

Cabinet of 27 July 2021

Public Questions

1. Question from David Nash

Those of us who live in the vicinity of the current building in Wimborne Rd, or have to travel along that route at school start and finish times know only too well the impact caused by some 12-15 minibuses, as well as parents providing their own vehicles, used to transport these vulnerable children to and fro.

Could you please ask the committee to take this into account when considering the site earmarked for expansion, the old Wimborne 1st that was, as it is located in a very narrow lane (School Lane) leading directly into traffic flowing from the north, Blandford, Cranborne etc., via Stone Lane through and around Wimborne town centre. Parking in West Borough is limited and congested at the best of times. Indeed, this often presented some difficulty / snarl ups at the peak times when the site was still a School. The number of minibuses School Lane could accommodate would be no more than 5, and turning would present a nightmare to both students, parents and members of the public in the Lane at the time. An accident waiting to happen!

Access / Egress will have to be drastically improved before the site can be used for this important and very necessary purpose.

Does the proposal make provision for addressing the major Health & Safety issues for students, staff, and members of the public, which using the old 1st School will doubtless present, particularly as most students are potentially vulnerable and have to be driven to site by minibus or parental transport?

2. Question from Gareth Elkins

There have been a number of traffic surveys along Stapehill Road, Ferndown since the residents submitted a petition in July 2018 to request the road be made safer. After each one we have been told several times the road "does not meet the criteria" to make it safer.

What are these criteria and in what way does the road not meet these criteria?"

3. Question(s) from David Redgewell

Question 1

What progress is being made on delivery on the Bus Railway interchange facilities at Weymouth Railway station and Dorchester south Railway stations?

And making sure this station scheme are fully accessible for bus rail Taxis interchange for passengers using wheelchairs access.

Is their Progress on Disabled lifts at Wareham station for disabled access a Rail head for swanage by bus and the swanage railway the station requires a fully accessible toilet.

With Network rail wessex routes First group Great western railway and south western railway and First group Wessex. Buses and Go south coast and purbeck and wessex Community railway partnerships.

Questions 2

With Dorset council and Bournemouth Poole and Christchurch Council.

What progress is being made on Audit on Public transport interchange as part of Bus back better the government National bus strategy and bus service improvements plan?

As part of plan is the council looking to reinstate bus service that have been withdrawn on Key bus corridor across the county.

For instance, Yeovil bus station to Dorchester south station. Via the A37

And provide a county wide bus and rail rover card valid on all bus service and rail in the county of Dorset Bournemouth Poole and Christchurch. Similar to Wiltshire council area .Or Bristol Bath and west super mare.

To look at the provision of a Saturday service Between Salisbury city centre Blandford forum Dorchester and Weymouth.

To look at Evenings and Sundays service between Dorchester south railway station ,weymouth x53 Bridport bus station,lyme Regis and Axminster station for trains to London Waterloo yeovil junction and Exeter central and st David station.

And Bus connection for Chard and Taunton. Town centre.

This is especially important to maintain winter bus service in west Dorset

With passenger's information and real time information at Bus stops and shelters. and disabled access in the form of castle kerbs.

4. Question(s) from David Berry

Question 1

With the proposed nominal 6 month delay in adopting the Dorset Local Plan from Quarter 2 2023 (published in September 2020) to Quarter 4 2023 (proposed in July 2021) there is a serious risk that the Dorset Council will miss the Government December 2023 deadline for it being adopted. What are the results of the risk analysis and mitigation measures to produce the Local Plan to meet this deadline, including but not limited to, the effects of your proposed reduction of the submission and examination duration from 15 months to 12 months, the new National Planning

Policy Framework issued on the 20th July 21 and the proposed Government Planning reforms ?

Question 2

Can you please provide to the public a more detailed breakdown of the indicative dates for each stage of the local plan development including how the public will be engaged for comments on the pre submission draft version of the Local Plan now scheduled for publication in May 2022.

5. Question from Mike Allen

A discussion took place at the recent full Council Meeting about housing numbers used for the draft Dorset Local Plan. There was concern among councillors that perhaps too many houses were being planned. I would like to take a quick “More or Less” look at the data, leading to a simple but profound question.

The draft Local Plan has been framed using the Government’s Standard Method to determine housing need, based upon the Ministry’s own 2014-based annual household projections for Dorset. These projections show, each year, how many households are expected. The household figures, for key years in the draft Local Plan, are:

2020	169,070
2021	170,289
2030	182,073
2038	191,087

The Standard Method uses the average growth over the ten years 2020-2030, which is $(182,073 - 169,070)/10 = 1,300.3$ households per year.

This is uplifted by a factor, based on the annual affordability ratio in Dorset, which, for 2019, comes to 37.875%, and drives the annual growth up from 1,300.3 to **1,793 households per year**. This is the annual figure used in the draft Local Plan over 17 years, and results in a total requirement of $17 \times 1,793 = \mathbf{30,481}$ households. Seemingly, the idea behind the uplift is that it will help to stabilise high prices (though no-one in Government has ever suggested it will cause prices to fall).

Notice though, that the Ministry’s household projections for 2021 to 2038 actually project the formation in Dorset of only $191,087 - 170,289 = \mathbf{20,798}$ households over the same Local Plan period, which is 9,683 less.

Therefore my simple question is this:

Given that these projections take account already of net in-migration from other areas and countries (they are calculated for every authority, not just Dorset), of population growth (the householders have been born already) and of declining household size, whom does Dorset Council expect to live in the extra 9,683 homes that are proposed over and above the homes necessary for the Ministry’s projected household growth?

