



## Cabinet

Dorset Council Draft Plan 2020-2024

Date of Meeting: 1 October 2019

Cabinet Members: Cllr Spencer Flower, Leader  
Cllr Peter Wharf, Cabinet Member for Corporate Development and Change  
Cllr Tony Ferrari, Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial and Assets

Local Member(s): All

Lead Officer: Aidan Dunn, Executive Director of Corporate Development

### **Executive Summary:**

This report presents the draft of Dorset Council's first ever whole-council plan. It sets out the council's vision, ambitions and priorities, and some of the key activities that services will undertake to deliver them.

It has been led by portfolio holders and cabinet, influenced by a whole-councillor seminar on 2 September, and supported by officers. The views of residents and partners will be sought during a public conversation from October - December 2019, before being submitted to full council for approval on 13 February 2020.

Councillors are asked to approve the draft plan attached at appendix 1, and the engagement process set out in section 5 below.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment:**

An assessment of the impact of the public conversation, which will take place from October - December 2019, is attached at appendix 4.

### **Budget:**

Financial information, including development of the medium-term financial plan (MTFP) is set out in this report.

### **Risk Assessment:**

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:  
Current Risk: Low  
Residual Risk: Low

**Climate implications:**

One of the priorities includes taking action to mitigate climate change.

**Other Implications:**

The council plan has implications for all our residents and partners. Their views will be sought during a public conversation from October - December 2019.

**Recommendation:** That the Cabinet:

1. Approves the draft Council Plan 2020-2024, attached at appendix 1, for engagement in accordance with the next steps set out in section 5 of this report.
2. Notes the output from the councillor seminar on 2 September (appendix 2, 'you said, we did').
3. Approves and promotes the briefing pack for parish and town councils (appendix 3) as part of the public conversation.
4. Notes the equality impact assessment and suggests any additional activity required to ensure the conversation is as inclusive as possible (appendix 4).

**Reason for Recommendation:**

To ensure Dorset Council's inaugural plan is informed by local people and the council's partners.

**Appendices:**

1. Dorset Council's draft plan
2. You said, we did: feedback from the councillor workshop 2 September 2019
3. Information pack for parish and town councils
4. Equality impact assessment

**Background Papers:**

None

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## **1. Background**

- 1.1 Dorset Council came into being on 1 April 2019 to:
- Protect frontline services by reducing costs;
  - Give Dorset a stronger voice nationally, helping to attract business investment, government funding and support local economic growth; and
  - Better meet the needs of communities by bringing all services together.
- 1.2 The creation of the new council has enabled it to:
- Reduce the number of councillors from 204 to 82, saving £400,000 per year;
  - Reduce the number of senior management roles and staffing costs, saving £5.2m in 2019/20; and
  - Reduce the costs of insurance, audit fees and other activities where the council now only pays for one organisation.
- 1.3 Despite this, the council faces significant challenges, mainly due to:
- An increasing need for support for children with special educational needs and disabilities;
  - The rising number of children taken into care to keep them safe; and
  - Increased demand for social care for vulnerable older people and people with disabilities.
- 1.4 The council's response to these opportunities and challenges is set out in its first ever whole-council draft plan, attached at appendix 1.

## **2. Dorset Council's Draft Plan**

- 2.1 Dorset Council's draft plan sets out its vision, ambitions and priorities. It is one of three documents including the budget and transformation plan (which are both in development) that will form the council's business plan from 2020-2024.
- 2.2 Following discussions with councillors, the new council's proposed vision is '*Dorset - a great place to live, work and visit*'. It is underpinned by five priorities:
- 2.2.1 Economic growth
  - 2.2.2 Unique environment
  - 2.2.3 Suitable housing
  - 2.2.4 Strong, healthy communities
  - 2.2.5 Staying safe and well
- 2.3 Each priority is cross-cutting and will involve collaborative cross-directorate and partnership working.
- 2.4 It has been led by portfolio holders, the cabinet, and discussions with councillors, including a councillor seminar on 2 September.
- 2.5 The seminar was attended by approximately half of the 82 councillors, who engaged in an interactive session, commenting on each of the draft priorities at 2.2 above, and

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setting out their views and ambitions for the council and county as a whole. The output from the seminar is being used in three ways:

- To update the draft priorities in the draft council plan (appendix 1);
- To inform strategies that are currently or soon to be in development (as detailed in appendix 2); and
- To inform directorate and service plans as they are developed for 2020-21, having been shared with corporate directors.

2.6 The plan does not yet contain measures. Once the priorities have been agreed, measures will be developed with portfolio holders, the cabinet and lead officers, and monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committees.

