

PLACE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 5 OCTOBER 2023

Present: Cllrs Carole Jones (Chairman), Les Fry (Vice-Chairman), Toni Coombs, Ryan Hope, Val Potheary, Maria Roe and Roland Tarr

Apologies: Cllrs Tony Alford and Sherry Jespersen

Also present: Cllr Belinda Bawden

Also present remotely: Cllr Laura Beddow and Cllr Ray Bryan

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Janet Moore (Service Manager for Environmental Protection), Graham Duggan (Head of Community & Public Protection), Jane Williams (Environmental Protection Team Leader), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Joshua Kennedy (Apprentice Democratic Services Officer)

Officers present remotely (for all or part of the meeting):

Anna Eastgate (Corporate Director - Place Services)

27. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28. Declarations of interest

C Jones, L Fry, M Roe and R Hope each indicated that in respect of agenda item 7 'Report on the findings from the Public Consultation for the Dog Related Public Spaces Protection Order and draft Order', as a dog owner and following advice from the Monitoring Officer, they had been granted a dispensation, to allow them to take part in discussion and voting on the item.

L Beddow noted that she was not a member of the committee but indicated that in respect of agenda item 7 'Report on the findings from the Public Consultation for the Dog Related Public Spaces Protection Order and draft Order', as a dog owner and following advice from the Monitoring Officer, she had been granted a dispensation in relation to the item.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that each of the councillors making a declaration had received a dispensation for when the item had been considered by the committee previously (June 2023) and that the dispensation extended for the duration of the current Council term.

29. **Chairman's Update**

There were no updates from the Chairman on this occasion.

30. **Public Participation**

Questions and statements had been submitted from members of the public. A copy of the questions and statements submitted and the responses to questions provided, are set out at Appendix 1.

31. **Questions from Councillors**

Questions were received from B Bawden. The questions asked and responses provided are set out at Appendix 2.

In addition to the response provided to question 2, the Service Manager Environmental Protection noted the decision not to break down the statistics to show responses from residents and visitors and been made with the guidance of the consultation team and to simplify the process. A request had been made as to whether this information could be provided but was not available to date.

In addition it was noted that Lyme Regis was currently the only area with a winter restriction on beaches and that in harmonising this, it would be easier for people to understand.

32. **Report on the findings from the Public Consultation for the Dog Related Public Spaces Protection Order and draft Order**

The committee considered a report of the Service Manager Environmental Protection, which summarised the findings from a Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order public consultation undertaken between June and August 2023. Informed by the consultation, it proposed the new draft Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order 2024 (PSPO) which would replace the existing PSPO. The report outlined the provisions for the Council area for a period of 3 years from 1 January 2024 until 31 December 2026. The committee was invited to consider the matters within the report, make any comments on the draft Order and recommend the draft Order to Cabinet at their meeting on 7 November 2023.

The committee discussed the recommendations (provisions) contained within the report in turn.

Recommendation to Cabinet (including comments where relevant)

That the draft Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order be approved with comments and recommendations made as follows:

1.2 Proposed Provisions - generic provisions

1.2.1 Clearance of dog fouling and appropriate disposal from public open spaces. Page 7 of the consultation report and the proposed open spaces

listed in Schedule 1 of the draft Order. This received almost universal support (99% 2023), (97% 2020).

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.2.2 **Maximum lead length of 2m where required**, page 7 and the areas are listed in Schedule 3 of the draft Order. This received significant support (82% 2023), (75% 2020). There was some commentary suggesting that it should be considered on a site-by-site basis. A consistent approach is recommended as variations could be considerable and confusing to the public.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.2.3 **Dogs on lead as directed by an authorised officer, maximum lead length 2m**, page 8. This received almost universal support (96% 2023), (92% 2020).

Recommended for inclusion.

1.3 **Proposed Provisions - dogs on leads, generic locations**

- 1.3.1 **Municipal cemeteries, church and graveyards**, where dogs are permitted, page 9. Received almost universal support (91% 2023), (85% 2020)

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.3.2 **Public formal gardens**, page 10. Received significant support (80% 2023), (65% 2020). Some commentary was received on providing zoned areas and allowing off lead in part, however given the number of locations, this was considered a potentially confusing measure for the public and would require significant additional signage.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.3.3 **Council owned allotments where permitted**, page 11. Received significant support (75% 2023), (65% 2020).

