

**Joint Overview Committee**  
**9 January 2025**  
**Public Participation**

**Question 1 – submitted by Becky Brookman on behalf of UNISON Dorset Branch**

UNISON is concerned that the significant changes outlined in the "Our Future Council" transformation plan, will lead to massive workforce reductions, with potentially hundreds of job losses.

UNISON has been informed of the proposals, but there has been no meaningful consultation or discussions. There has also been a lack of transparency and consultation with DC employees, which does not fit with DC's values.

We note in the report that there it is proposed that most of the savings will come from vacancy freezes and staff cuts, yet no evidence has been provided to show exactly how much will be saved through vacancy freezes and if they will impact statutory services. There is also no evidence provided to show the correlation between the cuts proposed and automation. We do not know of any other local authority that has made such significant savings using AI and automation. There is no information to demonstrate how the savings will be made. We also have concerns about the tight timescales proposed, especially given the lack of resources within the Trade Unions and HR service.

We note that there is to be a saving of between £7.6m and £23.5m from council employees against a baseline of £150.6m. Yet there is only a 1.1m to £5.7m reduction proposed in commissioned spend against a baseline of £182.3m. We believe that commissioned services should be looked at in more detail.

We are concerned that an Eqia has not yet been produced and the committee is being asked to make decisions based on very limited information. 29% of Dorset's population is over the age of 65, compared to 19% in England and Wales. We also know that nearly a third of residents are digitally excluded. Automation may not be beneficial for those residents. The Dorset digital Vision Eqia states DC will 'design end to end services based on understanding people's needs and involving them throughout' yet no information has been provided on the impact the proposed automation may have on certain communities, which would put into doubt the statement that this will have a major positive impact on the community.

There has also been no Eqia on the impact these proposals will have on Dorset Council Employees. The changes are likely to impact low paid female staff, while the leadership of the Council keeps growing, including most recently an increase of Corporate Directors from 3 to 5 in Place.

**Given that there is no detail on what impacts this proposal will have once delivered, how can the committee be assured that it can meet the targets that have been set here?**