### **3. Budget and medium-term financial plan (MTFP)**

3.1 The first Dorset Council budget for the 2019/20 financial year was approved at shadow cabinet on 20 February 2019. The covering report explained the key principles in developing the budget, directed by councillors:

- To avoid using one-off sources of funding to support ongoing expenditure;
- To set solid financial foundations for creating a financially sustainable council;
- To deliver the estimated £13.6m savings from the local partnership business case; and
- To ensure there are resources to fund transformation to address the predicted budget gaps.

3.2 The MTFP is currently in development for a ten-year period, with budget demands, pressures and risks being identified, as well as transformation savings, tactical savings and other opportunities to reduce costs and generate income. A Base Budget Review exercise is also being undertaken alongside building the MTFP as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process.

3.3 Information required to produce the MTFP is still emerging. We have had an initial spending review announcement but we await the detail and clarity around much of this. However, an early version of the MTFP was made available to Councillors at a seminar on 2 September as a budget simulator in order to perform 'what if' variance scenario modelling at this early stage.

3.4 The budget for 2020-21 will go to full council as part of the Business Plan – including the whole-council plan and the transformation programme – in February 2020.

## **4 The Transformation Plan**

4.1 The council's transformation plan is in development and will be informed by the council's priorities and plan. Its purpose is to allow us to plan change carefully, and allocate the right resources at the right time.

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4.2 The plan will be grouped into six cross-cutting programmes. They are:

- **One council service reform** – rethinking our services and using co-design with our residents and partners
- **Customer service** – understanding customer journeys and making services accessible
- **Travel and transport** – improving integrated travel options for residents of all ages and in all communities
- **Property and estates** - delivering services in the right place, by making best physical and financial use of our estate
- **Employer of choice** – working together to maximise our workforce potential, shape our culture and help our people to adapt to, and engage, in change
- **Efficient organisation** – modernising the way we work so we are leaner, and more modern and digital in the way we deliver services across the council.

4.3 The transformation plan will form part of the business plan, including the budget and whole-council plan, that will go to full council in February 2020.

## 5 Next Steps

5.1 The draft council plan will be subject to a public conversation from October - December 2019. The objectives of the conversation are to:

- Request input from residents, partners and colleagues on priorities for the next four years;
- Raise awareness of the council's role and budget pressures; and
- Initiate a conversation about developing independent and healthy communities, now and into the future.

5.2 The conversation will use a variety of consultation methods, including workshops with specified groups (for example, young people, black and minority ethnic groups), an on-line survey and an article in the Dorset Council newsletter.

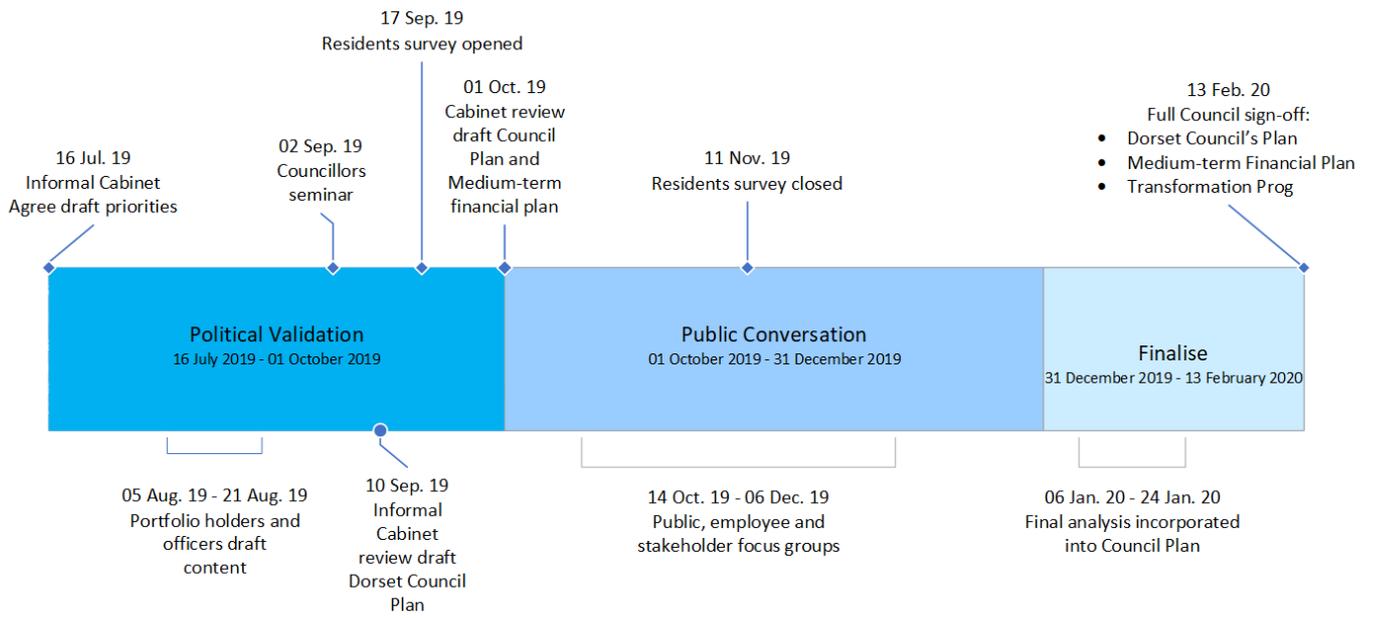
5.3 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and an action plan drafted to ensure the conversation is inclusive and reaches as many groups and residents as possible (appendix 4). This process will inform the EqIA of the plan itself, and will accompany the plan to full council on 13 February.

