

Full Council – 23 October 2025

Questions submitted by the public

Question 1 - submitted by Beaminster Town Council

Please could the relevant Cabinet member respond to the following points: -
How Dorset Council are assessing the long-term sustainability of its community resilience capabilities; what steps are being taken to improve public awareness, involvement and ownership of resilience planning; whether risk impact assessments are being conducted with meaningful community representations; how are Dorset's local resilience efforts being fed into the ongoing development and review of the National Resilience Framework and in particular, can the Council give a commitment to ensuring the improvement of local resilience capability and ensure that understanding is formally raised in national discussions?

Response by Cllr S Bartlett

Thank you for your question. Dorset Council understands that building strong community resilience is vital for protecting residents and helping communities recover from emergencies.

We work closely with partners through the Local Resilience Forum to strengthen resilience. There is an active community resilience group co-chaired by both Dorset local authorities. Earlier this year, the government published the *National Resilience Framework* and *National Security Strategy*, both of which highlight the importance of improving community resilience. Dorset Council also responded to a recent government consultation on this topic.

Local Resilience Forums have received Home Office funding for this financial year, and some of this has been allocated to local authorities to support community resilience work. We are currently deciding how to make the best use of this funding, working with the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils and other partners. Public engagement is key to our approach. We plan to work directly with communities to understand where they feel most vulnerable and how resilient they believe they are. This will help us identify priority areas for support.

The Council's transformation programme includes a focus on community partnerships. This includes working with town and parish councils and the voluntary sector to develop new service delivery models that meet local needs, with community resilience as a core theme.

There are resource challenges. The Emergency Management and Resilience team leads on community resilience support, helping parish and town councils and community groups where possible. However, this is in addition to their statutory duties for emergency response and planning.

We await the outcome of government discussions following the consultation and any updates on the national resilience framework, including whether additional funding

will be provided. In the meantime, we remain committed to supporting communities and encourage the use of resources available on the Local Resilience Forum's Dorset Prepared website, which helps councils and voluntary groups develop and test their own resilience plans.

Question 2 – submitted by Sam Hanbury

I am Sam Hanbury, co-founder of Baboo Gelato Ltd. We are a Dorset ice cream maker. We rent sites from Dorset Council in West Bay, Lyme Regis, and Weymouth.

We would like to ask Dorset Council to reduce the rental increases currently being imposed on tenants at your commercial kiosk sites in West Bay and Lyme Regis.

These rental increases are happening at a time of rising National Insurance, rising Minimum Wage, rising ingredient inflation, rising rates, and the Council's exceptionally aggressive and anti-tourist car park pricing measures which have depressed visitor numbers over the past two years.

Our rent in Lyme has jumped 54% since 2016. Likewise in West Bay our rent has jumped 68%. No business in West Bay or Lyme has seen anything like this increase in sales during the same period.

According to a Google AI search of Cushman & Wakefield, Carter Jonas and Savills: *'Retail rents have been complex since 2016, with prime rents showing more stability or slight increases in certain prime locations, while secondary rents have often declined'*.

In addition the normal 7 or 10 year term of lease in Lyme Regis is no longer being offered due to the ongoing Harbour Orders. This is a huge disincentive to invest when we have such insecurity of tenancy.

We hope you will agree that the kiosks in West Bay and Lyme Regis are a vibrant, very popular and historic feature of the towns, and that Dorset Council's hostile pricing is detrimental to the traders, which will affect the community and tourism as quality and variety fall away. There has already been a consolidation of the kiosks in West Bay that has reduced the variety of food on offer considerably.

You will also understand that we have a very short season in which to make money. We lose money throughout the winter months, yet we stay open to our detriment in order to keep the area lively. The current rental increase means that during the winter the daily rent is often similar to our total daily takings.

We only seek a fair rent that recognises the economic reality for all traders. We are not cash cows to be milked but small businesses that add a lot to Dorset's tourist offering. The current strategy is genuinely negative for Dorset and our tourist sector, and suggests anti-business attitude from the Council that only ends up hurting our wonderful County.

