

## **Public Statements for Cabinet – 28 February 2023**

### **Questions from Cllr Karen Tippins, East Ward Shaftesbury Town Council**

#### **Question 1 Cllr Karen Tippins, East Ward Shaftesbury Town Council**

I have requested information from Dorset Council before regarding the s106 contributions that have been collected by Dorset Council (and historically by North Dorset District Council) designated for Shaftesbury. Sadly, I have received no updates on the s106 contributions now for years, this includes - how much has been collected, what s106 money earmarked by organisations, plus the outstanding values, and what has been spent to-date on what by which organisation. Previously, this information was made available to all Cllrs in Shaftesbury Town Council and Shaftesbury residents every quarter. Now there is nothing, no s106 communications received by Cllrs from Dorset Council and the public are very much in the dark as well on the status of on the s106 money, even though many houses have now been built in Shaftesbury and are now occupied. There has been virtually no promised infrastructure made planned, built and made available for the residents in Shaftesbury funded by Developers s106. Please can this be addressed by Dorset Council, please will you send this requested s106 contributions information directly to me? I do not want the data to be edited or changed by a third party.

#### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning**

Thank you for your question. Dorset Council has a responsibility to report on developer contribution activity through the Infrastructure Funding Statement which is a requirement of national Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations. In December, Dorset Council published online its third annual funding statement which sets out in general terms developer contribution income, expenditure and commitment. The response to your question requires a level of detail which cannot be fulfilled through the monitoring requirements set by national regulation. However, more detailed information can be provided on request and I trust you have received an initial response from the Officers setting out in some detail the position regarding developer contributions from major development in Shaftesbury. Further information can be provided if required.

Though Dorset Council may not be able to offer the same channels of reporting as predecessor councils, it is committed to ensuring important information is accessible. The Planning Convergence and Transformation Project which has seen six legacy planning systems come together sits at the heart of this commitment.

#### **Question 2 Cllr Karen Tippins, East Ward Shaftesbury Town Council**

The government is considering draft road planning regulations that will put pedestrians and cyclists first. A draft version of Manual for Streets from the FFT states 'for residential streets a maximum design speed of 20 mph should normally be the objective...' A default speed limit of 20 mph would be introduced on new or redesigned urban and residential streets under planning guidelines.

I cannot see that Dorset Council is implementing these changes either in their planning policies nor in the recent Cabinet protocols for 20mph.

The accepted DC protocol for road speed reduction issued recently by Dorset Council Cabinet appears to be expecting residents to justify reducing speeds down to 20 mph on some form of weighting system based on recorded fatalities or injuries or accidents; whereas, the government is not stating 'weighting' by fatalities or accidents etc, but stating prioritisation 20mph for all built up urban areas where the roads are mixed use - mixed use with pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. The government regulations are promising to place pedestrians and cyclists as the priority for pushing through change from 30 mph down to 20 mph speed limits for built up areas.

Two Shaftesbury Town Council East Ward Cllrs, myself and Cllr Yeo are trying to obtain agreement with Shaftesbury Town Cllrs at STC to put forward a request to Dorset Council to reduce the road speed on Allen Road in East of Shaftesbury estate from 30 mph to 20 mph; Allen Road is a mixed use road with many small children living on the road. Personally, I don't believe we Cllrs should be blocked by Shaftesbury Town Council or Dorset Council protocol by putting this request directly to Dorset Council and the assessment being made on 'mixed use' and not weighted by fatalities/injuries.

For example, I strongly believe the spine road, Allen Road or any new road on this estate should never have been adopted to be 30 mph, and without any information on the speed limits with adoption, I have to assume Allen Road is now 30mph. Please can Dorset Council re-think both its planning policy for new developments and its 20 mph policy Cabinet procedures to be more in line with the new push by government on introducing a blanket limit of 20 mph limit in built up/mixed use road developments? Can Dorset Council seriously consider implementing 20 mph through-out all the roads on the new estate East of Shaftesbury based on a revised imminent government regulation of placing pedestrians and cyclists as priority? And that all these roads are mixed use, with a high density of children living on the estate.

