

Lulworth and Durdle Door Working Group

This group continues to meet regularly to monitor issues arising from tourists coming to Dorset. The group is chaired by the Police and has our two Councillors on it plus representatives from Highways, the various estates and traffic management. We have implemented a series of temporary road management systems to cater for peaks in numbers. Many of the actions have implications across the whole of Dorset.

Housing Numbers in the Local Plan

I have been asked to circulate further information about how the housing numbers for the Local Plan were worked out. These used the government's national standard methodology for the calculation of Local Housing Need, as explained below. Apologies for the rather technical nature of the explanation

The Local Housing Need calculation. The standard calculation is based on national datasets and has four steps. Step 1: setting the baseline using the 2014 based household projections (household projections are published by the Office for National Statistics every other year, but government requires us to use the 2014-based projections) Step 2: applying an affordability uplift based on median workplace-based affordability ratios (these are published annually and the results will change each year so will need to be updated as the plan progresses) Step 3: applying a cap where appropriate. Step 4: adding on the 'cities and large urban areas uplift' where it applies.

The baseline is the annualised household growth over the next 10-year period starting with the current year – for the consultation document this was 1,300 per annum. The affordability ratio was 10.06 and the adjustment is calculated using a specified formula but gave a multiplier of 1.38. Applying the adjustment to the baseline gives a local housing need requirement of $1,300 \times 1.38 = 1,794$ dwellings per annum. Over the 17-year plan period this equates to 30,498 dwellings. (NB the local plan document gives figures of 1,793 and 30,481 – the difference is because of rounding; in the local plan itself we have used figures to four decimal places).

A cap is only applicable where the local housing need requirement is 40% above the higher of either the baseline household growth figure or the most recently adopted housing requirement figure. It did not therefore apply to this calculation. Dorset does not contain one of the 'top 20 cities and urban areas' that qualify for the additional 35% uplift and therefore this was not applied.

Local Plan – revised timescale

The timetable has been revised because of the extremely large response to the initial consultation plus a series of questions requiring further work, by the government Inspector. The revised (aspirational) plan is as follows

- Publication of response analysis January 2022
- Cabinet March 2022
- Consultation May 2022
- Responses and analysis Summer 2022
- Cabinet September 2022

- Submission late 2022

Once the plan is submitted the timetable will be almost entirely dependent on the Inspector, but we are still aiming for agreement by early 2024.

Community Governance Review (CGR)

As a reminder, the areas that CGRs cover are:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes (grouping or de-grouping parishes)
- Increasing or decreasing the number of Councillors
- Creating ward boundaries or changing existing Warding arrangements
- Changes to Parish names
- Correcting minor boundary anomalies.
- Changing a parish council into a parish meeting

The responsibility of undertaking CGRs falls to the principal council (Dorset Council in this case) and can be triggered in a number of ways including a request from a parish, a community petition or, as in this case, at the principal council's volition. As a principal council, we are required to undertake a review of governance arrangements of all parishes every 10-15 years and Full Council on 15 July agreed that now was the appropriate time to carry out a council-wide review. The legislation that covers CGRs requires any Review to be completed within 12 months of Dorset Council publishing its Terms of Reference, although any changes to governance arrangements agreed as part of the Review cannot take effect until the next scheduled elections in May 2024. A copy of the Terms of Reference document can be found at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/community-governance-review.

The process that Dorset Council will follow will be:

- Publication of Terms of reference that sets out what will be covered – in this case it will be a review of all parishes that sit within the Dorset Council area (22 July 2021).
- Public consultation for 12 weeks seeking proposals/initial submissions (5 August to 28 October 2021).
- Consideration of consultation responses and preparation of draft recommendations (to be agreed by Full Council - December 2021).
- Public consultation on draft recommendations (20 December 2021 – 28 February 2022).
- Consideration of further responses and then publication of final recommendations. (to be agreed by Full Council – April 2022)

We have written to all Parishes, voluntary organisations and other potentially interested organisations with the detailed timetable. When preparing any submissions, we recommend that the parishes take into account the considerations that Dorset Council will need to apply that are set out in the Local Government Boundary Commission for England Guidance already provided to all Parish Councils: That is:

- The need to secure that community governance within the area under review:
 - reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area.
 - is effective and convenient.

- The impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion and the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish.
- The impact on electorate size of future development within the next 5 years.

We will be able to assist by providing street lists with elector numbers, and we have also provided figures for the 5-year projected future developments in the consultation document.

Any changes will be set out in a Reorganisation Order – the Order will include a detailed map of any boundary changes with any changes taking effect at the next scheduled elections i.e. May 2024.

If you have any queries in respect of the proposal, please do not hesitate to contact democratic services through a dedicated email address of cgr@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk .

Face to face meetings

We will be reviewing the decision to continue virtual meeting in mid-September, and I hope we will return to physical meetings in October, assuming the infection rates for Coronavirus reduce to a level that does not endanger the public or members with large meetings in enclosed spaces.

