



People and Health Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday, 21 January 2026
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Members (Quorum: 3)

Toni Coombs (Chair), Jane Somper (Vice-Chair), Bridget Bolwell, Barry Goringe, Sally Holland, Carole Jones, Chris Kippax, Robin Legg, Andy Todd and Carl Woode

Chief Executive: Catherine Howe, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic & Governance Services
Meeting Contact 01305 224185 - george.dare@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting, apart from any items listed in the exempt part of this agenda. If you would like to attend this meeting and have any specific requirements please contact the Democratic Services Officer named above.

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Agenda

Item	Pages
1. APOLOGIES	
To receive any apologies for absence.	
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interest as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their disclosure councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.	
If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.	
3. MINUTES	5 - 10

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2025.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Representatives of town or parish councils and members of the public who live, work, or represent an organisation within the Dorset Council area are welcome to submit either 1 question or 1 statement for each meeting. You are welcome to attend the meeting in person or via Microsoft Teams to read out your question and to receive the response. If you submit a statement for the committee this will be circulated to all members of the committee in advance of the meeting as a supplement to the agenda and appended to the minutes for the formal record but will not be read out at the meeting. **The first 8 questions and the first 8 statements received from members of the public or organisations for each meeting will be accepted on a first come first served basis in accordance with the deadline set out below.** For further information read [Public Participation - Dorset Council](#)

All submissions must be emailed in full to george.dare@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on Friday, 16 January 2026.

When submitting your question or statement please note that:

- You can submit 1 question or 1 statement.
- a question may include a short pre-amble to set the context.
- It must be a single question and any sub-divided questions will not be permitted.
- Each question will consist of no more than 450 words, and you will be given up to 3 minutes to present your question.
- when submitting a question please indicate who the question is for (e.g., the name of the committee or Portfolio Holder)
- Include your name, address, and contact details. Only your name will be published but we may need your other details to contact you about your question or statement in advance of the meeting.
- questions and statements received in line with the council's rules for public participation will be published as a supplement to the agenda.
- all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

5. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS

To receive questions submitted by councillors.

Councillors can submit up to two valid questions at each meeting and sub divided questions count towards this total. Questions and statements received will be published as a supplement to the agenda and all questions, statements and responses will be published in full

within the minutes of the meeting.

The submissions must be emailed in full to george.dare@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on Friday, 16 January 2026.

[Dorset Council Constitution](#) – Procedure Rule 13

6. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4)b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes.

7. 2025/26 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT 11 - 28

To consider the report by the Strategic Performance, Intelligence & Risk Lead.

8. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND BUDGET STRATEGY REPORT 29 - 112

To consider a report by the Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial (Section 151 Officer).

9. CORPORATE COMPLAINTS TEAM ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25 113 - 168

To consider a report by the Complaints Manager.

10. COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME AND CABINET'S FORWARD PLAN 169 - 198

To consider the committee's Work Programme and the Cabinet Forward Plan.

11. EXEMPT BUSINESS

To move the exclusion of the press and the public for the following item in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph x of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The public and the press will be asked to leave the meeting whilst the item of business is considered.

There are no exempt items scheduled for this meeting.

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PEOPLE AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2025

Present: Cllrs Toni Coombs (Chair), Jane Somper (Vice-Chair), Bridget Bolwell, Sally Holland, Carole Jones, Chris Kippax, Andy Todd and Carl Woode

Apologies: Cllrs Barry Goringe and Robin Legg

Also present: Cllr Shane Bartlett and Cllr Steve Robinson

Also present remotely: Cllr Ryan Hope

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Paul Dempsey (Executive Director of People - Children), Paula Golding (Corporate Director for Care and Protection), Julia Ingram (Corporate Director for Adult Social Care Operations), Antony Nash (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), Liz Crocker (Head of Strategy), Chris Heighway (Performance and Analytics Team Manager), Harriet Hallett (Business Intelligence Manager (Adults)), Karen Maher (Service Manager - S117 Hub), Sarah Sewell (Head of Service - Commissioning for Older People and Home First), Amy-Jane White (Quality Assurance and Programme Lead) and Katie Honour (Change Management Lead)

Officers present remotely (for all or part of the meeting):

Jonathan Price (Executive Director of People - Adults and Housing)

34. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

35. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting 22 september 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

36. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

37. **Councillor Questions**

There were no councillor questions.

38. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

39. **Adults and Housing Deep Dive into Waiting Lists**

The item was introduced by the Executive Director for Adults, Health and Housing and thanked the committee for receiving these items. The presentation from the Corporate Director for Adult Social Care provided additional contextual information the most up to date figures and highlighted areas of focus from the report provided.

The discussion between members and officers covered several key areas;

- The duration of waits for those people who are on waiting lists and the classification of wait times and the improvements made in reducing numbers of people on the waiting lists and the duration of the waits.
- Locality nuance around population demographics and the performance of each locality service.
- Detail around the types of referrals that are addressed at access without care assessments.
- The importance of community support to aid in the reduction of waiting lists and meeting needs through non-commissioned care.
- The inter connectedness between adult social care and health and the statutory responsibilities of the local authority under the Care Act and the Mental Health act.
- The levels of staffing and the impact of vacancies on delivery with emphasis on how service redesign work will impact the future of roles.
- The level of demand which is increasing and the relation between demands and contact numbers increases.
- The development of service delivery to manage and reduce waiting times through different working practices such as the change from a specialised centralist approach to a hub and spoke design for safeguarding.
- Data cleansing and the importance of accurate information in delivering services and the impact on individuals in receipt of care and support.
- Reasons for the increase in average wait times were due to the number of safeguarding referrals being received as well as a legacy from Covid.

Recommendation

The committee provided scrutiny and provide feedback in relation to Waiting Lists.

40. **Adults and Housing Deep Dive into Carers**

The Corporate Director for Adult Social Care presented an introduction to the report drawing in additional information and highlighting key areas of the report to be considered about the context of carers in Dorset.

The subsequent discussion of committee covered off several key areas

- Child carers and the support for children and making sure that the right support and advice is in place and concerns on the potential expectations of caring placed upon children.
- The placement of the service within birth to settled adulthood and the provision of training to workers in recognition of child carers

- The increase of carers accessing advocacy services and its relation to the increase visibility of service provision
- The change of provision and the actions taken to mitigate impact on individuals managing risk.

Additional questions were provided in writing to Children's Services to respond in writing focusing on the support in education settings for recognising and supporting child carers.

Recommendation

The Committee scrutinised and provided feedback in relation to carers and considered the potential of revisiting this report as part of a 6-month service review.

41. FutureCare Programme - Mid-Programme Review

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care provided some background context to the Future Care programme. The Workstream Lead - Future Care introduced the item and shared a detailed summary of the work completed so far and the impact of the approach.

After the presentation there was a discussion that covered of the following areas;

- The programme reset and the impact of changes delivered so far
- The change backdrop in the health sector and the cultural shift across partners to deliver the impact of the programme
- The constant challenge to provide services within a sector with cultural differences. The community bed flow is critical to service improvement and reducing discharge delay.
- The framework approach and how it works.
- The workflow and the visibility of capacity to ensure best use of resources
- The role of community hospitals are within the bed based intermediate care allocation part of the programme and the number of community beds in Dorset.
- The frequency of readmissions back into hospital particularly when discharged to home. Committee concerned about how re-admission can be prevented, and the need to understand the demographics and vulnerabilities. The Committee need to be assured that the investment ensures a real stop change and not just a short term solution.
- The different aspects of the programme and the dependant nature of the phases of work.
- The price of beds and the placement of individuals based upon their specific needs.
- The trend towards higher complexity and needs as part of the rationale for reablement centres.
- The discharge process from Acute hospital to community hospital, reablement bed or home settings and the way they are recorded,

- The cross-area settings in the North of the county and how that is working with out of county hospital stays is accommodated within the Transfer of Care approach
- Consideration around user experience – how was this to be gathered and taken into account

The Chairman summarised the discussion recognising the complexity of the system and the budget constraints highlighting the action to be taken to prevent overspend and invited a further update of progress.

Recommendation-

The Committee reviewed the progress that the programme continues to make in respect of improved outcomes for people and the delivery of financial benefits to the Dorset Integrated Care System, but also recognised that more work is required to reduce the further reduce the average length of stay for people in hospital ready to leave hospital with further support

42. Cost of Living Challenge Update

The item was introduced by the portfolio holder for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement and the backdrop that has led to this work. The details and key considerations from the report were set out by the Business Partner for Communities & Partnerships.

Following the presentation the discussion covered off the following areas.

- The different sources of funding including Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF) and the Household Support Fund (HSF) and how they interconnect.
- The prevention focus of the new fund and detail of situations that are likely to be covered in accessing funding.
- The community transport funding available and the system to address issues.
- A 3-year figure for the household support fund will be provided in December 2025/January 2026.
- Ensuring that all areas across Dorset are covered by services and access was not restricted by an individuals' location.
- The role of awareness and publicity in the delivery of prevention-based work.
- Citizen's Advice funding model and their access to funding.
- The discretionary housing payment is applied for a 3-6 month period generally to rebalance and move out of crisis.
- The devolved responsibilities of town and parish councils.

Information was provided after the meeting to the People and Health Scrutiny committee to show the frequency of multiple allocations of housing payments.

Recommendations

1.The Committee reviewed and commented on the progress of the £1.2 million investment in preventative and reactive spend.

2. The Committee noted that government has announced the Household Support Fund will be phased out at the end of the current spending cycle. From April 2026, the Household Support Fund was to be replaced by a new, long-term initiative called the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF).

3. The Committee request that Community Transport to be considered at Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

At 12:51 the vote to extend the meeting was proposed by the Chairman and unanimously agreed.

43. Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report

The Committee welcomed the attendance of the Independent Chair

Independent Chair of Safeguarding Adults Board provided an initial context around the report provided and the committee shared some early observations from a discussion that happened with a subgroup of the Committee. A summary of the highlights was provided by the members of the subgroup and the effectiveness of the safeguarding practices of Dorset Council were recognised by the Independent chair of Safeguarding Adults Board.

There was a question about the cross border working and the learnings from the “Simon” SAR and the requirement of legislative change in the solution. The Committee were pleased to hear that a review of recent SAR’s would be included in next year’s report.

The findings of the Safeguarding Adults Board investigation into out of county placements was to be shared with the committee.

44. 2025/26 Quarter 1 Performance Report

The Strategic Performance Lead for Intelligence & Risk introduced the progress to date and the report provided and set out the key indicators.

The subsequent discussion focussed on the following areas;

- Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and the resource required to manage the current performance around this area and the plan to utilise Artificial Intelligence and increased capacity.
- System issues around EHCP and the reviews have resulted in more amendments which are more time intensive from an officer perspective.
- The outcomes of children on EHCP around academic performance has improved and is currently above national averages.
- Children in care population and the services that are used to manage the population and keep children in their homes as much as possible.
- The role of information sharing in the ability to support children at hubs and in communities and the importance of parental consent.
- The need for local solutions around school transport.
- Identification of need and the importance of that in shaping provision and the right support.

- The Valuing Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (VSEND) programme and the early support provision and that the needs of children can be met outside of EHCP provision.
- Concern was raised that the new management system was not fully working yet, although the committee understood that this was affected by the complexities of partnership working.

Note: Please use the following link to access the Quarter 1 Performance Dashboard: [Link to Performance Dashboard](#)

Recommendation

The Committee noted the Quarter 1 (April–June 2025) performance overview available via the Scrutiny dashboard, with an accompanying exceptions extract provided in Annex 1 and 2.

The Committee considered the triangulated analysis for the identified areas of performance focus, to inform actions and recommendations

45. Committee's Work Programme and Executive Forward Plans

Suggested future items:

Help and care young carer support requested for summer 2026
Reablement service performance and rationale

46. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 2.12 pm

Chairman

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People & Health Scrutiny Committee

21 January 2026

2025/26 Quarter 2 Performance Report

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

S Ford, Corporate Director, Strategy, Performance and Sustainability

Report author and job title: Chris Heighway, Strategic Performance & Risk Lead

Email: chris.heighway@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: N/A

Report status: Public Choose an item.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report provides the People & Health Scrutiny Committee with an overview of key performance trajectories, indicators and exceptions for Quarter 2 of 2025/26 (July–September 2025). It builds on the Quarter 1 2025/26 performance report (presented to the Committee on 17 November 2025).
- 1.2 The report presents red-rated performance indicators, alongside amber indicators showing a worsening trend, with narrative context and improvement actions. Based on the data the Committee's key areas of focus this quarter are:
 - Children's Service's CMS implementation project update
 - Percentage of looked after children placed outside the council area
- 1.3 For these areas, performance has been triangulated using a mix of quantitative data (trends, benchmarking, demand) and relevant resource context, providing a rounded and meaningful narrative to support scrutiny discussion.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee:
- notes the Quarter 2 (July–September 2025) performance overview available via the Scrutiny dashboard, with an accompanying exceptions extract provided in Annex 1 and 2.
 - considers the contextual analysis for the identified areas of performance focus, to inform actions and recommendations.

