

Full Council – 18 July 2024

Questions submitted by Councillors

Question 1 & 2 – submitted by Cllr Hannah Hobbs-Chell

1. The ferndown regeneration plan was signed off in January 2017. We have since been successively promised funding and delivery on this, and social media posts and news reports have gone out as such, but to date have had no progress. The plan of 2017 is now outdated and not fit for purpose, and arguably became so 6months after formal adoption due to a large part of the land being sold to Torbay council in August 2017. Please can council confirm what funding, if any, was/is in place to bring this forward, and to work with the town council to develop a new action plan taking in to account the revised needs of the town and the residents, and any revised budgetary constraints or opportunities?

Response from Cllr Richard Biggs

The Leader of the Council wrote to Ferndown Town Council on 9th July 2024. The Leader made a commitment to continue to work with the Town Council on plans for regeneration of the town centre. The Leader made clear in his letter that no substantive work is currently being undertaken by Dorset Council officers on regeneration plans for Ferndown town centre and that there are currently no budget allocations for this work, nor were any budget allocations made for this purpose by the previous administration of Dorset Council. The Leader also acknowledged that the 2017 plan is out of date and needs to be reviewed in order to provide a basis for any future regeneration plans for Ferndown town centre.

Question 2

2. The tcf works, as agreed and signed off by the previous administration, have hit ferndown hard, and residents have been subjected to a lot of disturbance from roadworks etc. In particular, local businesses have been very negatively impacted, and it has caused business closures, most recently the fish and chip shop due to trading volumes. Businesses are reporting that they have not received any support during this time, either through compensation, direct consultation or business rate relief. Please can the council confirm what business support has been offered or not, and can we learn from this for future so that we support our essential business and commerce sectors in Dorset?

Response from Cllr Richard Biggs

The Transforming Cities Fund work undertaken in Ferndown under the previous Dorset Council administration aimed to provide safe routes for cycling and walking, particularly for children. It is not normal practice for local authorities to compensate businesses that claim they are affected by temporary highway and transport works. We can certainly consider how to best to help sustain local businesses in the continuing work that the Leader has made a commitment to with Ferndown Town Council.

Question 3 - submitted by Cllr Peter Dickenson

Weymouth recycling and waste centre is a much used facility but is in need of modernisation.

Expecting users to go up 8 steps then unload their waste or recycling is both unsafe and out of date.

I would like to request that this council look into up grading the facility as a matter of urgency.

Response from Cllr Jon Andrews

Dorset Council has 10 Household Recycling Centres (HRCs). Many of these sites lack split-level designs and rely on steps for residents to access the containers. If a new site is developed, it will consider the site's topography to ensure it can be made split level. Having a split-level site not only makes it easier for residents to deposit their waste but also improves health and safety by keeping plant machinery away from public areas.

For existing sites like Weymouth that still have steps to access the containers, site staff assist residents needing help. However, converting existing sites to split level would require significant funding and changes to planning conditions and environmental permits.

The council has limited resources to invest in new HRC infrastructure. Therefore, sites that are in most need of modernisation have been prioritised. Currently, replacing the Blandford HRC and transfer station is the top priority. The Wimborne and Dorchester sites are also high priority for review due to space limitations and the inability to separate materials adequately for recycling. Although Weymouth's steps are less than ideal, it's not currently a site targeted for immediate action.

Question 4 - submitted by Cllr Craig Monks

In a recent Council surgery, a local resident in Beaminster asked me about the proposed actions of this Council in response to the pledges made during the local and elections, expressing keen interest in seeing a concrete plan to tackle the issue of pollution in the river Brit and the wider Dorset's rivers and coastline.

With this commitment to the residents of Dorset in mind, the Council would need to consider within its plan's issues such as what legislation or other relevant powers it might intend to rely on to achieve its aim of cleaning up Dorset's rivers and coastline, Other organisations or stakeholders that the Council would need to collaborate with to implement any policy, Projected costs to the Council and clear set targets, including timeframes, to measure the policy's success?

So, my question to the Council is: Taking all these points into consideration can the council share with us what progress has been made so far to tackle this issue and will this work be a stand-alone commitment with its own budgets and timeframes of delivery or within the Councils proposed nature emergency declaration?

Response from Cllr Nick Ireland

The Council is committed to protecting and enhancing our environment and has declared a Climate Emergency. There is a decision to be taken this evening about declaring a Nature Emergency.

From the declarations, the Council will continue to deliver policies and actions that demonstrate our commitment.

In relation to river and coastal water quality, our responsibility is limited as the regulator is the Environment Agency. However, locally we have good working relationships with the Agency and other stakeholders involved in protecting waters.

The Council's Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee will be asked to consider this matter and I'm sure will invite stakeholders, including the water utility companies to participate. From this work, there are likely to be recommendations with the aim of further protecting these vital resources.

Question 5 – submitted by Cllr Piers Brown

Could the Portfolio Holder outline his preferred options from the 'Horton Road Safety Scheme PRE-FEASIBILITY REPORT', including the timeline for delivery & confirm that cost will not be the overriding factor in the decision-making process?