Armed Forces Silver Covenant award

Dorset Council is to receive the Armed Forces Covenant Silver Award as part of the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme. With over 80-Armed Forces personnel past and present, or family members, employed by Dorset Council, the award recognises the commitment the council is making to support its employees. Achieving the Silver Award is part of Dorset Council's pledge through the Armed Forces Covenant to ensure those who serve, or have served, in the armed forces, and their families, are treated with fairness and respect in their communities, economy and society.

Mental wellbeing event

Through the Armed Forces Covenant, Dorset Council is supporting this year's 'On Track' event which takes place at the Tank Museum, Bovington on 7 October 2021 in support of World Mental Health Day. The event will provide techniques and useful contacts to help build mental resilience, with talks, exhibitors and workshops. There will be a daytime event tailored towards members of the military and emergency services and an evening event for members of the public. The event can be attended in person or online. Keep up-to-date with the Dorset Armed Forces Covenant on Facebook or find out more about it at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/armed-forces-covenant

The Council budget

The council is currently forecasting to exceed its budget for this year by £8.3m. (2.76%). However there remains a large degree of financial uncertainty and if the local economic recovery picks up, the council could start to move towards financial balance during the latter part of this financial year. The significant financial burden placed on Dorset Council to deliver services against a backdrop of increasing need and considerably less income during the pandemic continues to be felt in all areas of the business. The council has a legal duty to provide educational support for children with special needs and disabilities and this level of need continues to rise. In addition, there are more people than previously forecast entering council-funded care because of the 'accelerated discharge from hospital' programme due to the pressures on the NHS from COVID.

We continue to lobby central Government for fairer funding. Dorset Council has not had, long-term, financial planning information from Government since its establishment in April 2019.

Purbeck “wilder grazing”

The Purbeck Heaths are nationally and internationally important for rare and threatened wildlife. To ensure that the amazing diversity of wildlife that inhabits the heaths can not only survive but thrive, a partnership of the RSPB, National Trust, Natural England and Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are expanding the naturalised grazing system at National Trust’s Hartland Moor and Natural England’s Stoborough Heath to encompass RSPB Arne. The project will create a “mini–New Forest” in the area between Stoborough, Corfe Castle and Arne near Wareham, with cattle, ponies and pigs roaming across an area of 1370 ha at the heart of the Purbeck Heaths National Nature Reserve. Different breeds of cattle, ponies and pigs will be used to create the greatest possible variety of grazing and trampling across the area. By allowing animals to range freely across a large area, they will both be able to restore natural patterns of habitat and help to spread different species across the landscape. This type of grazing system used to be much more common, and examples still exist today, including nearby in the New Forest. In Purbeck, the partnership will be more than doubling the area currently under such a grazing system and also introducing pigs, for their unique ability to assist this natural process.

Love Dorset campaign

As you will all be aware, high levels of anti-social behaviour from some visitors to Dorset have been reported. Incidents like fires caused by disposable BBQs, copious amounts of littering on our beaches, illegal camping, discarded tents and vehicles parked inconsiderately, were all of concern to Dorset’s residents and caused council officers a great deal of additional work.

To address some of these issues, Dorset Council has developed a campaign called ‘Promise to Love Dorset’. It has been funded through the COVID Operations Management Fund (COMF). The campaign is based on evidence which suggests behaviours can be changed using positive reinforcement rather than telling people off or shaming them. Our aim was to win over hearts and minds through a multi-partner approach. Through highly targeted digital marketing, would-be visitors to Dorset from all over the country will see the videos and social media graphics. The click through results so far are very encouraging with more than 1 million people already reached and 90,000 interactions to date and we expect that this figure will increase significantly.

Visitors to Dorset are being asked to value our unique environment, our often-perilous coastline and respect our residents in a series of short videos each featuring a different ‘promise’ and using a mix of humour and serious messaging to encourage responsible and sustainable tourism. The campaign is hosted on Visit-Dorset.com and our landowning partners, like the National Trust, Forestry England and RSPB, have all helped to shape the campaign and are working with us to share the messages.

This is not the only action the council has taken in terms of preparing for high numbers of visitors. We have more waste services in place and employees on shifts to keep popular destinations clean, we have additional civil enforcement officers and new tow away zones in place to address irresponsible parking and robust traffic management schemes in place for road closures as and when beach car parks reach capacity. We also have new volunteer ambassadors welcoming visitors to visitor hotspots, giving information on the local area.

Finally, If there are hedges, trees or verges which are causing safety or access issues, they can be reported to the team here: <https://dorset-self.achieveservice.com/service/report-a-hedge--tree-or-verge-issue>

New Housing Register

Changes to how residents can apply and be assessed for social housing in the Dorset Council area have now been introduced.

The council has introduced a new housing allocation scheme called Dorset Council Home Choice. It will replace legacy policies and housing registers which have been in place since before the reorganisation of local government in Dorset in 2019. All re-registrations will be assessed against the new criteria outlined in the Dorset Council Home Choice policy (these are on the website). The council will write to anyone who re-applies with the outcome of their assessment.

