

Cabinet 7 November 2023

Public Questions

1. Question from Councillor J Andrews

Over the past few years residents have been asking for various improvements to highways and in particular people parking in an irresponsible manner even though there are no parking restrictions. I have explained the unusually long and bureaucratic TRO system required to put parking restrictions in place and I know that not only myself but officers and other members get frustrated by it. Also the cost to put TRO's through the system. For instance to put an additional 20 metres of Double yellow lines in place would require a TRO at a cost of between £5-6K and possibly 12-18 months.

Has Dorset council raised this issue with the DoT and could a fast track TRO for small improvements be implemented in the example above?

2. Question from Councillor G Taylor

My questions relate to the placement of our SEND children and Dorset Councils relationship to Coombe House School. I these questions of the Leader of the Council and was asked to put them onto this Cabinet agenda for answers.

I am clear and understand that we need to keep a distance from Coombe House School, as it is an independent school, while accepting that we do own the site and have invested in it. We also have a responsibility to ensure that we are placing children in a SEND facility that meets their needs.

I therefore seek:

- Assurances that if an establishment does not meet the needs of a child / children, that child/ children will be withdrawn and placed elsewhere or will not be recommended to the specific establishment regardless of the financial implications to that establishment. In effect that the financial viability of a SEND establishment is not a factor in the recommendation of the placing of a child but that the quality of support for the child is the over-riding factor.
- Assurances that all SEND establishments in Dorset in the independent sector are treated the same as Coombe House and supported in the same way as and if required.
- Assurance that any support we have been giving to Coombe House has been at no cost to Dorset Council and that the Dorset Council staff time that has been used in support of Coombe House has been invoiced accordingly. I appreciate that some of our support will be as a result of our responsibilities as the owner of the site however I am referring to any support that we have

given the to enable the school to function with the exception of those services included in the contract when the school was set up.

3. Question from Councillor B Bawden

I'd like to thank the members of the People and Health Overview Committee who listened to the Mayor of Lyme Regis and me when we explained the concerns we had about dogs being allowed to run loose on our front beaches.

I'm very grateful too to the Environmental Health officers who walked round Lyme with me so I could show them our other beaches offered plenty of space, especially at low tide, for dogs to run off lead without compromising the safety and enjoyment of our beach goers.

I'd also like to challenge the assertion made in discussions that the survey had not been influenced by an organised campaign in favour of having no restrictions on dogs in the winter. I have sent several pages of one of the pro-dog campaigns conversations on social media, clearly showing:

- A) The celebrations and claims of success that the campaigning originally achieved a 54% majority overall in the public consultation
- B) The influencing of people to lobby the Cabinet against the Place and Resources Overview Committee recommendation.

Since the publication of the survey results, many people have assumed that dogs can be left to run loose on our town beaches and sadly, some dog owners are abusive to our Enforcement Officers when they are asked to put their dogs on leads. Since the officer recommendation was changed at the Place and Resources Overview Committee, the town council's notices saying 'Dogs on Leads' along the seafront have been removed or vandalised in attempts to take them down.

The hostility meted out to me and to town councillors on social media is based on misleading information and is abusive, unacceptable and upsetting.

Worst of all, several people have emailed in to thank me for standing up for the 'Silent Majority' but asked to remain anonymous, since they feel so intimidated by the 'Doggy Lobby'.

I'm very disappointed, therefore, that Dorset Council did not publish the local residents' survey responses, otherwise the 54% in favour of the 'on leads' restriction to remain would have been in the public domain.

Another town councillor and I raised the point one of the PRO Committee members also made that in a survey where 62% of respondents were dog-owners, the results should have been adjusted to reflect the national average of dog-ownership, in order for the statistics to be representative.

Does Dorset Council really think it is fair and equitable to the residents of Lyme Regis and those visitors preferring dogs to be kept under control on our beaches in winter, to allow a well-organised campaign to influence the decision when nearly two-thirds of respondents were dog-owners and nearly three quarters voting against restrictions in Lyme do not live locally?