### **Response of the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment**

Dorset Council will actively promote the installation of 20mph schemes, where appropriate, on new residential developments. In line with our recently agreed policy on 20 mph speed limits, we'd be happy to receive any requests for the new estate East of Shaftesbury. The policy allows requests from the local Dorset Ward Member and/or the town/parish council.

### **Question 3 from Graeme Neale**

I have a question regarding the Councils proposals to double the Council Tax on second homes. I am a second home owner as I own a small two bedded property in Swanage.

As way of background I first came to Swanage with my parents in 1969 when I was 8 (I am now 61) and in 1994 when my wife and I had our first child we took him to Swanage and have been back every year since.

6 Years ago my parents died and, due to some money they left me, this gave me the golden opportunity to purchase a property in Swanage, a place where I have always wanted to live.

Whilst I would quite happily move down to Swanage from Harrow permanently, it is, unfortunately, not an option. Although I am retired, I have an aging mother-in-law living near us in a care home and a brother who suffers with Asperger's syndrome living in local care facilities. I also now have a 24 year old daughter who still lives with us, as she cannot afford to move away from home, and needs to commute to London for her work.

Last year my family spent 118 days in our second home in Swanage. We come here as often as possible. Either myself and my wife or my children with their spouse/friends. We spend considerable money in local restaurants and shops. Last year I employed a Swanage builder to put in a new bathroom for me together with some new decking in the garden and extra work inside the house. I have employed other local plumbers and workmen. We belong to the Swanage Conservative Club and the British Legion. We support many of the festivals each year and the annual carnival, all boosting the local economy.

I understand from the proposals that 2<sup>nd</sup> home owners can be exempt from paying the additional council tax by transferring their properties to business rates as holiday lets, and evidencing that alongside having their property available for let for at least 20 weeks in a year, it must also have been actually let for at least 70 days.....but..... I spend way in excess of that time myself in my second home each year but there is no exemption for me.

So my question is; will the council make any provision for people who love this part of the country, spend considerable time and money here but for very good reasons cannot permanently move here, or are we to be penalised just for having a home where we would really love to live permanently but cannot.

### **Response from the Deputy Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health**

Thank you for your question. Second homes owners cannot be exempt from paying any potential additional premium by simply transferring a property to the business rates list. I should reaffirm that there are strict rules providing a firm evidenced basis for when a property being let on a commercial basis as self-contained holiday let accommodation can be moved out of the Council Tax list and over to the Business Rates list which is set out in law, updating on 1 April 2023 this year. This is supported by the decision making of the Valuation Office Agency. If a property meets the criteria and the required supporting evidence standards are met then the property has changed use. The property is now being used and managed as a commercial entity with all that goes with that change. You ask " Will the council make any provision for people who love this part of the country, spend considerable time and money here but for very good reasons cannot permanently move here, or are we to be penalised just for having a home where we would really love to live permanently but cannot" What you ask is not measurable and is wholly subjective, individual to individual and I can confirm that Dorset Council are not considering such a provision. I would wish to highlight that we are not seeking in any way to penalise those who enjoy spending time in their second home with the Dorset Council area.

#### Question 4 from Arthur Schaefer

With regards to the proposed increase in council tax on 'second homes' will there be any exemption from this surcharge, for retirement properties which are age restricted and warden controlled?

#### Statement

Cloverdale Court , Anning Road, Lyme Regis DT7 3ED consists of 44 retirement flats . Several are classed as second homes purchased for the eventual full time habitation by the owner of which my wife and I are one. There are strict requirements and conditions imposed on any tenant or buyer.

