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CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 28 JULY 2026

Present: Cllrs Nick Ireland (Chair), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chair), Jon Andrews, Shane Bartlett, Matt Bell, Simon Clifford, Steve Robinson, Clare Sutton, Gill Taylor and Ben Wilson

Apologies:

Also present: Cllr Piers Brown, Cllr Toni Coombs, Cllr Spencer Flower, Cllr Jack Jeanes, Cllr Carole Jones, Cllr Craig Monks and Cllr Hannah Hobbs-Chell

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

Jan Britton (Executive Director - Economy and Environment), Sean Cremer (Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director - Children's Services), Jen Furnell (Corporate Director for Education and Learning), Julia Ingram (Director - Adult Social Care), Jonathan Mair (Director - Assurance (Monitoring Officer)), Christopher Whitehouse (Projects Team Manager), Jon Bird (Service Manager for Economic Development and Skills), Laura Cornette (Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships), Liz Crocker (Head of Strategy), Mike Garrity (Corporate Director for Planning), Katie Hale (Head of Revenues and Benefits) and Catherine Howe (Chief Executive)

31. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

32. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to report.

33. Public Participation

There were no questions or statements from the public for this meeting.

34. Questions from Councillors

There were two questions from Councillor H Hobbs-Chell; these along with the responses are set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

35. Forward Plan

The draft Cabinet Forward Plan, together with the additional items added since the publication of the agenda, was received and noted.

36. **Dorset Council Annual Report 2025 - 2026**

The Leader of the Council set out the Annual Report, which provided an overview of the Council's performance and progress against the Council Plan over the past year. The report highlighted the achievements delivered despite significant financial pressures and increasing demand for services, and recognised the contribution of staff, councillors, partners, volunteers, businesses and local communities.

There had been significant progress across the Council's key priorities of housing, the economy, communities, and climate and nature, while also identifying areas for further improvement.

Cabinet Members took this opportunity to outline key achievements and challenges within their respective service areas.

In response to a question regarding the front door customer service, the Cabinet Member for Transformation, Customer & Workforce confirmed that he would investigate the issues raised and report back to the member concerned direct.

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland and seconded by Cllr S Clifford

Decision

That the Dorset Council Annual Report for 2025-2026 be received and noted.

Reason for the decision

The annual report provided a summary of the council's performance and achievements over the past year and demonstrated delivery against the Council Plan priorities. Approval of the report allowed for it to be formally published as part of the council's commitment to transparency, accountability and effective governance.

37. **Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan**

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth and Strategic Assets presented a report on Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan (DLVEPDM). The Plan set out a 10-year strategy to establish Dorset as a welcoming, vibrant and year-round visitor destination. He further highlighted that the visitor economy was a significant driver of Dorset's economy, supporting businesses, employment, cultural and heritage assets, transport and infrastructure.

Cllr Bell seconded the recommendation and emphasised the wider benefits of a strong visitor economy, including its positive contribution to health, wellbeing and thriving communities.

In response to a question relating to funding, the Cabinet Member confirmed that no additional funding was required to develop the Destination Management Plan. However, the Cabinet Member for Resources advised that delivering the plan's longer-term ambitions may require additional investment. Any future funding proposals would be supported by a business case and considered through the Council's budget-setting process, including approval by Full Council as part of the 2027/28 budget.

Cabinet welcomed the report and emphasised the importance of increasing visitor spend throughout the year, reducing reliance on seasonal tourism, and ensuring Dorset remained an attractive destination for visitors of all budgets. Members also highlighted the need to reflect the distinct identities of communities across the Dorset Council area and welcomed the use of community engagement to help inform the development of the wider visitor economy.

It was proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr M Bell

Decision

- (a) That the Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan (DLVEPDM) be adopted and
- (b) That additional funding be added to the 2027/2028 budget to meet the aspirations within the plan.

Note: additional funding to meet the aspirations of the Destination Management Plan would be subject to the agreement of Full Council as part of setting the 2027/28 budget.

- (c) That the local offering be recognised in the wording of the DLVEPDM action plan.

Reason for the decision

The visitor economy affected tourists, businesses, employment opportunities, cultural and heritage assets, transport networks, and infrastructure across Dorset. The Destination Management Plan was developed collaboratively with businesses, stakeholders, and cultural partners to provide a clear strategic framework for the visitor economy. Adoption of the Plan supported the development of a more resilient, sustainable, and competitive visitor economy, delivering benefits to communities, businesses, and visitors across Dorset throughout the year.

38. **SEND Reform Plan**

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education presented a report on the final Dorset SEND Reform Plan that had been submitted to the DfE on 19 June 2026.

