

Councillor Questions – Cabinet 4 October 2022

Question from Cllr B Heatley

Para 10.9 of the Cabinet Paper 'Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Budget Strategy' says that 'any decision to create investment zones in Dorset will be taken through the appropriate process, in line with the Council's constitution.'

What will this process be, and will it include consultation with and the broad consent of the residents of potentially affected areas?

Response from the Leader of the Council

I have responded on behalf of the Council to a request from Government asking whether there would be interest in an Investment Zone or Zones in Dorset. This expression of interest does not represent any formal commitment at this point in time by either Government or Dorset Council. Indeed I would expect to see more detail about the potential benefits of an Investment Zone for Dorset before we could make any formal commitment.

It is expected that the next stage will be for Government to seek formal expressions of interest but I understand that the turnaround for this will be quite short.

Decisions about matters such as participation in Investment Zones are executive functions of the Council. Our Constitution sets out how executive decisions are made, including the arrangements for prior publication of intended decisions in the forward plan, public participation and how urgent decisions are made.

My expectation is that before decisions are made we will engage with appropriate stakeholders. However, we will need to be mindful of the timescales set by Government and the need to strike an appropriate balance between engaging with stakeholders and not losing an opportunity, once fully assessed, which could be advantageous for the people and businesses of Dorset.