- \* Minimum age requirement is 55+ years
- \* No families with children
- \* The property cannot be used as a holiday let
- \* Our flat attracts a 'D' band council tax of £2240p/annum with no discount applied and in addition a service charge in excess of £4000 p/annum

The suggestion that:

- \* Second home owners, because of the limited time occupying these premises, make no contribution to the local community is false. We occupy our flat about 5 months in the year, mostly out of season. During that time we use almost every facility in the area in support of our local traders, during their quiet period, be it shops, restaurants, theatre etc. Our service charge contributes by securing employment for a local workforce responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the building and surrounding gardens.
- \* That second home owner's place an extra burden on our emergency and local services is false. In fact the reverse would be true and the burden reduced due to the time period spent there. Carbon emissions at a local level would also be reduced
- \* That second home owners take, away the opportunity from locals, especially young first time buyers from purchasing local property, by forcing house price hikes is false. As the housing supply in Lyme Regis is desirable, limited and finite, the average market price is already high and will remain very high. Forcing us to sell our property would not reduce the price and future buyers are likely to come from outside the area.

The Levelling up and Regeneration Bill addresses in part an apparent housing crisis and will allow councils to consider applying a premium tax on second homes. It refers second homes as 'dwellings 'occupied periodically' but doesn't state what that period should be . Dorset council defines it as accommodation that is not deemed a main residence. Neither has considered whether exemptions should be applied in specific cases. Placing all second homes in the same category, without examining individual cases is wrong and unfair.

It is considered that Dorset council should exempt properties such as Cloverdale Court, which is a warden controlled retirement complex, age restricted with facilities geared towards the older generation. Properties such as these are incapable of making any contribution to the local housing stock.

## **Response from the Deputy Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health**

We are not currently considering any exemptions. The driving intention of this consideration is not to release additional rental properties from current second home owners adding specifically to the local housing market. The definition of a property that is furnished and no one's sole or main residence is not specific to Dorset Council and therefore not our definition. There is no required number of days or any inference to be drawn out of the number of days that periodically occupied means.

### **Question 5 from Dr Derek Tordoff**

" My wife and I are both aged 75 and have had a second home in Pimperne since 2006. Each month we live in Surrey about 20 days and in Pimperne about 10 days. We have to be in Surrey to help look after our grandchildren during the week but love to escape to Pimperne at the weekends. We are not a drain on Dorset's council resources, eg we have no children at schools and we do not use Dorset adult social care facilities. We contribute to Pimperne village life, eg I have funded, built and continue to maintain a car park for use by the village and by church attendees. We do our shopping in Blandford and Wimborne, we support local restaurants, village and church activities etc.

If the proposal to charge the 100% additional council tax is adopted we will regrettably have to sell up as we would not be able to afford it in our retirement, thus driving us out of Dorset. It would change the lives and/or have significant financial consequences for many people.

Has the Council considered other options, eg to charge the extra 100% only on new build or newly purchased properties which are to be used as second homes? Has the Council done surveys of second home owners' intentions and also done a full impact assessment of the new additional costs of the proposal, eg for schools, social services, bin collections etc ?

I would estimate that, should the 100% proposal be adopted, then approximately one quarter of second property owners would each either (1) find ways around paying the tax (2) let their homes on airbnb etc and pay business rates instead (3) sell up and move away or (4) pay the extra tax. Hence little extra revenue would actually be generated (c £2.5m pa) and minimal extra housing released. This extra revenue would be at the expense of other potentially greater additional costs for the Council, plus also losing custom to local businesses and making Dorset an unwelcoming, incompassionate county for diverse populations and tourism.

I understand that the proposed Bill if passed would allow Councils to add an additional council tax of UP TO 100%. A smaller increase of, say 50%, would likely be more effective with most second homeowners endeavouring to afford it, rather than finding ways to avoid it. This would generate more revenue (c net £4m pa) for the Council (together with some housing released) compared to a likely c net £nil pa for the Council with a 100% increase. Perhaps this could be tried in the first instance. Less is often more.

We hope that the Council will be able to find a fair and reasonable solution which balances the worries about the future of long standing second homeowners with the needs for additional Council revenue and more housing."