5.4 A presentation has been developed for use with parish and town councils (appendix 3), which cabinet is asked to approve and promote.

5.5 Feedback from the conversation will be incorporated into the draft plan in preparation for full council on 13 February 2020.

5.6 The critical path for the adoption of the business plan as a whole is:

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# Dorset Council's Plan

2020 - 2024



# Introduction

This is the Dorset Council plan which sets out our ambitions for the next four years. It incorporates the political vision of your new councillors.

Our ambition is to put Dorset Council at the heart of the community.

## Local Government Reorganisation

Dorset was served by nine councils until 1 April 2019 when a local government reorganisation reduced these to two:

- **Dorset Council**  
(formerly Dorset County Council, East Dorset District Council, North Dorset District Council, Purbeck District Council, West Dorset District Council, Weymouth & Portland Borough Council)
- **Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council**  
(formerly Bournemouth Borough Council, Christchurch Borough Council, Borough of Poole Council)

### Why did we come together to form a new unitary council?

- To protect frontline services by reducing costs and duplication. The money saved is being reinvested into services including housing, road maintenance, schools, social care and waste collection.
- To give Dorset a stronger voice nationally which will help attract business investment, government funding and support local economic growth.
- To better meet the needs of communities across Dorset by bringing all services together in one council, working jointly for local people. Bringing services together with a shared common purpose creates a scale and effectiveness that the previous six councils couldn't achieve alone.

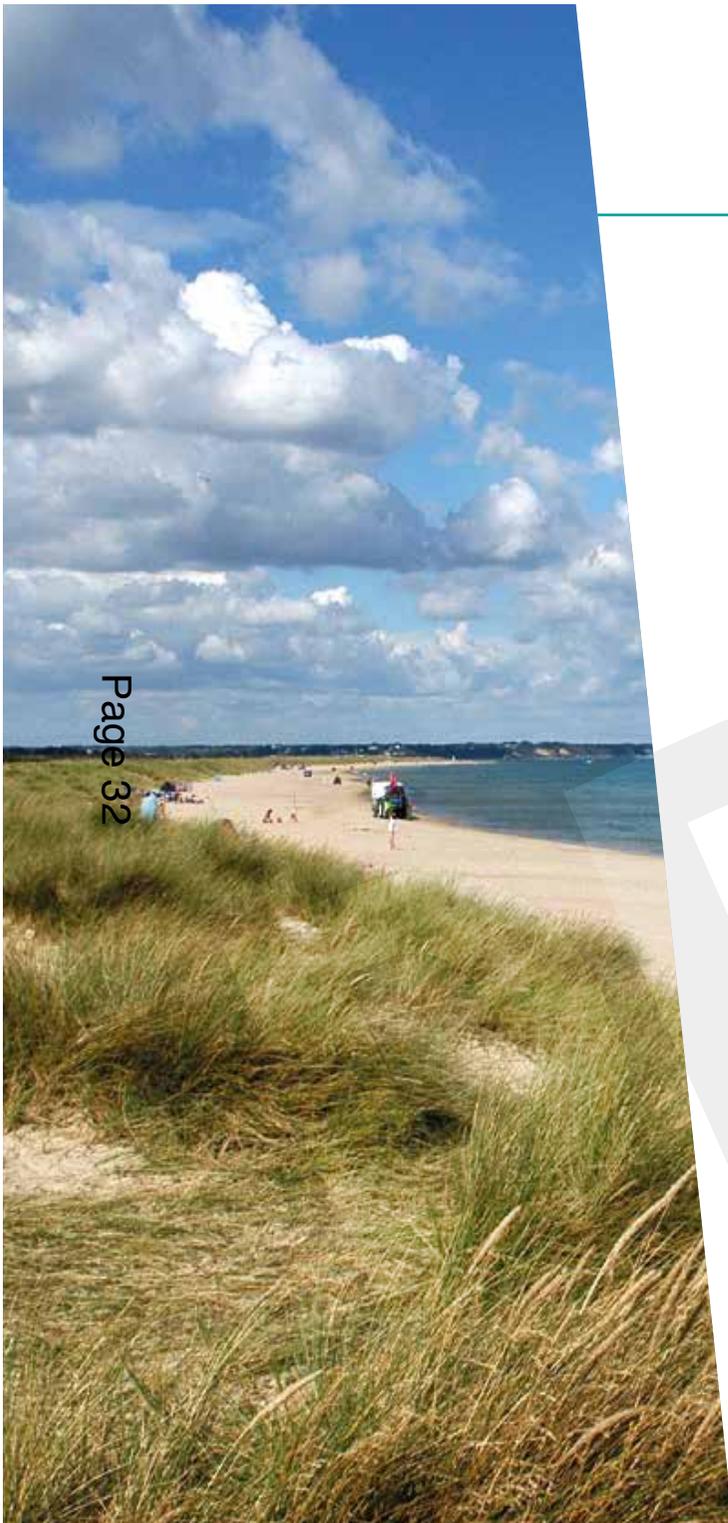
### The creation of the new council on 1 April 2019 has enabled us to make significant savings which have been reinvested into council services:

