

Cabinet – 28 January 2025

Questions from Councillors

1. Question from Hannah Hobbs-Chell

"With the recent highlight of the IICSA report, and previously the recent and devastating story of Sara Sharif, I would like to ensure that Dorset Council is doing everything in its power to ensure that we, as corporate parents, are protecting and safeguarding all children and young people in Dorset. I would like to see Dorset become one of the leading authorities in CSA and child abuse protection and prevention, and I recognise and appreciate that this good work has already begun with pathfinder and hub work. But there is always more we can do.

I am a victim and survivor, and gave evidence in the IICSA enquiry. I have been following the politics and news for many years, but this most recent highlight has again brought my experience, and that of thousands and thousands of others into the fore. I am also so very relieved that there is finally an announcement that the recommendation of mandatory reporting will become law. This, had it been in place when I was a child and teenager, would most probably have saved me from deeper harm at the hands of my abusers, and from myself. Instead however, multiple agencies that should have protected and then supported me to heal, failed me also over many years, and into adulthood, and have left me with lifelong consequences. They saved my life, but left me with the deepest scars. I would however like to pay credit to individuals within this who clearly cared, and did better, and it is thanks to them and those family and friends who loved and believed me, that I stand here today.

Whilst national implementation of recommendations is essential, and this first implementation is perhaps one of the most critical, there is also much that can be done locally and within local authorities. Indeed places such as Telford have seen very positive results where local initiatives have been implemented. In particular, establishing a victims and survivors panel, who liaise with, help to educate, and make recommendations to local authorities, the police, and NHS, has been praised by victims and local authority partners alike. I am sure that as a Council, we will ensure that we fully fulfil and go above and beyond in terms of implementing national guidance and law, but I would like to ask whether Dorset Council would work to establish a victims and survivors panel that also integrates with healthcare and police agencies, as a first step to ensuring we are one of the leading local authorities for protection and prevention of child abuse. Further, I'd like to ask that following the establishment of a victims and survivors panel, we look at other innovative solutions both as a result of listening to the panel, and to learning from innovation and research across the world, to ensuring that we support victims and survivors, as well as provide robust prevention work, above and beyond the national recommendations wherever possible."

## 2. Question from Cllr Belinda Bawden

I'd like to ask for an opportunity to let members and officers know of the sad death last week of Philip Sankey, who was the Lyme Regis expert on WATAG, the Western Area Transport Group. What Philip didn't know about the public transport service, present and past, wasn't worth knowing. He was always happy to reply instantly to emails or face to face questions with a staggering in-depth knowledge of the history and development of our bus and train services. He was so committed to serving his community and county over decades, that I fear we have lost not only a wonderful local volunteer but a huge fount of knowledge and expertise.

So, it is in the spirit of the gentle, kind, deeply conscientious and caring Philip Sankey that I'd like to mark his passing with a question to the Portfolio Holder for Place Services:

### Question 1

How can the desires and aspirations of Dorset's residents for a well-connected public transport network which genuinely opens opportunities for work, education, social connection and leisure best be articulated in the design of the new bus franchising responsibilities and how can Dorset Council involve its locally elected representatives and resident experts, for example, WATAG and other area Transport Action Groups, in shaping the best possible public and community transport network that reduces social isolation and rural inequality?

### Question 2

#### **The Climate and Nature Bill**

Please could the Leader and Portfolio holder for the Environment and Climate Change undertake to ask Cabinet and/or Full Council to pledge Dorset Council's support for the cross-party Climate and Nature Bill?

The CAN Bill makes sure the UK aims to keep global heating down to 1.5°C, which gives us a chance to avoid the worst impacts of climate change; it commits to reversing the destruction of nature by 2030; and calls for a climate and nature assembly to help Government and Parliament develop an emergency strategy to turn policies into local action.