

**Full Council
15 April 2021**

Questions and Statements submitted for the Public Participation Period

Question 1 - submitted by Kathryn Haskins, Director, Alexandra Hotel and Restaurant

I felt I must write regarding the planned beach works and perhaps this could be passed to the Chairman of Dorset Council and raised at the full council meeting.

Why does Dorset Council find it necessary to re-profile Lyme Regis' main beach during what we all hope will be a busy tourist period. The beach was closed for days on end in June last year whilst re-profiling and dredging was undertaken, the dredging saw sand being pumped by huge machinery for weeks on end and making the beach very uninviting for all. This wasn't an unprecedented occurrence as the year before this was done over the main May Bank holiday period causing the beach to be closed over the bank holiday in that year.

This has been brought up with your Officers and their response is that they **will try and avoid Bank Holidays when the beach profiling is undertaken but that it is sometimes unavoidable**. But I would ask why is it unavoidable? Surely with forward planning this could be avoided?

On the hotel and self-catering accommodation side of things the impact is huge and businesses struggling to survive it is highly important that extra obstacles are avoided at all costs.

The repercussions on us as operators are great with guests avoiding visiting or requesting discounts due to the feeling they have been unable to enjoy their holiday as planned. For those operating on marine parade this must also have a drastic impact on footfall and thus revenues.

Question - Could these works and those in future be undertaken out of season?

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan see response to Q2

Statement 1 – submitted by Ben Matthews, Managing Director, Lyme Bay Holidays

I am writing in regards to the proposed beach works in Lyme Regis which I understand are once again being planned in what we all hope will be a busy time for tourism within the town. As local businesses re-open at the end of an extremely difficult year this initial period is more valuable than ever. I would

request please that my email is passed to the Chairman of Dorset Council to be raised at the next full council meeting.

I fully appreciate that on-going maintenance of the beach is required and as local businesses we all benefit from this but surely as tourism is the key economic provider for the town any major yearly maintenance which necessitates the closures of key areas (which the beach is arguably the main one) that consideration should be given to the economic impact this has?

Previous years have seen the beach closed in May and June for a number of days which as a local letting agent results in us dealing with unhappy visitors and compensation claims, with our guests left questioning why we have not pre-advised them of the disruption, no one believes such information is not public knowledge.

On behalf of all local business owners reliant on visitors enjoying our town and all it offers, I would like to understand why such works cannot be planned for the quieter periods we experience and equally, why we are not notified in advance so we can at very least organise ourselves and pass information to our customers?

As local businesses we collectively need each other to help deliver successful holidays, or enjoyable day visits, whatever it may be, which encourage people to return and spend money within the town and wider area. Such a negative experience as arriving to find the main beach closed, has a huge impact on this experience and leaves nothing but a poor reflection of local accommodation businesses but not only those who have sold the holiday but equally others such as the traders located on Marine Parade and at the Cobb which has lost not only its idyllic setting but also many potential customers.

Undertaking these works in key holiday periods is severely damaging to local business and this should surely be part of the works consideration process or at the very least an explanation offered to why this is not possible and a period of notice given.

Question 2 – submitted by Ben Matthews, Managing Director, Lyme Bay Holidays

Question - Why are we all still unaware when the beach will be closed to undertake these works, surely it would be best for all for such information to be passed to local businesses?

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan to Q1 and Q2

Firstly, it is probably best to explain the reason for the works. In 2007 West Dorset District Council completed a £25M scheme to provide coast / flood

protection and stabilise the coastal slopes on which a large part of the town is situated. The marine works entailed importation of shingle and sand, a new sea wall, realignment of the North Wall rockery and new jetties with the purpose of reducing flood risk and providing support and protection to the toe of the slope. The amenity aspects of the beach and associated benefits to the local economy were recognised at an early stage and this resulted in the creation of a larger sand beach at the western end.

Both the shingle and sand beaches were designed and then modelled to provide a level of protection against flooding, a particular profile was deemed necessary to reduce wave overtopping and since completion of the scheme we have worked to maintain the volume and profile required to maintain this level of protection. Without the annual profiling and recycling of material to sustain the design profile, the beach volumes will steadily decrease over the years, affecting not only the standard of protection but also the size of beach available for amenity purposes.

The dredging and associated re-profiling of the beach is an annual task carried out by Dorset Council in collaboration with a number of partner organisations including Lyme Regis TC (LRTC) who provide banksmen. The Harbour Master in conjunction with the contractor adjust discharge points accordingly so part of the sand beach can remain open. The shingle beach and access to it will be unaffected by these works this year.

The process of procuring a contractor starts the year before, following the Council's procurement rules. The timing of works is critical for a number of very specific and important reasons. Dredging has to be undertaken during the early part of the year in order to prepare the harbours for the holiday season, working in the marine environment is extremely challenging and dangerous, particularly during the stormy season which means that the optimum window for works is around March / April when the storms are less likely and the pontoons are not in the harbour. When you factor in the availability of the contractor, the weather, the need for low tides and no obstacles in the harbours it makes it extremely difficult to find a window that suits all. In addition, providing specific dates for works presents some difficulties. Technical issues and weather conditions may disrupt schedules, but our intention is always to avoid holiday periods where possible. Last year's schedule was impacted heavily by Covid resulting in the works being done much later than normal.

Monitoring data shows that the volumes decrease during the year through natural processes and without the works the sand beach in particular will continue to decline in volume resulting in an increased risk from flooding and the eventual risk of sea wall undermining, in addition, the amenity value of the beach will decline as the beach becomes smaller. A full recharge of the beach will cost £M's so it is essential that we deliver this annual programme of works. Dorset Council will continue to work in partnership with the Environment Agency (EA), LRTC

and others to maintain the important assets, without which, the town and small businesses could suffer.

Question 3 – submitted by Mr David Frankl

The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, S122 states that it shall be the duty of every highways company and local authority (ie Dorset Council) ... to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians).

The UK Government has agreed to the Stockholm Declaration 2020 which links road safety to sustainable development. It states in Section 11:

· Focus on speed management, including the strengthening of law enforcement to prevent speeding and mandate a maximum road travel speed of 30 km/h (20mph) in areas where vulnerable road users and vehicles mix in a frequent and planned manner, except where strong evidence exists that higher speeds are safe, noting that efforts to reduce speed in general will have a beneficial impact on air quality and climate change as well as being vital to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries.

Question - Will the Council commit to a requirement for 20mph limit throughout all new housing developments and where electors or parish or town councils have requested a lowering of the speed limit, where there are no or inadequate pavements and where pedestrians and other vulnerable road users mix in a frequent manner and that 20mph will become the normal speed limit?

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

Dorset Council is currently reviewing its approach to setting 20mph limits. Something that you (Mr Frankl) are aware of having attend a meeting with the 20s plenty campaign group in February of this year. Whilst it may seem to be a straightforward case of committing to your (Mr Frankl's) request there are a number of factors that have to be considered in order to ensure that our approach is objective, evidence based and consistent.

Department for Transport (DfT) criteria will remain a key principle in any speed limit reduction assessment. The main reference document is [DfT circular 01/2013 'Setting Local Speed Limits'](#).

Included in our review will be how to best accommodate 20mph limit/zones for new housing developments, in the main, estate roads are designed for speeds of 20mph or lower. Whether all new roads associated with housing developments

can be subject to a 20mph limit or zone would likely be reviewed on a case by case basis.

With regards to the second part of the question, it is not possible to commit to the request for 20mph limits to be installed wherever it has been requested and/or where there are no or so called inadequate pavements – this would ultimately come down to whether it was appropriate.

It is important that we have the support of locally elected groups and/or councillors when implementing speed limit changes as this acts as evidence that there is broad support for a proposal, however, the decision of whether or not a requested speed limit reduction is appropriate rests with Dorset Council as the highway authority. This best ensures that speed limits are set consistently and balances the needs of all those using the public highway.

As you (Mr Frankl) have stated “speed limits should, be evidence-led and self-explaining, and seek to reinforce people's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel and encourage self-compliance” this is the approach that is taken by the Highways Service and can often mean that speed limits higher than 20mph are appropriate and balance the needs of all who use the public highway. To do otherwise can result in a worse situation.

The Department of Transport has encouraged highway authorities to introduce 20mph limits in urban areas and village streets that are primarily residential.

Dorset Council supports in principle the introduction of 20mph speed limits and zones where it is appropriate to do so. However it is not possible to commit to 20mph limit becoming the so called ‘normal speed limit’ as there will likely remain a number of roads where higher speed limits remain appropriate, particularly in rural areas and roads that are on the outskirts of urban areas.

