeting

(a) The Chair will invite the Deputation Leader to read out any statement/explanation given as part of the details of the deputation or a summary of it. If the Deputation Leader who has submitted the deputation is unable to be present, the Chair may invite another person on the deputation to read it out.

(b) A statement/explanation read out about a deputation shall not exceed five minutes unless the Chair expressly allows.

10.11 Discussion about a deputation

Unless the Chair decides otherwise, no discussion will take place about any deputation presented pursuant to these procedure rules.

10.12 Replying to a deputation

Any person identified as being the person who will reply to a deputation may reply in such matter as s/he considers appropriate.

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