



Dorset Council

Date: Thursday, 15 May 2025
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

All members of Dorset Council are requested to attend this meeting of the Full Council.

Interim Chief Executive: Sam Crowe, County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic Services
Meeting Contact susan.dallison@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting, apart from any items listed in the exempt part of this agenda.

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Agenda

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1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

To elect the Chair of Council for the 2025/26 municipal year.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

To elect the Vice-chair of Council for the 2025/26 municipal year.

3. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

4. MINUTES

5 - 32

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 10th April 2025.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interests as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their

decision councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.

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

6. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (a) To receive any announcements from the Chair of Council.
- (b) To receive a short presentation by members of the Youth Council on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

7. MOTION ON NOTICE - UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

33 - 36

To consider a motion on notice submitted by Cllr Duncan Sowry-House.

8. ELECTION OF LEADER OF COUNCIL

To elect the Leader of Council for the 2025/26 municipal year.

9. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY LEADER OF COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBERS

The Leader of Council to report the appointment of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet members.

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS FROM THE LEADER OF COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBERS

To receive any announcements and reports from the Leader of Council and members of the Cabinet.

11. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - QUESTIONS

A period of 30 minutes is allocated to receive and respond to questions and statements on the business of the Council in the following order:

- (a) Questions and statements from Town and Parish Councils;
- (b) Questions and statements from those living or working in the Dorset Council area;

A person or organisation can submit either 1 question or 1 statement at each meeting.

You are welcome to attend the meeting in person or via MS Teams to read out your question and to receive the response. If you submit a statement for Full Council this will be circulated to all members of the council in advance of the meeting as a supplement to the agenda and appended to the minutes of the meeting for the formal record, but it will not be read out at the meeting. The first 8 questions and the first 8

statements received by Democratic Services will be accepted on a first come first served basis in accordance with the deadline below:

The full text of the question or statement must be received by 8.30am on 12th May 2025. All submissions must be emailed to susan.dallison@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

When submitting your question or statement please note that:

- You can submit 1 question or 1 statement for each meeting;
- A question may include a pre-amble to set the context, each question, including the pre-amble can consist of up to **450 words** and you will be given up to **3 minutes** to read out your question;
- Sub-divided questions will not be accepted;
- When submitting a question please indicate who the question is for, i.e. the name of the Cabinet member;
- You will need to include your full name, address and contact details;
- All questions and statements will be published with the minutes of the meeting as a matter of public record.

Before submitting your question or statement please read the Council's Procedure Rules paragraphs 9.1 – 9.12 to ensure that your question/statement is compliant.

[Part 2 Rules of Procedure - Council and Committee Procedure Rules.pdf](#)

12. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS. TO RECEIVE 2 DEPUTATIONS 37 - 42

1. To receive a deputation – to be presented by deputation lead Rob Ferguson
2. To receive a deputation – to be presented by deputation lead Siobhan Lennon-Patience.

A period of 15 minutes is allocated to receive and respond to deputations in accordance with the council's constitution.

The petitions scheme and procedures relating to deputations can be viewed at:

[Council Procedure Rules](#)

13. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, JOINT COMMITTEES AND BOARDS AND ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS 43 - 66

To consider a report by the Democratic Services Team Leader.

14. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL - DORSET COUNCIL SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 67 - 90

To consider a report from the Independent Remuneration Panel on the review of Members' Allowances.

15. MOTION ON NOTICE - DECLARING AN ECONOMIC EMERGENCY

91 - 92

To consider a motion on notice submitted by Cllr Simon Gibson.

16. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

To receive questions submitted by councillors. The deadline for receipt of questions is 8.30am on Monday 12th May.

17. URGENT ITEMS

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

18. EXEMPT BUSINESS

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

The public and the press will be asked to leave the meeting whilst the item of business is considered.



DORSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 10 APRIL 2025

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

Present remotely: Cllr Jane Somper

Apologies: Cllrs Matt Bell, Ray Bryan, Simon Clifford, Toni Coombs, Spencer Flower, Barry Goringe, Ryan Hope, David Morgan, Andy Skeats, David Taylor and Andy Todd

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

Jacqui Andrews (Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services), Hayley Caves (Councillor Development and Support Officer), Sam Crowe (Interim Chief Executive), Susan Dallison (Democratic Services Team Leader), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director of People - Children), Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Antony Nash (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Megan Rochester (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

87. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11th February and Tuesday 25th March 2025 were confirmed and signed.

88. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

89. Chair's Announcements

The Council received and welcomed a short presentation from members of Dorset Youth Voice and the Youth Council.

The Chair reported the recent death of David Mannings, former Dorset County Council councillor. The Chair invited Cllr G Taylor to say a few words in tribute.

90. Public Participation - questions

There were 5 questions from the public and a copy of the questions and responses are set out at Appendix 1 to these minutes.

91. Public participation - petitions and deputations

There were no petitions and deputations received.

92. Announcements and Reports from the Leader of Council and Cabinet Members

The Leader of the Council provided a response to a question which had been raised at the previous Full Council meeting regarding the disposal of tyres. He confirmed that the Council did not send any tyres out of the county. Instead, truck tyres were processed through a company called TRS, which was ISO certified and operated in accordance with best practice standards. The company was also a signatory to a responsible recycling scheme. According to information available on their website, all tyres were recycled, reused, or disposed of sustainably. The resulting granules were used in a variety of industrial applications, including playground surfacing for schools. The Leader reiterated the Council's commitment to sustainable, British-based tyre recycling.

The Leader also reported on the ongoing Town Council tour, the first round was nearly complete and had been positively received. He concluded by thanking members for submitting several questions, noting that it provided valuable opportunities for both the Cabinet and the Leader to communicate their work and priorities to the wider Council.

Cllr B Wilson, Cabinet member for Corporate Development and Transformation, expressed pride in supporting equality, diversity, and inclusion both within the Council and across Dorset. He emphasised the importance of continuing to foster an inclusive culture, with inclusion remaining at the heart of the Council's values. He acknowledged that while progress had been made, there was still work to be done to become more inclusive. He reaffirmed the Council's commitment to investing the necessary time and effort to create an environment where everyone feels welcomed and included.

93. Questions from Councillors

There were 14 questions from councillors and a copy of these are set out in Appendix 2 to these minutes.

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor L O'Leary, which highlighted the need for more thorough budget consideration, the Cabinet Member for Place Services acknowledged the importance of reflection in the decision-making process. He advised that the points raised would have been taken on

board, noting that it was sometimes necessary for councillors to reconsider their positions.

Responding to a supplementary question from Cllr S Jespersen on behalf of Cllr R Bryan, the Cabinet member for Place Services confirmed that he would welcome its consideration at Scrutiny and provided assurance that a consistent approach was being maintained.

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor L Beddow, the Cabinet member for Place Services clarified that members of the public had access to multiple payment options for parking charges, including card, contactless and cash payments, in addition to mobile parking applications.

Responding to a supplementary question from Cllr S Gibson, the Cabinet member for Place Services supported the idea of effectively working with litter picking groups across Dorset.

In response to a supplementary question from Cllr P Dickenson, the Cabinet member for Place Services advised that there had been changes to services which had previously been funded by central government, however, Cllr J Andrews assured members that duties were being carried out following guidelines.

Responding to a supplementary question from Cllr C Monks, the Cabinet member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth welcomed the suggestion for members to collaborate across the chamber to support local businesses and indicated that the Cabinet member for Finance and Capital Strategy would respond at a later date.

Further to a supplementary question from Councillor C Monks, the Leader advised that the Council was actively working with local river groups, alongside its own officers, to explore matters relating to chartered waters.

94. Appointment of Chief Executive Officer and Head of Paid Service

Cllr N Ireland introduced the report and proposed that Dr Catherine Howe be appointed as Chief Executive Officer and Head of Paid Service as well as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer for Dorset Council. The motion was seconded by Cllr A Parry.

Decision: That, subject to completion of the usual pre-employment checks: -

1. To appoint Dr Catherine Howe as Chief Executive Officer and Head of Paid Service.
2. To appoint Dr Catherine Howe, as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer for Dorset Council

95. Appointment of two co-opted committee members to the Harbours Advisory Committee

Cllr R Hughes introduced the report and proposed that Mr Mark Roberts and Mr Lee Hardy be appointed as co-opted members of the Harbours Advisory Committee. The motion was seconded by Cllr J Andrews.

Decision:

- a) That Mr Mark Roberts be appointed as a Co-Opted member of the Harbours Advisory Committee.
- b) That Mr Lee Hardy be appointed as a Co-Opted member of the Harbours Advisory Committee.

96. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items to report.

97. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Appendix 1 - Questions and Statements from members of the public
Appendix 2 - Councillor Questions and Responses

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 8.16 pm

Chair

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Full Council

10th April 2025

Public Participation

Question 1 – submitted by Steven Briden

Given that even if all fossil fuel production ceased today, Food Emissions alone would still push the global temperature above 2°C increase at the higher end of the Paris Agreement Targets, and considering that agricultural food production accounts for a third of all greenhouse gas emissions, it would make sense for Dorset Council to prioritise this crucial aspect of the climate crisis. This is acknowledged in the Dorset Councils Food and Drink Technical Paper. The largest contribution to food based emissions comes from meat and dairy production.

Dorset itself has seen a massive growth in the Livestock and Dairy Industry over the last century, which has led to a sustained loss of Natural Biodiversity in this area. Species locally have been depleted by 19% since 1970, with a loss of 400 species to extinction.

With 65% of Dorset farmland used for Animal Husbandry, and only 11.5% for Olericulture (Vegetables), there is room for a more balanced and sustainable local food system.

Recent analysis has shown that agricultural emissions could be cut by 75% with a shift to more plant based diets. The IPCC has stressed that our food systems should be transitioning from being a source of emissions to one that acts as a carbon sink. These are things that can be enacted at a local level, that have a significant national impact.

Cities around Europe, such as Amsterdam and Edinburgh have successfully endorsed the Plant Based Treaty, and implemented impactful local changes, such as increasing plant based catering options in public institutions and schools. This includes 'Earth Days', where 100% plant based menus are served.

Will Dorset Council endorse the Plant Based Treaty, and join a growing global movement towards a positive environmental change.

Thank you.

Question 2 – submitted by Sheila Biddlecombe

"Recognising the evidence that plant-based diets are better for both health and the environment will the Council show leadership on this critical issue taking the

opportunity to lead by example and support a shift towards healthier, plant-based diets by endorsing the Plant Based Treaty? "

Endorsing the Plant Based Treaty, means expressing support calling for national governments internationally to negotiate a Global Plant Based Treaty as a companion to the Paris agreement, focusing on a transition to a plant-based food system in order to tackle the climate crisis. Combined with implementing local action within the council's authority, such as addressing internal catering menus, public education campaigns, and influencing positive change in institutions such as schools. Many UK Councils have already taken the step to support this.

Question 3 – submitted by Sandra Hood BSc(Hons) SRD

An analysis by the Office of Health Economics demonstrates that plant-based diets could save the NHS £6.7 billion annually, with 2.1 million fewer cases of disease. No other intervention can deliver such significant health advantages alongside cost savings and environmental benefits. Local councils are in a strong position to introduce plant-based initiatives and deliver public education.

Cities like Edinburgh and Amsterdam have endorsed the Plant Based treaty and developed comprehensive plant-based food strategies. Implementations such as public awareness campaigns, community cooking classes, and partnerships with local businesses, have been implemented by other councils to make plant-based eating more accessible, appealing and convenient for our residents.

Given these compelling health and economic benefits, will Dorset Council endorse the Plant Based treaty, and take steps to normalise plant-based foods and encourage their consumption?

Response from Cllr N Ireland

- Our communities will be eating meat and dairy well beyond 2050; and livestock farming will continue to be an important part of Dorset's economy and culture in Dorset well beyond 2050. But for that very reason, tackling the environmental impact of food and livestock in particular is essential – and a part of that will require greater understanding, availability and affordability of lower emission foods to help us adopt more sustainable diets.
- 'Do nothing' and 'everyone go vegan' are both incorrect approaches, but they're not the only options. And that is not just my view – that's the opinion of the national Climate Change Committee and the Food Strategy Independent Review, amongst others; whose analyses carefully consider these issues alongside food security, the impacts on farm businesses, affordability and food imports.

- I want to particularly emphasise four key things...
- **First, unlike cities we can't just focus on what we buy, but also on how it's produced.** Our farming businesses are at the frontline of climate change – both for cutting emissions and climate resilience threats to the food system. That's a source of anxiety amongst farmers who often feel vilified – but we can't achieve net zero without them. It presents both risks and opportunities to our farming businesses, layered on top of other worries around subsidies, tax and trade. That's why they need proper support, incentives and revenue streams in place to help them diversify. Cities without agricultural sectors might be able to ignore this, risk antagonising farmers, and focus just on consumers – but we cannot. We have to be clear that a just climate transition for farmers is a must, and that farming is a key opportunity area for green rural economies.
- **Second, whilst there is a need to increase how much plant-based food we all eat, cutting food emissions is more complex challenge than just shifting to plant-based diets.** We also need to shift what meat is bought, given the considerable variation in emissions amongst meat and where it's produced. And we need to ensure farmers are supported to make changes on livestock feed and additives, breeding practices, and grazing and waste management. Those won't be sufficient in themselves, but they matter.
- **Third, diet isn't just important for reducing emissions, but for drawing more carbon down by nature.** But doing that will need to be very carefully targeted to ensure we not only maintain but increase domestic food security and protect our best agricultural land – particularly in the context of food security threats to agriculture from climate impacts themselves. That's why things like the land use framework and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy are so important – they'll help ensure this is carefully managed and planned.
- **Fourth, there are both opportunities and risks for health and the cost of living.** Eating more plant-based foods could support healthier and more nutritionally balanced diets, but it could also be negative in some cases – which is why information and guidance on nutrition and meal planning around plant whole foods are so important. Improving health would involve eating more plants, not fake meat – but we must recognise how costs and convenience will influence people's choices. Just calling for more plant-based food isn't enough without measures to ensure that they're more accessible and affordable; that people have the knowledge and skills to ensure good nutrition; and that we don't worsen cost-of-living pressures – particularly in a context where the impacts of climate change might itself add to inflationary pressures on food bills.

- For all these reasons – and, to be clear, for all that we agree that lower emission diets are important – we don’t currently believe that the Treaty nor a simple call for plant-based diets is necessarily the right approach at this point.
- As I said at the beginning, this doesn’t mean that doing nothing is an option – far from it. Dorset Council has rightly retained its county farms estate which could drive influence; we have strengthened our engagement over this last year with the wider agricultural sector whilst drafting the LNRS; and we offer plant-based alternatives in our catering facilities and school menus, and we’re creating a public sector sustainable procurement toolkit to go further. That’s a good foundation for action.
- But what’s needed is much bigger than a campaign – as I said above, it requires strategic changes to the systems for supporting resilient and diversified farm businesses; steering carefully targeted land use change; and enabling informed, affordable and healthy choices by consumers.