### **Response from the Portfolio Holder to Adult Social Care and Health and the Deputy Leader of the Council**

I am sorry to hear that you feel if passed the application of a Council Tax premium would impact your personal considerations as to the continued affordability of you maintaining a second home in the Dorset Council area. I am afraid that I cannot confirm that your assumption that many will face such similar considerations as evidenced. With 5277 second homes in the Dorset Council area there will be as many scenarios as to the decision making for each to have come to occupy a second home, the frequency of use and the financial position of each. Property and intention changes constantly and such factors as seeking to measure a person's intentions holds no measurable value as intentions alter. Once a decision is made on this consideration within the Regeneration and Levelling Up bill and Royal Assent is secured we will know if any amendments have been agreed and will receive any supporting guidance. I can provide my assurance that officers will highlight any final position statements. We have also as part of the recommendations built in a review period to evaluate the factual outcomes. We absolutely recognise the representations received and understand the value of all who pay Council Tax within our area whilst we seek to balance the revenue need of the council serving all residents.

### **Question 6 from Vicki Elcoate**

It's a year since the start of the war in Ukraine and it was soon afterwards that refugees started flooding out of the country and heading for the UK. We have many individuals and families in Dorset, staying as guests with residents here. We are hosting a mother and two young boys who left their home, husband/father and wider family last February, eventually arriving with us in May. Dorset Council has provided an excellent support service and funding to help us with their expenses and we appreciate the extra kindness that has been shown. However there is no certainty about the future of the hosting scheme beyond the first year. We have asked our MP, Chris Loder, for clarification about what financial support will be coming from the Government and whether there is a scheme for second placements, allowing guests to move onto other hosts who have volunteered. So far there has been no clarification. In our case the financial support has been invaluable, particularly over the winter months for energy bills. Our guests know that the offer is for one year and we do not want to add to their uncertainty. So please could Dorset Council tell us what financial and other support, or arrangements for second placements, will be provided for Ukrainian guests beyond their first year here.

### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Communities and Customer Services**

Dorset residents and community partners have provided a fabulous welcome for refugees over the past year. We continue to thank them, and you, for the care and support provided so far. In recognition of this and to support hosting to continue, Dorset Council has already been topping up the government thank you payments for hosts from month seven with an additional £250.00 payment per month and by offering hosts the £1,000 winter payment to assist with the impact and costs associated with hosting our Ukrainian Guests as well as the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

The government have recently announced ongoing support for Ukrainian refugees in its updated guidance [Homes for Ukraine: sponsor guides - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guides). As part of these measures, hosts will receive an enhanced monthly thank you payment from £350.00 to £500.00 for supporting Ukrainian Refugees that have been living in the UK between one to two years. To further continue to support hosts, Dorset Council will continue to top up the thank you payments to £600.00 per month for all hosts from month 7. We will be communicating this information to all hosts very soon.

Our teams have been hosting Webinars recently on housing advice and support which can be viewed on this link <https://youtu.be/QIWbzbB1Wis?t=1>. It includes information about how to receive support for your guests if they require re-matching to a new host. Please do not hesitate to contact our Ukraine Response team if you need further advice or information for your guests - [ukraineresponse@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:ukraineresponse@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk) or 01305 221000.

### **Question 7 from Helen Sumler on behalf of Dorset Climate Action Network**

*CPRE have published a report about bus services in rural England, "Every village, every hour - A comprehensive bus network for rural England", link [here](#). Does Dorset Council support the CPRE Every Village, Every Hour vision?*

### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel, and Environment**

Dorset Council is absolutely supportive of improving rural mobility and we're currently engaged in works with the subnational transport body to help improve connectivity.

We strive to implement the best possible bus services for our towns and villages within the budgetary pressures of Local Authorities and the Bus Industry generally.

The Dorset BSIP sets out our vision for the future of bus services in the area and we have already changed the way our socially necessary 'core routes' are tendered.

As Dorset's next Local Transport Plan is developed, sustainable and reliable connectivity will be absolutely key. Dorset Council can't fully commit to the CPRE vision as there are parts of this that can only be implemented by national government. However, only last month I gave evidence to the Transport Select Committee while sitting next to Chris Hinchliff (Campaigns Manager at CPRE). As

part of my evidence I gave my full support to the idea of hourly bus services for our rural villages.