3. Reason for the recommendations

- 3.1 To support the council's commitment to robust governance, transparency and continuous improvement by adhering to the reporting mechanisms set out within Dorset Council's Strategic Performance Reporting Framework.

Specifically, this approach:

- aligns with the council's constitution, particularly provisions relating to performance monitoring, decision-making, transparency, and democratic oversight
- promotes public transparency by ensuring performance-related information is accessible, clear, and reported consistently
- supports effective tracking and oversight of the scrutiny committee's actions and decisions, reinforcing accountability and enabling timely follow-up
- supports the council's wider performance management framework by ensuring the committee's work is integrated into quarterly reporting mechanisms

4. The report

- 4.1 The scrutiny dashboard now includes Quarter 2 (July–September 2025/26) performance data, alongside historic trends where available, enabling Members to interrogate key metrics and emerging issues. The dashboard is publicly accessible via the following [link](#).
- 4.2 The areas of focus are indicated below and are considered in turn within the report:

Children's Services

- **Children's Service's Case Management System (CMS) implementation project update**
 - Dorset moved to a new workflow-based case management system in May to bring greater consistency, efficiency and oversight to the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process. The system provides structured workflows, an

out-of-the-box reporting module for statutory returns, and alerts to support ongoing monitoring of statutory compliance. It integrates with MOSAIC and Synergy Core to improve information flow across social care and education, includes an inbuilt forms designer for flexible updates, and offers manager and team-level caseload tools that strengthen operational oversight and workload management. Future releases will also introduce portal access for professionals, schools and parents, enabling them to contribute directly to the EHCP process.

- Reporting functionality within the EHCP Case Management System has advanced significantly throughout October and November and remains a key priority for the Service. This work is being delivered in close collaboration with Business Intelligence and Performance colleagues, alongside ICT support.
- Performance information on key metrics for current EHCPs and the timeliness of the Education, Health and Care Needs Request process from initial request to final plan issuance has been reinstated and is now available.
- Performance metrics for both datasets are being backdated for the period May 2025 to November 2025 to ensure accuracy and provide a reliable baseline for monitoring.
- Data Quality (DQ) reports have been developed to identify key data anomalies to provide greater transparency and enable the service to proactively resolve errors.
- Further work on enhancing reporting and performance monitoring will remain a priority for Business Intelligence & Performance (BI&P) and ICT colleagues. This includes continued development of analytical outputs to provide full oversight of performance and compliance. Delivery will be aligned with the governance provided by the Synergy Operational Group and the Children's Services Digital Work Plan, ensuring that improvements are embedded within existing structures.
- Our EHCP performance is not yet where we want it to be, and there are a number of factors that have contributed to this:
 - Staff familiarising themselves with the new case management system
 - Vacancies in localities and induction of permanent and interim workers
 - Peak holiday season limiting staff capacity
 - Delays in reporting from the new case management system

- Delays in timeliness and reasons for delay, are being analysed so that these can be understood and actions recommended to strengthen our position
- We are currently in formal consultation with the workforce with some proposed changes to our Dorset Children Thrive Model, and we anticipate, if these changes proceed, we will have the more capacity in the right places to strengthen our performance. The changes are proposed to be in place from April 2026.
- We have started exploring opportunities for using Artificial Intelligence to support our EHCP work and are hopeful that this will also improve our timeliness in this area. This forms part of a Council Wide initiative, and we do not yet have a timeline for implementation.
- **Percentage of looked after children placed outside the council area**
 - The percentage of children in care in homes outside Dorset at the end of quarter two was 45.22% - Dorset's target is 30%. When compared to Good + Local Authorities and Statistical Neighbours the average is 33.14% and the England average is 45%.
 - The percentage of children in care placed more than 20 miles away from home at the end of quarter two was 41.83% - Dorset's target is 35%.
 - 61% of children in care who live outside Dorset are living in neighbouring authorities.
 - Both measures have improved in October 2025 with the percentage of children in care in homes outside Dorset at the end of October 2025 being 44.71%, and the percentage of Children in homes more than 20 miles away is 41.04%.
 - Our commitment to placing children within their family networks may sometimes result in placing children outside of Dorset.
 - Where children's needs are best met in a home outside of Dorset, due diligence is completed by Brokerage Team. High cost and at distance homes are approved by the Director of Children's Services. All children are regularly visited by their social worker and there is regular contact with their independent reviewing officer between and during statutory reviews.
 - Prior to any child living in a residential home outside Dorset, careful consideration is given to matching the child's needs with the home and other children living there. A local area risk assessment is undertaken, and the relevant local authority is

notified to ensure that any risks in the area are known and understood. Annual visits are undertaken by the Brokerage quality assurance service and any downgrades to Ofsted ratings results in increased visiting and oversight.

- Dorset Virtual School provides a consistent offer for all children in care living both in Dorset and outside Dorset.
- Having children in homes outside of Dorset provides significant financial pressures, as homes are higher cost and there are additional travel costs and time pressures for social workers.
- The recruitment of local foster carers is essential to improving this position and the outcomes for our children, and despite the national challenge of recruitment of foster carers we did see an increase in initial enquiries during September 2025 and are actively assessing 19 families as mainstream foster carers and 16 families as kinship carers.
- Valuing Care is enabling us to gain a deeper understanding of children's needs and express these more clearly. At the same time, we are using the approach to assess foster carers' capacity. Together, these approaches will help us to make stronger, needs-led matches with local foster carers. Support children in transitioning from residential care to fostering in a planned and positive way.
- We launched our Christmas Fostering Campaign and are working closely with our foster carers to better understand the support they need to expand their fostering family to meet the needs of our children.
- We continue to develop and grow our in-house homes and our local externally commissioned homes. All Dorset in-house children's homes are either graded Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. We have recently successfully registered a single occupancy children's home in the East of the county, with plans to register 2 further homes in 2026. We continue to explore additional opportunities to expand.
- We have a Framework in place for locally commissioned residential homes providing a total of 17 beds for a range of children's needs. Of these we have 6 block arrangements in place meaning they can only be used by Dorset Council for our children, and we are in discussions to secure more places under these arrangements. Furthermore, we are actively engaged with other providers who are establishing homes in Dorset (proposed total beds is 8) to encourage them to join our framework.
- We are part of the Southwest Sufficiency Group, a group of 15 local authorities working together to develop sufficiency of homes for children. A recent Market Position Statement has

been produced setting out the regions position and direction of travel which includes, Regional Purchasing Arrangement and Fee Uplifts, Co-design and implement a regional framework to source residential placements for children in care, Keep children local in high-quality cost-effective provision. Workforce Development Partner with Dialogue, DfE, Ofsted, Children Homes Association, and University of Sussex academics to develop recommendations for providers and commissioners to inform recruitment, retention and growth strategies and Influence regulation and inspection protocols for Registered Managers. Transparent Baseline Costing Models, establish a transparent and data-driven baseline of costs across the region for commissioned services in children's care.

- In November 2025 the Government announced an acceleration of establishing Regional Care Cooperatives (RCC) following two regional trials. RCC's will mandate regional groups of local authorities to pool resources and budgets to accelerate the development of local homes for local children, improved data insights to support market shaping and manage excessive costs private providers charge to care for children. Our South - West regional work puts us in a good position to respond the development of RCC's.

Quarter 2 Exceptions Extract 2025/26

4.3 The Quarter 2 (July–September 2025) performance overview is available via the Scrutiny Dashboard, with supporting exceptions extracts provided in **Appendix 1 and 2**.

- Appendix 1 provides red-rated indicators accompanied by narrative context and improvement actions.
- Appendix 2 presents amber-rated indicators, with a worsening direction of travel, also supported by narrative and improvement actions.

Quarter 2 Risk Update

4.4 The performance dashboard incorporates strategic risks to acknowledge their critical role in shaping and influencing overall performance. Strategic risks are those that, if realised, could have the most significant impact on delivering the Council Plan or other key organisational priorities. Strategic risks may be considered by the Scrutiny Committee within the context of performance.

4.5 It is important to note that the responsibility for assessing the adequacy of risk controls and management rests with the Audit and Governance Committee, which holds the authority to make recommendations on the effectiveness of the council's risk management arrangements.

4.6 Whilst this is the case, it is acknowledged that the committee has an overarching interest in Risk ID 200, rated Very High:

“As a result of health service reform, Dorset Council may incur additional unprovisioned responsibilities, leading to increased resourcing & budgetary pressures, unmet health needs and potential harm to individuals”.

4.7 A meeting with risk owners is scheduled for 19 January 2026 to review the current position and understand how the risk is evolving within the context of performance. A verbal update will be provided to the Committee at its meeting on the 21 January 2026

Quarter 3 Performance Report

4.8 The next performance report, presenting Quarter 3 data, will be brought to the Committee 1 April 2026. Within this report committee has requested to receive a report focusing on Housing performance.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Not applicable. The report presents information on past performance and does not recommend any change to council policy or new action.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report; however some indicators are based on statutory returns, which the council must make to the Government.

7. Financial implications

7.1 There are no financial legal implications arising directly from this report.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The report does not have direct climate change implications.

9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 The People and Health Committee scrutinise performance within its area of expertise and any commissioned actions resulting from this process may improve the well-being and health outcomes of our communities.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 None.

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 Not applicable. The report presents information on past performance and does not seek a decision.

12. Equalities

- 12.1 There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications resulting from this report. Equality impact assessments are carried out, when necessary, across the council to ensure service delivery meets the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 **Appendix 1:** Summary of performance exceptions (red RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 2 2025/26 (July–September 2025)
- 13.2 **Appendix 2:** Summary of performance exceptions (Amber and ‘worsening’ RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 2 2025/26 (July–September 2025)

14. Background papers

- [Agenda Document for People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 17/11/2025](#)
- [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 30/07/2025](#)

15. Report sign-off

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendices

Appendix 1. Summary of performance exceptions (red RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 2 2025/26 (July–September 2025)

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Adults & Housing	Adults Safeguarding Activity - number of safeguarding concerns received during the month	636	RED	Same	The service continues to see a rise in demand and a significant increase in the number of concerns received in comparison to last year. As reported last month 50% of concerns continue to be received from the provider sector with missed medication being the most frequently reported incident type reported by providers. The number of concerns reported in relation to self-neglect is also significant and a rising area of demand and focus for the team.
Adults & Housing	Number of pregnant women / families in B&B exceeding 6 week stay	1	RED	Worsening	One household has been in B&B for longer than 6 weeks. Close monitoring and joint planning will be continued to ensure the accommodation needs of all families who require temporary accommodation are understood as early as possible following their approach to housing so that alternative options can be identified quickly and B&B placements are avoided if other more suitable options exist.
Children's Services	Number of Independent Special School places taken up by children and young people	542	RED	Same	As the number of children with agreed EHCPs continues to rise, we anticipate this may influence the number placed in independent or non-maintained specialist provision. Our strategic aim remains to place children in mainstream or maintained special schools wherever possible, ensuring provision is both appropriate and sustainable.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Children's Services	Number of special educational needs (SEND) tribunals against the authority	15	RED	Improving	SEND tribunal activity increased in September, with 15 new appeals lodged across Dorset. Chesil recorded the highest number, with 7 new cases (3 refusals to assess, 1 refusal to issue, 2 Section I disputes, and 1 covering Sections B, F & I). No cases were concluded in Chesil during this period. Dorchester & West received 2 new appeals (both refusals to assess) and concluded 3 cases: one refusal to assess which was overturned by Dorset before the hearing, one refusal to issue decided in favour of parents at hearing, and one Sections B, F & I appeal struck out by the tribunal. North locality saw 1 new appeal (refusal to issue an EHCP) and 2 concluded cases: one Sections B, F & I appeal decided in favour of the parent at hearing, and one refusal to issue resolved via paper hearing, also in favour of the parent. East recorded 4 new appeals (2 refusals to assess and 2 covering Sections B, F & I) and concluded 2 cases: one Sections B, F & I appeal decided in favour of the parent at hearing, and one Section I case conceded by the LA prior to hearing. Purbeck had 1 new appeal (Sections B, F & I) and concluded 1 case (Section I, hearing outcome in favour of the parent).