Question 4 – submitted by Richard Thomas

With environmentalists and nature-lovers in North Dorset agog for what is in the draft Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), and with public consultation on the excellent Wiltshire LNRS closing on 16 April, can you please confirm when the Dorset LNRS draft will be published, how long the consultation period will be, how the general public will be able to comment on the strategy, and what response if any Dorset Council has made to Wiltshire Council on its LNRS, in particular for those areas bordering Dorset such as Shaftesbury, Gillingham and Motcombe, and has the Council also responded to the national consultation on land use in England, the deadline for which is 25 April, and if so is that response available to view yet online?

Response from Cllr N Ireland

The draft Dorset local nature recovery strategy is currently having changes made after we went out to our supporting authorities (BCP Council and Natural England) as this is a statutory requirement. It is expected that the public consultation starts at the end of April and will last for 12 weeks. There will be lots of ways the public, businesses and organisations can respond including a range of events, some at libraries, some at specific meetings and events. There will be an online survey throughout the 12 weeks. The Nature Recovery Dorset webpages on the DC website will be updated with the date and information needed and will be promoted through a range of media channels.

The Local nature recovery officer has worked with the Wiltshire LNRS team and there has been a regional LNRS SW group running for 18 months where officers and Natural

England have come together to discuss any issues, especially relating to cross boundary work. There is no official response to the Wiltshire LNRS.

The authority is in the process of preparing a response to the Defra's Land Use Consultation. Our response will be submitted by the consultation deadline and will be accompanied by a covering letter from the Leader. Both the consultation response and covering letter will be published in due course

Question 5 – submitted by Giles Watts on behalf of Dorset Climate Action Network

Dear Councillor Ireland,

Dorset Climate Action Network (DCAN) welcomes the council's continued focus on climate issues in its recent report 'Revised Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Reduction Trajectories and Key Milestones' and is delighted that the targets for net zero have been brought forward by five years - to 2035 for the council and to 2045 for the county - with a further £6 million to support the acceleration of the council's carbon reduction programme.

However, we are disappointed that the intermediate net zero targets have been diluted to make them easier to achieve, especially those for 2025 and 2030. We also note the report is mostly devoted to addressing emissions within the direct control of the council representing only about 1.5% of the county's emissions. The rest of the county's emissions are only dealt with in section 6 and in much less detail. It refers to some great existing programmes - such as Low Carbon Dorset and Healthy Homes - but it lacks any significant new programmes or any coherent plan as to how the county will reduce its emissions in key areas such as power generation, transport, housing, industry and agriculture. DCAN believes it is not good enough to assume that decarbonising the county is the sole responsibility of central government. It is important that the Council shows leadership and we believe there is so much more the Council could be doing including:

- Insisting on higher standards in new housing developments with better insulation, solar panels and heat pumps as standard; while retraining planners so that they encourage rather than discourage these technologies even in conservation areas.
- Supporting communities to become net zero through community energy schemes involving solar and wind power, and community heating
- Going all out to support large wind farms offshore and around the SW peninsular which will bring a wealth of jobs and cheap energy.

- Encouraging active travel with better infrastructure and support the take up of electric vehicles with reduced parking charges (carrot) & low emissions zones (stick)
- Pressurising high industrial emitters such as Perenco to install Carbon Capture to reduce their emissions (4-8% of Dorset's emissions come from their diesel turbines)
- Working with farmers to reduce agricultural emissions through changes in land use and a movement towards providing crops for a plant-based diet.

Many of these initiatives are compatible with the Committee for Climate Change's 7th Carbon Budget which stresses the need to move towards electrification of home heating and transport followed by reform of agriculture and development of natural carbon sinks. Will the Council commit to making a clear plan for reducing emissions across Dorset and to working with local climate and environmental groups to achieve this?

Response from Cllr N Ireland

- Thank you for the question. Giles will know we think very highly of the work that Dorset CAN do not only as a critical friend that helps push us further, but for the action they take in their own right through Open Greener Homes, on hedges, Dorset COP and more – so we always welcome and value your engagement with us.
- We're very pleased to have brought our net zero and milestone targets into line with the pathways set out by the Climate Change Committee in the national carbon budget. As the paper outlined, having that foundation gives us greater confidence in the balance of ambition, pragmatism and risks involved – and we're particularly pleased to have ensured that's not just a paper commitment, but one backed by funding.
- Giles is right that the paper puts more emphasis on the operational side of our activity, but that reflects the motivation behind the paper being to secure the additional £6m capital for the council's operational programme. But we certainly do not shrink from the significant task there is in driving county-wide change.
- The paper could not in a single document deal with the complexity of plans required across all the sectors Giles mentions, but that's why we're actively developing new plans and strategies across most of those areas, including a new Local Plan, Local Transport Plan, Local Energy Plan, Economy Strategy, and Local Nature Recovery Strategy (which combined with the forthcoming national policy framework will help set the foundation for a clearer route for agricultural emissions).
- They will be the key policy foundations for making sure we get it right on new builds, energy infrastructure, and transport decarbonisation incentives amongst other

things – and we very much welcome DCAN and wider stakeholders' involvements in engagement and consultation processes for those over the coming months.

- Amongst other things, we are hopeful that they will underpin our increasing focus and active work on opportunities like the green energy cluster opportunity around Portland and Weymouth, as we pivot to prioritising the green economy as a key determinant of better outcomes and prosperity for residents. To this end, we're already actively engaged in conversations on these, which you'll appreciate that for commercial reasons I can't necessarily detail here.
- Also beyond strategy, we're also undertaking a range of facilitation measures to help try and influence change beyond the council – including creating a climate ambassadors programme and events with our schools; creating toolkits for public sector sustainable procurement; working with town and parish councils to support their journey to new zero; and looking to potentially launching a Solar Together scheme later this year. We also regularly meet with other public sector organisations, trying to align our efforts to decarbonise at scale.
- Suffice it to say, there is a long way to go of course. We always welcome DCAN's views and guidance on how to progress. I know Giles already engages regularly with our teams, but I'd be very happy to also meet with you to help ensure that the opportunities to help input in our strategies and plans are clear; and to identify any more ways that we could collaborate with our strong network of active communities.

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Full Council

10th April 2025

Questions submitted by Councillors

Question 1 – submitted by Cllr Steve Murcer

My question is about the operational efficiency of the Council, in relation to internal reports and policies prepared for committees, cabinet and full council.

At the outset can I say that my question is not meant to be critical of the officers for whom I have the greatest respect, it is more a challenge to the accepted custom and practise within the local authority.

This is my first experience of working in the public sector and one of the things that has surprised me the most is the length and complexity of some reports and policies:

They are often:

too long

repetitive

contain complex language

And honestly stifle proper scrutiny, which I'm sure is not the intention

As Councillors we all want to do a good job, but when you sit down to prepare for a committee your heart sinks when you realise how much you have to read and digest. And think how much time we could save officers if we gave them the licence to produce succinct and concise reports.

Here are three examples of what I mean:

cabinet papers often extend to over 400 pages

the first policy I ever read was 101 pages long with 134 action points

why do I need 12 pages of supporting papers to explain why a 9 year old child can't walk 3 miles to school

Whilst I accept policies may need to include a risk assessment and keep the council legal, the quality of a report is not indicated by its length indeed the opposite might be true. And this is a safe place for dangerous truths, I often don't read all the papers for a forthcoming meeting, I simply don't have the stamina.

Question

Whilst I am new to the protocols and process of this council, my question or my request is that the Council establishes a working group to produce a Coms Policy that sets clear guidelines for the length, structure and content of papers.

The sort of thing I would like to see included are that papers;

include a referenced executive summary of 1 or 2 pages and have clear conclusions and recommendations

conform to an agreed word count

are clear, concise and in plain English

To ensure compliance all coms for a fixed period of time to go through a Gate Keeper who has the authority to ask for papers to be re-written or simply abbreviated through co-pilot

Aim

The aim of this policy is empower the officers to write simple concise reports and so save a great deal of time, trouble and cost. At the same time ensuring we have a better informed and more engaged councillor group with more time to dedicate to the needs and expectations of their electorate.

Thank you for your time.

Response by Cllr Nick Ireland

I'm very grateful to Cllr Murcer for his question. As a new member of Dorset Council, he won't appreciate that this has been a recurring theme during the first term/five years of this Council and a source of much frustration to elected members.

But good news!

We are an administration that rails against the 'same old, same old' and the Democratic Services team have already begun work on the sort of changes that you describe.

These include revising the report template and amending the requirements on the officers who write reports. Going forward, report authors will be required to include an executive summary and to provide more succinct reports, with links to useful additional information i.e. if it can be an appendix rather than in the main paper, then it will be.

The Democratic Services team have also arranged to be notified when new staff who are likely to be report authors join the council, so that they can have an initial discussion about the expectations around report writing and democratic decision making.

AI will also play an increasing role in report generation; I'm pleased that as an organisation we are accelerating the take-up of Co-Pilot and our colleagues in Digital are doing a great job in engaging with staff and members to ensure that this tool is used to best effect.

However, we do also need to recognise that Dorset Council is a complex organisation and must make decisions within a framework of legal requirements. This means that sometimes we will need to provide councillors with detailed information. But this should be the exception not the rule, and where we need to provide evidence and analysis, it should be done in a way that engages councillors.

All reports follow a consultation process and have to be signed off by our statutory officers. They have the authority to act as gatekeepers and their role includes ensuring that reports are succinct, engaging and informative. My Cabinet colleagues have also been tasked to do the same when approving reports.

As soon as it is ready, I will ask officers to share the new draft report template and requirements with group leaders, and with you Cllr Murcer.

Question 2 – Submitted by Cllr Louie O’Leary

"Will Dorset Council dedicate a bench along Weymouth harbour side in memory of the late Cllr Tony Ferrari who passed away while in office and did so much in his time as a cabinet member to promote Weymouth Harbour and economic regeneration in our town"

Response by Cllr Jon Andrews

Cllr O'leary thank you for your question

In your question you mention that the late Cllr Ferrari did a lot for Weymouth in his time on Dorset Council; with that in mind it only seems right that it is Weymouth Town Council, being the elected body of the town, to provide the bench. Of course, Dorset Council will happily work with Weymouth Town council to site and install a bench if they wish to go ahead with this suggestion.

Question 3 – Submitted by Cllr Louie O'Leary

"Can the council confirm that despite being voted through at the budget meeting it does not plan to introduce evening parking charges in Weymouth?"

Response by Cllr Jon Andrews

Yes.

Question 4 – Submitted by Cllr Les Fry

Farmers in the United Kingdom have a challenging time making a living, our Dorset Council farm tenants are no different, they work hard for little reward. One significant help was the Governments Sustainable Farming initiative (SFI) which made a massive difference to farmers, so instead of sweating every acre of land to maximise profits they were able to work with nature, set aside sections of their land to improve the water, soil and air.

The previous Government administration termed SFI, public money for public goods, farmers were paid to ensure healthy crops, trees, plants and bees, improve soil quality, reduce flooding, limit climate change and to enhance the beauty of our countryside.

A great many farmers have based their finances on the SFI and were very proud of the ongoing work to improve the countryside. These were not subsidies they were payment for protecting the natural environment.

In mid March without any notice the Government closed the SFI scheme to new applications, this is in short a complete disaster for many farmers including our own Farm tenants, those Councillors who sat in on the interviews for new tenants will remember that each balance sheet had an SFI entry, turning a minus into a positive.

This Abrupt decision has a significant impact on farm budgets, the viability of enterprises and may have impact on food security and the continuation of nature positive agricultural practices on certain farms.

For the next potential iteration of the SFI scheme, further details are due to come in July 2025, but no commitment about when it will reopen and how much funding will be available for the scheme.

Will the leader of Council please write to either the minister or department responsible for this decision to ask for an immediate reopening of the SFI scheme?

Response by Cllr Nick Ireland

I'd like to thank Cllr Fry for his question. I could give a one-word answer but I believe it's worth exploring this topic in more detail.

Late in March I was invited to Cordite Way, a new right of way which whilst not yet fully breaching the gap between Holton Heath and Hamworthy, hopefully will do so soon. It was a glorious Saturday morning, and those involved in the 20+ year project, including our Rangers and interim Chief Executive, were there in force for the opening speech by Vikki Slade MP. At such instants, living in the Dorset we know and love, it's difficult to square the here and now with the knowledge that the UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world, with less tree cover than any of our Western European neighbours, and a sustained loss of natural biodiversity in this area alone; species locally have been depleted by 19% since 1970, with a loss of 400 species to extinction.

Climate change tends to grab the headlines. This Dorset Council has acknowledged that greenhouse gas emissions are the major factor in global warming, and so we've just brought forward our net zero targets to 2035 (for stuff we directly control) and 2045 (for things that we don't). However, some of the climate targets are also nature ones; the largest proportion of the emissions in our 2045 target, at around 33%, is agriculture and land use in the Dorset Council area.

One of the first actions of the new Liberal Democrat led Dorset Council was to declare a nature emergency, and it is leading work to develop a [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) (LNRS) for Dorset that is due out for [consultation](#) shortly. Dorset Council activity for nature currently includes the [Community Tree Fund](#), the [Love your Verge](#) programme, and a cut and collect approach to greenspace management to support biodiversity. There is also a marine project to protect the seagrass beds at Studland by installing [eco-moorings](#), a major [heathland restoration project](#) at Avon Heath Country Park, the successful award of major nutrient mitigation funding for Poole Harbour, and the full allocation by Dorset National Landscapes of £2.4m [Farming in Protected Landscapes](#) funding. It is also prioritising growth through the symbiosis of green-tech and nature-based solutions, driving economic recovery and creating jobs. Dorset Council is in the top 10 councils leading on nature recovery as ranked by the [Woodland Trust](#).

As Cllr Fry mentions, a very large spanner has been thrown into the works by this Labour government putting on hold the sustainable farming initiative, which pays farmers for making space for nature on their land and importantly, encourages sustainable farming practice. This is promoted as the way to farm in the Dorset LNRS and is already supported by some farmers in Dorset as a means to increasing agricultural productivity through healthier soil, planting trees and hedges, digging ponds, putting less nitrates in the water by reducing fertilisers, and better food production.

70% of land in England is farmed and so if nature is to recover, farmers need to be a big part of the solution.

I will write to the Environment Secretary Steve Reed to request that the scheme is reopened and given the priority and funding it deserves.

Question 5 – Submitted by Cllr Ray Bryan

Given the recent announcement regarding weed spraying can the reason for this decision be explained please. For example, is it financial, ecological or ideological?

