PLACE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER 2026

Present: Cllrs Ryan Hope (Chair), Andrew Starr (Vice-Chair), Piers Brown, Simon Gibson, Val Pothecary and David Taylor

Present remotely: Cllrs Sherry Jespersen and David Northam

Apologies: Cllrs Richard Crabb and Roland Tarr

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):
Janet Moore (Service Manager for Environmental Protection), Graham Duggan (Head of Regulatory Services), Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic and Governance Officer) and John Miles (Democratic Services Officer)

20. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

21. **Declarations of interest**

The Senior Democratic and Governance Officer reported that in respect of agenda item 6 'Dog Related Public Spaces Protection Order 2027', Councillors S Gibson, D Northam, S Jespersen and R Hope had indicated that they were dog owners and following advice from the Monitoring Officer, they had been granted a dispensation, to allow them to take part in discussion and voting (where applicable) on the item.

22. **Public Participation**

One question had been submitted from a member of the public. A copy of the question and the response provided at the meeting is set out at Appendix 1 to the minutes.

23. **Questions from Councillors**

There were no questions from councillors.

24. **Dog Related Public Spaces Protection Order 2027**

The committee considered a report of the Service Manager Environmental Protection, which summarised the findings from a Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order public consultation undertaken between May and August 2026.

Informed by the consultation, it proposed the new draft Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) 2027, which would replace the existing PSPO. The report outlined the proposed provisions for the Council area for a period of 3 years from 1 January 2027 until 31 December 2029. The committee was invited to consider the matters within the report, make any comments on the draft Order and recommend the draft Order to Cabinet at their meeting on 10 November 2026.

The Service Manager, Environmental Protection, provided a presentation, which focused on the key issues of consideration by officers, for councillors to consider during their deliberations. The process of establishing the Order was about balancing competing interests and included review of the consultation responses, consideration of public health issues, the welfare of dogs and their needs, establishing a balance between different groups of people, recognising the role of having consistency across locations, review of complaints data, enforcement issues and equality impacts. In addition, it was noted that a petition had been received which included around 7000 signatures. The petition needed to be distinguished from the consultation response due to the nature of the petition and the limited information on the people that had added signatures. It provided evidence of significant public interest rather than information on specific recommendations. Councillors had to consider the information to reach a view on the provisions of the draft Order.

Councillors considered general issues arising from the report and presentation and points were raised in the following areas:

- The review required consideration of a balance of needs between different groups
- It was noted that there was a mixed response to proposals relating to the fixed period of beach related summer restrictions and this could be given further consideration during the next review period
- It was reported that the issue of timings for beach restrictions had been included in the consultation and could therefore be considered at the meeting
- In response to a question, it was noted that reference to ‘formal public gardens’, generally referred to gardens owned by town and parish councils who would determine which ones would be enforced. The definition could be reviewed during the drafting of the Order and amended as necessary to make this clearer.

The committee discussed the provisions contained within the report in turn. The recommendation in respect of the provision is provided, including comments of the committee where relevant.

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.

Committee comments:
It was noted that the PSPO took precedence over any matter relating to the trail being a public right of way.

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%.

Committee comments:
In response to a question, it was noted that the National Trust had previously been supportive of the restrictions due to the protection of the natural habitat.

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.

Committee comments:
The committee considered the provision and during discussion the following points were raised:

- It was noted that the phrasing of the consultation questions could have an impact on the responses received, with particular reference made to date timings for the restrictions e.g. restrictions running to the end of August or the end of September. This could be reviewed in advance of the next consultation
- In drafting the Order, officers had looked at the provisions in similar/coastal councils, including the neighbouring councils of BCP and East Devon. Having consistency with neighbouring councils assisted with messaging and enforcement
- A point was raised as to whether dogs should be allowed earlier access to beaches from the beginning of September, to allow wider use whilst the weather was favourable

- In response, officers noted that consistency was important and in addition, the views of the various parish and town councils had been considered. There was a balance to be made, and it was suggested that this could be looked at in preparation for the next review
- A view was expressed that the current restrictions should remain in place as they were consistent with neighbouring councils' restrictions and another view noted that children and families should be put first, in respect of their safe use of beaches.

