Place and Resources Overview Committee

1 October 2026

Draft Dog Related Public Spaces Order 2027 and associated Consultation Report

For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:
Cllr M Bell, Public Health, Prevention & Communities

Local Councillor(s): All wards

Senior Leadership Team:
S Crowe - Executive Director, Housing, Prevention and Communities

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Statutory Authority: Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

Report status: Public

1.0 Executive Summary

This report summarises the findings from a Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order public consultation undertaken between May and August 2026 (12 weeks). Informed by the consultation, it proposes the new draft Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order 2027 (PSPO) which will replace the existing Public Spaces Protection Order. The report outlines the proposed provisions for the Council area for a period of 3 years from 1 January 2027 until the 31 December 2029.

There were over 5000 responses made to the consultation, the majority of which supported renewing the current provisions. For the protection of public health and the welfare of dogs and their owners, this report recommends renewing the current provisions. Where there are notable other views, these are discussed in the report.

The recommendations from the Committee will be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 10 November 2026.

2.0 Recommendations

1. That members of the Committee consider the draft Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order 2027 including the Consultation Report and Equality Impact Assessment, and comment as necessary.

2. That the draft Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order 2027, amended as necessary, be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

3.0 Reason for the recommendations

To protect public health and safety and animal welfare.

To comply with the requirements of the Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.

To assist with the efficient use of enforcement resources.

To recognise the public's support, through the consultation responses, for certain restrictions required for public health and safety and animal welfare.

To recognise and implement the requirements of equality legislation and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

4.0 The Report

4.1 For a PSPO to be made, the elements within it must meet the following two conditions which are prescribed in the legislation.

Condition 1

Activities carried out in a public place within the authority's area have had a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those living in the locality, or

It is likely that the activities will be carried out in a public place within that area and they will have such an effect.

Condition 2

The effect or likely effect of the activities:

Is or is likely to be of a persistent or continuing nature;

Is or is likely to be, such as to make the activities unreasonable; and justifies the restrictions imposed by the order.

4.2 Both conditions must be satisfied but Members are asked to be particularly mindful of condition 2 when including any proposed land that is to have a dog

restriction placed on it. The inclusion of any restriction should be proportional to the need.

4.3 An Order, as well as meeting the above tests, must be fair, proportionate, and consistent with the principles related to public health and safety to enable dog owners and non-dog owners to enjoy public open spaces. Irresponsible dog ownership can give rise to a range of public health concerns that affect residents, visitors and the wider community. Dog fouling in public spaces presents a risk of exposure to harmful bacteria and parasites, including *Toxocara canis*, which can pose particular health risks to young children and vulnerable individuals. Uncontrolled dogs may also contribute to injuries through bites, attacks or collisions, while dogs that are not kept under proper control can cause fear, anxiety and reduced enjoyment of public spaces for other users.

4.4 In addition, persistent fouling and irresponsible behaviour can undermine the amenity and accessibility of parks, beaches and open spaces, discouraging their use for recreation, exercise and other activities that support physical and mental wellbeing. Exercise and social interaction are also an important components of animal welfare. By encouraging responsible ownership, the Order seeks to maximise the social, health and wellbeing benefits associated with dog ownership whilst minimising the detrimental impacts that can arise from irresponsible behaviour.

4.5 The Order should be enforceable without having detrimental impact on those that are reliant on assistance from dogs. Assistance dogs provide essential support to disabled people, including those with visual impairments, mobility difficulties and a range of medical conditions. Access to public spaces may not be practicable for some disabled people without their assistance dog.

4.6 A small team of Animal Licensing & Dog Control Officers are responsible for raising awareness around dog issues, education, and enforcement. They also undertake a range of other animal welfare duties such as the licensing of premises used for animal boarding and sale. Their work is essential in helping keep Dorset a great place for people and dogs alike and can be helped by responsible dog ownership.

4.7 Officers enforce the provisions of the PSPO by patrolling and investigating complaints. Since 2024, Dorset Council has received between 30 to 50 complaints or enquiries each year relating to the Order at beach locations. These have included reports of alleged breaches, requests for amendments to the restrictions, and general enquiries regarding enforcement. Most of the contacts received relate to the restrictions in place on Front Beach at Lyme Regis, reflecting that the provisions at this location are more contentious.

