

# Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

## 26 May 2022

### Plans for Summer Operations in Dorset

#### For Review and Consultation

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr R Bryan, Highways, Travel and Environment

**Local Councillor(s):** All

**Executive Director:** J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

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**Report Status:** Public

#### **Brief Summary:**

Due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, last summer saw unprecedented visitor numbers to Dorset. The Council and its partners were well prepared and the implications were well managed. Your Committee received a report on 25 January 2022 about the work that had been undertaken and requested sight of any plans considered necessary for this year.

With the removal of travel restrictions, visitor numbers are not expected to be as high as last year. However, they are expected to be significantly above a 'normal' year as people catch-up on lost holidays over the previous two years.

This report updates your Committee on work undertaken following the report in January 2022 and outlines the plans being put in place to assist the Council and its partners manage the implications of expected high visitor numbers this summer.

#### **Recommendations:**

Members of the Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:

- (i) note the progress made on actions contained in the Improvement Action Plan which was produced as a result of experience of summer 2021.
- (ii) review the proposals for managing high visitor numbers to Dorset during summer 2022.
- (iii) subject to the above, support the proposals as outlined.

### **Reason for Recommendations:**

To ensure that council services are prepared to effectively manage the consequences of high visitor numbers during the summer.

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Covid-19 foreign travel restrictions in 2020 led to exceptionally high visitor numbers to Dorset during the summer and associated issues such as illegal parking and major incidents including serious injuries from tombstoning at Lulworth Cove and the Wareham Forest, fire most likely resulting from the use of a disposable BBQ. During this time there was a strong national focus on preventing the further spread of Covid-19 through restrictions and social distancing and council resources were deployed to assist with this and support the welfare of those more vulnerable to the consequences of infection.
- 1.2 With the experience of 2020 and continuing foreign travel restrictions, a coordinated multi-agency approach was taken for the summer of 2021 involving key council services and Dorset Police linking into the Local Resilience Forum including a weekly Forward Look Group. Visitor numbers were again exceptionally high and the consequences well managed. These arrangements were reviewed by your Committee at their meeting on 25 January 2022 and the report can be seen [HERE].
- 1.3 Following the removal of Covid-19 restrictions, travel abroad will be more accessible this summer and this is likely to reduce the number of visitors to Dorset. However, it is expected that numbers will still be higher than pre-Covid as people 'catch-up' on missed holidays and events from the past three years. Indeed, the summer events calendar is looking very busy starting with The Queens Platinum Jubilee and finishing with the Tour of Britain cycle race. An approach is proposed for this summer that utilises the joint working and structure from last year with an appropriate level of resourcing to match expected demand.

## 2. **Improvement Action Plan**

2.1 Before looking at arrangements for this year, it is helpful to review progress with the Improvement Action Plan that your Committee considered in January 2022. Good progress has been made and the plan has helped to inform proposed arrangements this year. The updated plan is given at **Appendix 1**. Of particular note is the decision to stand-up an 'operations group' at key times during the spring and summer, the Summer Demand Group (SDG). Also, it has been possible to access the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) for budget to support this year's operations.

2.2 Your Committee asked that the views of partners to last year's operation should be sought, especially those of the emergency services. A survey was undertaken the results of which have been received and are given at **Appendix 2**. In summary;

- Overall there was a positive impression of the Council's handling of summer operations.
- In particular, respondents had a strong net positive agreement that the Council kept people safe during the period.
- Although showing a net positive response, there was a more mixed response to some questions.
- Some Parish and Town Councils felt that they should have been more involved.
- A significant proportion of respondents felt unable to give a particular view on some of the questions.

The results have been used to help inform the actions taken within the Improvement Plan and to shape this year's proposals.

## 3. **Summer Demand Plan 2022**

3.1 Given the good performance of last years plan and operations, a similar approach is proposed for this year albeit scaled back to suit the level of expected visitors and budget available. The draft plan can be seen here [DCSummerDemandPlan2022.pdf \(dorsetcouncil.gov.uk\)](#) . In making arrangements for this year, actions from the Improvement Plan have been taken into account along with the views of partners and BCP Council. It is important that both councils are aligned to manage wider implications across the whole Dorset area, especially those from large events such as the Bournemouth Air Show and Great Dorset Steam Fair.

3.2 Key features of the plan are;

- Summer Delivery Group with core membership of key council services; coastal town councils and Dorset Police. Its overarching objective being to effectively manage the implications of high visitor numbers and keep safe.
- Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rated calendar for the period informed by the Safety Advisory Group and Dorset Police. The calendar primarily drives the level of preparedness of summer operations and the resources put in place by services.
- A Multi-Agency Command Centre (MACC) will stand up at key times, informed by the RAG rated calendar. As for last year, it will be provided by an established contractor and operate remotely. It will provide an operational communications hub and facilitate the input of services and agencies to issues. It will link into Emergency Planning and the Local Resilience Forum as necessary.

