

Cabinet 5 May 2020

Questions from Councillors

Question 1 from Cllr Brian Heatley

Many commercial boat owners using our harbours are not eligible for the Small Business Grants Scheme to help small businesses unable to trade because of the Covid 19 pandemic. This is because they don't pay Business Rates. While there is now a specific scheme to help commercial fishing businesses, there are many other businesses such as charter angling concerns that remain without help. These businesses are important in themselves for our tourism and leisure industries, but also attract many visitors to Dorset who go on to use our restaurants, pubs and accommodation. The support of the Council in asking Dorset MPs to lobby the government on this anomaly is much appreciated. However, the Council itself could assist by waiving or reducing its harbour dues and berthing fees rather than just deferring them as it has promised to do.

If it's right to help small businesses with free parking in Council car parks, how about free berthing for our boat based businesses? And a holiday from other harbour dues which could be clawed back if the government does eventually offer more substantial help?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport and Environment

Question 2 from Cllr Nick Ireland

"In the Covid-19 report (agenda item 7), it states under 13.14 that "the financial impact of COVID-19 on Dorset Council's budget has been significant ... including ... renting and converting a hotel into a hospital", yet available capacity in our Acute Hospital (Dorset County) is currently significantly much more than anticipated and our Community Hospitals are equally underutilised. Given that the facility provided by renting hotels was designed to take the now unrealised pressure from our hospitals for apparently only non-medical discharges, and that my previously asked question as to set-up costs of this 'hospital' was unanswered, what has been the total cost so far of this seemingly unnecessary facility and what is the average 'occupancy' rate in percentage terms?"

(Two questions in there, so I'll be asking two supplementaries ...)

Response from Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Health or Finance, Commercial and Assets?