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Children's Services	Percentage of children with a new child protection plan who have been on a child protection plan within the last two years (rolling 12 months)	16.22	RED	Worsening	The service has seen a rise in the proportion of children subject to repeat child protection plans, which is currently above target. In response, an audit has been completed to review the sustainability of plans and the decision-making processes involved. The findings from this audit will help inform next steps and support improvements in practice.
Children's Services	Percentage of Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) issued within 20 weeks	22.86	RED	Worsening	We are currently unable to report on EHCP metrics due to the recent migration to the new Case Management System. Once the new reporting solution is fully implemented and embedded, we will backfill the missing data to ensure continuity and accuracy in performance monitoring.
Children's Services	Percentage of looked after children placed outside the council area	45.22	RED	Worsening	We have seen an increase at the end of this quarter in the % of children in care living outside Dorset to 45.22 from an improved figure in July of 41.61. This means that our performance is worse than National Average and Good + stat Neighbours.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Children's Services	Rate of permanent exclusions from schools (all schools) (%)	0.84	RED	Worsening	There have been 9 permanent exclusions recorded this quarter: 4 in July and 5 in September. These exclusions predominantly affected pupils in Years 8 and 10, with each year group accounting for 33% of the total (3 children and young people (CYP) in each year group). One exclusion was rescinded in the East locality. A significant proportion of the excluded pupils had existing vulnerabilities, 40% were Children in Need (CIN), 20% were receiving Targeted Early Help, 40% had previous involvement with Children's Social Care (CSC) within the past six years. Only 2 pupils had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Locality-level data shows that Chesil, Dorchester, and North each recorded the highest number of exclusions, with 2 exclusions per locality.
Public Health and Prevention	Percentage of deaths registered within 5 calendar days	80	RED	Improving	Since 9 September 2024 the national target has been to register deaths within five days of the receipt by Registration Services of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death. The national target of 95% is extremely challenging for rural areas such as Dorset where most of the registration offices are part-time due to local demand and a lack of capacity to be able to increase the opening hours. Whilst customers are likely to be able to book an appointment at any office in the area within the five-day timeframe, they frequently wish to attend the office that is most convenient to them rather than travelling to a different town in order to register more quickly and will choose to wait a little longer for this reason.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
					In Dorset we place significant emphasis on providing our customers with the best experience for registering deaths at what is often a sensitive time for them, listening to their preferences as to where they attend to do this, over seeking to maximise performance against the target. For instance, a customer living in Gillingham is unlikely to wish to travel to Weymouth in order to register a death as quickly as possible and will choose to wait a few days longer so that they can attend the Gillingham office. A flexible approach is taken to diary management with as many offices open as possible on any given day, but this is limited by registrar capacity and accommodation availability. Whilst death appointments are prioritised due to their time-critical nature, availability must also be balanced with appointments for birth registrations and taking notices of intention to marry or form civil partnerships. Performance improved slightly during September due to the reduced death rate (in line with seasonal expectations), engaging more casual cover for offices to offset capacity issues arising from vacancies and lessening in demand for notice of marriage appointments (in line with seasonal expectations). Looking ahead, the national civil registration transformation agenda is likely to see a move away from the current in-person requirements for registration appointments that tie these to physical offices. The temporary move to conducting death registration appointments by telephone enabled during the

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
					pandemic proved that these could be undertaken much more quickly when the location and travel issue was removed in areas like Dorset. The ability to register deaths remotely will make a significant difference to performance in this respect. However the timeframe will be driven nationally, and we are unable to implement such changes locally.

Appendix 2. Summary of performance exceptions (Amber and ‘worsening’ RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 2 2025/26 (July–September 2025)

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Adults & Housing	Adults - Number of outstanding assessments (Care Act)	863	Amber	Worsening	There has been pressure on the teams due to high volumes of referrals in and ongoing waiting list of work. There were 865 referrals into teams in September, of which 345 were for assessments; there were 383 assessments completed across the service within the month.
Adults & Housing	Adults - Number of overdue 12 month reviews (Care Act)	1221	Amber	Worsening	Overdue Reviews continue to be a challenge. There is a considerable volume of review work that is completed across the service, with 2476 reviews having been completed since 1st April 2025 for 1758 individuals. This continues to be an area of focus with the majority of the reviews being for people who have been waiting longest or there has been a change in need.
Adults & Housing	Net number of households in Temporary accommodation (including B&B) at the end of the month (taking in to account households newly placed in TA and those moving out into	211	Amber	Worsening	The increase of households in temporary accommodation reflects the expected seasonal increase.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
	alternative accommodation)				
Children's Services	Percentage of 3 and 4 yr olds benefitting from funding EY education in Met/Good/Outstanding setting	96.78	Amber	Worsening	The proportion of 3 and 4 year-olds accessing funded early years education in settings rated Met/Good/Outstanding remained consistently high throughout Quarter 2, with a slight upward trend observed mid-quarter. A peak in July and August reflects a period of stability and quality across most settings. However, a slight dip in September is attributed to a small number of settings receiving inspection outcomes below 'Good'. These outcomes were primarily due to challenges in recruitment and the absence of robust processes to ensure consistent quality. Currently, three settings are rated below Good: two Inadequate and one Requires Improvement. All are receiving targeted support to reflect on their inspection outcomes and implement improvement plans. These settings are expected to be re-inspected within 12 months, and ongoing support is in place to ensure rapid progress and improved outcomes for children.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Children's Services	Percentage of Section 47 investigations completed within 10 days	82.76	Amber	Worsening	The timeliness of s.47 investigations has varied in Q.2 and has been below target. The previous delays in one locality have started to improve but have required further focus. Timeliness of s.47 investigations continues to be driven through weekly locality management meetings
Children's Services	Percentage of Section 47s leading to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC)	42.53	Amber	Worsening	Quarterly performance shows an average of 34.50 this year compared to 41.68 last year, performance remains slightly above the national average (32.18) and close to the benchmark for Good+ authorities (35.50), reflecting an overall improvement.
Adults & Housing	The total number of contacts into adult social care each month	1704	Amber	Worsening	The demand at the front door of Adult Access Team is difficult to manage as it is direct access from members of the public. The volume over the last year has risen since the same period last year . This is reflected in demand across the service in other areas and is reflected in the complexity we are seeing in the population of Dorset who have Care Act eligible needs.

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People & Health Scrutiny Committee

21 January 2026

Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan Strategy Report (MTFP)

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr S Clifford, Finance & Capital Strategy

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

S Cremer, Corporate Director, Section 151 Officer

Report author and job title: Sean Cremer, Corporate Director, S151 Officer

Email: sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972

Report status: Public Choose an item.

Executive Summary:

This report sets out proposals for Dorset Council's 2026/27 revenue and capital budgets and summarises the medium-term financial plan (MTFP), which covers the following years. As part of preparing budget proposals the draft Cabinet report is presented to both scrutiny committees, People and Health Scrutiny Committee and Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee. As this committee is receiving an advance copy of the Cabinet report, there are some sections highlighted in the report which identify where a paragraph or sentence is subject to change ahead of Cabinet. For example, where the Cabinet paper refers to the feedback arising from this committee.

In this context, the role of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee is to review the proposals for

1. Adults and Housing (appendix 1d),
2. Children's Services (appendix 1e)
3. Birth to Settled Adulthood (appendix 1f)
4. Public Health and Protection (appendix 1h)

The budget proposals are built around the priorities identified in the Dorset Council Plan.

This budget continues to reflect members' priorities of resource allocation into front line services wherever possible, and this is reflected in the areas of growth set out in the analysis in this paper.

Recommendation:

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to review and comment on the budget proposals covering the Adults and Housing, Birth to Settled Adulthood, Public Health & Protection and Children's Services Directorate which are set out in the draft Cabinet report at Appendix 1d, 1e, 1f, 1h which are attached to this covering report and provide any feedback to Cabinet in time for responses to be included in the report being considered on 29 January 2025.

Reason for Recommendation:

The Council is required to set a balanced revenue budget, and to approve a level of council tax as an integral part of this. A balanced budget is essentially one where all expenditure is funded by income without unsustainable use of one-off or short-term sources of finance.

Part of the approval process includes the budget proposals being considered formally by Scrutiny Committees prior to Cabinet approval.

1. Financial implications

1.1 All covered within the Cabinet report.

2. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology implications

2.1 All covered within the Cabinet report.

3. Well-being and health implications

3.1 None specifically identified in the Cabinet report.

4. Other implications

4.1 None specific.

5. Risk Assessment

5.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: High

6. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 The budget is a framework for the Council to achieve its priorities and the requirement to achieve a balanced budget is delivered through a number of key assumptions, and the delivery of programmes of transformational change.
- 6.2 The overall budget framework has not been the subject of a separate equality impact assessment but the programmes and changes upon which delivery of the budget will depend will themselves be assessed.

7. **Appendices**

- 7.1 Appendix A – Draft Cabinet report on budget and MTFP strategy

8. **Background Papers**

- 8.1 None

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Cabinet

29 January 2026

Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan Strategy Report (MTFP)

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr S Clifford, Finance & Capital Strategy

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

S Cremer, Corporate Director, Section 151 Officer

Report author and job title: Sean Cremer, Corporate Director, S151 Officer

Email: sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972

Report status: Public Choose an item.

Executive Summary:

This report sets out proposals for Dorset Council's 2026/27 revenue and capital budgets and summarises the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), which covers the following five years to 2030/31. The report also includes the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management Strategy.

The budget proposals are built around the priorities identified in the Dorset Council Plan and [will be] were considered by the Dorset Council Scrutiny Committees on 21 and 22 January 2026. This paper contains details of Cabinet's responses to the matters raised by those committees.

This paper also provides an update on funding announced in the Local Government Finance Settlement issued on 17 December 2025.

A summary of the key components of the budget is as follows:

The Council proposes a net budget of £482.6m for 2026/27, an increase of £18.9m from 2025/26. Rising service delivery costs of £37m are being addressed through £18m of savings, efficiencies, grants and income and £18.9m of increased funding, which based on government funding, is almost entirely reliant upon changes to Council Tax.

Rising cost of service delivery includes £29m of increasing need within Adults & Housing and Children's driven by increasing numbers of people from the communities needing to access council services to receive vital support. New savings and efficiencies include: new service grants and income £16m, managing and meeting need differently £10m.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is asked to agree and to recommend to Council:

1. the Revenue Budget summarised in Appendix 1;
2. the increase in general Council Tax of 2.9985% and 1.9919% in the Social Care Precept, providing a Band D Council Tax figure for Dorset Council of £2,205.90; an overall increase of 4.9904%;
3. to note the Council Tax base of 163,765.1 and Band D equivalents (188,374 households in total) agreed by the S151 Officer earlier in this budget setting process;
4. to note the continuation of the unchanged scheme of Local Council Tax Support and note the revised income tables following the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) uplift of benefits by 3.8%;
5. the Capital Strategy set out in Appendix 3 and approve changes to the programme contained within the appendix;
6. the Treasury Management Strategy set out in Appendix 4;
7. to note the assumptions used to develop the Budget Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), as set out throughout this report;
8. the recommended balances on earmarked reserves and on general funds, including the minimum level of the general fund.
9. **[Available for Cabinet]** in making these recommendations, Cabinet is requested to consider and agree the responses to the recommendations and comments made by the *scrutiny committees as part of the budget scrutiny process (Appendix 6)*;
10. recommendations 1-5 from 4 December 2024 Harbours Advisory Committee meeting regarding fees and charges, budgets and asset management plans (Appendix 7);

1. Reason for Recommendation

The Council has to set a balanced revenue budget each year, and this includes deciding the level of Council Tax. A balanced budget means the Council can afford all its planned spending using its regular, reliable income not by depending on one-off money or short-term sources of finance that can't be repeated.

The Council is also required to approve a Capital Strategy, a capital programme and budget, and a Treasury Management Strategy, each of which are included with this report.

[Placeholder until Cabinet] The draft budget proposals have been considered by the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee and by the People and Health Scrutiny Committee and their recommendations are set out in Appendix 6 for Cabinet consideration.

2. Financial implications

All covered within the report.

3. Well-being and health implications

- 3.1 This report signals Dorset's ongoing commitment to the wellbeing of its residents through prevention and partnership approaches with our communities. This is to mitigate the forecast growth in the numbers of people needing support from our services, and the complexity of needs.

4. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

4.1 The report highlights the ongoing commitment to delivering the priorities of the council plan. Responding to the climate and nature crisis is one of the 4 priority areas of the council. This budget continues to support the delivery and leadership required to deliver on this ambition and deliver the associated benefits of warmer homes, cleaner air and job creation for the residents of Dorset.

Included in Appendix 5.

5. Other Implications

Nothing specific.