4.8 An important role of officers, is to raise awareness of the provisions of an Order. A graduated approach to enforcement is operated, seeking to raise awareness and educate in the first instance. A Fixed Penalty Notice is only considered where a person refuses to comply with an officer's instruction; where there is evidence of repeat offending (either through information provided to the officer or through the officer witnessing repeated breaches by the same individual), or where other offences, such as dog fouling have been witnessed to the required evidential standard. Members may wish to consider whether the current priorities and enforcement approach of the Animal Licensing and Dog Control Team reflect their expectations for the service.

4.9 Only provisions contained within the public consultation can be considered for inclusion in the Order. These were drawn from the current Order and representations made to the service. Any proposals outside the scope of the consultation would require a further consultation exercise. A specific question relating to the removal and disposal of dog faeces was not included. However, the consultation's introduction made clear that the requirement to remove dog faeces and properly dispose of it would remain within the proposed Order, and that failure to do so would continue to constitute an offence. No concerns, objections or requests for change relating to this provision were raised within the consultation comments received.

4.10 Where a restriction applies, the landowner can apply to the Council for a consent to require that we do not undertake enforcement on that land. However, the PSPO takes precedent over any other legal provision (e.g. local byelaws).

4.11 The draft Order seeks to maintain all the restrictions currently in place. This approach is supported by the consultation findings in all but one case, Seatown Beach. In that instance, support for removing the restriction was half a percentage point higher than support for retaining it. This is discussed further in the relevant section of this report.

4.12 The consultation had a high level of participation with 5013 responses and included good representation of respondent ages, dog owners, and non-dog owners.

4.11 Consultation information was sent to all Parish and Town Councils and other relevant landowners, alongside Dorset Police and the Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner who are statutory consultees. Any significant additional commentary from these organisations is summarised in Appendix A, 'The Dog- Related PSPO Public Consultation Report'.

4.13 The Council acknowledges receipt of a petition Petition · Allow dogs on beaches from 1st September instead of 1st October - United Kingdom · Change.org and note the 7104 signatories. This petition calls for a change to

the current rules restricting dog access to Dorset and Hampshire beaches. The petition is generic in nature, in that it covers dog restrictions on beaches both in Dorset and Hampshire and is hosted on a national platform.

4.14 Whilst the findings of the public consultation are an important consideration in determining the requirements of the new Order, Members are reminded that consultation responses are only one factor in the decision-making process. In reaching a balanced and proportionate decision, Members should also have regard to;

- the protection of public health and safety;
- the need for consistency of restrictions across comparable locations within the Council's area;
- the practical enforceability of any restrictions introduced.

Consideration should also be given to ensuring that any provision is clear, understandable and capable of being readily complied with by residents and visitors alike. Members should also consider the positive contribution that responsible dog ownership can make to both individual wellbeing and wider society.

We wish to thank participants for their contributions.

5.0 Consultation Findings

5.1 The data used to inform these findings is drawn from Appendix A, The Dog Related PSPO Public Consultation Report. The percentage figure has been rounded up to the nearest whole number.

General demographic information - In terms of representative responses, 75% (3047) of the respondents that could be mapped (4,557), were residents (Dorset area postcode). 69% of respondents were female and 66% were aged 50 and over. The response rate of people recognising themselves having a disability under the Equality Act was 15%.

62% of respondents were dog owners. Dog ownership is the strongest factor for influencing responses throughout the consultation. Non-dog owners were consistently more likely to support retaining restrictions, while dog owners were more likely to support reducing or removing them.

The recommended provisions detailed in Section 6 of this report follow the order of the Consultation Report and the relevant page number is referenced. An officer recommendation is given in each case. A summary of the provisions is given in the following table.

