

# Cabinet

28 January 2025

## Dorset Centre of Excellence Annual Performance Report

### For Review and Consultation

**Cabinet Member and Portfolio:**

Cllr C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

**Local Councillor(s):**

Cllr

**Executive Director:**

P Dempsey, Executive Director of People - Children

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Job Title: Strategic Commissioner Education

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**Report Status:** Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

**Brief Summary:**

This report provides an overview of the performance of the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE), a company established by Dorset Council in 2021 to provide special education provision. The strong performance of DCOE has enabled pupils to thrive and to achieve. This includes strong examination results (first year of being an examination centre) and destinations for pupils. Families have also given testimony to the transformational and life changing impact of the education at Coombe House School.

**Recommendation:**

For Cabinet to note the DCOE Performance Report.

**Reason for Recommendation:**

To ensure Cabinet are fully informed of the current DCOE performance.

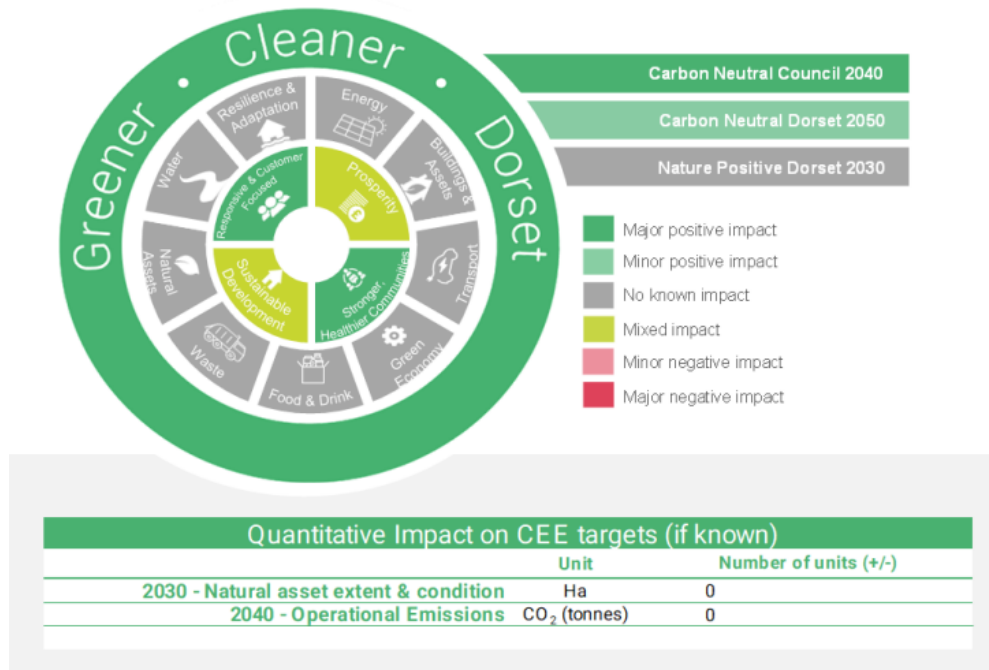
## 1. Report

- 1.1 The Annual Performance Report provides more detail of the performance of the company and school over the past year.

## 2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- 2.2 The school site is owned by Dorset Council and leased to the Dorset Centre of Excellence. Dorset Council funds the costs of placements at the school from the high needs block.

## 3. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications



<b>Natural Environment, Climate &amp; Ecology Strategy Commitments</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact

<b>Corporate Plan Aims</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Prosperity	neutral
Stronger healthier communities	strongly supports it
Sustainable Development & Housing	neutral
Responsive & Custom Focused	strongly supports it

#### 4. **Well-being and Health Implications**

- 4.1 A positive experience of school and education/learning will contribute significantly towards the wellbeing of children and young people and their families.
- 4.2 DCOE have invested in and established community engagement aspects to their work. This includes community use of the swimming pool which is being well used and will contribute towards well-being and health of the local community.

#### 5. **Other Implications**

N/A

#### 6. **Risk Assessment**

- 6.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

7. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

N/A

8. **Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Overview

- 8.2 Appendix 2: Dorset Centre of Excellence Annual Performance Report

[Dorset Centre of Excellence Annual Performance Report.pdf](#)

9. **Background Papers**

None

10. **Report Sign Off**

- 10.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

## Appendix 1 Overview

As a local authority, Dorset Council has a duty under Section 42, Children and Families Act 2014 to secure special educational provision and health care provision in accordance with EHC Plans. The Council also has in place a plan for managing the High Needs Block funding, used to pay for special education provision, which forms part of the Safety Valve arrangements with the Department for Education.

The Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE) was established to enable Dorset Council to:

- deliver special education provision (at a reduced capital cost from, and quicker than, new build alternatives)
- deliver these at lower cost to independent providers and higher value for money (i.e. taking into account cost avoidance and other benefits)
- secure places for Dorset children & young people and a high degree of control over quality/nature of the provision (resulting in better outcomes for pupils and better value for money)

DCOE was established in 2021, and Coombe House School has been operational for 2 full academic years. There are over 112 pupils on role at the school and in this relatively short space of time DCOE have:

- Established and embedded strong leadership and governance, including financial management, with an unqualified Independent Auditors Report and the Ofsted inspection recognising 'GOOD' leadership and management
- Developed broad and aspirational curriculum, with innovative practice to enhance the offer to pupils; and addressed the areas for improvement identified in the 2023 Ofsted inspection
- Invested in teaching staff, the school environment and the therapeutic offer, to meet the needs of pupils
- Managed the growth in pupil number steadily and well, including the recruitment and retention of staff
- Worked as part of the local education community in Dorset, sharing practice and expertise

- Invested in community engagement, for the benefit of local people (such as community use of the swimming pool) and for the benefit of pupils (in terms of involvement and engagement with the local community as part of 'preparation for adulthood').
- Taken positive steps to reduce the carbon footprint