The plan had been developed through extensive partnership working with education, health and council colleagues, alongside children and young people with SEND and their families. Subject to DfE approval, which was expected in September, the plan would unlock significant financial support through the High Needs Block Stability Grant. Implementation was already underway, supported by £1.8 million of DfE funding for the Dorset Expertise Offer, with progress overseen by the independently chaired Dorset Alliance for Inclusion and Excellence in Education.

In response to questions regarding the higher rate of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) growth in Dorset compared with the national average, members were advised that the exact reasons for this increase were not yet fully understood. However, Dorset's rural characteristics were likely to be a significant factor. Many children in Dorset beginning their education in small, close-knit primary schools where their needs were well understood and effectively supported. Transitioning to larger secondary schools presented additional challenges, and both families and schools may seek the reassurance of an EHCP to ensure appropriate support was in place.

To address this, the council was developing a range of initiatives, including Inclusion Hubs and the Experts at Hand service, delivered through the locality-based Family Help model. These were intended to provide earlier access to specialist advice and support, strengthen inclusive practice in mainstream schools, and give families and education settings greater confidence that children's needs could be met effectively without necessarily requiring a statutory plan.

Responding to further detailed questions, the Cabinet Member advised that it was not possible to provide a full response at the meeting and invited the member concerned to submit their questions directly after the meeting so that a detailed response could be provided. However, she highlighted that specialist schools remained the right provision for some children and young people, while others could achieve better outcomes in mainstream schools with the appropriate support in place.

She emphasised that improving workforce skills and teacher training would be critical to the success of the reforms, noting that the DfE had set aside funding to support workforce development. The Executive Director also acknowledged concerns that Inclusion Hubs could unintentionally become a route to exclusion, but assured members that these risks were recognised and that mitigating actions would be put in place. The council would also continue to support and invest in its special school sector as an important part of the overall SEND system.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr S Clifford

Decision

- (a) That the content of Dorset's Local Area SEND Reform Plan (2026-2029) be noted.
- (b) That the plan submitted to the Department for Education be endorsed.
- (c) That the proposed programme of reform and associated transformation activity be supported.
- (d) That further updates on delivery, performance and financial impact be brought back to Cabinet at key milestones.

Reason for the decision

The Reform Plan was a key strategic priority for the Council and a mandatory requirement under the Government's SEND reform programme. Its approval and delivery would help address growing financial pressures, improve outcomes for children and young people, increase local educational provision, and reduce reliance on costly out-of-area placements, creating a more sustainable and inclusive SEND system.

39. **Dorset Council Local Plan**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Planning Enforcement advised that, in response to changes introduced by the Government to the local plan-making system, Dorset Council was required to transition to the new-style Local Plan framework, with a timetable of 30-months. He noted that Dorset was not alone in facing this challenge, with many local planning authorities across the country working to adapt to the new requirements.

In response to comments, the Cabinet Member acknowledged members' frustrations regarding the time taken to develop a new Local Plan and recognised the importance of maintaining momentum as implementation progressed.

It was proposed by Cllr S Bartlett and seconded by Cllr N Ireland

Decision

- (a) That Cabinet agrees to progress the Dorset Council Local Plan via the new plan-making system;
- (b) That the governance arrangements outlined in the report be agreed, delegating the detailed arrangements to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Planning Enforcement in consultation with the Corporate Director for Planning;

- (c) That the indicative timetable for the production of the local plan as set out in Appendix 1 (of the Cabinet report – 28 July 2026) be agreed with the detail being delegated to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Planning Enforcement and the Corporate Director for Planning, to review and vary this timetable and update and publish when necessary;
- (d) That the content and publication of the formal Notice of Intent to Commence Plan Making included in Appendix 2 (of the Cabinet report – 28 July 2026) be agreed;
- (e) That the outline of the focused Scoping Consultation and Consultation Strategy in Appendix 3 (of the Cabinet report – 28 July 2026) be noted with the detail to be agreed with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Planning Enforcement;
- (f) That the spend of up to £1,000,000, initially funded from Local Plan Reserves, to bring in additional support to the project as and when needed, be agreed.

Reason for the decision

To put the necessary arrangements in place to enable the Dorset Council Local Plan to be prepared as quickly and efficiently as possible under the new plan-making system.

40. Dorset History Centre - approval sought to proceed with development of capital project

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration Economic Growth and Strategic Assets sought approval to proceed with the development of the “Past Lives, Future Proofed” project in preparation for the stage 2 application to the National Lottery heritage Fund in November 2027. The project would extend the working life of the Dorset History Centre by decades.

