

**Annual Meeting of Council
12 May 2022**

Questions and Statements submitted for the Public Participation Period

Question 1 – submitted by Alistair Chisholm

In an email, dated 28th April 2022, written to all those invited to the second HYAS master planning workshop for the North Dorchester Garden Community, Wessex Water stated the following:

1.(We) are still not satisfied that risks to Eagle Lodge, a major strategic public drinking water supply source, can be mitigated..... “

and

2. “major development in a source protection zone can result in significant water quality deterioration in the aquifer.....serious pollution may render the source unusable.....”

and

3. "Significant investment is likely to be required to serve the site,

including new service reservoirs."

In view of these damning comments, and the massive costs involved in providing suitable mitigation measures to ensure the continued supply of healthy drinking water to the town, why is this Council continuing to spend public money on the DOR 13 site which is clearly and fundamentally flawed ?

Question 2 – submitted by Rob Pearce on behalf of the Dorset Equality Group

Dorset Equality Group's question is to ask what progress is being made in implementing the Real Living Wage as the baseline staff employment rate.

As a group we are aware of the debates initiated by Councillors Nick Ireland and David Gray surrounding the Council's current pay structure, especially at the top and bottom of the scale. It is more than just our contention, there is a growing body of evidence, that the pernicious effects of inequality impact heavily on happiness, health, housing, and many other areas of life and that they affect us **all**.

We applaud the tenacity, flexibility, and service to the people of Dorset which Dorset Council has demonstrated throughout the pandemic. The contribution of staff undertaking essential, but in the past relatively unrecognised, roles has been widely appreciated by Dorset residents and we urge Dorset Council to become in the very near future a Real Living Wage employer and to be in a position to promote widely the benefits of a more equitable wage structure.

We recognise the huge burdens placed on local authorities to fulfil their statutory obligations with diminishing resources in real terms, but we know too that economic, health and social crises provide unmissable opportunities for imaginative policy formation and implementation.

It is our view that now is the time for Dorset Councillors, council officers and staff, trades unions, staff associations and Dorset residents to design such a policy and to see it to implementation. Not only will baseline pay increase, but so too will morale, productivity, local purchasing power and the example set to the private sector.

Dorset, despite all that it offers in terms of quality of life, has some of the highest indicators of inequality in the UK with often exorbitant urban housing costs; isolation and expensive, but frequently poor, public transport links in rural areas; and insecure and seasonal employment in seaside towns.

Let's secure for Dorset not only a highly valued quality of life but also the consideration and respect which the lowest paid deserve, alleviating some of their anxieties about the cost of enjoying life in Dorset.

Thank you very much.

Question 3 & 4 – submitted by Dr Sandra Reeve on behalf of Dorset Climate Action Network (Question to be read by Giles Watts from Dorset Action Network)

Dorset Council needs to be seen to operate fairly and to set high standards in public office. **Dorset Climate Action Network** is therefore very disappointed at the way the motion on UK energy self-sufficiency (Agenda 13) was handled at the Full Council meeting on 14th April.

It was clear that there were strong feelings in the chamber about this motion which included the proposal: 'Mindful of the current experience of global conflict and uncertainty, Dorset Council urges the Government to introduce an energy policy with the principal objective of securing permanent UK energy self-sufficiency from as early a date as possible, **utilising whatever forms of energy generation sourced from within the UK are necessary to this end**'. This proposal ignores both the recommendations of the IPPC report and Dorset Council's own Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy.

Following the disruption by protesters, the meeting was moved to another room, where a vote was taken **with no debate permitted, apart from the words of the proposer and the seconder which were delivered before the disruption**.

We note the actions by the two protesters calling themselves Grannies for the Future. However, Dorset Council's response to the protest was disappointing. By hurrying through the vote of such a key motion without public discussion and behind closed doors, the Council has stifled an important debate in the face of climate change and clearly failed to respect the principles of democracy, thereby damaging the Council's democratic reputation.

We call on the Council to deem the vote on the motion Agenda 13 null and void and bring the motion back to a future meeting so that it can be openly debated in public before a second vote is taken. We gather that this is possible if 24 members provide notice of a revised motion.

Question 1: Will the Chair please give their reasons for moving to an immediate vote on Agenda 13 without debate, rather than adjourning the vote to another occasion, which they could have chosen to do?

