

Council Plan 2024-2029

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Welcome from the Leader

This Council Plan 2024-2029 sets out our vision for the future Dorset we want to see. It outlines our vision and strategic priorities, setting the council's direction for the next 5 years.

Dorset is rich in natural beauty, history, and community spirit, with a stunning and diverse natural environment. 85% of our residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live, compared to the national average of 75%.

However, we face some significant and complex challenges. The climate and nature emergency, scarcity of affordable housing, poor economic growth, health inequalities, and lack of social mobility.

These are challenges affecting the whole country and require significant investment and support from central government. Dorset Council and its partners have an equally important role to play in addressing them and improving the lives and wellbeing of residents.

Our strategic priorities are designed to address the key issues facing Dorset, while continuing to provide the essential everyday services we know people rely on.

Dorset Council provides around 450 services to over 380,000 residents. As a unitary council, the council has a wide range of statutory duties which are legal obligations set out in various Acts of Parliament. These duties ensure that we provide essential services and support to our communities. While the council will continue to deliver these essential services, the Council Plan is an articulation of our ambitions for the future of Dorset over the next 5, 10 and 20 years.

This Council Plan sets out what we want to achieve in the next 5 years, with an eye to the horizon; ensuring we work together to create a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable Dorset for current and future generations.

Cllr Nick Ireland
Leader of Dorset Council

Our vision

“Working together to create a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable Dorset for current and future generations”

‘Working together’ reflects how partnership and working together is vital to achieve the best outcomes for Dorset. ‘Together’ refers to Dorset Council, voluntary, private and public sector partners, residents, communities and businesses.

‘Fairer’ is about addressing the inequities and challenges some of our residents’ face. We need to improve social mobility, reduce health inequalities, support vulnerable people, improve access to homes for local people, and support inclusive communities.

‘More prosperous’ is about economic growth and creating opportunities for residents to enjoy a better quality of life with better outcomes.

‘More sustainable’ is about tackling climate change and helping nature to recover. It’s enabling communities to strengthen and become more self-reliant while adopting a preventative approach that helps people avoid crises. We want a more sustainable model for public services and a better quality of life for residents.

‘For current and future generations’ reflects the focus on where we want Dorset to be in 5, 10, 20 years’ time.

Guiding this vision are the underlying principles of **‘Partnership’** and **‘Prevention’**: we can achieve more working with others and through prevention we can avoid crisis.

Our strategic priorities

Our four strategic priorities set out where we want to make a significant and positive difference. They are:

- Provide affordable and high-quality housing
- Grow our economy
- Communities for all
- Respond to the climate and nature crisis

We will work hard to achieve each priority so we can deliver the best outcomes for Dorset. Our ambition is to work in new and more efficient ways, joining forces with partners when appropriate.

We will stand up for Dorset to try and secure more investment and help us achieve the outcomes our residents have told us are most important to them.

In 2024 we held a Big Conversation with our residents to ensure their voices were not only heard but their priorities were reflected in this Council Plan. The findings of our biennial residents' survey have also been used to inform this plan.

Provide affordable and high-quality housing

Access to affordable, high quality and safe housing is essential for our residents to be able to live and thrive and is a cornerstone of the future success of Dorset.

The challenge

Rising costs and the growing gap between average house price and average salary makes it difficult for local people, especially working-age residents, to afford to live in Dorset.

There is a chronic lack of genuinely affordable housing. Vulnerable residents, including those in crisis or with special needs, often struggle to find suitable homes. The standard of some rented accommodation is not acceptable.

Addressing this requires working with partners and strategic planning through the new Local Plan. We need innovative solutions that help residents access affordable, suitable, and secure homes.

Our approach

We recognise that increasing the availability of affordable homes to meet the needs of local people, improving existing housing stock, and ensuring sustainable development is vital to improve personal health, economic and environmental sustainability.

Working in partnership with the private, social and community sectors and developing our role will support growth and progress to meet these key housing objectives.

Supporting registered providers (also known as housing associations) is important and we value the new affordable housing they provide, and the good housing management and tenant support they offer.

In addition to this, we aim to broaden our role and the range of support we offer on housing. We will look to use our own land and assets to increase the amount of good housing supplied to residents, including specialist, temporary, supported and affordable housing.

An effective prevention approach is vital and makes sure that residents with priority housing needs such as homelessness can be supported earlier and are able find solutions which work well for them. This reduces the need for emergency housing or support services at critical times and provides better outcomes for people and families.

Target measures

- 30% reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation over the next 5 years
- eradicate use of bed and breakfasts for family households over the next 5 years
- maintain annual homelessness prevention levels consistently higher than the national average
- achieve the desired balanced position of a smaller but sustainable temporary accommodation stock over the next 5 years
- deliver 450 new affordable homes every year through the housing association development programme
- bring forward new housing supply of 100 new accessible homes and 90 larger family homes at affordable rents per year
- implement approved new models of delivery to increase affordable housing supply making best use of council assets
- deliver 100 new supported accommodation homes over the next 5 years secured through grant funding and support from providers