Response by Cllr Jon Andrews

On the 18 July 2024, the Council passed the Nature Emergency Motion.

Included with this was section 6: (f) which stated:

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

The desire to reduce glyphosate as part of our response to the Nature Emergency, combined with pressure on DC budgets, means that for 2025 just one herbicide application will be undertaken across Dorset Council's highway network, where herbicide is spot sprayed to weeds within the sealed surface.

Completing one sealed surface herbicide application per year is the same specification as 2023, where only one sealed surface weed spray was undertaken.

Alternatives to glyphosate will be trialled this year in some areas.

Question 6 – Submitted by Cllr Laura Beddow

Dorset Council asked our residents to use the parking app (JustPark) in order to save the council money and time.

Why are you now penalising them for doing so by asking them to pay the app charges?

Response by Cllr Jon Andrews

Due to increasing costs and changes to our contract with JustPark, we can no longer cover this fee. Until now, we have been covering the fee from our parking income, but we can no longer afford to do this without impacting other services. In most other counties where JustPark operates, the 10p fee is already paid by motorists who use the service. Users of our car parks can avoid the fee by paying for their parking by cash, credit card or contactless payment at any of our car park machines.

The app was introduced not to save money or time but to give drivers a different option and the convenience of paying with their phones.

Question 7 – Submitted by Cllr Simon Gibson

Last week the Portfolio Holder announced the areas set to benefit from funding to improve local buses. Dorset Council submitted an ambitious bid to the Government's BSIP programme and whilst any new funding is welcome and the new areas will be pleased with an enhanced service, many areas, including my own area in Verwood missed out. I do appreciate that the funding into Dorset from the Government was not enough to cover all areas. I have raised the frustrations of my residents on a number of occasions as the bus service in Verwood is not good enough for a town of our size.

Given that Verwood was not chosen on this occasion, what plan does the Portfolio Holder have to improve the bus service in Verwood?

Response by Cllr Jon Andrews

The allocation of Bus Grant funding for 2025/26 is the first step to transforming bus services and community transport across Dorset. The money we've received so far from Government is only a small part of what we require. Longer-term funding is key to us achieving our BSIP vision so that many more communities benefit from improved local bus services. Dorset is disadvantaged by the current government funding allocation formula, an issue we'll be raising through our MP's and directly with the Department for Transport.

We will be arranging Bus User & Stakeholder group meetings to discuss future improvement ideas which will feed into how future allocations of Bus Grant Funding should be spent. Councillors will receive an invite to these meetings as well as the Town and parish Councils, and local interest groups.

Question 8 – Submitted by Cllr Simon Gibson

The Verwoodians on Waste group are a fantastic group that coordinates volunteers to litter pick across Verwood. Since November the dedicated team have removed over 1400kg of waste from the roadside. This is a remarkable achievement that helps our environment and has saved the Council money. The group is supported by many different parts of the council from the waste team to Litter Free Dorset to the highways team. However, as the group continues to grow they would like to do more and to do so there is a need for more coordination across the council so that our volunteers can get the support they need quicker.

Will the Portfolio Holder consider how we can better support litter picking volunteers as part of the Hedge to Hedge review and create a single point of contact within the council so that litter picking groups across Dorset can more easily get the support that they need to continue their excellent work?

Response by Cllr Jon Andrews

Firstly, thank you to the Verwoodians on Waste group who do a great job litter picking within the Verwood area. In response to your question around supporting litter picking volunteers our council plan emphasises the importance of collaborating with our communities, the Voluntary and Community Sector, and Town and Parish Councils. The point of contact for most areas relating to community litter picking is through Litter Free Dorset, a Dorset Council hosted partnership, who can help with equipment and putting voluntary groups in touch with the people in waste who pick up the litter and also provide equipment. Regarding work on the highway verges, the DC Greenspace team will be happy to advise and assist and have done for other community groups. I suggest they contact the Greenspace team to arrange a discussion.

In terms of working more with the volunteers there are opportunities to deliver specific campaigns in their area that look at reducing litter at source, for example bin your butt, a cigarette campaign that has been run successfully by some other community groups to reduce cigarette butts in targeted hotspots. There are many resources on the LFD website. They are able to look at coproducing bespoke campaigns with the volunteers for their local area or around a specific litter issue. Please contact the LFD coordinator to arrange a discussion if this is something that appeals to the volunteers.

Question 9 – Submitted by Cllr James Vitali

Will the leader of the council agree to meet with “HAB Tree Care”, a small business in my ward, to discuss their plans to plant thousands of new trees in Dorset and help reverse the depletion of native tree species?

Response by Cllr Nick Ireland

I would be open to meeting with HAB Tree Care as their initiative to plant thousands of new trees and help reverse the depletion of native tree species in Dorset aligns well with our nature recovery goals.

As a precursor to my meeting with them, I suggest that they contact Dorset Council’s Greenspace team in the North to have an initial discussion on their proposals to ascertain where Dorset Council’s support may be required.

Question 10 – Submitted by Cllr Belinda Bawden

Dorset Council has recently been expressing the intention to collaborate more closely with town and parish councils, including potentially co-funding projects as well as agreeing asset transfers and maintenance arrangements.

However, I have been unable to establish what the best process is to achieve this. For example, in Lyme Regis and Charmouth, I understand that offers of co-funding could possibly enable:

- bus stop boxes to be repainted
- white and yellow lines to be repainted
- surface water drainage problems, including in one of Dorset Council's big car parks, to be resolved
- other car park repairs to be undertaken
- other flood mitigations to be implemented
- beach replenishment for coastal protection and amenity value
- road safety measures to improve pedestrian safety
- retaining river walls, old and current sea walls, roads and bridges to be repaired.

Yet I have been unable to get proposals to be submitted as requests for funding contributions, with one exception from the small selection mentioned here.

Locally, we do appreciate Dorset Council's financial pressures and the need to prioritise statutory services but it isn't realistic just to expect town and parish councils to come forwards to offer to fund urgent repairs and routine maintenance which are clearly Dorset Council's responsibilities as the landowner, Highways Authority, Local Flood Authority or Coastal Protection Authority.

Could we please design a process whereby Dorset Council promptly develops project proposals for the requested repairs, maintenance and improvements in our wards, with suggested requests for co-funding if appropriate, so that town and parish councils can decide whether they are prepared to contribute financially to get things done?

Response by Cllr Richard Biggs

Thank you for your question and for highlighting the various issues in Lyme Regis and Charmouth. I understand your concerns.

The issues you mentioned are important for residents and we should be able to work collaboratively on resolving them. From the perspective of how we are organised at the council, they involve multiple service areas and different funding sources, which can make it challenging to establish a clear process for collaboration and funding. That is not to excuse the current situation, and we acknowledge we need to improve things. I suggest we bring together key people from each service area to discuss possible resolutions: I am keen to support and facilitate these discussions with you.

Looking ahead, I want to reassure you that Dorset Council is committed to working more effectively with Town and Parish Councils, as detailed in the 'Communities for All' priority of the Council Plan.

The Community Partnerships Programme has been developed to fulfil this commitment. One of its aims is to enhance collaboration with Town and Parish Councils, including how we work together on complex service and asset issues, like the ones you have raised.

To achieve this, the programme will create clear and accessible processes for the devolution of a range of services and assets. In doing so, roles and responsibilities will be defined, and mechanisms for fulfilling these responsibilities will be established, including funding options.

As part of this initiative, we have started a new approach this week to improve community asset transfers of land and property to town and parish councils. A dedicated team in Assets and Property will now focus solely on land disposals, including community asset transfers, rather than these tasks being part of the general workload of all property surveyors. We hope this new focus will speed up community asset transfers, which is an area we acknowledge has not worked well in the past.

Importantly, we are committed to co-designing these improvements with Town and Parish Councils. The first phase of engagement will take place over the next month, facilitated by the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils.

Question 11 – Submitted by Cllr Peter Dickenson

Could the portfolio holder for place please explain his reasons for withdrawing the relief for sponsored schools crossing patrols.

Response by Cllr Jon Andrews

Dorset Council is not legally required to provide a School Crossing Patrol Service. However, the council follows national guidelines and fully funds the service at locations that meet specific policy criteria. For locations that do not meet these criteria, communities can sponsor a School Crossing Patrol, which will be fully managed by Dorset Council.

Previously, sponsors only needed to cover the salary and associated costs like national insurance and pension scheme. They did not have to pay for line management costs, equipment/uniform, or maintenance of patrol lights. This posed a financial risk to Dorset Council.

To mitigate this risk, an Executive Decision was made in October 2024 requiring sponsors to also fund line management costs, equipment/uniform, and maintenance of patrol lights, if applicable.

Question 12 – Submitted by Cllr Peter Dickenson

Could the portfolio holder for place give an update on the junction of Louviers road and Littlemoor road which you met with myself and Cllr L O’Leary back in May 2024 and offer any purposed solutions.

Response by Cllr Jon Andrews

Both the junctions of Louviers Road with Littlemoor Road were included as part of the Transport Assessment for the now consented 500 dwelling development to the north of Littlemoor Road, which identified that no improvement works were required at these junctions. We have kept the junctions under review while the first occupations of the development occur, and it is still the case that no improvement works are required. We will continue to keep the junctions under review while the development continues.

The development included additional facilities to improve connectivity and options for active and sustainable travel such as additional crossing refuges and better links through the site to the existing pedestrian, cycle, and bus facilities on Littlemoor Road and the local services and beyond. The development also benefits from a Travel Plan to promote sustainable travel modes to the new residents.

Question 13 – Submitted by Cllr Craig Monks

What does Dorset Council plan to do to support small businesses that are struggling due to the recent increase in business rates, especially when combined with other rising costs like National Insurance? This is creating a real crisis in the business community.

Response by Cllr Richard Biggs

Dorset Council recognises that there is significant uncertainty for the business community at this time. The government-imposed changes to business rates and National Insurance contributions are beyond the council's immediate ability to influence. However, the council are working with strategic partners such as the Dorset Chamber of Commerce to ensure government are aware of the impact such changes are having on businesses across the county by lobbying through the British Chambers of Commerce and other agencies.

Additionally, support for Dorset businesses is available through the Shared Prosperity Fund [UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Dorset Council](#) which is operated by the council, or the Dorset Business Growth Service [Home | Business Growth Dorset](#) which operates across both Dorset Council and BCP areas. Eligible businesses may be able to secure support through either of these services and I would encourage business owners to investigate the support available.

In June this year the council will approve and adopt a new Economic Growth Strategy; this will set out a long-term approach to ensuring growth and prosperity for Dorset. The strategy will highlight some of the major opportunities that can transform the Dorset economy. For example, the council are aware of significant clean energy proposals for the South Dorset area, and the potential for our considerable defence manufacturing base to capitalise on increased government defence spending. Both opportunities have the potential to create significant numbers of jobs and investment both directly and within the wider supply chain and service businesses.

The council will continue to investigate ways in which it can support the local business community and would welcome further engagement or views on what form this support could take. Suggestions can be submitted directly to the council at economicgrowth@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk ‘

Question 14 – Submitted by Cllr Craig Monks

Last summer I raised concerns about water quality and was told by the Leader that a policy would be considered, including inviting water company executives to attend Council. Later in the year, I asked for an update at Cabinet and was advised this would go to Scrutiny. However, after speaking to the Scrutiny Chair, I was informed that Overview develops policy and Scrutiny scrutinises it. I then raised the matter with the relevant Overview Committee, who gave a general update on existing Council policy, but no clear response on whether a specific policy would be developed as the Leader suggested.

Could the Council clarify on what steps Dorset Council is taking to address water quality in our rivers and seas with a dedicated and robust policy?

Response by Cllr Nick Ireland

The responsibility for water quality in our rivers and coastal waters lies with two water companies, Wessex Water and South West Water, and also with the Environment Agency as the statutory regulator.

Therefore, this Council does not have a policy on something it has no direct control over.

I have previously requested that Place and Resources Scrutiny set-up a task and finish group similar to successful grid capacity task and finish group chaired by Cllr Bartlett in the last Council, which was established to review the strategically significant issue of Dorset's constrained grid capacity and the outcome of which is now informing our involvement with relevant partners in producing a Local Area Energy Policy. To date, this request has been declined.

However, we have been actively collaborating on improving water quality through various initiatives including the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Whilst currently in draft, Priority 4 covers rivers, lakes and wetlands and Priority 5 covers coastal areas. The strategy sets out the importance of water quality for wildlife and human health and provides many actions for different stakeholders to get involved with, helping deliver better water quality through collective action.

We are also carrying out a project working with Wessex Water, the Environment Agency and Weymouth Town Council to address the recent downgrading of Weymouth Beach bathing water quality status from excellent to good, which has resulted in the loss of Blue Flag status. This project is being led by Litter Free Dorset working with communities, businesses, and organisations to raise awareness and promote a call to action by carrying out practical actions to improve to excellent the bathing water for this season.

Just this week we had the good news that a raw sewage overflow into the sea at Chesil Cove has been taken out of service through a 12-week £1m project by Wessex Water.

In addition, I recently attended an environmental and water quality roundtable hosted by Edward Morello MP which was also attended by the water companies. I am now looking to extend an invite to Wessex Water and South West Water to join an informal briefing with councillors to discuss the issue of water quality, storm overflows and their improvement plans for the next 5 years. I will send out an invitation to all members through the usual channels when this has been confirmed.

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FULL COUNCIL

MOTION ON NOTICE

Date of Council Meeting: - 15 May 2025

Title of Motion: - Dorset Council as a whole council will Uphold the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Proposer: - Cllr Duncan Sowry-House

Seconded: - Cllr Clare Sutton

Supported by:- Cllr Belinda Bawden, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Hannah Hobbs-Chell, Cllr Pete Roper, Cllr Rob Hughes, Cllr Kate Wheller, Cllr Paul Kimber, Cllr Noc Lacey-Clarke, Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Stella Jones, Cllr Ryan Hope, Cllr Steve Robinson, Cllr Gill Taylor, Cllr Simon Clifford, Cllr Bridget Bolwell, Cllr Dave Bolwell, Cllr Louise Bown, Cllr Will Chakawhata, Cllr Neil Eysenck, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Scott Florek, Cllr Alex Fuhrmann, Cllr Sally Holland, Cllr Jack Jeans, Cllr David Taylor, Cllr David Tooke, Cllr Sarah Williams, Cllr Matt Bell, Cllr Andy Todd, Cllr Richard Crabb, Cllr Chris Kippax

Motion Narrative and Action Required

This council recognises the importance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as a fundamental framework for the protection and promotion of children's rights globally. As Dorset Council, we are committed to ensuring that all children and young people within our jurisdiction are afforded the rights and protections enshrined in the UNCRC.