6. Risk assessment

- 6.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High
Residual Risk: High

- 6.2 The Council is legally required to set a balanced budget. The financial operating environment for Local Government remains extremely challenging, and the risks therefore remain high for all local authorities as we aim to deliver value for money and financial sustainability.
- 6.3 The **provisional** Local Government Finance Settlement was published on 17 December 2025 and, though the Council is still working through the detail of some contained within this, headline conclusions and assumptions are set out in this report. The final settlement is subject to consultation, which closes on 14 January 2026. As a result, the final settlement figures are expected in February, a few days before the Full Council meeting.
- 6.4 For the first time in a decade the Government has set out a multi-year settlement (MYS) for Local Government for which the first year of funding is 2026/27. The MYS removes some uncertainty over future funding and at the same time has delivered significant change to the funding landscape for Local Government. A number of grants have been rolled into core funding, and changes to the underlying formula, notably how rurality has been accessed have impacted Dorset's funding. Focus since 17 December 2025 has been on understanding the implications for the 2026/27 budget setting process but will shortly move to focus on developing plans for the subsequent 2 years to take advantage of the three-year window.
- 6.5 Looking ahead, further pressure on the Council's reserves comes from the cumulative deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which is expected to exceed the total reserves held by the council by March 2026. The override has been extended until March 2028, however, on 22 October 2025 the Government announced delays to the SEND reform, which was expected in Autumn 2025 and is now anticipated 'early in the new year'. Without changes to funding or policy this would mean that many councils - including Dorset – may have to face a section 114 notice when the statutory override ends in March 2028. There is more detail on the DSG later in this report.
- 6.6 This report outlines the impact of the changes which are part of the Government's move towards reforming local government funding. The loss of grant funding for Dorset as a result of this settlement further increases the risk over the medium term.

6.7 **[This paragraph is draft for scrutiny as this is ahead of Q3 report being published]** The 2025/26 quarter 3 finance management report will be presented to Cabinet in January 2026 alongside this paper, providing the latest detail on the financial matters affecting the 2025/26 budget. Where service overspends cannot be mitigated, this will have a consequential impact on the financial position for 2026/27 and future years. This sets out that Dorset Council is anticipating:

1. fully using its budgeted contingency in the current year (2025/26),
2. requiring use of reserves to meet the forecast overspend
3. requiring use of reserves to meet the costs of investment in our transformation programme as set out in the October 2025 Cabinet Transformation Report.

6.8 Any use of reserves puts further pressure on the revenue budget as the increased reliance on external borrowing increases the amount of interest paid by the Council.

6.9 Taking into account both the local and national operating context, the acting S151 Officer, the Council's Chief Finance Officer, has assessed the current financial risk level as high. Readers of this report should therefore anticipate that achieving a balanced budget will likely require a reprioritisation of service delivery to maintain long-term financial sustainability.

7. Equalities impact assessment

7.1 The budget is a framework for the Council to achieve its priorities and the requirement to achieve a balanced budget is delivered through a number of key assumptions, and the delivery of programmes of transformational change.

7.2 The overall budget framework has not been the subject of a separate equality impact assessment but the programmes and changes upon which delivery of the budget will depend will themselves be assessed.

8. Appendices

1. High-level consolidated revenue budget summary and directorate budget summaries
2. Council Tax resolution **(available for the Council report only)**
3. Capital Strategy 2025-2030 **(available for the Cabinet and Council report)**
4. Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 **(available for the Cabinet and Council report)**
5. Climate Wheel
6. Response to the issues raised by the scrutiny committees **(available for the Cabinet and Council report)**

7. Harbours Advisory Committee budget proposals for 2026/27 ([available for the Cabinet and Council report](#))
8. Proposed fees and charges for 2026/27 ([available for the Cabinet and Council report](#))

9. Background papers

[Medium Term Financial Plan and budget update to Cabinet 11 November 2025](#)

10. Introduction and priorities

Introduction

- 10.1 Local government finance is a dynamic and complex field, shaped by evolving national policies, demographic trends, and the imperative to deliver essential public services within constrained resources. This report presents Dorset Council's proposed revenue and capital budgets for the fiscal year 2026/27, alongside a comprehensive Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that extends through to 2029/30. The document details how the Council intends to allocate resources, manage risks, and pursue its priorities in the face of significant financial and social pressures.
- 10.2 At its core, the budget strategy reflects the Council's commitment to four key priorities: providing affordable and high-quality housing, fostering economic growth, supporting inclusive communities, and responding to the climate and nature crisis. These priorities are embedded across Dorset Council and inform the financial planning process. The report also addresses the implications of recent changes in national funding formulas, notably the introduction of Fair Funding 2.0, which has fundamentally altered the distribution of government grants and results in an increased reliance on local taxation.
- 10.3 For Dorset Council the changes result in seeing almost no growth in government grants as funding is redirected to other parts of the country and the reset of business rates sees the council's retained business rates reduced by around 15%. Changes to funding formula to assess need e.g. how remoteness is factored in means Dorset receives less funding and remains reliant on Council Tax.
- 10.4 The financial environment for local authorities remains challenging. Dorset Council faces rising costs of service delivery, driven by inflation, demographic shifts—such as an aging population—and increasing demand for social care and education services. The Council's approach to balancing its budget involves a combination of efficiency savings, transformation initiatives, and prudent management of reserves, all underpinned by robust governance and risk management frameworks.

Priorities

- 10.5 The Dorset Council Plan is underpinned by four key priorities for 2024-2029 and details the steps that will be taken to deliver our vision: Working together to create a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable Dorset for current and future generations.
- 10.6 The four strategic priorities are:
1. Provide affordable and high-quality housing
 2. Grow our economy
 3. Communities for all
 4. Respond to the climate and nature crisis
- 10.7 The priorities form a key part of our delivery focus, creating a 'strategic framework' that will ensure that the actions required to meet the aspirations of the council plan are aligned with our change programmes, place-based work, governance and the resources required to accelerate delivery.
- 10.8 More information about the [Dorset Council Plan 2024 to 2029](#) is available on the Council's website.

11. Financial context - 2025/26 current year position

- 11.1 **[This paragraph is draft because the two meetings of scrutiny committees take place ahead of Q3 report being published]** The Quarter 3 2025/26 financial management report to Cabinet sets out a forecast **over/underspend** for the current year of **[TBC]**. See the Cabinet agenda pack for more information on the in-year position.
- 11.2 Any overspend in the current year will require use of reserves. Where the underlying cause of the overspend is expected to be recurrent there will be an impact on the base budget for 2026/27 as a permanent funding arrangement is required. As part of setting the budget we will also review the sustainability of any short-term or non-recurrent savings which have been made this year to help offset those that fall short. Whilst this is sound, in-year financial management, the base budget impact for future years also needs to be understood.

12. Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS)

National context

- 12.1 On 17 December 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness at the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Alison McGovern MP, delivered a [written statement](#) to Parliament on the provisional LGFS. The supporting papers for the [provisional LGFS 2026-2027 to 2028-2029](#) were also published on the same day.
- 12.2 The Local Government Finance Settlement sets the total funding and a range of parameters such as council tax limits, business rate multipliers and policy decisions which are then distributed to Local Government. These inputs are aggregated through Core Spending Power, which sets the resource envelope for each Local Authority. (more on this later)

- 12.3 The provisional settlement marks the first time in a decade that the Government has illustrated multiple years' worth of provisional allocations. This allows for more accurate financial planning to be undertaken. However, it should be noted that the settlement remains an annual event and figures for future years are subject to change until they are 'locked in' by their own settlement.

13. Changes for 2026/27 onwards

Updated data to measure deprivation

- 13.1 Funding takes into account the latest data on deprivation published in 2025. Previously deprivation data from 2019 was being used for some funding. Within the 2025 data set there are 7 domains of deprivation, which combine to create the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD25):

- 1) **Income:** Measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income.
Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index: Measures the proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families
Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index: Measures the proportion of those aged 60+ who experience income deprivation
- 2) **Employment:** Measures the proportion of working age population involuntarily excluded from the labour market.
- 3) **Education:** Measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population.
- 4) **Health:** Measures the risk of premature death and impairment of life quality through poor physical/mental health.
- 5) **Crime:** Measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at local level.
- 6) **Barriers to housing and services:** Measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services.
- 7) **Living environment:** Measures the quality of both the 'indoor' and 'outdoor' local environment.

- 13.2 More information on the English indices of deprivation [available here](#).

Updated formula & consolidation of grants

- 13.3 In last year's settlement (2025/26) the formulas used were last updated in 2013-14, some of which include data from 2001. The Government's updated formula following the fair funding review 2.0 consultation has made a number of significant changes to simplify grant streams and has changed some of the formula used to distribute grants.

- 13.4 Sixteen funding streams have been brought together worth £21.5 billion over the multi-year Settlement, alongside which grants have been rolled into the Revenue Support Grant. An overview of the grants is below with further reading on the [funding simplification explanatory note](#) also available.

Consolidated Grant & Total 2026-27 to 2028-29	Previous individual grant streams & individual total 2026-27 to 2028-29
Children, Families and Youth Grant £3.1bn	1 Children's Social Care Prevention Grant £0.81bn 2 Supporting Families £0.76bn 3 Holiday Activities and Food Programme £0.62bn 4 Post-16 Pupil Premium Plus Programme £0.04bn 5 New funding for children's social care reform: £0.32bn & £0.55bn
Crisis and Resilience Fund £2.49bn	6 Household Support Fund 7 Discretionary Housing Payments
Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant £2.46bn	8 Prevention and Relief element of the former Homelessness Prevention Grant £1.09bn 9 Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme 10 Rough Sleeping Prevention & Recovery Grant <i>(9 & 10 total £0.88bn)</i> 11 Domestic Abuse Accommodation Support £0.5bn
Public Health Grant £13.45bn	12 Public Health Grant Yes – consolidation announced at the local government finance policy statement £12.08bn 13 Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Improvement Grant £1.05bn 14 Local Stop Smoking Services and Support Grant £0.2bn 15 Individual Placement and Support Grant £0.07bn 16 Swap to Stop programme £0.05bn

Impact for Dorset

13.5 The multi-year settlement for Dorset was largely in line with the modelling assumptions and as such there were “no surprises” for 2026/27. Looking ahead over the 3-year period Dorset sees grant funding reducing during the period 2026/27 to 2029/30 by £6m. These changes maintain the reliance upon Dorset Council making full use of the Council Tax flexibilities to meet rising costs of service delivery. Whilst reducing grant funding over the long term is disappointing to see, the advance notice does provide a greater degree of certainty to enable the Council to factor this into future planning. More detail of the component parts of the settlement is set out throughout this report.

14 Core Spending Power (CSP)

- 14.1 Core Spending power aggregates the funding totals and parameters set out in the LGFS to identify the total resource envelope for each Local Authority.
- 14.2 MHCLG describe CSP as:
“a measure of the resources available to local authorities to fund service delivery. It sets out the money that has been made available to local authorities through the Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS)”
- 14.3 At the risk of stating the obvious it must be noted that the term “made available” does constitute to mean the same as given, awarded, funded, provided, allocated. For Dorset Council almost all of the new resources *made available* rely on local decisions to realise i.e. decisions around how much to raise Council Tax levels.

Core spending power nationally

- 14.4 As part of the settlement nationally the Local Government CSP has been increased by an average of 5.7%.
- 14.5 This equates to a national CSP uplift of £4.2bn, of which £2.5bn (61%) is from increased Council Tax. For 2025/26 the increase derived from Council Tax was 55%, showing a trend of increasing reliance on local taxes to fund local government.
- 14.6 This means the only way to realise this **full** uplift of CSP is to take the maximum flexibilities granted when it comes to raising Council Tax, as this is assumed as part of the calculation. The maximum increase allowed varies by authority type.
- 14.7 CSP has been overhauled and for 2026/27 onwards is made up of the following components:
- 1) Fair Funding Assessment
 - 2) Business rate retention
 - 3) Council Tax
 - 4) Specific and consolidated government grants

Dorset Council Core Spending Power (CSP) changes

14.8 The table below sets out year-on-year changes in the published CSP figures.

Illustrative Core Spending Power of Local Government	2025-26 £m	2026-27 £m	Change £m	Component total £m	Proportion of change in CSP
Fair Funding Allocation	0.0	133.0	133.0		
<i>of which: Baseline Funding Level</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>56.8</i>	<i>56.8</i>		
<i>of which: Revenue Support Grant</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>60.8</i>	<i>60.8</i>		
<i>of which: Local Authority Better Care Grant</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>15.4</i>	<i>15.4</i>		
Legacy Funding Assessment	131.0	0.0	(131.0)		
<i>of which: Legacy Business Rates</i>	<i>66.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>(66.0)</i>		
<i>of which: Legacy Grant Funding</i>	<i>49.7</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>(49.7)</i>		
<i>of which: Local Authority Better Care Grant</i>	<i>15.4</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>(15.4)</i>	2.0	8%
Council tax requirement	337.8	362.0	24.1	24.1	93%
Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse	2.4	3.2	0.7		
Families First Partnership	1.9	3.5	1.6		
Total Transitional Protections	0.0	0.0	0.0		
<i>of which: 95% income protection</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>		
<i>of which: 100% income protection</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>		
<i>of which: Fire and Rescue Real-terms floor</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>		
Grants rolled in to Revenue Support Grant	2.6	0.0	(2.6)		
Recovery Grant	0.0	0.0	0.0		
Recovery Grant Guarantee	0.0	0.0	0.0		
Mayoral Capacity Fund	0.0	0.0	0.0	(0.3)	-1%
Core Spending Power	475.7	501.6	25.9	25.9	100%

