Public Document Pack

DORSET COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER 2026

Present: Cllrs Stella Jones (Chair), Les Fry (Vice-Chair), Jon Andrews, 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, Simon Gibson, Margaret Goringe, Jill Haynes, Hannah Hobbs-Chell, Sally Holland, Ryan Holloway, Ryan Hope, Nick Ireland, Jack Jeanes, Sherry Jespersen, Carole Jones, Paul Kimber, Chris Kippax, Nocturin Lacey-Clarke, Robin Legg, Cathy Lugg, Rory Major, Craig Monks, Paddy Mooney, David Morgan, Steve Murcer, Louie O'Leary, Jon Orrell, Mike Parkes, Andrew Parry, Val Pothecary, Byron Quayle, Julie Robinson, Steve Robinson, Pete Roper, David Shortell, Andy Skeats, Jane Somper, Duncan Sowry-House, Andrew Starr, Gary Suttle, Roland Tarr, David Taylor, Gill Taylor, Andy Todd, Chris Tomes, James Vitali, Claudia Webb, Kate Wheller, Sarah Williams, Ben Wilson and Carl Woode

Apologies: Cllrs Jindy Atwal, Bridget Bolwell, Alex Fuhrmann, Rob Hughes, David Northam, Emma Parker, Belinda Ridout, Clare Sutton and David Tooke

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):
Jacqui Andrews (Service Manager for Democratic and Electoral Services), Jan Britton (Executive Director - Economy and Environment), Hayley Caves (Councillor Development and Support Officer), Sean Cremer (Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)), Sam Crowe (Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), Susan Dallison (Democratic & Governance Services Team Leader), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director - Children's Services), Jonathan Mair (Director - Assurance (Monitoring Officer)), Catherine Howe (Chief Executive), Lucie Laker (Executive Director for Modernisation & Customer Delivery) and Megan Rochester (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer)

30. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 16th July 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

31. **Declarations of Interest**

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

32. **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 at appendix 1 to these minutes.

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

There were no petitions or deputations for consideration at the meeting.

34. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair advised that both she and the Vice-Chair had been working closely with the Youth Council and highlighted National Cadet Week. Appreciation was expressed to Cllr P Kimber for his leadership and continued support with the Portland Sea Cadet's.

The following tributes were made to former district councillors.
Cllr K Wheller paid tribute to the late Honorary Alderman Rendall , recognising his contribution and service to the Council and the local community.

Cllr A Parry paid tribute to the late Cllr C Jamieson and acknowledged his dedication to public service.

The Chair further informed Council of the recent passing of former Cllr K Meech and acknowledged his service to the community and local government.

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

The Leader of the Council began by extending best wishes to Cllr C Sutton following a recent car accident and on behalf of the council jwished her a full and speedy recovery.

The Leader welcomed Lucie Laker to the council as the new Executive Director for Modernisation and Customer Delivery..

Members were informed of the recent passing of a long-serving *Dorset Echo* journalist, who was remembered for her warmth, humour and significant contribution to the local community. Condolences were expressed to her family, friends and colleagues.

An update was provided on the recent Corporate Peer Challenge, which had highlighted a number of organisational strengths, particularly partnership working, while also identifying opportunities for further improvement. The Leader praised the commitment of council staff and reiterated the council's ambition to build on its successes.

The Leader also highlighted the council's continued engagement with local communities, noting a commitment to turning community conversations into meaningful action to improve outcomes for Dorset residents.

An update was given on devolution, with particular emphasis on the importance of ensuring that decisions affecting Dorset reflected the needs of its rural and coastal communities, including transport and connectivity challenges.

Members were advised of the Environment Agency's decision to approve the permit variation sought by the Powerfuel Portland Energy Recovery Facility. The Leader acknowledged the concerns raised by residents and emphasised the importance of ensuring those views continued to be heard.

The continuing drought conditions affecting Dorset were also highlighted. Residents were encouraged to follow guidance from their water suppliers, and members noted the wider implications of climate change and the need for resilient infrastructure and sustainable water supplies.