Question 4 – submitted by Mr David Frankl

20's Plenty for Dorset ask for 20mph signed limits without vertical engineering (eg speed humps and chicanes), even if existing speeds exceed 25mph, without the need for costly speed surveys

Department for Transport Circular 01/2013 “Setting Local Speed Limits” states

- **S3** - As well as being the legal limit, speed limits are a key source of information to road users, particularly as an indicator of the nature and risks posed by that road both to themselves and to all other road users. Speed limits should, therefore, be evidence-led and self-explaining, and seek to reinforce people's assessment of what is a safe speed to travel and encourage self-compliance.

- **S97** - The implementation of 20 mph limits over a larger number of roads should be considered where mean speeds at or below 24 mph are already achieved over a number of roads. Traffic authorities are already free to use additional measures in 20 mph limits to achieve compliance, such as some traffic calming measures and vehicle activated signs, or safety cameras. Average speed cameras may provide a useful tool for enforcing compliance with urban speed limits.

Question - Will Dorset Council commit to amending its speed limit policy to allow 20mph limits with signage where mean speeds below 24mph are already achieved over a number of roads?

Politicians representing 21 million people in the UK have already committed to this. They have used a variety of sources, usually found from Government and coordinated at the Highway Authority level to fund it.

People across Dorset want 20mph limits as standard to improve safety and improve the environment. This would allow implementation to cost just £3 per head of population on average, rather than costing hugely more with engineering works. The Government have confirmed that new car models will have speed limiters fitted from April 2022. Speed limiters use traffic-sign-recognition cameras and/or GPS data to determine the limit, automatically limiting engine power and a vehicle's speed to the prevailing limit.

To save money, Traffic Regulation Orders (approx. £5k each) can be grouped to cover the whole county possibly using a phased roll out over a few years.

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

As our approach is to follow Department for Transport guidance on setting local speed limits, I can commit to 20mph limits being **considered** where mean speeds are at or below 24 mph are already achieved over a number of roads. However I cannot commit to it becoming an automatic response to such situations as there are a number of other factors to consider in terms of prioritising the installation of any reduced speed limit, not least of all the prevalence of road traffic collisions. There may also be more cost effective ways of addressing concerns which should be considered before a speed limit reduction.

The quoted £3 per head average cost of installing 20mph limits is too simplistic for a rural authority. However, if we are to use this figure with the Dorset Council population of 375k then the total cost would be in excess of £1m.

We must assess the cost benefit of any highway scheme to ensure that spend of public monies is put to best use, the review of our approach to setting 20mph limits will help to more clearly define how 20mph limits will be identified, assessed and prioritised.

It is important to consider that demand for highway improvements, which includes setting speed limits is just one of the many demands faced by Dorset Council and difficult decisions must be made on how to allocate available budgets.

Thank you for raising these questions to full council and giving me the opportunity to respond.

Question 5 – submitted by Belinda Bawden

Please confirm that Dorset Council will support and fund the proposal from DAPTC for Carbon Literacy training for all town and parish councillors.

An expert from the Centre for Sustainable Energy has tailored the government-accredited Carbon Literacy training for town and parish councillors, focusing on engaging communities in the pathways to net carbon zero.

This training will be a huge support in improving the understanding of councillors about the climate and ecological emergency, enabling them to develop the tools and solutions to engage their local communities in practical actions towards improving better health and well-being for residents, businesses and visitors alike and achieving net carbon zero goals.

Please let us know when this will be rolled out and to whom?

<https://carbonliteracy.com/toolkits/local-authorities/>

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

The Making it Happen section of the climate and ecological strategy highlights the need to improve awareness and engagement of staff and the public on the issues of climate change and behaviour change and notes the important role Town and Parish Councils can have.

At a webinar for Town and Parish Councils held on 2nd December it was agreed that following the Consultation process and adoption of the Strategy by Dorset Council, the Council would gauge the needs of Town and Parish Councils via an online questionnaire and host a number of webinars to provide relevant guidance as required. As part of the ongoing development of a wider communication strategy we will be exploring the variety of online tools as well as opportunities for working more closely with a range of partners to engage and communicate with residents.

We would encourage all Town and Parish Councils to take up opportunities to inform their thinking on climate change and the options in their Towns and Parishes to play their part in carbon reduction. Dorset Council officers can provide technical support in this regard.