A discussion was held regarding the potential extension of access to beaches to allow dogs to be walked during the evening and early morning periods. During the discussion, points were raised in the following areas:

- Allowing evening and early morning dog walking on beaches could allow families to enjoy the beaches together with their dogs, to support the economy through the potential extension of trading times for businesses in these locations and support the attraction of tourists
- A point was noted that allowing dog walking on beaches in the evening and early morning periods could assist with enforcement by creating a community of people who were invested in retaining the right to walk their dogs on the beach
- The PSPO was a tool which allowed the council to deal with any hot spots for dog fouling
- It was noted that children on beaches were vulnerable and that it was important to consider the potential health issues of extending dog access to beaches
- There needed to be consideration of the balance between potential economy, enforcement and health related impacts
- The timing for amending the provision was considered and whether this should be pursued now or form part of a future review and different views were expressed
- Clarification was sought as to whether a recommendation to change the timings related to the provision could be made and it was noted that as a question around timings had been included in the consultation, this could be considered
- A suggestion was made that a trial change in timings could be undertaken on a specified beach, and Weymouth beach was noted due to it having a regular cleaning schedule
- A point was made that councillors should be considering the issues in an impartial manner
- A number of councillors spoke about the potential for a positive economic impact of extending the hours for beach access for dog walking
- The Head of Regulatory Services noted that a potential option would be for the committee to continue with the recommendation as per the report but with a rider that officers investigate the option to run a trial for early morning or late evening access and/or a reduced restriction period to the end of August rather than September. A trial could run with due consultation to inform the next review in 3 years.

Discussions could be held with Weymouth Town Council about the potential for a trial.

Further to the discussion above it was proposed by R Hope seconded by D Taylor that dogs be allowed access to Weymouth beach between the hours of 1800 – 0600 and that if this was not agreed, a trial for this be considered to inform the next PSPO review.

The Service Manager Environmental Protection clarified that the consultation had included a question around having a daily exclusion period between 8.00am and 7.00pm and that dogs could be walked on beaches outside of those times.

It was noted that beach cleaning in Weymouth took place at 6.00am.

In response to a question, the Head of Regulatory Services noted that the committee would need to add a rider to the recommendation to state that it was subject to legal advice to ensure that there was scope within the consultation to amend the provision. R Hope and D Taylor as proposer and seconder of the recommendation confirmed that they were content to include this in the recommendation.

A point was raised as to whether Lyme Regis should be included in the recommendation, but it was noted that Lyme Regis Town Council were not in support of changing the restrictions.

R Hope confirmed the wording of the recommendation and added that dogs should be kept on lead during the time period specified. D Taylor, as seconder, was content with the addition to the recommendation. It was noted that this applied during the time that dogs were restricted (1 May to 30 September).

The committee confirmed that they were content to maintain restrictions on other beaches, as set out in the report.

It was proposed by R Hope seconded by D Taylor and agreed by the committee

To be included in the recommendation to be made to Cabinet:

Subject to legal advice with regard to the wording included in the consultation and confirmation that there is scope to amend the provision, dogs to be allowed access to Weymouth beach between the hours of 1800 – 0600 to allow evening and early morning dog walking on lead.

If this cannot be forwarded as a recommendation during this review, officers are requested to undertake a trial to inform the next consultation.

In respect of all other beaches included in this provision – Recommendation 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.

Committee comments:
It was noted that to maintain a consistent approach, the committee supported the officer recommendation.

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.

Committee comments:
It was noted that subject to tides, there was beach access outside of the designated area of the PSPO. In addition, the provision provided a tool for enforcement at the discretion of the dog wardens.

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.

Committee comments:
The committee discussed the area covered by the provision with one view being that the all year round dog off lead exercise area at the Pavilion end of the beach area should be relocated due to town council events being held on the beach, making the beach very busy in the area and another view that the current area should be retained, with an acceptance that it may be more difficult to use at times. The Head of Regulatory Services reported that there were discussions taking place with Weymouth Town

Council regarding the location of the area and this may feature in the preparation for the next Order. On this basis it was agreed that the current arrangement should be maintained in line with the officer recommendation.

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

Having considered each provision, the committee returned to the recommendation set out at paragraph 2 of the report.

It was proposed by D Taylor seconded by S Gibson

Recommendation to Cabinet

That the draft Dog-related Public Spaces Protection Order 2027 be approved with the proposed provisions as per the report attached at Appendix 1 (paragraphs 6.1 through to 11.9) with the following amendment to the provision set out at paragraph 10 of the report:

10 Proposed Provisions – beach restrictions

Recommendation from Place and Resources Overview Committee to amend the current restriction in respect of Weymouth Beach

Subject to legal advice with regard to the wording included in the consultation and confirmation that there is scope to amend the provision, dogs to be allowed access to Weymouth beach between the hours of 1800 – 0600 to allow evening and early morning dog walking on lead.