Members took the opportunity to raise questions of the Leader regarding the matters outlined in the announcements.

36. **New Warding Proposals for Dorset Council - response to the draft recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England**

Members considered a report relating to the draft recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and the proposed response from Dorset Council.

The Leader of Council reminded members that the council had previously considered the matter at its meeting in May and explained that the purpose of the report was to seek agreement on those recommendations that the council wished to support and those it wished to challenge. Members had been invited to submit comments and concerns to the Task and Finish Group during the consultation process.

The Leader of Council introduced the proposals set out within the report and summarised the recommended responses detailed in the accompanying table. Members were advised that, should they wish to make individual representations, submissions could be made directly to the Local Government Boundary Commission before the consultation deadline. It was also noted that members of the public were able to submit their own comments as part of the consultation process.

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland seconded by Cllr W Chakawhata.

Decision

That the response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's draft recommendations on warding patterns and ward names, as set out in Appendix A be approved.

37. **Dorset Community Safety Plan 2026/27**

Members considered the Dorset Community Safety Plan 2026/27.

Cllr M Bell outlined the council's statutory duty to identify community safety priorities and publish a Community Safety Plan. He noted that the plan had been developed in partnership with a range of organisations and had previously been considered by the People and Health Overview Committee.

Members heard that, whilst Dorset remained one of the safest places to live, work and visit, there was a need to remain vigilant and continue supporting victims, tackling violence, addressing anti-social behaviour and strengthening community resilience. Particular reference was made to the experiences of women and girls and the importance of early intervention and prevention. It was noted that the plan would be refreshed annually to respond to emerging risks and priorities.

During the debate, members discussed community engagement, the experiences of young people, rural crime, road safety, anti-social behaviour, prevention measures, public awareness of the plan and the importance of partnership working.

In summing up, Cllr D Sowry-House thanked members for their contributions and highlighted the value of collaborative working in maintaining Dorset as a safe place to live, work and visit. He welcomed ongoing engagement as part of the annual review process.

It was proposed by Cllr M Bell seconded by Cllr D Sowry-House.

Decision

That the Community Safety Plan 2026-2029 be adopted.

38. **Youth Justice Plan 2026-2027**

Cllr M Bell presented the Youth Justice Plan 2026-2027, a statutory requirement, and highlighted the work of the Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service and its partners in reducing reoffending and improving outcomes for children, victims, and communities. Members were advised that addressing the underlying causes of offending, tackling inequalities, and supporting young people to make positive choices were key priorities. Thanks were expressed to Dorset Council staff and partner agencies for their continued work.

Members considered the recommendations of the relevant committee and discussed the priorities set out within the plan, together with the arrangements in place to support young people involved in the youth justice system. In discussion, members recognised the positive outcomes being achieved and welcomed the partnership approach outlined within the plan.

Decision

That the Youth Justice Plan be adopted.

39. **The Dorset Council (Purbeck) Motorised Watercraft Byelaws 2027**

Cllr J Jeanes presented the report and advised that a review of the byelaws had been undertaken in response to water safety concerns. Members were informed that engagement had taken place with relevant stakeholders and that the proposed byelaws sought to improve clarity and reflect the increasing use of watercraft.

Thanks were expressed to all those who had contributed to the consultation process. It was noted that a number of minor drafting observations had been received, including typographical amendments and corrections to place names, none of which were material or affected the recommendations.

In the debate, Cllr C Tomes expressed full support for the proposals and thanked Bridget Betts for her work on the review, including engagement with watercraft users in Swanage.

Cllr B Wilson welcomed the consultation process, noting that it had generated significant local interest and had appropriately reflected both the views of residents and the intended outcomes of the byelaws.

Decision

That the Dorset Council Motorised Watercraft Byelaws be adopted.

40. **Appointment of General Licensing/Gambling Committee Vice-chair**

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland, seconded by Cllr S Clifford,

Decision

That Cllr J Andrews be appointed Vice-Chair of the General Licensing and Gambling Committee.

