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DORSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 16 APRIL 2026

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

Apologies: Cllrs Bridget Bolwell, Rob Hughes, Paul Kimber, Rory Major, Gill Taylor and Claudia Webb

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

Susan Dallison (Democratic & Governance Services Team Leader), Jonathan Mair (Director – Legal and Democratic), Julia Ingram (Corporate Director of Adult Social Care), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director of People – Children), Lisa Cotton (Corporate Director for Transformation, Customer, and Cultural Services), Sam Crowe (Director of Public Health and Prevention), Sean Cremer (Corporate Director of Finance and Commercial), Hayley Caves (Member Development and Support Officer), Jacqui Andrews (Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services), George Dare (Senior Democratic and Governance Officer), Antony Nash (Senior Democratic and Governance Officer), Chris Matthews (Head of People and Workforce), Graham Duggan (Head of Regulatory Services), and Grace Evans (Head of Legal Services).

Officers present remotely (for all or part of the meeting): Iain Sim (Interim Corporate Director of Housing)

TRIBUTES TO THE LATE COUNCILLOR DAVE BOLWELL

The Council observed a minute's silence in memory of Dave Bolwell and Barry Goringe. The Chair announced that tributes to Barry Goringe would take place at the next meeting of Council.

Members paid tribute to Dave Bolwell's service as a councillor and his contributions to Dorset Council, Bridport Town Council, and in Bradford-upon-Avon before he moved to

Dorset. Councillors remembered his kindness, good humour, and his commitment to the local community.

71. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bridget Bolwell, Rob Hughes, Gill Taylor, Claudia Webb, Rory Major and Paul Kimber.

72. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2026 were confirmed and signed.

73. Declarations of Interest

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

74. Chair's Announcements

Member of Youth Parliament

The Chair invited the Member of Youth Parliament, Tom Clifton, to address the council. The Member of Youth Parliament reflected on his term in Youth Parliament and his work tackling sexual violence in schools.

Jonathan Price – Executive Director, People – Adults and Housing

The Chair announced that Jonathan Price would be leaving Dorset Council at the end of April. On behalf of the Council, the Chair thanked Jonathan for the work he had done for the council.

75. Public Participation - questions

There were two questions received from members of the public and responses were provided by the relevant Cabinet Members. The questions and responses are attached as an appendix to these minutes.

76. Public participation - petitions and deputations

There were no petitions or deputations.

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

The Leader of the Council announced that Dorset Council was the national winner of the Clean Energy – Power Award at the 2026 APSE Energy Awards at the end of February.

The Leader also announced that Councillor R Hope would be stepping down from his Cabinet Member role at the Annual Meeting and that Councillor M Bell would join Cabinet. The Leader thanked Councillor Hope for the work he had done as a Cabinet Member.

A motion without notice was proposed by Councillor T Coombs that the order of business in the agenda be changed (Procedure Rule 16c), specifically that Item 13 – Questions from Councillors be moved to be the next item on the agenda. The motion was seconded by Councillor V Potheary.

Members spoke in favour and against the motion to change the order of the agenda.

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was LOST.

78. Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy 2026-2031

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care proposed the recommendation as set out in the report. The proposal was seconded by the Leader of Council.

Members debated the report and the debate reflected a range of views. Several councillors raised concerns that the £60k income threshold was too high and that there were concerns about the local connection criteria. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care responded to these concerns and explained that there had been improvements made to the policy.

The Director of Legal and Democratic advised that during the debate, he discussed with Councillor L Beddow about whether she had a disclosable pecuniary interest due to being employed by a registered social landlord. He gave the advice that this policy did not directly relate to her employment.

Decision:

That the Housing Allocations Policy 2026–2031 be approved, subject to an amendment to section 4.15 replacing the first bullet point with the following text:

- *applicants who own, or part own, or have any legal or beneficial interest in a residential property in the UK or abroad, whether occupied by them or let to others. This includes applicants who hold such an interest directly or indirectly, including through a company, partnership, trust, or other legal entity, where the applicant has control of, or a material interest in, that entity and it owns residential property, or*

Reason for the decision

To ensure Dorset Council has a clear, fair, and legally compliant policy governing the allocation of social housing, consistent with the Council's statutory duties under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 considering the needs and priorities of Dorset residents.