Key actions to deliver this priority

- improve the quality and standard of homes, either rented or owned, working directly with landlords. Support good landlords to meet and exceed minimum standards and use all enforcement options available where we find poor standards of housing. Any financial penalties imposed will be invested in supporting better quality housing
- prevent homelessness and move homeless people into settled homes quickly
- develop an Empty Homes strategy for Dorset
- implement new models of housing delivery that broaden the council's role and support to increase the amount of new affordable housing that meets the needs of Dorset residents
- develop broader opportunities to meet wider housing needs, including housing for people working in essential roles such as teachers, NHS staff and care workers, and local households on the housing register

Leadership and partnership

- the Home in on Housing programme, delivering the Dorset Council Housing strategy, outlines our leadership in housing. It sets the direction on how to deliver the right homes, in the right place and at the right price and is supported by senior council leaders, members and key stakeholders

- our strategic and operational partnerships continue to mature. Key partnerships with housing associations who own and manage almost 25,000 rented or shared ownership homes and build over 400 new homes per year are regularly supported by key leaders, members and operational experts
- there is regular and effective contract management with specialist providers of accommodation and support. This shares insight and opportunities to achieve good value. It ensures services which enable tenants with support and care needs to live well
- cross-council support and effective forward planning around key strategic plans (such as the Local Plan) and policies enables the most appropriate influence and support for developers and builders to provide the right new homes in the right place for sale or rent, including affordable housing
- strong working relationships with government provide us with grant funding, advice and support to deliver new homes and provide housing advice
- town and parish councils and community groups support understanding of local housing need, and the provision of new homes through Community Land Trusts, led by local people working alongside the council and housing associations

Standing up for Dorset

- ask Homes England and government to provide funding to build a greater proportion of 'social rented' homes, at reduced rents
- influence government, Homes England and housing associations for more support to meet Dorset's housing needs, and to understand that this is broad – including rental and low-cost home ownership options across a range of circumstances
- call on the government to review local housing allowance rates for temporary accommodation. With rates frozen at 2011 levels, this puts a disproportionate financial burden on local authorities and residents, as rents and costs rise

Grow our economy

A strong economy underpins everything we want to achieve. It will increase wealth, create more opportunities for people, improve living standards, and boost funds for public services. We will encourage growth, foster innovation, support businesses and help create new jobs.

The challenge

The Dorset Council area has a significant economy incorporating 20,000 businesses, generating over £8.45 billion of Gross Value Added (GVA - a measure of the value that producers add to goods and services they buy, and is a key indicator of a country's economic performance) and supporting 145,000 jobs.

Dorset's economy is based on fairly traditional industries such as agriculture, retail, coastal and marine, hospitality and leisure, and care services. There are also strengths in advanced manufacturing, maritime, defence, and emerging expertise in renewable energy.

Productivity has stalled over the last 25 years. Our economy grew by only 6% during that period, compared to 31% in the BCP Council area, 35% in the southwest and 43% nationally.

Large numbers of Dorset's young people leave the county to find employment elsewhere. Meanwhile, employers tell us they often struggle to recruit and retain people with the right skills. This challenge is compounded by high house prices and poor transport connectivity in some areas. Digital and mobile phone connectivity is unreliable, especially in rural areas.

For the past decade strategic economic planning, whether in the form of industrial strategies, strategic economic plans, or growth deals, has been undertaken on a pan-Dorset geography. These Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership-led initiatives were reflective of the shared economic challenges and sectors Dorset held with the BCP (Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole) Council geography.

In the Dorset Council area, we will develop and implement a strategy which is representative of its unique economic geography and specific business sectors. A strategy that considers an approach to growth regardless of location but also plays on localised strengths and opportunities.

Our approach

We recognise a change is needed to break the cycle of slow economic growth.

We need to support and diversify the economy by embedding digital technology across all sectors, investing in our advanced and often bespoke manufacturing sector, and making more of our natural advantages in clean energy, maritime and defence. There is a need to introduce scale into these sectors.

Bringing productivity up to the UK average would generate an additional £1.6 billion for Dorset, leading to higher paid jobs and greater disposable income.

We will step into the space vacated by the Dorset LEP and move forward into a new direct relationship with both businesses and government, set out in an economic strategy that is specific to Dorset. We will build a new set of strategic relationships with the business community that enables them to feed into the democratic decision-making process.

Target measures

- narrow the Dorset to UK productivity gap by 5% by 2029
- generate over 2000 jobs and over £500m of private sector investment in renewable energy projects by 2029
- increase total visitor-related spend in Dorset by 5% by 2029
- by 2029, create 1000 business start-up courses for 16 to 34 year-olds to encourage young people into entrepreneurship
- support community-led masterplans in at least 70% of the coastal and market towns by 2029
- a new delivery company for the Dorset Innovation Park will be launched in 2025, creating 300 jobs by 2029