41. **Harbours Advisory Committee - Appointment of Co-optee**

It was proposed by Cllr S Williams, seconded by Cllr L Fry,

Decision

That Mark Saxby be appointed as co optee of the Harbours Advisory Committee for the period October 2026 – October 2029.

42. **Motion on Notice - viability as a material planning consideration**

Cllr S Flower introduced the motion and highlighted Dorset Council's ambition to increase the delivery of affordable housing in support of its vision for a fairer, more prosperous and sustainable Dorset. Members heard that improving housing standards and delivering the homes required through the emerging Local Plan remained key priorities. Concern was expressed that viability assessments could present a significant barrier to securing affordable housing contributions from developers.

The motion proposed that the administration continue to lobby Government on the issue of viability and that the Leader of the Council write to the Government to set out Dorset Council's concerns. Support for the motion was sought from all political groups.

During the debate, Cllr N Ireland referred to recent updates to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Cllr J Orrell stated that the council should be doing everything possible to maximise the delivery of affordable housing.

In summing up, Cllr S Flower noted that viability provisions within the National Planning Policy Framework had recently been updated and encouraged members to read the changes. He thanked members for their contributions to the debate and the comments received on the motion.

It was proposed by Cllr S Flower and seconded by Cllr B Quayle.

Decision

THAT the administration will commit to lobbying Government for changes to the viability provisions set out in national policy so that this council is able to comply with its own polices as set out the Dorset Plan and the emerging Dorset Local Plan.

THAT the Leader of Council will write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out these concerns, seeking changes to national guidance on the matter of viability. Furthermore, in doing so he will seek cross-party support from other Group Leaders to be co-signatories to the letter.

This approach should enable Strategic Planning Authorities to support the Central Government policy to provide social housing for rent or shared equity for local people.

43. **Motion on Notice - Motion for the Ocean**

Cllr N Ireland introduced the Motion for the Ocean and outlined the importance of recognising the connection between activities on land and the health of Dorset's coastlines, rivers and seas. Members heard that the motion supported the council's commitments in relation to climate change and nature recovery and had been developed jointly with BCP Council. It was noted that healthy rivers, landscapes and marine environments were essential to improving water quality and addressing sewage pollution, and that effective solutions often delivered multiple environmental benefits.

During the debate, members discussed the aims and objectives of the motion, together with the practical implications of delivery.

Cllr G Suttle acknowledged the intentions of the motion and proposed the following amendment: -

That the motion be referred to the appropriate Overview Committee to establish a clear, fully costed business plan to ensure the financial and service delivery risks are fully understood and how such an initiative could potentially impact on the provision of front-line services.

That the outcome and recommendations from the Overview Committee be referred to the Cabinet and finally to Full Council for adoption.

Members expressed a range of views on the amendment. Comments were made regarding the need for cleaner seas, the importance of meeting residents' expectations, the role of scrutiny in considering policy proposals and associated costs, and the need to understand resource implications. Reference was also made to existing work already being undertaken in several of the areas identified within the motion.

In response, Cllr N Ireland advised that the motion had involved significant partnership working, including engagement with BCP Council and other stakeholders. He noted that, if approved, an action plan would be developed and stated that he did not support the amendment, highlighting that the proposal before council was a motion rather than a policy document.

On being put to the vote the amendment was LOST

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland seconded by Cllr B Bawden

Decision

Therefore, Dorset Council commits to:

1. Working collaboratively with partners, businesses, harbour authorities, educational institutions and communities to support a sustainable blue economy that strengthens Dorset's marine and coastal sectors, promotes innovation and clean marine technologies, and delivers long-term prosperity alongside ocean recovery.
2. Improving ocean literacy and community engagement by supporting schools, colleges, universities and community groups to increase understanding of the marine environment through education programmes, outdoor learning, citizen science, volunteering, communications and awareness-raising activities.

3. Ensuring that relevant council strategies, plans and projects have regard to the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy and contribute, where appropriate, to the recovery of marine, coastal and water-dependent habitats.

