

**Annual Meeting of Council  
12 May 2022**

**Questions submitted by Councillors**

**Question 1 – submitted by Cllr Maria Roe**

In May 2019 Dorset Council declared not only a climate change emergency but also an ecological emergency. Dorset Council has many opportunities to show leadership on strengthening and protecting the natural environment.

Since November 2019 I have been trying to find out what Dorset Council's policy is on the use of glyphosate. I have had many discussions and emails with officers and I have had many different and conflicting responses. Some officers tell me that glyphosate is only used under statute to maintain hard surfaces and highways and used in exceptional circumstances to control pervasive weeds such as Japanese knotweed.

In November 2021 at the Places and Resources Scrutiny Committee the Climate Change & Ecological Emergency Strategy Progress report stated definitively that glyphosate will now only be used as a management tool for highway verges. However, this is quite clearly not the case as glyphosate is used on SANGs quite liberally. Where I live it has been sprayed down by the riverbank, around drain covers, 2 foot strips around a children's play area, around information boards, around the base of trees. I have been told that using Roundup ProVantage, which is readily available in supermarkets, will not have an adverse impact on bees and other insects, animals, or people. The last email I received stated that the Roundup herbicide has been one of the most trusted herbicides in the world for more than 35 years.

The reality is that it is highly toxic, and the science is being undermined. In 2020 and 2021 a landmark court cases have been taking place in the United States against Monsanto and the new owner Bayer. Settlements of 100,000 Roundup lawsuits of \$10.9 billion and \$2 billion for personal injury have been made for people suffering from cancer.

Professor Dave Goulson from the School of Life Sciences at the University of Sussex has for many years warned of the dangers of using glyphosate. The University of Birmingham published research in December 2020 where they tested keystone species and found that even at approved regulatory levels glyphosate causes significant DNA damage, embryonic development failure and interferes with the metabolism and gut function of animals.

My question is - what is Dorset Council's policy on the use of glyphosate?

**Response by Cllr Ray Bryan**

Dorset Council take the health of our residents seriously and complies with all current National regulations and guidelines in the use of glyphosate. We actively aim to reduce herbicide use and to use mechanical control methods wherever practicable.

**Supplementary Question - Cllr Maria Roe**

Many councils have stopped using Roundup because of the ecological emergency. Governments are notoriously behind the curve recognising dangers – you only have to look back at the 1960s and 1970s to see how powerful the tobacco industry used

to be. Think about how asbestos used to be thought of as safe, and more recently the deadly cladding on Grenfell tower.

But, we have a growing body of caselaw from the United States and most importantly we have the scientific evidence to show us how harmful glyphosate is.

My question requires a yes or no answer. Is Dorset Council willing to risk a law suit for using glyphosate?

**Cllr Ray Bryan** advised he would speak to the Legal Team and respond in due course.

## **Question 2 – submitted by Cllr Kelvin Clayton**

The Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy states that it “has a key role in lobbying government for clear policy and financial support required for the transition to a zero-carbon future”. The Notice of Motion, proposed by the Leader of the Council, and approved at the last Council, calls for the Council to urge “the Government to introduce an energy policy with the principal objective of securing 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”. Unless the latter is restricted zero-carbon energy, how does it intend to do both?

### **Response by Cllr Ray Bryan**

The motion presented by the Leader and approved at last Full Council is not in conflict with the Climate Strategy. We are recognising that there is a need for a period of transition from a reliance on fossil fuels to an energy network that is fully resourced by renewable energy. It is clear that industrial and manufacturing machinery, transport and many other aspects of our daily lives will require oil-based products for a period of time until a transition can be made to alternatives. With current uncertainties and reliance on oil and gas from other countries it makes sense for our country to become more self-sufficient in this regard.

Following the debate at the last Full Council meeting, the Council Leader wrote to The Rt Hon Greg Hands MP, Minister of State for Energy, Clean Growth & Climate Change expressing the need for energy self-sufficiency utilising whatever forms of energy generation sourced from within the UK as are necessary to this end, including wind, solar and hydrogen. This letter emphasised the need for government to meet its declared 2050 net zero carbon target.

Following COP 26 in Glasgow last year I sent a letter to central government expressing amongst other things the need for processes to be simplified to encourage the development of more renewable energy installations in the UK. I pointed out that it is unnecessarily difficult to set up solar arrays, wind farms, and tidal power generation in terms of bureaucracy, funding, and physical infrastructure and that we wanted the government to remove these barriers and empower councils to make their own decisions on how best to address their energy needs.