It was noted that all town and parish councils had the opportunity to comment through the public consultation.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.3.4 **Council owned car parks**, page 12. Received significant support (92% 2023), (85% 2020)

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.3.5 **Within 5m of marked sports pitches**, page 13. Received significant support (80% 2023), (70% 2020). There was some commentary about adopting a non-blanket approach - considering the restriction only when the pitch is being used for sport. However, the risk of residual dog fouling near to the pitch remains a concern.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.4 **Proposed Provisions - dogs on leads, specific locations.** Page 14 of the consultation report.

- 1.4.1 **Rodwell Trail, Weymouth.** A well-used urban cycle and footway connecting the outlying wards to Weymouth town. The responses were divided, 48% were in favour, 24% favoured no restriction and 28% didn't know. The majority were in favour of continuing the restriction. Dog owners were less supportive of dogs being on a lead but 52% of residents responding were in favour of retention. DCN, Cycling UK and West Dorset commented on a cleaner and safer space since the introduction of the requirement to keep dogs on lead. This is a very popular location, and the Order should reflect the necessity to reduce the risk of fouling to as low as possible.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.4.2 **West Bay Harbour side and Esplanades.** Received majority support (61% 2023), (67% 2020). No significant theme identified in open text commentary.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.4.3 **Lyme Regis pathways etc. adjacent to the Front/Town Beach.** Received majority support (63% 2023), (68% 2020). No significant theme identified in open text commentary.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.4.4 **Weymouth Esplanade.** Received majority support (67% 2023), (77% 2020). No significant theme identified in open text commentary.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.4.5 **Swanage.** The Parade and adjacent roads leading to the Beach. Received majority support (60% 2023), (75% 2020). No significant theme identified in open text commentary.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.4.6 **Studland. Access to Knoll Beach and Middle Beach from the car park, including the car park and staircases.** Received majority support (57%

2023), (60% 2020). No responses were received from Studland Town Council.

Clarification was provided on the areas covered by the provision. It was noted that it was difficult to identify these areas on a map.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.4.7 **Studland beaches** are managed by the National Trust on behalf of Natural England. As agents of the land, they have requested that all of the Studland beaches are dogs on lead restricted. The consultation restricted the questions to just Shell Bay beach and Knoll Beach, to enable an area of these beaches to be restriction free in the summer months.

For Shell Bay beach (1st May to 30th September) the responses were divided, 49% in favour, in favour of no restriction 33% and 18% don't know. The majority was therefore in favour the retain the restriction. The opinion of dog-owners vs non-dog owners was stark. An overwhelming 84% of non-dog owners and only 30% of dog owners wanted the restriction retained.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.4.8 **Studland Beach known as Knoll Beach** (not including Middle Beach), (1st May to 30th September) The responses were the same as Studland Shell Beach above. This enables enforcement of the restricted beaches in the summer months to run from the entrance on Knoll beach by the National Trust Centre up to the ferry.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.4.9 **Studland – Ferry Road, from Studland Beach car park to South Coast end marker, Shell beach National Trust Car Park and access routes to Shell Beach.** Received majority support (57% 2023).

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.4.10 **Charmouth, Lower Sea Lane Car Parks and surrounding areas leading to the Beach.** Received majority support (56% 2023), (64% 2020).

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.5 **Proposed Provisions - dog exclusion areas, generic. Page 24 of the consultation report.**

- 1.5.1 **Recreation areas, including skateboard parks, tennis and basketball courts, bowling and putting greens, enclosed play parks, sporting or recreational facilities and athletics tracks.** Received majority support (64% 2023), (55% 2020)

Enforcement issues were considered and it was noted that a media campaign would be run following adoption of the Order. In addition it was noted that work could be undertaken with town and parish councils to authorise their officers to serve fixed penalty notices and provide training.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.5.2 **Marked Sports Pitches.** Received majority support (60% 2023). Restrictions to apply only when in use or during the playing season received only limited support.

