

Cabinet 2 March 2021

Public Questions

1. Question from John Calvert - Item 10 Tourist Information Centre Funding

The Executive Summary comments that TICs provide the following key services: ~ free information including maps, local attractions and events, general information about the local area, bus/transport provision and information about accessibility ~ ticket sales for some transport providers and for local events ~accommodation information and booking for the local area.

As a resident of Dorchester I have been trying to discover what decisions are being taken on my behalf. I eventually found recommendations about the Tourist Information Centre on the Agenda for the Place and Resources Overview Committee and assumed there would be a constructive discussion and so I asked a question about it.

I was surprised therefore to see the identical document in the Cabinet papers published only a few days later and before the Overview Committee had met.

What happens if the Overview Committee changes the suggested recommendations, or is that not usually allowed politically?

2. Question from John Calvert

As a resident of Dorchester for over 10 years I have used the Dorchester Tourist Information for all these when they were available and I use them in other towns every time my wife and I visit for the first time.

This situation is not recent, there were plans for the TIC to go into the Shire Hall but then there weren't. The obvious next place was the new Library but no plans there. Finally the reorganisation of the Corn Exchange surely offered possibilities.

The response from Dorchester Town Council is sympathetic but seemingly at an early stage.

My question is this - If Tourism is so important for Dorset and in particular for Dorchester why is the Council stopping the funding and releasing the expert staff before agreeing a replacement service?

Some transitional funding is no substitute for proper planning.

Response for both questions from the Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services

Thank you Mr Calvert for submitting your questions. I will reply to both together as we have already provided a response to the second question at the place and

resources overview committee on 25th February and the council's usual practice is just to answer questions once. That said, I think this response is relevant to both questions.

As Mr Calvert rightly points out, the cabinet papers were published before the place and resources committee had considered the report. This was necessary because of the timing of the two meetings and the need to publish the reports in good time. But cabinet are always keen to hear the views of the overview committee and cabinet members have received an update of the key points that were made at the overview committee. On this occasion, no changes were made to the recommendations in the report. But several members of the overview committee made the key point that Dorset Council's role in relation to tourism is a strategic one – our role is to attract visitors to Dorset and we have a website – visit Dorset that aims to do that. Several of the committee members referred to visit Dorset and made suggestions about how we might develop this further to support our local tourism businesses. We will consider these helpful comments with colleagues who maintain visit Dorset

3. Question from Rupert Hardy (Chairman of ND group – Campaign to Protect Rural England) – Local Plan Consultation

Clause 2.7.22 of the Local Plan Consultation says that “Policy DEV1 establishes a housing requirement for 30,481 new homes during the period 2021-2038” but also that “discussions are taking place to establish whether there is a need for Dorset Council to meet an unmet need from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and the New Forest”. Council officers Hilary Jordan and Trevor Sneller have said publicly, but not in print, that in the light of this unmet need Dorset's housing target should therefore be 39,000 homes, even though we believe there has been no formal request yet from either Council. Could Dorset Council please confirm which of these two figures represents the Council's housing target, and if it is 30,481 homes what does the 39,000 figure then represent?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning

National policy says that local planning authorities should be meeting the target for their area as established through the standard methodology, and that in addition, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.

The consultation document for the local plan sets out a housing target of 30,481 homes over the plan period, based on the standard methodology. The document acknowledges however that that is not necessarily the final target figure. We do not

yet have any formal requests from neighbouring councils to consider meeting some of their unmet housing needs, but this is a possibility. And it is also important to bear in mind that the target figure resulting from the standard methodology may change during the preparation of the plan, as for example new affordability data becomes available. The standard methodology figure will become fixed at the time that the plan is submitted for examination, but up to that point, we will need to amend our target to accommodate such changes.

So while the consultation document sets out a target of 30,481, this is not necessarily the final target figure and we do not currently know what that will be. The figure of 39,285 is the sum of the housing supply set out in the consultation document. The housing supply and the housing target are two quite different things and it is not being suggested that the target should be 39,285. However, the consultation document includes a supply that exceeds the currently-assumed target, and this has been done deliberately for a number of reasons.

Firstly, we may need to increase (or reduce) the target as a result of changes to the statistics that form the inputs to the standard methodology.

Secondly, as explained above, we may need to consider requests to meet some of the housing needs of neighbouring areas.

Thirdly, this is a consultation and we may well wish to make changes to the proposals as a result. These might involve taking out some of the potential development sites or reducing the estimates of their capacity, which would therefore reduce the supply.

And finally, it is prudent to plan for a housing supply that exceeds the target. Councils are continually required to be able to demonstrate a five-year supply of land for housing, as if they do not then they are unable to give full weight to their local policies and must apply the national 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' when considering applications. Changing circumstances, including market fluctuations, new constraints evidence and infrastructure delivery issues, can affect the speed at which sites come forward for development and the number of homes eventually provided on them. If we are only just providing enough to meet our targets, then we can very quickly lose the five-year land supply, thereby losing our local control over development.

4. Statement from Nicola Newman, Chief Executive of Ansbury Guidance - Item 19 Tracking and support service for young people not in education, employment or training - Options appraisal of potential models for delivery

I am CEO (P/T) of Ansbury – the current externally commissioned provider. We evolved from Dorset Careers and Connexions.

This is my perspective on the impact of current proposed service and funding changes, informed by my voluntary roles as a Board member of:

- Careers England
- Dorset LEP
- Dorset Chamber of Commerce
- Dorset Skills Advisory Panel

and as a recent Governor of The Swanage School.

I would like Councillors to be sure the proposed reductions are conscious, and their impact is expected, and planned for in these extraordinary times.

NEET support and Career Guidance is an important ‘tip’ of a large Dorset-wide employability system, invisible until it goes wrong. Early intervention in schools reduces NEET numbers, improves lives and reduces costs long-term.

2021/2022 is a difficult year for all young people seeking further education, training and employment. They are the COVID generation who have had learning, exams, friendships, and plans disrupted and constantly changed. Unemployment is expected to rise. Dorset’s young people will need more support to plan their future in 2021/2022 but will get less than they have ever had.

‘Career’ is an individual’s journey through life, learning and work. It is where individual psychology and aspirations meet social structure. Research evidence confirms that professional, impartial Career Guidance has an observable impact on young people’s progression.

If vulnerable young people have no goals or plans they believe in, more will develop barriers to achieving: long-term unemployment, poor mental health, addiction, crime, exploitation, County Lines, homelessness. This will be a net cost to the Council and society in increased Social Care, NHS, Universal Credit, housing and anti-social behaviour costs – but more importantly young people will not be fulfilling their potential.

The IAGT contract, awarded in 2016, must end in 2021. I believe the decision has already been made to remove Council funding for professional (L6) Careers Guidance for vulnerable young people – those with EHCPs, in/leaving Care and/or at risk of becoming NEET – and the proposal is to do the same for vulnerable NEET young people. This will negatively impact all these young people.

- This gap cannot be filled by the Careers Hub or unqualified Enterprise Advisers.

- Schools don't have sufficient funding, or time, to provide professional (L6) Career Guidance (even if technically it's their role to do so and Ofsted requires it) - missed learning is their current priority
- Level 6 Advisers are scarce and there is no 'supply' service if school-based staff are absent due to ill health/maternity/caring responsibilities

Changes in funding and services this year will have wide negative impact – Dorset young people deserve better - temporary COVID funding for 1 year could mitigate the transition and better enable a long-term plan.