79. Fees for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Commercial Strategy presented and proposed the recommendations as set out in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Derek Beer.

Decision:

That the new fees for the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences be adopted.

Reason for the decision:

The fees have not been raised since 2022 when they were calculated on the cost of running the service.

80. **Shipton Gorge and Loders Community Governance Review**

The recommendations as set out in the report were presented and proposed by the Leader of Council. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Neil Eysenck.

Decision:

That the final recommendations in respect of the parish boundaries for the parishes of Shipton Gorge and Loders as shown in Appendices A, B and C, be agreed.

Reason for the decision:

To ensure that community governance arrangements within the area under review are reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area, and comply with statutory guidance.

81. **Review of the Senior Leadership Team and Appointment to Roles**

The following officers, who were members of the Senior Leadership Team, left the meeting for the duration of the item: J Mair, J Ingram, P Dempsey, L Cotton, S Crowe and S Cremer.

The Leader of the Council presented and proposed the recommendations set out in the report. The proposal was seconded by Councillor A Parry.

Decision:

- a) That Sean Cremer be appointed to the post of Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer) and as the administrator for the Local Government Pension Scheme in Dorset.
- b) That the Council's Pay Policy Statement be amended to incorporate an additional pay enhancement for Directors in Statutory Officer positions.

Officers returned to the meeting following the decision being made.

82. **Member Code of Conduct Complaint**

Council received the report.

83. Questions from Councillors

There were nine questions received from councillors. The questions and responses provided by Cabinet Members are attached as an appendix to these minutes.

In response to a supplementary question by Councillor L Fry, the Cabinet Member for Place Services responded that attempts would be made to replace the trees where it is possible to do so.

In response to a supplementary question by Councillor C Lugg, the Cabinet Member for Place Services reiterated that school crossing patrols would not take place on zebra crossings as it causes confusion for drivers.

In response to a supplementary question by Councillor R Legg, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning advised that he would try to ensure the meeting of emergency planning would take place before the end of the consultation period.

In response to a supplementary question by Councillor C Monks, the Cabinet Member for Place Services agreed to meet with him and that the Environment Agency would be running sessions across Dorset, including in rural areas.

84. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

85. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 8.15 pm

Chair

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Full Council – 16 April 2026

Questions submitted by the Public

Question 1 – submitted by Geoffrey Chopping

In January 2018, before the East Dorset District Council Offices closed, I submitted a Definitive Map Modification Order Application for a public footpath across Woodleaze Copse and through the offices site to Furzehill Wood. Many witnesses supported the application, several of which are dogwalkers and still use the application route daily. Furzehill Wood is owned by the Woodland Trust and is open to the public.

Since then, I have become a Holt Parish Councillor and Biodiversity Net Gain has become a requirement. Consequently, I am keen to support: the current users of the Application footpath; the interests of the future residents of the new estate; and to protect the considerable wild life which uses the site as a wide wildlife corridor linking the green spaces, which almost totally surround the development site. Although there is some fencing it is mainly fairly porous fencing so that most Wildlife can find a way through, including large mammals.

Over a year ago, when I learnt that the DMMO Application was being claimed by Dorset Council as the reason the current preferred developer had not agreed to formally proceed, I explained that Dorset Council could legally declare the current walkable DMMO application route as a Public Footpath (precisely fulfilling the Application Route), or if they would create a walkable route and declare it along or near the boundaries of the 5 adjacent dwellings and declare it as a public footpath then I would be delighted to withdraw my DMMO Application.

Dorset Council have done neither, even though the Senior Ranger - Green space team East confirmed that the route along the fences was possible.

In the last year, the quantity of vandalization has increased enormously and the police have been repeatedly called.