Concern was expressed about the lack of signage and enforcement relating to dog exclusion zones on marked sports pitches and suggestions made that grounds staff could be trained to deal with issues in their area and separate areas identified for dog exercise. The Head of Community and Public Protection noted that these comments could be taken on board. Specific issues relating to Potterne Park and Lyme Regis could be discussed with the relevant ward councillors.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.6 **Proposed Provisions – generic beach restrictions – Page 27 of the consultation document. (Maps are produced to support the Order by clearly delineating areas where restrictions apply).**

- 1.6.1 **Fixed time period for summer restriction.** Continuing the fixed period of 1 May to 30 September for relevant Beach restrictions received majority support (51%).

Of those that did not support this time period (32%), 71% wanted the beaches without restriction between 19:00 and 08:00. BCP Council do not allow dogs on beaches at any time during the exclusion period so in retaining our restriction we have consistency across Dorset. There is potential for increased incidence of residual fouling and encroachment into the exclusion period.

A request was made for consideration to be given to allowing dogs on the beach during specific times in the summer period due to the economic benefits of dog walkers coming to Weymouth to use the beach. The Head of Community and Public Protection confirmed that this had been reviewed but it was felt to add complexity to the restrictions which could have an impact on the ability to enforce. However, this could be kept under review and considered during the next renewal process.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.7 **Proposed Provisions - specific beach locations**

- 1.7.1 **Swanage, Central Beach.** Received majority support (76% 2023), (60% 2020). No significant theme identified in open text commentary. Swanage Town Council had general concerns about dog fouling within the Town.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.7.2 **Lyme Regis, Front/Town Beach, summer restriction.** Received majority support (53% 2023), (47% 2020).

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.7.3 **Lyme Regis, Front Town Beach winter restriction (1 October to the 30 April) requirement to keep dogs on lead.** Did not receive majority support with 46% in favour of maintaining the restriction and 54% in favour of no restriction. (40% and 58% respectively 2020). Lyme Regis Town Council wanted an option for an extended exclusion period. In setting the parameters for the consultation, this was not seen as a proportionate choice.

Officers are concerned that there is limited suitable alternative space to exercise a dog off lead during the winter months. Officers have considered adjacent beaches and found them unsuitable as they are either slippery or unstable underfoot for those with mobility issues. No open green spaces are available without climbing a gradient.

There is no evidence of significant use of this beach area by families and children compared with other beaches in Dorset without restrictions, nor increased level of subsequent risk from dog attacks or fouling contamination.

The committee considered the provision and during discussion the following points were raised:

- The Service Manager Environmental Protection noted an error with the response figures from the consultation for the provision and that there was a greater level of support for having no restriction
- A level of support was expressed for the views of Lyme Regis Town Council that dogs should not be allowed off lead
- The consultation had been open to all and there was no indication that there had been a campaign to skew the results
- A point was made that councillors should adhere to the results of the public consultation
- The consultation was a worthwhile exercise to help shape officer recommendations. However, as the margin of support was tight in this case, the committee could follow the officer recommendation but ask for a review after one year
- B Bawden, ward councillor, spoke in support of the requirement to keep dogs on lead, outlined some concerns she had with the consultation and assumptions made and made a request for residents and visitors to be identified in the responses.

Committee members considered their views on the provision and there was a level of support for both including the provision and also not including the provision.

Following discussion it was proposed by V Pothecary seconded by R Tarr that the provision in the Order relating to Lyme Regis, Front Town Beach winter restriction (1 October to the 30 April) requirement to keep dogs on lead, be Recommended for inclusion in the Order.

On being put to the vote it was Agreed.

Recommended for inclusion

Note – Officer recommendation was ‘Not recommended for inclusion’

- 1.7.4 **Chideock, Seatown Beach.** No overall majority with 50% for and 50% against, the same as 2020. No representation made from the Wraxall Estate, the landowner. This is a long stretch of beach and zoning was suggested by a limited amount of people.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.7.5 **West Bay - East Beach and West Beach.** Received majority support (59% 2023). No significant theme identified in open text commentary.

Recommended for Inclusion.