- the reduction in the number of councillors from 204 to 82 has produced £400,000 per year in savings
- the reduction in the number of senior manager roles, and staffing costs in areas of duplication like finance, HR, and IT will achieve savings of £5.2m in 2019/20 and £10m per year in a full council year
- the reduction of costs for insurance, audit fees and other activities where the council now only pays for one organisation rather than six.

### Despite this, the council faces significant financial challenges mainly due to growing demand for:

- support for children with special educational needs and disabilities
- the rising number of children taken into care to keep them safe from immediate risk of harm
- social care support for vulnerable and frail older people and people with disabilities.

Following Dorset Council's declaration of a climate emergency in May 2019, an Executive Advisory Panel has been established to discuss and form policies as to how the council will set carbon reduction targets.



# Dorset - A great place to live, work & visit

## Our ambition is to focus on the following:

- Direct action – reducing council greenhouse gas emissions
- Indirect action – influencing and showing leadership through our wider services
- Partnership working – development of a Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole Renewable Energy strategy and an Energy Efficiency strategy.

The panel will look to build on this and will work in partnership with organisations across Dorset to develop its climate emergency plan.

## Transformation

We aim to meet our financial challenges by transforming how we deliver services, designing a council that meets your needs as our residents. We will do this by working with you to shape that design, provide our services differently and make better use of technology.

### A programme of transformation will allow us to:

- plan any change carefully but in a timely manner
- allocate our resources to make the most difference
- focus on the changes we want to make and how they meet the needs of residents
- be clear on the desired outcomes to support our council priorities.

Our transformation plan is delivered through six programmes helping us to make changes that are consistent across the whole council.

## The six programmes of transformation are:

- One council service reform – rethinking our services and using co-design with our residents and partners
- Customer service – understanding customer experience and making services accessible
- Travel and transport – improving integrated travel options for residents of all ages and in all communities
- Property and estates – delivering services in the right place, by making best physical and financial use of our estate
- Employer of choice – working together to maximise our workforce potential, shape our culture and help our people to adapt to, and engage, in change
- Efficient organisation – modernising the way we work so we are leaner, and more modern and digital in the way we deliver services across the council.

## Our financial journey

As the operating environment for councils has become increasingly challenging in recent years, Dorset Council's predecessor organisations saved over £120m from their budgets in response to reducing financial support from government, so we have a good track record of delivering efficiency.

The reorganisation of local government in Dorset also means that Dorset Council is in a stronger position than many other local authorities in terms of our ability to deal with the continuing challenges.

But local government reorganisation alone won't be

enough. We will continue to develop, to cope with the demand and cost pressures we continue to experience. We are developing a new, medium-term financial plan to ensure the organisation makes the very best use of all the resources available.

A ten-year medium-term financial plan details our budget demands, pressures and risks. It also sets out our anticipated transformation savings alongside other opportunities to reduce costs and generate income. We will be an advocate for Dorset by making government aware of the need for better funding nationally, particularly for two of our demand-led services, adult social care and children's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Our focus is on delivering services which meet your needs within our budget; to make Dorset a great place to live, work and visit.