Key actions to deliver this priority

- establish a new business representation group made up of local business leaders and relevant representative bodies and develop a tailored economic growth strategy for the Dorset Council area
- develop a strategic relationship with the Dorset Chamber of Commerce and support the development of local chambers and Business Improvement Districts to generate business engagement and intelligence
- focus our efforts on delivering a small number of exciting, large-scale opportunities which will make a significant difference to the county's economic performance:
 - work with the private sector to secure investment in low carbon and renewable energy projects in Dorset: including green hydrogen storage and production; offshore wind generation and manufacturing. This will support the emerging clean energy super cluster around Portland and South Dorset that can have national significance
 - kickstart the regeneration of Weymouth by developing underused sites to improve the offer and vibrancy of the town. Create a "growth corridor" with Portland and Dorchester, bringing economic benefits to the wider area
- encourage increased levels of sustainable tourism and continue to explore ways to extend the visitor season throughout the year
- continue to implement our digital Infrastructure and Inclusion strategy, working with government and industry to improve connectivity across the county, tackling those hard-to-reach areas where digital connectivity inhibits economic growth
- review transport provision, including public, post-16, community and SEND transport, looking at options to enhance future provision
- pursue a Devolution Deal with neighbouring authorities to secure devolved powers and funding from government which can support green energy projects, and digital and transport infrastructure
- develop a coastal and market towns strategy framework to support growth and regeneration, working in partnership with town and parish councils, and seeking funding from government
- enable private sector investment into the build out of Dorset Innovation Park, creating an additional 300 new jobs on the site by 2029
- address young people's perception of opportunities and their social mobility by encouraging entrepreneurship and building relationships with local businesses

Leadership and partnership

- reset our relationship with national government: develop a direct relationship with national government identifying and promoting the strategic projects and sectors that can contribute to the national economic position
- develop a strong inward investment proposition to attract national and international investment into the county
- build relationships with skills providers, colleges and universities to increase the higher education and skills footprint across Dorset and connect businesses with academic-led research and development
- play a leading role in regional politics and lobbying of government, coordinating policy positions that benefit the Dorset economy and key sectors with regional partners such as the Great South West, South West Region Defence and Security Cluster, Maritime UK SW and through a Devolution Deal

Standing up for Dorset

- advocating for Dorset's contribution nationally to economic growth – especially in the green (environment) and blue (marine) economy
- negotiate with the government and bid for funding for essential digital and transport infrastructure

Communities for all

We want to improve the lives of our residents, from the youngest to the oldest. We want to create communities where everyone can thrive, where essential services are accessible, where people can enjoy life at any age and where people look out for each other.

Strong communities foster social support, enhance well-being, and create a sense of belonging, which collectively contribute to a more resilient and cohesive society.

We want public sector resources to be used as effectively as possible to meet local needs, and we need to redesign how the council works with communities.

This Council Plan priority will be shaped through co-design with partners and communities themselves. It will align with Dorset's Integrated Care Partnership strategy. This section sets out our direction of travel. The Council Plan will be updated once the co-design work has been completed.

The challenge

Dorset has many strong communities, with an active voluntary and community sector and over 160 town and parish councils. However, the population and world are changing rapidly, and our communities need support to adapt to the challenges ahead.

Dorset has the oldest demographic of any county in the UK. 29.5% of our population are aged over 60, compared to an average of 19% nationally. As people age, we often need more health and care support, which, unless addressed at an early stage, can put more pressure on already-stretched services. Meanwhile, younger people often move away due to lack of opportunities, low wages and high housing costs, reducing our working age population.

There are also widespread disparities across our area. Our 2023 residents' survey shows significant differences in how residents from different areas view the quality of council services. Some communities are calling for us to work differently to better understand and meet the needs of towns and villages. Some of our town and parish councils are also calling for better partnership working.

South Dorset is the least socially mobile constituency in the country. Social mobility is the link between a person's occupation or income with that of their parents. Many of our communities face deep poverty having experienced hardships for decades, repeatedly appearing in the bottom national measurement for deprivation. There are also areas of poverty in wealthier rural areas, with data averages masking large income inequalities.

Health inequalities are the unfair and avoidable differences in people's health across social groups and between different populations. In Dorset people are generally healthier and live for longer than England overall; 1.8 years longer for both men and women. However, the length of time people in Dorset live is closely related to the extent of disadvantage and deprivation they experience. Males living in the least deprived areas live on average 5.5 years longer and females 4.9 years longer, than those living in the most deprived areas.

Healthy life expectancy is a measure of how long people can expect to live a healthy life before decline and frailty sets in and is also affected by deprivation and disadvantage. The amount of time spent living in good health before long-term health conditions appear varies greatly across Dorset. People experiencing long-term health conditions affects economic growth and productivity in working-age adults.

Finally, our residents' survey highlighted issues of community cohesion – also evidenced through local protests in August 2024. While three quarters of Dorset's residents feel that they belong in their community, fewer than half (49%) of ethnic minority residents feel the same. In Weymouth and Portland, only 44% of residents feel that people from different backgrounds get on in their local area.

Our approach

The 'communities for all' priority is where our themes of 'prevention' and 'partnership' come most strongly into play.

We believe strong communities have a vital role in preventing crises from happening, both personal and community crises. They are essential responders during crises of all kinds. When people in communities are well-connected and supportive, they can better mobilise resources, provide mutual support, and recover more quickly. This helps ensure our most vulnerable residents receive help from people they know and trust. When residents are connected and look out for one another, communities thrive.

We need to reduce the various inequalities between different groups, giving more equal access to opportunities, and supporting more cohesive communities. We want our services and infrastructure to be age and disability friendly, where people of all abilities and ages can stay in the homes and communities they prefer for as long as they want, reducing the need for major life change or expensive care.

This requires a different way of working with partners and in localities across our area. It requires a comprehensive and joined-up response across public sector, the voluntary and community sector (VCS), with local businesses, and other partners to address social, economic, and infrastructure challenges. We want to build on, accelerate and enhance our approach to place-based working, which is about 'working with' and 'not 'doing to' people and our communities.

