

Dorchester Town Council

Community Priorities Review

2023-2028

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Background

What does a Community Priorities Review do?

- Reflects the views of the Dorchester community and prioritises the needs and aspirations of its residents
- Identifies social, cultural, economic and environmental characteristics and strengths of our local community
- Identifies local problems and explores opportunities to collaboratively overcome them
- Suggests how the community would like to develop in the future and creates a vision
- Delivers an implementation plan to achieve this vision and identifies who needs to be involved

The underlying approach of the Community Priorities Review is one of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD).

ABCD is an approach to community development that focuses on identifying and leveraging the existing strengths and assets within a community. Rather than looking at our community's needs and deficits, ABCD seeks to empower individuals and groups by recognising and utilising their skills, resources, and connections to foster positive change and sustainable development. This approach emphasises the importance of involving local people in the decision-making process and building on our community's own capacities to create lasting solutions to local challenges. By tapping into the inherent strengths of our community, ABCD aims to enhance community resilience, social cohesion, and overall well-being.



Background

How the Community Priorities Review was carried out

A number of group and individual meetings have been held to review the previous Directory of Aims and Aspirations (2017-2020), and to identify what progress has been made, what areas are still relevant to develop, and suggest new approaches and projects that might be needed - particularly post pandemic, and in the current economic climate. Engagement has taken place through conversation with partners, formal consultation and desktop research.

This has included input at 3 Community Lunches, email correspondence and meetings & conversations with partners including:

- Dorset Council
- Dorset Council Youth Voice
- Public Health Dorset
- Dorchester Youth & Community Centre
- Dorchester Locality
- Bournemouth University
- Southampton University
- Thomas Hardy School
- Network Rail & South Western Railway
- The Volunteer Centre Dorset
- Help and Kindness
- Awards for All
- As well as a large number of community organisations & local businesses

In addition I have referred widely to partner plans and strategies including:

- Dorchester Town Council Corporate Plan (2019-2024)
- Dorchester Town Council's Vision for Dorchester (2022)
- Dorchester Town Council Climate Emergency Action Plan
- Dorchester Town Council Heritage Tourism Strategy
- Feeling Towns report (2023)
- Dorset Council (DC) Plan (2022-2024)
- DC Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy 2023-25 Refresh
- DC Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Action Plan 2023-25 Refresh
- Dorset Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022
- DC Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2023
- Public Health Dorset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2022
- NHS Dorset Joint Forward Plan 2023-2028
- Dorchester Transport Action Group plan

Following the Community Priorities Review, a new Community Implementation Plan has been created which has been streamlined and simplified to make it more accessible and easier to measure outcomes. The Plan will be a living document that represents the views of our local community. It will be reviewed every 6 months and updated to reflect changing circumstances.

A Vision for Dorchester

Approved: 28 September 2022

The following vision is a product of Town Council and wider public input, to provide a more appropriate vision for Dorchester than the vision that was included in the January 2021 draft Local Plan.

It sets out general aims for the town as a whole, and whilst many of these may apply to other towns and villages across Dorset, reflects the priorities of our residents and distinctive elements of Dorchester.

- 1 Have risen to the challenge of **climate change**, with designs based on zero carbon solutions, and wildlife friendly green spaces and tree-lined corridors that encourage walking and cycling.
- 2 Have a balanced but diverse mix of **housing and workplaces**, in particular helping young people to afford to live and work locally, and flexible, adaptable premises to help businesses respond to changing economic circumstances.
- 3 Have a **vibrant and accessible town centre** that people want to visit and walk around, to access local services, explore its rich history, culture and arts and enjoy its shops, museums, its historic market and its hospitality.
- 4 Have a strong **sense of community** with a wide range of social and sports opportunities for all ages, accessible local centres and recreation spaces, supporting a range of inclusive and community-run enterprises.
- 5 Have outstanding **health and social care, education and training**, with its schools, colleges and hospital providing choice and opportunities for a better way of life.
- 6 Be **easy to get to and around**, with an extensive network of safe and attractive walking and cycling routes, linking to a network of transport hubs for trains and buses, with car and bike sharing facilities, all using low emission technology.
- 7 Still recognise and celebrate its rich **literary associations**, including Thomas Hardy's Casterbridge, and the town's medieval, Roman and neolithic **heritage**.
- 8 Link to the surrounding **countryside**, both visually and physically, valuing the tranquillity, biodiversity, productivity and timelessness of the landscapes that surround the town, including north of the water meadows.

Key aims of the Community Priorities Review

1 Culture, Heritage, Tourism & Leisure

We want to live in a town that:

1. Provides good opportunities for recreation and leisure.
2. Communicates well about events, activities and opportunities to get involved.
3. Capitalises on our tourism and heritage offer.

2 Transport & Access

We want to live in a town that:

1. Promotes active travel.
2. Makes sustainable travel easier, safer and more accessible.

3 Good Health, Wellbeing & Safety

We want to live in a town that:

1. Makes more use of green open spaces and nature for health and wellbeing.
2. Fosters a community that is safe and welcoming for all
3. Seeks to improve links between health and social care & community providers.
4. Wants to improve health for different communities.

4 Democracy & Local Voice

We want to live in a town that:

1. Seeks to strengthen local democracy
2. Works to increase community cohesiveness & resilience

5 Housing

We want to live in a town that:

1. Provides for local housing needs.
2. Supports people most at risk of homelessness.
3. Ensures that housing developments are fit for the future.

6 Economy, Training, Education & Volunteering

We want to live in a town that:

1. Supports the local economy and collaborates with local businesses to facilitate economic growth and job creation.
2. Provides opportunities for life-long learning & training.
3. Gives everyone increased opportunities to get involved in civic life.
4. Supports people of lower incomes

7 Climate & Environment

We want to live in a town that:

1. Actively engages to reduce our carbon footprint and promote sustainable practices.
2. Helps to protect the natural environment.
3. Helps to mitigate or prepare for effects of climate change.

Action Steps

To transform these aspirations into reality, the Dorchester Town Council will:

- Collaborate and consult with residents, community organisations, and businesses to gather feedback and continue to shape priorities.
- Develop a Community Implementation Plan outlining specific actions for how the Town Council will contribute to achieving the priorities.
- Seek external funding opportunities and partnerships to support the implementation of various projects.
- Regularly review the progress, evaluate outcomes, and adjust strategies as needed to ensure ongoing success.
- Communicate progress and achievements through various channels, including public meetings, social media, newsletter and the Town Council website.

Key partners involved in the delivery of the Community Plan

- Voluntary & Community Sector
- Statutory Partners
- Business partners