So far Dorset Council have failed to implement any effective security measures and the vandalization continues unchecked. A manhole cover was missing for a month leaving a deep water filled chamber as a considerable safety hazard.

The Leader of Dorset Council was invited to issue a statement to the Holt Annual Parish meeting, held on 19 March 2026, with an update of the situation including: the DMMO footpath Application;

the position with the preferred developer, who is the Whitelock Group;

when effective security would be undertaken;

and whether Dorset Council has accepted yet that Furzehill is really not suitable for having an enormous quantity of further dwellings dumped in its midst, when there is a complete lack of sustainable public transport and limited local shopping facilities.

No statement was received then, nor has one be received since.

QUESTION: Will Dorset Council explain why it neither attempted to answer any of the questions, nor comment on any of the criticisms?

Response by Cllr S Bartlett

The request for a statement to the parish council meeting was not acted on because it did not come from the parish council itself.

The Definitive Map Modification Order application is still in the queue, and it will take time to work through. We have held several site meetings to look at alternative routes suggested by Cllr Chopping, but we have not been able to agree to these. The proposed alternatives would cause significant disruption to wildlife, vegetation, mature trees and nearby residents. There is also no evidence that these routes have been used as paths, and they would be narrow and difficult to access.

For those reasons, the council now intends to proceed with declaring the original DMMO application route before the land is sold. Discussions about the sale of the site are ongoing.

On site security, regular inspections are already taking place. Because of the high number of break-ins, security patrols have been increased to several visits every 24 hours. We have also approved the installation of five CCTV and alarm units to improve monitoring and deter further vandalism.

Decisions about future housing in the area are part of the Local Plan process. Possible sites are still being assessed alongside public consultation responses and supporting evidence. A draft plan is expected to be considered by Cabinet and Full Council later this year.

Question 2 – submitted by Jenny Murray

On the 16h April 2026 it will be exactly one year since the UK Supreme Court ruled unanimously in the For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers that the terms “sex” “man” and “woman” in the Equality Act 2010 refer to biological sex. (a link to the ruling is here <https://supremecourt.uk/cases/press-summary/uksc-2024-0042>).

The Government has confirmed that organisations should not wait for "EHRC guidance" as the FWS Supreme Court ruling was "crystal clear". The EHRC said the guidance "is just a navigation tool" and the law of the land was determined on 16 April 2025.

We are aware that Dorset Council has established a "A Task and Finish Working Group" for action across this area. Can Dorset Council confirm it is now compliant with the FWS Supreme Court Ruling across all its internal and external policies, internal/external training, data collection, equality impact assessments and is also ensuring that all 3rd party service providers/supply base are compliant.

Response by Cllr N Ireland

Thank you for your question.

Dorset Council recognises the Supreme Court's judgment in *For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers*, delivered on 16 April 2025, which clarified that, for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, the terms "sex", "man" and "woman" refer to biological sex. We also recognise that gender reassignment remains a separate protected characteristic under the Act.

Following the judgment, the council established a task-and-finish approach to review relevant policies, practices and guidance. This work has included internal communications, reviews of documentation, and actions across our workplaces to ensure facilities and arrangements remain lawful and appropriate.

The council continues to keep its policies and practices under review to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 as interpreted by the Supreme Court, alongside our ongoing duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

In relation to external providers, Dorset Council requires all suppliers and contractors to comply with equality legislation as a condition of working with the authority and to keep their practices up to date with relevant legal requirements.

This is an ongoing process, and the council will continue to review and update its arrangements as required.

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Full Council – 16 April 2026

Questions submitted by Councillors

Question 1 – submitted by Cllr L Fry

How did the Council get this so wrong??

Over the past couple of weeks roadworks have been taking place at the Queens Ave / Maud Road junction in Dorchester. The work undertaken is to bury the electric cables and gas pipes deeper into the ground, ahead of the road improvements due in the school summer holidays. Queens Ave is a historic tree lined road, with mature lime trees close to the roads edge and junctions.