5.2

Proposal Category	Number Reviewed	Officer Recommendation
Generic lead restrictions	2	Retain. (Significant level of support, very similar to 2023 consultation)
Generic dogs-on-lead locations	5	Retain. (Significant level of support, very similar to 2023 consultation)
Specific dogs on lead locations	9	Retain. (Level of support was slightly higher than the 2023 consultation)
Generic Exclusion areas	2	Retain (Level of support was similar to the 2023 consultation)
Beach restrictions	9	Retain current arrangements (Level of support compared to the 2023 consultation varied dependent on the restriction)

6.0 Proposed Provisions – lead length and direction to be on lead.

6.1 Maximum lead length of 2m where required (page 11) and the areas are listed in Schedule 3 of the draft Order. This received strong support at 83%.

6.2 Dogs on lead as directed by an authorised officer, maximum lead length 2m, (page 12). This received almost universal support at 96%.

Recommended for inclusion

7.0 Proposed Provisions - dogs on leads, generic locations

7.1 Municipal cemeteries, church, and graveyards, where dogs are permitted, (pages 13 & 14). Received almost universal support at 91%.

Recommended for inclusion

7.2 Public formal gardens, (pages 13 & 14). Received strong support at 81%.

Recommended for inclusion

7.3 Council owned allotments where permitted, (pages 13 &14). Received significant support at 78%.

Recommended for inclusion

Note: Swanage Town Council requested that restrictions relating to Town and Parish Council-owned allotments be considered for inclusion in the Order. However, this is not something that can be incorporated within the current process and will instead be reviewed as part of the development of the next Order.

7.4 Council owned car parks, (pages 13 & 14). Received almost universal support at 92%.

Recommended for inclusion

7.5 Within 5m of marked sports pitches, (pages 13 & 14). Received strong support at 83%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.0 Proposed Provisions - dogs on leads, specific locations, (pages 17, 18, 19, 20 of Consultation Report).

8.1 Rodwell Trail, Weymouth. A well-used urban cycle and footway connecting the outlying wards to Weymouth town. Received majority support at 57%. Supported by the Friends of Rodwell Trail Group.

Recommended for inclusion

8.2 West Bay Harbour Walk and promenade. Received majority support at 66%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.3 Lyme Regis pathways etc. adjacent to the Front/Town Beach. Received majority support 65%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.4 Weymouth Esplanade. Received majority support 70%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.5 Swanage. The Parade and adjacent roads leading to the Beach. Received majority support 65%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.6 Studland. Access to Studland Beach from the car park, including the car park and staircases leading to the beach. Received majority support at 62%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.7 Studland Beach (known as Knoll Beach), Middle Beach, and Shell Beach, (1st May to 30th September). Received a small majority support at 52%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.8 Studland – Ferry Road, from Studland Beach car park to South Coast end marker, Shell Beach National Trust Car Park, and access routes. Received majority support at 62%.

Recommended for inclusion

8.9 Charmouth, Lower Sea Lane Car Parks and surrounding areas leading to the Beach. Received majority support 61%.

Recommended for inclusion

9.0 Proposed Provisions - dog exclusion areas, generic (pages 20, 21, 22 of Consultation Report).

9.1 Recreation areas, including skateboard parks, tennis and basketball courts, bowling and putting greens, enclosed play parks, sporting or recreational facilities and athletics tracks. Received majority support at 61%.

Recommended for inclusion

9.2 Marked Sports Pitches. Received majority support at 61%.

Recommended for inclusion

10.0 Proposed Provisions – beach restrictions (page 24 - maps are produced to support the Order by clearly delineating areas where restrictions apply).

10.1 Fixed period for summer restriction. Continuing the fixed period of 1 May to 30 September for relevant beach restrictions received the largest support at 44%. 35% respondents wanted a set period but with different dates or times; 20% wanted no restriction and 1% did not know.

Of those that did not support the current requirement, 47% wanted another period of restriction, chiefly reducing the period. For instance, Dorset Police supported limiting the period from the 1 May to the end of the school holidays. Others wanted dogs to be allowed on beaches in the morning and evening periods.