#### 4. **Summer Demand Services**

4.1 The cost of additional summer operations to the Council in 2021 was £2.282M, funded through COMF and other Government Covid related grant. This year there is an allocation of £690,000 from COMF recognising the scaling down of operations and grant available. Current estimates are shown in the table below although this is not yet a complete picture;

<b>Additional Services</b>	<b>£</b>
Litter bins & street cleansing	77,487
Temporary harbour seasonal staff	60,000
Weymouth Park & Ride operation	90,000
Coastal Town Council visitor management	65,000
Illegal parking and tow away zones	20,000
MACC and ancillary arrangements	34,000
Weymouth ASB Patrol	50,000

Weymouth Safe Space project	25,000
Mobile CCTV units	25,000
Total	446,487

4.2 Further funding requests may be received for additional services in areas such as traveller management; parking; public toilet cleansing; country park visitor management and these will be considered in conjunction with the budget allocation. A contingency sum will be set aside to assist with any unplanned urgent items of spend.

4.3 Of particular concern has been the incidence of forest and heathland fires which do so much damage to our unique countryside and habitats and put lives at risk. Already this year, there have been incidents across the combined councils area. We have taken action to persuade retailers not to sell disposable BBQ's and working with partners, there will be extensive communications about the risk. A Public Space Protection Order will be in force from the summer, legally restricting the lighting of open fires on certain land.

## 5. **Forward Look**

5.1 As recognised by your Committee at your January meeting, valuable experience has been gained over the past two years about a more proactive approach to visitor management during peak periods including greater multi-agency planning and delivery. Through the Covid-19 pandemic, one-off additional grant funding has been available to facilitate this and deliver additional services, this will not be available next year. Following the summer, further work will be undertaken to embed valuable elements of the past two year's work and this will also consider the reduced funding. Your Committee may wish to be sighted on this.

## 6. **Financial Implications**

6.1 The budget allocation and spend will be monitored at the Summer Demand Group, supported by the Place Finance Manager. Reporting will be to Place Board as part of overall budget management.

## 7 **Climate Implications**

7.1 Visitors to Dorset are an essential part of our communities and local economy. However, there is an additional carbon footprint. The effective

management of visitor numbers especially in relation to travel and parking can help to reduce this.

## 8. **Well-being and Health Implications**

- 8.1 Whilst there is less of a focus on reducing the transmission of Covid-19, public safety remains a priority. The plan and operational arrangements act in support of this and help ensure that residents and visitors alike benefit from what Dorset has to offer.

## 9. **Other Implications**

- 9.1 None identified.

## 10. **Risk Assessment**

- 10.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Medium

## 11. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 11.1 The implications arising from this report do not adversely affect people or groups with protected characteristics.

## 12. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Improvement Action Plan

Appendix 2 – 2021 Summer Operations Survey results

## 13. **Background Papers**

Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee Report, 25 January 2022 – Post scrutiny review of plans for summer 2021 tourism in Dorset.

## Appendix 1 – Improvement Action Plan

Ref	Lessons Learnt	Actions	By Whom	By When	Current Position
<b>A) Summer Operations Structures (Dorset Council Operations Group)</b>					
A1.1; A3.6	The Dorset Council Operations Group (or similar) has been very effective and should be retained	Determine chair/membership of DCOG (from February to end Summer)	Place Management Team	21/2/22	Complete - Summer Demand Group (SDG) led by Head of Community and Public Protection
A3.4		Invite to be provided to duty officers and SAG coordinator	Emergency Planning	21/2/22	Complete – SDG membership determined
A3.7		Establish quarterly meetings between Police and DC (regulatory services)	Head of Community & Public Protection; Service Manager for Licencing	21/2/22	Complete – Regular meetings established, plus Dorset Police represented on SDG
A3.1	Proposed funding requirements need to be presented to SLT at an early stage, as COMF funding unlikely to continue	Outcomes from the debrief to be shared with Executive Director for Place	Covid Silver / Service Manager for Assurance	21/2/22	Complete – 2022 funding agreed
A3.3	Briefing on summer operations could be extended to a wider set of stakeholders	Internal DC briefing to be extended from Gold/Silver to other duty groups. This needs to clarify roles and manage expectations	Place Corp Director (tbc) / Emergency Planning	21/2/22	Briefing date to be agreed