- 1.7.6 **Charmouth, West beach.** The responses were divided with 51% in favour of the restriction and 49% wanting no restriction. The commentary was also divided in terms of support.

Recommended for inclusion.

- 1.7.7 **Weymouth, Central (except exercise area at the Pavilion end) and Greenhill Beaches.** Received Majority support (67% 2023), (59% 2020). Some limited commentary on the current location of the beach exercise area and relocating to the Greenhill end.

Recommended for Inclusion.

The committee thanked officers for the report.

In addition, a comment was made to recognise the pressures that the service was under, with four dog wardens covering the whole Council area and for Cabinet to consider during the budget setting process, whether additional budget was available for enforcement of the PSPO. The need for awareness raising and education in this area was also recognised.

33. **Place and Resources Overview Committee Work Programme**

Councillors noted the committee's work programme. The timing for the item relating to fixed penalty notices would be clarified following the meeting. In addition, councillors noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.

A review of policies was to be undertaken and prioritised for review by the committee.

34. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

35. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

APPENDIX 1 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Agenda item 5 – Public Participation

Questions received

1. Question from Councillor David Sarson on behalf of Lyme Regis Town Councillors

Response from Lyme Regis Town Councillors to the proposed removal of the restriction to have dogs on leads on Lyme Regis Front Town Beach in winter

Lyme Regis town councillors would like to make the strongest possible objection to this proposal which is against our recommendation. We ask Dorset Councillors to reconsider this decision.

The officer's recommendation prioritises the desire of a relatively small number of dog owners to exercise their dogs off-lead in winter on the front beaches over the need of the families of Lyme Regis and our visitors. The small sandy beach and the pebble front beach are the safe areas in Lyme for young children, the elderly and others wanting to dig and play on the beach, and paddle and swim in the water, without fear of being knocked over or frightened by dogs or finding dog excrement and urine polluting the sand, pebbles and water.

The front beaches are used for these leisure purposes throughout the year.

As a Town Council we receive regular complaints about the behaviour of dogs and their owners in the town and on the beach. In particular **people complain about dogs being out of control and frightening and aggressive to young children and older people.** In the light of recent dog attacks in the national and local news, it seems absurd to be removing the on-lead restriction given that most local people voted for a total ban all year round for the front beaches in 2020. At the time,

Dorset Council's PSPO to allow dogs on the beach on leads in the winter months seemed a sensible compromise.

Off leads dogs enjoy racing and playing with others and can become very boisterous. They also go into the sea where owners often throw large stones and objects for them to chase.

Lyme's town front beaches are well populated by families all year and are not appropriate for this.

There are two major considerations:

1. **The physical safety of people** (especially small children and older people)

2. **The other is the possibility of infection as faeces and urine are deposited on the beach**

Often it is claimed that faeces and urine will wash into the sea but the top halves of the two man-made front beaches are not reached by high tide so will never be washed clean by the sea.

The Town Council has a responsibility to deliver the best possible care to the people of Lyme and their friends and family, as well as ensuring a good tourist experience.

Given that the officer recommendation goes against the strong view of the town council and ward member, if agreed, will Dorset Council pick up the responsibility for cleaning the beaches and the public liability should any beach goer be attacked, injured or worse, by dogs off lead on our busy front beaches?

2. Question from Councillor Brian Larcombe

Lyme Regis' front beach is not an appropriate place to allow dogs to run out of control off a lead. - To do so is unhealthy and unsafe. While there may be other adjacent places east and west, even north, which may provide alternative areas, - whatever the area I would strongly advocate that dogs must ways be held under proper control. - Sadly, there have been recent and growing numbers of well-publicised incidents and some fatalities across the UK when dogs have been allowed off-lead and out of control.