Question 6 – submitted by Giles Watts on behalf of the Dorset Climate Action Network (DCAN)

How does the Council expect to defend at Public Examination a Local Plan which, through the scale and proposed pattern of development, has attracted a strong adverse reaction from the public and which would inevitably:

- a. Encroach heavily on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and breach the Green Belt, both of which are defended from development by government policy (see National Planning Policy Framework paras 136 and 172)
- b. Involve building on a large area of greenfield land, some of which is open to flooding, against advice in NPPF paras 117 and 155 to 157
- c. According to the Council's own Sustainability Assessment, do serious damage to both landscape and biodiversity; and act strongly against the pursuit of the Council's own Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy, despite the advice in Section 14 of the NPPF?

Should the Council now draw back from a scale of development which, in the light of these strong adverse impacts, may well be rejected by the Inspector ... which would delay the Local Plan implementation and cause reputational risk to Dorset Council?

Response by Cllr David Walsh

The National Planning Policy Framework requires local planning authorities to plan positively to meet the development needs of their areas. This includes meeting objectively assessed housing needs, as well as any unmet housing needs of adjoining areas, and if we do not do that then the plan is not likely to be found sound on examination. Our consultation responses have confirmed that the adjoining Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole council area is likely to have significant unmet need and the plan will need to take this into account. We will be assessing all the consultation responses and considering the changes that need to be made to the proposals in the light of the comments made. But it is not possible to meet the area's housing needs without development on greenfield land, and we also need to consider whether some release of green belt would provide the most sustainable development option. Meeting housing needs is a key part of national planning policy, alongside addressing climate change, and the location and design of new homes can play a major role in

reducing emissions and providing more sustainable patterns of development in future.

Question 7 – submitted by Alistair Chisholm, Independent Dorchester Town Councillor and Co-ordinator of STAND.

I was interested to read Cllr. David Walsh's comments, quoted in the Dorset Echo of 30th March 2021, on the recent granting of funds from central government to create a Local Heritage List for Both Dorset and BCP Councils.

Cllr. Walsh said, "This is great news. It is very important that we help to promote and protect local heritage and forge stronger connections between people and their local areas, at a time when we are reconnecting with what surrounds us and valuing it more than ever."

How does Cllr. Walsh reconcile this view with the sham of the recent Public Consultation on the Local Plan when Dorset residents were asked to comment on a Plan which lacked several vital background papers and was clearly not fit for purpose. It is clear, from the reaction to the DOR 13 proposals for north of Dorchester contained in that Plan, that this area is of huge local value and importance. However there was virtually no involvement of either the Town Council or the Dorchester community prior to its inclusion in the Plan."

Response by Cllr David Walsh

The public consultation on the local plan has resulted in a large number of comments – around 30,000 – and we are very grateful to all those who took the time and trouble to respond. We are going through and considering all these comments at the moment, and will be making changes to the plan document where necessary.

We have consulted previously on potential development north of Dorchester, and had plenty of input from the Dorchester community at that stage as well. All the major development proposals in the plan have generated objections. We are looking into all the issues raised, but have to balance these with the importance of meeting our local housing and other development needs. We need to follow national policy, including that in relation to housing requirements, in order to have our plan found sound.

Question 8 – submitted by Jane Ashdown

Preamble: The Council is to be congratulated for securing funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to create a County-wide list of local heritage assets with a view to protecting and promoting local heritage including monuments and landscapes. As a Dorchester resident I am especially interested in protecting the valued landscapes of archeological, cultural and environmental significance around the county town.

Question: Can Councillor Walsh provide information on how and in what time frame Dorset residents will be surveyed about the heritage assets that they value and wish to see added to the Local Heritage List?

Thank you.

Response by Cllr David Walsh

Since the successful funding award, Dorset Council and BCP Council have been asked to submit proposals for the Local Heritage List Campaign to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The proposals are awaiting sign-off by MHCLG and, subject to these being agreed, it is the intention that a public launch will take place around May, including publicity and an online survey, to gather initial views and raise awareness. This will be used to inform the full nominations process which will take place during the summer. The funding secured for the campaign will be used to appoint consultants to carry out much of the engagement work and so precise details of what this will involve, including exact dates, have yet to be established.

Question 9 – submitted by Helen Sumbler

The Dorset Council draft CEE Strategy Transport section states “In rural areas like Dorset, car ownership is amongst the highest in the country. And in 2018 just over 2,500 million vehicle miles were travelled in Dorset Council area. A significant shift will be needed to make active travel and public transport the first transport mode of choice. This will be a significant challenge, in 2018 only 1% of UK passenger journeys were made on public transport.” This information is now over two years out of date, and therefore any plans and programs to address the CEE based on this data might no longer be appropriate or effective, especially bearing in mind the impact the COVID pandemic will have had on public patterns of behaviour with respect to transport.