Background:

The UNCRC, adopted in 1989, outlines the civil, political, economic, social, health, and cultural rights of children. It emphasises the importance of children's voices in matters that affect them and acknowledges their right to a safe environment, education, and health care.

Whereas:

- The UNCRC has been ratified by 196 countries, making it the most widely accepted human rights treaty in history.
- Children are a vulnerable group requiring specific rights and protections to ensure their well-being and development.

- Upholding the UNCRC aligns with our commitment to human rights, social justice, and the welfare of all residents.
- The local authority has an obligation to consider the best interests of the child in all decisions and policies affecting them.

Motion

That this Council: -

1. Affirms its commitment to the principals and provisions of the UNCRC and integrates these into local policies and practices, complimenting the delivery of Dorset Council's 10 yr plan for children, young people and families, aiming to be a Rights Respecting Authority.
2. Establishes a Children's Rights Committee to oversee the implementation of the UNCRC within our authority, ensuring that children's voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes. This will include developing some of our young people as 'Rights Respecting Ambassadors as well as a Children's rights impact assessment.
3. Signposts training and awareness programs for council members and staff on the importance of children's rights and the UNCRC.
4. Engages with local communities, schools, and organisations to promote understanding of children's rights and encourage active participation from children in matters that affect them.
5. Declares that Corporate Parents as duty bearers, capturing all our children and young people, we uphold the United Nations Convention of The Rights of The Child and identify as a Rights Respecting Authority.
6. Requires that all policies, procedures and interactions involving our children and young people are mindful of relevant articles from the UNCRC

By adopting this motion, we reaffirm our dedication to creating an environment where all children can thrive, ensuring their rights are respected and upheld in our community.

End of Motion

Conclusion:

I urge all council members to support this motion to uphold the UNCRC, demonstrating our commitment to safeguarding the rights of every child and young person in our care and fostering a society where they can reach their full potential.

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Deputation to Dorset Council for the meeting of full council on Thursday 15 May

Names of the delegation: Rob Ferguson; Lisa-Jameela Musleh; Jo Macgregor; Michael Torrens.

The Issue: Dorset Pension Fund Investments in companies enabling crimes against humanity in Gaza and the West Bank, and violations of Palestinian rights.

The 15 May is the day of commemoration for the Nakba - also known as the Palestinian Catastrophe - the destruction of Palestinian society and homeland in 1948, and the ethnic cleansing of a majority of the Palestinian people.

Dorset Palestine Solidarity Campaign is today calling on the council to take steps to divest the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) fund it administers from companies enabling Israel's grave violations of Palestinian rights and end procurement contracts with these companies.

Councillors on Dorset pension fund committee are quasi-trustees of the Pension Fund. As part of the Brunel Pension Partnership pool, the Dorset Pension Fund can request that steps are taken to divest from unethical investments and from companies enabling violations of international law.

10 councils vote to divest

There are now 10 councils that have voted to divest from companies engaged in arms sales, breaches of international law and human rights violations, including those complicit in Israel's human rights violations.

North Somerset Council has passed a motion calling on Avon Pension Fund to divest from *"companies that facilitate Israel's breaches of international law... arms companies supplying Israel with weapons and military technology... companies on the UN's list of businesses involved in activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and deemed to facilitate Israel's involvement in human rights abuses."*

Bristol City Council has voted to divest from arms manufacture, and from companies on the UN's list of businesses involved in activities in the illegal-settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Islington Pension Fund has committed to begin a process to "ensure that companies on the UN's list of businesses involved in activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" are "excluded from the Fund's investments."

Israel's Genocidal Assault on Gaza

In January 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the world court, handed down an interim ruling affirming there is plausible evidence Israel is committing genocidal acts against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. As a State Party to the Genocide Convention, the UK has a binding obligation to employ all means reasonably available to prevent and deter further genocidal acts.

In June 2024, UN experts issued a statement demanding that both states and companies stop all arms transfers to Israel. In issuing their call, they outlined that financial institutions,

such as banks and pension funds, investing in arms companies supplying Israel must cease, writing that financial institutions “failure to prevent or mitigate their business relationships with these arms manufacturers transferring arms to Israel could move from being directly linked to human rights abuses to contributing to them, with repercussions for complicity in potential atrocity crimes.”

Israel’s genocidal assault on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip has killed at least 61,709 people, including 17,492 children. Over 14,000 are missing, presumed dead beneath the rubble. According to the UN, at least 1.9 million people – 90 per cent of the population – across the Gaza Strip have been displaced during the war, many repeatedly, and some 10 times or more.

Nowhere in Gaza is safe: vast areas of Gaza have been levelled. UN schools sheltering the displaced, and hospitals treating the wounded, have been repeatedly targeted. In March, fifteen Palestinian paramedics and rescue workers, were killed by Israeli forces “one by one” and buried in a mass grave, with their crushed vehicles.

On 17 April Israel launched an attack on al-Mawasi, a crowded tent camp designated as a “humanitarian evacuation zone”. UNICEF’s executive director Catherine Russell noted, “Images of children burning while sheltering in makeshift tents should shake us all to our core.” Gaza’s health infrastructure has been destroyed.

In June 2024, UN experts declared that “Israel’s intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people is a form of genocidal violence and has resulted in famine across all of Gaza.” Since 2 March, aid supplies including food, fuel, water and medicine have been blocked by Israel from entering Gaza. In April, Israeli defence minister, Israel Katz, said: “Israel’s policy is clear: no humanitarian aid will enter Gaza”. National Security Minister, Ben Gvir, went still further, declaring that “the food and aid depots should be bombed”. The medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières says Gaza is now becoming a “mass grave for Palestinians”.

Dorset Pension Fund Complicit investments: Total £173,857,887

Dorset Council Pension Fund invests over £173 million in 71 companies that are complicit in Israeli genocide, war crimes and apartheid. These include:

BAE Systems - Investment value: £5,825,410

BAE Systems is a large British arms producer. As reported by Investigate, it manufactures a range of weapons and military technology used by Israel in its militarised attacks on Palestinians. This includes “components for combat aircraft, munitions, missile launching kits, and armoured vehicles.”

Babcock International - Investment value: £2,891,233

Babcock International is a large British arms company. It works in partnership with Israeli arms companies including Elbit Systems, Rafael and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI). Between 2008 and 2021 Babcock applied to the British government for 12 arms export licenses to supply weapons, components, or military technology to Israel.

Caterpillar - Investment value: £2,516,215

US Company Caterpillar supplies the Israeli military with D9 bulldozers which are weaponised and used to demolish Palestinian homes, schools, villages and civilian infrastructure in the illegally occupied West Bank. As reported by Investigate, “armoured D9 bulldozers have been crucial for Israel’s ground invasion of the Gaza Strip, accompanying combat troops and paving their way by clearing roads and demolishing buildings.”

Cisco Systems - Investment value: £7,327,187

Cisco Systems is an US-based public company that designs and sells a broad range of digital communication technologies. In 2018, it entered into a long-term agreement with the Israeli state to establish a range of “digital hubs”. 8 of the 45 announced locations of digital hubs are in or near illegal Israeli settlements. In addition, Cisco is also a large contractor for the Israeli military.

Honeywell - Investment value: £2,009,285

Honeywell is a US-based arms company. It manufactures components for bombs, missiles and drones used by the Israeli military in its attacks on Palestinians.

Smiths Group - Investment value: £1,563,217

Smiths Group is British arms company. From 2008 to 2021 it applied to the British government for 32 arms export licenses to Israel. It has supplied a number of components to the Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II fighter jet programme. The F-35 Lightning II was first used by Israel in 2018, and has been used in Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

RTX Corporation - Investment value: £1,478,656

RTX Corporation, previously known as Raytheon, is a US-based arms company. It has supplied Israel with a range of weapons and military technology used in its militarised attacks on Palestinians. RTX Corporation supplies guided air-to-surface missiles, which have been used by Israel in its militarised attacks on Palestinians, including its genocide in Gaza.

GE Aerospace, formally General Electric - Investment value: £1,390,452

GE Aerospace, formally General Electric, is one of the world’s largest weapons manufacturers. Its engines are integrated into Israel’s fighter jets, attack helicopters, and surveillance aircraft, used in its assaults on Palestinians, including its genocide in Gaza.

General Dynamics - Investment value: £526,671

General Dynamics is an American aerospace and weapons company. It manufactures weapons used by Israel in its attacks on Palestinians, including artillery shells and metal bodies for MK-80 series bombs, which have been used extensively in Israel’s assaults on Gaza, causing massive civilian casualties and widespread destruction.

Leonardo - Investment value: £36,326

Leonardo, formally Finmeccanica, is an Italian arms company. It manufactures naval guns installed on Israel’s warships. AgustaWestland, a subsidiary of Leonardo, makes components for Apache attack helicopters used by Israel in attacks on Palestinians. In addition, Israel’s Defence Ministry has purchased seven training helicopters from Leonardo.

Elbit Systems - Investment value: £18,926

Elbit Systems is Israel's largest private arms company. Elbit Systems has played a [central role](#) in supplying weapons used in Israel's attacks on Palestinians, including its ongoing genocide in Gaza. Elbit Systems' drones, including the Hermes 450 and 900, as well as its MPR 500 bombs, have been extensively deployed in Israel's genocide in Gaza. In addition, Elbit Systems has produced controversial weapons, including weaponised white phosphorus, cluster bombs, and flechette projectiles.

Dorset Palestine Solidarity Campaign is calling on Dorset Council to:

1. Commit to divest the Local Government Pension Scheme fund administered by the council from companies complicit in Israel's genocide in Gaza and violations of international law and human rights against Palestinians. This includes arms companies supplying Israel with weapons and military technology; companies providing infrastructure for Israel's unlawful military occupation of Palestinian land; and companies conducting business activity in Israel's illegal settlements on stolen Palestinian land.
2. End procurement contracts with companies complicit in Israel's attacks. For example, terminate all banking arrangements with Barclays, which provides substantial financing to companies supplying Israel with weapons used in its attacks on Palestinians.

When our governments fail, it falls to our communities to uphold justice. Dorset should not be complicit. We call on Dorset Council to commit to divesting from companies involved in these abuses, and stand on the right side of history and of justice.

DEPUTATION TO DORSET COUNCIL

For the Full Council Meeting on Thursday 15 May 2025

Deputation Leader Contact: Siobhan Lennon-Patience

Names of Deputation: Siobhan Lennon-Patience, Lily Langford, Mark Stevens, Jenny Lennon-Wood (Secretary of Dorset Trades Union Council).

The Issue:

The government's Green Paper, 'Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working' proposes cuts to benefits for people with disabilities. The impact of these cuts will increase demand on publicly funded social care, adding to pressure on Dorset Council's already-stretched resources. We urge the Council and Councillors to make representations to the government consultation on the Green Paper.

Supporting statement: (to be read by the Deputation Leader in the Full Council meeting)

The Green Paper's main impact on social care costs will be through people who currently use their Personal Independence Payment, Limited Capability for Work and Work-related Activity (LCWRA) assessment, or associated carers element to self-fund their care. They are likely to turn to Dorset Council if they lose support. Also, people who currently use their support to stay active and independent are likely to experience a faster decline in health which will increase the demand for Adult Social Care.

Alongside increased demand for publicly funded social care, people who lose protections and support connected either to PIP or LCWRA could become impacted by the Benefit Cap, face higher Council Tax Reduction, lose Carer's Allowance or Carer's element protections for caregivers, or lose protections from sanctions or protected pathways to debt enforcement.

Councils are also concerned by the impacts on clients currently receiving non-residential care, almost all of whom receive either PIP daily living or or DLA Care support. Some will continue to qualify for PIP due to the extent of their care needs but local authorities will need to take a view on how to treat people who lose disability benefits in their charging policies. Other disabled people who move into employment could have higher incomes and yet make lower client contributions as earnings are fully disregarded, while benefit income is counted as part of the care assessment.

Losing PIP will also affect housing stability. Currently, individuals with significant health conditions or disabilities that limit their ability to secure accommodation are given higher priority in homelessness assessments. Without PIP and LCWRA to demonstrate vulnerability, many claimants who become homeless may no longer be deemed a priority for housing assistance, leaving them at greater risk of prolonged homelessness.

Many of those who lose PIP and who are not claiming Universal Credit will need the additional support to stay in their homes, again lowering the savings from reforms. So much of the support available to ill people is dependent on PIP or LCWRA as a marker of vulnerability and need, meaning loss of entitlement will have far reaching consequences for entire households.

One of the most troubling consequences of these reforms is that seriously ill people who manage to live independently will become invisible within the support system. Up to now, the benefits system has always recognised and supported those too ill to work. These reforms will change this, with the unprecedented consequence of illness being unrecognised, unsupported and invisible. However, ignoring illness does not make it go away.

How will Dorset Council identify people, many with life-limiting illnesses such as cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and emphysema, who lose access to support? Once LCWRA ends and PIP becomes the determining factor for support, there will be no data collected on those who are ill and unable to work. This could effectively erase some of the most vulnerable people from the system entirely, whilst simultaneously making it more challenging to deliver preventative support or monitor the impact and effectiveness of these reforms.

The consultation outlined in the government's green paper, [Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working](#), closes on 30 June 2025. As it does not address the specifics of the new system it cannot fairly reflect the views of people with disabilities and their carers. Of particular concern is that it excludes Personal Independence Payments and their eligibility criteria. It also fails to consult properly on the knock-on impacts on other services, such as the NHS and local authorities.

We urge Dorset Council and councillors to:

- **respond to the consultation on the 'Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working' Green Paper**
- **publicly encourage disabled people in Dorset to use the consultation as an opportunity to express their concerns.**

Full Council

15 May 2025

Appointments to Committees, Joint Committees, Boards and Election of Chairs and Vice-chairs

For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director:

J Mair, Director of Legal & Democratic

Report Author: Susan Dallison

Job Title: Team Leader, Democratic Services

Tel: 01305 252216

Email: susan.dallison@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Brief Summary:

Full Council is asked to review and approve the allocation of committee seats in line with political balance rules and, in accordance with the Council's Constitution make appointments to committees, joint panels and boards in accordance with the nominations from the Political Group Leaders. Full Council will also elect the Chairs and Vice-chairs of the ordinary committees for the forthcoming municipal year.

Full Council is also asked to delegate authority to Jonathan Mair, Director of Legal & Democratic, in consultation with the relevant Political Group Leader, to make in-year changes to committee appointments as and when required.

Recommendation:

- (a) That the allocation of committee seats and the appointments to committees and joint boards and panels, as nominated by the political group leaders be approved for 2025/26, as set out in appendices 1, 2 & 3 respectively;
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Legal & Democratic, in consultation with the appropriate political group leader, to make in-year changes to committee, joint panel and board appointments.
- (c) That Full Council appoints committee Chairs and Vice-chairs for the 2025/26 municipal year (nominations set out in appendix 4).

