

## **Cabinet 28 July 2026**

### **Questions from Councillors**

#### **1. Question from Cllr H Hobbs-Chell**

##### **Youth employment**

We have all seen the statistics and renewed interest in youth unemployment at a national level, and indeed I have read with interest the latest statistics release in June from the House of Commons. This release showed that nationally unemployment increased, employment rate down, compared to the previous year. Whilst the figures are not currently at the peak historically, the trends are clear – increasing youth unemployment is occurring. This makes for important reading, and, when combined with the SEND reforms coming forward, the cost-of-living difficulties, and the housing crisis faced, I know I am not alone in feeling a renewed sense of duty to do all we can to support our young people to have the opportunities, life experiences and feeling of agency as they embark upon adult life. Furthermore, we as a Council recently published our Economic Development strategy and are working on our Local plan and Design code, housing strategy and delivery, family hub and best start in life reforms, and responding to the SEND reforms as previously mentioned. In all these conversations, youth unemployment, opportunities, and the statistics on youth retention have been topics of great concern and attention, and we all have spoken about the need to examine and support this. At a front-line level, both as a Councillor and in my role as the chair of our food and essentials bank and community support organisation in Ferndown, am acutely aware of the growing problem facing our young people who are desperate to find paid employment, but cannot find the job vacancies, or struggle with interviews, and find that jobs are incredibly oversubscribed and competitive. This is despite young people actively volunteering and having additional skills and experience above and beyond formal education often. Whilst at a local level I am working with the business community to support this, I feel there is a wonderful opportunity for Dorset Council to proactively seek improvements and better outcomes for our young people, in partnership with businesses and the VCS sector. I am therefore asking if the Cabinet lead for Economic Development, and/or other members of the cabinet as best fits, as well as group leaders or nominated representatives, would commit to an initial round table discussion (to be decided pre round table) with business leaders in Dorset and other organisations supporting youth employment and skills, to examine the issues and opportunities we have within Dorset?

#### **2. Question from Cllr H Hobbs-Chell**

##### **School crossing patrol**

Whilst much has been discussed and debated recently with regards the school crossing patrol in Ferndown, and notwithstanding the huge importance of children's safety, I would like to take the opportunity to be able to clarify some of the facts which appear to have become unclear during this process. For clarity, the crossings do not sit directly in my ward, however, having taken advice, due to their setting within the schools that serve all of Ferndown, I have

a responsibility and desire to reflect and support the considerable number of residents from my ward for whom the schools are their education point.

I recognise and thank the Ferndown North ward members Cllrs Lugg and Parkes for campaigning for many years for permanent crossing points at Church Road, and also thank this Cabinet and Cabinet lead for recognising the urgency of need at this site and delivering the over quarter million pound investment in safer crossing points for both our young people and indeed all our residents, at any time of the day or night, making this stretch much more age and pedestrian friendly. I also wholeheartedly thank Sarah and all our other school crossing patrol officers for their dedication and commitment to ensuring our young people are looked after. Specifically, please could you provide clarity on the following:

Dorset Council have previously advised that it is on the advice of the Police that Dorset Council are not able to continue with a permanent school crossing patrol at this site with the installation of 2 permanent crossing points. Please could you confirm this to be the case, and publish the written advice in the written response to this question?

Confirm commitment to continuing to examine the possibility of a School Street at Mountbatten or Church Road, a school walking bus, and speed reductions at school drop off times, as deemed to be appropriate and necessary to ensure safe travel, (I am grateful to the Cabinet lead and officers as I know this feasibility work is already underway having discussed and sought assistance with this myself)

Outline the specific safety concerns and confusion relating to having a school crossing patrol on a zebra crossing, or advise whom I can contact within the Police to advise on this

Confirm how many near misses and accidents within 50m of either crossing have been reported since the introduction of the permanent crossings.

Confirm that as part of the consultation with ward members, local partners, and the public, the removal of the school crossing patrol from September 2026 was included as currently stated on the Dorset Council web page entry. As part of this, could you confirm the public outcome of the consultation responses from the public.