

Full Council

11th February 2025

Questions submitted by Councillors

Question 1 – submitted by Cllr C Lugg (on behalf herself, Cllr Julie Robinson, Cllr Mike Parkes and Cllr Andrew Parry)

The A348, Ringwood Road runs through Longham, the centre of Ferndown, and on to Tricketts Cross where it joins the A31. Residents constantly complain about the large number of HGVs travelling through the town, many coming from the port of Poole, and going on to other routes upcountry. After years of trying, last year Cllr Parkes and I persuaded Dorset Council to reduce the speed on this road to 30mph, thanks to Cllr Ray Bryan and the TCF team. A resident who lives along Ringwood Road at Longham, tells me this has had some impact on HGV traffic, as during busy times, it no longer shows as the fastest route.

When the A31 bypass was built, the opportunity to direct traffic away from Ferndown Town Centre was missed. More recently Dorset LEP funded an upgrade to Gravel Hill which was again meant to address the issue. Again, Ferndown were let down.

As well as travelling through the Town Centre traffic has to negotiate Longham Bridge. This bridge is unsuitable for HGVS as only one can traverse the bridge at a time, and there have been collisions, vehicles stuck and frequent damage to the bridge. It needs a weight restriction but as an A road this isn't possible.

I believe that Cllr Bryan, when he was cabinet member for Highways, had conversations with Highways England about downgrading the A348 to a B road, to facilitate a weight restriction.

Will Dorset Council commit to working with National Highways to make this a reality?

Question 2 – Submitted by Cllr M Parkes

As local ward councillors Cathy Lugg and I would like to fully understand what Dorset Council's intentions are for Victoria Road in Ferndown.

Following our ward member work with the excellent team from Litter Free Dorset we welcome the funds that have been made available to make some improvements with regards to the seating and planters adjacent to the library which has acted as a catalyst for the Town Council to fund the removal of all the trees and replace street furniture in the road.

Many shop keepers and local residents have asked us why the planters and trees have been removed when no consideration is being given to the issues of people parking on the

pavements as– on street parking was very much a fundamental to any regeneration of the street scene.

Without the planters we are left with a lifeless concrete street which has given the even wider pavements exacerbating the existing inappropriate parking issues.

When Dorset Council publicly committed to the regeneration project in early 2024, officers were actively seeking pots of money they believed could fund the much needed improvements and we are saddened that this activity has ceased to the detriment of our residents however we understand that the Town Council has been promised £89,000 as part of the Capital Leverage Fund to carry out works in Victoria Road which we welcome, although it seems strange that Dorset Council would give money to the Town Council to carry out work on Dorset Council land rather than retaining the project itself.

We now understand that Dorset Council Officers have been tasked with designing the new streetscape. We would like to know what the timescales for the design and implementation and how this is going to be funded by Dorset Council. We'd also like to understand when we will be involved as ward members in a project that we were previously leading on at a local level rather than finding out through third parties as is currently the situation. It does seem like for some inexplicable reason we are currently being excluded from something that sits in the heart of our ward and that we have both been actively campaigning about for at least the past ten years.

Ferndown's town centre not only serves the residents of the largest inland town in Dorset but also used regularly by its surrounding communities of West Parley, West Moors, St Leonards & St Ives and Verwood. The residents of Ferndown and the wider East Dorset deserve commitment and project ownership from Dorset Council.

Question 3 – Submitted by Cllr M Parkes

Whilst I appreciate there may be commercial sensitivities please can I have an update on the sale of the former East Dorset District Council site at Furzehill which has been ongoing for over five years.

Like most of the elected members in the East of Dorset we would like to understand if this money will be ringfenced for capital projects that would be of benefit to residents in the former local authority's geographical area or whether we will see this money propping up funding shortfalls in places such as Weymouth and Dorchester.

Question 4 - Submitted by Cllr B Quayle

The Blandford Youth and Community Centre

Will the Cabinet Member for Children's Services formally launch an investigation into the recent collapse of the Blandford Youth and Community Centre? This facility has been an integral part of the community, providing essential services and support to local youth and residents. The abrupt closure has caused significant concern among community members, who are keen to understand the circumstances leading to this decision.

As one of the local members, I ask that you investigate the matter thoroughly and provide a detailed report on the reasons behind the closure, any contributing factors, the steps being taken to address the situation, and how previous Dorset Council funding was used to support the Blandford Youth and Community Centre.

Question 5 - Submitted by Cllr B Quayle

The Veteran Friendly Framework (VFF)

The Veteran Friendly Framework (VFF) is a collaborative initiative spearheaded by the Royal British Legion, Royal Star & Garter, and the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance. Its goal is to enhance the health and wellbeing of veterans residing in care homes across England. Although there is no specific mandate requiring all councils to have their care providers enrol in the VFF, some councils and care providers choose to participate voluntarily to better support veterans.

The VFF comprises eight standards that care providers must meet to gain accreditation. These standards include identifying veterans' wellbeing needs, addressing social isolation, and providing signposting to local support services, among others.

Can the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care confirm whether Dorset Council mandates our care providers to enrol in the Veteran Friendly Framework? If not, could you please explain why?

Question 6 - Submitted by Cllr R Bryan

Can the Portfolio Holder for Place Services explain why the failed trial of reducing the cost of parking in a select number of tier three car parks is to be continued.

The word failed is not my word but those of the most senior officer in Place Services and was used at the scrutiny meeting when discussing the result of the trial.

The cost of the failure is circa a quarter of a million pounds.

This resulted in a quarter of a million pounds being unavailable to spend on road repairs or other Highways issues such as pot holes, cleaning drains etc.

When the parking review took place on my watch as Portfolio Holder, we spent a year looking at how we could better control the churn of motorists so that spaces would become available to those wishing to visit the areas for a short time to enable them to shop etc.

The result was to introduce three tiers of car parking charges across the Dorset Council area.

Tier 1 was for the smaller type car parks found in villages and rural areas.

Tier 2 was for the larger towns

Tier 3 was for those areas of high demand of both local and visiting motorists where local people found difficulty finding car park spaces and therefore drove around these areas looking for an available space. Hence burning fuel and emitting exhaust gases into the local air.

To help the local residents we also introduced a totally new system of car parking permits. These were only available to residents and people permanently working in the Dorset Council area.

The result of the failed experiment is reduced income.

Highways repairs feature in the top three priorities in the residents survey so a loss of funding created by this failed exercise was a loss of money to repair our roads.

I am proud of the work of our highways team, we have some of the best maintained roads in the country. These are not my words but words of the many visitors who visit the lovely county of Dorset.

To improve our network of roads we need more revenue for Highways not less.

My question is as the experiment failed and cost money what is the thinking behind the decision to repeat this experiment.