The Councils Policy is that any ground works undertaken near the base of mature trees must be dug by hand to prevent any damage, especially root damage to the tree. This is what is insisted of all developers

This work caused all the roots to be damaged, severed from the tree trunk. This has resulted in the tree becoming unsafe and will need to be taken down. The loss of this mature tree was totally preventable, had the work been undertaken in accordance with the agreed procedure.

Questions

How taking into account the Councils Policy of ground works around mature trees, was the ground at the base of a mature lime tree not dug by hand to protect the roots?

What can be done to prevent this happening again?

Response by Cllr J Andrews

I have spoken to the Executive Director for Place and he says “We’re very sorry this work led to the loss of a mature lime tree. I have made clear to the Executive Director that should not have happened.

“The council is clear that work near established trees should be dug by hand to protect the roots. In this case, that did not happen as it should have. The right checks weren’t followed, and we got it wrong.

“The work was done during the Easter holidays to prepare for a new pedestrian crossing near The Thomas Hardy School. Electricity cables needed to be lowered, working with SSE. The planned route had to change to avoid a gas pipe, and during that work the tree’s roots were damaged.

“Expert advice has now confirmed the tree is unsafe and will need to be removed. It will be replaced.

To stop this happening again, a full review is already underway. We are reinforcing clear instructions with staff and contractors so agreed ways of working around trees are followed every time.

Dorset Council has made nature recovery a clear priority. Over the past two years, nearly 5,000 trees have been planted on Council owned land, as highlighted in our Biodiversity Report. In 2024, the Council declared a Nature Emergency and is now delivering on that commitment, including through the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which sets out how we will protect and restore habitats while supporting communities and wellbeing across the county.

Question 2 – submitted by Cllr M Parkes & Cllr C Lugg

School crossing patrol

Whilst we are extremely pleased with the two new pedestrian crossings, we are very disappointed that the school crossing patrol will be withdrawn in Church Road, Ferndown at the end of the summer term.

The crossings remain extremely busy serving children from the first, middle and upper schools which is compounded by ongoing dangerous parking at the start and end of the school day.

Can the cabinet member explain the rationale for withdrawal of the crossing patrol and if it is a funding-based decision whether it would be possible to remain if funded by other sources such as the Town Council?

Response by Cllr J Andrews

We're pleased that the two new zebra crossings are being welcomed by the community. They're there to make it safer for children and pedestrians.

Where a zebra crossing is installed, a school crossing patrol does not operate at the same place. Drivers are already required by law to stop at a zebra crossing. Having a patrol there as well can confuse drivers and increase risk rather than reduce it.

For that reason, when a zebra crossing replaces a location previously covered by a patrol, the patrol is withdrawn from that point. This is not a funding decision.

The crossings in Ferndown provide a safe, permanent crossing at all times of day and throughout the year, not just at school times.

School crossing patrols are valued, and Dorset Council continues to fund them where they are still needed and meet our criteria. Communities can choose to fund a patrol at other locations, but not at a zebra crossing.

We also recognise concerns about parking at school drop-off and pick-up times. We continue to work with schools and families to encourage safer behaviour and reduce congestion around schools.

Question 3 – submitted by Cllr J Orrell

Does the Leader agree with me that the pension fund should make its investment decisions not just on money alone but also on moral, ethical and ecological grounds, investing positively in wind and solar and not choosing to invest in polluting fossil fuels and arms manufacturers that enable genocide in Gaza?

Response by Cllr N Ireland

Yes. I do agree that responsible investment requires consideration of ethical, environmental and social factors alongside financial ones, particularly where they present material long-term risks. Climate change and environmental degradation are recognised financial risks, and the Pension Fund already reflects this within its responsible investment approach.

Several LGPS funds in England have adopted formal exclusion or divestment policies, and legal advice provided to LGPS administering authorities confirms that ethical and sustainability considerations may be considered.

There are examples of Ethical, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) and fossil free funds that have delivered returns broadly in line with conventional funds over medium and long-term periods and tend to show equal or lower downside risk together with lower volatility, largely due to reduced exposure to high-risk sectors.