Reason for Recommendation:

To comply with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Dorset Council Procedure Rules (as set out in the Constitution).

1. Political Groups and Percentage entitlement

- 1.1 Where membership of Dorset Council is divided into political groups the Council is required to review and allocate the total number of seats on ordinary committees in accordance with the strength of each political group.
- 1.2 The number of members of the political groups and the overall percentage entitlement to committee seats is as follows:
 - Liberal Democrat Group – 42 members (51.22% entitlement)
 - Conservative Group – 30 members (36.59% entitlement)
 - Green Group – 4 members (4.88% entitlement)
 - Independents for Dorset Group 4 members (4.88% entitlement)
 - Labour Group 2 members (2.43% entitlement)

2. Allocation of committee seats and appointments to committees

- 2.1 The number of seats on ordinary committees (appendix 1) are allocated to each political group in the same proportion as the overall size of each political group, as far as is practicable. This excludes appointments to the Cabinet which are made by the Leader of Council and any other panel or board where the political balance rules do not apply such as the Health and Well Being Board.

- 2.2 Where a political group has a majority of seats on the council it must also, where practicable, have a majority on each individual body to which appointments are made.
- 2.3 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 sets out the 4 principles to be followed, as far as reasonably practicable, when working out political proportionality:
- (a) Preventing domination by a single group: That not all the seats on a committee should be allocated to the same political group:
 - (b) Ensuring a majority group enjoys a majority on all committees: If one political group has a majority in the Full Council, that political group should have a majority on each committee:
 - (c) Aggregating all committee places and allocating fair shares: Subject to (a) and (b) above, the number of seats on the ordinary committees of an authority which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total number of all the seats on the ordinary committees of that authority as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority; and
 - (d) Ensuring as far as practicable fairness on each committee: Subject to (a) and (c) above, the number of the committee seats which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that committee as is borne by the number of members of the group to the membership of the authority.
- 2.4 Full Council may waive the requirement to apply political balance rules for any committee(s) where the Full Council wishes to appoint an alternative number of members from political groups. For political balance to be waived no member must vote against the motion, an objection by a single member would make it necessary to apply strict political proportionality. This report assumes that the Council does not want an alternative arrangement to that prescribed in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

3. Joint Arrangements

- 3.1 As well as making appointments to the council's ordinary committees (appendix 2) Full Council is also asked to approve nominations to a number of joint committees, panels and boards as set out in appendix 3.

4. Appointment of Committee Chairs and Vice-chairs

- 4.1 In accordance with the Constitution, the election of committee Chairs and Vice-chairs will take place at the Annual Meeting of Full Council, unless Full Council has agreed alternative arrangements. No councillor shall be the Chair of more than one committee and Vice-chair of more than one other committee except with the consent of Full Council.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Constitution the Leader of Council will be the Chair of the Cabinet and the Deputy Leader will be the Vice-chair of Cabinet.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Members elected to roles of special responsibility will receive an allowance in addition to the basic allowance as set out in the Scheme of Members Allowances. (See report of the Independent Remuneration Panel as a separate item on this agenda).

6. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

- 6.1 There are no implications.

7. Well-being and Health Implications

- 7.1 There are no implications.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 There are no other implications.

9. Risk Assessment

- 9.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

10. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 10.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Allocation of committee seats (political proportionality)

Appendix 2 – Nominations to ordinary committee seats 2025/26

Appendix 3 – Nominations to joint committees, panels and boards 2025/26.

Appendix 4 – Nominations for committee Chairs and Vice-chairs

12. **Background Papers**

None

13. **Report Sign Off**

- 13.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

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	Liberal Democrat Group 42 Members 51.22% of seats	Conservative Group 30 Members 36.59% of seats	Green Group 4 Members 4.88% of seats	Independents for Dorset Group 4 Members 4.88% of seats	Labour 2 Members 2.43%
Committee	No. of seats	No. of seats	No. of seats	No. of seats	No. of seats
People & Health Overview (10)	6	4	0	0	0
People & Health Scrutiny (10)	6	4	0	0	0
Place & Resources Overview (10)	6	4	0	0	0
Place & Resources Scrutiny (10)	6	4	0	0	0
Audit & Governance (10)	6	4	0	0	0
Appeals (15)	6	5	1	1	2
General Licensing / Gambling Act (15)	6	6	1	1	1
Pension Fund (5)	3	2	0	0	0
Strategic & Tech Planning (12)	6	4	1	1	0
Northern Area Planning (12)	6	4	1	1	0
Eastern Area Planning (12)	6	4	1	1	0
Western & Southern Planning (12)	6	4	1	1	0
Total seats	69	49	6	6	3

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ALLOCATION OF ORDINARY COMMITTEE SEATS POLITICAL GROUP NOMINATIONS - 2025/26

PEOPLE & HEALTH OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Committee size: 10

Allocation of seats: Lib Dem 6, Cons 4

No member of this committee shall also be appointed to Cabinet.

No member of this committee shall also be appointed to the People & Health Scrutiny Committee.

Political Group	Nomination
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Alex Fuhrmann
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Beryl Ezzard
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Jindy Atwal
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Louise Bown
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Stella Jones
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Ryan Holloway
Conservative	Cllr Mike Parkes
Conservative	Cllr Byron Quayle
Conservative	Cllr Steve Murcer
Conservative – seat given to the Green Group	Cllr Jon Orrell

PEOPLE & HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee size: 10

Allocation of seats: Lib Dem 6, Cons 4

No member of this committee shall also be appointed to Cabinet.

Political Group	Nomination
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Bridget Bolwell
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Chris Kippax
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Carl Woode
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Sally Holland
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Robin Legg
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Andy Todd
Conservative	Cllr Toni Coombs
Conservative	Cllr Carole Jones
Conservative	Cllr Barry Goringe
Conservative	Cllr Jane Somper

PLACE & RESOURCES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**Committee size: 10****Allocation of seats: Lib Dem 6, Cons 4***No member of this committee shall also be appointed to Cabinet.**No member of this committee shall also be appointed to the Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee.*

Political Group	Nomination
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Andy Canning
Liberal Democrat	Cllr David Taylor
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Andrew Starr
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Richard Crabb
Liberal Democrat	Cllr David Northam
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Roland Tarr
Conservative	Cllr Simon Gibson
Conservative	Cllr Piers Brown
Conservative	Cllr Val Potheary
Conservative	Cllr Sherry Jespersen

PLACE & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**Committee size: 10****Allocation of seats: Lib Dem 6, Cons 4***No member of this committee shall also be appointed to Cabinet.*

Political Group	Nomination
Liberal Democrat	Cllr David Tooke
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Sarah Williams
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Alex Fuhrmann
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Rory Major
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Jack Jeanes
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Barrie Cooper
Conservative	Cllr Noc Lacey-Clarke
Conservative	Cllr Ray Bryan
Conservative	Cllr Louie O'Leary
Conservative	Cllr Craig Monks

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**Committee size: 10****Allocation of seats: Lib Dem 6, Cons 4***No member of this committee shall also be appointed to Cabinet.*

Political Group	Nomination
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Andy Todd
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Neil Eysenck
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Ryan Holloway
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Chris Kippax
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Beryl Ezzard
Liberal Democrat (seat given to Green Group)	Cllr Belinda Bawden
Conservative	Cllr Gary Suttle
Conservative	Cllr Spencer Flower
Conservative	Cllr Andrew Parry
Conservative	Cllr Jill Haynes
Co-opted Members appointed 12.10.23 – 12.10.27	
Mr S Roach	
Mr R Ong	

APPEALS COMMITTEE**Committee size: 15****Allocation of seats: Lib Dem 6; Cons 5, Green 1, IFD 1, Lab 2**

Political Group	Nomination
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Alex Fuhrmann
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Richard Crabb
Liberal Democrat	Cllr David Morgan
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Louise Bown
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Bridget Bolwell
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Andrew Starr
Conservative	Cllr Mike Parkes
Conservative	Cllr Barry Goringe
Conservative	Cllr Julie Robinson
Conservative	Cllr David Shortell
Conservative	Cllr Andrew Parry
Green	Cllr Jon Orrell
Independents For Dorset	Cllr Pete Roper
Labour	Cllr Paul Kimber
Labour (seat given to Cons)	Cllr Emma Parker

GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE / LICENSING AND GAMBLING ACT COMMITTEE**Committee size: 15****Allocation of seats: Lib Dem 6; Cons 6, Green 1, IDF 1, Labour 1**

Political Group	Nomination
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Derek Beer
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Andrew Starr
Liberal Democrat	Cllr David Morgan
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Louise Bown
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Jack Jeanes
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Sarah Williams
Conservative	Cllr Emma Parker
Conservative	Cllr David Shortell
Conservative	Cllr Craig Monks
Conservative	Cllr Jane Somper
Conservative	Cllr Jill Haynes
Conservative	Cllr Cathy Lugg
Green	Cllr Claudia Webb
Independents For Dorset	Cllr Les Fry
Labour	Cllr Kate Wheller

STRATEGIC AND TECHNICAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**Committee size: 12****Allocation of seats: Lib Dem 6; Cons 4, Green 1, IFD 1**

This committee will be made up of 4 members from each of the 3 Planning Area Committees (unless political balance requirements necessitate otherwise)

Political Group	Nomination
Liberal Democrat	Cllr David Tooke
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Duncan Sowry-House
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Dave Bolwell
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Matt Bell
Liberal Democrat	Cllr David Taylor
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Richard Crabb
Conservative	Cllr Spencer Flower
Conservative	Cllr Toni Coombs
Conservative	Cllr Craig Monks
Conservative	Cllr Belinda Ridout
Green	Cllr Belinda Bawden
Independents For Dorset	Cllr Pete Roper

NORTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE**Committee size: 12****Allocation of seats: Lib Dem 6; Cons 4, Green 1, IFD 1**

Political Group	Nomination
Liberal Democrat	Cllr David Taylor
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Richard Crabb
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Carl Woode
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Barrie Cooper
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Rory Major
Liberal Democrat	Vacancy
Conservative	Cllr Sherry Jespersen
Conservative	Cllr Belinda Ridout
Conservative	Cllr James Vitali
Conservative	Cllr Carole Jones
Green – seat given to Conservative Group	Cllr Val Potheary
Independents for Dorset	Cllr Les Fry

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE**Committee size: 12****Allocation of seats: Lib Dem 6; Cons 4, Green 1, IFD 1**

Political Group	Nomination
Liberal Democrat	Cllr David Morgan
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Duncan Sowry-House
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Scott Florek
Liberal Democrat	Cllr David Tooke
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Alex Brenton
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Beryl Ezzard
Conservative	Cllr Spencer Flower
Conservative	Cllr Toni Coombs
Conservative	Cllr Barry Goringe
Conservative	Cllr Bill Trite
Green – seat given to Conservative Group	Cllr Andy Skeats
Independents for Dorset	Cllr Hannah Hobbs-Chell

WESTERN & SOUTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE**Committee size: 12****Allocation of seats: Lib Dem 6; Cons 4, Green 1, IFD 1**

Political Group	Nomination
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Dave Bolwell
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Neil Eysenck
Liberal Democrat	Cllr David Northam
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Matt Bell
Liberal Democrat (seat given to Labour Group)	Cllr Kate Wheller
Liberal Democrat (seat given to Labour Group)	Cllr Paul Kimber
Conservative	Cllr Louie O'Leary
Conservative	Cllr Craig Monks
Conservative	Cllr Simon Christopher
Conservative	Cllr David Shortell
Green	Cllr Belinda Bawden
Independents for Dorset	Cllr Pete Roper

PENSION FUND COMMITTEE**Committee size: 5****Allocation of seats: Lib Dem 3, Cons 2***Not more than 2 members being also appointed to the Cabinet.*

Political Group	Nomination
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Andy Canning
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Will Chakawhata
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Andy Todd
Conservative	Cllr Steve Murcer
Conservative	Cllr Andy Skeats

Appointments to Joint Committees/Panels & Boards - Appendix 3

Corporate Parenting Board (7 members plus the Portfolio Holder)	
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Duncan Sowry-House
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Bridget Bolwell
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Stella Jones
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Matt Bell
Conservative	Cllr Cathy Lugg
Conservative	Cllr Byron Quayle
Conservative	Cllr Julie Robinson
Portfolio Holder for Children's Services	Cllr Clare Sutton

Dorchester Markets Joint Panel (8 members) 2 should represent wards wholly or mainly within the area of the former Dorchester Borough Council (except where such appointment would result in an appointee being a member of the town council).	
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Roland Tarr
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Sally Holland
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Sarah Williams
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Dave Bolwell
Conservative	Cllr Simon Christopher
Conservative	Cllr Laura Beddow
Conservative	Cllr Jill Haynes
Independents For Dorset	Cllr Rob Hughes

Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority (4 members)	
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Richard Biggs
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Duncan Sowry-House
Conservative	Laura Beddow
Conservative	Byron Quayle

Appointments to Joint Committees/Panels & Boards - Appendix 3

Dorset National Landscape Partnership Board (was AONB Partnership Board) (2 members plus Portfolio Holder)	
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Ben Wilson
Conservative	Cllr Jane Somper
Portfolio Holder for Environment	Cllr Nick Ireland

Dorset Coast Forum (2 members)	
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Matt Bell
Conservative	Cllr Peter Dickenson

Dorset Local Access Forum (1 member)	
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Alex Brenton

Dorset Police and Crime Panel (5 members)	
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Louise Bown
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Carl Woode
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Sarah Williams
Conservative	Cllr Simon Gibson
Conservative	Cllr Louie O'Leary

Harbours Advisory Committee (6 members)	
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Sarah Williams
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Sally Holland
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Mike Baker
Conservative	Cllr Ray Bryan
Conservative	Cllr Peter Dickenson
Independents For Dorset	Cllr Rob Hughes
Co-opted Members Mr M Saxby appointed up to 12/10/2026 Mr L Hardy appointed up to 10/04/2028 Mr M Roberts appointed up to 10/04/2028	

Appointments to Joint Committees/Panels & Boards - Appendix 3

Joint Archives Board (3 members including the relevant Portfolio Holder)	
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Scott Florek
Conservative	Cllr Laura Beddow
Portfolio Holder for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement	Cllr Ryan Hope

Pension Board (1 member)	
Liberal Democrat	Cllr David Taylor

Schools Forum (2 members) 1 member to be appointed from the cabinet	
Liberal Democrat nomination	Cllr Clare Sutton
Conservative	Cllr Byron Quayle

Shared Lives (Adult Placement Approval Panel) (2 members)	
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Beryl Ezzard
Conservative	Cllr Jane Somper