Response from Cllr Jon Andrews

In response to the Horton Road Safety Scheme pre-feasibility report, I have asked officers to expedite a new and improved signage scheme at this location. This will be part of a phased approach which will allow us to monitor the effectiveness of these improvements over time and if necessary, we will consider more extensive highway measures. Officers will be providing the local Member and me with an update next month on the details and timing of this scheme in addition to their plans for how they will monitor the improvements.

Question 6 – submitted by Cllr Robin Legg

It's at least a year since the unauthorised development of a coach park at Loscombe Cross in the parish of Bradford Abbas first appeared. The matter is of grave concern to both Bradford Abbas and the Queen Thorne Group parish councils because the access to the parking area gives on to the crossroads of the A30 dual carriageway where there have been four fatalities in as many years, most recently on 20th February. I am told that a planning enforcement case has been opened reference EN/2023/00402. On the 4th of January this year I received an email from Planning Enforcement saying, "I will ask the enforcement officer to provide updates should there be any significant changes to the enforcement case". To date I have received no updates. Local residents are becoming exasperated at the lack of action when

there is an obvious and continuing risk of death or serious injury at this location by the unregulated use of this site as a coach park. Please explain in detail what action is being taken to bring this use to an end with a specific timescale in which that will take place.

Response from Cllr Shane Bartlett

Whilst I share the councillor's and community's concerns about safety along this section of the A30, I must be clear that none of the Road Traffic Collisions were attributable to the unauthorised coach park at Loscombe Cross. Following these incidents a Traffic Regulation Order to restrict speeds to 60 miles per hour was successfully completed and put in place by the Road Safety Team. I can also confirm that the enforcement case regarding the coach park remains ongoing at this time. As with all enforcement cases, action should be proportionate to the breach and taken when it is expedient to do so. Officers have been liaising closely with highway colleagues in considering this case, and are in discussion with the property owner regarding the material change of use of the land, who has sought the services of a planning agent to act on their behalf. A retrospective planning application has been submitted (as is their right) but did not meet validation requirements and the enforcement team are following this up with the owner/agent in order to seek a resolution. Further updates can be provided by officers once more precise timescales are known.

Question 7 – submitted by Cllr Robin Legg

The ground floor frontage of a late medieval timber house is located on the corner of Long Street and Cheap Street, Sherborne. The structure was first listed in 1950 but has been neglected for many years and is in a sorry state of repair. Last week the structure was damaged in a wanton act of vandalism. One of the oak panels was kicked in. What action will the authority take, including the use of statutory powers, to ensure that this historic structure is repaired and protected to be enjoyed by future generations?

Response from Cllr Shane Bartlett

Our records indicate that the Structure is Grade II Listed in 1973 and comprises part of a timber fronted house which previously was largely demolished. The building has been protected recently when works were carried out to the listed Buildings around the corner in Long Street, above the takeaway. The Structure has also been protected historically when works have taken place.

When considering buildings at risk, and any intervention through the use of statutory powers, the Local Planning Authority needs to have regard to the current state of repair, degree of risk to the building and that the owner is responsible for maintaining the structure in the first instance. Interventions by Dorset Council therefore need careful consideration and inevitably those buildings at greatest risk have to be prioritised. At present there does not appear to be a case for justifying the use of statutory powers, but I have asked officers to keep the situation under review.

Question 8 – submitted by Cllr Richard Crabb

Barton Farm Estate, Sherborne

The Barton Farm Estate in Sherborne a development of 344 houses by Persimmon is the subject of many failures of planning enforcement, incomplete roads, pavements and lighting and breaches of obligations under the Section 106 Agreements. I understand talking to colleagues that similar problems have occurred on Persimmon developments in Shaftesbury and elsewhere. How many breaches of planning conditions, Section 106 obligations and road making agreements remain outstanding on Persimmon developments across Dorset and please will you list those estates? What measures will the authority be taking in future to ensure proper compliance by this developer with its obligations and will that include ensuring that maintenance of public areas is under the control of residents?

Response from Cllr Shane Bartlett

Dorset Council is aware of the residents concerns over Barton Farm. Officers from the Planning and Highway Authority have met with the developer Persimmon Homes to agree a way forward to address the ongoing concerns. These meetings have been very positive and can I suggest that Cllr Crabb discusses the detail of his question with the Corporate Director for Planning. Can I also ask that members with a specific concern about a possible breach of planning control to contact our enforcement team, which can be done via the Council's online enforcement portal, so that it can be investigated.

Question 9 – submitted by Cllr Louie O'Leary

In July 2023 the previous council passed a motion condemning the Bibby Stockholm barge and calling for its removal from Portland harbour. This request fell on deaf ears by both the previous government and the Port. There is a new Labour government now and a Labour MP in South Dorset who was elected on the promise of removing this barge. The renewal of the contract for the barge is coming up shortly. Therefore will this Council re-affirm its stance and once again call on this barge which is a disgrace to Dorset and a blot on the Jurassic coast and call for this barge to be removed as soon as possible.

Response by Cllr Nick Ireland

My response to the Deputation received earlier detailed this council's position, which is unchanged from that of the previous administration, and I will be speaking to new SD MP Lloyd Hatton to see how how can assist us.