In short, the evidence does not necessarily show that ethical or fossil free investment underperforms. In fact, over the long term it performs broadly the same, often with lower downside risk. The idea that councils must choose between values and returns is no longer supported by the data.

The Pension Fund Committee will formally review its Investment Strategy later this year and will seek scheme members' views on the role of nonfinancial considerations within the framework of its fiduciary duties.

As of May, elected members of this council can join Dorset Council's pension scheme and therefore will be eligible to engage with said review.

Question 4 submitted by Cllr R Legg

An Osborne resident has been in dispute with the highway authority about the cause of flooding to his home since before the formation of Dorset Council in 2019. The dispute has twice been considered by the Ombudsman and three successive Members of Parliament have made representations on his behalf. The flooding episodes have increased his household insurance premiums and blighted his ability to sell his house. If the authority is determined to maintain its original position as notified to Edward Morello MP in the last few weeks will, it now make all the files and correspondence relating to the dispute open for inspection, including electronic communications, internal memos, and communications with the Ombudsman and MPs?

Response by Cllr J Andrews

Cllr Legg is correct that the dispute he refers to goes back many years and predates the existence of this Council.

Both the Council and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman believe this to be a legal disagreement. Having issued a final decision, the Ombudsman has decided not to respond to further correspondence from the resident.

Like anyone else the resident is entitled to make a freedom of information request and if they are dissatisfied with our response the resident can ask the Information Commissioners Office to carry out a review.

Question 5 submitted by Cllr R Legg

At a time when the Climate Emergency is increasing the occurrence of devastating heathland fires and flooding incidents in our county the proposed closure of four fire stations appears profoundly ill judged. Will the authority's Emergency Planning Team explore in what way community resilience to emergency situations can be supported by retaining the experience and enthusiasm of volunteer firefighters in those communities whose fire stations are threatened by closure?

Response by Cllr S Bartlett

The Dorset Local Resilience Forum has a Community Resilience Group, supported by multi agency partners. The Council's Emergency Management and Resilience Team will feed Councillor Legg's suggestion into that forum, alongside the wider work that is underway to enhance community resilience. Due to sensitivity around the present situation of the Fire Authority I am happy to meet Cllr Legg outside of this meeting with officers to discuss his concerns further should he wish to do so.

Question 6 submitted by Cllr C Monks

Will Dorset Council allocate dedicated funding to support Prout Bridge, recognising that it delivers many of the same preventative and family-support functions as Council Family Hubs, despite currently receiving no direct financial support?

Response by Cllr Sutton

Thank you for your question regarding whether Dorset Council will allocate dedicated funding to support the Prout Bridge Project.

Dorset Council recognises and highly values the significant preventative, wellbeing and family-support role played by voluntary and community sector organisations across the county, including the Prout Bridge Project. The work delivered by Prout Bridge reflects many of the principles we seek to promote across the wider system, including trusted relationships, accessibility, community-based provision and early intervention to support positive outcomes for children and young people.

However, it is important to be clear that funding provided to Dorset Council through the Best Start in Life and Family Hub programme is governed by national policy, strategy and service specifications, rather than local discretion. This funding is issued with clear conditions and is committed to delivering a nationally defined Family Hub model, including universal and targeted services focused on pregnancy, infancy and early childhood. A central objective of the programme is to improve early outcomes such children reaching a Good Level of Development (GLD) at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, reflecting the critical importance of the earliest years in shaping long-term life chances.

While the Prout Bridge Project's work is highly valued, its core delivery is focused primarily on youth work and mental health support for older children and young people, including targeted youth clubs, mentoring and wellbeing interventions for those aged approximately 8 to 25. This important provision sits largely within the adolescent and youth support space, rather than the early-years remit that Best Start Family Hub funding is designed to address. As a result, Best Start Family Hub funding cannot be allocated on a discretionary basis to individual organisations delivering aligned but non-commissioned activity outside of the approved Family Hub network and national programme requirements.