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (3 members)	
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Jindy Atwal
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Robin Legg
Conservative	Cllr Louie O'Leary

Appointments to Joint Committees/Panels & Boards - Appendix 3

For Information - appointments made by the Leader of Council

Health & Well Being Board (3) plus 2 substitutes –	
Leader of Council (or the Leader's nominee)	Cllr Gill Taylor
Member	Cllr Clare Sutton
Member	Cllr Steve Robinson
Substitute	Cllr Sally Holland
Substitute	Cllr Chris Kippax

Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd.	
Cabinet member - Chair	Cllr Nick Ireland
Cabinet member – Vice-chair	Cllr Richard Biggs
Cabinet member	Cllr Steve Robinson
Cabinet member	Cllr Ben Wilson
Cabinet member	Cllr Gill Taylor

Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence	
Cabinet member - Chair	Cllr Nick Ireland
Cabinet member – Vice-chair	Cllr Richard Biggs
Cabinet member	Cllr Gill Taylor
Cabinet member	Cllr Clare Sutton
Cabinet member	Cllr Ryan Hope

Shareholder Committee for Dorset Innovation Park	
Cabinet member	Cllr Nick Ireland
Cabinet member	Cllr Richard Biggs
Cabinet member	Cllr Shane Bartlett
Cabinet member	Cllr Simon Clifford
Cabinet member	Cllr Clare Sutton

SEND Partnership Board	
Portfolio Holder for Children's Services	Cllr Clare Sutton
Cabinet Lead	Cllr Nick Ireland

ANNUAL MEETING OF COUNCIL – MAY 2025

NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS

People & Health Overview Committee	Chair	Vice-chair
Liberal Democrat Nominations	Cllr Beryl Ezzard	Cllr Louise Bown
Conservative Nominations		
Green Nominations		
Independents for Dorset Nominations		
Labour Nominations		

People & Health Scrutiny Committee	Chair The Chair shall be a member of the largest opposition group that is different to that of the Leader	Vice-chair The Vice-chair shall not be a member of the same political group as the Leader
Liberal Democrat Nominations	-	-
Conservative Nominations	Cllr Toni Coombs	Cllr Jane Somper
Green Nominations		
Independents for Dorset Nominations		
Labour Nominations		

Place & Resources Overview Committee	Chair	Vice-chair
Liberal Democrat Nominations	Cllr Andy Canning	Cllr Andrew Starr
Conservative Nominations		
Green Nominations		
Independents for Dorset Nominations		
Labour Nominations		

Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee	Chair The Chair shall be a member of the largest opposition group that is different to that of the Leader	Vice-chair The Vice-chair shall not be a member of the same political group as the Leader
Liberal Democrat Nominations	-	-
Conservative Nominations	Cllr Noc Lacey-Clarke	Cllr Ray Bryan
Green Nominations		
Independents for Dorset Nominations		
Labour Nominations		

Audit & Governance Committee	Chair The Chair shall be from the largest political group that is different to the Leader	Vice-chair
Liberal Democrat Nominations	-	
Conservative Nominations	Cllr Gary Suttle	Cllr Spencer Flower
Green Nominations		
Independents for Dorset Nominations		
Labour Nominations		

Appeals Committee	Chair	Vice-chair
Liberal Democrat Nominations	Cllr Andrew Starr	Cllr Bridget Bolwell
Conservative Nominations		
Green Nominations		
Independents for Dorset Nominations		
Labour Nominations		

Harbours Advisory Committee	Chair No Co-optee shall be appointed as either Chair or Vice-chair	Vice-chair No Co-optee shall be appointed as either Chairman or Vice-chair
Liberal Democrat Nominations		Cllr Sarah Williams
Conservative Nominations		
Green Nominations		
Independents for Dorset Nominations	Cllr Rob Hughes	
Labour Nominations		

Licensing Committee	Chair	Vice-chair
Liberal Democrat Nominations	Cllr Derek Beer	Cllr Louise Bown
Conservative Nominations		
Green Nominations		
Independents for Dorset Nominations		
Labour Nominations		

Strategic & Technical Planning Committee	Chair	Vice-chair
Liberal Democrat Nominations	Cllr Duncan Sowry-House	Cllr Dave Bolwell
Conservative Nominations		
Green Nominations		
Independents for Dorset Nominations		
Labour Nominations		

Northern Area Planning Committee	Chair	Vice-chair
Liberal Democrat Nominations	Cllr Richard Crabb	Cllr David Taylor
Conservative Nominations		
Green Nominations		
Independents for Dorset Nominations		
Labour Nominations		

Eastern Area Planning Committee	Chair	Vice-chair
Liberal Democrat Nominations	Cllr David Tooke	Cllr Duncan Sowry-House
Conservative Nominations		
Green Nominations		
Independents for Dorset Nominations		
Labour Nominations		

Western & Southern Area Planning Committee	Chair	Vice-chair
Liberal Democrat Nominations	Cllr Dave Bolwell	Cllr Neil Eysenck
Conservative Nominations		
Green Nominations		
Independents for Dorset Nominations		
Labour Nominations		

Pension Fund Committee	Chair	Vice-chair
Liberal Democrat Nominations	Cllr Andy Canning	Cllr Andy Todd
Conservative Nominations		
Green Nominations		
Independents for Dorset Nominations		
Labour Nominations		

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Full Council

15 May 2025

Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel – Dorset Council Scheme of Members' Allowances

For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director:

J Mair, Director of Legal & Democratic

Cover Report Author: Lindsey Watson

Job Title: Senior Democratic Services Officer

Tel: (01305) 252209

Email: lindsey.watson@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Brief Summary:

Under the Local Government (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, Dorset Council is required to establish an Independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations to the Council in respect of its Scheme of Members' Allowances. When setting a scheme of allowances, the Council must have regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

This report presents the findings of the Independent Remuneration Panel's recent review and the recommendations made in respect of the scheme for consideration by Full Council.

Recommendation:

That the attached report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, following their review of the Dorset Council Scheme of Members' Allowances, be considered by Full Council.

The recommendations for Full Council consideration are set out in section 9 of the attached report (Appendix 1).

Reason for Recommendation:

To enable Full Council to consider recommendations on the scheme of allowances following a review undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

1. Report

- 1.1 The Dorset Council Scheme of Members' Allowances was previously reviewed in 2020.
- 1.2 The Independent Remuneration Panel has been convened to undertake a fundamental review of the scheme of allowances. As a fundamental review, the Independent Remuneration Panel has reviewed all elements of the current scheme and some additional points raised by the council, which are detailed in the attached report.
- 1.3 The Independent Remuneration Panel has concluded their review and their report and recommendations are presented at appendix 1 for Full Council consideration.
- 1.4 Full Council must have regard to the recommendations made by the panel, when setting the scheme.
- 1.5 The panel has recommended that changes to the basic and special responsibility allowances if agreed, be applied with effect from 1 April 2025.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The recommendations relating to the basic allowance and special responsibility allowances made by the Independent Remuneration Panel represent an annual increase over the 2024/25 budget for members' allowances of £98,410. When setting the budget for 2025/26, an assumption had been made in respect of the green book pay award increasing the budget by 2%. This equates to £33,894 and therefore the

impact of the full recommendations on this year's budget would have been £64,516. Through ongoing national pay negotiations, employers have now offered 3.2%, potentially narrowing the impact of the Independent Remuneration Panel recommendations to £44,180.

- 2.2 In addition, there are implications on the budget associated with the future indexation of allowances and recommendations made to expand the reimbursement of caring expenses.

3. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**

None directly arising from this report.

4. **Well-being and Health Implications**

While councillors do not receive a salary, the panel has looked to recommend an allowances scheme that will support councillors in their role and subsequently assist a range of people to stand as a councillor.

5. **Other Implications**

None directly arising from this report.

6. **Risk Assessment**

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

7. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

In their report the panel has considered equalities and diversity issues and the demographics of Dorset Council councillors.

8. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel – Dorset Council – Scheme of Members' Allowances

9. **Background Papers**

Dorset Council Constitution – Part 5: Scheme of Members' Allowances

[Part 5. Scheme of Allowances updated 1 April 2025.pdf](#)

10. **Report Sign Off**

This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), and the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer).

Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel

Scheme of Members' Allowances for Dorset Council

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report is a review of the existing Scheme of Members' Allowances (the **Scheme**) for Dorset Council (the **Council**). The report makes recommendations to the Council on the Scheme (the **Review**).
- 1.2. This report has been prepared by the Independent Remuneration Panel (the **Panel**) for the Council, comprising three individuals drawn from the community:
 - (i) John Quinton (Chairman);
 - (ii) Keith Broughton; and
 - (iii) Martin Varley.
- 1.3 John Quinton is now retired following a career in local government, including working as the Head of Democratic Services for Wiltshire Council between 2003-2013. Prior to working for Wiltshire Council, John performed a similar role at Surrey County Council.
- 1.4 Martin Varley is a Solicitor and Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute for Securities for Investment. He is a corporate lawyer and specialises in banking and finance, having previously worked in the City, Bahrain and Dubai.
- 1.5 Prior to retirement, Keith Broughton spent most of his time in the human resources field, specialising in remuneration planning and management in a number of large international organisations and consultancies.
- 1.6 All panel members have experience of serving on a number of Remuneration Panels for various councils across southern England.

2. Legal Basis

- 2.1. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (the **Regulations**) apply to all local authorities.
- 2.2. The Regulations require a relevant authority to make a scheme of allowances providing for the payment of a basic allowance (**BA**) to each member of that authority. The BA must be the same for each member of the authority.
- 2.3. A relevant authority's scheme of allowances may also provide for the payment of special responsibility allowances (**SRAs**) to such members

of the authority as have special or additional responsibilities. The specified categories of special or additional responsibilities which may be included in a scheme of allowances include: -

- i) acting as leader or deputy leader of a political group within the authority;
- ii) acting as a member of an executive where the authority is operating executive arrangements within the meaning of part 2 of the Local Government Act 2000;
- iii) presiding at meetings of a committee or sub-committee of the authority;
- iv) representing the authority at meetings of or arranged by any other body;
- v) acting as a member of a committee or sub-committee of the authority which meets with exceptional frequency or for exceptionally long periods;
- vi) acting as the spokesman of a political group on a committee or sub-committee of the authority; and
- vii) carrying out such other activities in relation to the discharge of the authority's functions as require of the member an amount of time and effort equal to or greater than would be required of him or her by any of the above-mentioned activities.

2.4 SRAs need not be the same and may reflect the different expectations, time and effort involved in particular roles. The Panel takes the view that this time commitment is in addition to those hours set out in section 8(A) below.

2.5 Member allowance schemes may also provide for the payment of:-

- i) a carer's allowance;
- ii) a co-optees' allowance, to any co-opted and appointed members of a council's committees or sub-committees for attendance at conferences and meetings; and
- iii) members' travelling and subsistence allowances whilst acting in connection with their duties as a member of the authority.

2.6 Before a relevant authority may make or amend a scheme of allowances it must have regard to recommendations made in relation to the scheme by an independent remuneration panel.

2.7 Where the Panel makes a recommendation that any allowance levels should be determined according to an index, the Regulations require that it should also make a recommendation as to how long the index should run before reconsideration. In any case, an index may not run for more

than four years before a further recommendation on it is sought from an independent remuneration panel.

- 2.8 The Regulations provide that when a scheme of allowances is amended, an authority may choose to apply the amendment retrospectively to the beginning of the financial year in which the amendment is made.

3. Context of the Review

- 3.1. The Panel last reviewed the overall members' allowance scheme for Dorset Council in 2020.
- 3.2. In 2022 and 2023 the Panel undertook limited reviews of the allowances paid to co-opted members of committees established by the Council.
- 3.3. Following elections in 2024 the Panel was asked to review and update the Scheme.

4. Role of the Panel

- 4.1. Regulation 20(2) requires that an independent remuneration panel shall consist of at least three members none of whom:
- (i) is also a member of an authority in respect of which it makes recommendations or is a member of a committee or sub-committee of such an authority; or
 - (ii) is disqualified from being or becoming a member of an authority.
- 4.2. The three members of the Panel are individuals, none of whom is:
- (i) a member; or
 - (ii) disqualified from being or becoming a member; or
 - (iii) co-opted or appointed as a member of a committee or a sub-committee
- of Dorset Council.

5. Principles of Review

- 5.1. The Panel conducted the review in accordance with the following principles:
- a) Dorset Council is one of many local authorities, it should adopt a scheme similar to comparable local authorities and which is not significantly out of line with others;

- b) a scheme should be simple and easy to understand by the public as well as Councillors themselves;
- c) a scheme should not be overly bureaucratic;
- d) membership of a local authority is a voluntary public service and the level of allowances should reflect that; but people should not be prevented from standing for office on the grounds that they would be financially disadvantaged;
- e) a scheme should provide reasonable recompense for the time commitment and duties involved, after allowing for an element of public service, in order to maintain the quality of representation and extend the opportunity for people to serve as Councillors;
- f) a scheme should reflect the substantial time which the average Councillor spends on casework, local community work and other council work;
- g) a scheme is not intended to pay a market salary to a member through the BA or the BA plus any SRA; and
- h) a scheme should recognise also the additional duties and responsibilities of office holders.

6. Evidence

6.1 To inform its recommendations, the Panel was provided with the following evidence:

- (i) the Regulations;
- (ii) detailed benchmarking data from South West Councils on the levels of current allowances;
- (iii) the current members' allowance scheme for Dorset Council;
- (iv) the Constitution of Dorset Council and guidelines for the various roles of committees and its members;
- (v) statistics relating to the number and nature of meetings of committees and attendance at them;
- (vi) the responses to the Questionnaire referred to in paragraph 7.2 below (the **Questionnaire**);
- (vii) LGA Survey of councillors;
- (viii) Examples of Parental Leave policies from other local authorities and from the LGA.

- 6.2 The Panel also had the opportunity to interview those individuals named at paragraph 7.4 below and to consider the responses to the Questionnaire.

7. Methodology for the Review

- 7.1 The Panel met on eight occasions on 5 and 10 February, 10, 17,18, 20 and 26 March and 15 April 2025.

- 7.2 The Questionnaire was sent to all Councillors seeking views on various aspects of the allowances scheme. 47 responses were received.

- 7.3 Specific points raised within the response to the Questionnaire are covered in the relevant sections of this report.