Question: Over half the land area of the front beach over which LRTC has expressed its view that dogs should at least be kept under proper control on a lead, is pebbles and is non-tidal. This obviously means the dog mess left by dog owners is impossible to pick up and remove, and is not washed away by the sea, - the tide doesn't reach anywhere near this hugely used public beach area. Winter and Spring seasonal weather and seas produces steep slopes at the front edges of the pebble beach and sand which is unsafe for those with less mobility, and regularly has to be significantly re-profiled to make them safe. Once off the lead the dogs are effectively out of control and we've had complaints of dog nuisance and their bounding upon adults and children, attacking other dogs, and even urinating on people's clothes and possessions on the sand and pebble beach areas. - **If** Dorset council grants permission for this, what is Dorset council going to

do to remove the mess; what is Dorset going to do to directly manage the distress and nuisance factor and all related complaints, - and importantly the full liability for any and all unfortunate incidents as a direct consequence of their (Dorset council's) decision? - Obviously, the consequences, full obligation and liability will be Dorset council's *if* it grants permission for off-lead, out of control dogs, against the advice and view, the local awareness, and the first-hand knowledge and experience LRTC has of the area concerned. - No one wants to say as a consequence, and in the light of any serious event, 'we told you so' but LRTC cannot be held liable for a decision Dorset makes, against its advice and on its land.

Response to both questions from the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Communities

Thank you for your questions Councillor Sarson and Larcombe.

Given that the officer recommendation goes against the strong view of the town council and ward member, if agreed, will Dorset Council pick up the responsibility for cleaning the beaches and the public liability should any beach goer be attacked, injured or worse, by dogs off lead on our busy front beaches?

Over half the land area of the front beach over which LRTC has expressed its view that dogs should at least be kept under proper control on a lead, is pebbles and is non-tidal. This obviously means the dog mess left by dog owners is impossible to pick up and remove, and is not washed away by the sea, - the tide doesn't reach anywhere near this hugely used public beach area. Winter and Spring seasonal weather and seas produces steep slopes at the front edges of the pebble beach and sand which is unsafe for those with less mobility, and regularly has to be significantly re-profiled to make them safe. Once off the lead the dogs are effectively out of control and we've had complaints of dog nuisance and their bounding upon adults and children, attacking other dogs, and even urinating on people's clothes and possessions on the sand and pebble beach areas. - If Dorset council grants permission for this, what is Dorset council going to do to remove the mess; what is Dorset going to do to directly manage the distress and nuisance factor and all related complaints, - and importantly the full liability for any and all unfortunate incidents as a direct consequence of their (Dorset council's) decision? - Obviously, the consequences, full obligation and liability will be Dorset council's if it grants permission for off-lead, out of control dogs, against the advice and view, the local awareness, and the first-hand knowledge and experience LRTC has of the area concerned. - No one wants to say as a consequence, and in the light of any serious event, 'we told you so' but LRTC cannot be held liable for a decision Dorset makes, against its advice and on its land.

As described in the report, the recommendation for the winter restriction to be removed is based on the findings from the public consultation; a lack of evidence to substantiate the need to impose this provision; providing more consistency across the Council; and a concern about access for those with impaired mobility.

Unfortunately, an error was made in the report. The correct figure for 'no winter restriction' in the 2020 public consultation should read 49%. So, with 54% in favour of no restriction this year, there is more support for no winter restriction.

A question relating to an all-year-round ban was not given as an option in the 2020 public consultation.

Allowing a dog to foul without proper removal is an offence under the Order. Both the Town Council and Dorset Council officers are authorised to serve fixed penalty notices should an offence be witnessed.

Dorset Council is the 'principal litter authority' for the area by virtue of provisions in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and has the responsibility of clearing litter, which includes dog faeces. The Lyme Regis Town Council website already acknowledges this on its 'Waste and Recycling' page and directs users to the Dorset Council website. The introduction of the new PSPO will not change this.

Dogs must not be allowed to be 'dangerously out of control' in a public place, which means injuring someone or making someone fear they may be injured. This applies to any breed or type of dog. Owners (or the person in charge of the dog at the time) who allow a dog to hurt a person or other dog may be prosecuted and disqualified from owning a dog. Penalties are also available in situations where a dog is allowed to be dangerously out of control and a person is in fear of being injured even without any injury occurring.

Liability for any injury will rest with the owner/person in charge of the dog. Victims of dog attacks can claim compensation if the dog owner is found to have been negligent, which includes the inability to control their dog.

The Town Council is reminded that variations to the Order can be made if significant concerns about public safety arise.

