

**Full Council - 13 July 2023**  
**Councillor Questions and Responses**

**Question 1 – submitted by Cllr L O’Leary**

**Weymouth car parking**

Way back in November 2019 I raised the issue of the unfairness in parking charge disparity across this authority. I hoped one authority would mean one rate but that has sadly not become the fact. Weymouth is being particularly penalised by the new beach levy which is effectively a tax of geography. Why are we charged more because we have a beach? Visitors come across Britain and the world to Dorset to see our beaches yes but also our market towns, Goulds Hill, Sherborne Abbey, Wimborne Minster, Corfe Castle, Portland Bill and other non-beach related attractions yet we are to be penalised. Will the cabinet member look to scrap the beach levy and ensure a fairer rate for all across the county and instead re-direct his approach to filling car parks in Winter and maximisation current parking space areas.

**Question 2 submitted by Cllr J Orrell**

**Weymouth car parking**

Would you consider harmonising the parking rates across Dorset car parks, and using the revenue to support more public buses?

**Question 3 – submitted by Cllr Ryan Hope**

**Weymouth car parking**

The new pricing structure for Dorset Council Car Park is a complete U-turn from the 2019 manifesto to unify the charging structure across the county which was announced in November 2021. As per Dorset Councils press release dated 29th March “An increase in the cost of parking in Dorset Council’s car parks will be limited to busy tourist areas. The rates will be seasonal, with some only increasing for the spring/summer period.”

Can the cabinet for Highways, Travel and Environment Cllr Ray Bran please explain why this U-turn has taken place?

**Response to questions 1 – 3 from Cllr R Bryan**

The Dorset Council area is unique in its makeup, having very rural and isolated locations, several market towns and popular beach locations; that attract a huge increase of visitor numbers to the area. The introduction of the 3-level charging scheme that was brought in last year supports these differing geographies and the number of customers who park in each area. These proposals were subject to full member engagement at every stage.

The increase in level 3 car park charges builds on the 3-level charging scheme. The 3-levels remains, however now there is a focus on tourist destinations, thus in Weymouth there is a higher tariff in Pavilion, Swannery, Melcombe Regis, Park Street, Lodmoor and Beach car parks. To protect local residents from the higher tariff, The Nothe, Council Offices, Governors Lane, Cosens Quay and Royal Yard car parks remain at the level 2 tariff (493 spaces). This is the same tariff as our market towns such as Dorchester, Wareham and Wimborne.

The other level 3 locations (Portland, Lyme Regis, Charmouth, West Bexington and West Bay) have had the same tariff increase as Weymouth level 3 car parks this year, however unlike Weymouth, these locations do not have the benefit of level 2 car parks for local residents.

There does not appear to be a reduction in car park usage in Weymouth since the charges were increased. As with all changes, we monitor impact on the local area. The new machines we have installed will enable us to analyse any change in use, and we will make amendments to the tariff if proved necessary.

Previously, Weymouth residents did not have the benefit of a short stay permit and would have to pay the full tariff all year for their short visits. Hence a permit was introduced to support residents when making quick visits to the car parks, whether this be for the shops, dog walks, sea swims or medical appointments. The Short Stay permit which allows 2 hours parking every day, is £78 a year, which is the equivalent to £1.50 a week.

We have introduced a maintenance plan for our car parks, this includes cyclical vegetation maintenance work, lighting inspections and improvements and ground works. We have recently completed surface works at Overcombe and Beach car parks and have invested in new machines in all our car parks. We will be carrying out relining works and further surface works.

The pricing structure means that the longer you stay the cheaper the parking is per hour, i.e. For 1 hour it is £3 and for 4 hours £7.50 or £1.87 per hour, 10 hours is £1.50 an hour. Parking remains free from 6pm – 8am. In comparison, in Bournemouth it is £3.30 for one an hour whether you park for 1 hour or 4 hours and is this rate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We have also introduced a rollover tariff, this means that if a customer parks at 5pm and pays for 3 hours parking on one day, they can stay until 10am the following day, as the free overnight period is included in the ticket. Thus a 10 hour ticket gives you a 24 hour stay at no extra cost (This does not include Chesil and Portland that are 24 hour charging car parks and motorhomes as they are not permitted in car parks after 10pm).

The only out of town car park in Weymouth is the Park & Ride, which remains free to park but you pay for your bus fare. First Bus run a commercial service with their local service 2. It is usual procedure for additional buses to run from the park and ride for the summer period to cope with demand. The level 2 tariff car parks in Weymouth are in the centre of town. During the Summer months, visitors are directed to the Swannery car park, so that is filled first.