Improvements to health, social mobility, inclusion, and reduced poverty not only benefit individuals and families but also support the wellbeing, resilience and prosperity of a whole community. In turn, this can also achieve a more sustainable model for statutory health and care services.

Target measures

- a joined-up model of locality working, delivering through prevention and partnership: measures to be agreed with local partners and linked back to our priorities and the work of the NHS, the Health & Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Care Partnership
- improve educational attainment by working through leadership in the education community: increase Dorset's Key Stage 2 results (55% in 2024) to be as good or better than the national average levels by 2029 (60% in 2024)
- transfer up to £500k a year of Dorset Council's apprenticeship levy to increase the number of apprenticeships offered by local businesses and organisations
- be the best Corporate Parent that we can for our children in care and care leavers. Improve levels of engagement in employment, education, and training among our care leavers to 65% through provision of good, stable, and consistent care and accommodation, good multi-agency wraparound support, and a sufficient number and range of opportunities
- seek internationally recognised accreditation as an 'age-friendly' county
- work specifically with those groups at higher risk, including supporting unpaid carers, those ageing without children and those ageing alone
- increase the number of age and disability friendly environments to enable people to stay in the homes they want for longer, reducing the proportion of people in traditional care settings, as well as creating all-age friendly environments, equally accessible by young parents with pushchairs as they are to older people with walkers or disabled people

Key actions to deliver this priority

- prevention and early help: listen to and involve residents in decisions about their health and wellbeing, and care and support needs. Use data to better understand current needs and identify potential issues before they become problems. We will make changes when needed to improve people's outcomes, access or experience, to improve equity and reduce inequalities in health
- thriving communities: work more closely with town and parish councils and with voluntary and community sector organisations to support residents, investing in the infrastructure
- work better together: put people's and communities' needs at the heart of how we plan care and support. Work with Integrated Care System partner organisations to provide care as close as possible to those who need it. We value the strength of voluntary and community organisations in this partnership
- commissioning and procurement: co-design and deliver with communities and partners on a locality basis, devolving funding to neighbourhoods where appropriate
- change the culture: focus on people first and act on feedback about quality of services and experience
- simplify our approach to communities so it is consistent: a more joined-up and coherent model of place-based working, building on existing arrangements, developing strong relationships locally, and using existing assets in communities, such as libraries and family hubs. This will be built into our new target operating model (this sets out how we will introduce new ways of working with residents and communities)
- strengthen and simplify the connection between Dorset Council and the voluntary and community sector through an active assembly, including simplifying access to funding

- engage with people closer to home, with dignity and respect: be honest about options and involve people in decisions
- support people of working age who are economically inactive to address barriers to employment
- devolve or transfer more assets to communities to enable creation of local hubs where people can access support and care
- through the collective efforts to deliver on the Council Plan priorities of ‘provide high-quality housing’, ‘grow our economy’, and ‘communities for all, we aim to improve social mobility and reduce poverty in the Dorset Council area

Leadership and partnership

- we have been a trailblazer working on the government’s Families First for Children Pathfinder. We will continue to work very closely with our partners in health, the police, education and the voluntary sector to put families at the centre of changes to the delivery of support they receive from us and our partners
- recognising our unique demographic, we aim to lead the UK in how we support people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, within an ageing population
- we will combat stigmatising attitudes and behaviours, and encourage intergenerational activities
- play a clear role in building new health and care teams in neighbourhoods, working with the NHS, residents and communities
- continue to work in partnership with Dorset Police on community safety

Standing up for Dorset

- call on the government for fairer funding for Dorset schools and for children with special educational needs
- influence government on issues of healthy ageing and disability
- work with NHS, business, community partners and others to maximise income to support the health needs of our population and develop new and innovative models of preventative work
- promote Dorset as a great place to live and work, recognising the “grey economy”, identifying age-appropriate employment opportunities and recruiting a younger workforce through developing training opportunities within the county.

Responding to the climate and nature crisis

Addressing the climate and nature emergencies is vital for current and future generations: to protect lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems. Whilst this is a huge global and national challenge, many solutions are local. Dorset has a role to play in helping tackle climate change and support nature recovery. In doing so, we can strengthen community resilience and stimulate economic growth.

The challenge

Climate change

Climate change is one of the most urgent challenges facing the world today, demanding immediate and decisive action. Rising global temperatures are increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events like heatwaves, floods, and wildfires. And sea levels are rising at a rate three times faster than a century ago.

As a rural, coastal county we are especially vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change, which will include more frequent heatwaves, fewer frost days, heavier rainfall, increased flooding, and more intense storms. Our seaside communities are particularly exposed to rising sea levels which can lead to coastal erosion, flooding, and damage to infrastructure. Our rural communities risk being impacted by unpredictable weather patterns which can harm crops and livestock, disrupt planting and harvesting schedules, and reduce overall agricultural productivity.

But, by taking the right actions now, we can help address climate change and ensure a safer, more resilient Dorset for future generations.

Nature crisis

The UK is facing a nature crisis, now ranking as one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, with nearly 1 in 6 species threatened with extinction. Unfortunately, here in Dorset we're no exception. Over the years, many areas for nature in our county have been split up or lost, leading to a decline in local wildlife. More than 3,000 species of plants and animals in Dorset are now of conservation concern, meaning they are rare, threatened, protected, declining or extinct.