If this cannot be forwarded as a recommendation during this review, officers are requested to undertake a trial to inform the next consultation.

In respect of all other beaches included in this provision – Recommended to maintain the current restriction.

The Chair thanked officers for their work in bringing the draft Order through the process and the enforcement team working on the ground. The Chair also thanked all that had taken the time to respond to the consultation.

25. **Place and Resources Overview Committee Work Programme**

The Place and Resources Overview Committee work programme was reviewed.

The Chair noted that he had attended a meeting with the Peer Review team this week, along with the other chairs of the overview and scrutiny committees. As part

of this, a comment had been made around ensuring a greater focus on policy development and having greater visibility of forthcoming reviews.

26. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

27. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

APPENDIX 1 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Question from Richard Daw

The Lyme Regis Dog Owners Group is asking Dorset Council to allow dogs off lead on Lyme Regis Town Sandy Beach before 10am and after 6pm from May to September, while retaining the current unrestricted access from October to April.

Dorset Council has acknowledged that the adjacent beaches are unsuitable for many people with mobility issues. Yet the current restrictions leave disabled and less able-bodied dog owners without a safe, accessible alternative for five months of the year.

The impact extends beyond disability. Local families and visitors who want to enjoy the beach with their dogs are also excluded during the summer months. Shift workers, whose working hours may not fit within the permitted times, can also be affected.

For some people, their dog is their only companion, their reason to leave the house and an opportunity to socialise. For families, being unable to bring their dog can mean missing out on a shared beach visit.

Our campaign has provided date-stamped photographs showing how frequently the beach is empty during the hours we are requesting. A Freedom of Information response also confirms that no fines for dog fouling have been issued on Lyme Regis Beach in the past three years.

We are not asking for unrestricted summer access. We are asking for a reasonable compromise that accommodates other beach users while allowing more people to enjoy the beach.

My question is:

How has Dorset Council assessed the impact of the proposed restrictions on disabled and less able-bodied people, local families, visitors and shift workers, and what evidence demonstrates that refusing a limited early morning and evening compromise is necessary and proportionate, particularly when the Town Sandy Beach is the only safe and accessible beach available to some people?

Response provided by the Service Manager Environmental Protection

Thank you for your question.

The Council has considered the impact of the proposed restrictions on a range of affected groups through both the public consultation and the Equality Impact Assessment, appendix C.

The consultation identified accessibility, disability, mobility and inclusion raised by respondents in relation to Lyme Regis Front Beach. The consultation also demonstrated that different user groups have competing needs and expectations regarding beach access.

The Equality Impact Assessment specifically considered the needs of disabled people, including those who rely on assistance dogs and those with impaired mobility. Assistance dogs are exempt from the restrictions proposed within the Order, recognising their role as an auxiliary aid under the Equality Act and the importance of ensuring disabled people are able to access public spaces on an equal basis with others.

In relation to people with limited mobility, officers considered representations both supporting and challenging the suitability of alternative exercise locations. This evidence includes information from Lyme Regis Town Council identifying alternative locations such as Monmouth Beach, where accessibility matting and level access from nearby parking are available, together with other nearby locations where dogs may be exercised. Conversely, other respondents argued that these alternatives are not suitable for all users due to gradients, surface conditions and walking distances.

There is therefore evidence presenting both perspectives. Even where some individuals may experience inconvenience as a result of a restriction, members are entitled to conclude that the restriction remains justified and reasonable in order to prevent and/or reduce the detrimental effect, or the risk of the detrimental effect, that the Order is seeking to address. Members may also wish to consider whether a less restrictive alternative would achieve the same outcome with comparable certainty and enforceability. The issue of accessibility will be kept under review during the period of the new Order.

The consultation findings, which included responses from residents, visitors and businesses showed that maintaining the dog exclusion zone during the spring/ summer period at Front Town beach received a majority 57% support.

With regard to the suggestion of early morning and evening access, officers considered this alongside other alternatives proposed during the consultation. The recommendation to retain the existing arrangements reflects officers' view that, in the absence of a clearly supported alternative, the current restriction remains the clearest, most consistent and most enforceable approach.

Members will determine whether that balance remains appropriate, and the weight given to the differing views expressed during consultation is proportionate.

Duration of meeting: 3.00 - 4.54 pm

Chairman

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