Response by Cllr R Biggs

As part of ongoing asset management reviews, the Council is exploring alternative rental models, including income-based approaches such as turnover rents. Additionally, consideration is being given to the potential transfer of these assets to Town and Parish Councils, who may be better positioned to respond to local economic dynamics and community needs. These approaches reflect a more responsive and sustainable way of managing property assets, particularly in areas with seasonal trading patterns and diverse business pressures.

The Council has a statutory responsibility to secure best consideration in relation to its property assets. For commercial holdings, this includes the setting of appropriate rental levels. The income derived from these assets contributes to the Council's wider revenue budget, supporting the delivery of essential public services.

In the case of the commercial kiosk sites at West Bay and Lyme Regis, these fall under the harbour undertaking, and as such, rental income from these sites is directed to the Harbours' revenue budget. It is therefore incumbent upon the Council to ensure we continue to achieve best consideration in support of harbour operations.

Lease renewals and rent reviews are standard mechanisms through which rental values may be adjusted in line with contractual terms. Open market rent assessments are informed by comparable evidence and reflect the level a prospective tenant would reasonably expect to pay. The Council acknowledges the challenges that seasonal fluctuations in trade present for tenants. While market rent assessments inherently reflect such variations, we remain acutely aware of the diverse operational pressures faced by individual businesses and the implications for their long-term viability.

It is important to note that benchmarking rental values is inherently complex. Rental levels are highly specific to each individual property and lease, influenced by a wide range of factors including location, demand, lease terms, and trading potential. This means that direct comparisons across counties or authorities can be misleading and risk being taken out of context, especially when not grounded in like-for-like property data.

While the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is often referenced in financial contexts and does include private residential rental payments, it does not include commercial

rents. As such, CPI is not a property market index, and the movement of commercial rental values does not necessarily align with general inflation. That said, there can be a degree of correlation in some sectors, where commercial rents may move broadly in step with inflationary trends. However, the property market is influenced by a distinct set of factors, which can result in rental trends that diverge from CPI. For example, in some sectors, rental values have decreased even as CPI has risen.

Question 3 – submitted by David Frankl

I agree with the draft local transport plan objectives, in particular, prioritising walking, wheeling and cycling, delivering a connected, inclusive network of active-travel routes and minimising transport's negative health impacts.

Lowering of speed limits is all about safety on our roads, yet the present 20mph policy does not mention safety, it is written from a driver's point of view. Traffic surveys measure speed, not the other attributes that need to be considered when assessing appropriate speed limits. Keep average speeds up and you will likely not get the speed limit reduced.

The present 20mph policy appears to have been written to make it difficult to get 20mph limits in place. It was last reviewed in 2022 and was due to be reviewed in 2024.

When will it be reviewed to reflect current best practice and align it with the draft local transport plan, encouraging walking and cycling and putting the safety of vulnerable road users before car drivers?

Response by Cllr J Andrews

Dorset Council's 20mph policy places road safety at its core, clearly outlining our commitment to considering the implementation of 20mph speed limits where they can enhance safety for pedestrians and cyclists, and contribute to a reduction in road traffic collisions. Beyond safety, the policy supports broader objectives including improved quality of life, the promotion of healthier lifestyles, environmental sustainability, and strengthened social and economic wellbeing within communities. These objectives are closely aligned with the priorities identified in our recent consultation on the next Local Transport Plan.

Since the introduction of the 20mph policy, there has been strong public interest, with many communities submitting formal applications for implementation. So far, new limits have been setup in Bridport Town Centre, Wimborne Town Centre, Langton Matravers, Winfrith Newburgh, Pimperne, Child Okeford and Winterborne

Kingston. Cheselbourne and Okeford Fitzpaine are scheduled for delivery this month and another scheme in Wimborne is planned for November. We continue to support communities applying for new speed limits.

The strong level of community engagement and uptake clearly demonstrates that the policy is delivering meaningful benefits and remains well-aligned with local priorities. Consequently, there are no current plans for a formal review. However, we continue to maintain close liaison with the Department for Transport and other local authorities to ensure our approach remains evidence-based, responsive, and reflective of emerging insights from studies being undertaken in other areas.

Residents interested in a 20mph speed limit for their area are encouraged to contact their local town or parish council, or their Dorset Councillor, to initiate the process.