Ref	Lessons Learnt	Actions	By Whom	By When	Current Position
A3.9; B3.5		Briefing sessions for elected members and parish & town councils, including contact points (emails etc)	Place Corp Director (tbc) / Emergency Planning	11/4/22	Complete - Briefing date for elected members set. Briefings for town & parish councils being delivered as part of regular briefing sessions
A3.5	Required command and control involvement could be clarified by DCOG agreeing risk level (RAG) based on	RAG level to be determined by DCOG based on police / weather / service intelligence.	DCOG Chair	11/4/22	Complete – RAG ratings agreed
B3.2		OOH meetings attendance to be based on DCOG risk ranking (i.e. Green = Bronze/MACC; Amber/Red= Silver/Bronze/ MACC/Duty Emergency Planning / Comms)	DCOG	11/4/22	Complete – RAG ratings agreed
A3.9	Demands on officers are not sustainable and need to be recognised with job descriptions/remuneration	Decision needs to be reached on how we manage staff resources in future years, either by backfilling or remuneration. This is primarily a Place Directorate issue.	Place Management Team	11/4/22	Resourcing in process, via SDG
A3.10	There is a Local Resilience Forum expectation that local authorities will lead an ongoing forum for partner engagement	Reiterate importance of partner engagement with SAGs, via Local Resilience Forum	Service Manager for Assurance / Service Manager for Licencing	11/4/22	Complete – Both local authorities have fed this back via the Civil Contingencies Unit

Ref	Lessons Learnt	Actions	By Whom	By When	Current Position
		Communicate awareness of SAGs to Parish & Town Councils, including invites to specific SAGs where appropriate	Service Manager for Licencing	11/4/22	Complete - In place for this season of events.
		Liaise with Place Management Team on extent of LRF forum and lead	Service Manager for Assurance / Place Management Team	11/4/22	Complete – Agreed that SDG will include appropriate partner representation (Police / Coastal town and parish councils)
<b>B) Multi Agency Command Centre</b>					
B1.1; B1.2; C3.1	There is a need for some level of multi-agency coordination group to continue for next summer	A decision needs to be reached as to whether a MACC is retained or integrated into a revised Bronze role. This needs to include operation hours (with flexibility)	Place Management Team	11/4/22	Complete – MACC will be operational for Red rated days (primarily weekends)
D3.1		If Bronze arrangements replace the MACC for coordination, this will need to be reflected in a revised role as it would not be possible on current standby/duty arrangements	Place Management Team	11/4/22	There may remain a role for Bronze officers. This is subject to further discussion

Ref	Lessons Learnt	Actions	By Whom	By When	Current Position
B3.4	Updates need to be sense-checked to ensure messages are appropriate for audience, without impacting on timeliness of information sharing	Agree who has sign-off responsibility for update reports	DCOG lead	11/4/22	To be agreed with MACC
<b>C) Information Sharing / Situation Reports</b>					
C3.1; C3.2; C3.3	Situation reports play a vital role, but we need to ensure that key messages / nil returns can be provided more easily by busy operational teams	Work with Digital and Change team to enable an effective SitRep tool, including 'tick box' for nil return/mobile phone reporting	tbc	11/4/22	Outstanding
<b>D) Operational / Bronze</b>					
D3.2	Out of hours duty officers play an important role and we need to ensure that we have access to the knowledge that is needed	Link in with Digital and Change team as to how Delve can provide greater access to resources/knowledge/contacts	Tbc – Emergency Planning?	11/4/22	Complete – Delve capability exists, but limited
D3.5		The Duty gypsy / traveller rota should be reinstated for 2022, or integrated into an existing operational duty rota	Service Manager for Coast & Greenspace / Place Services Management Team	11/4/22	Outstanding – discussion underway to resolve resourcing for this season.

Ref	Lessons Learnt	Actions	By Whom	By When	Current Position
D3.3		Ensure that there is summer operations input into the review of out of hours services	?	11/4/22	Not actioned – This action has been superseded
D3.4	There are too many channels of communication to responding officers (teams / phone / WhatsApp / email etc)	Consolidate methods of communication (particularly for Bronze / Duty Emergency Planning Officer). It may be useful to discuss this with Digital and Change colleagues.	?	11/4/22	To be agreed as part of MACC set-up for this season
D3.5	Liaison between partners over management of transient communities was vital	Discussions to be held between Dorset Countryside and parish/town clerks over use of the Piddlehinton site to support S62 notices	Town Clerk (Weymouth Town Council) / Greenspace Manager	11/4/22	Ongoing dialogue

