

Cabinet – 19th November 2024

Questions from Councillors

1. Question from Cllr Craig Monks – Housing Needs

I am very proud that my ward is the home of Mountjoy school. Mountjoy school provides special education to children from across Dorset and neighbouring counties.

Many families who attend this school face significant challenges including housing needs when policies deem their housing choices unsuitable, leading to distressing placements in Weymouth bed and breakfasts, which result in difficulties such as disrupted education, long and costly school commutes, and additional financial strain.

Many families across the Council area face similar challenges but families who attend schools like Mountjoy face more extreme challenges including financial constraints due to higher care needs.

What measures could Dorset Council take to ensure that families with special needs, who are deemed homeless, can access suitable housing that meets their specific needs, even if this requires flexibility in housing policy?

2. Question from Cllr Craig Monks – Parnham House

Chairman, I wish to raise a concern regarding the timeframe of the process for the restoration of Parnham House.

To clarify, my question does not pertain to any specific planning application but instead focuses on the level of staffing, leadership and resources allocated to support the estate both within Dorset Council and other bodies such as Historic England as a consultative body.

Given the significant heritage value and the importance of ensuring progress, can you provide reassurances that sufficient resources and staff are in place to effectively manage and expedite this process?

Furthermore, what additional measures or resources can be considered to control and accelerate the restoration efforts as a whole?

And would the Portfolio holder meet with me and the owners of Parnham Park to agree a way forward in preserving the estate.

3. Question from Cllr Belinda Bawden - CTAP

Please could the Portfolio Holder for Place Services confirm when they are expecting to hear whether the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the Coastal Transition Accelerator Programme (CTAP) for Charmouth and Swanage has been successful, so when our local stakeholders, organisations and residents could be fully involved in shaping the priority proposals?

4. Question from Cllr Belinda Bawden – Dorset COP

The three Dorset-wide environmental networks - [Zero Carbon Dorset](#), [Sustainable Dorset](#) and the [Dorset Climate Action Network](#) – recently held the second [Dorset COP](#) when over 300 organisations and individuals were able to hear inspiring stories of community-based climate and environmental actions, ideas and aspirations.

Here's what was reported in [Dorset View](#):

Hundreds of people attended Dorset's second community-led 'conference of the parties' – Dorset COP – which was held on Saturday 2 November at Bournemouth University. The University's new vice-chancellor, Professor Alison Honour, opened the event alongside Lois Betts, the University's sustainability manager, recently elected local MP, Jessica Toale, and the Dorset COP organisers.

Jessica Toale said:

“There is no more profound a challenge or driver of global instability than climate change. While the annual climate COPs are really important international conferences, we cannot tackle climate change without local, community-level action.

“That is why this local Dorset COP was such a brilliant event – bringing together local people, businesses and policymakers to look at what the big issues are and how to address them – from renewable energy and carbon capture to the circular economy and sustainable transport.

“I will be working with change makers here in Bournemouth West to address some of these huge challenges – including cleaning up our seas and rivers, moving us towards a zero-waste economy and ensuring nature's recovery.”

While it was encouraging to see officers from the Sustainability and Electoral Services teams attending the COP, and the Low Carbon Dorset displays, "policymakers" from Dorset Council were in really short supply, even fewer than last year.

I'm happy to report that the perception of Dorset Council's action on climate change was marginally better than last year, according to those attending the Carbon Literacy workshop for town and parish councillors and community groups but this was from 0 last year to about 20% of the audience.

Given the clear, concerning and continuing disconnection between what Dorset Council is actually achieving and what some of the most engaged people in the county **think** we are doing, would it be possible for Dorset Council to undertake now to support next year's Dorset COP in Sturminster Newton with collaboration, communication and, crucially, participation?

[Dorset COP](#)

[Dorset Biz report](#)

[Dorset View report](#)