Questions from Councillors

1. Question from Cllr P Dickenson

The environment degradation occurring in Weymouth Bay and the surrounding Portland anchorages and specifically the long-term seabed damage caused by the detained Russian shadow fleet oil tanker, MT Smyrtos. This massive tanker has now been anchored off our coast for months. A vessel of this scale remaining static for such an extended period poses a severe and cumulative threat to our local marine ecosystem and fishing industries.

Marine experts say the heavy anchoring practices cause extensive and potentially irreversible scaring to the sea floor.
As a vessel like MT Smyrtos shifts its immense anchor chain dragging across the sea floor scraping away hectares of habitat.
While Dorset Council official statements note that national agencies are monitoring the vessel for pollution risks, the physical destruction of the seabed floor is happing out of sight.

The council's obligation under its climate and ecological commitments cannot allow the bay to become a long-term parking lot at the expense of our environment.

Question

As the Leader of the Council, what steps are you going to take to:

- Assess the specific seabed impact, shifting footprint of the MT Smyrtos since arrival.

- Advocate for the vessel's relocation to a less sensitive mooring or port facility if detention is to continue indefinitely.

- Ensure strict monitoring to ensure that its anchoring apparatus is not actively destroying protected reef structures and seabed.

Weymouth bay is the jewel of the Jurassic Coast. You must ensure that geopolitical enforcement actions do not inadvertently result in the scarring of our local marine sanctuaries.

2. Question from Cllr C Monks

Thank you to the Portfolio Holder for Place Services for his response to my recent correspondence regarding the Beaminster Tunnel closure.
The delay in progressing these works has been frustrating for the thousands of residents who rely on this route, both in Beaminster and across the wider area, and many residents, community groups and businesses have contacted me about the disruption. I am pleased that the emergency works are now finally due to begin.

However, one group that will be particularly affected during the construction period is our business community. Can the Portfolio Holder outline the planned programme of works, including the expected timescales and traffic management arrangements, and explain what support Dorset Council will provide to help Beaminster businesses through this challenging period?

3. Question from Cllr L O'Leary

The gateway to Weymouth is now covered in ugly graffiti all over the Littlemoor road bridge. I reported it to the council to be told because it is not offensive the council won't remove it. Surely this vandalism of our shared public space and the view it gives visitors to our towns is highly offensive. Will the council review its policy on graffiti removal and crack down on this menace?

4. Question from Cllr L O'Leary

Will the leader set out the time table for devolution including ratification by council on joining the Wessex Authority?

5. Question from Cllr P Brown

About the car park review.

- Can the Portfolio Holder explain the logic of having dynamic pricing for a service with inelastic demand?

6. Question from Cllr P Brown

And the other on a highways issue in my ward.

- What makes the portfolio holder think that after signs failed to make a difference to accident rates at the C2 pinch point in 2025 that speed limit sign will suddenly make a difference in 2027?