Source: [Core Spending Power table:2026 to 2029](#)

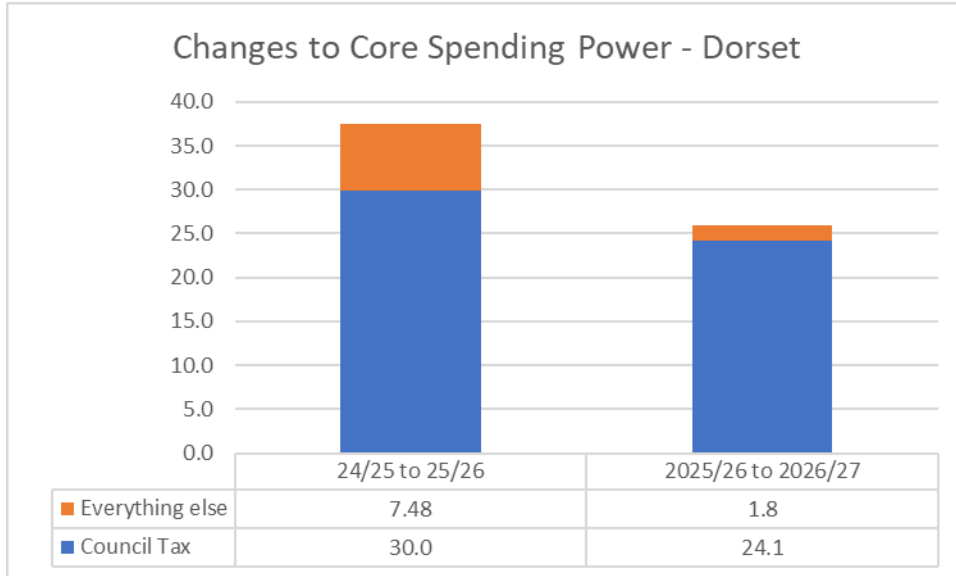
14.9 Dorset Council's CSP increases by 5.7%, £25.9m which is in line with the national average. Of this £25.9m, £24.1m (93%) is reliant upon the requirement to generate additional Council Tax revenue. Last year's CSP increase was 83% reliant upon Council Tax.

14.10 So, whilst the Government has "made available" £25.9m very little of this increased funding comes from Central Government.

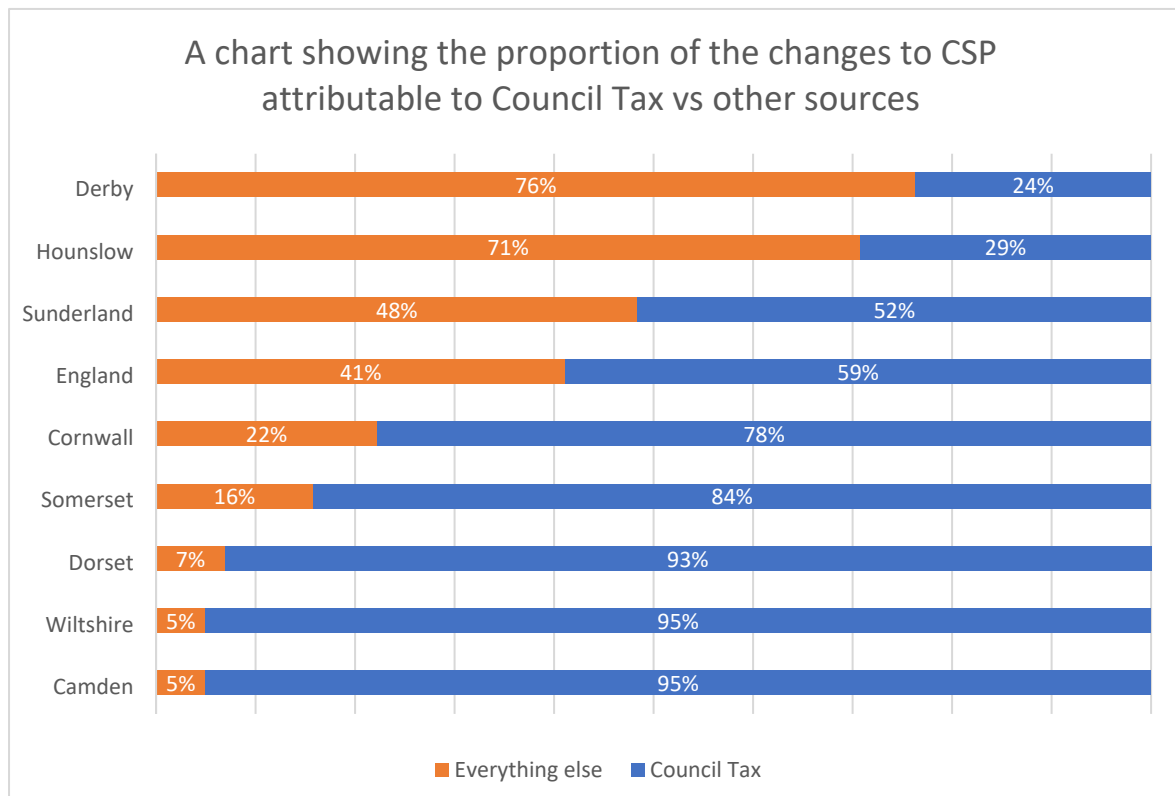
14.11 Part of the reason for the weighting between funding components is that Fair Funding 2.0 has introduced significant changes to the Formula Funding allocations and fundamentally changed the assessment of Relative Need and Resources. Where the assessment of relative need is greater than resource, more government funding is directed. Where the government assess that a council has sufficient resources to meet its need, government funding has been redirected elsewhere. This is shown in the increasing reliance on Council Tax for Dorset Council.

Historic trend

14.12 When looking at the changes to CSP for Dorset over the last 2 years the impact of the funding methodology can be seen as government grant increases are reducing.



14.13 When comparing where the changes to Core Spending Power come from, Dorset compared to the national allocation further demonstrates the dependence on raising council tax.



14.14 Dorset Council principally loses out on funding due to the changes to the relative needs formula that have been introduced for 2026/27 onwards. The government assessment of relative needs vs relative resources results in the distribution shown in the previous graph. Changes to remove remoteness from all but Adult Social Care Funding also means Dorset's assessed need has changed

Provisional Future Trend

14.15 Based on the provisional multi-year settlement Dorset Council will see overall resources (which includes those within Core Spending Power) increases over the 3 year period.

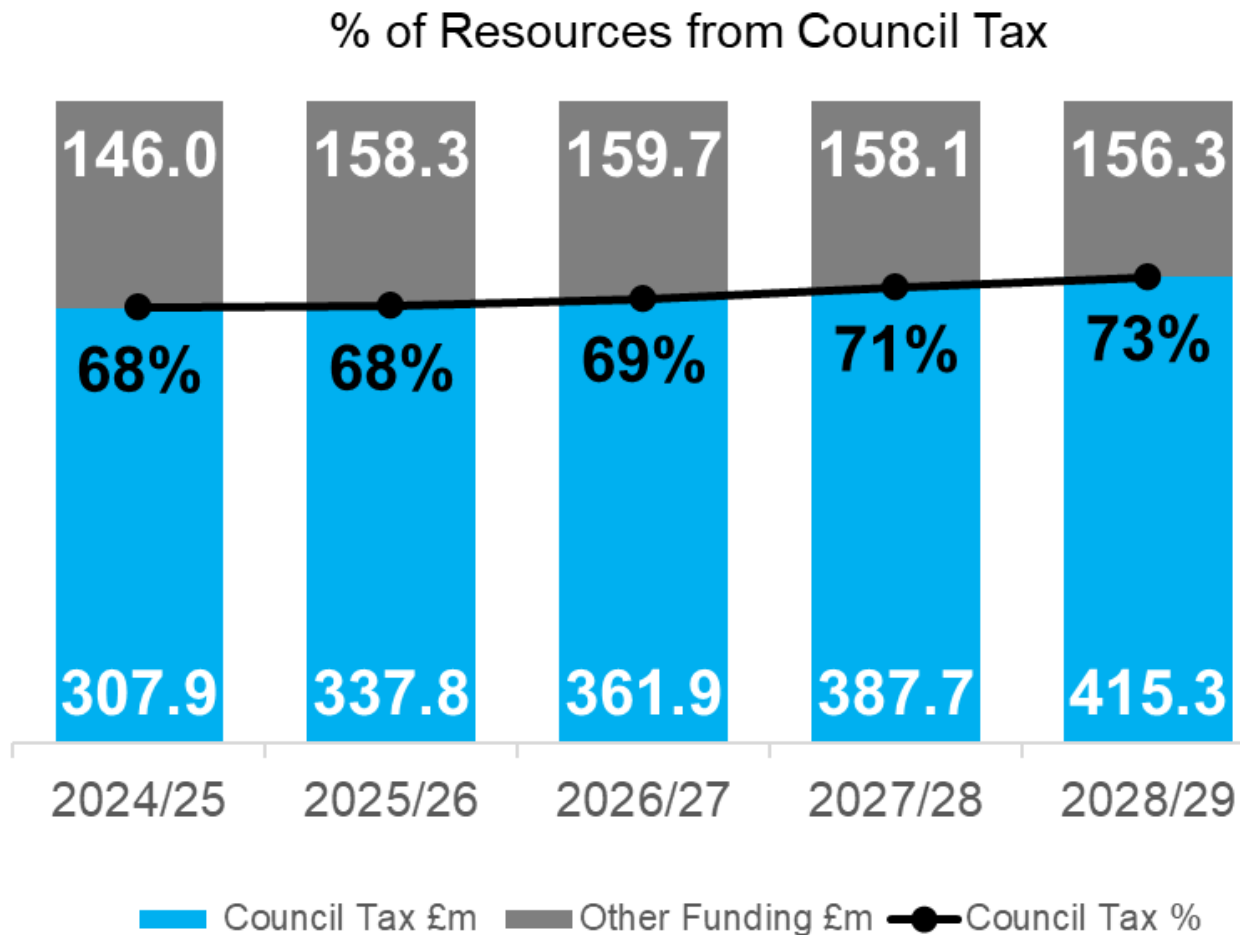
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Change across MYS 26/27 to	
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	%
Business Rates	73.1	57.9	59.5	60.7	2.8	5%
Council Tax	337.8	361.9	387.7	415.3	53.4	15%
Grants	85.2	101.8	98.6	95.6	(6.2)	-6%
Total Resources	496.1	521.6	545.7	571.5	50.0	10%
Annual % change		5.1%	4.6%	4.7%		

Source: LG Futures MTRR dated 29 December 2025.

14.16 The table above shows:

- 1) Dorset Council's funding increase from £521.6m in 2026/27 to £571.5m in 2028/29. An increase of £50m +10%
- 2) Of which Council Tax drives £53m of the growth, offset by £6.2m of reduced grants.

14.17 As a result the multi-year settlement bakes in the continued reliance upon Council Tax for Dorset Council, with Council Tax increasing from 69% to 73% across the multi-year settlement. The historic and future trend is shown visually in the next graph.



14.18 The analysis above may look different to in previous years. This is caused by the way in which the Government has reorganised grant funding as part of the Fair Funding Review 2.0. The provisional LGFS for 2026/27 sees a number of previously separately identifiable grants consolidated. These changes see the amount of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) increase from £1.8m in 2025/26 to £60.8m 2026/27 with the majority of the increase coming from consolidating these grant streams not NEW funding. With the exception of the analysis presented in this report , as a result of the changes to Government funding historical comparison of tables showing budgets in this report, compared to previously published tables risks being inaccurate.

CSP component: Fair Funding Assessment (FFA)

- 14.19 The FFA replaces the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) used in recent years. The FFA is comprises of two parts:
1. Business Rates Retention
 2. Revenue Support Grant (RSG) which also includes the Local Authority Better Care Grant (LABCG)
- 14.20 Dorset Council receives £155.2m from FFA an increase of £1m (0.66%) on the legacy funding assessment used for 25/26.

CSP Component: Business rates

- 14.21 Business rates reduces from 2025/26 to 2026/27 by £15.2m. This is driven by a Business Rates “reset” and realignment of funding to redistribute local government resources to be targeted where the Government assesses they are needed the most. This takes into account the assessment of relative need and local resources. The impact of this reduction is offset partially by increased grants for 2026/27 which can be seen to reduce over the MYS.
- 14.22 As well as being a revaluation for 2026/27 the current multipliers used to calculate business rates bills are being replaced by the following from April 2026.