- 7.4 The Panel also interviewed the following Councillors:

- (i) Councillor Nick Ireland, Leader of the Council;
- (ii) Councillor Gill Taylor, Cabinet Member, Health and Housing
- (iii) Councillor Rob Hughes, Deputy Leader of the Independents for Dorset Group;
- (iv) Councillor Carole Jones, Conservative Group Member;
- (v) Councillor Paul Kimber, Labour Group Member;
- (vi) Councillor Andrew Parry, Leader of the Conservative Group;
- (vii) Councillor Kate Wheller, Leader of the Labour Group;
- (viii) Councillor Roland Tarr, Liberal Democrat Group Member;
- (ix) Councillor Spencer Flower, Conservative Group Member;
- (x) Councillor Jindy Atwal, Liberal Democrat Group Member;
- (xi) Councillor Sally Holland, Liberal Democrat Group Member;
- (xii) Councillor Duncan Sowry-House, Chair of Strategic and Technical Planning Committee;
- (xiii) Councillor Toni Coombs, Chair of Scrutiny Committee;
- (xiv) Councillor Noc Lacey-Clarke, Chair of Scrutiny Committee;
- (xv) Councillor Derek Beer, Chair of the General Licensing and Licensing and Gambling Acts Committees;
- (xvi) Councillor Clare Sutton, Cabinet Member, Children's Services, Education and Skills and Leader of the Green Group;

- (xvii) Councillor Ben Wilson, Cabinet Member, Corporate Development and Transformation;
- (xviii) Councillor Jane Somper, Conservative Group Member;
- (xix) Councillor Bridget Bolwell, Chair of Corporate Parenting Board.

7.5 In addition, the Panel interviewed:

- (i) Jonathan Mair, Director Legal & Democratic and Monitoring Officer, Dorset Council;
- (ii) Jacqui Andrews, Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services;
- (iii) Louise Drury, Head of Service, Children in Care and Care Leavers.

7.6 The Panel wishes to record its thanks to those individuals who gave evidence and to Lindsey Watson for the significant support that she gave to the Panel.

8 Deliberations and Conclusions

A. The Basic Allowance (BA)

- 8.1 The response from the Questionnaire indicated that the majority of Councillors (24) who responded, felt that the BA, currently set at £15,056, was set at about the right level. 22 members felt that it was too low and one felt that it was too high.
- 8.2 The benchmarking data referred to in paragraph 6.1(ii) above, indicated that the BA was fairly placed regionally if a little on the low side. The BA at Devon County Council was £15,000, at Somerset Council £15,500, at Wiltshire Council £15,860, at Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council £14,458 and at Cornwall Council £18,368. It is accepted by the Panel that those other authorities cited may be in a different point in their cycle of review of allowances.
- 8.3 The response to the Questionnaire indicated that Councillors spent an average of 107 hours per month on Council duties and this is reflective of the national figures presented by the LGA in its Survey of Councillors, referred to in paragraph 6.1(vii) above. There were of course exceptions to this with figures of 40 and 60 hours per week quoted although this would largely be determined by the roles performed by those Councillors.
- 8.4 From the interviews conducted it was clear that some Councillors were performing significant roles within their communities, bringing together various partner organisations and leading on projects as well as dealing with significant levels of case work. In addition, there was a broad consensus that digital communications, particularly social media,

have increased the pressure on Councillors to respond to queries and comments almost immediately, no matter what day of the week or the time of day. This constant engagement with the public has led to increased workloads.

- 8.5 Some responses to the Questionnaire indicated that there might be some tensions in workload between rural and urban divisions and between single and multi-member divisions but this was not reflected in the subsequent interviews with councillors.
- 8.6 The Panel received evidence that suggested the demographic of the Council had changed since the last elections. The Panel heard from several Councillors who had either given up work or had reduced their hours to enable them to perform their Council role. The allowances payable were not in all cases, sufficient to make up for lost earnings or, indeed, potential earnings, but they did go some way to reduce the deficit.
- 8.7 The Panel received evidence to the effect that a significant increase in the BA would go some way towards broadening the demographic of Councillors further. In addition, there were some representations that recommended a larger BA balanced with a substantial reduction of some of the SRAs.
- 8.8 This is the first fundamental review of the Scheme since 2020 and the Council's move to unitary status. This is the first opportunity the Panel has had to fully assess the impact on workloads and the demands on Councillors' time resulting from the change. The amalgamation of district councils and the county council functions into the unitary authority, and the consequent significant reduction in the number of elected representatives, is relevant in assessing the increased workloads of Councillors.
- 8.9 Based on the views contained in the responses to the Questionnaire and the benchmarking data, there is a strong case for an uplift in the BA. This would contribute to future proofing the BA over this Council term and would in some way compensate for the increased workloads and demands on Councillors.

The Panel recommends that the BA be increased to £16,000 per annum with effect from 1 April 2025.

B. Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

- 8.10 The response from the Questionnaire indicated that the majority of SRAs currently payable were about right although the SRAs payable to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members were highlighted by a number of Councillors as being on the low side.
- 8.11 Whilst the BA has been increased on an annual basis since the last fundamental review in line with the Officer pay award, SRAs have not

been increased since 2021. This has meant that all SRAs have lost some value when compared to other local councils and eroded some of the differential with the BA. On that basis the Panel proposes that there should be some uplift in all SRAs.

- 8.12 The benchmarking data referred to in paragraph 6.1(ii) above, indicated that the SRA for the Leader was on the low side regionally. The SRA paid to the Leader of the Council is currently £36,590. Whereas at Devon County Council the leader receives £37,700, at Somerset Council £38,750, at Wiltshire Council £39,670, at Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council £31,320 and at Cornwall Council £33,980.
- 8.13 The Leader of the Council has decided not to appoint Lead Members and it is likely that this would have had some consequential impact on the workloads of Cabinet Members.
- 8.14 The Cabinet Member SRA is quite well placed regionally at £23,000. At Devon County Council cabinet member SRA is £22,623, at Somerset Council £20,150, at Wiltshire Council £23,800, at Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council £20,880 and at Cornwall Council £23,780.
- 8.15 There were three specific areas that were raised during interviews and in the responses to the Questionnaire:
- (i) An allowance for the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board;
 - (ii) the SRA for the Chair of the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee; and
 - (iii) the SRA payable to Group Leaders.
- 8.16 The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board does not receive an SRA under the current Scheme. This issue had not been drawn to the attention of the Panel in previous reviews. At this Review, however, members across the political groups expressed surprise that the role does not attract an SRA.
- 8.17 The Panel received evidence from past and present Chairs of the Corporate Parenting Board, from past and present Group Leaders and from members of the Board. The unanimous view was that this was an important role within the Council and one that needed to be recognised with an SRA. The Panel also interviewed the lead officer to understand better the role that it performed within the Council.
- 8.18 All Councillors are corporate parents in that they are accountable for looked after children, numbering over 400. The Corporate Parenting Board is the statutory body that performs this role on a day to day basis ensuring that the Council is compliant with all of the statutory responsibilities. The Board holds the local authority to account for its

performance for the looked after children service. The Chair of the Board has a specific role in leading the Board and engaging with and listening to service users and acting as the “eyes and ears” of the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services.

- 8.19 The Panel was persuaded that the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board should receive an SRA.
- 8.20 The second area where there appeared to be some consistency in the views expressed, is the SRA for the Chair of the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee. The Panel is aware that the majority of workload for the Committee is performed by the sub-committees appointed to consider licensing applications. Data provided to the Panel indicated that in the municipal year 2023/24 there were 31 sub-committee meetings of which the chair chaired 14. So far in the municipal year 2024/25 there have been 23 sub-committee meetings, of which the chair has chaired 18.
- 8.21 There is currently a core group of members who regularly serve on the sub-committees and who are trained to chair the meetings. The Panel was told that currently the vast majority of this workload is undertaken by the Chair of the Committee.
- 8.22 The Panel took account of the quasi-judicial role of the Chair of the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee, and the possibility of decisions being appealed to the courts. This added responsibility should be taken into account in assessing the level of the SRA to be awarded. The Panel also took account of the number of meetings of the Committee and its sub-committees.
- 8.23 The final area where there has been some representation is the SRA payable to Group Leaders. The current scheme provides that an SRA is payable to a Group Leader where that group has a membership of not less than 10% of the total Council membership.
- 8.24 Some evidence was presented to the Panel to suggest that the size limitation imposed on the membership was arbitrary and the workloads were similar between Group Leaders regardless to the size of the group. A number of Councillors also suggested that the amount of the SRA was too low and that the workload was more akin to the chair of a Scrutiny Committee, for example.
- 8.25 The Panel was told that the role of the Group Leader within the Council is not purely a political role. Officers can use Group Leaders as a sounding board over forthcoming issues and they can assist with the political management of the Council.
- 8.26 The Panel felt that it was important to emphasise that in assessing the level of SRA payable, it is the role that is important not the person performing that role. The Panel is not persuaded that the role is equivalent to that of a major committee chair nor is it persuaded that

the size of the group is irrelevant to the workload in managing that group. The Panel does not recommend any change to the minimum threshold of a political group's membership of 10% of the Council.

The Panel recommends that the following SRAs be payable as from 1 April 2025:-

	<i>SRA recommended</i>	<i>Current amount (2024/25 scheme)</i>
<i>Leader of the Council</i>	<i>£38,000</i>	<i>£36,591.90</i>
<i>Executive / Cabinet Members (including Deputy Leader)</i>	<i>£23,500</i>	<i>£23,000.59</i>
<i>Chair of the Council</i>	<i>£11,000</i>	<i>£10,454.81</i>
<i>Vice-Chair of the Council</i>	<i>£5,500</i>	<i>£5,227.47</i>
<i>Chairs of Audit and Governance Committee, overview committees, scrutiny committees, and all planning committees (including strategic)</i>	<i>£11,000</i>	<i>£10,454.81</i>
<i>Chair of the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee</i>	<i>£7,500</i>	<i>£5,227.47</i>
<i>Chairs of all other committees listed in Article 8 and the Dorset Police and Crime Panel and the Corporate Parenting Board in Article 11 of the Dorset Council Constitution</i>	<i>£5,500</i>	<i>£5,227.47</i> <i>(Chair of Corporate Parenting Board does not currently receive a SRA)</i>
<i>Minority Group Leaders (Note: Minority Parties must have a membership of not less than 10% of Dorset Council for their Leader to receive an SRA).</i>	<i>£5,500</i>	<i>£5,227.47</i>

C. Indexation of Allowances

- 8.27 The current scheme provides that both the BA and the SRAs are adjusted annually by an amount equivalent to any officers' pay award. This is intended to protect the levels of allowances against any cost of

living increases. Most, if not all, local authorities nationally update their allowances in a similar way.

- 8.28 As part of the Questionnaire, Councillors were asked whether they supported an automatic annual adjustment of both allowances. In response, 93% of respondents said the BA should be adjusted annually and 87% said the SRAs should be adjusted annually.
- 8.29 When asked, the consensus amongst Councillors was that the officer pay award was the most appropriate index to use to update allowances.
- 8.30 In recent years the pay award to officers has been expressed as a consolidated fixed sum rather than a percentage increase against each salary point. In response to this change of approach, the Panel recommended that the uplift in the BA be increased by the percentage increase at Salary Scale Point 43, as this equates to a senior manager within the council. However it also recommended that this uplift should not apply to SRAs, as in its view the allowances are dissimilar. The BA reflected the time commitment and costs of Councillors whereas the SRAs reflected responsibilities and accountabilities. As the current scheme provided for both allowances to be increased annually, the Panel agreed to look at this further during the current review.
- 8.31 It was clear that without the indexation of the SRAs, those allowances had fallen out of kilter with other comparable regional authorities and the differences between the BA and SRAs had decreased.
- 8.32 In order to future proof the scheme, the Panel is persuaded that both the BA and all SRAs should be increased annually in future. Where a consolidated fixed sum salary award is made to officers, the BA and SRAs should continue to be increased by the percentage increase applied to salary point 43 on the NJC terms and Conditions.
- 8.33 The Panel is mindful that any indexation may not be for a period of more than four years before the Scheme is again reviewed. The Panel recommends that indexation of BA and SRAs should continue for the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029.

The Panel recommends that:-

- (i) both the BA and SRAs be updated annually to reflect the annual pay award to staff and that this indexation commence from 1 April 2026;***
- (ii) where a consolidated fixed sum pay award is made, the BA and SRAs be increased by the percentage increase applied to salary scale point 43; and***
- (iii) indexation of BA and SRAs should continue for the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029.***

D. Co-opted and Independent Members Allowance

- 8.34 The Panel reviewed the allowances payable to Co-opted and Independent Members of committees in 2022 and 2023. The Panel is of the view that there is no further action or updating required.
- 8.35 As stated at paragraph 8.33, indexation may not be for a period of more than four years before the Scheme is again reviewed. The Panel recommends that indexation of the allowances payable to Co-opted and Independent Members of committees should continue for the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029.

The Panel recommends that:-

- (i) no further increase be applied to the Co-opted and Independent Members allowances;***
- (ii) these allowances be updated annually, commencing on 1 April 2026, to reflect the indexation increases applied to the BA and SRAs; and***
- (iii) indexation of the Co-opted and Independent Members allowances should continue for the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029.***

E. Dependant Carer's Allowance

- 8.36 The Regulations provide that a scheme of allowances may also include the payment of a dependant carer's allowance to those Councillors who incur expenditure for the care of children or other dependants whilst undertaking particular duties. These duties are specified in the Regulations and are set out in the Annex to this report (**Permitted Duties**).
- 8.37 The Scheme currently provides that the dependant carer's allowance is payable to any member of the Council for the actual expenditure incurred for the care of dependants, whether children, elderly people or people with disabilities, whilst a Councillor is on Council business where travelling allowances are payable.
- 8.38 The current rate of dependant carer's allowance payable is up to £14 per hour or, by prior arrangement with the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services, invoiced expenditure above £14 per hour. The allowance is not payable to a member of the claimant's own household. Councillors who claim a dependant carer's allowance are required to certify that the amounts claimed (up to the permitted maximum) have actually been incurred. Receipted invoices are also required.
- 8.39 Whilst there was no consensus in the responses to the Questionnaire in relation to this dependant carer's allowance, where specific comments were made to the Panel, they were to the effect that

members felt the amount that can be claimed is too low. In more detailed questioning during the interviews, it was clear that the requirements of the Scheme are too restrictive. This means that many Councillors who could otherwise have claimed the allowance, did not.

- 8.40 For Councillors with dependants who require specialised care, the maximum allowance payable was far too low.
- 8.41 For Councillors who require informal childcare, the Scheme is too restrictive in that invoices are required and family members are excluded.
- 8.42 Technology used in connection with Council business may now require that a Councillor attend to matters at home. So, whilst no travel allowance would be available, the member is required to devote their attention to Council business. In these circumstances, it may be appropriate for a carer to be engaged, particularly where the dependant has complex needs.
- 8.43 The Panel is of the view that this element of the Scheme should be amended so as not to deter people with caring duties from standing for election or participating without hindrance in the work of the authority and the bodies to which it appoints members. In addition, the Panel accepted the representations that the Scheme should take account of those Councillors whose dependants require specialised care and those who make informal arrangements for care, as this would again help with the inclusion and diversity.
- 8.44 In addition, the Panel agreed that this should be broadened to include councillors who required specialised care or support themselves to perform their roles as this would again help with the inclusion and diversity.