**Cllr Spencer Flower,**  
Leader of the Council

# Understanding Dorset

## Population

Dorset (Council area) has a population of 375,000 residents, 28% of whom are aged 65 and older (compared to 18% in England and Wales).

Dorset is an attractive place for people to settle in their retirement – it has a large population of older people, and relatively low birth rates. With no university outside the conurbation (Bournemouth), younger people often move away from the area. The population continues to grow slowly with people moving into the county and longer life expectancy. The greatest part of population growth is amongst over 65s. Dorset's working age population is expected to see a marginal decline over the next 25 years. Currently there are over 7,000 people in Dorset living with dementia, and the number is increasing.

The Dorset rural idyll can conceal hidden deprivation: there are pockets of deprivation, mostly in urban areas (mainly Weymouth & Portland). But there is also some rural deprivation due to isolation and barriers to housing, transport and essential services. Crime is consistently low in Dorset.

The population is predominately White British, with only 4.4% black and minority ethnic people.

## Natural and historic environment

Dorset's natural environment is a great asset.

95 miles of coast in Dorset and Devon are classified as a UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site – the only one in England. Over half of Dorset is covered by the Area of Outstanding National Beauty designation; 7% of Dorset is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest; and Dorset has one of the largest areas of protected lowland heath in Europe.

These designations together mark Dorset as a special place but also present challenges in terms of available land for delivering housing and employment development.

Dorset also has a rich historic environment, with one in twenty of all the protected ancient monuments in England, a well preserved pre-historic landscape and around 10,000 listed buildings.

