

**Full Council
20 October 2022**

Questions submitted by Councillors

Question 1 – submitted by Cllr Paul Kimber

The Portland community are clearly very upset and disappointed by the headlines on the 16th of December regarding the future of the Portland hospital, despite the need to get the MIU reopened.

As the Dorset Council knows the Portland community showed their concerns, and reiterated the need for the MIU to reopen, by linking arms around the hospital.

Leading members of the Portland community recently campaigned for COVID vaccination clinic to be held at the Portland hospital. This was very successful, and again the feedback from the Portland community this was very well received.

The Portland hospital development unit has also continually campaigned for the Portland hospital MIU to reopen.

Portland needs a MIU when will this much needed MIU will reopen?

Response from Cllr Peter Wharf:-

Thank you for the question. As you know, I forwarded you an update via email in advance of full Council which highlighted that while the Portland MIU remains closed, residents are able to access the urgent care unit at Weymouth hospital. In my response I pointed out that this is a decision that rests with Dorset Healthcare, as the provider of the service. However, I did also say that I would raise the matter with NHS Dorset, and Dorset Healthcare NHS Trust, as the provider of the service.

I have since received this response from Dawn Dawson, acting Chief Executive of Dorset Healthcare. She states: 'There are no immediate plans for changes with the MIU position. We continue to try and manage the urgent care demand across the system in the most efficient way according to the resource available, vacancies and sickness levels, Weymouth Urgent Treatment Centre is the local alternative for residents.' Dawn also highlighted that the Trust was holding a listening event on 8 February to hear first-hand from local people and to try to understand the needs that may not be being met locally – not just from urgent care.

Question 2 submitted by Cllr Matt Hall

As Dorset Council moves towards a new Local Plan, will Cllr Walsh confirm that D.C. will use this time wisely to develop additional Supplementary Planning Documents such as a Householders Guide to Extension Design to enable a better understanding of planning requirements and a more consistent approach to the decision-making

process? Such documents are proven to assist Councillors, Town & Parish Councils, Developers, the wider public and Town Planners.

Response from Cllr David Walsh:-

The priority area of work for the planning policy team continues to be the local plan. If resources allow, informal guidance for applicants may also be prepared, though we are likely to be cautious about preparing further Supplementary Planning Documents at the moment, as the changes currently proposed by national government suggest that existing Supplementary Planning Documents will only remain in force for a limited period once the new system is introduced.

Question 3 submitted by Cllr Matt Hall

As the Kitt Hill situation in Sherborne rapidly approaches its first birthday with no current sign of a solution, can the Portfolio Holder for Highways please confirm what Dorset Council is doing to speed up the much needed and overdue repairs to the property wall that has so negatively impacted residents, businesses, and tourists for far too long.

Response from Cllr Ray Bryan:-

Dorset Council fully recognises the concerns raised by the Local Councillors in relation to Kitt Hill. Throughout this complex issue both Officers from Dorset Highways and Building control have made sure that the safety of the public has been maintained and the road is passable with traffic control. We have been in constant engagement with the owners, and we believe that the works needed will be agreed and more information will be given in the near future.

Question 4 submitted by Cllr Nick Ireland

With so many large commercial roofs across the county, could the respective portfolio holders outline what Dorset Council is doing to promote the system of prior approval for solar panel installations on commercial premises?

Response by Cllr David Walsh:-

It is recognised that Dorset Council has a positive role to play in securing a net zero future and our commitment to this is set out in the Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plan, a refresh of which is due to be considered by Cabinet in March. The planning system also has a vital role to play in supporting this, and Dorset Council is currently preparing interim guidance and a position statement on climate change, together with a sustainability checklist for planning applications and guidance for occupiers of listed buildings. With the agreement of Cabinet at its meeting in March, the position statement will be the subject of consultation before it is finalised.

The installation or alteration of solar equipment on non-domestic premises benefits from permitted development rights. This is subject to limitations and conditions, one of which requires prior approval in some cases, such as where sites are within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, conservation areas, or on listed buildings. Dorset Council must exercise care not to predetermine its position as the Local Planning Authority in considering prior approval applications when these are needed. However, through our pre-application advice service (which is accessible via the Council's website) we can help any commercial or business operator to understand what may or may not require planning permission and, where permission is required, will be able to positively advise on any proposals for renewable energy generation.

Question 5 – submitted by Cllr Howard Legg

Church Street, Upwey, gets flooded regularly following moderate or heavy rainfall. This has been experienced by local residents for decades.

The appropriate local authority, currently Dorset Council, places flood signs on the road, puts cones in place, clears debris and cuts escape channels for the water, all of which have limited effect and follow the occurrence. The latest example of this follow up action occurred in late January. No substantial works are undertaken to either prevent water covering the road or to drain it away before flooding occurs.

When can local residents expect Dorset Council to fulfil its obligations to manage this problem before the road gets flooded and to ensure partners such as the Environment Agency as well as local landowners do what they are obligated to do?

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan:-

Thank you for raising your concerns about the drainage at Church St, Upwey. Let me assure you that Dorset Council recognise that there is an issue here and that they are fulfilling their obligations to manage this problem. Colleagues from the Highways and Flood Risk Management teams are working with the Environment Agency to agree the next steps that need to be taken. The Highways team are currently designing a drainage improvement scheme that will involve replacement of about 60m of pipework. This still needs to be agreed by the Environment Agency, but we are working closely with them to obtain their support.