4. Supporting the development and implementation of a Marine Nature Recovery Strategy for Dorset and advocating for the introduction of Marine Nature Recovery Strategies in England, working with partners to align marine recovery with local nature recovery priorities.

5. Working with water companies, regulators, government and other partners to improve water quality across Dorset's rivers, estuaries, harbours and coastal waters, and seeking clear plans, targets and transparency for reducing sewage pollution and other sources of contamination.

6. Considering ocean recovery, marine health and the catchment-to-coast environment in strategic decision-making, plans, policies, budgets and investment programmes, ensuring alignment with the councils' climate and nature ambitions.

7. Reducing plastic pollution at source through council policies, procurement practices, communications and community engagement, while continuing to promote behaviour change that reduces litter and waste entering rivers and the marine environment.

8. Promoting nature-based solutions for flood risk management and water quality by supporting sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), natural flood management, permeable surfaces, swales, rain gardens, habitat restoration and marine enhancement measures within relevant infrastructure projects.

9. Encouraging water conservation and climate resilience through rainwater harvesting, sustainable water management and measures that reduce pressure on Page 150 drainage networks, improve water quality and enhance resilience to drought and flooding.

10. Working with farmers, land managers, catchment partnerships and environmental organisations to improve water quality, support sustainable land management and strengthen the connection between healthy landscapes, healthy rivers and healthy seas.

11. Using procurement, social value, planning and investment opportunities to demonstrate leadership in supporting marine recovery, nature-based solutions and sustainable coastal development.

12. Reporting on progress through appropriate governance arrangements and working jointly to develop action plans that translate this declaration into practical local delivery. By adopting this Motion for the Ocean, Dorset Council commits to working with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, and with partners and communities, to protect, restore and enhance our ocean, coastlines, rivers and estuaries for the benefit of nature, climate, local prosperity and future generations.

44. **Questions from Councillors**

There were four questions received from councillors. The questions and responses provided by Cabinet members are attached at appendix 2 to these minutes.

Supplementary questions were received as follows:

Question 1 – Cllr C Jones referred to the reported number of staff sickness absence days and expressed concern at the level recorded. She sought

information on the measures being taken by the Council to address sickness absence and support improvements in attendance.

Question 2 – Cllr V Pothecary referred to Council Tax matters and asked whether Cllr J Jeanes could provide his response in writing so that it could be shared with residents when similar enquiries or complaints were received.

At that point in the meeting and in accordance with Procedural Rule 8.1 the committee voted to extend the duration of the meeting.

Question 3 – Cllr S Murcer referred to forthcoming budget discussions and asked the relevant Cabinet Member to ensure that a realistic and transparent highways budget was developed, one which members could support and be proud to endorse.

Question 4 – Cllr P Brown noted that recent legislative changes allowed councils to increase fly-tipping fines and asked whether Dorset Council would commit to introducing higher penalties, in line with neighbouring authorities.

45. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

46. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business

Public Participation Questions
Questions submitted by Councillors

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 9.36 pm

Chair

.....

This page is intentionally left blank

Full Council – 22 October 2026

Public Participation

1. **Question submitted by Cllr Celia Wright, Chairman Hinton St Mary PC**

On behalf of Hinton St Mary PC and residents I would like to ask why the initial consultation of Ward boundaries was undertaken without informing HSM PC of the consultation and ZERO communication.
To find it has been proposed we are removed from Sturminster Newton Ward against our wishes without anyone having the courtesy to communicate with the PC seems unfair.
I look forward to your comments.

Response from Cllr Nick Ireland

Thank you for your question. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is responsible for the current electoral review and for consulting on its proposals. Dorset Council is itself a consultee in that process.

Before the review began, Dorset Council provided the Commission with contact details for all town and parish councils. The email address supplied for Hinton St Mary Parish Council was the address published on the Hinton St Mary website.

The Commission has confirmed that it sent consultation emails to that address at both stages of the review. Its email tracking records indicate that neither email was opened, although we are not in a position to say why that was. I therefore recognise why the Parish Council may feel it was not consulted, but the Commission did attempt to contact it using its published address.