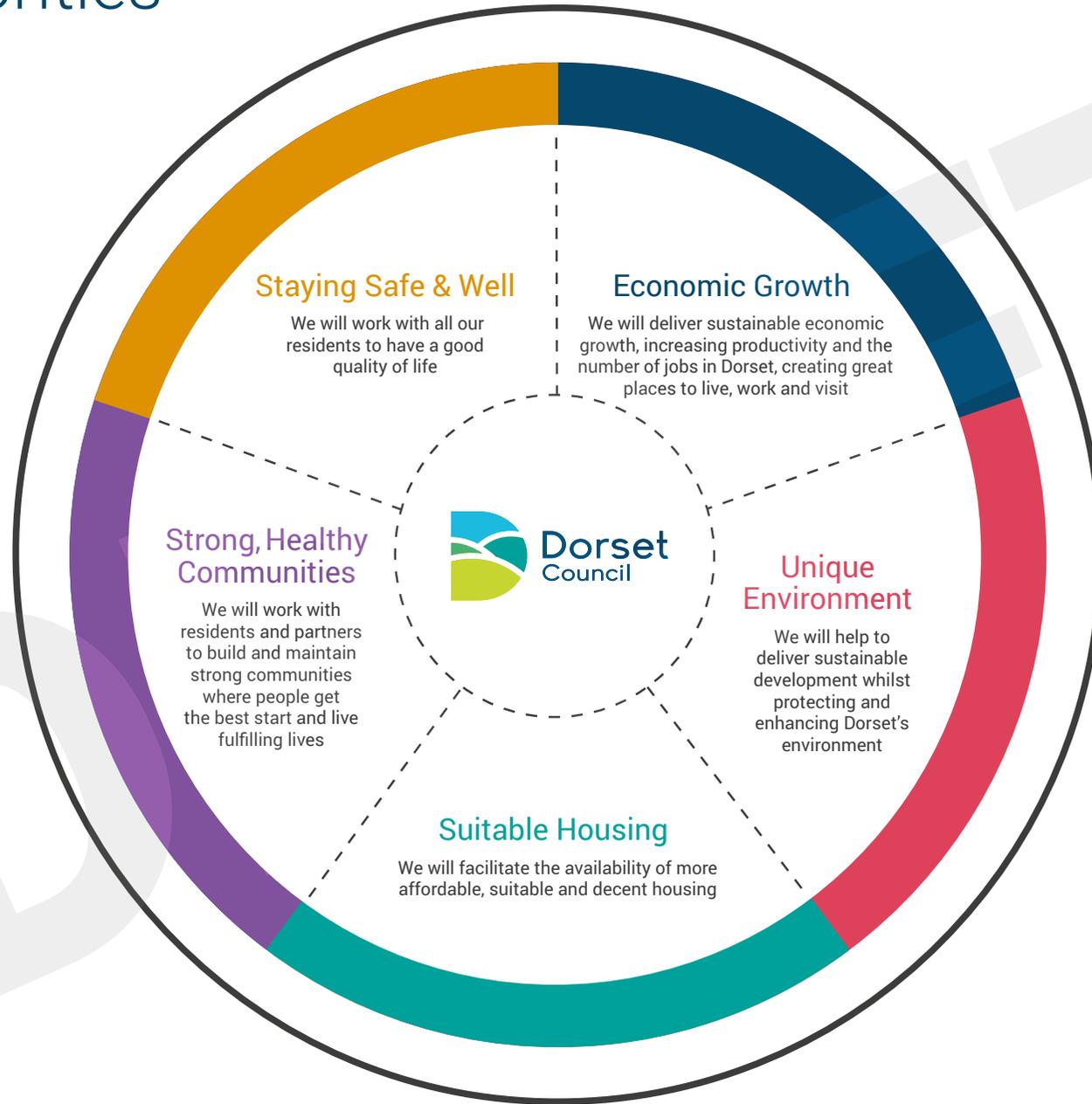
## Economy and infrastructure

Employment in Dorset is high but, like the UK, our economy has a productivity gap. Manufacturing, health, retail, education and hospitality are all big employers in Dorset. 20,000 businesses are based in Dorset: 86% of them are micro firms and less than 1% are large firms. Dorset's economy is worth around £7.1 billion and provides 143,000 jobs. Dorset has above national average representation of advanced engineering and of manufacturing as a whole, but there is also a continuing seasonal, low skill, low wage economy with tourism and agriculture significant industries. The area is rich in valuable minerals, including stone, sand/gravel and oil.

Earnings are below average and house prices are high with affordability issues for many young people and keyworkers. In 2017, lower end house prices were more than ten times higher than lower end earnings in Dorset.

Dorset has no motorway but over 4,000 km of roads. 95.1% of premises in the Dorset Council area have access to superfast broadband. 3.1% of premises in the Dorset Council area have access to full-fibre broadband.

# Our Priorities





# Our Priorities

## Economic Growth

We will deliver sustainable economic growth, increasing productivity and the number of jobs in Dorset, creating great places to live, work and visit.

### What will we do?

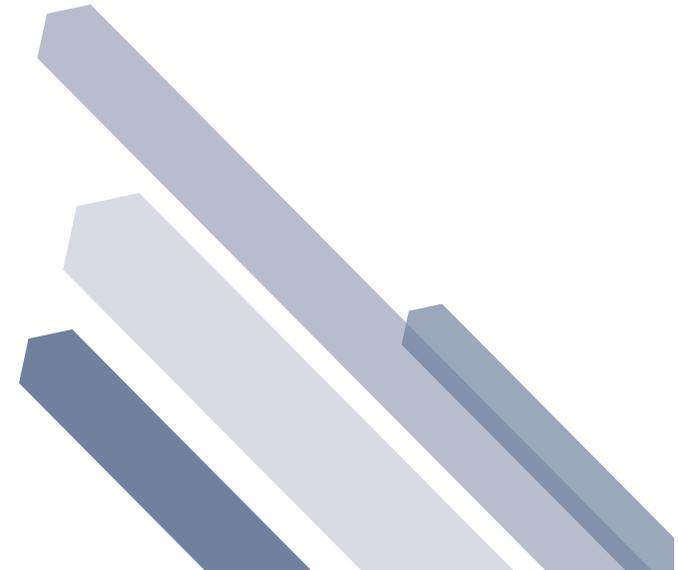
- Enhance Dorset as a place to do business and attract inward investment
- Support the creation and growth of new businesses, and in turn support job creation
- Improve transport and digital connectivity across the area
- Enhance people's aspirations and skills to improve social mobility

### How will we do it?

- Adopt a new Dorset Council Local Plan by 2024
- Explore the roll out of full fibre technology and 5G in Dorset to enable people to travel less and access opportunities
- Work to improve rail services, public transport and reliability of journey times
- Enable growth of good quality jobs at Dorset Innovation Park as our designated Enterprise Zone
- Support growth in key sectors, including advanced engineering/manufacturing, agritech, maritime commercial opportunities, aquaculture and tourism
- Work with schools, colleges, universities and business to raise career aspirations and improve skills
- Stimulate local business opportunities through council procurement
- Work with partners to develop the Dorset place brand

### Who will we work with?

- Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership
- Dorset Local Nature Partnership
- Schools, colleges, and universities
- Local business community
- Government departments
- Investors and developers
- Business support networks
- Town and parish councils



[Infographic to follow]

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# Our Priorities

## Unique Environment

We will help to deliver sustainable development whilst protecting and enhancing Dorset's environment.

