

Full Council – 10 February 2026
Questions submitted by Councillors

Question 1 – submitted by Cllr J Somper

Hate crimes continue to be reported across Dorset on multiple strands, including antisemitism, racism, disability-related hate, sexual orientation, and religion. In August 2025, antisemitic incidents were reported in neighbouring Bournemouth, including the ultimate alarming symbol, a swastika graffitied on to the walls of the home of a religious leader and an assault on a Jewish teenager with an air weapon, following which Dorset Police increased patrols and reassurance for Jewish communities.

There has been a deeply concerning escalation in antisemitic hate crimes in the UK and internationally, including the fatal attack in December at Bondi Beach in Australia and an attack at a synagogue in Manchester, occurring as Jewish people were travelling to worship or to celebrate. These events have understandably heightened anxiety within Jewish communities.

Members of Dorset Council were contacted by Dorset Police seeking information about any Jewish community events during Hanukah in December. This was done to provide reassurance and ensure appropriate safeguarding. While welcome, this highlights the ongoing and immediate nature of the risk faced by some communities at moments of religious and cultural significance.

Dorset Police data shows that hate crime continues to be recorded across the county, including racially motivated offences, disability-related incidents, and religion-based hate crime.

Given the urgency of these developments, will the Cabinet Member commit to asking the Dorset Community Safety Partnership to designate hate crime prevention as a specific priority within its Community Safety Plan, including improved reporting, victim support, community engagement, and visible reassurance for communities at increased risk?

Question 2 – submitted by Cllr S Flower

Material Planning Development Management Considerations – Viability

One of the key material considerations currently is scheme viability. This council and predecessor councils have experienced post planning application approval, submissions by developers claiming that the approved housing development would no longer be viable if the obligation for social housing allocation for rent or shared equity is retained in the scheme.

With the support of a spreadsheet, it is possible for developers to 'prove' that the site is no longer viable. This results in the loss of much needed housing for local people, something I am aware has cross-party support in this chamber.

The imposition of yet another non-negotiable levy of £400 per dwelling to cater for the New Forest Recreational Mitigation Strategy adds another cost burden, which could well further impact on the viability of schemes, which are within the designated zone, whilst bringing no direct benefit to the people of Dorset.

When the New Forest Recreation Mitigation Strategy was brought to the 9 December Cabinet, I asked a question concerning the impact on scheme viability. The response was that any financial impact would be discounted from the land value. This is interesting in as much as another application came back to the 19 November Eastern Area Planning Committee [one of several cases in the past] with a spreadsheet claiming that the scheme was no longer viable. I do not recall that discounting of the land value was a factor in this case. The question was asked whether there was a difference between the land value when permission was originally granted and the figure quoted on the spreadsheet; unfortunately, this information was not available.

So, my question is in two parts:

1. Will officers commit to a piece of work to analyse the impact of developer contributions and deliverability of schemes, with a clear link to the provision of social housing in accordance with the aims and aspiration of this council's legacy Local Plans, the Dorset Local Plan once adopted and the Dorset Plan which has housing as a key feature.
2. In future can Area Planning Committees be made aware of the viability, of development schemes, which include a percentage of social housing, beyond just words. Planning Committee reports should include a detailed spreadsheet setting out the financial considerations, when planning applications are submitted in the first instance. This would ensure that scheme viability is established [with contingencies] prior to the granting of planning permission.

Thank you, Madam Chairman

Question 3 – submitted by Cllr S Flower

Dorset Local Plan – Regs 19 draft plan preparation

I refer to a recent Parliamentary Question to the Planning Minister from a Dorset MP, which elicited, what could be taken as an important clarification of national planning policy. The Minister confirmed that Local Authorities should, and I quote: ***“make an assessment of the number of new homes that can be provided in their area... justified by evidence on land availability, constraints on development such as***

National Landscapes and areas at risk of flooding, and other relevant matters. Local Plans must be deliverable, based on proportionate evidence, and consistent with national policy, whilst taking the views of local people into account.”