It was proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr M Bell

Decision

- (a) That the Dorset History Centre’s request to proceed with externally funded development work on its capital project Past Lives, Future Proofed further to the anticipated submission of a Stage 2 application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in November 2027 for £3.8 million and subsequent Delivery Phase of the project whose total value over both phases is £5.28 million, be approved.
- (b) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Economy and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth and Strategic Assets to approve spend decisions, including procurement, contract award, and payment of invoices, within the Total Scheme Budget for the Dorset History Centre capital project as detailed in paragraph 4.2, of the Cabinet report of 28 July 2026.

All activity will be undertaken in accordance with Dorset Council's Contract Procedure Rules, Financial Regulations, Scheme of Delegation and applicable law. Procurement of services for the Delivery Phase of the project is contingent upon a successful Stage 2 application to NLHF.

- (c) That Dorset Council acts as financial guarantor: Dorset History Centre intends to bridge the current budget gap of £110,000 (see para 4.3 of the Cabinet report of 28 July 2026) by fundraising from a variety of sources.

In the event that this proved challenging, Dorset Council will meet the budget shortfall to ensure the viability of the project and the securing of the large capital grant from National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Reason for the decision

To support and endorse the development of a project that would result in significant inward investment in Dorset's cultural infrastructure through the provision of capital improvements to Dorset History Centre and a pan-Dorset public engagement programme.

41. Procurement - Dorset Highways Contractor Resource (Labour Top up) Framework

Cabinet considered a report that sought approval to amend the estimated Dorset Council total spend over the contract term from £20 million to £60 million, while retaining the existing eight-year contract period. Members were advised that the originally approved value did not accurately reflect the intended scope and potential usage of the framework and could unintentionally constrain its use, create compliance risks, disrupt service provision, and necessitate an unplanned procurement exercise. The amendment would ensure that the procurement documentation accurately reflected the framework's intended value and provide continued flexibility to meet future service requirements.

Cabinet unanimously supported the recommendation.

It was proposed by Cllr J Andrews and seconded by Cllr C Sutton

Decision

That the 'Estimated DC Total Spend over Contract Term' value of £20m as set out in Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report of 12 March 2024 be replaced with a value of £60m.

Reason for the decision

To ensure compliant spend in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

42. Crisis and Resilience Fund

The Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention and Communities presented the report and its recommendations, noting that the item had also been considered by People & Health Overview Committee on 6 July 2026. The Crisis and Resilience Fund had replaced the Household Support Fund and the report set out the proposed approach in detail to strengthen and develop the Council's longer-term resilience offer.

It was proposed by Cllr M Bell and seconded by Cllr S Clifford

Decision

That:

- (a) Interim governance of the Crisis and Resilience Fund programme be provided through the Communities and Prevention Delivery Board, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention and Communities and the Cabinet Member for Housing.
- (b) An annual report on Crisis and Resilience Fund spend and impact be presented to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee.
- (c) The proposals set out in Appendix 2 of the Cabinet report of 28 July 2026, for the allocation of Crisis and Resilience Fund funding to the resilience services and projects identified, be agreed.

Reason for the decision

To provide clear interim governance and decision-making for the Crisis and Resilience Fund through the Communities and Prevention Delivery Board, as part of the council's senior leadership delivery arrangements.

43. **E-Scooter Micromobility Rental Service**

The Cabinet Member for Place Services set out the report and its recommendation. It presented an opportunity for Dorset Council to participate in the nationally recognised e-scooter trial, which sought to explore how micromobility could support and enhance the wider transport network. The trial would also provide a safe and regulated alternative to existing unlawful e-scooter use, expand travel options for residents and visitors, and contribute to the Council's environmental and economic priorities.

He further advised that this proposal had also been considered and was supported by the Place and Resources Overview Committee on 6 July 2026.

It was proposed by Cllr J Andrews and seconded by Cllr N Ireland

Decision

- (a) That the commencement of the proposed e-scooter rental service be approved, comprising:

Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell, through the appointment of a competitively procured operator; and
Corfe Mullen and Upton, through an extension of the existing Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) e-scooter rental scheme.

- (b) That officers be authorised to co-produce geofencing arrangements with Ward Members and Town and Parish Councils, ensuring that local concerns and priorities are reflected in the scheme design, and to engage with the Department for Transport regarding the provision of appropriate warning signage to promote public awareness and safety.

Reason for the decision

The introduction of regulated e-scooter rental schemes supports Dorset Council's adopted strategic objectives, including those set out in the Local Transport Plan, Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Sustainable Transport Plan.