Opening beaches at either end of the daily exclusion period may be viewed favourably by some dog owners; however, it also presents a number of practical challenges. There is potential for an increased incidence of residual dog fouling and for dogs to remain on the beach beyond the permitted period, resulting in encroachment into the exclusion hours. In addition, several Town and Parish Councils undertake mechanical beach raking in the early morning, while organised exercise classes and swimming groups frequently use beaches during early morning and late evening periods. Retaining the current restriction also provides consistency with neighbouring authorities, as both Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and East Devon District Council prohibit dogs from beaches throughout the exclusion period.

Maintaining the existing arrangements therefore supports a clear and consistent approach for residents and visitors across Dorset and neighbouring Devon.

Recommended to maintain the current restriction

11.0 Proposed Provisions - specific beach locations – all day dog exclusion from 1 May to 30 September

11.1 Swanage, Central Beach, (page 28). Received a small majority support at 53%. Supported by Swanage Town Council.

Recommended for inclusion

11.2 Lyme Regis, Front/Town Beach, summer restriction, (page 30). Received majority support at 57%. For some with limited mobility, the accessibility of neighbouring beaches and alternative areas to exercise a dog has been of concern in previous years. Monmouth Beach is largely a pebble beach and access is via gravel/ earth pathways and therefore challenging for those who are unsteady on their feet. However, Members are reminded that those with assistance dogs are not subject to the Front Town Beach restriction. Lyme Regis Town Council comments;

‘We have accessibility matting on Monmouth Beach, which is placed at the high-water mark. There is level access from the car parks and chalets/caravans/beach huts directly onto the matting. The ramp down to East Beach is made of concrete and isn't any more slippery than any other surface when wet. The rocks on the beach will get slippery with algae but wouldn't be accessible for wheelchairs or those with mobility issues anyway.’

‘We completely oppose suggestions to allow dogs on the beaches in the morning or evenings during the current summer exclusion, as the beaches start to get busy very early and remain busy well into the evening. The argument about access for those with mobility issues isn't a factor as far as

we're concerned, as there are plenty of other open spaces in Lyme Regis where dogs can be exercised on or off the lead. Some examples include Middle Mill Fields, Spittles (the section accessed from Timber Hill) and the River Lym Walk.'

'Large sections of Slopes Farm are accessible and level, as are parts of Ware Cliff. Monmouth Beach is probably more accessible than the Front Beach as it is closer to the car parks and there is a level path along the top, with access directly from the car park.'

The issue of will be kept under review with Lyme Regis Town Council.

Recommended for inclusion

11.3 Lyme Regis, Front/Town Beach – maintain no winter restriction (page 31). Received majority support at 62%. Lyme Regis Town Council were supportive of reinstating the dog on lead restriction.

Maintain current arrangement, not recommended for inclusion.

11.4 Chideock, Seatown Beach (page 33). This is a long stretch of beach and responses were evenly divided with 49.7% wishing to remove the restriction and 49.3% wishing to retain the restriction, similar to the results of the 2023 consultation. The landowner, Wraxall Estate, made representation to maintain the restriction. Residents who responded were more likely to support retention.

Recommended for inclusion

11.5 West Bay - East Beach and West Beach (page 34). Received a slight preference for support at 53% for East Bay and 52 % for West Bay. Again, residents who responded were more likely to support retention.

Recommended for Inclusion

11.6 Charmouth, West Beach (page 36). Received a small majority in support with 53% wishing to retain the restriction, slightly higher support than in the 2023 consultation.

Recommended for inclusion

11.8 Weymouth, Central Beach (pages 38- 40). Maintain current arrangements of all year-round dog off lead exercise area at the Pavilion end. Received a small majority of support at 53%.

For those who wanted it changed, just over half were in favour of enlarging the exercise area. Comments also included relocation further north along the

beach, allowing dogs on the beach during the morning and evening periods and, at a more operational level, improving management and enforcement.

Weymouth Town Council did not submit a formal response to the consultation. Instead, councillors indicated that they wished to respond in their individual capacities. As a result, any comments received from town councillors have been considered as individual consultation responses. Only one response was received from a town councillor and this is summarised in Appendix A.

Recommended to maintain the current arrangement

11.9 Retain an exclusion area from the marked dog exercise area at the Pavilion end of Weymouth Beach to the Greenhill Groyne.

Received a small majority in support at 55%.