We have been looking into alternative ways that our car parks can raise revenue, using some of the spare capacity. There are limits due to legislation, however there are some options that we are currently exploring which could fund additional Public Transport in the area.

Our market towns do not have the increased footfall that the coastal towns benefit from and rely on business from residents only. The new charges are aimed at the visitors and there is provision for residents of Weymouth to use car parks that have the same tariff as the market towns. Residents also have access to two car park permits, which provide better value if the holder uses our car parks regularly.

I am always happy to continue to meet with representatives of the Town Council in Weymouth and I have asked the Director of Highways to contact the Town Clerk.

#### **Question 4 – submitted by Cllr S Jespersen**

##### **HGVs**

From May 31<sup>st</sup> the government has approved the use of longer semi-trailer HGVs on British roads. These vehicles can be 2metres longer than standard size HGVs. The expectation is that these longer vehicles will move the same volume of goods but make eight percent fewer journeys, saving up to 70,000 tonnes of carbon and other emissions and generating up to £1.4bn in economic benefit.

But many of Dorset's strategic roads will not easily accommodate these longer vehicles and there is a real risk of damage to bridges, private property and verges, causing congestion and disruption to communities. In my own Ward beautiful, old Durweston Bridge, which sits at the junction of the A350 and the A357, is already frequently damaged by HGVs and it will, quite simply, be impossible for the longer vehicles to use this junction as it is currently engineered. Others in the Chamber will have similar examples, I am sure.

Dorset Council must begin planning now for these longer vehicles, mapping potential problem areas and identifying the necessary mitigation measures. We must also work with the Local Government Association to support their work with the haulage industry to make the use of specialist Satnav mandatory for HGV drivers.

Could I ask that this council moves swiftly to bring together the necessary expertise to understand the possible impact on Dorset's roads, to plan for the necessary mitigation measures and to set aside the necessary funding over time. Can I also ask that we communicate with communities to reassure residents that the council is aware of the issue and is planning for the future.

##### **Response from Cllr R Bryan**

There is no reason to expect more damage. A trial of these longer vehicles has been running since 2012. It is a design requirement that the longer semi-trailers have steering axles that mean the turning circle is no greater than the old standard length trailer. The maximum weight allowed to be transported has not increased. The

advantage is that they have 8% more volume saving 1 in 12 lorry journeys with a significant saving in emission and number of vehicles.

More detail is available from the linked government document:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/longer-semi-trailer-lst-implementation-guide-for-operators/longer-semi-trailers-full-implementation-guide-for-operators>

### **Question 5 submitted by Cllr D Beer**

#### **South Western Railway Consultation**

South Western Railway, under the instructions of the department of transport have launched a public consultation on the closure of railway station ticket offices to reflect the falling number of tickets sold in this way and to improve the service to the travelling public.

In practice though this will result in a massive reduction in staff presence at all of our Dorset stations to in most cases twelve hours a WEEK, spread over four days.

The effects of this proposal, should it be implemented, will mean that the public will not be able to access toilet facilities, waiting rooms, and stations will become far less secure.

Of equal importance, those with disabilities such as visual impairment or mental health issues will not have assistance in planning journeys, what tickets are on offer, or accessing the right train.

In our rural area a large number of people of all ages do not have access to smart phones, the internet or other means of information about travel, and many require help in purchasing railcards etc.

This measure, whilst sounding lovely that staff will not be stuck behind ticket office windows, but will be out assisting passengers would be fine if it were every day, for at least six or more hours, but three hours a day, four days a week will not do anything to encourage travel mode shift from the car, and obviously is totally against green travel principles.

What response is this council planning, to influence the consultation exercise and robustly defend adequate staffing at our railway stations in Dorset, with staff whilst present able to sell the right ticket at the right price to those who need help in these matters?

#### **Response from Cllr R Bryan**

We share your concerns where there is a clear disbenefit to people travelling on the railways in our area. In particular, the proposals to reduce staffing hours at Gillingham, Sherborne, Wool and Dorchester South stations. We don't think it is

appropriate for Sherborne and Wool to be without station staff on Friday and Saturdays, nor for Gillingham and Dorchester South to be unmanned on Sundays.

The lack of a published EqIA to go with the rail industry's decision to close all ticket offices is concerning as this would give us clarity as to what consideration has been given to those with protected characteristics.