### **Question 8 from Sandra Reeve on behalf of Dorset Climate Action Network**

'The original Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy was divided into 'Areas for Action' 'referencing, for example, Direct, Indirect (through services) and Influence & Partnership sections and these were backed up by detailed and target specific Action Plans. What has happened to these detailed Action Plans and their targets in relation to this new 2023-25 Refresh of the Natural Environment Climate and Ecology Strategy?'

### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment**

'The original Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy was divided into 'Areas for Action' 'referencing, for example, Direct, Indirect (through services) and Influence & Partnership sections and these were backed up by detailed and target specific Action Plans. What has happened to these detailed Action Plans and their targets in relation to this new 2023-25 Refresh of the Natural Environment Climate and Ecology Strategy?'

The action plan is being refreshed alongside the strategy and will be presented to Cabinet in March.

### **Question 9 from Tracee Cossey**

Why does the new Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy, now called the proposed 'Natural Environment Climate and Ecology Strategy (2023-2025 Refresh)' not account for longer-term planning beyond 2030 to reach the 2040 and 2050 climate action goals? Further, Is there a second document?

### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment**

Every mission and cross-cutting action within the document are applicable to the medium and longer-term, including into the 2030s, and milestone targets are included for the medium term (2030, 2035 and 2040). Emphasis on short and medium term activity is merited for three reasons (1) action cannot be delayed until the longer term, so the strategy emphasises the urgency and frontloading of action required, and counters the sense that activity may be delayed until the 2030s or later; (2) Given the expected rapid shifts in national policy, technology and delivery over that period, more long-term planning is more complex to achieve in detail owing to its contingency on those; (3) relatedly, national planning extends only to the window of the 6<sup>th</sup> Carbon Budget to 2037. For these reasons we have committed to regularly refresh the strategy in order to keep pace with that context, and this strategy aims to emphasise the significant the urgency of action required over the coming decade.

### **Question 10 from Tracee Cossey**

Why has the word 'Emergency' been dropped from the title of the newly proposed refresh document?

### **Response from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Travel and Environment**

The strategy has been retitled to align it with the Council Plan priority 'Protecting our natural environment, climate and ecology', which is one of its 5 top priorities. The Council Plan is the Council's overarching strategic document. The 2019 declaration is noted within the document, and the acuteness of the climate, biodiversity and resilience risks and urgency are clearly articulated.

### **Statement from Andrew Foulds**

I own a second home in Dorset and live here for around 16-18 weeks of the year, including in the winter months when holiday lets are empty. I love Dorset and have used my life savings to make a commitment to live in Dorset for a significant part of my time. I am happy to pay my council tax like everyone else (even though I make less use of council services) and spend money in the local economy (local shops, restaurants, tradespeople etc.) and make a contribution to the community. Family reasons mean that I cannot move here full time.

I firmly believe that the proposal to charge double council tax on second homes will have a number of unintended consequences:

- If this proposal goes through, I would expect (conservative estimate) that 25% of second homes would be sold, mostly to become holiday lets that would pay **no** council tax (small business rate exemption)
- A further 25% would convert to holiday let for part of the year or exploit other loopholes to avoid paying any council tax

The net effect would be :

- No increase (and potentially even a decrease) in council tax collected
- No significant reduction in property prices to make them more affordable
- No increase in the availability of affordable housing
- An oversupply of holiday let properties or properties that purport to be holiday let to avoid council tax
- An increase in holiday let visitors (**in peak season only**) who make little or no contribution to the local community and contain a small minority that misbehave
- No improvement (possibly worsening) in community life and vitality

- Loss of people like me who truly love Dorset and am happy to contribute to the community and to the local economy on a year-round basis

I am very sympathetic to the need for more affordable housing, but this proposal will do **nothing** to help with that. An increase in the availability of affordable housing will only be achieved by building more affordable new homes. The Council should be looking at policies and incentives to achieve that, rather than to fall victim to "the politics of envy" by increasing council tax for second homes.