

Cabinet 29 January 2026

Public Participation

Questions

1. Question from James Gillet

PREAMBLE

I have reviewed Section 11.1e of the Transforming Public and Community Transport report, which sets an 'hourly' target for core routes. In the Dorchester and Weymouth areas, busy services like the 1, 2, and 10 already run every 12–15 minutes; reducing these would be a major downgrade for this vital public transport link. Furthermore, residents are frustrated by First's aging fleet of buses and the lack of reliable, frequent direct links to major regional hubs like Poole and Yeovil, which restricts local job opportunities. I also support cheaper fares for 16-25s and a unified ticketing system to modernise our network in line with the high-quality Morebus model seen elsewhere in Dorset.

QUESTION

To achieve the modern vision in Section 4.3, will the Council commit to maintaining 10–15 minute high-frequency targets for busy urban routes across both Dorchester and Weymouth and include requirements for newer vehicles, a restored frequent and direct link to Poole and Yeovil for commuters, and a unified ticketing system rather than applying the lower hourly standard to these vital services?

2. Question from Karen Tipples

Statement on Use of Council Tax Where Section 106 Funding Exists

The proposed 12% increase in Shaftesbury Town Council's precept is not being driven by unavoidable costs, but by the use of Council Tax to fund projects that already have allocated Section 106 developer contributions and which, under proper governance, should not be impacting residents' council tax at all.

1. First, the Mampitts Hub.

Dorset Council Cabinet agreed in October 2025 that this project would be subject to strict project cost control and that early drawdown of Section 106 funds would be available. Despite this, over £60,000 of Council Tax has already been used to fund Mampitts Hub costs, with only a partial Section 106 reimbursement claimed. There is no evidence of a ringfenced project account, no clear reconciliation between Council Tax and Section 106 expenditure, and no published cost-control framework, despite Cabinet direction.

2. Second, Wincombe Recreational Park.

Dorset Council Cabinet papers confirm that £200,000 of Section 106 funding has been agreed with Shaftesbury Town Council for this project. Despite this, the Town Council has added £164,000 of Council Tax to the precept for Wincombe, without published project plans, delivery dates, or cost breakdowns. This represents Council Tax being used in place of developer contributions, contrary to the purpose of Section 106.

3. Third, the Youth Club.

There is £128,000 of Section 106 funding allocated, yet the Town Council has added £5,000 of Council Tax for this project. Again, Council Tax is being used where ringfenced developer funding already exists.

In addition, the precept includes:

- £19,000 in 'Professional and Legal' Cost Centre for “Dorset Council devolution”, with no definition, scope, or supporting agreement published.
- £25,000 for High Street traffic management under Ear Marked Reserve, despite Dorset Highways previously indicating that surveys could be undertaken at no cost to the Town Council.

Taken together, these decisions show a pattern where Council Tax is being used as a substitute for Section 106 funding, rather than Section 106 being used to reduce pressure on residents' bills.

This matters because Section 106 contributions are intended to be spent as a priority in towns like Shaftesbury, which have experienced rapid housing development. When substantial Section 106 funding is allocated and available, Council Tax precepts should not be rising to fund the same infrastructure.

Question to Dorset Council Cabinet

Given the Cabinet decision of October 2025 requiring strict cost control on the Mampitts Hub, and given the confirmed allocation of Section 106 funding for Wincombe Recreation Park and the Youth Club, what action will Dorset Council now take to ensure that Section 106 funds are properly ringfenced, transparently accounted for, and used to reduce — rather than increase — Council Tax for Shaftesbury residents.