

**Full Council – 13 February 2024
Public Participation**

1. Question from Penny Quilter

I would like to ask about trees at the Old Council building at North Quay in Weymouth, which is currently being demolished (permission granted on 20th July 2023).

- The felling of 6 trees at the front of the building was carried out at the end of 2023, ostensibly “To allow safe demolition of building “. The building is being demolished from the rear and it is unclear why it was necessary to remove these trees.
- According to the Tree Survey dated 10.02.23, 1 of these 6 trees was semi-mature and the rest were young, ranging from 4m to 8m in height and included species of Holly, Silver Birch and Ash. Only one of these trees was in poor condition.
- At the planning meeting on 20th July it was suggested that these 6 trees might be replaced by specimens in pots.
- I understand that Dorset’s tree planting objectives (and those in the draft Weymouth Neighbourhood plan) are to increase tree cover. I trust that the “treescape” will be improved on the North Quay site with an overall increase in trees.
- Historic photographs show street trees in the pavement opposite the site when it was houses. It should be possible to “thicken” the existing street tree planting.
This could be achieved as a planning condition for any future development.
- There are 7 mature birch trees in the car park area on the demolition site that do not appear in the Tree Survey (4 on the east and 3 on the west side of the main building). These currently have barrier protection.
Presumably, these trees are to be protected and retained.

Please can you comment as far as possible on the points raised and confirm that a tree protection and re-planting plan has been made for the site and more specifically confirm that the plan includes the replacement of felled trees with an appropriate, equivalent species, to be planted in the ground?

2. Question from Rob Cheeseman

There has been an expectation for some time that the **Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA L2) for Weymouth** would be published by now. Following interactions with Weymouth Town Council I understand there was a release date set for September 2023 following a briefing to Weymouth Town

Council from Dorset Council. This release failed to happen and a future date has not been given.

I learned in November that the report would be formally released following discussions with the Environment Agency.

Separate submissions by the Environment Agency (EA) to the Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in December 2023 as part of Regulation 14 consultation indicated that the EA were satisfied that SFRA L2 has assessed the current and future flood risk for the Weymouth Town Centre Area.

When will the Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA L2) for Weymouth be published and what is the reason for the delay in its publication?

3. Question from Arthur Schaefer

Will the council consider extending the period of exception if the property refers to a retirement home such as Cloverdale Court, Lyme Regis, which is subject to strict leasing conditions, i.e. minimum age requirements of 55 years, no children allowed and holiday lettings prohibited? Potential buyers are limited to a small niche band of people who fit the strict criteria and those who can afford the expensive service charge in excess of £4500 p/a. The sale of such property is difficult and often exceeds the 6-month period needed to effect a sale.

4. Question from Alex Bailey

"What a whirlwind 2023 has been for all of us! Despite the challenges, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who collaborated with me during that tumultuous period. Your contributions were truly invaluable to the campaign, even though my involvement has since come to an end. Unfortunately, Councillor Flower chose not to share the advice from Richard Wald KC publicly, and my opinion of him then remains unchanged – as reported by the Dorset Echo.

Let's now turn our attention to the future, specifically focusing on the current budgetary situation. We must consider the insights provided by individuals such as Weymouth Town Councillor David Gray, as well as the perspectives offered by Dorset's Lone Ranger, Councillor Gary Stuttle. Additionally, we should take into account the remarks made by Dorset Council's treasury manager, David Wilkes, regarding the concerning borrowing trends, with a total of £219 million borrowed and £7 million spent on interest to service external debt. These figures paint a bleak picture of Dorset Council's financial health, especially when coupled with the year-on-year 5% increase in rates for most households, particularly those in Band D in Weymouth. Despite these challenges, there are still some council officers and individuals in this chamber who maintain that Dorset Council possesses sufficient emergency funds.

We cannot ignore the dire financial situation faced by Bournemouth, Christchurch,

and Poole (BCP) Council, which is burdened with a staggering £1 billion debt. Given these circumstances, my question remains: What distinguishes Dorset ratepayers that Dorset Council consistently ranks as the third, and sometimes fourth, highest spender per head of population in England?"