We will be providing a response on behalf of Dorset Council expressing our concerns and would encourage others to submit their own response to the consultation, to reiterate the importance of the railway to our communities. Details can be found how to do this on SWR and GWR's website.

### **Question 6 submitted by Cllr P Barrow**

#### **Grass cutting**

I wish to raise my concerns with regard to the significant delays in grass cutting this year.

Dorset Council is ten weeks behind with cutting and this has led to a significant number of complaints from residents. My in box is flooded with complaints as is our local social media.

The main complaints being that the area is looking incredibly uncared for, there is an increased risk of fire, open spaces are inaccessible, the local primary school has seen an increase in hay fever, dogs are getting seeds in their ears and paws. I could go on, but I'm sure you get the picture.

I understand Dorset Council has changed its mowing practices and will in future be picking up the cuttings. This will reduce soil fertility to slow grass growth in the future as well encouraging wildflowers.

So after making changes to the previous grass cutting plans, to bring in these new practices, Dorset Council has a new plan, which it has failed to deliver.

I understand that the delay is down to mechanical failures and having to wait weeks for spares from Italy.

What I do not understand is why Dorset Council has got into a situation where they are at the mercy of mowers breaking down and slow parts delivery.

Dorset Council must have planned and reactive maintenance regimes in place for the mowers, what is apparent is that they have failed this year. Why were parts not readily available and why were there no spare mowers to use whilst the defective ones were being repaired.

In addition, why did Dorset Council not let the residents know what was going on before it became a real issue. This lack of early information led to residents

wondering if the grass was ever going to be cut and much speculation about the cause of the delays.

In conclusion, what lessons have been learnt and what changes have been made to prevent this happening again? Is the grass cutting team under resourced?

### **Response from Cllr R Bryan**

As Cllr Barrow correctly points out. The DC Weymouth team have had more than usual breakdowns this year and parts from Europe are much harder to source than in the last few years.

This has exposed a lack of resilience and despite best efforts the verge cutting has fallen behind schedule.

To recover from this situation DC has made a number of changes, some of which will have a positive effect now, others will take a little longer.

These are:

- Staff are working longer days and Saturdays to catch up.
- A cut and collect mower is being hired in from next week. Previously one was not available.
- DC is purchasing new cut and collect mowers from a different manufacturer and have a much better support network / spare part availability in the UK to reduce down time. To be delivered late July.
- An additional cut and collect mower is ordered for the Weymouth team. To be delivered late July.

These new and additional mowers/ longer working hrs/ hired in mowers are adding extra resource so the team can catch up and reduce down time. This is already helping the team catch up and will further improve when the new mowers arrive.

For the longer term, the team are working on a business case to add additional resource to the Weymouth area. This will help build upon these improvements, adding more resilience and shorten the time frame to complete each scheduled cut.

As we are collecting all the verge clippings, the verges are being left neat and tidy once cut.

### **Question 7 submitted by Cllr K Clayton**

#### **Biodiversity**

Since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 all public authorities have been under a statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Authorities have until 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 to formulate their compliance plans. When will this council receive a report outlining the actions we will be taking to comply with this duty?

### **Response by Cllr R Bryan**

The Environment Act, which passed into law in 2021, enhances the authority's existing biodiversity responsibility first introduced in 2006 by the Natural Environment and

Rural Communities (NERC) Act. It does this by requiring planning authorities to 'conserve and *enhance* biodiversity' rather than just 'conserve' as previously and by requiring authorities to report on their actions to meet this duty.

The government state that authorities must complete their first '*consideration*' of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024 with a view to agreeing policies and objectives as soon as possible after that date. However, we are still awaiting clarification from central government on the format and content for some requirements of this report. The report on biodiversity policies and actions will be published no later than 1 January 2026, as required under the Environment Act.

### **Question 8 submitted by Cllr L Fry**

#### **Recycling Centre**

Dorchester and the surrounding area has suffered for years with a poor quality recycling centre, nearby residents frequently have to put up with heavy lorries travelling past their houses. For health and Safety reasons the system grinds to a halt, with entry gates closed and all users ejected when containers need moving or full ones taken away. Queues build up and can wait for at least 30 minutes or so whilst staff in the centre make any operational changes necessary. A replacement site has been on the cards now for many years with currently no apparent progress on the issue.

As Dorset council plays its part in helping the environment and works to improve recycling rates across our County to have an outdated and inefficient centre does not help in any way and possibly encourages fly tipping.