We are actively lobbying government to encourage renewable energy development but recognising that a period of transition will be necessary to meet our current energy needs. This is why we have set a realistic date for Dorset Council to become carbon neutral.

Our intention has always been and remains to become carbon neutral by 2040 or before and for us to influence and support the wider county meeting this goal by 2050. The motion presented and approved at last Full Council does not change this.

### **Question 3 – submitted by Cllr Belinda Bawden**

Article 5.2(b) of the Council's Constitution states that it is the responsibility of the Chairman of Council "to preside over meetings of the Council so that its business can be carried out efficiently with regards to the rights of Members and the interests of the community".

Do these rights of Members include the right to speak in opposition to a Notice of Motion?

### **Response by Cllr Val Potheary**

I believe that this question is alluding to my decision to move to a vote after protesters disrupted our meeting on 14 April.

I take my responsibilities as Chairman of the Council very seriously. As required by the Constitution I work hard to ensure that our business is carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of members and the interests of the community.

There was a motion on our agenda to be decided on 14 April but protesters made a deliberate attempt to disrupt the meeting and to prevent a vote from going ahead.

I moved straight to a vote rather than adjourning to another occasion because I did not wish the protesters to succeed in preventing a democratic vote from taking place that evening.

Sometimes I have to make decisions so that council business can be carried on efficiently and that may include curtailing debate that would otherwise take place. Members might not always agree with my decisions but I do expect them to respect the Chair and to abide by what I have decided.

### **Question 4 – submitted by Cllr Alex Brenton**

Since declaring a Climate and Ecological Emergency in 2019, Dorset Council has made substantial changes to the way the council operates, working towards being Carbon Neutral by **2050**. There is a welcome expansion of renewable energy schemes, the transport fleet is changing the use and procurement of vehicles.

However, there is one area where Dorset is **not** preparing for a low carbon future and that is in Planning Policy and Procedure. We are still permitting new buildings which are not fit for the next 30 years. They are neither Carbon Neutral in building techniques or use by residents.

As a Planning Committee we are constantly told that we **CANNOT demand** Carbon reduction measures as we have **no policy, and we cannot have a Policy until the Local Plan is agreed and accepted and even then it is subject to Government Building regulations which may or may not encourage these measures.**

In our Planning Officers reports we have a nod to Climate Change – usually indicating whether there is a bus service or train station nearby, as though lower car use is the only solution.

If we can ask for biodiversity and environmental surveys, why can we not ask for a Dorset Protocol NOW which demands information before the application is accepted.

On: -

Building techniques which reduce wastage and excess concrete use,

Solar energy capture from roof tiles or garden array,

Passive heat systems – ground or air source heat pumps,

Rainwater collection and storage and reuse,

Permeable outside ground coverings (drives and patios)

Most Councillors on Dorset Planning Committees believe we urgently need a Policy on Carbon Footprint of all new buildings. **When can we expect this to be delivered?**

#### **Response by Cllr David Walsh**

Changes to building regulations are coming into place this year, which will introduce more stringent energy efficiency requirements for new dwellings, and further enhancements are due in 2025 when the national Future Homes Standard will be introduced.

We cannot change development plan policy without adopting a new local plan or separate development plan document, which has gone through the statutory preparation process including a public examination. The local plan programme is currently under review and a revised programme has not yet been published.

In the meantime however, officers are carrying out some work on what can be done under the current policy framework, with the aim of developing an interim position statement, based on existing national and local policies but seeking to take as proactive approach as we can.

#### **Question 5 – submitted by Cllr Alex Brenton**

Every new building involves more impermeable covered space increasing rainfall run off and every dwelling produces sewage. Natural England is concerned that mitigation measures to stop Eutrophication are not enough, In the meantime, planning permission will only be granted if Dorset Council can be satisfied that it will not lead to an adverse effect upon the integrity of a protected habitat as a consequence of the impact of nutrient enrichment upon water quality.

All properties in my ward drain eventually into the Poole Harbour basin. **Can I assume that as our pumping and treatment plant in Lytchett Matravers already overflows regularly and cannot cope with existing flows that NO New Buildings will be permitted in Lytchett Matravers for the foreseeable future?**

## **Response by Cllr David Walsh**

We have adopted policies for mitigation of the effects of Nitrogen on Poole Harbour, which allow development where it makes provision for appropriate mitigation of any adverse effects on protected habitats. Natural England has recently published revised guidance on nutrients matters, suggesting that the impact of Phosphorus on Poole Harbour needs to be considered, in addition to that of Nitrogen, and further work is taking place to work out the implications of this. Development proposals will be refused if they do not provide satisfactory mitigation but can be allowed if they do.