Question 2: We hope Dorset Council agrees that our energy and climate security is important enough to require a proper public debate; if so will the Council bring the motion back to a future meeting as this appears to us to be the most equitable way forward?

Question 5 & 6 – submitted by Caz Dennett XR, Dorchester, Weymouth, and Portland

On the 4th April 2022 UN General Secretary Antonio Guterres said:

“We are on a pathway to global warming of more than double the 1.5°C limit agreed in Paris. Some Government and business leaders are saying one thing but doing another. Simply put, they are lying. And the results will be catastrophic. This is a climate emergency.

Climate scientists warn that we are already perilously close to tipping points that could lead to cascading and irreversible climate impacts. But, high-emitting Governments and corporations are not just turning a blind eye, they are adding fuel to the flames.

They are choking our planet, based on their vested interests and historic investments in fossil fuels, when cheaper, renewable solutions provide green jobs, energy security and greater price stability.

Climate activists are sometimes depicted as dangerous radicals. But, the truly dangerous radicals are the countries that are increasing the production of fossil fuels [which include the UK].

Investing in new fossil fuels infrastructure is moral and economic madness.

We must triple the speed of the shift to renewable energy.

Leaders must lead.

If you live in a big city, a rural area or a small island State; if you invest in the stock market; if you care about justice and our children’s future; demand an end to all fossil fuel subsidies.”

Is Antonio Guterres, the United Nations and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change wrong to say we must prevent all new oil & gas extraction, including here in Dorset?

Question 2

Three years ago Dorset Council declared we are in a climate emergency, yet last month passed a motion to support new oil & gas extraction including here in Dorset and continues to invest £41 million of our Dorset Pension Fund in fossil fuels.

Does Dorset Council understand you are saying one thing and doing another, and displaying the moral and economic madness Mr Guterres refers to?

Question 7 – submitted by Giles Watts

My wife and I are lucky enough to be hosting two lovely Ukrainian Families who are seeking sanctuary from the war. They are two women in their 30s and three children aged 5, 8 and 8. Both families are from Kharkiv which has been largely destroyed by Russian forces. At the start of the war they spent their first week cowering in an unlit cellar beneath a Barber’s shop before escaping to Poland. The Polish welcomed them in without any delays and quickly allocated them a single room in a large apartment block in Katowice along with many other refugee families.

The families arrived in Dorchester on Friday after a 5-week struggle to obtain visas. Two of the children did not have passports and had to travel to Warsaw for biometrics (photos and fingerprinting). Despite intervention from Chris Loder’s team – for which we are grateful – the last visa for the 8-year-old boy was not granted until Wednesday evening just hours before

flying. The stress levels have been very high and our first hand experience of the Home Office's visa system has been a shameful disgrace.

Local support in Dorset has been fabulous and heart-warming with everyone wanting to help with everything including phone chips, clothing, events and even offers of monetary support. It is truly the kindness of strangers. Dorset Council have also supported us in a number of ways. DBS checks and a safety check of our property have both been carried out with common sense and efficiency, while your helpline and welcome packs were well received although ultimately less useful than local networks such as "Help for Kindness" in Weymouth.

School places are our first priority and we were surprised that schools have not been provided with any additional resources and many are already full. We have been incredibly lucky. The Prince of Wales School in Dorchester under their inspirational head, Gary Spracklen, agreed to take in the children immediately, and has provided them with free second hand school uniforms and allocated them with school meals out of their own budget until universal credit is confirmed.

For the mothers, the next stage may prove to be even more difficult. They need to sign up for medical and dental services and they need a bank account before they can apply for universal credit and child benefit which we have been informed will take at least 6 weeks and may require originals of documents they do not have. Until then, they will have almost no funds coming in. To work, they must also apply for a National Security number which we hear can be very tricky and time-consuming.

Question

We believe Dorset Council is receiving £10,500 from the government for every Ukrainian refugee. Out of this the Ukrainians receive £200 each on a pre-paid card and the host families receive £350 per month. How do Dorset Council intend to spend the remaining funds? We wondered whether some should go to local schools that take on refugee children to provide additional staffing and resources and whether the council might also support language classes for both refugees and host families.