There is talk of something happening in North of Dorchester, but this is unacceptable for several reasons, not least that there is a strong swell of opinion against this development happening at all.

Can we please have some positive action for a new recycling centre in Dorchester that will actually encourage more recycling and support our community please?

#### **Response by Cllr L Beddow**

It has long been acknowledged that the Dorchester Household Recycling Centre (HRC) is inadequate. This has also been recognised in the Waste Plan, which allocated some land at the rear of the current facility, and also suggested that an alternative site could emerge through the review of the Local Plan.

However, finding new sites for waste facilities is not an easy task. If we are to invest in a new, fit-for-purpose site, this would require significant investment - probably in the region of £11million.

As you will be aware, we are actively pursuing a new HRC and waste transfer station in the centre of the county, as a replacement to the existing Blandford site. This is

currently the waste team's highest priority in terms of business continuity and resilience.

Wimborne, Blandford and Dorchester HRCs are our smallest HRCs and all require development. Both Blandford and Wimborne HRC's need to be considered as part of the wider depot/infrastructure review that our Assets & Regeneration team will be leading on. This review will take into account property growth, commercial growth, and environmental factors in relation to climate change and for waste, future flooding will be a key aspect that will be considered.

As a unitary Council we have a great opportunity to maximise the efficiency of our infrastructure. As building a standalone HRC in Dorchester is unlikely to pass the business case stage, we would be looking to co-locate other services on the same site to maximise efficiency and strengthen our waste infrastructure.

Unfortunately, new infrastructure takes a huge amount of planning. Although no decisions have been made yet about which sites may be allocated for development in the Local Plan, we cannot exclude the opportunity that the north Dorchester development may provide if it is allocated.

### **Question 9 submitted by Cllr L Fry**

#### **The Prince of Wales School**

I understand that the shortfall in the funding of the Physical Disabilities Unit at The Prince of Wales School was first raised, formally, with Council Officers at a meeting in December 2018. Minor adjustments were made in July 2022 with the creation of a 'small school allowance' in recognition that underfunding by the Council has a big impact on small schools that pick up the challenge of providing a county-wide provision for children with complex needs. However, despite the school's protests, no action has been taken by the Council to resolve the matter on a longer-term basis.

Discussions were re-started in December 2022 with the arrival of Amanda Davis. I am told that progress has been made and that Officers are of the opinion that the school's case is accurate and fair.

The school has now submitted a deficit budget for 2023/24. This budget has been accepted by the Council. The school has taken action on matters relating to the mainstream budget, however, the majority of the deficit is agreed to be caused by the underfunding of the PD Unit. This deficit is likely to increase in the Autumn as pay increases associated with staff directly employed to work with Unit children come into effect. Governors of the School have voted to refuse new admissions until the matter is resolved.

What action are Council Officers taking to bring a speedy resolution to this issue and therefore prevent the closure of the Unit to new children as from 1st September 2023?



## **Response by Cllr B Quayle**

Thank you for your question regarding the funding of the base for children with additional needs at the Prince of Wales School.

I can confirm officers have been in discussion with Prince of Wales Chair of Governors, Martin Butcher an Headteacher, Gary Spracklen, regarding the financial position of the school. The school includes a base for children with additional needs. It was previously the site of a special school and therefore the environment is particularly supportive of children with additional needs. The site is currently shared with Dorchester Opportunity Group. There is an inclusive culture within the school that is well established through the school leadership and community.

In 2023, officers have had a series of telephone conversations and meetings with Mr Butcher and / or Mr Spracklen, both at the school and at County Hall, on the following dates:

- 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023
- 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023
- 25<sup>th</sup> April 2023
- 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023
- 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023
- 26<sup>th</sup> June 2023

In addition, Amanda Davis (Corporate Director for Education and Learning) spoke to Mr Butcher at the Chair's Briefing (for Chairs of Governing Bodies in Schools) on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023 regarding the work being undertaken by officers.

The aim of these meetings has been to understand the financial position of the school and to ensure support is put into place to help manage finances effectively. This is a standard offer for our maintained schools.

Vik Verma (previous Corporate Director for Education and Learning) had agreed to provide additional base funding of £17K. He also provided a further £123.6K to support capital build. This year Amanda Davis has approved an additional £9k, based on the formula previously employed by Vik, to ensure continuity of funding. She has also agreed to an additional £11K to support the costs of running the hydrotherapy pool, in line with other schools with this facility.