But this loss of natural spaces doesn't just affect wildlife - it impacts us too. Our green spaces, which are essential for our health and wellbeing, also provide critical nature-based solutions to pressing challenges like flood protection, climate change, and water quality.

By taking action today to restore and expand spaces for nature, we can help build and protect homes for wildlife and ensure a healthier, more resilient future for both nature and our communities.

Our approach

Our vision is to create a climate friendly, nature rich county that is able to adapt and thrive in the face of environmental change.

Our strategic approach to bring this vision to life is as follows:

- **Cutting greenhouse gas emissions:** We will speed up our efforts to become a carbon neutral county and council, bringing forward our net zero targets by 5 years. As a council we aim to reach net zero by 2035, and the entire county by 2045. By tackling climate change at its source, we can help pave the way for a more sustainable future.
- **Halt nature's decline:** In collaboration with others, we will take immediate action to help protect and enhance our land, rivers, and seas for wildlife. Through Dorset's Local Nature Recovery strategy, we will set clear goals and build a strong foundation to help make sure spaces for nature are bigger, better and more connected in our county by 2030.

- **Prepare for a changing climate:** We are committed to helping our communities, ecosystems, and economies adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change, ensuring Dorset is resilient and well-prepared for the future.

Target measures

- deliver a revised carbon reduction target of 80% from 2019 baseline by 2030 to include:
 - Dorset Council fleet: transition all small vehicles to electric by 2030 and all large vehicles to use alternative low emission fuels by 2026 to reduce our fleet emissions by 70% by 2026
 - generate more of our own energy by installing an additional 5MW of solar PV on our estate by 2030
 - switch all our oil-fired heating systems to non-fossil fuel alternatives by 2028
 - reduce our emissions from staff travelling for business by at least 25% by 2029
 - ensure our services are resilient to climate change by having climate adaptation plans for each service by March 2026
- achieve a 65% recycling and composting rate by 2035 and ensure the optimum use of the recycling and composting services provided
- nature recovery target is for 30% of our land to be in positive management for nature by 2030. Other targets include:
 - 80% of our urban verges will be managed to enhance their value for nature by 2030 (currently 50%)
 - improve 300 miles of the Rights of Way network, making it more accessible to connect people's access to nature by 2030 (30 miles in last 10 years)
 - 70% of our county farms land will be managed using sustainable farming practices that balance food production and nature by 2030 (currently 5%)
 - 15,000 hectares of Dorset are covered by Landscape Recovery management agreements by 2030 (currently 0 hectares)

Key actions to deliver this priority

- reduce Dorset's impact on climate change by:
 - significantly reducing emissions from our fleet vehicles by transitioning all small vehicles to electric by 2030 and all large vehicles to alternative low emission fuels by 2025
 - generating more of our own energy by installing an additional 5MW of solar PV on our estate by 2030
 - working with others to create a roadmap to help Dorset meet its net-zero goals, identifying the most cost-effective and practical pathways to reduce emissions
 - helping residents and organisations to improve energy efficiency and use renewable energy in their homes and buildings through advice, grants and guidance
- develop and implement the Local Nature Recovery strategy, working across organisational systems to deliver change at scale

- renew the rights of way improvement plan (ROWIP) which explains the aspirations and improvements proposed for Dorset’s public rights of way network to benefit the community, nature and climate and support the local economy
- help communities adapt for climate change impacts and recover nature, working with town and parish councils and other partners
- ensure our services are resilient to climate change by having climate adaptation plans for each service by March 2026

Leadership and partnership

- work with partners across Dorset to help reduce its carbon footprint by 50% by 2030 (relative to our 2017 baseline)
- support all Dorset public sector organisations to develop climate resilience plans by 2026
- produce a strategy setting out how Dorset will adapt and become more resilient to climate change by 2026
- work with the farming community to support sustainable farming which will reduce emissions, improve water quality and make more space for nature
- work with water companies to improve water quality and reduce pollution of rivers and the sea
- lead on the development and implementation of the Dorset Local Nature Recovery strategy
- support landowners, town and parish councils, businesses, schools and communities to take action to recover nature locally
- support the Dorset and Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnerships in their nature recovery as set out in their apportionment of the Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcomes Framework
- continued support of the Dorset Coast Forum and Litter Free Dorset to deliver sustainable practices and nature recovery through their wide partnerships and to the communities of Dorset
- ensure over time that the businesses and organisations we have contracts with provide nature recovery and sustainability credentials as a matter of course
- work with partners to develop a Local Area Energy plan

Standing up for Dorset

- influence government for increased focus on retrofitting homes
- make the case for increased investment into our electricity grid system
- call on pharmaceutical companies to take more responsibility for waste
- make representations to government to invest in Dorset Local Nature Recovery strategy (LNRS) implementation
- ask for new nature funds to deliver the LNRS with Farming in Protected Landscapes an effective delivery model to copy
- work with farmers to support their asks to government around supporting sustainable farming in Dorset
- ask government for more investment in sustainable transport infrastructure.