Statements received

1. Statement from Mrs Cynthia Sharp

Re: views on the recommendation to remove the Dogs on Leads restriction for the Lyme Regis front beaches during the winter months

As an older (mid-70's) resident of Lyme Regis, I am extremely concerned about the possibility of dogs being allowed off leads on the sandy beach in the winter months.

I already witness many dogs along the seafront completely ignoring their owners pleas not to jump up, even though they are on leads, and on more than one occasion I have been almost knocked over as I pass them.

My balance is not good and, especially in the colder months, the sandy beach is one place where I can walk safely, alone or with my peers, as pebbles are difficult for me.

I recently saw one young mother yelling at her children as they were scrabbling about on the pebbles in the exact spot where a dog had deposited a dropping just minutes beforehand. Though it was picked up, the surrounding pebbles were wet and of course contaminated with the remains of the faeces.

The sandy beach is known as a safe space locally, and, particularly when the tide is in, there is just not enough space for families, people like myself and loose dogs to enjoy themselves.

I met a local single friend recently who had ended up in hospital after falling on a beach not far from Lyme due to a large dog leaping up at her. She was off work for several weeks and was badly affected mentally. I am very afraid this may happen to me.

There are so many other places to exercise dogs in Lyme including along the River Lym to Uplyme, along Ware cliffs, on Monmouth beach and on Timber Hill.

Please may we keep a few spaces for older residents, many with small grandchildren, where dogs are under control.

2. Statement from Councillor Caroline Aldridge

Recommendation 1.7.3 Lyme Regis Front Town Beach – proposed change in arrangements to allow dogs off leads 1 October to 30 April.

I strongly object to this decision and request that it is reviewed on the grounds that a relatively small number of dogs and their owners have been prioritised over the health, safety and wellbeing of the people of Lyme (and their visitors), many with young children and vulnerable relatives who use this small, sandy beach throughout the year to play in the sand and swim. This is the only sandy beach in Lyme.

I challenge the statement at para 1.1.9 that there was a good representation of respondent dog owners and non-dog owners as para 1.1.13 states that two thirds of responses were from dog owners. PDSA statistics from 2023 state that 29% of UK adults were dog owners. Statistics from the Animal and Plant Health Agency (2016-2019 being most recent statistics) show 25% of households owning a dog. That same agency has 2023 post code information for Lyme Regis (DT7) showing 0.22 dogs per household. It is incorrect to say that a survey where 62% of respondents were dog owners is representative of the local population.

It is untrue that there is limited suitable alternative space to exercise a dog off lead on the flat during the winter months. There is a flat river walk from the sea front to Uplyme through suitable fields and also flat walking from Holmbeach car park out to the land by Ware cliffs.

On what evidence is the statement made “ there is no evidence of significant use of this beach by families and children compared with other beaches in Dorset....” ? Families use it regularly in winter because it is quieter than in summer. Those with

young children and vulnerable elderly relatives go then because it is accessible and safe – dogs being allowed to race and play among them in that small area will destroy that opportunity for many families as they will fear being knocked over, attacked or pollution from the beach and sea being used as a dog lavatory.

As Chair of LRTC Tourism Committee, and latterly Town Management Committee, I have seen many complaints about poorly controlled dogs being aggressive, knocking people over and sometimes injuring them, frightening small children by grabbing their toys, attacking other dogs and fouling, with their owners often managing this poorly. We need restrictions to keep our vulnerable safe.

This consultation has focused on provision for dogs and their owners but has had no regard at all to the rest of the population who deserve an enjoyable beach experience with their health and safety needs met, this recommendation needs to be withdrawn.

3. Statement from Julia Lawrance

With reference to the latest Dorset Council consultation as to allowing dogs off lead on Lyme Regis front beaches out of season, I wish to voice my view that the current rules should not be changed. This is for a number of reasons, including child safety (some dogs very boisterous and out of control off lead, which leads to them jumping up on both young children and adults causing unnecessary alarm) I have had personal experience when playing with my 2 year old grandson when numerous dogs have come bounding up to us frightening him and jumping around barking. Owners often comment that they are friendly and mean no harm, but this really is not acceptable.

I have also noted in last year or two that many people have more than one dog, which increases the risk of harm when off lead.