Vanessa Eddey (Team Manager in School Finance and Support) has worked with Prince of Wales to look at budgeting and spend. She has benchmarked against other similar schools to assess where the school could make savings. The areas she has found to be higher than other schools are as follows:

- Teaching Assistants
- Premises costs
- Energy – the school have been linked to the sustainable property team
- Capitation (pupil premium and sports premium and how they set aside / utilise these grants)
- Service Level Agreements / external consultancy

We are not yet able to agree to fund the pay rise that may be awarded to school staff. We are not able to do this for any of our schools as we do not yet understand the cost. However, we appreciate that schools are reporting that pay awards are likely to cause budget pressures.

There are other schools in Dorset that provide similar bases to Prince of Wales, and we must fund these fairly and consistently. Our additional funding for Prince of Wales to date, have ensure comparisons to other bases.

Our expectation remains that the school sustains provision for pupils, and we will continue to work with all our schools to meet the specific needs of children. The Government SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan sets out the expectation that, wherever possible, children will attend their local mainstream school alongside their peers, close to their homes. We know that Mr Butcher and Mr Spracklen are very supportive of our strategy to ensure children feel a sense of belonging in their local schools and we will continue to work with them and other schools to plan for emerging needs of children.

### **Question 10 submitted by Cllr R Crabb**

#### **Barton Farm Estate Footpath**

The main footway link from the Barton Farm Estate to Sherborne Town Centre is through an area known as the Secret Garden. The route takes pedestrians down to the new light controlled crossing of the A30 at Newell. It is the main pedestrian route to town for nearly 400 households.

When elected members were first shown architects sketches for this route a decade ago it was intended that the route would be accessible by those with disabilities and would be lit at night. It was therefore made a condition of planning that the footway would be built to a design and specification agreed by the planning authority. The planners now say that there is no record on file of approval ever being given for the sub-standard footway which has actually been built by Persimmon. Nor is there any provision for the footway to be adopted as public highway like the rest of the footways on the estate.

How can this failure of planning have happened and will it now be added to the list of outstanding items which are the subject of planning enforcement?

#### **Response from Cllr D Walsh**

The Council currently has an open planning enforcement case in relation to this site, and officers are looking into various concerns as part of this case, including concerns about the footway link, highways, street lighting and soil heaps. Officers have been in correspondence with Persimmon to seek to resolve the issues, and the Enforcement Manager will now be reviewing this case in consultation with the Highways team, to establish whether the issues can be resolved informally. The enforcement case remains open and the team will review potential options for formal action if it is not possible to resolve matters informally.

## **Question 11 submitted by Cllr R Crabb**

### **Platinum Skies Pedestrian Crossing**

Platinum Skies is a quite new development on the junction of Horsecastles Lane, Sherborne and the A30 main road to Yeovil on the west side of Sherborne. Residents need to cross the busy Horsecastles Lane road that has 3 lanes leading up to the traffic lights. Many of the people who live there are well into their 70's and beyond, so therefore find this extremely difficult, intimidating and dangerous.

The original plans showed a pedestrian crossing at the traffic light junction. However, for some reason these were not installed and I have no idea why not. This is so dangerous that it is highly likely that there will be an accident causing injury or worse. I watched an elderly resident cross these three lanes of traffic with a trolley. She was on her way to the bus stop that is on the opposite side of the road from Platinum Skies. She did make it, but I could see just how very dangerous this crossing is.

I met with the resident's association who explained that residents are very concerned indeed about this issue. I assured them that I will present their concerns to Dorset Council and help to identify a solution.

What are the possible solution to ensure that the crossing of this busy and fast road is safe for residents?

I look forward to hear what is proposed to alleviate this issue.

### **Response from Cllr D Walsh**

The footway to the south of the development has been constructed as required by the 2016 approval for the development, with an uncontrolled crossing point provided on the main road at the optimum position.

The requirement for a footpath to Bradford Road along where the grass verge was located was a requirement of the planning permission. It was accepted at the time and reported to the planning committee, that there would be no need to provide a footway north to the A30 as required by the Local Plan Policy SHER3. This is because the primary directional flow of pedestrian movement from the Extra Care residents and the Hotel residents was considered to be inwards to the town, and that it would be mostly vehicular traffic going north to the A30.