Dorset at a glance

Changing population

- Dorset has the largest proportion of people aged 65 and over (29.5%) of any unitary authority in England. The median age in Dorset is 51.6, up by 4 years since 2011, compared to 40.6 for England & Wales. An older age population means fewer people of working age and more people potentially requiring care
- an ageing population provides a wealth of skills, experience, knowledge and a population that are often willing to give back to their communities through volunteering

Economy

- Dorset's weekly earnings for residents is 90% of the national figure
- Dorset's local productivity is falling behind the rest of the UK, producing 15% less per hour than the national average
- Dorset's working age population has fallen over the past ten years and this trend is projected to continue – in particular, we lose residents aged between 18 and 39
- Dorset businesses lead nationally on aquaculture, maritime automation and agri-tech
- our unique landscape offers huge potential for renewable energy. We produce far more renewable electricity than many authorities (328,383 MWH)

Housing

- in the last ten years, median house prices have risen by £122,000 in Dorset and are higher than both the national and regional prices
- average house prices are 12 times higher than average salaries
- private rental costs are on par with national rents but the gap between local housing allowance and rents has widened

Rurality

- Dorset has poor connectivity – no motorways, 58% gigabit broadband compared to 84% nationally and 90% in BCP Council area, and among the worst mobile phone connectivity in the UK
- 46% of Dorset's residents live in areas that are difficult to access to services, compared to 18% across England
- the council faces additional costs providing services to rural areas
- Dorset contains all six of Britain's native reptile species, 93% of all mammal species and 90% of British Butterfly species
- Dorset is home to the England's only natural UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Jurassic Coast and has two National Landscape areas, covering 54% of the council area
- our unique landscape provides opportunities to expand the blue and green economy and exploit the higher educational potential of studying the environment

Health and deprivation

- the gap in life expectancy between the most deprived and least deprived areas of Dorset is 6.3 years for men and 5.3 years for women
- there are 11 areas in Dorset within the top 20% most deprived nationally for multiple deprivation, up from 10 in 2015. 10 of these are in Weymouth and Portland

Climate

- Dorset's greenhouse gas emissions fell by over 4% from 2019-2021, and by a third since 2005
- Dorset's renewable energy capacity continues to increase. It now stands at 347 MW (2022), an increase of 16% in a year
- Dorset's* environmental economy is worth between £0.9bn and £2.5bn per annum. It also supports between 17,000 and 61,000 jobs in the economy. *inc. BCP Council area

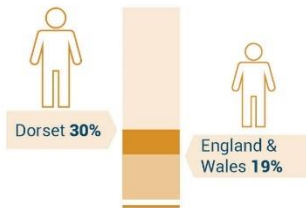
Crime

- Dorset has the fourth lowest total crime per 1,000 population of any unitary authority in England

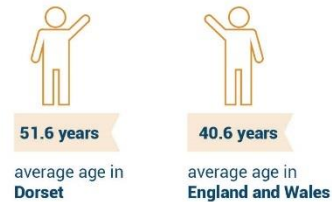
Dorset at a glance

Ageing population

65+ year olds in Dorset



Average age in Dorset



Experience and knowledge



An ageing population brings valuable skills, experience, and knowledge, and often contributes to their communities through volunteering

Economy

Working age population



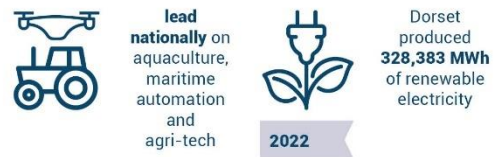
Average weekly earnings



Value produced for every hour worked

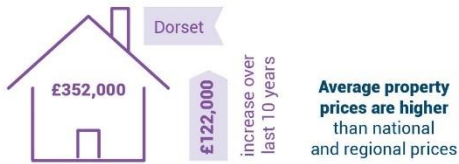


Dorset businesses

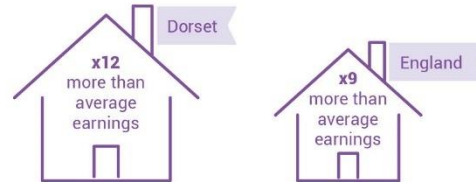


Housing

Average property prices



Average property prices are...



Private rental prices



Rurality

Connectivity



Access to services



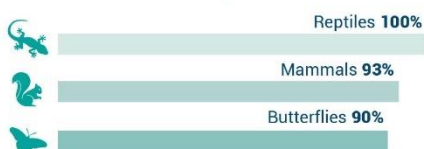
Limited public transport



Services to rural areas



Native species living in Dorset



Natural status



Health and deprivation

Deprived areas



10 out of 11 deprived areas are in **Weymouth & Portland**

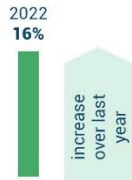
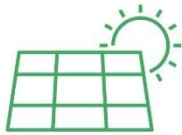
Life expectancy gap



age gap between most deprived and least areas of Dorset

Climate

Renewable energy production in Dorset



Greenhouse gas emissions



greenhouse gas emissions fell by over **4%** from **2019-2021** and by a **third** since **2005**

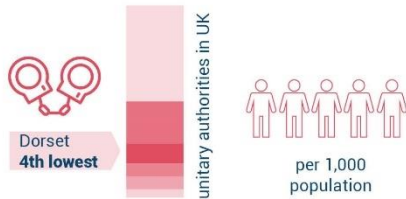
Dorset environmental economy



...is valued at up to **£2.5bn per year** of the local economy and supports up to **61,000** jobs

Crime

total crime per 1,000 population



What we do

We provide around 450 different services to over 380,000 residents. Waste collection, road maintenance, planning, housing, libraries, and adults and children's social care are just some of the vital services which support the smooth running of our local communities.

