

Councillor Questions for Cabinet 1 March 2022

Question 1 from Cllr Kate Wheller

Traffic management and parking: On the final day of Dorset County Council I attended a meeting with Cllr Darryl Turner, then the cabinet member, to discuss a petition from residents to reduce the 60 mph section of the Portland Beach Road to match the rest of the road. On balance Cllr Turner and officers agreed that this was a sensible suggestion and that work would be undertaken for a report to go to the new Cabinet and new Full Council. This has been lost without trace. Could this please be looked in to. Early in 2019 I submitted a petition requesting officers to look into the possibility of providing residents parking for Ebor Road in Wyke Regis. Officer stated that since there were only 7 names on the petition they would not pursue the issue – they were informed that there are only 7 houses in Ebor Road and all residents had signed the petition. Officers told me they would look again at the scheme; this too seems to have been lost. Cllr Bryan suggested recently that he was in favour of residents parking could this also be looked at again please.

Question 2 from Cllr Kate Wheller

I note that so called 'ghost' ponds are being restored in many areas of the country. Can you tell me whether any investigation has taken place on the existence of such ponds on Dorset Council's Farms or other land and if they do whether we could reinstate them? It would seem to be a great way of improving biodiversity and possibly improving drainage and possibly therefore flooding.

Question 3 From Cllr Nick Ireland

Dorset Council recently announced two contract awards related to the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS), one related to Training, Support & Development, and the other Communication & Networking.

There is a focus, particularly in the first contract, on the most deprived areas of Dorset Council's area, specifically numerous Wards of urban Weymouth & Portland plus Bridport with a few additional urban Wards elsewhere.

The remainder of our markets towns and predominant rural communities will only be required to receive "*base level coverage*".

The areas outside of the contract's focus contain "*hundreds of community organisations such as local charities, community groups, village hall committees, social enterprises and parish councils*", many of whom have barely survived the pandemic, and did so by relying heavily on the existing support structure which already has a good understanding of the Dorset Council area landscape and communities.

How will Dorset Council be supporting these organisations when this support is removed shortly?

Question 4 from Cllr Nick Ireland

At the last Dorset Full Council, it was disappointing to note that yet again the presented Pay Policy Statement highlighted the fact that Dorset Council is still not a Real Living Wage Employer.

(We pay circa £1500 per annum less than the Real Living Wage threshold – source livingwage.org.uk)

It was equally disappointing to hear the portfolio holder repeating the incorrect mantra that it isn't possible for local authorities to make this happen and dumbfounding to hear the Leader boast that we pay the National Minimum & Living Wages when it is a legal requirement that we do so!

Given that numerous local authorities, including our near neighbours Cornwall to whom our leader is providing peer support, are accredited Real Living Wage employers, with some even taking the socially conscious decision to go further and insist their suppliers are of the same status, when will this Cabinet take the issue seriously and commission a paper on the subject for discussion in this forum and subsequent debate at Full Council?

Question 5 from Cllr Bill Trite

The Swanage locality Rapid Response Vehicle, usually referred to as the Ambulance Car or Paramedic Car, has a record of preventing many deaths in Swanage and nearby villages by administering life-saving support well before a conventional ambulance reaches such emergency cases. This service is vital in Swanage owing to (among other things) the town's relative remoteness from A&E facilities, its higher than Dorset average of elderly and vulnerable residents, the exceptional holiday-time road traffic congestion which extends ambulance journey times both to collect patients and to transport them to A&E, and the doubling or trebling of the number of people in the town in the summer months. Moreover the Ambulance car can be 'tethered' to the immediate area whereas an ambulance cannot. Yet notwithstanding the even greater local concern that the Ambulance Car may soon be withdrawn, a recent Freedom of Information response by the Ambulance Trust revealed that the Car was staffed for only 42% of the time throughout 2021, representing a swingeing *de facto* reduction of this service without any due consultation process. To meet and address these grave concerns and shortcomings, the Council has promised to convene a Task & Finish Group comprising appropriate persons. Could we please have an update on when the first meeting of such a duly constituted Task & Finish Group will be taking place?

Question 6 from Cllr B Trite

Dorset Council has, I understand, a statutory role in representing the needs of residents who will or could be adversely affected by changes to health services. Since Swanage and nearby villages will be the area worst affected by loss of the Swanage-based Ambulance Car, can local residents rely on the Cabinet ensuring that at least one of the local Dorset Council members be appointed to the Task & Finish Group mentioned in the last question?

Question 7 from Cllr Jon Orrell

- 1) Will the council support hotels and guest houses in Weymouth, as they recover from the impact of the pandemic, by replacing the loss of scratch card permits with an electronic equivalent or similar cost access to Pavilion, Lodmoor, Swannery car parks?
- 2) How many people a year are being placed by agencies outside Dorset (Housing associations, treatment agencies, other councils or probation) , away from their families and support networks to central Weymouth hotels and hostels?