Right to vote

Dorset residents are being asked to check their electoral registration details are correct to make sure they retain their right to vote in future elections and referendums. Letters have been sent to all households as part of an annual canvass to identify any residents who are not registered to vote, or whose details are not correct. Although the majority of households will not have to take action if their details are up to date, it is important everyone follows the instructions on the form that they should have received by now. Any residents who have any questions can contact DC at elections@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk or by telephone on 01305 838299.

South Walks House

This building remains closed, and we are currently planning to dispose of the building and house most of the staff who were there in County Hall. This is part of our planned asset disposal programme which reflects our aim to use less office space, with employees working in a "hot-desking" flexible office space environment.

Waste and Recycling information

Below is a personal message from Jill Haynes the Cabinet portfolio holder for waste to all Councillors.

You will all appreciate how incredibly hard our staff from Dorset Waste have worked during the pandemic. I am writing today to flag up the pressures we are currently under with staff availability due to a combination of factors. We are getting a number of staff being asked to self-isolate through track and trace, this is at a time when there is a national shortage of HGV drivers and agency provision. We also have staff with much deserved and needed annual leave booked. The combination of these factors has led to us have concerns about cover for some areas. At the moment we are managing but it is a close call. We will always collect black bin and food waste, but our policy is that, if we have to, we will take staff from the garden waste and or recycling rounds to ensure cover. If we need to do this, I will ensure that local members are informed, there is appropriate comms and that those affected receive a refund. We hope that this is not needed but I felt that I had to warn you of the pressures on the service and would ask for your support locally.

Verge Cutting

This seems to be a current hot topic and I have summarised an article from our countryside manager below. The detailed policy is on the website

There is a huge opportunity for verges to be managed more sympathetically to help compensate for the 97% reduction in UK wildflower meadows since the 1930s. Dorset Council has significantly changed the way we manage many of our verges in the last few

years to do more than ever to protect, conserve and enhance the verges in Dorset for biodiversity. These changes include, increasing the amount of 'cut and collect' mowing for the verges within the 30-mph urban road network – this is where we collect the vegetation clippings instead of letting them decompose into the soil. Collecting the grass clippings reduces the soil fertility, resulting in lower growth rates, longer periods between cutting and a far better environment for wildflowers to establish and thrive; in some examples a reduction from 7 cuts a year to 2 has been achieved within towns and verges full of wildflowers. This reduction in verge cutting allows wildflowers the time to complete their life cycles which benefits bees and other pollinators. This method also saves time and reduces fuel consumption, further aiding the environment.

Dorset Council now cut the B and C class rural road network once instead of twice. Previously all rural roads (40 mph and above) received two cuts per year with a side arm flail. This is now reduced to one cut, from late June /July onwards. This ensures not all the verges are cut in a similar time and many flowers complete their life cycles uninterrupted before cutting.

We are creating verges which have been designated Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) by Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT). Working with DWT, we hope to create, by good management, more verges of SINC quality due to the diversity of herbaceous species present. Some verges already have high biodiversity value. These are known as “conservation verges”. These verges avoid the first cut and are then cut as usual later in the summer.

This package of measures ensures that biodiversity can thrive on more of our verges each year. While we have reduced cutting, it is important to remember that for wildflowers to exist on our verges, they will still need some cutting. Too little cutting results in verges turning to bramble and scrub, which would prevent wildflowers from living on our verges. Many may think it is a paradox, but if we want good populations of wildflowers, we will inevitably need to sometimes cut verges with wildflowers present. The vast majority of any cut flowers will soon bloom again between cuts, so don't be too alarmed if you sometimes see mowers cutting verges where wildflowers are present.

Some urban verges are still cut conventionally 5 or 6 times a year using mowers that leave the clippings behind to decompose into the soil. Over time we hope to reduce this method and move to more “cut and collect” mowing on the urban verges, reducing the number of cuts and collecting the clippings. Please note it is dangerous to maintain verges, and members of the public should avoid doing it themselves. However, if you or a group are interested in performing maintenance tasks in your community, then please contact our Coast and Countryside service.

Control of weeds on highway hard services, e.g., kerb edges, is done with a biodegradable herbicide. This work is carried out once or twice a year during the growing season. This helps reduce weeds and maintain the integrity of Highway infrastructure.

Farming Support

We are delighted to announce the launch of a new programme to support farmers and land managers in the AONB (Areas of outstanding natural beauty). There will be around £500,000 to support these projects until the end of March 2022 although we expect the scheme to continue until March 2024 with government support. The focus of the programme is to

- Support nature recovery
- Mitigate the impacts of climate change

- Provide opportunity=ties for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and its cultural heritage
- Support nature friendly, sustainable farm business

The Dorset AONB team will be managing the programme locally and more details are on the website or contact us direct.

Surgery

We are not (yet) holding face to face meetings for the moment. However, we would be more than delighted to talk to you on the telephone or via Zoom. Please ring or email us with some details so that we can prepare ourselves. Peter's email address is peterwharf@hotmail.com telephone 07986 600799 and Laura's is cllrlaura.miller@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk telephone 07814 569563.

Peter Wharf & Laura Miller, Dorset Councillors for West Purbeck