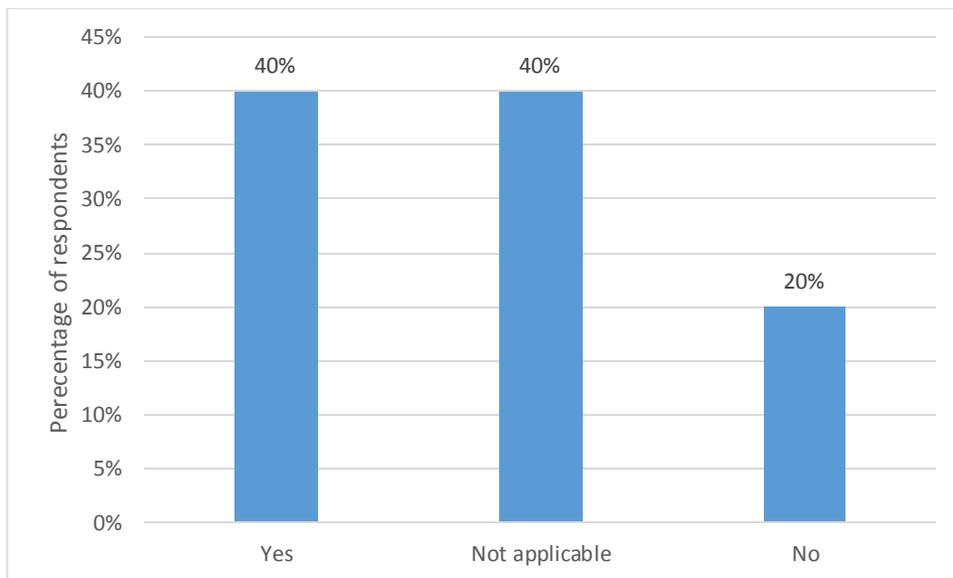
## Appendix 2 – 2021 Summer Operations Survey Results

Overall, 45 respondents completed this questionnaire.

- 59% of respondents were from Parish and Town Councils
- 25% of respondents were from voluntary/community organisations
- 5% were from Blue Light Services
- 5% were from the Business Community
- 5% were from The Local Resilience Forum
- 2% were from other Local Partner Organisations

### Question 1

**Do you feel that your organisation was sufficiently involved in planning and responding to the summer of 2020 and 2021 operations?**



40% of respondents felt that they or their organisation were sufficiently involved in planning and organising the summer of 2020 and 2021 operation. 40% felt that this was not applicable to them and 20% felt that they were not sufficiently involved.

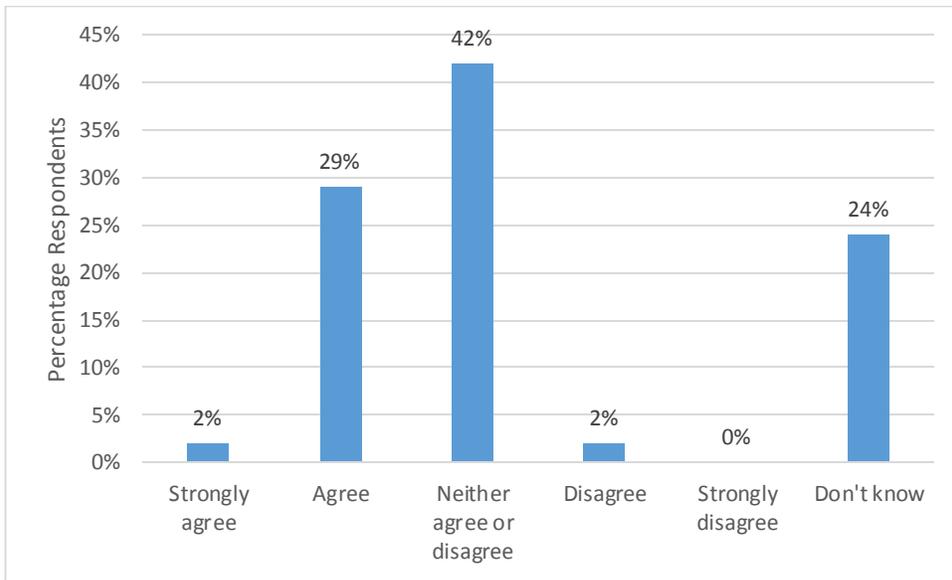
Of the 20% that felt that they were not sufficiently involved just over three quarters were made up of Parish and Town Councils.

Where the answer was 'No' the respondents were given the opportunity to give any feedback and the following comments were made:

- We are a very small parish council with only 7 members, many of whom ended up shielding during the period so there was very little we could do.
- We didn't have any involvement that we were conscious of in this work, and don't know enough about how it was done to know whether we should have been or not.