The Panel recommends that the Scheme incorporates a Dependant Carer's Allowance for Permitted Duties to include:-

- (i) A distinction between formal specialised care and informal care;***
- (ii) For formal specialised care the allowance should provide for the reimbursement of the actual expenditure, subject to prior agreement with the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services and the provision of appropriate invoices/receipts;***
- (iii) For informal care, the maximum allowance payable should be the national minimum wage and is payable subject to the carer providing a written receipt (the process to be agreed by the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services and the member making the claim);***

- (iv) ***In respect of informal care, the claimant's own household should not be excluded, subject to where a person acting as a carer already has joint caring responsibilities, payment would be subject to the prior agreement of the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services;***
- (v) ***Both elements of this allowance are payable for the care of dependants whether children, elderly people or people with disabilities while the member is on Council business where travel allowances are payable or otherwise by prior agreement with the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services.***
- (vi) ***Any members of the Council requiring specialist care or support for themselves should agree this provision with the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services and the actual cost will be reimbursed upon production of receipts.***

F. Travel and Subsistence

- 8.45 The Panel received little evidence of concern amongst members regarding the travel and subsistence rates payable and during the interviews members appeared satisfied with the process for submitting claims.
- 8.46 However, there was some concern that the mileage rate of 45p per mile had not been increased for many years. This is the HMRC approved rate for mileage allowances. Anything over and above the rates approved by HMRC are taxable. Therefore, to pay travel expenses in excess of those HMRC approved rates would impose an administrative burden on the Council in administering the deduction of tax and paying it to HMRC. This is something that the Panel cannot recommend.
- 8.47 Currently, the Scheme provides that a mileage allowance is payable to a Councillor for attendance at meetings of the Cabinet/Executive, and of those committees and sub-committees, panels, joint committees, consultative bodies and working groups of which they are not a member, when expressly invited to attend and speak. This provision does not apply to meetings other than the Cabinet/Executive, where the Councillor simply wanted to observe the meeting.
- 8.48 The Panel considered this issue and agreed that the ability to attend meetings, even where the Councillor simply wanted to observe the proceedings, was part of the democratic process. Therefore the payment of a mileage allowance should be paid where a member attends a meeting.
- 8.49 The Panel was also asked to consider whether it was appropriate to pay a mileage allowance in connection with ward duties and

responsibilities. Currently Councillors can claim for attendance at parish and town council meetings but not for meetings with individuals or groups of constituents. The Panel received no evidence that this is an issue. The Panel is of the view that the BA is designed to include ward activities and therefore no change should be made to the Scheme in this respect.

The Panel recommends that;-

- (i) paragraph 5.2(c) of the scheme be amended to include the payment of a mileage allowance for the attendance of a Councillor at any meeting of the Council to observe the proceedings;***
- (ii) apart from (i) above, there be no change to the current travel and subsistence allowances, other than updating the subsistence rates to reflect the officer rates for 2025.***

G. Policy for Parental/Adoption/Sick/Neonatal Care Leave for Councillors

- 8.50 As part of its review in 2022, the Panel recommended *“That a consultation be undertaken of Dorset Councillors regarding the possible introduction of a policy for Parental/Adoption/Sick leave and that the response be considered as part of the Panel’s next fundamental review of the Scheme.”*
- 8.51 The purpose of a Parental/Adoption/Sick/Neonatal Care leave Allowance is to provide for the continuation of payment of allowances whilst a Councillor is absent from Council duties, whether this is through illness or for parental responsibilities. The allowance could provide for the continuation of both the BA and any SRA payable.
- 8.52 The response to the Questionnaire indicated that support for the continuation of the BA was far more widespread than for the continuation of an SRA.
- 8.53 In interviews the response from right across the political spectrum was that it would not be correct to continue to pay an SRA during an absence and this was something that a Group Leader would manage through a change in appointment.
- 8.54 The Panel agrees with this view. In addition, the Council has a six-month attendance rule whereafter the Full Council may grant a dispensation, which would effectively authorise the continuation of the payment of the BA beyond six months. On this basis the Panel is of the view that there are current procedures in place that mean a formal Parental/Adoption/Sick/Neonatal Care Leave policy is not needed.

The Panel recommends that in view of the current procedures in place, no action be taken to introduce a Parental/Adoption/Sick/Neonatal Care Leave policy for member allowances.

H. Miscellaneous Issues Raised

(i) Car Parking

- 8.55 The Panel was asked to consider whether Councillors should be required to pay for their car parking permit at the same rate payable by staff. This had been raised as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26.
- 8.56 The Panel was advised that officers are no longer provided with free parking when at the Council's offices.
- 8.57 The purpose of the BA is to reimburse Councillors for the expenses incurred undertaking their roles and it can be argued that this should include parking. However, the Panel felt that there was a need to distinguish between the Council's staff and Councillors.
- 8.58 Councillors do not receive a salary out of which parking charges may be met. Councillors attend meetings in the execution of their public duties, and the Panel therefore agreed that it is not appropriate to charge Councillors for car parking. Any impediment to Councillors attending meetings and performing their democratic role should be resisted.

The Panel recommends that Councillors should not be required to pay for their car parking permits to be used only when undertaking Council business.

(ii) Salary Sacrifice Schemes

- 8.59 The Panel was asked to consider whether Councillors should be eligible to access staff salary sacrifice schemes.
- 8.60 For the same reasons outlined at paragraphs 8.56 and 8.57 above, the Panel consider there to be the fundamental difference between Councillors and staff in that members receive an allowance and not a salary. On this basis the Panel did not feel that it was appropriate to recommend the formulation of a salary sacrifice scheme for Councillors.

The Panel recommends that Councillors be not permitted to access the salary sacrifice scheme designed for staff.

(iii) Councillors access to the Local Government Pension Scheme

- 8.61 The Panel did receive some representations that Councillors should be able to access the Local Government Pension scheme, so that allowances are pensionable. This is not possible under the current law and the Panel has no authority to recommend the inclusion of Pensions within the Scheme.

9 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 **Basic Allowance:** The Panel recommends that the BA be increased to £16,000 per annum with effect from 1 April 2025.
- 9.2 **Special Responsibility Allowances:** The Panel recommends that the following SRAs be payable as from 1 April 2025:

Leader of the Council	£38,000;
Executive / Cabinet Members (including Deputy Leader)	£23,500;
Chair of the Council	£11,000;
Vice-Chair of the Council	£5,500;
Chairs of Audit and Governance Committee, Overview committees, Scrutiny committees, and all planning committees (including strategic)	£11,000;
Chair of the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee	£7,500;
Chairs of all other committees listed in Article 8 and the Dorset Police and Crime Panel and the Corporate Parenting Board in Article 11 of the Dorset Council Constitution	£5,500;
Minority Group Leaders (Note: Minority Parties must have a membership of not less than 10% of Dorset Council for their Leader to receive an SRA).	£5,500.

- 9.3 **Indexation of Allowances:** The Panel recommends that:
- 9.3.1 both the BA and SRAs be updated annually to reflect the annual pay award to staff and that this indexation commence from 1 April 2026;
- 9.3.2 where a consolidated fixed sum pay award is made, the BA and SRAs be increased by the percentage increase applied to salary scale point 43;

- 9.3.3 indexation of BA and SRAs should continue for the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029.
- 9.4 **Co-opted and Independent Members Allowance:** The Panel recommends that:
- 9.4.1 no further increase be applied to the Co-opted and Independent Members allowances;
- 9.4.2 these allowances be updated annually, commencing on 1 April 2026, to reflect the indexation increases applied to the BA and SRAs; and
- 9.4.3 indexation of the Co-opted and Independent Members allowances should continue for the period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029.
- 9.5 **Dependant Carer's Allowance:** The Panel recommends that the Scheme incorporates a Dependant Carer's Allowance which includes:
- 9.5.1 a distinction between formal specialised care and informal care;
- 9.5.2 for formal specialised care the allowance should provide for the reimbursement of the actual expenditure, subject to prior agreement with the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services and the provision of appropriate invoices/receipts;
- 9.5.3 for informal care, the maximum allowance payable should be the national minimum wage and is payable subject to the carer providing a written receipt (the process to be agreed by the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services and the member making the claim);
- 9.5.4 In respect of informal care, the claimant's own household should not be excluded, subject to where a person acting as a carer already has joint caring responsibilities, payment would be subject to the prior agreement of the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services;
- 9.5.5 both elements of this allowance are payable for the care of dependants whether children, elderly people or people with disabilities while the member is on Council business where travel allowances are payable or otherwise by prior agreement with the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services; and
- 9.5.6 any members of the Council requiring specialist care or support for themselves should agree this provision with the Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services and the actual cost will be reimbursed upon production of receipts.
- 9.6 **Travel and Subsistence:** The Panel recommends that;
- 9.6.1 paragraph 5.2(c) of the Scheme be amended to include the payment of a mileage allowance for the attendance of a Councillor at any meeting of the Council to observe the proceedings;

- 9.6.2 apart from 9.6.1 above, there be no change to the current travel and subsistence allowances, other than updating the subsistence rates to reflect the officer rates for 2025.
- 9.7 Policy for Parental/Adoption/Sick/Neonatal Care Leave for Councillors:** The Panel recommends that in view of the current procedures in place, no action be taken to introduce a Parental/Adoption/Sick/Neonatal Care Leave policy for member allowances.
- 9.8 Car parking permits:** The Panel recommends that Councillors should not be required to pay for their car parking permits to be used only when undertaking Council business.
- 9.9 Salary Sacrifice Schemes:** The Panel recommends that Councillors be not permitted to access the salary sacrifice scheme designed for staff.

Annex

Dependant Carer's Allowance – Permitted Duties

The Scheme may include the payment of a dependants' carers' allowance to those Councillors who incur expenditure for the care of children or other dependants whilst undertaking particular duties. These Permitted Duties are specified in the Regulations and are as follows:

- 1) a meeting of the executive;
- 2) a meeting of a committee of the executive;
- 3) a meeting of the authority;
- 4) a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of the authority;
- 5) a meeting of some other body to which the authority make appointments or nominations;
- 6) a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of a body to which the authority make appointments or nominations;
- 7) a meeting which has both been authorised by the authority, a committee, or subcommittee of the authority or a joint committee of the authority and one or more other authorities, or a sub-committee of a joint committee and to which representatives of more than one political group have been invited (if the authority is divided into several political groups) or to which two or more Councillors have been invited (if the authority is not divided into political groups);
- 8) a meeting of a local authority association of which the authority is a member;
- 9) duties undertaken on behalf of the authority in pursuance of any standing order requiring a member or members to be present while tender documents are opened;
- 10) duties undertaken on behalf of the authority in connection with the discharge of any function of the authority conferred by or under any enactment and empowering or requiring the authority to inspect or authorise the inspection of premises;
- 11) duties undertaken on behalf of the authority in connection with arrangements made by the authority for the attendance of pupils at a school approved for the purposes of section 342 of the Education Act 1996; and
- 12) any other duty approved by the authority in connection with discharging the duties of the authority or its committees or sub-committees.

FULL COUNCIL

MOTION ON NOTICE

Date of Council Meeting: - 15 May 2025

Title of Motion: - Declaring an economic emergency

Proposer: - Cllr Simon Gibson

Seconder: - Cllr James Vitali

Supported by: - Cllr Craig Monks, Cllr Laura Beddow, Cllr Jane Somper, Cllr Toni Coombs, Cllr Mike Parkes, Cllr Andrew Parry, Cllr Spencer Flower, Cllr Piers Brown, Cllr Val Potheary, Cllr Andy Skeats, Cllr Sherry Jespersen, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Jill Haynes, Cllr Byron Quayle, Cllr Barry Goringe

Motion Narrative and Action Required

Dorset, like the wider United Kingdom, is experiencing difficult economic headwinds that are negatively impacting our local economy and our businesses. A combination of stubbornly low growth rates, increasing cost of employment and darkening global trading conditions are causing widespread concern. A recent report by the Institute of Chartered Accountants highlighted plummeting business confidence. The number of new businesses registrations has reduced and winding up orders increased to the highest level since the financial crash.

After the Spring Statement, the OBR halved its growth forecast for 2025 from 2.0% to 1.0%. And since inflation has regularly outpaced growth in recent years, real living standards are deteriorating, which for businesses means less consumer demand even whilst their own prices are rising. Growth rates have been historically low in recent years and once population increases are considered, GDP per capita has actually fallen. Economic growth in Dorset sits below the regional average and the national average. Dorset has a productivity deficit. Our ageing population and reducing number of younger people further exacerbates the issues facing businesses and their ability to grow.

Increases to employers National Insurance Contributions, reductions in Retail, Hospitality and leisure business rate relief, increasing energy costs and global tariffs have made life increasingly difficult for our businesses and the families that rely on them for income and employment.

A thriving economy allows businesses to grow, to hire more staff and to pay better wages. Confident businesses invest in their infrastructure and better train their employees.

Dorset Council is well placed to show leadership and support for our businesses and local economy. As we produce our next Economic Growth Strategy, we must look urgently at anything that the Council can do to improve growth, support businesses and jobs.

Motion

Dorset Council therefore commits to: Declare an ‘Economic Emergency’ that requires urgent action. Furthermore, the Council commits to:

1. A thorough and urgent review of all existing Council policies to more fully assess the impact on economic growth in Dorset and the impact on local businesses and jobs.
2. Ensuring that all future major policy has a more detailed assessment of the various economic factors included in the reports similar to the successful Climate Change ‘colour wheel.’
3. Establish a permanent Executive Advisory Panel that will meet regularly, on a cross party basis, to build upon the work of the task & finish group that has been supporting the forthcoming Economic Growth Strategy.
4. Create a strategy for Business Rates that seeks to grow the number of businesses across the Dorset Council area. With consideration given to a percentage of any increase in business rate revenue being set aside to improve our local economy, our highstreets or offer increased rate relief to struggling businesses.
5. Increase the capacity of the Economic Development team to ensure that economic factors can be considered more fully across the council and to enable more input into planning applications.
6. Work to ensure that economic growth is prioritised across Dorset, including in rural areas.
7. To speed up the work of the Market Town/ Highstreet Strategy to allow for regeneration of our town centres.
8. An annual scrutiny review of the Economic Growth Strategy and action plan.
9. Working with the business community, business representatives and locally elected representatives to lobby for better business support for Dorset and to ensure that the Government prioritises Economic Growth and support for businesses of all sizes.