44. **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Working Group - Final Report and Recommendations to Cabinet**

Prior to consideration of the following item, the Director of Assurance and Governance apologised to the Chair of People & Health Scrutiny Committee (PHSC) and the Leader of the Council regarding the timing of the report. He explained that, in accordance with Council procedures, the report should have been presented to Cabinet earlier. Following the meeting of the People & Health Scrutiny Committee in April, formal notification of the Committee's recommendations should have been sent to the Leader of the Council, triggering the two-month period for Cabinet consideration. This process was not followed, and the required timescales were not met. The Director indicated that measures had now been put into place to prevent a recurrence.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education presented a report responding to the recommendations made by the People and Health Scrutiny Committee. She proposed that Cabinet accept all the recommendations, as they were broadly consistent with the service's existing direction of travel and the improvements already being implemented, except for recommendation two. In relation to that recommendation, it was proposed that a phased approach be adopted.

The Chair of People & Health Scrutiny Committee thanked all those involved in the review. She outlined the process undertaken by the working group as part of its investigation, including the inquiry day, and summarised the report's key findings and recommendations for Cabinet's consideration.

In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that further work was required to improve the timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and achieve the target of issuing 75% within the statutory 20-week timescale. She highlighted that performance had improved significantly during the period reviewed by the Committee, increasing from 22% in September

2025 to 58% in Quarter 1 of 2026/27, exceeding the latest national average of 46%. The Cabinet Member also noted that delivery of the EHCP process was dependent on contributions from health partners and education providers, which could affect overall performance.

While supporting continued service improvement, the Cabinet Member advised that a target of 75% (in relation to the PHSC recommendation 2) was not considered realistically achievable on a consistent basis at this stage. It was therefore proposed that Cabinet adopt an initial target of 65%, with a stretch target of 75% from January 2027, following the implementation and embedding of the service improvements set out in the report.

The Cabinet Member thanked the Scrutiny Working Group for their work and effort on this matter and welcomed their continued support and challenge going forward.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr J Andrews

Decision

That the responses to the recommendations of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee, made on 16 April 2026 following its inquiry into Education, Health and Care Assessment and Planning, be agreed.

Reason for the decision

The Scrutiny Committee's recommendations were consistent with actions that the service had already implemented or had identified as necessary to improve the experiences of children and families accessing the service. The service recognised and accepted the Scrutiny Committee's role in holding it to account for performance in this area and welcomed the recommendations as supporting ongoing improvement activity.

45. **Youth Justice Plan**

The Cabinet Member for Children Services, Families and Education presented the report, noting that it had previously been considered by the People and Health Overview Committee on 6 July 2026.

During discussion, several detailed questions were raised. The Cabinet Member advised that full responses could not be provided during the meeting and invited the member concerned to submit their questions afterwards so that a detailed written response could be provided.

The Cabinet Member then invited the Head of Service for the Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service to comment on a few of the issues raised. It was noted that:

- A task and finish group was currently reviewing the membership of the Board, including opportunities to strengthen voluntary sector involvement and ensure that victims' voices were more effectively represented.
- The rate of younger children entering the youth justice system for the first time continued to be closely tracked and monitored.
- In relation to gateway crimes, the service was working closely with Dorset Police and Community Safety colleagues to develop and deliver appropriate intervention plans.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr N Ireland

Recommendation to Full Council

That the Youth Justice Plan 2026/2027 be approved.

Reason for the recommendation

Youth Justice Services were required to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan which should be approved by the Local Authority for that Youth Justice Service. Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service worked across both Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council. Approval was therefore sought from both Dorset Council and from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.

46. **Coombe House School - Future Site Options**

The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education presented the report and recommendations of the Dorset Centre of Excellence Shareholder Committee. The recommendations sought Cabinet's support for further work to be undertaken to explore options for the wider site and associated assets, including Coombe House School.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr N Ireland

Decision

- (a) That the Executive Director for Children's Services work with the Company to model the impact of the 2026 Schools' White Paper and the impact of the proposals relating to Osprey Quay.
- (b) That the Chief Executive establishes a working group to review the commercial options for the site, with the Company.
- (c) Cabinet recognised the need for a short-term investment plan for the site to ensure it was being maintained, (whilst acknowledging the work required in respect of the long-term plan for the site) and instructs the

Executive Director Economy and Environment, to prepare the short-term investment plan.

Reason for the decision

The Council needed to establish its future approach to the use and investment of the wider site and asset.

47. Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031 - First Review

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Planning Enforcement presented a report on the adoption of the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031 First Review following an independent examination.

