

## Place and Resources Overview Committee – 5 October 2023

### Agenda item 6 – Questions from Councillors

#### Question from Cllr Belinda Bawden

Dorset Council has singled out Lyme Regis's front beaches as the only ones **not** recommended for inclusion in the restrictions to keep dogs on leads during the winter.

Excluding only Lyme's beaches will cause confusion to those visiting Dorset and surely maintaining the status quo was one of the aims to provide consistency across the Council area?

The recommendation seems to be based on a 54% majority, including visitors.  
**It flies completely in the face of the town council's request for an all year ban and from me as ward member arguing that the current restrictions remain.**

Our opinions were formed through local knowledge of our situation, our residents' and visitors' feedback and our considered views as responsible councillors. For example, on the doorstep I've received **only** complaints about dogs; my inbox similarly has heart-rending stories about the impacts dog behaviour has on my constituents' health and well-being.

The town council regularly receives complaints about unruly dogs and dog mess.

I am not the only person who feels totally overwhelmed, even as a dog lover, by the number of dogs on the beach and I would not be able to take my grandson on the beach if they are allowed to run loose again. He would simply not be safe.

I genuinely do not understand why dogs are being prioritised over our children and why, in the light of both local and national tragedies currently being reported in the press, Dorset Council would choose to put my grandson, my constituents and our visitors at risk in this way.

I am seriously concerned that this decision is based on a narrow majority which includes visitors, even though I had warned the team conducting the survey that there was a highly organised pro-dog lobby here, with several Facebook pages to push the case for dogs to run free on our front beaches all year round. I feared the 'Silent Majority' would not be heard above the noise of the pro-dog lobby, which also benefited from a prominent shop in town directing detailed guidance for the survey. It seems I was right.

This recommendation is based on a questionable assumption about the lack of alternative places to take dogs off lead and an utterly false premise that our beaches are not busy with families and children from October to April. We **are** busy all year round, particularly any sunny weekend, since Lyme attracts huge numbers of day visitors from far afield. Both councils' car park statistics prove that.

We have family festivals and activities all year round and attract more daily adult swimmers during the winter, since Lyme is more sheltered than Seaton, West Bay and nearby beaches in winter.

1. Please could Dorset Council provide the evidence for its assumptions to base a decision on such a narrow majority, achieved through an organised campaign and including visitors, deemed acceptable enough to justify dismissing the evidenced concerns of the locally elected representatives?

2. Can the PSPO consultation responses for Lyme split the 54% into numbers of DT7 residents and others so we can see how my constituents voted?