- I felt outlying parish councils have been ignored yet we still see the problems
- It wasn't something the Parish Council were aware of happening.
- No meaningful involvement opportunity was offered.
- We were not initially invited despite being a major tourist area. Once I raised this as what I considered to be an oversight we were included and this felt appropriate.
- Not aware of a conversation with Parish Councils and as a holiday accommodation provider, I was not aware of any inclusion.
- We needed more policing of illegal parking.

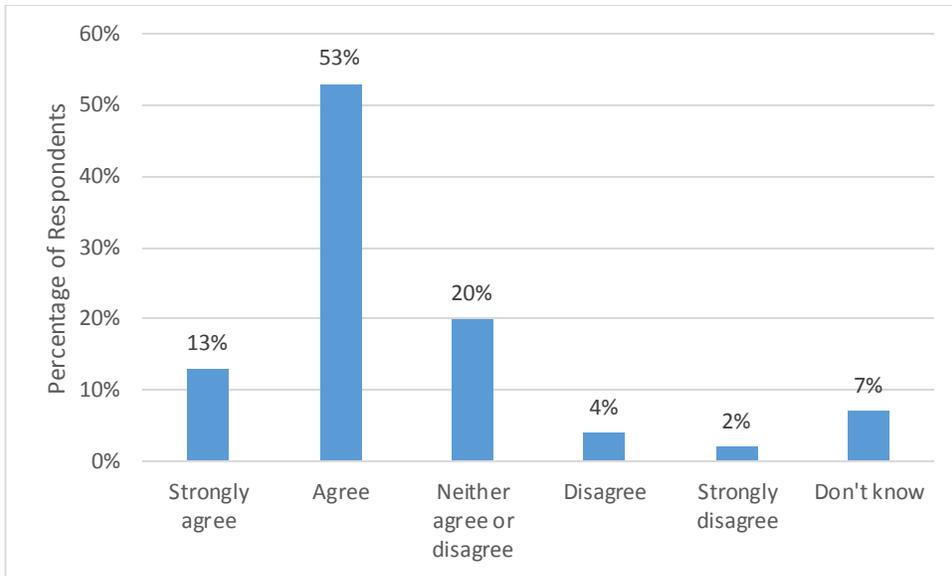
**Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements. In responding to additional visitor pressures in the summer 2020 and 2021, Dorset Council: (Maximised the commercial and economic opportunities that were presented.)**



There was a net agreement score of 29% to this question, that is to say that of those who had an opinion 31% agreed that the Council maximised economic and commercial activities and 2% disagreed. 66% either didn't know or neither agreed nor disagreed.

**Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

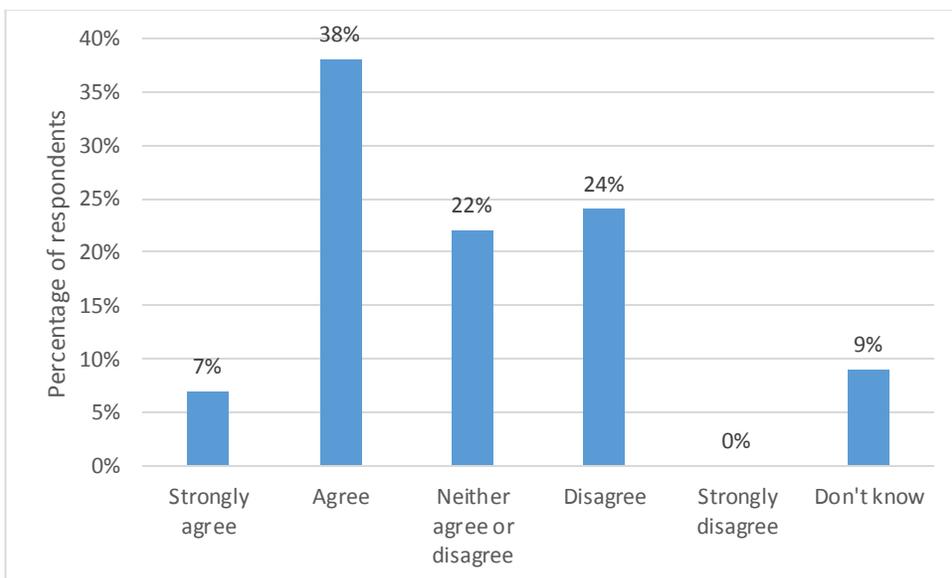
**In responding to additional visitor pressures in the summer 2020 and 2021, Dorset Council: (Kept people safe.)**



There was a strong net agreement score of 60% to this question, that is to say that of those who had an opinion 66% agreed that the Council kept people safe and 6% disagreed.

**Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

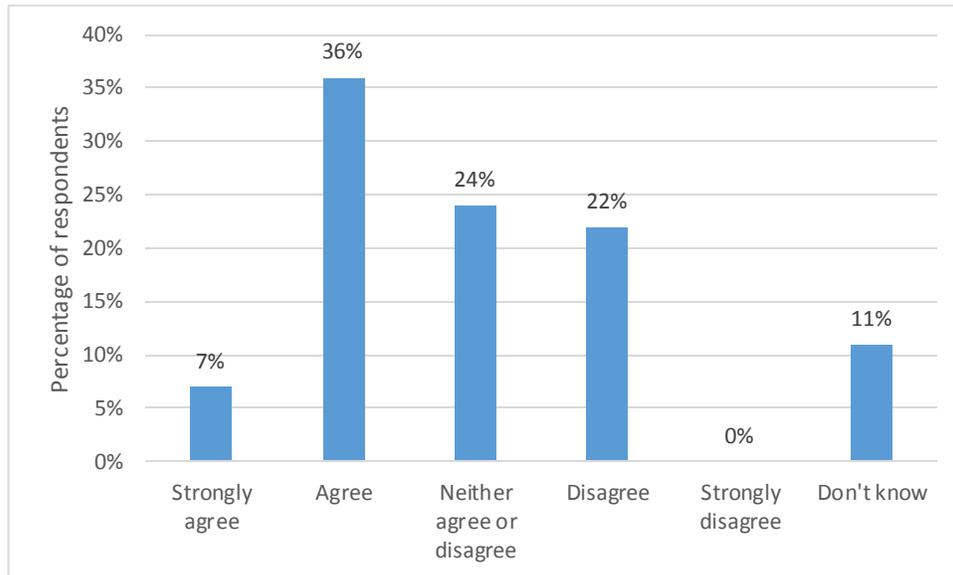
**In responding to additional visitor pressures in the summer 2020 and 2021, Dorset Council: (Protected our natural environment. )**



There was a net agreement score of 21% to this question, that is to say, that of those who had an opinion 45% agreed that the Council protected our natural environment and 24% disagreed.

**Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

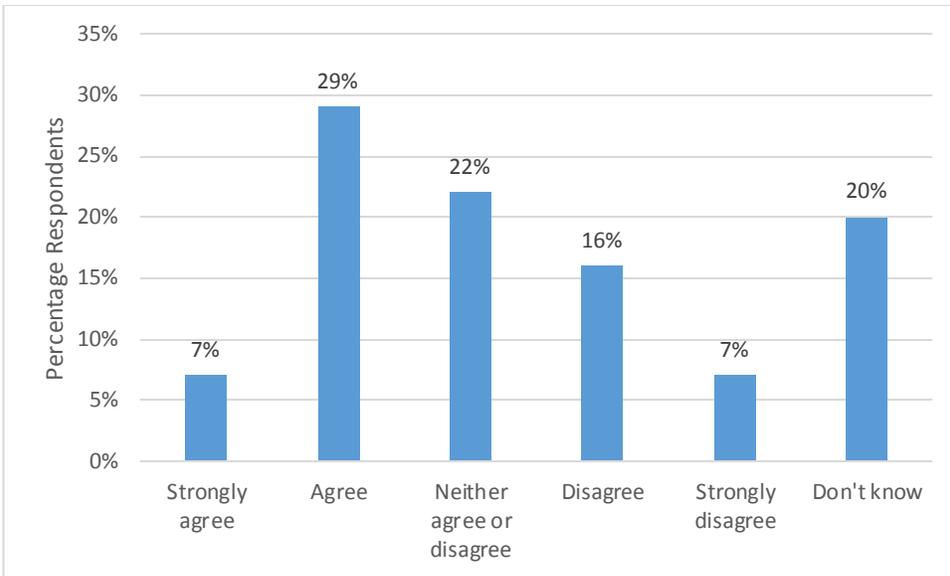
**In responding to additional visitor pressures in the summer 2020 and 2021, Dorset Council: (Encouraged a collective sense of responsibility for our environment.)**



There was a net agreement score of 21% to this question, that is to say, that of those who had an opinion 43% agreed that the Council protected our natural environment and 22% disagreed.

**Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

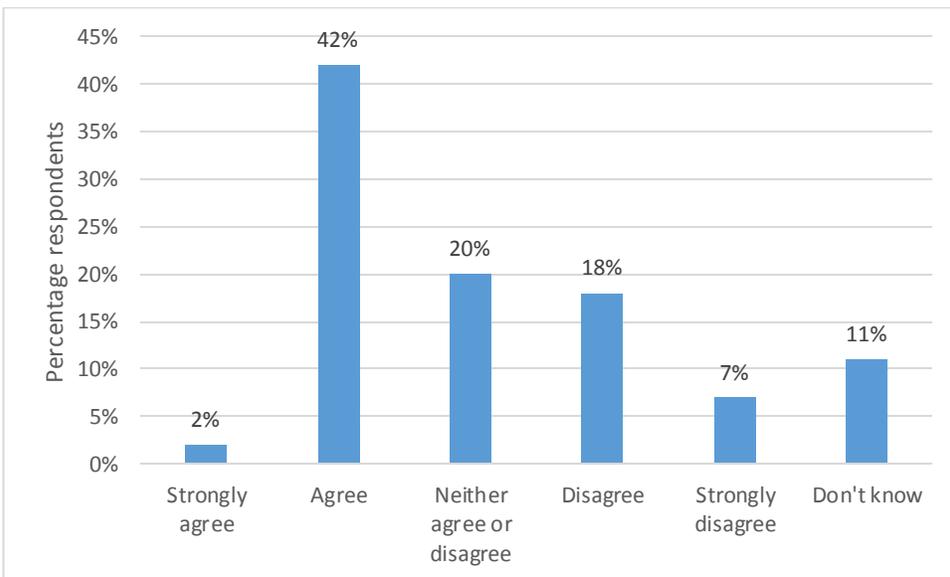
**In responding to additional visitor pressures in the summer 2020 and 2021, Dorset Council: (Minimised potential tension in respect of illegal parking.)**



There was a net agreement score of 13% to this question, that is to say, that of those who had an opinion 36% agreed that the Council minimised potential tensions relating to illegal parking and 23% disagreed. 44% either didn't know or neither agreed nor disagreed.

**Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

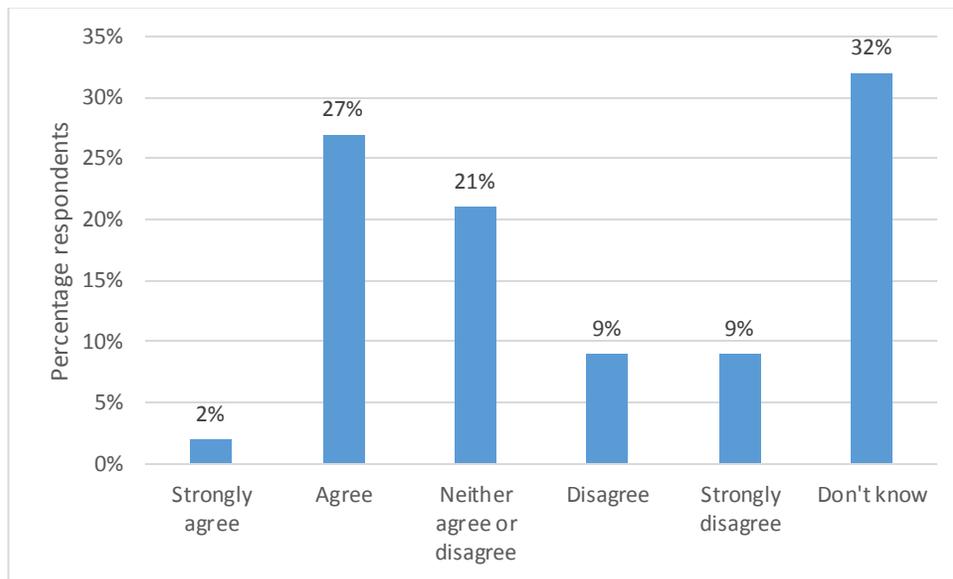
**In responding to additional visitor pressures in the summer 2020 and 2021, Dorset Council: (Minimised potential tension in respect of traffic.)**



There was a net agreement score of 19% to this question, that is to say, that of those who had an opinion 44% agreed that the Council minimised potential tensions relating to illegal parking and 25% disagreed.