It was proposed by Cllr S Bartlett and seconded by Cllr N Ireland

Decision

- (a) That the Council ‘makes’ the Modified Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031 (as set out in Appendix A of the Cabinet report of 28 July 2026) part of the statutory development plan for the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Area.
- (b) That the Council offers its congratulations to Shaftesbury Town Council and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group for producing a successful neighbourhood plan review.

Reason for this decision

To formally make the modified neighbourhood plan part of the statutory development plan for the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Area. In addition, to recognise the significant amount of work undertaken by the Town Council and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group in preparing the plan review and to congratulate the Council and the Group on their success.

48. Urgent items

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

49. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business considered at the meeting.

50. Coombe House School - Future Site Options

The exempt appendices associated with agenda item 17 “Coombe House School – Future Site Options” were not discussed at the meeting. The report was considered in open business as set out in min no. xx to these minutes.

Appendix 1 - Councillor Questions

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 8.48 pm

Chair

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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?

Response from Cllr Richard Biggs;

Thank you, Councillor.

You are absolutely right to highlight the importance of youth employment and the challenges many young people face as they move into adulthood.

Supporting young people into employment, training and enterprise remains a key priority for Dorset Council and our partners. We recognise that barriers can include skills development, transport, housing affordability, confidence and, for some, additional support needs.

Importantly, Dorset already benefits from a strong partnership approach through the recently approved **Local Skills Improvement Plan 2026–29**, which was developed through extensive engagement with employers, education and training providers, Dorset Council, BCP Council, employer representative organisations and workforce development partners. The Plan provides a clear framework for addressing current and future skills needs across the area.

Whilst I welcome continued discussion on this important issue, my view is that our priority should be the successful delivery of the actions already identified within the Plan. The focus now needs to be on implementation, accountability and outcomes rather than producing additional strategies. This is an area where scrutiny, the Dorset Skills Board and partners all have an important role to play in monitoring progress and ensuring that commitments translate into real opportunities for young people.

We should also recognise the opportunities presented through devolution. Greater local influence over skills, employment support, economic development and investment has the potential to strengthen the alignment between education, training and employer demand, helping us create more pathways into good-quality jobs and careers for Dorset residents.

I am committed, through my role on the Dorset Skills Board and through the Council's wider economic growth agenda, to working with partners to ensure that young people are equipped with the skills, experience and opportunities they need to succeed.

Supporting young people into employment is not only important for individual life chances but is critical to Dorset's future prosperity, productivity and resilience.

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.

Response from Cllr Jon Andrews

I thank Cllr Hobbs-Chell for these questions, which I know are important to local families and the wider Ferndown community.

Dorset Council's policy is that School Crossing Patrols do not operate at zebra crossings. Drivers already have a legal duty to stop at a zebra crossing when someone is crossing or waiting to cross. The zebra crossing therefore already provides a controlled place to cross. We do not operate a School Crossing Patrol at the same location, and this approach is supported by Dorset Police's Road Safety team. This avoids having two different crossing arrangements at the same point and provides a clear and consistent approach for drivers and pedestrians.

I will provide the written advice received from Dorset Police as part of my written response, where it can legally be shared.

I'm aware that Cllr Lugg has raised a near miss with our Road Safety team. Other than that, since the zebra crossings were introduced, there have been no recorded injury collisions and no near misses formally reported to Dorset Council within 50 metres of either crossing. However, both Dorset Council and Dorset Police recognise the importance of safe driving around schools apart from an email from one of the ward councillors. We will continue to work together during the next school term to monitor the situation, consider any concerns that are raised and support enforcement activity where appropriate.

The permanent zebra crossings were installed through an investment of more than £250,000 to improve safety. Unlike a School Crossing Patrol, which operates only at certain times of the school day, the crossings are available for pupils, parents, residents and other pedestrians throughout the day and night.

The decision to remove the School Crossing Patrol followed a change in Council policy, supported by Dorset Police about the operation of School Crossing Patrols at zebra crossings. As the consultation on the crossing scheme took place before this policy position was adopted, the future operation of the School Crossing Patrol was not included in the consultation and was not something people were asked to comment on. The policy change was subsequently communicated to ward members and the public.

The consultation related to the introduction of the permanent crossings. Feedback received during that process was considered before the scheme was finalised. A summary of the consultation findings is available in the published consultation documents.

We remain committed to looking at other ways to improve safety around Ferndown schools. This includes exploring the potential for a School Street scheme, supporting the development of a walking bus where there is local interest and capacity, and considering any request for a 20mph speed limit, either at school times or on a permanent basis, in line with Dorset Council policy.

The safety of children travelling to and from school remains our priority. We will continue to work with schools, parents, councillors, residents and Dorset Police to identify practical measures that support safe and active travel.