The consultation on the draft recommendations remains open until 9 November 2026, and I would strongly encourage the Parish Council to submit its views directly to the Commission before the deadline, either through its website or by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk.

2. **Question submitted by Poppy Maltby**

Purbeck School buses no longer running to rural villages

From September this year around 30 children from the Purbeck villages, Langton Matravers, Worth Matravers and Kingston had their seats on the local Purbeck School bus removed and switched to the Public Morebus 40 service. This is because

there are more children travelling from the Swanage area than can sit on the existing three buses. There was no consultation on this change nor much notice given by the service provider Damory, or Dorset Council School Travel.

The impact of this on the children is significant. Rural exclusion being one, these children no longer get the bus with their friends but wait at school for these regularly delayed public buses to arrive. They stay there long past when the dedicated school buses have left.

These buses are already well used by the public and now these children, as young as 11, either sit next to strangers, or occasionally are forced to stand by hostile members of the public who want a seat. The existing three school buses cannot have standing passengers, but there is no such problem on public buses. It is unclear how much damory have factored in the impact of the £2 bus fare or summer peak season in ensuring these children have seats.

Parents have also expressed safeguarding concerns. Unlike school buses, drivers do not have DBS checks. They are also concerned about young girls exiting the bus on their own in rural areas, to walk down lanes to hamlets such as to Acton – observed by total strangers. In December and January, being at least 10-15 mins later than the old school bus – this walk will be in the dark.

With their public bus journeys taking around 30-40 minutes a day longer than before, this adds up to a significant disadvantage of around 3 hours a week of time lost to sleep or study compared to Swanage children - who actually live further away from the school.

This ‘cost efficiency’ outcome is a result of the existing contract, now up for renewal – which prioritised lowest possible cost with little consideration of the cost to children.

I would therefore be grateful if you could let the parents of these children understand:

a) how safeguarding concerns have been considered in this decision

b) how Dorset Council are factoring rural needs into their contract negotiations from 2027 – to ensure that these children are not disadvantaged as they are now, in the name of efficiencies and cost savings?

Response from Cllr Jack Jeanes

Thank you for your questions and for highlighting the concerns raised by families in Langton Matravers, Worth Matravers and Kingston. I appreciate that any change to a child's journey to and from school can be unsettling for both students and parents, particularly in rural areas where transport options are more limited.

In response to question (a),

The Council takes the safety and wellbeing of children extremely seriously. While Service 40 is a public bus service rather than a dedicated school transport route, it operates within national regulations and standards for public transport. The service is provided by a professional operator, and the Council is satisfied that it offers a suitable means of travel for eligible students. We recognise the safeguarding concerns that have been raised by some parents and understand the importance of children feeling safe and comfortable when travelling. These concerns have been discussed with the operator and will continue to be kept under review.

The arrangements are also consistent with the Council's statutory responsibilities for home-to-school transport and with national guidance issued by Government. While local authorities must ensure that eligible children have access to suitable transport, there is no statutory requirement for this to be provided through dedicated school-only vehicles.

In response to question (b),

The Council fully recognises the importance of reliable transport for rural communities and understands the challenges that longer journeys can create for young people and their families. As we develop home-to-school transport arrangements from September 2027 onwards, we will continue to consider the needs of rural communities alongside factors such as journey times, vehicle capacity, accessibility, safety, environmental impacts and value for money. Our aim is to make the best use of available transport while ensuring pupils can travel to school safely and efficiently.

In doing so, the Council will continue to meet its statutory duties and have regard to national home-to-school transport guidance, balancing those requirements with the need to provide a sustainable and cost-effective transport network across Dorset.

More broadly, the Council is also making record investment in Dorset's public and community transport network, improving connectivity and travel opportunities for residents in rural areas and helping to ensure that communities remain connected to education, employment, healthcare and other essential services.

This page is intentionally left blank

Full Council – 22 October 2026

Questions submitted by Councillors

Question 1 – submitted by Cllr C Jones

The last few months have been beset in the North of Dorset with missed bin collections. Some households, and indeed blocks of flats were left without a collection for a number of weeks.