Increasing the infrastructure for active transport and public transport would not only reduce Dorset's emissions from car use but also reduce the isolation of

elderly / non car drivers, and help address transport deprivation in areas without access to public transport for young people and low paid workers who are unable to afford a car.

At Scrutiny Committee, I asked the Scrutiny Committee to explain why it is acceptable that no current Implementation Plan exists for the Local Transport Plan. The response given was that instead of writing an Implementation Plan for an old Local Transport Plan written by predecessor councils, Dorset Council with BCP Council has begun work on 1 new joint Local Transport Plan for 2022-2038 to align with the 2 new Local Plans for Dorset and BCP.

IP4 would have reported on progress of the LTP and set out performance indicators from 2020 to 2023; allowing the council to understand areas where you are performing well and others where you need to focus more effort or attention. The lack of progress report and defined performance indicators for LTP goal 2, tackling climate change, should be of considerable concern, since transport accounts for the highest percentage of carbon emissions by both Dorset Council and the County as a whole.

Without such information, it is difficult to access detailed information about projects, and understand how projects have been, and will be, identified and prioritised for funding between 2020 and 2022. Please could the council explain in detail which transport projects have been chosen for LTP funding between 2020 and 2022 and how these projects were prioritised and chosen?

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

Dorset Council absolutely agrees that more and better infrastructure for active travel and public transport helps provide an environment to encourage low carbon travel.

The question refers to part of an answer provided to a previous question to the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 25th March. The full answer went on to outline key projects that Dorset Council has put resources into planning, designing and delivering over the past year, including developing a £100m package of active travel and bus infrastructure through the Transforming Cities Fund, responding to Covid-19 through the Emergency Active Travel Fund, delivering increased electric vehicle charging capacity across the area and helping to develop Dorset's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy.

A conscious decision was made to prioritise delivery of these key activities to make real improvements to low carbon travel options in the county rather than produce a further, non-statutory, report that does not provide direct public benefit. This decision was knowing that work is already underway to create a new Local Transport Plan, taking account the changed context since it was produced by the legacy Councils.

While there is no implementation plan document for the current period, Dorset Council has continued to deliver schemes and improvements in line with the Local Transport Plan, resulting in active travel, safety and low carbon schemes being built. Dorset Council also continues to maximise funding for low carbon and active travel through external funding opportunities. Local Transport Plan funds are scored against a number of individual tests under the following headings;

Tackling Climate Change
Better Safety, Security and Health
Economic Growth
Equality of Opportunity
Improved Quality of Life
Value for Money
Deliverability

2020/21 was not a standard year in terms of delivery, but despite Covid-19, 10 cycleway, footway and crossing schemes were constructed using our limited LTP funds. Additional schemes were delivered utilising external funding sources including the removal of redundant railway lines in Commercial Road, Weymouth that presented a risk to people on cycles and motorcycles. Further active travel schemes are programmed for 2021/22. The annual improvement programme is reviewed and approved by our Highways Lead Member and myself as Highways Portfolio holder.

In response to the specific question relating to 2018 data, baseline data from 2018 is currently the best reliable data available for this purpose against which to make decisions. Nationally there is an awareness that successive lockdowns have had significant impacts on people's travel habits and that this change is still occurring making it impossible to collect further information on which to base longer term decisions.

Question 10 – submitted by Julie-Ann Booker, on behalf of Extinction Rebellion, Dorchester Weymouth and Portland

Question on Climate and Ecological Emergency Leadership and Influence from Dorset Council

From the outset, a stated aim of Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy has been to provide Leadership and Influence, to make Dorset a net Zero-Carbon county (by 2050).

Following the "Climate Ideas" public consultation in January-February 2020, representatives from Extinction Rebellion Dorchester Weymouth & Portland were invited to present an idea to one of the "Climate Inquiry" Days.

With their allotted 5 minutes of time in front of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Executive Advisory Panel on 3rd March 2020, Extinction Rebellion presented:

5 WAYS TO TELL THE TRUTH AND THE BENEFITS OF DOING SO

A communications plan outlining the opportunities for Dorset Council to exercise Leadership and Influence, and help people in Dorset understand the climate and ecological emergency. In the introduction the speaker said:

“When XR asks you to Tell the Truth, it doesn’t mean we think you are lying. It means we need you to communicate earnestly and clearly about the emergency. There is a huge opportunity for Dorset Council to show Leadership; to influence how residents, organisations and businesses understand and respond to the emergency.”