Children and adults should always be the priority. There are two other beaches in Lyme where dogs are welcome to run free. Why is this not enough? Please take into account the percentage of responses from non dog owners and put in perspective with those that are.

I haven't mentioned the dog fouling issue, and the increase in risk of owners not being aware of where they are fouling when dogs roam free.

4. Statement from Councillor Rob Smith

I read with concern that

The one significant change this time is that the current restriction to keep dogs on leads on Lyme Regis's Front Town Beach during the winter is not recommended for inclusion in the new order.

I understand that from your survey, 62% of respondents were dog owners. What statistical modelling did you undertake to make your survey representative of the community rather than a minority pressure group?

Firstly, 54% in favour is a very narrow majority for a small sample size, and should not lead to an automatic revision of restrictions.

Next, let us look at how we could interpret these statistics:

If 62% of respondents were dog owners, and 54% of respondents were in favour of lifting restrictions, then we can estimate that at most $54/64 = 84\%$ of dog owners were in favour, and 16% of dog owners were opposed.

Now, if 25% of households are dog owners, then 84% of $25\% = 21\%$ of the population is actually in favour of "dogs off the lead", as opposed to 79% against.

I do not have the full statistics of your survey, but a rough calculation confirms what those of us in Lyme Regis know; the vast majority of the town are opposed to dogs off the lead on the beach.

The majority of dog owners are responsible people, but a few are not. And we have all had large dogs bound up to us with the owner crying "don't worry about him...." when we're nearly knocked over. This should not happen in the small confined beach area at Lyme.

There are real health and safety concerns about dogs on the beach which is a popular play area for young children. We have had reports of children digging up dog mess, or dogs urinating on sand castles. I urge Dorset Council to prioritise our children's safety over the wishes of dog owners to exercise their dogs on what is a small, compact artificial beach. We do not want to put children at risk, as this proposal will clearly do.

Lastly, I am sure that having dogs running free on the beach will have a detrimental effect on local businesses due to Lyme Regis being a less pleasant and less family safe place to visit in the winter.

For these reasons, Lyme Regis Town Council voted for a complete ban on dogs on the beach, and I urge you to respect their decision.

5. Statement from Mrs W Wilkins-Colijn

Please, don't go back to letting dogs loose on the beach in Lyme Regis.

A lot of people feel unsafe, including older people with dogs on leads, children and swimmers.

I'm an all year round swimmer and had so many issues. Dogs sticking their heads in my bag while getting changed, going off with my clothes and coming back with holes in, jumping on me trying to get out of the water, urinating on my clothes, the list goes on.

My grandchildren crawling on urinated sand..

And no it's not the odd person letting their dog do these things. Most feel very entitled to let their dogs do what they want.

In the last 5 years I met 3 persons who were polite, constraining their dogs and not run riot round me.

I know of people who gave up on swimming, it was too stressful.

And yes if they are allowed loose on the beach again I'm thinking of giving up too, as there are so many more dogs around now!

It use to be in double digits on that small peace of sandy sand (people use to take photographs) it doesn't bear thinking how many there will be now.

You might as well get stalls there, as on Croft's selling dogs collars etc

Please, please reconsider. Many people benefit from cold water swimming, don't let them having to give up.

APPENDIX 2 - QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

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?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Communities

1. The Public Consultation was promoted in accordance with our usual practice, including press and social media releases, coverage in local and regional TV, newsletters, posters and through councillor engagement. Direct messages were also sent to 117 residents who had either requested prior notification or with whom we had been in contact through the last consultation.

The Council has used many avenues to promote the consultation. In doing so, it has tried to ensure that the reach was such to minimise the risk of bias for any particular outcome. Locally elected representatives would have been able to make representation through the consultation process.

The 2023 consultation showed more support for dogs to be unrestricted in the winter period than in 2020. The removal of the dog on lead restriction would harmonise provisions for beaches over the winter period across Dorset Council.

2. This information will need to be manually calculated and may not be accurate as residents were not required to input their postcode. However,

the consultation and engagement team will endeavour to extract the information in time for the Committee Meeting.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.50 am

Chairman

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