Category	Rateable Value	Multiplier
Small Business Retail Hospitality & Leisure (RHL)	Under £51,000	38.2p
Small Business	Under £51,000	43.2p
Standard Retail Hospitality & Leisure (RHL)	£51,000 to £499,999	43p
Standard Multiplier	£51,000 to £499,999	48p
High Value Multiplier	Over £500,000	50.8p

- 14.23 Note the Council does not play a role in establishing the rating list, this is currently the responsibility of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) which is set to become part of HMRC in the future.

CSP Component: Council tax

- 14.24 The [provisional] LGFS confirmed that the limit for a local referendum remains at 3% – so a proposal to increase Council Tax by 3% or more requires a local referendum. There is also provision for councils with social care responsibilities to raise the adult social care precept by up to a further 2%. As stated earlier in this report, the headline increase of Core Spending power is only achieved if Councils make full use of these powers to increase Council Tax. These limits are in place for the 3 years covered by the settlement.
- 14.25 These budget proposals include a core Council Tax increase of 2.9985% and an adult social care precept increase of 1.9919%. The proposed total increase is therefore 4.9904%, which results in an annual band D Council Tax charge of £2,205.90. This is an increase of around £2.02 per week on the 2025/26 charge. The Council Tax charges proposed for each band for 2026/27, for Dorset Council only, are set out in the table, below.
- 14.26 Some further facts about the composition of our Council Tax base which help understand the makeup of households and respective bills are as follows:
- 1) 51% of households in Dorset are in Bands A – C which means the for the majority of households the increase equates to less than 25.3p per day.
 - 2) 71% of households are in Bands A – D
 - 3) The number of households receiving Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) are 21,709 out of a total of 188,210 households.
 - 4) This includes 9,259 pensioners on LCTS.
 - 5) Single Person Discount applies to 60,566 households.
 - 6) A range of other reliefs and disregards available, such as 1,349 band reductions for properties with a disabled resident.
- 14.27 Councils set their Council tax based on the number of 'Band D equivalent properties'. The Council has calculated its tax base as 163,765 band D equivalent properties, compared with 160,793 for the previous year, an increase of 1.85%. This includes the growth for the Second Homes Premium.
- 14.28 The council is also anticipating a small surplus on the council tax collection fund for 2025/26. This estimate is factored into the 2026/27 budget as one-off funding.

High Value Council Tax Surcharge (HVCTS)

- 14.29 A newly announced High Value Council Tax Surcharge (HVCTS) was confirmed as part of the government budget in November 2025. HVCTS is a new charge on owners of residential property in England worth £2 million or more in 2026, taking effect in April 2028. A public consultation on details relating to the surcharge will be held in early 2026.

- 14.30 Homeowners, rather than occupiers, will be liable to the surcharge and will continue to pay their existing Council Tax alongside the surcharge. Social housing will not be in scope.
- 14.31 The Valuation Office will conduct a targeted valuation exercise to identify properties above £2 million and therefore in scope. Fewer than 1% of properties in England are expected to be above the £2 million threshold. Revaluations will be conducted every five years.
- 14.32 The government has recognised that under the current system, the average band D charge for a typical family home across England is £2,280. That is £250 more per year than a £10 million property in Mayfair, based on the band H charge in the City of Westminster, currently pays. This surcharge will change that, implementing a significant reform to improve fairness within England's property tax system.
- 14.33 Properties above the £2 million threshold will be placed into bands based on their property value. Charges will increase in line with CPI inflation each year from 2029-30 onwards.

Threshold	Charge from 2028/29
£2.0-2.5m	£2,500
£2.5-3.5m	£3,500
£3.5-5.0m	£5,000
£5m+	£7,500

- 14.34 The HVCTS will be administered alongside existing Council Tax by Local authorities, who will collect this revenue on behalf of central government. This is a significant change as previously the total level of Council Tax was decided locally and retained locally. Whether this approach of directing local authorities to collect further tax on behalf of central government remains to be seen as part of future government budgets.
- 14.35 Councillors will be reassured that local authorities will be fully compensated for the additional costs of administering this new tax through new burdens funding – for Dorset there are 8,890 (4.77%) properties in Band G & H which could be the type of property may be reviewed by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) to assess eligibility. However this data is only as a very rough proxy and any charges are subject to the property valuation.

15 Financial modelling assumptions and the initial budget gap

- 15.1 As part of setting a budget the Council is required to make a number of assumptions, these are set out in the table below. It should be noted that these are forecasts of what will happen and are in addition to the base budget that was built for 2025/26.
- 15.2 Under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is required to report to Full Council when it considers the budget and sets Council Tax for the upcoming financial year. This report must address the robustness of the financial estimates and the adequacy of reserves included in the budget proposals, ensuring that Members have access to professional and authoritative advice to inform their decisions.
- 15.3 Members are required to take this report in account when making decisions in relation to the budget and the setting of council tax. The financial modelling assumptions outlined in this section form a critical basis for the CFO's assessment of the reliability of the estimates and the sufficiency of reserves.
- 15.4 In preparing the budget proposals for 2026/27, a range of assumptions were built into the MTFP model for 2026/27 and beyond. These assumptions will need to be reviewed and refined on an ongoing basis as new information becomes available, up to the point at which the budget is formally set.
- 15.5 As well as general inflation, the budget proposals make provision for further, specific inflation or changes to income and grants. A summary of key changes assumed as part of setting the 2026/27 budget is shown in the table below.

Variable	2026/27
Council tax increase	3%
Council tax base growth	1.24%
Social Care Precept	2%
Business rates growth	-15%
Pay award	3.20%
General inflation	3.20%
Increase in fees & charges	5.00%
Employer pension contribution – Primary	-1%
Employer pension contribution – secondary	+£1m

- 15.6 These assumptions are examined further throughout this report.

16 Fees and Charges

- 16.1 An average increase in income from fees and charges income has also been estimated at 5%, with budgets uplifted accordingly. It is expected that this average increase will be delivered through a mix of both price and volume increases. In response to the budget gap discretionary fees and charges will be reviewed to ensure the full cost of the service is being recovered through the current level of fees and charges. Where fees are set by the government or already defined in legal agreements e.g. commercial rent, these sources of income are treated differently.
- 16.2 The Council's Fees and Charges Policy was implemented for the 2023/24 Budget and is published on the Council website. [Fees and Charges Policy 2023 - Dorset Council.](#)
- 16.3 The Council recovering more of its costs and placing less demand on general funding remains key to securing financial sustainability

17 Pay assumptions

Local Government Pay award

- 17.1 The pay and conditions of employment for local government services employees are determined by the National Joint Council (NJC), which comprises representatives from Trade Unions (58) and Employers (12).
- 17.2 The 2025/26 NJC pay award was agreed at 3.2% and for the 2026/27 financial year the MTFP currently assumes the same again, a 3.2% increase in pay inflation, reflecting anticipated ongoing national pay trends.

National Living Wage

- 17.3 From 1 April 2026, the National Living Wage is forecast to increase by 4.1% to £12.71 per hour for workers aged 21 and over. The National Minimum Wage for 18–20-year-olds is expected to increase to between £10.55 and £10.75 per hour and for under-18s and apprentices is expected to rise to around £8.20-£8.40 per hour. The government has reiterated its commitment to aligning pay more closely across age groups. This may be revised in future Government budgets.
- 17.4 All Council staff are paid at an hourly rate which is above the national living wage.

National Insurance

- 17.5 No changes to national insurance were announced in the 2025 Autumn Statement.

Pay inflation

- 17.6 Where the council commissions services, for example within the care sector these employers may be impacted the most by the rises in national living wage and so may seek support from the commissioner (the Council) with meeting the cost. Inflation requests are being managed consistently through an officer group chaired by a member of the Councils Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

- 17.7 Every 3- years the Pension Fund undertakes an actuarial valuation. This is the formal process carried out by qualified actuaries to assess the financial health of a pension fund. It involves estimating the current value of the pension scheme's assets and comparing this to the projected liabilities—the future payments the scheme is expected to make to its members. Actuaries use various demographic, financial, and economic assumptions, including life expectancy, salary growth, investment returns, and inflation rates, to forecast both the future outgoings and the likely income from investments.
- 17.8 The results of the valuation help determine the level of employer contributions required to ensure the fund can meet its future obligations.
- 17.9 The results of the 2025 Valuation mean that Dorset Council will see a 1% reduction to primary contribution rates, and a £1m increase to secondary contribution. This results in a £1m saving.
- 17.10 MHCLG held a consultation on whether Mayors and Councillors should regain access to the LGPS. This access was originally removed in 2014. The consultation closed on 22 December 2025 and there is a possibility the outcome of the consultation would take effect from 1 April 2026. If this happens there will be an annual cost of £0.3m if all 82 members joined, and remained in the scheme.

18 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

- 18.1 The Dedicated School Grant (DSG) is a ring-fenced grant, the majority of which is used to fund individual schools' budgets in local authority-maintained schools and academies in Dorset, early years nursery entitlement and provision for pupils with high needs, including those with Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) in special schools, special provision and mainstream schools in Dorset and out of county. Part of the DSG, the Central Services Schools Block (CSSB), provides funding for Dorset Council to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils in state-funded maintained schools and academies in England.
- 18.2 Dorset's DSG provisional allocation for 2026/27 is £387m before recoupment. There are four blocks within the DSG:

Block	£m
Schools Block	269
High Needs Block	65
Early Years Block	50.5
Central Services Schools Block	2

- 18.3 The 2025/26 quarter 2 DSG forecast overspend is £54.279m; the majority within the High Needs Block and supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- 18.4 The 2025/26 forecast overspend increases the cumulative forecast deficit to £148.59m before Safety Valve partner contributions. Adjusting for partner contributions from the DfE and Dorset Council, the cumulative deficit is forecast to be £112.3m.
- 18.5 The Government has announced the extension to the statutory override for the DSG from 2025/26 to March 2028. In practical terms this means that the cumulative overspend on the DSG will not fall to be funded from the Council's reserves but will instead continue to be treated as a separate, negative reserve on the Council's balance sheet.
- 18.6 Whilst the statutory override remains in place, the cost of servicing a forecast £155m deficit as at March 2026 is around £5m per year. A cost borne by local taxpayers in Dorset, and money which otherwise would be available to invest in local priorities.
- 18.7 Dorset Council are part of the Safety Valve and Enhanced Support and Monitoring programmes. The Settlement is not clear regarding the continuation of these programmes.

18.8 The government announced on the 11 December a £3bn investment in specialist SEND placements. This includes 70 places at Osprey Quay, Portland.

DSG – Medium term outlook

18.9 Contained within the settlement consultation documents the following text in respect of DSG under [section 1.5](#)

- 1) The extension to the DSG Statutory override was extended for a further 2 years to support local authorities to manage these impacts.
- 2) The government will bring forward a full Schools White Paper early in the new year. This will set out substantial plans for reform of special educational needs provision to deliver a sustainable system which – first and foremost – supports children and families effectively, and which is also financially sustainable.
- 3) The 2025 Autumn Budget set out that once the Statutory Override ends at the end of 2027-28, funding will be managed within the overall central government DEL envelope.
- 4) Local authorities will of course be expected to manage the system effectively and where this is the case we would not expect local authorities to need to fund future special educational needs costs from general funds.
- 5) We recognise that the size of deficits that some councils may accrue while the Statutory Override is in place may not be manageable with local resources alone and will bring forward arrangements to assist with them as part of broader SEND reform plans.
- 6) Whilst we do not expect local authorities to plan on the basis of having to meet deficits in full, any future support will not be unlimited. Councils must continue to work to keep deficits as low as possible. To support local authorities to do this, we are disseminating best practice and case studies from previous programmes focussed on efficient spending, such as Safety Valve and Delivering Better Value, and providing all local authorities with advisers to help consider how these learnings can be applied.

18.10 Point 4 and 6 in the above lead to a level of concern as Dorset received the highest (best) possible outcome of the Local Area SEND inspection. At the same time remain under review for the safety valve programme with payments frozen and no tangible support or recommendations to change practice to deliver the level of financial savings required to achieve in-year balance. It is therefore unclear how these commitments are any different to what has already been put in place across Dorset.

18.11 Dorset receives one of the lowest High Needs Block allocations per EHCP compared with our statistical neighbours, and roughly £4,700 less per high needs pupil than the national average.

18.12 Further disparity is seen on the education funding for which Dorset Council receives some of the lowest levels of education funding out of all local authorities.

18.13 Dorset continue to call for fair funding that acknowledges the current and very real needs of our communities and reflects the significant costs rural authorities.

20 Setting a balanced budget

20.1 The November 2025 MTFP report to Cabinet reflected that all budget work needs process and method, and these must be structured around a framework – in this case, a draft statement of principles – to be used in developing the budget.

20.2 Dorset's budget principles, outlined below, are proposed for Cabinet's continued endorsement and will guide the remaining work on the budget strategy.