At face value, this response could be seen as giving encouragement for Dorset Council to push back on the rather simplistic aim of meeting the imposed massively increased housing targets set by Government. These arbitrary targets don't in any way relate to the needs and aspirations of the people of Dorset.

The major constraints in the Dorset Council area must surely be flooding risk, 400m habitats zones, green belt and National Landscapes, which is clearly why certain sites have to be excluded. As Members in this chamber will be aware there are huge community concerns regarding these matters, which surely have been expressed in responses to recent Regs 18 Land Allocations public consultation.

So, given the Minister's response, my question is whether this was simply a re-quote of the NPPF or is this cause for optimism. Does this Council still need to take account of the critical part of the sentence in para.62 of the NPPF, which includes reference to the local housing needs assessment quote '***should be conducted using the standard method for calculating housing numbers***'.

Can members in this chamber and the communities of Dorset be reassured that due weight will be applied, and consideration given, when taking account of local views and concerns during the sifting process, regarding which sites will be included or excluded during Dorset Council Draft Local Plan preparation.

Thank you, Madam Chairman

Question 4 – submitted by Cllr R Bryan

My question is for the Cabinet Member for planning

On the 14 January I attended the Eastern Planning Committee and had the opportunity to speak to the Corporate Director for Planning about a local planning issue.

I requested details of existing planning and any extant planning permissions on the site in question, which is causing significant issues for my residents; Having already sent emails requesting this information.

With the investment in a new planning system following the formation of the unitary council I am surprised just how long it has taken to even get an acknowledgement of my request.

As recently as Monday 2nd February I was told that I should receive an email with the details of planning permissions, both current and historic and if not received a

written response I was to inform the writer as to the failure to deliver the details I had requested.

As from today the site in question is running yet another business that does not have planning permission.

My question is, what does the Cabinet Member feel is a reasonable time for an elected member to receive acknowledgement of their request for information, bearing in mind the officer member protocol.

Thank you, Madam Chairman,

Question 5 – submitted by Cllr R Bryan

Can I ask the Cabinet Member for Place what plans are in place to clear the drains and gullies to allow for the dispersal of the huge amounts of ground water we have experienced during the last week.

I requested information as to how much we spend on road sweeping and drain clearance; I did receive that information within 36 hrs. This information worryingly demonstrated that we do not have separate budget for this important front-line service. It also revealed that staff employed to deal with drains and road sweeping are often transferred to waste collection when there is a short-term lack of drivers for the HGV waste collection vehicles.

During my time as Portfolio Holder for Highway put forward a suggestion for an Edge-to-Edge review, with the sole purpose of keeping roads and walkways clear of debris that blocks the drains, which would also have the benefit of reduce highway maintenance costs.

During the last few days, the weather has been exceptionable wet to say the least, but unless we keep drains and roadside gullies clear then flooding and the subsequent highway damage will always be an issue.

Under the previous Dorset County Council, the decision was made to reduce the budget on highways maintenance by circa £183 K by reducing the road sweeping and drains clearance. The outcome of this rather short-sighted decision was damage to highway surfaces. I am aware that this incurred a cost of over £1 million to remedy. Hence my request for a full review.

Without the budget to clear drains and gullies the situation will only get worse. In the 2026/27 budget I cannot identify any financial committed to clear the roads of the weeds and get the drains and gulleys clear, which would therefore avoiding costly highway repairs and ensure roads kept open for the motorist.

So, my question is, what plans are in place to deal with the issue I have outlined.

Thank you, Madam Chairman

Question 6 – submitted by Cllr J Vitali

To ask the Cabinet Member for Property and Assets how Dorset Council proposes to address persistent issues with Shepherd's Close County Farm in Marnhull, and:

- a) To set out what immediate actions are to be taken to reduce agricultural runoff and pollutants from running into neighbouring properties, and the timelines for those interventions;
- b) To set out the longer-term plans for investment in the farm and support for the tenant;
- c) To explain why it has taken some two years to address issues raised by adjacent residents and the ward member;
- d) To explain why his department's communications with the ward member have been so inadequate.