**Question 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

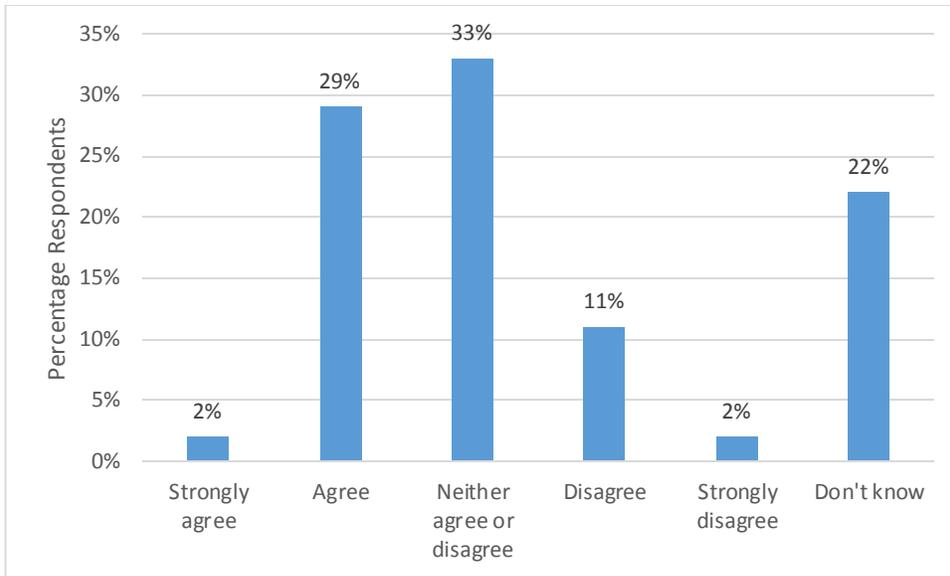
**In responding to additional visitor pressures in the summer 2020 and 2021, Dorset Council: (Minimised potential tension in respect of wild camping.)**



There was a net agreement score of 11% to this question, that is to say, that of those who had an opinion 29% agreed that the Council minimised potential tensions relating to Wild Camping and 18% disagreed. 53% of respondents either didn't know or responded that neither agreed nor disagreed.

**Question 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

**In responding to additional visitor pressures in the summer 2020 and 2021, Dorset Council: (Minimised potential tension in respect of anti-social behaviour.)**



There was a net agreement score of 18% to this question, that is to say, that of those who had an opinion 31% agreed that the Council minimised potential tensions relating to Anti-social behaviour and 13% disagreed. 55% of respondents either didn't know or responded that neither agreed nor disagreed.

### **Question 10: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the Council's response in the summer of 2020 and/or 2021?**

- It was useful to understand what DC was planning at clerk meetings with officers
- Unfortunately no volunteers could be found for Seatown so there were significant issues re parking litter etc
- Council seemed apathetic and disinterested with its own internal organisation in a state of flux
- As a Town Council we were consulted on a weekly basis by the senior management team at Dorset Council. Their response was outstanding and exceeded our expectations. Thank you to everyone at Dorset Council for the excellent service through extremely difficult times. It is good to know that we are in safe hands.
- We stayed at home so can't answer most of these, I know there were attempts to manage traffic and illegal parking. Environment, famously Durdle Door, shocking.
- Too little too late
- As a larger Council we were well plugged into the work, it may be that smaller Councils who did not have the same level of contact may not feel as engaged. Our Council was well supported by DC and I feel officers understood our pressures and gave advice and support freely.
- Having missed out at the beginning it was not always clear about what additional support from which we could benefit within the group. It appeared that additional services and support was not available equally across local councils.

- The multi-agency approach taken to planning and responding to the summer tourism seasons was welcomed and praised by many agencies and has been recognised as good practice for business as usual in the future.
- I think your management of the Covid response to residents directly was very good, but responding to the government reducing restrictions was, of course, impossible due to the fact that you have no control over how many people come into the area! However I would've liked to have seen a much louder and more direct response to the government to give local authorities some powers to control numbers of visitors in that instance.
- there seemed to be too many people flocking to too few sites (e.g. Durdle Door lost all its charm due to hordes of people descending on the area).
- The 2021 response was excellent, being broadly coherent and effective and would merit an "agree" or "strongly agree" to all the answers. It should also be noted that the response in both 2020 and 2021 in regard to supporting businesses was also very good, with public funding being distributed very well. The 2020 coastline response was more challenging, with the circumstances unique and it took time to have the right resources and plan in place to protect the coast.
- The Promise to Love Dorset Campaign, together with Litter Free Dorset campaigns and those run by Lulworth Estate, seemingly did alter visitor behaviour compared to 2020, and reassured local communities. There was still considerable pressure on the natural environment, but at least it was better managed in 2021 compared to 2020.
- It was bedlam totally disorganised and unpoliced. People parking illegally and overnight camping everywhere. No one stopped it. Emergency services couldn't get through and neither could public transport. In a medical emergency lives could have been lost because of traffic congestion.
- Found all the advice very helpful.
- Failure to take action regarding unauthorised camp site swung balance too far against environment.
- Not very much aware of the Council's work in these areas. Council achievements could be more widely publicised.

END