I understand problems have been around sickness & lorry breakdowns.
Could the cabinet member please tell us how sick days there have been at the Shaftesbury depot over the past 6 months and as a comparison, the number of sick days at our other depots please.

Thank you.

Response by Cllr J Jeanes

Thank you for the question. Over the last six-month period, the Shaftesbury waste depot recorded 1,739 sickness days lost, of which around 1,280 days related to long-term absence and 459 days to short-term absence.

For comparison, sickness days lost at the Council's other waste depots during the same period were:

- Weymouth Depot (Crookhill): 1,449 days
- Poundbury Depot: 861 days
- Ferndown Depot: 658 days
- Wareham Depot: 450 days
- Bridport Depot: 322 days

The various waste depots are different sizes and have different number of employees operating from them, so it is not an exact comparison between depots. Whilst sickness absence has been a contributing factor, it is important to note that the majority of absence at Shaftesbury relates to a small number of long-term cases. Service disruption in North Dorset has also been influenced by other operational challenges, including vehicle availability and the difficulty in securing agency staff at short notice to cover unplanned absences.

The service is taking action to address the underlying causes of these issues, including strengthening attendance management arrangements and improving operational resilience. In addition, the Council is investing in improvements to the Shaftesbury depot to provide better facilities and infrastructure, helping to further strengthen the resilience of the service and support reliable waste collections for residents.

Question 2 – submitted by Cllr V Pothecary

Background

For many weeks I have been inundated with complaints from residents regarding our refuse collection service – particularly with regard to food waste. Whilst collection has been inconsistent across the Ward, recently some Villages have had **four missed food waste collections in a row!** No formal apology has been given and no pertinent information has been received. I, and others, have been left to pick up the pieces.

Given the average temperatures we are experiencing, it seems to me that we are failing in our legal responsibility and commitment to adhere to basic health and safety standards. A compostable bin liner is only structurally sound for up to 5 days. After that a food bin left outside is at risk from magots and rats.

Dorset Council has the highest council tax in the Country. This particular issue is at the very heart of what many consider to be a contractual commitment. There are also many villagers in the North who feel they receive little enough for their tax contribution as it is.

I am sure that every member of this Council would agree that the situation is totally unacceptable and must not be allowed to continue.

Question

Please can I be given the reason for this widespread failure to meet this Councils' commitment to a weekly food waste collection and an assurance that the food waste collection, in particular, will return to its hitherto exemplary service in the Gillingham area, without delay.

Response by Cllr J Jeanes

Thank you for the question. I recognise the concerns raised by residents who have experienced missed food waste collections and apologise to those who have been affected. The level of service delivered in parts of North Dorset in recent months has not been where we want it to be.

The main cause of the disruption has been staffing shortages, particularly amongst HGV drivers. This has been driven by increased levels of long-term sickness absence affecting a small number of employees, combined with limited availability of agency drivers to provide short-notice cover. Where qualified drivers are not available, we cannot safely operate our collection vehicles. When this happens, collection rounds unfortunately have to be stood down and recollected at a later date, resulting in delays to some collections.

We are actively managing sickness absence and supporting employees to return to work at the earliest appropriate opportunity. At the same time, we are improving resilience by developing our own pool of relief staff, investing in improvements to the Shaftesbury depot, recruiting additional drivers, and supporting existing operatives to gain HGV licences and progress into driving roles.

These actions are aimed at addressing the underlying causes of the disruption. While some of these improvements, particularly increasing driver numbers and building greater operational resilience, will take time to fully deliver their benefits, we are starting to see some early signs of improvement. We remain focused on restoring reliable rubbish, recycling, food and garden waste collection services and reducing the risk of future disruption for residents.

Regarding the level of Council Tax - you said we're ranked first. It's worth reminding members and the public watching this that the Council Tax bill covers funding for a number of other organisations. Remove the parts of the bill set by the other organisations Dorset is ranked 11th. It is only after factoring in the other preceptors , Police, Fire and the Town & Parish Councils that resident face the highest bill.

