

Cabinet – 9 September 2020 – Statements Received

Agenda Item 12 – Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO)

Statement from Emma Lang, Acting Chair of Poole Labour Party

One of the more ideologically flawed elements of the current PSPO is its focus on tackling the symptoms of homelessness rather than its cause. Preventing rough sleepers from sheltering in shop doorways or car parks merely moves the problem out of sight, but it doesn't help the individuals or address their needs. During the Covid crisis there has finally been a recognition that homeless people need to be housed for the good of our society - and that must continue. Remove the clauses that target rough sleepers and instead introduce policies that tackle the causes of homelessness.

Statement from Neil Duncan-Jordan

An obvious weakness in the current PSPO is its ineffectiveness in fining those who are clearly unable to pay. This not only appears to be pointless, but is also seen by the public as callous and cruel. Criminalising rough sleepers for trying to keep warm and dry is not the mark of a compassionate council. Such a punitive approach lacks even a basic awareness of the problems and to date has failed to act as either a deterrent or a significant source of revenue. Remove the clauses that punish rough sleepers and introduce a more effective approach to tackling homelessness.

Statement from Sarah Ward

These clauses increase risk to a vulnerable cohort by causing dispersal to area's with additional risks.

The clauses are in breach of Government guidelines which state that PSPO's should not be used as a tool for managing rough sleeping or the results of poverty – they should be restricted to dealing with genuinely anti-social behaviours.

The Cabinet should support the recommendations in the report, which public consultation also largely supports, and remove the clauses. Failure to do so would be morally wrong and risk a costly court case which I intend to pursue at the High Court should the clauses remain.

Statement from Jim Buchanan, RMT Wessex Regional President

I would like to offer my view of the PPSO proposals with the following statement for the Cabinet meeting of 9 September:

I share the cabinet view and believe that the continued use of clauses b, c, d and e would effectively criminalise the status of being without a secure home. This is not the mark of any civilised society. I am also concerned by what appears to be an attempt to establish a crude correlation between homelessness and anti-social behaviour. Sitting in a shop doorway is not anti-social. However, as a rail worker I frequently witness high levels of unacceptable and disgraceful behaviour from visitors to our town usually under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Statement from Patrick Canavan, on behalf of Bournemouth Labour Party

This statement urges Cabinet to resist the recommendation by the Conservative Group via the Overview and Scrutiny Board to reinstate the discriminatory clauses within the existing PSPO in Poole which Labour has been campaigning to remove for some time.

We call on Cabinet to proceed with the original recommendations. Public consultation should take place regarding a BCP wide PSPO but only on the basis of the three clauses identified which adequately deal with anti-social behaviour and do not penalise and prejudice the homeless and rough sleepers.

Please oppose extending the four inequitable clauses across BCP to this extremely vulnerable group.