Notwithstanding this, officers have passed these concerns to the Highways team, who have advised that each year Dorset Council receive many more requests for small highway schemes than we can build. This means we need to prioritise to make the most effective use of limited engineering resources and public money. Our funding comes from central government, and is conditional on us setting out strategic objectives, consistent with the Government's transport policy, in a Local Transport

Plan and spending our money on schemes which go furthest to achieving those objectives. We therefore evaluate all scheme requests against these objectives.

Road Safety is the highest priority for Dorset Council when allocating funding to Local Transport Plan schemes. It is our duty to ensure that our funding is used where it will make the biggest impact and save the most lives. In response to the concerns raised by Cllr Crabb the Road Safety Team will conduct a safety assessment at this location.

### **Question 12 – submitted by Cllr R Legg**

#### **Hummer Railway Bridge**

Work on the reconstruction of Hummer railway bridge was completed in April 2022 but the bridge was immediately closed to vehicular traffic because of an argument between the Council and Network Rail over the specification and design of safety barriers on the bridge approach. The dispute centres on whether this is a repair of the old bridge or an entirely new structure. The bridge reopened to traffic in June of last year but only after the installation of a temporary barrier system and traffic lights for the bridge crossing. The cost of those works fell entirely on Dorset. The Office of Rail and Road were asked to mediate in the dispute but they declined. The Council and Network Rail are now seeking to agree on the terms of reference for an independent legal counsel to finally resolve the issue. The outcome is not academic. I am told that a barrier system for a new bridge, if that is what it is, is of the order of £200,000 and that doesn't include legal fees incurred to reach a final determination. The decision on what constitutes a new bridge or a major reconstruction of an old one in Hummer will set a precedent nationally that Network Rail will use in all their future dealings with highway authorities. In that case should we not seek the support of the Local Government Association, including financial support, since we are fighting this case on behalf of all highway authorities?

#### **Response from Cllr R Bryan**

Network Rail and Dorset Council are jointly appointing counsel to provide advice on the matters particular to Hummer Bridge. Once provided, the advice will be legally privileged and therefore not suitable for sharing in the wider domain. Had the Office of Road and Rail provided a decision regarding the applicability of the various regulations, or if we had taken Network Rail to court, then a wider precedent may have been set. However, as we are now seeking advice that will enable both parties to make informed decisions, it won't set a legally binding precedent.

### **Question 13 – submitted by Cllr Robin Legg**

#### **Pinford Lane**

Three parish councils, Sherborne, the Yeohead Group and Milborne Port (Somerset) submitted a joint application in March for a Definitive Map Modification Order to establish Pinford Lane as a bridleway. The route lies predominantly in the parishes of

Castleton and Goathill which are part of Sherborne Rural Ward. It has been a long-held ambition by the parishes to create a safe pedestrian and cycle route between Sherborne and Milborne Port avoiding the busy and at Crackmore Rocks dangerous A30 . Thanks to the tenacity and scholarship of Jim Hart, the recently retired Rights of Way Liaison Officer for Castleton parish, a documentary case for this route has been made. It has taken him two years of research in the Parliamentary archives, reading the records of 19th century Parliamentary Committees and examining the terms used in Acts of Parliament to extinguish different categories of rights of way in earlier Turnpike Acts. It is a unique piece of research running to some 120 pages of submission for the DMMO. The authority has recently reviewed the priority to be given to DMMO applications with documentary claims now only ranking fifth. I am told that it may be four or five years at the earliest before this application is even considered by committee. I understand and support the need to bring forward claims based on user evidence so that they are considered at an early date whilst claimants are still alive. However, I think it is important that Mr Hart's unrivalled understanding of this unique and complex application should be treated in the same way as those based on user evidence and given priority 1 status. Do you agree?

### **Response from Cllr D Walsh**

This Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) application was received in March 2023 and the Definitive Map Team Manager has spoken with the applicants to keep them informed of progress and potential timescales.

Cllr Legg is correct in that cases based solely on documentary evidence are ranked fifth in order of priority. However, the implementation of the new Statement of Priorities for DMMO Applications earlier this month has resulted in this application moving from number 260 in the queue to number 29. This means that at the current rate of progress it is likely to be started in approximately 2027. The Definitive Map Team has received over 200 DMMO applications in the last three years and now has a large backlog of cases to work through. Each case can take several years to resolve. The Team do understand Cllr Legg's concerns and greatly appreciate the amount of work undertaken by Mr Hart. If the opportunity arises to deal with this matter any earlier, they will of course begin investigating as soon as possible.

Cllr Legg is welcome to discuss the issue with members of the Definitive Map Team at any time.