5 straightforward low-cost or cost-free ways to communicate the emergency were presented.

- Residents Letter (direct mail), using an existing household mail out such as Council Tax bills
- Dedicated edition of the quarterly residents News Magazine
- Variable Message Signs (road side electronic message boards), to suggest behaviour changes
- Local media – regular column in local newspaper on C&EE topics/updates provided by EAP members / Leaders, regular slots on local radio stations
- Council Website and Social Media accounts – high visibility C&EE presence and frequent clear, simple messaging

At the end of the presentation the speaker asked if there were any barriers to implementing such a plan, the consensus view from the EAP members indicated there were no barriers. <https://vimeo.com/395514546>

We appreciate that COVID-19 hit us soon after the Inquiry Day and Council communications focused on the national and local requirements for restrictions, and continuous reminders to keep the public safe. This demonstrated how possible it is for the Council to communicate with great urgency, focus and clarity.

From this moment, can Dorset Council commit to implementing a communications plan similar to that presented to and valued by the EAP, that focuses on educating Dorset residents about the C&E Emergency; the causes, the challenges, the required changes and the solutions, and in so doing lead residents, businesses and organisations in Dorset to achieve a zero-carbon county?

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

When the Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy is fully approved, Dorset Council officers will produce an accompanying communications plan that supports the actions within the strategy. We will continue to communicate and

engage with residents about the changes we are making to our services to address the emergency, and provide guidance and enable those who may need support to change their own personal behaviours and reduce their carbon footprint.

The Climate and Ecological Emergency will continue to be one of the council's communications priorities in the future and we will use the appropriate channels available to us. This activity will be considered alongside the communication and engagement needs of all our other statutory services.

Question 11 – submitted by Sarah Pattison

The Equality Act (2010) requires that all ‘plans, policies and procedures’ should take due account of equality impacts. This should start at the beginning of a plan making process and parallel its development. Can you please explain the time line for the delivery of Equality Impact Assessment in parallel to the plan (Dorset Draft Local Plan) making process? Exactly what organisations have been approached that are representative of protected characteristic groups in the Equality Act?

Response by Cllr David Walsh

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is a process of systematically assessing the impact that a policy, project, strategy, service or proposal is likely to have on different groups of people within Dorset (e.g. employees, residents and customers).

An EqIA helps to consider the actual or potential impact of our activities and decisions on people. The assessment gives the opportunity to take an evidence-based approach by using data, information and feedback to explore ways to improve services, remove or reduce negative impacts by reviewing issues and looking at how we can potentially mitigate and increase public trust by being transparent in how we make decisions. A robust EqIA process ensures we are meeting our duties under Section 149 of the Equality Act.

EqIAs should help to provide decision makers with enough information to pay ‘due regard’ before they reach a decision about a policy or service. Internally, all Dorset Council policies are subject to an equality impact assessment which is independently reviewed and signed off by our own Equality & Diversity Action Group. Group members also champion equality, diversity and inclusion across the council.

For practical reasons the draft Dorset Council Local Plan has been subject to two separate EQIAs. The first EQIA relates to the ‘consultation process and mechanism’ we intended to use to engage our local communities and the second EQIA relates to the actual Draft Plan policies themselves. Both EQIAs were drafted at the end of 2020 and presented to the Council’s Equality & Diversity Action Group on 17 December 2020. After some minor amendments from the feedback received at the meeting, the two reports were signed off by the Group Chair in February 2021.

The EQIA for the public consultation is a discrete process agreed and actioned at the time of the consultation. The draft plan policies EQIA however is a work in progress as the Plan is a consultation draft containing ‘options’ so as a result of the consultation there is an expectation that the draft EQIA will be updated later in the year. A further consultation EQIA would also need to be prepared for the anticipated Publication Plan, later in the year.

We are committed to ensuring fair and accessible services for everyone in Dorset. Our Statement of Community Involvement requires us to consult with a range of consultees including bodies representing protected characteristic groups in the area. We have a large database of local organisations and voluntary bodies that we directly mail, including the local equality groups listed on our website, but any additional groups are very welcome to sign up to be notified of future consultations.