- 1) **No reliance on reserves** – The budget will not be balanced by drawing on reserves.
- 2) **Priority-led resource allocation** – Funding decisions will be aligned with the Dorset Council Plan and its strategic priorities.
- 3) **Protect and improve services** – Services will be safeguarded where possible but must demonstrate value for money and improved efficiency.
- 4) **Maximise unitary council benefits** – We will continue to seek savings and efficiencies from our status as a unitary authority.
- 5) **Adopt a commercial mindset** – The Council will pursue opportunities to operate more commercially where appropriate.
- 6) **Evidence-based decisions** – Business cases will underpin key decisions, and we will consider 'invest to save' opportunities.
- 7) **Realistic and accountable budgeting** – Budgets must be achievable and aligned with the Council's objectives, with clear accountability for delivery and sound financial management.
- 8) **Transformation in progress** – We are implementing both short-term and long-term transformational savings plans as part of our ongoing strategy to deliver sustainable financial improvements.
- 9) **Work within the financial strategy** – All resource allocation must align with the overarching financial strategy approved by Cabinet.
- 10) **Target new Government funding** – Where possible, new Government funding will be directed towards existing spending pressures and priorities

21 MTFP process and budget development

21.1 The budget approved in February 2025 showed there was a MTFP gap, including pre-planned savings, of £37.9m for 2026/27. Following on from a review of our assumptions and accumulating cost and demand pressures, the budget gap moved on as summarised in the table below, which was presented to Cabinet in November 2025.

Budget Gap - Feb 2025	£37,867,735
Change in inflation	£5,702,518
Supporting DSG	£2,550,000
Place	£1,553,235
Adults & Housing	£8,775,503
Corporate	£1,793,080
Children's	£1,561,198
B2SA	£1,300,000
Public Health and Protection	£611,984
Change in grant funding	(£55,696)
Reduction in Central Finance Pressures	(£3,327,000)
Increase in Business Rates	(£5,374,277)
Increase in Council Tax	(£8,530,459)
Budget Gap - 11/11/2025	£44,427,821

21.2 It was clear that rising demands were having an impact on the MTFP and increased the budget gap £44.4m.

21.3 Over the time since then, officers have put in an enormous amount of work to identify further savings and transformation options and crucially assess the deliverability of these options to meet the council's legal duty to set a balanced budget.

21.4 As a result the budget gap of £44m is to be closed as follows.

Budget Gap - Feb 2025	£44,427,821
Central Finance	(£17,595,571)
Adults & Housing	(£6,789,779)
Place	(£5,449,645)
Council wide	(£4,171,100)
Council Tax	(£3,451,732)
Capital Finance	(£2,500,000)
Change in inflation	(£2,249,441)
Children's	(£1,937,345)
Business Rates	(£472,000)
Corporate	£65,041
B2SA	£123,750
Budget Gap - 6/01/2026	£0

22 Summary budget proposals

22.1 Analysis of budget movements and savings is set out in the individual Directorate/Service sections of this report and in the appendices. If adopted, this Budget Strategy will deliver a balanced budget in 2026/27 and the following gaps, still to be resolved, for the following years of the MTFP. The MTFP sets out the gap based on what is known at the current time.

22.2 The provisional LGFS and multi-year settlement result in a draft MTFP for 2026/27 to 2029/30 as follows:

Medium Term Financial Plan summary						
	Previous Year Budget 2025-26 £m	MTFP Yr1 2026-27 £m	MTFP Yr2 2027-28 £m	MTFP Yr3 2028-29 £m	MTFS Yr4 2029-30 £m	MTFP Yr5 2030-31 £m
Council tax	342.014	362.840	382.120	404.195	427.545	452.255
Business rates (NDR funding)	70.153	58.926	59.788	60.993	60.993	60.993
Other grants treated as general funding	4.985	60.843	72.383	69.258	69.258	69.258
Total funding	417.152	482.609	514.291	534.446	557.796	582.506
Budget requirement	417.152	482.609	531.844	568.082	605.460	643.988
Budget gap (cumulative)	(0.000)	0.000	(17.552)	(33.636)	(47.664)	(61.482)

22.3 As a result of the proposed directorate budgets are as follows:

Dorset Council	Restated base budget 25/26 £'000	Proposed base budget 26/27 £'000	Increase/ (Decrease) in base after adjustments £'000	%
People - Children's	89,950	95,124	5,174	5.8%
Birth 2 Settled Adulthood	9,008	10,674	1,666	18.5%
People - Adults & Housing	179,282	191,174	11,891	6.6%
Public Health & Prevention	3,999	4,312	313	7.8%
Place	106,003	105,421	(582)	(0.5%)
Corporate Development	56,369	56,294	(75)	(0.1%)
Service Budgets	420,376	438,763	18,387	4.4%
Central Budgets	19,081	19,609	529	2.8%
Total Budget	463,693	482,609	18,916	4.5%
Council Tax, Business Rates and Central Grants Funding	(463,693)	(482,609)	(18,916)	4.5%
Budget Gap	0			

22.4 More detail on the directorate budgets is available in the following sections.

23 Directorate-level context updates

23.1 This section of the report deals with the budget contexts for each of the Council's directorates.

23.2 Appendix 1 contains a reconciliation of the growth, savings and changes for each Directorate.

Adults & Housing Services

23.3 The net budget proposed for Adults and Housing Services is an increase of £11,891m, to £191.174m, a net increase of 7%.

Context

23.4 Adult Social Care nationally faces significant pressures driven by rising demand, workforce shortages, and escalating costs. Requests for support have increased year on year, with working age adults showing the sharpest growth. Providers report severe financial strain, largely due to National Living Wage uplifts and recruitment challenges, while local authority budgets remain insufficient to meet demand. Delays in hospital discharge linked to social care capacity continue to impact the wider health system.

Budget

23.5 The budget pressures centre around two main themes:

1. Pressures that impact all council services	£m
Pay inflation, increments and employer's pension contribution adjustment	0.786
General inflation, utilities	5.765
Increased fees and charges	(3.623)
Movements to other directorates, for example OFC	(1.656)

2. Pressures that impact Adults and Housing	£m
Adult Care Package Growth	11.405
Increase in Safeguarding resource	0.140
Increase in Mental Capacity Act resource	0.250
Prevention contract	0.444
Adult Social Care prior year pay savings	0.950
Housing resource	0.214
Reallocation of Public Health grant – Community Safety	0.284

- 23.6 The growth within Adult Social Care has been challenged and refined during the budget setting process. The budget supports 4415 people with packages of care at an average cost of £887.11 per week. Care packages include care home placements, home care support, supported living, extra care, and direct payments.
- 23.7 Investment has been made in reablement at the front door, which refers to short-term, intensive support provided when someone first approaches Adult Social Care. The aim is to help individuals regain independence and reduce the need for long-term care, thereby supporting savings delivery.
- 23.8 The FutureCare programme, a Dorset-wide initiative launched in early 2025 to transform urgent and emergency care (UEC) and intermediate care, continues into 2026/27. Led by the ICS partnership—including Dorset Council, BCP Council, NHS Dorset, and hospital trusts—it aims to create a more integrated, people-centred care system by 2027. This programme of work will also continue to support the delivery of savings and manage demand through improved patient flow, reduced hospital stays, and more efficient use of resources.
- 23.9 During the year, the council has seen changes in health support funding, with Continuing Health Care (CHC) and Joint Funding packages being handed back from the NHS. When individuals no longer meet CHC or Joint Funded eligibility, responsibility shifts to the local authority, which is means-tested. These changes are included in the growth request and currently cover 34 care packages at a full-year cost of £1.793m, and this figure continues to rise. This trend is increasing due to stricter NHS eligibility criteria and regular reviews that move more cases from health to social care funding.
- 23.10 The above pressures have been offset by 2026/27 transformation savings which are detailed in appendix 1.

Savings

- 23.11 Adults and Housing savings for 2026/27 total £4.724m, summarised in the following table. Further detail can be found in Appendix 1:-

Adults and Housing 2026/27 savings	£m
Transport Offer	0.200
Working Age Accelerator	0.750
Future Care Programme	2.900
Provision of careline subscriptions	0.200
Self-Funder Offer	0.075
Vacancy Factor increase to 3%	0.599

23.12 There are inherent risks within all budgets, particularly in demand led services such as Adults and Housing. All modelling and strategic budget planning has been based on the best available information and projections. However, pressures and demand are subject to change, which can have a significant impact on the budget.

Children's Services

23.13 The overall budget proposed for Children's Services is an increase of £5.174m, to £95.124m, an increase of 6%.

Context

23.14 Children's Services nationally continue to face significant pressures primarily driven by rising need, demand and escalating costs. The government's reform agenda, including The Families First Partnership (FFP) programme, seeks to rebalance the system by prioritising early intervention, family-based care, and reducing reliance on residential placements. This includes keeping children at home, strengthening kinship and foster care, improving market stability, and addressing profiteering within external provision.

23.15 The government expect all authorities to have started The Families First Partnership reforms during 2025/26.

23.16 Dorset have helped shape national reforms and the Families First Partnership programme by being a Families First for Children Pathfinder authority and have tested and adopted many of the programme's requirements since July 2024. Dorset will be fully compliant with the Families First Partnership guidance by March 2026.

23.17 However, the Dorset is not immune to the national context. Demand and need pressures persist, external placement markets remain constrained, and costs continue to rise, reflecting the broader systemic issues affecting Children's Services across the country. This is likely to continue until national reforms and local transformation programmes are embedded and the Children in Care placement volume and mix changes.

Budget

23.18 Budget increases centre on two main themes:

1. Pressures that impact all council services	£m
Pay inflation, increments and employer's pension contribution adjustment	1.02
General inflation, utilities	0.918
Increased fees and charges	0.181
Movements to other directorates, for example OFC	(3.549)

2. Pressures that impact Children's services	£m
Children in Care	5.070
Removing unachieved savings target	1.622
Fostering: Increasing capacity	1.483
Increased SEN Provision / Legal fees	0.500
Increased in-house residential capacity	0.445
Other changes (Individually <£0.5m)	0.600

Further information

23.19 Supporting Children in Care accounts for over a third of the directorate spend. In line with national reforms, the directorate has committed to early help and prevention, and additionally future projects will seek to reduce and change the placement mix for our Children in Care.

23.20 Children's services have engaged external support to model then reduce and change the placement mix for our Children in Care. This commenced during 2025/26 and should be fully operational for the new year. In summary:

- £5.1m is the extra funding requirement for 2026/27 based on the October 2025 Children in Care population and trend analysis.
- £4.2m is the estimated savings achieved through changing the number of Children in Care and the placement mix.

To deliver the estimated Children in Care savings requires:

- Embedding the ways of working recommended by external support
- Increase funding and support into fostering teams, including increasing rates with the aim to have circa 250 children in Dorset foster care placements during 2026/27
- Increasing the number of families who can offer foster placements, through a targeted foster care recruitment campaign (TVI project)
- Increase our Dorset Council run residential provision. £0.445m to release an estimated £0.57m

23.21 Other Children's Services savings total £1.5m, summarised in the following table:

Children's Services 2026/27 savings	£m
A change to our locality model to both improve outcomes for children, young people and families and create efficiencies.	0.500
The use of AI will help us to improve the quality and timeliness of EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan) application process which means we do not need to employ additional workers.	0.300
Section 17 funding helps children who need extra support to stay safe and healthy but we do not need to spend as much this year as previous years.	0.200

Children's Services 2026/27 savings	£m
Continue to adapt the Outdoor Education Service so that the income it generates pays for its running costs.	0.122
Other changes, predominantly budget adjustments <£0.1m identified during the budget process	0.426

23.22 £0.212m of budget is being reallocated from Children's Services to Birth to Settled Adulthood. This adjustment ensures the budget aligns with actual expenditure, such as the Head of Service salary and contributions from partner organisations.

23.23 The full savings table for Children's is available in appendix 1.

23.24 Children's Services, as all the directorates within the council, identified other savings to help balance the budget. This is not without risk with careful planning required to avoid duplication or to push cost into the system, for example by holding Early Help vacancies and therefore not preventing escalation of need.

Families First for Children Pathfinder (FFCP) and funding

23.25 For the previous two years, the DfE have provided £4.6m to support Dorset's Families First for Children Pathfinder work. The largest element of the funding, the FFC Pathfinder grant totalled £2.7m. This was not enough to fund the entire project and the Social Care grant was used to bridge the gap.

23.26 During 2025/26, the Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) formula was announced and used within the multi-year financial settlement to support Children's Social Care reforms. The FFC Pathfinder grant is not part of the new funding formula

23.27 The formula works by estimating each local authority's level of predicted need for children and family services, by identifying the number of children with characteristics that most accurately predict whether a child will interact with children's social care services. These include child-level factors such as age, sex, and eligibility for Free School Meals, alongside neighbourhood factors like deprivation. The formula uses this combination of characteristics to estimate how levels of need vary across the country.