### What will we do?

- Provide an environment that attracts business investment, tourism and a skilled workforce
- Improve access to our coast and greenspaces
- Deliver services in a way that protects and enhances our natural, historic and cultural environments
- Support behavioural change to reduce waste
- Provide leadership and contribute to tackling climate change
- Support local communities to respond to climate change
- Capitalise on Dorset's unique environmental assets to support our priorities
- Instil community pride in our environment to help keep it clean and safe
- Support the development of appropriately located renewable energy

### How will we do it?

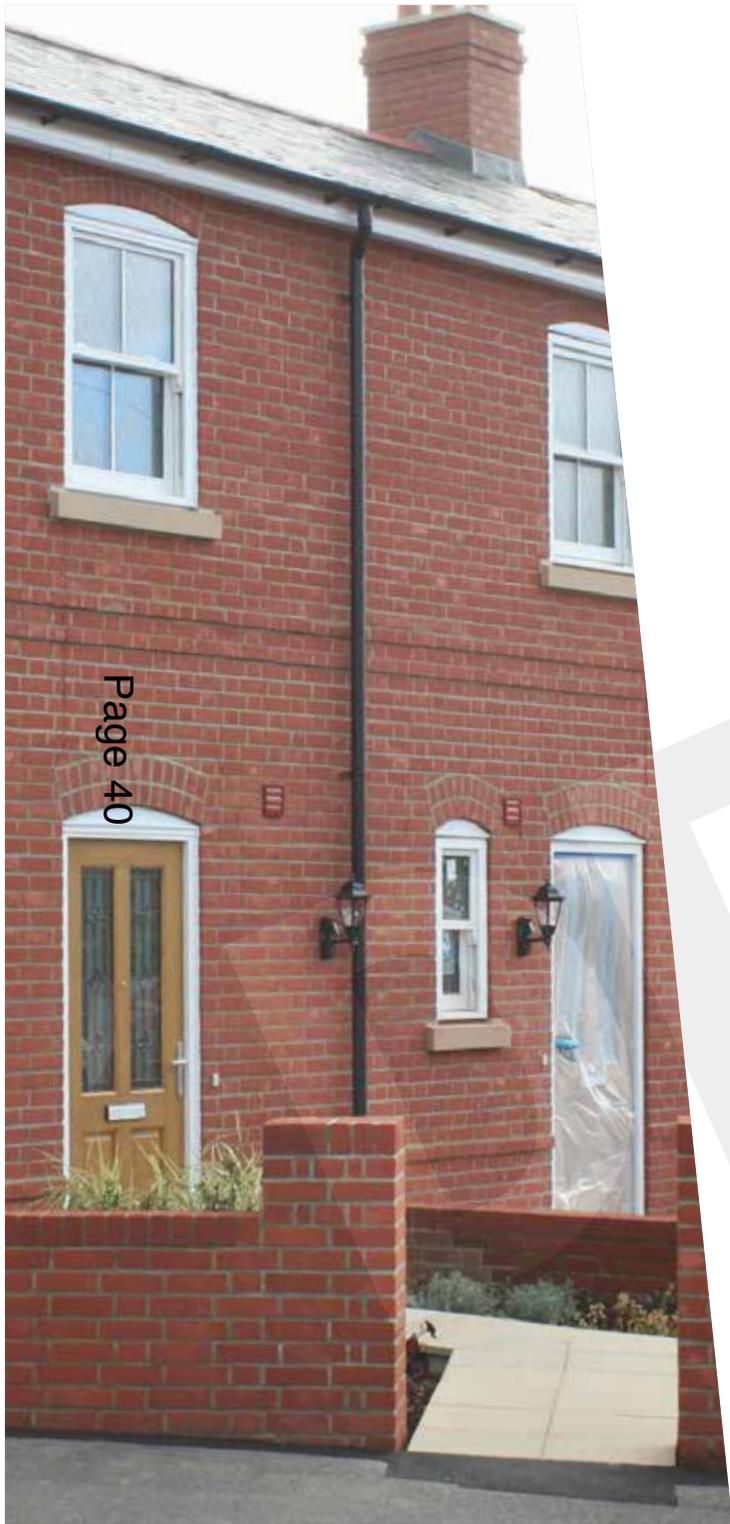
- Develop and implement a strategy to engage with communities on how to protect our environment and respond to proposals that impact on the environment
- Develop a climate change strategy working with our partners, particularly town and parish councils and government
- Deliver a highways verge management and street cleansing strategy
- Deliver our pollinators and biodiversity action plan
- Maximise local resource by applying for additional funding and grants
- Responsibly manage the spaces, buildings and land we own
- Support local farmers, woodland owners, foresters and land managers to make environmental improvements through the countryside stewardship scheme
- Actively monitor and assist in managing areas of poor air quality

### Who will we work with?

- Areas of outstanding natural beauty partnerships
- Dorset Local Nature Partnership
- Jurassic Coast Trust
- Dorset Wildlife Trust
- Natural England
- Marine Management Organisation
- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Highways England
- Government departments
- Police
- Fire and Rescue Service
- Town and parish councils
- Voluntary and community sector
- Significant landowners

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# Our Priorities

## Suitable Housing

We will facilitate the availability of more affordable, suitable and decent housing.