Some councils have been able to freeze or reduce council tax due to government support. They were beneficiaries of what government call "fair funding" as we saw more money moved further North - for example Nottingham used to be higher. How did Nottingham fare under fair funding?

Well, Dorset's Fair Funding allocation was £133m with £362m then having to come from Council Tax. Nottingham on the other hand, their Fair Funding allocation is £272m - over double - with only £171m having to come from Council tax. So they get double the funding Dorset gets and this year didn't take the full Council Tax rise. And - it was reported this week that Nottingham are considering freezing Council tax - how this is a fair deal for the residents of Dorset is beyond me.

Queston 3 – submitted by Cllr S Murcer

Members will be aware that one of the key roles of the A&G Committee is to highlight risk as well as an oversight on governance.

The ongoing Transformation Programme is an important part of continuing to create a strong and sustainable Council without the need to reduce front-line services. My question relates to the Transformation Update tabled at the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on Monday 12 October.

Questions were asked and answers given regarding the declared savings expected from Transformation by the end of this financial year of £9.4m.

Progress to Date – July 2026

22.3 Expectations of the savings delivery are shown in the table below

Savings area	Budget	Forecast at P4	P4 confidence	Remainder to deliver	Remainder confidence
Workforce redesign	£2.5m	£1.1m	High	£1.4m	Medium
Third-party spend	£4.0m	£2.0m	Medium	£2.0m	Low
ICT rationalisation	£0.3m	£0m	Low	£0.3m	Low
Full-year effect delivered in 2025/26	£2.6m	£2.0m	High	£0.6m	High
Total	**£9.4m**	**£5.1m**	**High**	**£4.3m**	**Mixed**

The Council's own confidence in its ability to deliver these savings is mixed and there is a high probability that there will be a short fall close on £4m.

Moreover, the Council's current year end overspend is forecast to be £8.136m. With 60% of the contingency already spent, these two factors are seen as significant risks to the Council.

Given the challenging nature of local government finances my concern therefore is how a balanced budget can be achieved.

The need for pace and hard-edged outcomes has never been more important to prevent, or at least mitigate the collateral damage to other vital services provided by this Council, particularly in the Economy and Environment Directorate (Place) by not achieving planned savings and overspends

So, my question is what actions are being taken to ensure the Council achieves a year-end balanced outturn without the need to cut front-line services.

Response by Cllr Clifford

I would like to highlight a few points which should give you comfort.

First the director of finance is on the record saying that the headline current overspend is within 2% of target and relative to the size of the total budget is not regarded as significant.

Secondly, he has previously outlined a huge range of options to reduce the overspend including reducing capital spend, delaying spend to following years, a

forensic look at vacancies, tightening 3rd party spend and reviewing new posts and also a close look at borrowing. This latter point is particularly important as the recent government decision to pay the council £145m to fund 90% of the High Needs Block means in all likelihood this council will not need to borrow again this year with a significant cash saving.

Finally, he also responded to this question and compared the council's financial position this year with that of last year. At this stage last year, we were facing an overspend position of £7.7m - very similar to this year's position. As you will be aware, last year we brought in a balanced budget without the need to look at reducing frontline services, and I am confident we will do the same this year.

Question 4 – submitted by Cllr P Brown

How many fly-tipping fixed penalty notices has Dorset Council issued in the last 12-month reporting period and how much has it raised?

Response by Cllr M Bell

Thank you for your question.

The Environmental Enforcement Team, comprising of 5 officers, deals with reports of fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles and other related crime. The team has built up considerable local knowledge and working relationships with partners to act on crime and share intelligence about perpetrators. Over the past 12 months, 97 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued for environmental crimes including 41 of these for fly tipping with £10,900 received so far in related fines. Over the same period, 8 vehicles involved in waste crime have been seized and disposed of.

The message is clear; we will not tolerate environmental crime in Dorset. My message to our residents and businesses is to ensure that your DIY, building and trade waste is only put in the hands of licensed waste carriers.

This page is intentionally left blank