The residents' survey, conducted every 2 years with a weighted sample which is representative of the population of the Dorset Council area, shows that waste collection, street cleaning and highways maintenance are perceived to be the council services which matter most to residents and their families. We recognise how highly these services are valued by residents, and we are committed to the continued delivery of these important services.

We work closely with many partners and deliver some services through strategic partnerships, such as the Integrated Care System.

The council is led by 82 Dorset councillors, elected by our residents.

- we carry out 23,692,500 household waste collections a year
- 2% of waste goes to landfill, with a recycling and composting rate at 58.9 per cent, putting us in the top three unitary councils in England
- we maintain 2,400 miles of road, fix around 20,000 potholes, apply 100 miles of surface treatment and resurface around 5.5 miles of footways/cycleways every year
- we process over 4,000 planning applications a year
- we supported thousands of residents struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, including administering funding of £20 million for free school meals, supermarket vouchers and help for food projects, utility costs and housing
- we support 1,804 children in need, including looking after 300 children with a Child Protection Plan
- our adult social services give direct support to 4,048 people and delivered 13,831 hours of home care
- we care for 1,010 people with a learning disability and 363 people with mental health related conditions
- our libraries cater to local needs in information, learning, literacy, employment, digital skills, health and wellbeing
- in a year, our libraries issue over 1 million books and 500,000 e-resources and host 87,000 attendees at events like author talks, rhyme time sessions and code clubs
- in a year, our libraries provide over 59,000 sessions on our free computers
- we support housing associations to deliver new affordable homes. There are 22,000 housing association homes in the Dorset Council area
- in 2023/24 we helped deliver 508 new affordable homes.
- in one year, more than 4,000 households approached us as homeless or at risk of homelessness
- there are 5,700 households on the housing register
- 4,192 Dorset Council residents were supported to make positive healthy lifestyle changes through LiveWell Dorset – quitting smoking, cutting down on alcohol, managing weight or becoming more active

What we do



We carry out **23,692,500** household waste collections a year.



We maintain **2,400 miles** of road, fix around **20,000 potholes**, apply **100 miles** of surface treatment and resurface around **5.5 miles** of footways/cycleways every year.



2% of waste goes to landfill, with a recycling and composting rate at **58.9%**, putting us in the top 3 unitary councils in England.



We process over **4,000** planning applications a year.



We support **1,804 children** in need, including looking after **300 children** with a Child Protection Plan.



Supported thousands of residents struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, including administering funding of **£20 million** for free school meals, supermarket vouchers and help for food projects, utility costs and housing.



Adult social services give direct support to **4,048** people and delivered **13,831** hours of home care.



In 2023/24 the council helped deliver **508** new affordable homes.



In one year, more than **4,000** households approached the council as homeless or at risk of homelessness.



There are **5,700** households are on the housing register.



We support housing associations to deliver new affordable homes. There are **22,000** housing association homes in the Dorset Council area.



The council cares for **1,010** people with a learning disability and **363** people with mental health related conditions.



4,192 Dorset Council residents were supported to make positive healthy lifestyle changes through LiveWell Dorset, quitting smoking, cutting down on alcohol, managing weight or becoming more active.



In the last year our libraries issued over **1 million books** and **500,000** e-resources and hosted **87,000** attendees at events like author talks, rhyme time sessions and code club

How this Council Plan will be delivered

Strategic planning: related strategies

This Council Plan sets out the strategic priorities that we want to deliver over the next 5 years. This work is underpinned by a number of 'principal strategies', listed below, which set out greater detail on the delivery of these priorities.

We also have a number of 'enabling strategies', also listed below, which support the way in which we will be able to deliver our priorities.

There is a golden thread running from the Council Plan, through the principal and enabling strategies, through service plans, which are updated annually and set out the operational requirements for delivery, and through to individual employee objectives. This ensures that all our planning is aligned with our vision and priorities.

Principal strategies

- [Housing strategy](#)
- [Climate strategy](#)
- [Local Nature Recovery strategy](#)
- Economic growth strategy [to be developed]
- Communities strategy [to be developed]
- [Children, Young People and Families Plan](#)
- Adults '[A better life](#)' strategy
- Local Plan [in development]
- Local Transport Plan [in development]

Enabling strategies

- Medium Term Financial Plan
- [Strategic Asset Management Plan](#)
- People and Culture strategy [in development]
- [Equality Diversity and Inclusion strategy](#)
- Customer strategy [in development]
- Transformation plan [in development]
- Risk management strategy
- [Digital Infrastructure and Inclusion strategy](#)

Our values

Our values as an organisation frame how we will deliver Council Plan priorities. We believe values are key to creating a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable place for all communities. They inform the way we work and underpin relationships with partners, customers and communities.

Our values

Identifying our values as an organisation will play an important part in supporting the success of the Council Plan.

In the summer of 2024, we carried out engagement activity to look at what values were important to our employees and leaders and how they influenced the way they work.

Our employees were asked to consider:

- would the values be fit for the organisation's future
- can they be lived by on a day-to-day basis from the front-line employee to the chief executive
- are they unique to describe Dorset Council
- will they help deliver a positive customer experience

Using the data and evidence gathered, the values we have finalised are: Respect, Together, Accountability, Openness and Curiosity, with Inclusion central to all those values.