### What will we do?

- Develop appropriate, affordable and sustainable housing, maximising the use of council-owned assets
- Bring long-term empty properties back into use
- Support people to access appropriate accommodation
- Work to raise standards of privately rented homes
- Promote energy efficiency for healthy homes
- Implement a new single Dorset Council housing register and review choice-based lettings
- Adopt a new Dorset Council Local Plan by 2024

### How will we do it?

- Deliver the Building Better Lives programme
- Provide homes by 2024 in line with land supply target
- Develop a business plan for our housing company Homes Dorset
- Increase the number of new homes of all tenures e.g. shared ownership, starter homes, key worker housing
- Reduce homelessness
- Work to ensure that no less than 35% of all new housing is affordable housing
- Increase the number of households receiving assistance from Healthy Homes Dorset

### Who will we work with?

- Registered housing providers
- Voluntary and community sector
- Private landlords
- House builders
- Dorset Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- Homes England
- Police
- Armed forces
- Town and parish councils



[Infographic to follow]

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# Our Priorities

## Strong, Healthy Communities

We will work with residents and partners to build and maintain strong communities where people get the best start and live fulfilling lives.

### What will we do?

- Work to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area
- Support communities to be cohesive, inclusive, safe and active
- Enable people to feel a sense of belonging and to participate actively in their community
- Aim to increase people's healthy life expectancy and reduce differences between areas
- Work to give residents the same opportunities to live well no matter where they live or what their circumstances are
- Provide additional support to communities with the greatest challenges
- Keep Dorset connected with better transport and digital links between communities

### How will we do it?

- Work collaboratively with town and parish councils and communities to improve local areas
- Provide a directory of community activities to connect people and tackle social isolation
- Help people to claim and receive benefits they are entitled to
- Improve mental health support for children, young people and adults
- Improve and maintain air, food and water quality
- Work to reduce rates of smoking, and gambling, alcohol and drug addiction
- Protect people from harm from rogue traders
- Provide safe and useable cycle ways and footpaths, better bus services and community transport schemes
- Provide and maintain access to rights of way, country parks and countryside
- Recognise when the voluntary sector is better placed to provide a service and support them in their work

### Who will we work with?

- Residents
- Police
- Parish and town councils
- NHS services
- Fire and Rescue Service
- Community groups and voluntary organisations
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Other councils including Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council

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# Our Priorities

## Staying Safe & Well

We will work with all our residents to have a good quality of life.

### What will we do?

- Help families stay together and, when they can't, provide the best possible care
- Give children a great and inclusive education that enables them to be the best they can be
- Support adults to live independently in their own homes and, when this isn't possible, provide high quality care
- Put individuals and families at the heart of everything we do
- Reflect the voices of communities in our work
- Build and support capacity in voluntary and community organisations
- Work to prevent children and vulnerable adults from being exploited

### How will we do it?

- Provide good quality social care services
- Provide more specialist education within Dorset for children with complex communication and learning needs
- Provide information, advice and support at the earliest opportunity
- Use technology and explore innovative ways to improve quality of life and independence
- Improve how social care, education and health services work together through the 'Our Dorset' partnership
- Design services with people, not for them
- Raise public awareness of exploitation of children and vulnerable adults

### Who will we work with?

- NHS services
- GP practices
- Schools, colleges and universities
- Police, probation and youth offending
- Voluntary and community organisations
- Residents and communities
- Fire and Rescue Service
- Regulators
- Housing associations
- Service providers
- Prisons
- Local Enterprise Partnership
- Town and parish councils
- Police
- Armed forces
- Town and parish councils



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# We will make this happen by...

As we have come together to create a brand-new organisation, we have defined our principles and values for our journey ahead. This is the focus of our transformation plan which will support us to achieve our priorities by 2024.

## Our Values

- We are an advocate for Dorset on a local, national and global stage
- We work together with our communities and our partners to make things happen
- We put people first and design services around their needs now and in future
- We are open, accessible and accountable
- We use time and money wisely
- We value people and build on their strengths

## Our Behaviours

Responsibility • Respect • Recognition • Collaboration



## Our Principles

Employer of Choice

Customer Focused

Sustainable Organisation

Effective & Modern





Dorset  
Council



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