Recommended for inclusion

12.0 General comments.

The open text box in the consultation document provided respondents with an opportunity to comment on matters not covered by the structured questions. Just over half of respondents chose to provide additional comments. The most common themes related to time-based restrictions, lead requirements, and enforcement. Views on beach access were mixed, with similar numbers of respondents supporting and opposing dogs on beaches. There were also a number of requests for designated off-lead areas.

Dorset Police made the general comment that in terms of tackling rural crime, in the Dorset Police and Crime Plan there is reference to the impact of dogs off lead, disturbing protected wildlife e.g. ground nesting birds, seals resting on beaches. The provisions contained in the PSPO can assist with protecting wildlife.

Lyme Regis Town Council made comments to support retaining existing beach restrictions, dog exclusion areas, and lead requirements.

13.0 Alternative options considered.

13.1 None. A PSPO is the prescribed way to place reasonable restrictions on the access of dogs to public land.

14.0 Legal considerations

14.1 The process for introducing a new PSPO is governed by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Before making the Order, the

Council must be satisfied that the statutory tests contained within the legislation have been met.

Any challenge to the proposed Order can be made to the High Court within 6 weeks beginning with the date on which the Order is made and can only be on the grounds of a) The council did not have the power to make the Order, or to include a particular prohibition or requirement or b) A procedural requirement was not complied with.

Any enforcement action arising from the Order will be carried out in accordance with the Council's General and Regulatory Services Enforcement Policies.

15.0 Financial implications

15.1 Officer resources are directed towards a wide range of statutory and discretionary functions, with proactive patrols undertaken alongside other service priorities. Consequently, routine patrols relating specifically to the Order are generally considered a lower operational priority unless intelligence, complaints or emerging issues indicate a need for targeted enforcement activity. Should Members wish to see a higher-profile enforcement presence, increased patrol frequency or a more proactive approach to monitoring compliance, consideration would need to be given to the associated resource and financial implications, including officer capacity and the potential impact on other service areas.

The new PSPO may require changes to existing signage. The cost of changes and replacement of routine signage will be met from the existing budget.

16.0 Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

16.1 The provisions are specifically related to human public health and dog welfare. The protection of the environment in terms of ecology is not a purpose of the Order, but there may be beneficial effects.

16.2 Some restrictions on open spaces may cause dog owners to have to travel further by car to exercise their dogs with associated fuel use and emissions.

17.0 Well-being and health implications

17.1 Keeping public open spaces free from dog fouling is a high priority for our residents as is the safe use of parks and open spaces by all. Dog fouling is unpleasant and can spread disease. Having adequate control over a dog by placing it on a lead helps ensure that the owner can see if the dog fouls and ensures the dog is under the owner’s control.

Dogs provide many positive benefits including companionship, opportunities to exercise and support mental health and social interaction.

17.2 Dogs not under the owner's control can cause injury to people and other animals and be a public hazard.

18.0 Other implications

18.1 For animal welfare reasons and the well-being of dog owners it is also important to have appropriate areas to exercise dogs off lead when there is reduced risk to others.

19.0 Risk implications.

19.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Low

20.0 Equalities

20.1 An EqIA for the proposed Order is given at Appendix C.

20.2 The EqIA will continue to be updated as the Order is implemented.

20.3 Exemptions to compliance and enforcement practices have been informed by the EqIA and in line with guidance issued by the ECHR on assistance dogs.

21.0 Appendices

Appendix A – Dog-related PSPO Public Consultation Response Report 2026

Appendix B - Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order 2027 (draft)

Appendix C – EqIA Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) 2026

Appendix D - Public Consultation Findings Infographic 2026

22.0 Background Papers

Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, Chapter 2

Anti-social behaviour powers: statutory guidance for frontline professionals 2025

The Local Government Association, Public Spaces Protection Order, Guidance for Councils, 2018

Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK

Assistance dogs: a guide for all businesses| EHRC

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2024 to 2027 - Dorset Council

Dealing with irresponsible dog ownership: practitioners' manual - GOV.UK

Dorset Council Website, Dog related PSPO

23.0 Report sign-off

This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance & Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member(s)