This question is not addressed in the draft Local Plan, but we can be sure that it will be in the minds of developers, who will welcome the offer of extra land allocations throughout Dorset, but build homes only to meet actual demand, not to stabilise prices.

6. Question from Sandra Reeve

Questions will be read out by an officer of the council and a response given by the appropriate Portfolio Holder or officer *at the meeting*. All questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.' (Dorset Council's stated procedure - my italics)

These are the guidelines for questions submitted to a virtual meeting. On June 15, at the Pension Fund Committee, a statement was read out by Cllr Andy Canning (supported by Cllr P Wharf) stating that a decision had been taken not to read out the questions submitted by engaged members of the public, on the basis that the Pension Fund Committee had already explained their approach to Pension Fund Divestment from fossil fuels in September 2020.

This was already puzzling to me as one of my questions was based on statements made on June 1, 2021 by Cop 26 President Alok Sharma at the first NetZero Pensions Summit, who said: 'Putting your money in fossil fuels creates the very real risk of stranded assets.' His speech was not available for consideration in September 2020.

Another public question pointed out: 'Brunel has made a 'net-zero by 2050' commitment. There is a clear contradiction here between Brunel's date and Dorset Council's own target of 2040. Surely this is a 'direct action' and Dorset Council should instruct Brunel to invest in order to meet their 2040 date?' This is a new and valid question

And a third question from a Scheme member asked for poll to establish what demand there was for an ethical investment option, which seems important when current policy runs until 2022.

We were told on June 15th that members of the public who had asked a question would receive a written response, which would also be put in the public minutes. After two emails to Democratic Services and to the Pension Fund Committee, I was told by email on July 8th that I would 'shortly' receive an answer to my own questions. I have still not received a response. As a result, I do not feel that this committee is interested in any form of engaged public dialogue.

Questions:

1. Can you explain from a procedural point of view why Democratic Services supported the decision/request by the Pension Fund Committee to ban questions at the virtual Committee meeting on June 15 (without informing the public before the meeting) given what the public is led to believe will happen on your website (see above) ?

2. Can you tell me how much time Dorset Council permits to elapse between a question that has not been answered at a meeting and the promised responses from the Pension Fund Committee?

7. Question from Bob Driscoll

Subject: The Strategic Inter Urban Public Transport Corridor between Bridport and Yeovil

This route was operated by Damory as service number 40, between 2011 and 2017. It operated 6 days a week and provided a useful lifeline for commuters to Yeovil and served Yeovil College. The route received financial support from Dorset County Council (DCC) but, with careful planning of the timetable, the numbers using the service increased to the point where Damory felt they were prepared to operate the service without subsidy. This was announced at our public meeting in January 2017. When the secondary schools transport contract was tendered by DCC, Damory lost a major part of the work and could no longer justify having a presence in Bridport. It therefore gave notice to withdraw from the route at the end of summer term in July 2017. It is now 4 years since Damory withdrew and, in spite of initial assurances that there would be a seamless transfer to a new operator, it is now a shadow of its former self. The first casualty was the Saturday service, which ceased in October 2017. Fortunately, Beaminster Town Council stepped into the breach and started its own community bus, manned by volunteers, which started in June 2018 and runs every Saturday. The second casualty was withdrawal of the 07.30 service from Bridport to Yeovil and corresponding 17.15 return, which – at a stroke – destroyed the commuter market and forced Yeovil College to provide its own transport for students who live along the Bridport and Beaminster corridor. This took place in October 2018 with only one month's notice. Yeovil College were gifted a minibus by DCC and the advice to commuters was to try and car share.

WATAG believes that the passengers who use this route have been treated disgracefully, with no attempt to engage with stakeholders to try and remedy the situation. 2 years ago, at the Cabinet meeting held 18 July 2019, a Beaminster resident raised the issue of bus cuts on the Bridport/ Beaminster and Yeovil corridor, and how it had affected her children travelling to and from school. The reply she received at the time was (and I quote):- *“At the Place Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9 July 2019 which was attended by a representative from The Western Area Transport Action Group (WATAG), the route between Bridport, Beaminster, Crewkerne and Yeovil (service 6) was discussed. The committee has agreed to set up a working group to look at reductions in subsidy for public transport (and the viability of routes) across the county in the context of the climate change emergency. This will include service 6. Until the group has been set up and the review completed, further changes to this service are unlikely to be made.”* In the 2 years since that Cabinet meeting, we have heard nothing from this working group, and the complaints still come in. The reputation of this service has become so bad that it actually featured in our MP Chris Loder's maiden speech in the House of Commons!

We have even used this route as our case study in the “County All Party Parliamentary Group: The decline of rural buses”, submitted in May 2020. A meeting was held at Beaminster Public Hall on 03 February 2020, chaired by Dorset Councillor Rebecca Knox, about the state of the bus service. Over 100 people attended. I was asked – at the meeting – by Councillor Simon Christopher to write to Councillors Spencer Flower and Ray Bryan to highlight the depth of feeling and the need for urgent action on this strategic route. I did get an acknowledgement from Councillor Flower.

In our latest exchange of correspondence with Dorset Travel, in which we have asked for a slight retiming to the last bus from Yeovil to Bridport to allow Yeovil College students to use it, we have been told that the National Bus Strategy means (and I quote): ***“If changes are to be made to specific routes, it will be as a part of this work so we will not be making changes for September 2021.”***

Question

We welcome the National Bus Strategy and are pleased to have been included as part of the Stakeholder Engagement sessions. However, we see no need to use the NBS as a delaying tactic. Will DC Cabinet please insist that Dorset Travel gives the highest priority to resolving the issues on this route, and creates a timetable that serves the needs of its users?