

**Full Council
20 October 2022**

Questions submitted by Councillors

Question 1 – submitted by Cllr Maria Roe

UK homes leak the most heat in Europe primarily because of lack of insulation. This costs people even more money and the cost of heating a home has almost doubled even with the recent government support.

People are having to make the choice between heating or eating. Health issues amongst the vulnerable and elderly will increase because of lack of heating this winter. In Dorset the most badly affected areas are West Dorset with 28% and North Dorset with 23% of homes insulated.

Upgrading homes with insulation is the cheapest way to solve these problems.

The performance report for Healthy Homes in Dorset over a 15-month period from March 2021 to June 2022 is as follows:

In Dorset 20 homes have had cavity wall insulation installed. 107 homes have had loft insulation, and 24 homes have had both cavity wall insulation and loft insulation.

Enquiries to Healthy Homes Dorset from the public have rapidly increased but more money is urgently needed from government. This is an emergency.

What is Dorset Council doing to lobby government so that the people of Dorset are supported to insulate their homes?

Question 2 submitted by Cllr Jon Andrews & Cllr Matt Hall

On behalf of your two Sherborne Town Dorset council members would like collaboratively to ask the following questions.

On February the 10th 2022 a section of a house wall was damaged on one of the narrowest parts of the 274-mile long A30 that runs through Sherborne. This caused a safety issue that needed to be fixed ASAP. The road safety team did an excellent job were onsite on the 11th and made the decision to shut the A30 and consequently the narrow Cornhill. The road was closed for approximately 2.5 months until the site was surveyed, and possible solutions were sought and scaffolding repositioned. The road is now partially open but after eight months the issue has not been resolved and temporary three-way traffic lights control the traffic causing huge delays on the A30. Unfortunately, this wall is part of a private residence and due to current legislation around confidentiality the details of any negotiation or repair has to be kept confidential.

This matter has caused extreme disruption to the people and businesses of Sherborne as it one of only two routes from west to east through the town and being

an ancient market town and one of the most historic and beautiful towns in Dorset with narrow streets, has seen large numbers of cars and commercial vehicles clogging up the streets as some of you might have experienced when attending the recent civic service in honour of the late Queen Elizabeth.

The public naturally are exasperated as to why this issue has taken so long to fix as we are now into the ninth month. I know the local MP has been asking questions and I would ask that Dorset Council firstly explain to the public all the negotiation with the property owner that have gone on. Also, why the Temporary Traffic regulation order (TTRO) has been extended until September 2023 and most importantly when work will start on the Kitt Hill issue?

Question 3 submitted by Cllr Jon Andrews & Cllr Matt Hall

Due to the ongoing problems on the adjacent Kitt Hill and the traffic control that was already in place it was decided that the major junction improvement work on the Newell in Sherborne would be brought forward which was a sensible suggestion. I have to say I am very impressed with the Dorset highways team for the effort and work they have put into this project so far. However, it seems that the anticipated finish date of mid to the end of October will come and go. This is not only frustrating the highways team but also local residents. I understand that during the initial stage of the work in August of this year, whilst excavating the site that an 11000-volt cable was discovered and luckily was not broken during excavation. This could have resulted in extreme injury or even fatality. This I am informed s because the electricity companies plans were not correct. I am now being informed that the electricity company cannot complete the movement of this cable until mid-November. Can the portfolio holder for highways update council as to when the movement of this cable will commence, and the workforce can get back to the excellent job they are already doing?

Question 4 & 5 submitted by Clare Sutton

On 21st September the Dorset Echo reported on Dorset schools' exclusion rates. The four with the highest rates were all in Weymouth and Portland, that is, ALL our secondary schools. Of these, the exclusion rates of the 'top two', one of which is in my ward, were 5 times the England average.

Whilst I completely understand that exclusions are sometimes necessary for the benefit of other pupils and the school as a whole, and that Dorset Council has limited influence in relation to Academy schools, there is clearly a pattern here. For all the talk of 'Levelling Up', I think we're all aware that Social Mobility scores for Weymouth and Portland are among the very worst in the country, and those who have read the Forgotten Towns report by Philip Marfleet and Jenny Lennon-Wood will have a better understanding of why.

In this context, my questions are:

1. What support does Dorset Council provide to excluded young people and their parents/carers to enable them to have a successful school life when they return to education?

2. What more can Dorset Council do to ensure that the disparity of opportunity between young people from Weymouth and Portland and their counterparts elsewhere in Dorset is reduced?

Question 6 – submitted by Cllr Kelvin Clayton

There has been much talk about growth recently. In January 2021, the Royal Town Planning Institute published a research paper *Net Zero Transport*. For a county like Dorset it provides a vision of the near future that has “net zero transport at the heart of its growth, while protecting and enhancing the rural character of its villages...and surrounding countryside.” Based on the idea of ‘15-minute communities’, “areas of growth are planned to achieve high levels of self-containment and facilitate local living.” “Car ownership is discouraged through the design of the public realm”, through the development of “integrated, frequent and affordable public transport on strategic mobility corridors” and through the repurposing of secondary country roads into car-free ‘living lanes’ that “enable residents of smaller towns and villages to access essential services, facilities and mobility hubs by bike without fear of fast moving traffic”.

Has Dorset Council considered placing such a vision at the heart of its growth strategy?

Doing so would, of course, require the total integration of its Local Plan, its Local Transport Plan, and its Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy. Is such an integration something this Council would consider?

Questions 7 & 8 – submitted by Cllr Belinda Bawden

1. Volunteers in Lyme Regis and Charmouth have been working with the West Country Rivers Trust to monitor water quality and liaising with water companies, the Environment Agency and local councils to investigate and mitigate the effects of excess sewage discharges. Since the ‘Citizen Science’ work of the River Lim monitoring group and the Lower Char Community Project got underway this year, unacceptable numbers of sewage discharges have been identified in the rivers and the sea and frightening levels of e-coli and intestinal enterococci have been reported in the sea. In this context, my questions are:

Could Dorset Council help us locally by engaging with the water companies, Environment Agency and river monitoring groups to ensure the best water quality monitoring processes are put in place, that any problems are swiftly investigated and that the mechanisms already requested (by a fellow river monitor to the Head of Planning on 12th October – see attached) in the planning system to ensure all natural and man-made mitigations and improvements to environmental health are undertaken to be put in place **before** applications are approved?

2. Would Dorset Council write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to urge the government not to scrap environmental and

health protections but instead strengthen them to ensure we protect and enhance our natural freshwater and marine resources to boost the opportunities for nature-based solutions to the climate and ecological crises and for the natural environment of Dorset, upon which the economy and health and well-being of our residents depends?