

Councillor Report:02/03/2026

Cllr Carl Woode

Education White Paper and SEND Reform

Dorset Council has responded cautiously positively to the Government's Education White Paper, "*Every Child Achieving and Thriving*", and its proposed SEND reforms, which aim to improve inclusion, attainment and support for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The plans propose that schools are properly equipped and funded, backed by an additional £4 billion, to support children in mainstream settings where appropriate through three levels of support: targeted, targeted plus (with specialist input), and specialist provision via an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Existing EHCPs will remain in place until pupils complete their current phase of education, with reassessments beginning from the 2029-30 academic year as children move between stages. Dorset Council has welcomed the long-term vision but stresses that funding must address historic underfunding and enable councils to recruit enough staff to deliver timely support. Parent representatives are encouraging families to review the proposals carefully and take part in the national consultation before it closes in mid-May.

- [Key information and proposed reforms in the schools white paper](#)

Stronger Protection for Livestock

The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) Act 2025, which comes into force on 18 March 2026 in England and Wales, strengthens legal protections for livestock against dog attacks and worrying. Updating legislation dating back to 1953, the new law clarifies the distinction between attacking and worrying livestock, extends protections to incidents on roads and paths, includes animals such as llamas and alpacas, and increases penalties from a £1,000 cap to unlimited fines. Police are also given stronger powers to seize and detain dogs, gather evidence and enter premises, when necessary, while a defence is introduced for owners whose dogs were out of their control without consent. The changes aim to improve animal welfare and support farmers while maintaining responsible countryside access, with guidance emphasising that dogs should be kept under close control near livestock.

- [Dogs \(Protection of Livestock\) \(Amendment\) Act 2025](#)

County-wide Electric Vehicle Charging Rollout

Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council have launched a £16.5 million county-wide project to install more than 3,000 on-street electric vehicle charge points over the next five years. Funded through the Department for Transport's Local EV Infrastructure Fund and private investment, the scheme aims to make charging more convenient and affordable, particularly for households without off-street parking, while preparing residents for the 2030 phase-out of new petrol and diesel cars. Officials say the rollout will remove a key barrier to EV adoption by improving access, reliability and consistency across Dorset, helping reduce emissions that account for around a third of the county's carbon footprint. I will be following up on this to clarify how charge points will be distributed across the county.

Business Growth Funding Boost

Dorset Council has welcomed a £1.023 million Government funding package over three years to continue delivering the Business Growth Dorset service across Dorset and BCP. The funding, £341,000 annually from 2026 to 2029, will provide free expert advice and practical support to help local businesses start, grow and improve productivity. Programmes focus on areas such as advanced manufacturing, digital innovation, access to finance, social enterprises and high-street businesses. The service has already supported more than 400 firms and is aiming to reach 530 by March 2026. Council leaders say the investment provides long-term stability, helping strengthen the local economy, encourage innovation and create high-quality jobs as part of a national Growth Hub network.

Rough Sleeping Numbers Fall

Rough sleeping in the Dorset Council area fell slightly in 2025, with 14 people recorded sleeping rough, the lowest level since 2022, despite increases across both the South West and England overall. Government annual snapshot figures show Dorset's numbers have remained relatively stable in recent years, with the highest concentration in Weymouth and smaller numbers in Bridport, Dorchester, Swanage and Wimborne. The council says the reduction reflects ongoing partnership work funded through the Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant, including outreach services, supported accommodation and specialist advice. While welcoming the decline, the council stresses that preventing homelessness remains a priority and encourages residents to seek help early through its Housing Advice helpline.

- [Street Link - Connecting people sleeping rough to local services](#)