Organisations representing those with protected characteristics, that were contacted during the consultation on the plan, include:

- LGBTQ+ communities – organisations such as Space, LGB&T Equality Dorset, Intercom Trust
- Places of worship
- Children’s services e.g. Family Information Services, Locality teams, DYA newsletter
- Age UK
- Help and Kindness
- Dorset Race Equality Council
- South West Dorset Multicultural Network
- Town councils’ community development workers
- Dorset Council’s community workers
- Disability organisations e.g. Weymouth Access Group, Access Dorset, Dorset & Wilts Deaf Association, Dorset Blind Association, Mental Health Forum etc
- Dorset Community Action
- Gypsy & Traveller contacts and the Gypsy & Traveller Liaison Group which includes a number of community and voluntary organisations

Question 12 – submitted by Solmaz Tavsanoğlu

The policies with their supporting texts in the Dorchester Chapter of the Dorset Plan Options Consultation January 2021 are the edited version of or identical to the policies with their supporting texts in the Dorchester Chapter of the West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland Preferred Options Consultation August 2018.

The following questions separately and in sequence are to be answered

Considering these policies and their supporting texts were consulted on in August 2018

- 1) Why were the same policies with same supporting texts consulted on again?
- 2) The present draft local plan demonstrates that responses to the 2018 consultation were not taken into account although the policies remain the

same in the draft plan in 2021. Taking the consultation that took place on these policies in 2018 how can residents trust a rerun of the same consultation?

Response by Cllr David Walsh

Consultation took place on potential policies for Dorchester in 2018 as part of the preparation of a new West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan. Since then, however, it has been agreed to stop working on that plan and instead to prepare a new local plan covering all of the Dorset Council area.

The responses made to the 2018 consultation have all been taken into account. This does not mean that every change requested by respondents has been made – respondents do not all agree with each other, and we have requirements such as housing needs that we have to plan for, despite objection, if the plan is to be found sound. A number of changes have been made as a result of earlier consultation comments, and the evidence has been reviewed. But the proposals for Dorchester are very similar to those previously consulted on, as they have arisen through very similar needs and evidence. The further consultation has obviously provided people with a further opportunity to comment and input into the process, and allowed people who did not respond previously an opportunity to have their say.

Question 13 – submitted by Caz Dennett, on behalf of Dorset CEE Bill Alliance

The CEE Bill aims to direct the Government to do more to reduce carbon emissions, to protect our countryside and wildlife, and avoid the kind of environmental disruption and disasters that the Ministry of Defence states may aggravate threats to our peace and security.[1] If passed as an Act of Parliament it would ensure that Government develops an emergency strategy. It would also accelerate the ability of local authorities, such as Dorset Council and all our Town and Parish Councils to tackle the C&EE and rapidly reduce carbon emissions. In summary the Bill has 3 main aims or parts:

Part 1 - focuses on reducing CO2 emissions to keep planetary heating down to 1.5 degrees. This will minimise extreme storms, wildfires, floods and other effects of global warming that we are already experiencing, even here in Britain and in Dorset. Includes emissions from aviation and shipping, and those from imported goods.

Part 2 - sets out the requirements for conserving and restoring ecosystems and soils – protecting wildlife and the places we love, and absorbing lots and lots of carbon into woodland and plant life.

Part 3 – refers to strengthening our democracy and how we make the decisions we need. The Bill calls for a Citizens' Assembly to support Government and Parliament create the strategy to make it happen (the UK Government and many local authorities already use CAs for these purposes).

The Bill had its 1st reading in Parliament in Sept 2020. To date 100 MPs (and counting) across 7 political parties have openly declared their support for the Bill. It is due for a 2nd reading this summer.

Several Councils have passed a motion to support the CEE Bill, a simple statement to say they agree with the aims of the Bill e.g. Oxfordshire County Council, and locally Portland Town Council.

A key stated aim in DC's C&EE Strategy is to influence and lobby Dorset's MPs to persuade government to support actions that reduce CO2 emissions, and gain budget to achieve or preferably accelerate the Council's plan and target dates. The CEE Bill seeks to do precisely this and is therefore a highly relevant matter for Dorset Council.

Will Dorset Council use their leadership and influence profile to write to the 5 Dorset MPs in the Dorset Council area (Sir Christopher Chope, Richard Drax, Simon Hoare, Chris Loder, Michael Tomlinson) and request they support the Bill and vote for it when the Bill is reintroduce to parliament, (or if not, why not)?

[1] A Changing Climate – Exploring the Implications of Climate Change for UK Defence and Security:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/930787/dcdc_report_changing_climate_gsp_RR-A487.pdf

Response by Cllr Ray Bryan

The Climate and Ecological Emergency bill referred too, is in its early stages so it would not be appropriate at this time to ask the Dorset Council MP's to support something that may significantly change if and when it progresses through parliament, although rest assured I do support the outcomes of what the Bill is aiming to achieve in subsection 2. The leader continues to meet with all MP's and Climate and Ecological Emergency features in those meetings. We have already received substantial help from Government in the form of nineteen million pounds of grant money which shows that lobbying and working with government in the right way produces results.

Question 14 – submitted by Caz Dennett, on behalf of Dorset CEE Bill Alliance

We understand that Cllr Maria Roe submitted a motion to Full Council, seconded by Cllr Kelvin Clayton (both members of the Climate & Ecological Emergency Executive Advisory Panel), which stated the aims and benefits of the CEE Bill and its relevance to Dorset Council's own C&EE Strategy. A copy of the Motion can be accessed here: <https://dtaction.co.uk/cee-bill/motion-to-dorset-council-full-council-meeting-15-04-21-on-climate-and-ecological-emergency-bill/>

We further understand that since the beginning of 2021, Dorset Council has changed the process for accepting motions from Councillor's to Full Council. The

motion on Dorset Council's support for the CEE Bill was rejected and is not being read or debated at this meeting tonight (15th April 2021).

The test for whether a motion was accepted for Full Council reading and debate was previously transparent and is stated in the Dorset Council's Constitution, and has to do primarily with the degree of relevance to Council business (Section 14 MEMBER REQUESTS FOR CONSIDERATION AT FULL COUNCIL, page 112). However, it appears that there is now an unclear-to-the-public, additional step to deciding what is "relevant" and this appears to involve the opinion of the Leaders of each political party group at Dorset Council.

We are concerned that such changes:

1. Negatively impact democracy in Dorset because the decision to accept Councillor's motions has become a political decision, with a political party able to veto a motion, rather than a democratic services decision, based on constitutional prerequisites.
2. May not be constitutional. The Constitution states: Section 14.2(a) (page 112) that the decision to accept a motion or not based on specific criteria is "in the opinion of the Proper Officer in consultation with the Chairman". There is no mention of consulting with political party group leaders. The most recent published Constitution is dated 17th November 2020.
<https://modern.gov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/g5040/Public%20reports%20pack%2017th-Nov-2020%20Constitution.pdf?T=10&Info=1>
3. Could effectively ensure that perceived "unfavourable", "challenging" or "politically oppositional" motions may never again be heard at this Council.

Could Council clearly explain the new process for assessing which motions from Councillors are heard in this Council which includes, how the process was decided and who decided it, whether the new process has been written into the Constitution (but not published), and how the change was adopted without a debate and a vote at Full Council?

Response by Cllr Spencer Flower

Motions are a means by which eight councillors can request that an item is considered at a meeting of the Full Council.

Under our Constitution the decision as to whether a motion should be accepted is made by the Monitoring Officer as Proper Officer, applying rules contained in the Constitution. Previously that decision was made after consulting only with the Chairman of Council. The decision is still made by the Proper Officer but now it is made after consultation with the Council's four group leaders as well as with the Chairman.

This change came about after some members suggested that a motion to an earlier meeting of the Council should not have been allowed. The rule itself about what constitutes a valid motion has not been altered. The change has been to widen those who are consulted before a decision is made about whether

to include a motion on our agenda. That widening of consultation is far from undemocratic.

The Monitoring Officer has delegated authority to make such changes to the Constitution and he did that after consultation, again in accordance with the Constitution. The change was reported to the Audit and Governance Committee on 18 January.

The Constitution is published online and updated periodically. This change will be included in the next published update.

Asking an officer to make a decision about whether a motion should be on our agenda can put the officer in an invidious position if as councillors we do not all agree that the motion should be debated. We need to consider a new approach to motions. I have spoken with the other group leaders and I have asked that the Audit and Governance Committee should review our approach and make recommendations to Council.

As to the requested motion; we were being asked to debate a motion here in this chamber about business in Parliament. That business was a private member's bill for which no Parliamentary time has been allocated. The Monitoring Officer consulted the Chairman and consulted the group leaders before he applied our rules and decided that the motion did not relate sufficiently to Council business to be debated here.

None of this changes my commitment to tackling climate change in Dorset and at the July Council meeting we will be debating our strategy for how we in Dorset should address climate change.