**Beacon Ward ANNUAL Report to Parishes**

**Dorset Council**

**Cllr Jane Somper**

Autumn 2025

**Malpractice in Dorset Council**

As a councillor of Dorset Council, I am deeply dismayed by the findings of the SWAP report. I’ve been a councillor for 14 years working alongside officers who’ve shown nothing but total integrity and professionalism. The scale of the financial mismanagement, lack of internal oversight and disregard for due process, the scheme of delegation by a very small number of people with potential criminal intent is staggering and a profound breach of public trust.

Residents and members rightly expect transparency and accountability from the local authority. Instead the council is faced with £9 million spent largely off-book, questionable contracts and decisions made outside the safeguards designed to protect public funds.

This isn’t just about process, it’s about trust which has been badly eroded. I will be seeking assurances on what action will be taken to restore that trust, prevent any repeat of this, and that those responsible are held to account.

**NRS Collapse - At Home Equipment**

Following serious concerns and rumours that NRS Healthcare had gone bust, I made urgent enquiries with Dorset Council, as no information had been shared with elected members at the time. NRS has been the provider of at home equipment for residents, including those discharged from hospital or receiving care at home. I was advised in a briefing with a senior officer that Medequip will be taking over Dorset’s Community Equipment Loan Service, replacing NRS as the provider.

I was given assurances that during this transition, urgent cases, particularly hospital discharges will be prioritised and that there will be no interruption to those services. However, it remains unclear how long residents who do not meet the “priority” threshold may have to wait for the equipment they need to live safely and independently at home. This uncertainty is deeply concerning.

While I recognise the efforts of council officers working under difficult and fast moving circumstances, it is my role as a councillor to ensure that no one is left behind. Residents deserve clear communication, transparency on how cases are being prioritised, and reassurance that those not deemed “urgent” will still receive timely and adequate support. I will continue to monitor the situation closely and advocate for all residents, especially those who may otherwise fall through the gaps.

If you as parish councillors, become aware of anyone who is not receiving the equipment they need then please ask them to contact me either directly (you have my email address) or through yourselves.

**Housing Allocation Policy Consultation**

**Dorset Council is reviewing its Housing Allocation Scheme 2026–2031,** which sets out how people register for housing, how applications are assessed, and how social homes are allocated.

The consultation is open until 24 August 2025. Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to take part and provide feedback through the online consultation portal at consultation.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, by emailing dorsetcouncilhomechoice@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, or by calling 01305 221000.

**Why this matters**

Proposed changes could significantly affect households already on the register. These changes may alter eligibility criteria, priority bandings, or waiting times, and it is important that residents understand what is being proposed and how it may impact them.

**Key issues to consider**

Eligibility and prioritisation: The revised policy will change how priority is determined and may alter thresholds for different levels of need.

Length of residency requirement. **A key proposed change** is a reduction in the amount of time applicants need to have lived in the Dorset Council area before qualifying. Under the draft policy, applicants would meet the local connection requirement after two years of continuous residence or three years out of the last five. This marks a shift from previous longer requirements and would make the register more accessible to newer or returning residents.

Impact on current applicants. There are questions about how those already on the register will be treated during the transition. Clarity is needed on whether some may lose priority or face longer waits, and whether protections will be in place for those affected.

Transparency and fairness. It is important that the criteria for assessing housing need are clear, consistent, and equitable, and that the process remains accessible for residents with vulnerabilities or complex circumstances.

Housing supply and demand. The updated policy should reflect how Dorset Council plans to meet housing demand across the county and ensure fair distribution of available homes.

**What parish councillors can do**

Review the draft Housing Allocation Policy and understand the implications of the proposed changes. Consider how these changes will affect local residents, particularly those with urgent or long standing housing needs. Encourage community groups, and individuals currently on the housing register and other residents to engage with the consultation and share their views.

**Link to consultation and draft policy** [Housing Allocation Policy Consultation - Dorset Council - Citizen Space](https://consultation.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/c-e/hac/)

**Dorset Council Local Plan**

The Council will be going out to consult on the DCLP. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of responding with a focus on this area/parish/village. There will be only 3 opportunities for residents to attend drop in sessions in north Dorset (dates to be confirmed) where officers will be on hand to answer questions. I will be holding a briefing session before the consultation ends for parish councillors and residents with a specific interest (date to be confirmed).

**Pharmacy Needs Assessment Consultation**

Have your say on the future of pharmacy services in Dorset

Every three years, Dorset’s Health and Wellbeing Board carries out a detailed review of pharmacy services across the county. This review known as a Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) looks at what services people currently use, what’s available, and what might be needed in the future. It's a legal duty for all Health and Wellbeing Boards to publish this.

Last year, more than 900 residents from across Dorset and BCP shared their experiences through a survey delivered in partnership with Healthwatch Dorset. Their feedback has played a vital role in shaping the draft PNA.

Residents are being asked for final comments and insights from local people and professionals as part of a public consultation.

The consultation is open until 14 August 2025.

You can view the draft document and submit your feedback online <https://consultation.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/public-health/pna2025/?utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=SocialSignIn&utm_source=LinkedIn>

For any ward work, please contact me at CllrJane.Somper@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk.