

# Councillor Report:23/02/2026

Cllr Carl Woode

## Highways: Potholes and Road Defects

All identified road defects, including potholes, are assessed using a risk-based approach aligned with national best practice guidance set out in Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure. Assessments consider factors such as defect size, severity and location within the highway network to determine appropriate response times. Defined intervention levels and a risk matrix guide prioritisation and management. The council aims to complete permanent repairs at the first visit where possible; however, temporary repairs may be undertaken to make defects safe before permanent reinstatement is carried out as part of planned works. During 2024/25, approximately 10,500 potholes were attended to and repaired.

## Housing Policy and Local Housing Debate

Dorset Council has reached a key milestone in updating its Housing Allocation Policy for 2026–2031 following a scheduled five-year review. The revised policy aims to make access to social housing fairer, more transparent and consistent, including clearer eligibility criteria, a strengthened local connection requirement and a simplified four-band priority system based on housing need. Proposed changes also include updated financial thresholds, a new method for assessing overcrowding, enhanced support for Armed Forces households, and measures to improve access to the housing register. The draft policy, shaped by a 12-week public consultation, will now progress to Cabinet and Full Council for approval, with implementation expected later in 2026 if agreed.

At the most recent Full Council meeting, members also passed a motion relating to housing associations and the delivery of affordable housing. The discussion reflected wider local concerns about the availability of social and affordable homes and highlighted the importance of partnership working between the council and registered housing providers. The motion emphasised maximising affordable housing supply, effective management of existing housing stock, and ensuring transparency and accountability in delivery.

More broadly, local housing debate has focused on housing supply, development levels, and the impact of growth on rural communities and the environment. The council's ongoing policy updates and Local Plan engagement seek to balance meeting housing demand and national planning requirements while protecting local character and responding to community concerns.

- [Draft Housing Allocation Scheme 2026-2031](#)

## Wessex Partnership and Regional Collaboration

In a joint statement, the leaders of Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) councils welcomed government recognition of the Wessex Partnership's preferred geography. The councils highlighted ongoing collaboration across planning, economy, transport, environment and public safety, and confirmed plans to establish a Strategic Planning Board to develop a Wessex Spatial Development Strategy supporting sustainable growth, infrastructure delivery and environmental priorities. Leaders also noted recent government guidance on Foundation Strategic Authorities, called for clarity on future growth funding following the end of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and expressed confidence in progressing regional devolution ambitions.

## Renters Rights Act: Support for Landlords

Dorset Council is encouraging private landlords to prepare for significant reforms introduced under the forthcoming Renters Rights Act, coming into force on 1 May. The legislation introduces major changes to the private rented sector, including the removal of Section 21 "no fault" evictions, limits on rent increases and advance payments, stronger tenant protections, and the introduction of a mandatory landlord ombudsman, alongside tougher enforcement measures. To support landlords through these changes, the council is hosting a dedicated Landlord Forum in March to provide guidance, expert insight and practical advice aimed at improving understanding and compliance.

- [Renters' Rights Act 2025](#)

## Budget 2026/27 and Strategic Investment

Dorset Council approved its 2026/27 budget this month, setting a net budget of around £482 million focused on protecting essential services and delivering priorities within the Council Plan. Key investments include adult and children's social care, road maintenance and safety improvements, and support for local economic growth and community wellbeing. Feedback from the council's budget simulator exercise indicated strong public support for prioritising frontline services, particularly care provision and highways, and these priorities are reflected in the approved budget. The budget also balances ongoing financial pressures through a 4.99% council tax increase.

A significant factor supporting the council's financial position is national funding to address Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits, which have arisen nationally due to sustained pressures in high needs education and SEND provision. Through government safety-valve and DSG management arrangements, around 95% of Dorset Council's remaining DSG deficit will be covered through national funding support. This reduces long-term financial risk, strengthens the council's medium-term financial outlook, and supports continued investment in education and children's services while improvement and financial management plans continue.