That said, Dorset Council remains committed to supporting strong community-led prevention and early help through other appropriate local mechanisms. Local Alliance Groups (LAGs) provide a transparent, place-based route for voluntary and community organisations to apply for council funding on a project basis. LAG funding is specifically intended to support early help, prevention and community responses

that align with local need and complement the wider Best Start, Family Hub and Early Help system. The Prout Bridge Project is therefore eligible to apply for LAG funding for specific projects through this route.

Further information on Local Alliance Group funding and the application process is publicly available, and organisations are actively encouraged to bring forward proposals through this mechanism. Details can be found here: [Local Alliance Group funding for projects - Dorset Council](#)

Furthermore, Prout Bridge is also able to apply to the Dorset Youth Fund, which I am aware that you have successfully applied to previously. The £200k Youth Grant for 2026-27 opens for applications on 30th April, with a focus on supporting a range of positive activities for young people, including support for those whose needs might otherwise escalate. More information can be found on this [link](#)

Question 7 submitted by Cllr C Monks

Following the Council's recent announcement of additional funding for flood prevention, what future flood defence works are proposed for Beaminster ward, and what is the anticipated timeframe for their delivery?

Response by Cllr J Andrews

Dorset, including Beaminster, is already benefiting from the council's extra investment in flood prevention, including the addition of another gully-emptying vehicle to help reduce surface water flooding.

Alongside this, further work with local communities is already underway to better understand where flooding happens and why. This work will continue over the summer.

Once that work is complete, we will be able to confirm what further flood defence measures are needed in Beaminster and set out a clear programme and timescales for delivery.

The aim is to make sure any future works are properly targeted and will make a real difference.

Question 8 submitted by Cllr Louie O'Leary

Reporting of broken glass

Smashed glass has been a growing problem in parts of my ward, with everything from broken bottles to smashed lights being the cause. While not as obviously serious as syringes and needles, it is far more serious than general litter. I have tried reporting smashed glass via normal litter reporting but often have had to deal with it

myself due to the length of time it takes for a response. Will the council create a new self-report portal that makes this a greater priority for the sake of both residents and animals?

Response by Cllr J Andrews

Thank you for raising this. I wasn't aware that broken glass was a recurring issue in parts of your ward, so it's helpful to have it flagged.

At the moment, broken glass is reported under general litter. Creating a brand-new reporting category would take time and would not be a quick fix.

That said, I've asked officers who assess street cleansing reports to actively look out for any reports involving broken glass and to prioritise them where there is a clear risk to people or animals.

We will monitor how this approach works and whether response times improve, and we'll keep under review whether changes to the reporting system are needed in the longer term.

Question 9 submitted by Cllr Louie O'Leary

Weymouth Entrance improvements

The council has made the regeneration of Weymouth and Portland a major issue for this administration. We have heard on several occasions big new ideas and plans for Weymouth, including leisure, energy, and high-tech ambitions. However, while these are no doubt exciting possibilities, there are less ambitious but important things that would make a major impact. The main route into Weymouth runs into my ward, the Weymouth relief road. This road is in major need of beautification and improvement. Graffiti, ugly boarding, dirty signs often obscured by overgrown scrub, and a lack of imagination plague the gateway to Weymouth. Will the council commit to a tidy-up and overall improvement to the main entrance to Weymouth.

Response by Cllr Jon Andrews

I agree that the Weymouth Relief Road is the main gateway into the town, and at the moment it does not look as good as it should.

While longer-term regeneration projects matter, everyday things like how clean, tidy and welcoming a place feels also make a real difference.

Parts of the relief road have clearly deteriorated over time. Responsibility is split across different council teams and, in some places, landowners, but that won't stop us taking action.

Our Community Highway officers are preparing for this work to begin. That will include clearing overgrown areas, removing graffiti, and reviewing signs, barriers and fencing, so poor or unnecessary features can be improved or removed.

This work will be taken forward using existing budgets where possible and linked to wider transport and regeneration work. Local ward councillors will be involved as plans develop.

We accept that relatively small, practical improvements here are achievable and would make an immediate difference - and that work should begin.