

PEOPLE AND HEALTH OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2025

Present: Cllrs Beryl Ezzard (Chair), Louise Bown (Vice-Chair), Jindy Atwal, Alex Fuhrmann, Ryan Holloway, Stella Jones, Steve Murcer, Jon Orrell, Mike Parkes and Byron Quayle

Also present: Cllr Alex Brenton, Cllr Steve Robinson and Cllr Gill Taylor

Also present remotely: Cllr Jane Somper

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Andrew Billany (Corporate Director for Housing), George Dare (Senior Democratic and Governance Officer), Sam Poole (Interim Corporate Director for Commissioning & Improvement), Andy Frost (Service Manager for Community Safety), Ian Grant (Programme Coordinator), Steven March (Service Manager for Housing Standards) and Louis Wicks (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice)

19. **Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

20. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

21. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2025 were confirmed and signed.

22. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

23. **Councillor Questions**

Two questions were submitted by a councillor, with responses given by the Cabinet Member for Health and Housing. The responses to the questions are attached to these minutes.

24. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

25. **Empty Homes Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Health and Housing introduced the Empty Homes Strategy. The strategy had been developed in partnership with stakeholders, with a member Task & Finish group contributing to the strategy development. The Strategy set out all the options available for empty homes to be brought back into use, with enforcement being used as a last resort.

The committee discussed the financial aspects of the report, including £600k capital reducing to £500k per year in 2028/29, and the staffing capacity of the team to deal with the number of empty homes. The capital funding used to purchase empty-homes could be reinvested when the property is disposed. There was wide support from the committee to increase staffing capacity and investment levels, to bring more empty homes back into use.

Proposed by Cllr A Fuhrmann, seconded by Cllr R Holloway.

Decision:

To recommend to Cabinet that the Empty Homes Strategy budget is maintained and that priority be made into increasing staff capacity

In addition to this discussion, members asked questions of the officers, and the following points were raised:

- A compulsory purchase of an empty property would be a last resort, and some owners may want to sell their property to the council. Some empty properties could be repurposed by the council, or they could be sold within a few months.
- There were checks and balances to ensure value for money, which included internal process, a capital strategy board which assesses cost effectiveness, there were also groups which checked rates and tendering, as well as a responsibility of the Director of Housing to have oversight of projects.
- One compulsory purchase order had been made since 2021, however it was likely this would be needed again in the future and other legal remedies were possible, such as compulsory leasing.

Proposed by Cllr R Holloway, seconded by Cllr J Atwal.

Decision:

To recommend to Cabinet that it approves the adoption of the Empty Homes Strategy.

26. **Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028**

The Domestic Abuse Programme Manager introduced the report. The Domestic Abuse Strategy was developed in conjunction with the Community Safety Partnership, which sought to avoid duplication and build upon existing work. He reflected on the progress made through the previous Domestic Abuse Strategy

and that the new strategy gave an opportunity to build upon work already undertaken to tackle domestic abuse over the next 3 years.

Committee members asked questions of the officers, and the following points were raised:

- In order to reach people affected by domestic abuse, there are local communication campaigns and national campaigns throughout the year.
- An initiative called the Dragonfly Project was a community-based domestic abuse awareness programme which trained community champions. Information about the project would be circulated to all members.
- The Safeguarding Families Together project and using talks in schools on healthy relationships were both used to prevent domestic abuse in young people.
- The strategy and its outcomes would be monitored through a delivery plan and performance measures, with formal monitoring through the Community Safety Partnership.
- Deprivation could be a contributor to domestic abuse; however domestic abuse could happen in all households.

Proposed by Cllr R Holloway, seconded by Cllr J Atwal.

Decision:

That the Committee recommend to Cabinet that the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-28 be approved.

27. **Age Friendly Communities**

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care introduced the report which encompassed a vision for Age Friendly Communities. It would build upon the work of the Thriving Communities programme. There would be differences to the implementation of Age Friendly Communities across the county, due to the differences between local areas. The Corporate Director for Commissioning and Improvement outlined the recommendations in the report.

Members discussed the report and raised the following points:

- How the age-friendly communities programme would be promoted.
- How decision-making could become more age friendly.
- There was a strong funding case for age friendly communities.
- External funding for specific age-friendly work was available.
- The vision for outcomes was that older people felt part of society more. Suggestions to measure this were social participation, better use of community transport, volunteer engagement rates, and the key performance indicators for entering into care.
- There was a concern that there was not enough meaning to age-friendly communities, and there needed to be more resources for it to be meaningful.

- There was an aspiration for a site in Bridport to be built as an age-friendly community.

During the discussion, the committee made the following recommendations.

Proposed by Cllr R Holloway, seconded by Cllr A Fuhrmann.

Decision: To recommend to Cabinet that it promotes Age Friendly Communities through local charities, businesses, faith groups, and local councils.

Proposed by Cllr A Fuhrmann, seconded by Cllr R Holloway.

Decision: To recommend that an Age Friendly Wheel be a part of every council report in the same way as equalities and environment is currently presented.

The recommendations set out in the report were proposed by Cllr R Holloway and seconded by Cllr J Atwal.

Decision:

That the committee recommend to Cabinet that it:

1. Endorses Dorset's application for Age Friendly accreditation by the World Health Organisation (WHO).
2. Endorses the integration of Age-Friendly principles into whole council strategy and planning considerations including Adult Social Care locality practice, commissioning and strategic planning.
3. Through the Council's OFC programme (Commissioning & Procurement & Community Partnerships Programmes), integrates age friendly principles into design of infrastructure, transport, housing, and public spaces.

28. Committee's Work Programme and Executive Forward Plans

The Committee noted their work programme and the executive forward plans.

29. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 8.50 pm

Chairman

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