Our Organisational Values



How we develop our workforce will be key to realising our ambitions, and we need to ensure that our values reflect in the way that we work and how we engage with partners and residents.

Our equality statement

We believe equality, diversity and inclusion is everyone's business. Our services and facilities must be accessible to all. We will strengthen relationships with communities and support our diverse workforce and the diversity of Dorset.

[You can read our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) strategy in full here.](#)

Transformation

We are undergoing a major transformation programme to improve our services, make things better for our customers and to save costs.

This work has a critical role in ensuring we can deliver our vision and priorities.

It includes establishing and embedding a new operating model and using new technologies to streamline our operations and become more efficient and effective. We use real-life data to inform activity and decisions.

We are encouraging more of our customers to contact us digitally while giving extra support to those who cannot.

We provide early help to prevent a problem becoming a crisis and we work with partners and communities to achieve change together.

Some transformation changes require upfront investment but will save money in the longer term.

This new way of operating is designed to improve our services to meet the needs of all our residents and communities.

Budget priorities and financial strategy

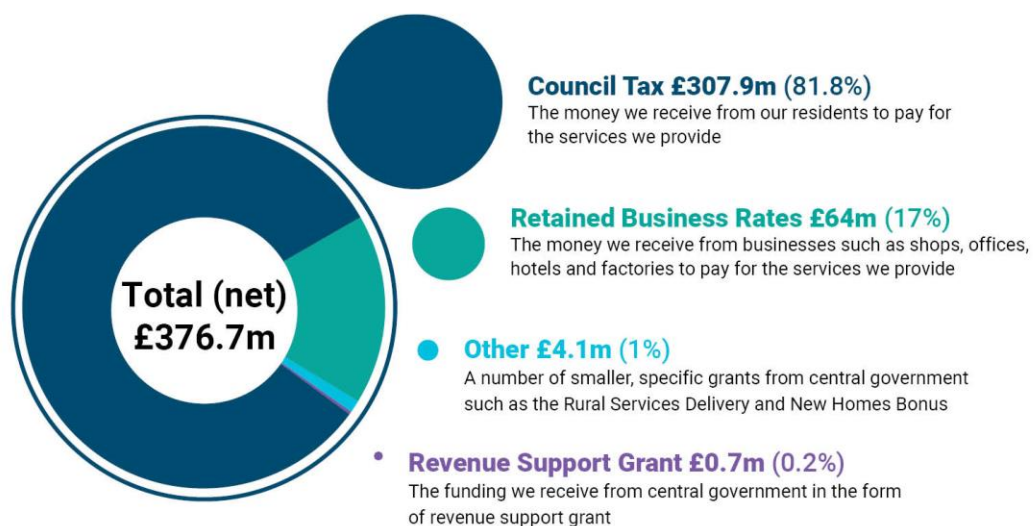
Our annual budget-setting process and medium-term financial plan are aligned to the Council Plan strategic priorities. This ensures the appropriate allocation of staffing, assets and financial resources (capital and revenue) to achieve those priorities.

We continue to face a challenging financial position, with rising demand for services, inflationary pressures and reduced funding from government. The budget setting process requires creativity, innovation, and robust prioritisation and planning.

How the budget is funded

This pie chart sets out the sources of funding for Dorset Council:

2024/2025 - Dorset Council sources of funding



How the budget is spent

The infographic below shows how Dorset Council's budget is allocated.



* Includes Revenues & Benefits, Finance, Procurement, Human Resources, IT, Legal and Democratic Services.

We are committed to fiscal responsibility and transparency.

Strategic risk management

Managing and mitigating potential risk is critical to the success of any organisation.

As the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated, unforeseen circumstances require quick action and the ability to adapt.

There are major risks that could result in events or circumstances that might threaten our business model, future performance in achieving the ambitions set out in this Council Plan, solvency or liquidity and reputation.

Here are the principal risks we constantly plan for so we are ready to act should they happen:

Commercial – Commercial risks are those that could result in the council losing a commercial partnership or failure of a supply chain.

Data and information management – Risks of this nature are centred around failures to prevent unauthorised or inappropriate access, as well as failures to enable legitimate use of our data, systems, and assets.

Finance – Our financial stability is driven by increased budgetary pressures in an increasingly challenging financial environment.

Legal – These are risks concerned with non-compliance of regulations, laws or statutory obligations that may result in penalties, fines or other legal consequences.

Operations - Operational risks are associated with the uncertainties that we face during our day-to-day activities delivering services.

People – We are faced with a challenging environment in recruiting and retaining the necessary people to deliver our objectives.

Project / programme – Project and programme risks are centred around projects not aligning with our strategic priorities as well as projects being unable to deliver the intended benefits, on time and within budget.

Property – We have a large portfolio of properties and as such associated risks ranging from property defects to ineffective or inefficient safety management protocols.

Reputation – Reputational risks are those that could be uncovered through adverse events in the form of ethical infringements, failure to meet objectives or lack of innovation.

Security – Our security risks include unauthorised and / or in appropriate use of our systems and assets including cyber security, digital and physical access to our assets.

Technology - Technology risks are such risks that arise from technology not delivering services as expected because of deficient systems or processes.