23.28 This approach ensures that local authorities are funded based on their anticipated need for children's services, rather than historic service use. As a result, funding allocations are in no way influenced by individual local authority practices or the number of children who have previously interacted with the social care system. This means there is no financial incentive to

categorise more children as Children Looked After or Children in Need, supporting the Government's commitment to improve effective early intervention and preventative services.

23.29 The change in formula will reduce funding received by Dorset, not because of the preventative work undertaken, but the removal of historic service use.

23.30 Councils that have invested in prevention and reduced the number of children requiring acute services are not penalised. Historical spending patterns or numbers of Children in Need or Children Looked After have no bearing on funding allocations. Instead, the formula allocates resources based on an accurate assessment of the level of need in each area.

23.31 The introduction of CYPS, along with the decision to combine grants and roll some grants into Core Spending Power and the uncertainty whether the FFC Pathfinder grant will continue, the estimated 2026/27 position is:

	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
FFC Pathfinder grant	2.710	-
Children's and Families grant (the Supporting Families grant of the five grants that make up the overall grant)	1.082	-
Children's Social Care Prevention grant	0.839	-
Childrens, Families and Youth grant (Family First Partnership element of the three grants that make up the overall grant)		3.492
TOTAL	4.631	3.492
Reduced funding		1.139

23.32 Recognising the reduced funding, Children's Services leadership began conversations with the DfE in December 2025 highlighting the significant risk for Dorset to continue as a successful 'Pathfinder' authority, successfully leading reforms and showcasing the effectiveness of the reform model to the rest of the country.

23.33 The reduced funding also jeopardises the saving realised through the revised operating model to comply with Families First Partnership programme.

23.34 Presently, it is unclear whether the revised funding will come with any additional responsibilities. The remaining elements of the Children's and Families Grant (Supported Accommodation Reforms - New Burdens to LAs, Staying Put, Virtual School Heads Extension for Previously Looked After Children, Leaving Care Allowance uplift, Personal Advisors) totalling £0.876m are now part of the Revenue Support Grant.

Birth to Settled Adulthood

23.35 The Birth to Settled Adulthood (B2SA) service is a joined-up approach to supporting children and young people with complex additional needs. By bringing together health, social care, and education, B2SA supports children and young person to receive consistent, coordinated support from birth through to adulthood.

23.36 The overall budget proposed for Birth to Settled Adulthood is an increase of £1.666m, to £10.674m, an increase of 18%.

23.37 The budget is centred around two main themes:

1. Pressures that impact all council services	£m
Pay inflation, increments and employer's pension contribution adjustment	0.865
General inflation, utilities	0.156

2. Pressures specific to Birth to Settled Adulthood	£m
Unachieved savings	1.000
Increased need	0.700

23.38 The integrated Birth to Settled Adulthood budget was formed in 2025/26 and continues into 2026/27. Integrated the Children's and Adults together reflect the way teams work and provides oversight of total spend. Over the past year, demand for services has increased significantly, which has resulted in a higher growth requirement within the 2026/27 budget.

Saving

B2SA 2026/27 savings	£m
Internally operated short breaks home scheduled for opening in the year. Funding has already been secured.	0.09

23.39 £0.212m of budget is being reallocated from Children's Services to Birth to Settled Adulthood. This adjustment ensures the budget aligns with actual expenditure, such as the Head of Service salary and contributions from partner organisations.

Place Directorate

23.40 The overall budget proposed for the Place Directorate is a decrease from £106.003m to £105.421m in 2026/27, a decrease of £0.582m or circa 0.5%.

23.41 The main components of the budget changes are as follows.

1. Pressures that impact all council services	£m
Pay inflation, increments and employer's pension contribution adjustment	1.204
General inflation, utilities	2.040
Increased fees and charges	(2.538)
Increase vacancy factor requirement	(0.741)
Movements to other directorates, for example OFC	(2.775)
Total	(2.809)

2. Pressures that impact Place Directorate	£m
Realignment of waste budgets	0.931
Dorset Travel growth incl. SEND transport	0.750
Economic Regeneration	0.450
Final cessation of DFE funding for joint use leisure centres	0.189
Total	2.320

3. Place Directorate 2026/27 savings	£m
Permanent removal of posts already taken place	0.864
SEND transport reviews	0.500
Further permanent removal of posts	0.450
Reduction in streetlighting energy costs	0.412
Reduction in temporary staff	0.240
Increased commercial waste income	0.175
Increased garden waste income	0.091
Reduction in arts/culture/sports expenditure	0.075
Reduction in cross border waste costs	0.060

3. Place Directorate 2026/27 savings	£m
Total	2.868

23.42 These are explored in more detail below.

23.43 Setting aside the transfer of £2.775m from the Place budget to other budget centres due to OFC, the like for like comparison of the Place budget between the 2025/26 budget and the proposed 2026/27 budget is £106m in 2025/26 compared with £105.4m in 2026/27. However, this disguises the continuing drift of the wider Place budget into Dorset Travel. With Dorset Travel removed, the budget for the universal Place services reduces from £61.5m in 2025/26 to £60.9m in 2026/27.

Dorset Travel

23.44 Dorset Travel budgets – and in particular, SEND Transport – has been subject to significant national problems in recent years which have been well documented. After the pandemic, costs increased by 20% to 30% in this sector nationally, largely due to driver shortages and fuel costs. Since that time, cost increases have reduced but tend to remain higher than baseline rates of inflation. The table below shows the volatility in costs over recent years, for Dorset Travel as a whole, across the full range of services including SEND transport, mainstream school transport and public transport.

Dorset Travel - year on year actual spend increases			
Financial Year	Actuals/ £m	Increase on previous year/ £m	Increase on previous year (%)
2020-21	22.172		
2021-22	24.571	2.399	11%
2022-23	30.554	5.983	24%
2023-24	34.679	4.125	14%
2024-25	36.424	1.745	5%
forecast Q3 2025-26	40.375	3.951	11%

23.45 This makes accurate budget setting for future years an exercise in risk appetite rather than modelling known variables, due to the lack of clarity on expected costs. This is further exacerbated by the procurement cycle, which means that costs/contracts change at the beginning of the academic year in September, mid-way through the Council's financial year.

23.46 After careful consideration of the above, budget growth has been included in the proposed budget, consisting of “default” inflationary uplift on costs plus a specific further sum of £0.7m. This takes the total Dorset Travel budget from an expected spend of £40.4m in the current year to circa £44.6m of budget in 2026/27, which equates to allowing for increased costs of circa 10%. The original assumption for growth in the MTFP was circa £2m higher, but actions taken to control costs (for example, by reducing the numbers of solo travellers from 25% to 15%) have curtailed this expected trajectory of costs.

23.47 In addition to the above, specific savings initiatives are included in the draft budget proposals for ongoing school transport/SEND transport reviews (£0.5m) and additional resourcing to boost the numbers in the team undertaking this work (£0.050m).

23.48 During 2026/27, some mainstream school transport contracts are to be renewed after a period of some time. The budget allows for the usual inflationary uplift, but there is always risk with major re-procurements that the financial impact on renewed prices is above and beyond existing budgets. These contracts (OOSO, or One School, One Operator) were last reprocured before the pandemic and before the war in Ukraine, so prices may be returned at rates higher than inflation.

Regeneration and Economic Development

23.49 The economic regeneration programme in Weymouth and the work of the Dorset Clean Energy Super Cluster centred around Portland Port and Chickerell have not previously had an allocation of revenue funding. During 2025/26 the Executive Director for Place reallocated funding from within existing Place funds to provide necessary funding for expenditure on these priority projects.

23.50 This budget proposes the allocation of a further £0.450m to these projects, which are core to the agenda for regeneration, growth and social mobility in the most economically-deprived areas of Dorset.

DfE funding at joint use leisure centres

23.51 Joint use leisure centres are partly funded by the Department for Education (DfE). Previously, DfE has reduced its financial contribution and in 2026/27 will remove all remaining funding, circa £0.2m. However, costs for DC, in operating the leisure centres, remains unchanged and therefore the DC budget will need to increase to compensate for the lost funding.

Realignment of waste budgets

23.52 A one-off sum of £0.930m is included in the proposed budget for dealing with the realignment of waste budgets. Specific items include:

- 1) Reassessment of the recyclate cost
- 2) Reassessment of glass cost
- 3) Realignment to prior year contractual inflation
- 4) Reassessment of expected volumes arising of all waste streams
- 5) Costs being incurred in relation to dealing with POPs (persistent organic pollutants) due to recent legislative change
- 6) Reassessment of cross border charges being incurred

Place – savings

23.53 Major savings items over £250k are as follows:

- 1) £0.865m of posts have been permanently removed from the Place Directorate base budget, in an exercise carried out since March/April 2025.
- 2) An additional vacancy factor of £0.741m has been added to the Place Directorate base budget, to bring the total level to 3%.
- 3) School transport and SEND transport reviews savings are included at a value of £0.5m.
- 4) Another exercise to permanently remove posts from the base budget in 2026/27, included here at a value of £0.450m.
- 5) The street lighting energy budget is reduced by £0.412m, reflecting the estimated price in 2026/27, however this is subject to energy price renewals in autumn.

23.54 It should be acknowledged that “business as usual” means uncertainty in the Place Directorate, meaning that it is not risk-free. The major issues of volatility remain unchanged:

- a) Income via fees and charges are often dependant on the wider economic landscape and even weather (affecting services such as leisure centres, garden waste volumes, country parks, car parking income etc).
- b) SEND Transport costs will be subject to volumes of children in the system as well as their specific requirements.
- c) Recyclate waste is a global commodity and is subject to market fluctuation, with our costs pegged on a monthly basis.
- d) The proposed budget includes a vacancy factor of 3% or circa £2m. Achievement of this saving will be subject to the ability to pause recruitment sufficiently long enough to achieve vacancy targets.
- e) Income uplifts are not always achievable where there are existing contractual/legal arrangements which conflict.
- f) Limiting inflation uplifts to 3% across the board may not always be achievable.

Public Health and Prevention

23.55 Dorset Council's Public Health team focuses on improving population health and reducing inequalities. It delivers statutory services such as sexual health, NHS Health Checks, and children's public health nursing, and commissions additional services like drug and alcohol support and smoking cessation. The service also provides health protection (e.g., outbreak management), health improvement initiatives, and strategic advice to the NHS and local partners. Its work is data-driven, targeting prevention and early intervention to reduce long-term demand on health and social care systems.

23.56 The Public Health grant allocations have been confirmed for the next three years, consistent with the council's funding allocation. The 2026/27 Public Health grant is £18.9m, an increase of £2.3m compared to 2025/26. This increase comprises £0.5M real terms increase to the Grant, with the remainder of the increase due to consolidation of S31 grants that previously were separate to the ring-fenced grant. Specific activity is ringfenced within the grant, including smoking cessation (£0.9m) and drugs and alcohol (£5m). National guidance highlights strengthened assurance requirements for the consolidated Public Health grant, which must be used exclusively for Public Health purposes.

23.57 The overall budget proposed for Regulatory Services is an increase from £3.999m to £4.312m in 2026/27, an increase of £0.313m (8%).

23.58 The main components of the budget changes are as follows

1. Pressures that impact all council services	£m
Pay inflation, increments and employer's pension contribution adjustment	0.098
General inflation, utilities	0.052
Increased fees and charges	(0.187)

2. Pressures that impact Regulatory Services	£m
Bereavement Services maintenance cost increase	0.022
Bereavement Services income lower than expected	0.080
Planned savings in Regulatory Services were not delivered	0.070
Market Cornhill reduced income from rentals	0.060
Market legacy savings target unmet	0.067
Anticipated savings target was not delivered for 2025/26	0.050

Corporate Services

23.59 The overall budget proposed for the Corporate Directorate is a decreased from £56.369m to £56.294m in 2026/27, a decrease of £0.075m (0.1%).

23.60 The main components of the budget changes are as follows.

Pressures that impact all council services	£m
Pay inflation, increments and employer's pension contribution adjustment	1.568
General inflation, utilities	0.123
Increased fees and charges	(0.340)
Increase vacancy factor requirement	(0.500)
Movements to other directorates, for example OFC	5.965

Pressures that impact Corporate Directorate	£m
Increase in running costs for Customer Services out of hours service	0.141
Communications restructure and investing in supporting the Armed Forces Covenant	0.114
Additional legal resource for adult court of protection cases	0.100
Reduction in procurement income and savings projections	0.100
End of contractual rebate income from schools	0.062
Reduction in Archives Service savings projections	0.050
Increase in cost for software to process invoices	0.018
Additional cost to cover statutory purchasing templates	0.012
Professional procurement services to schools has ended	0.012

Corporate Directorate 2026/27 savings	£m
Debt Management	0.481
Software to automate council tax within back-office systems	0.211
Planned changes with elements of the people and workforce function	0.100
Review and rationalisation of digital systems across the organisation	0.085
Automation of financial assessments	0.050
Planned changes within elements of the finance team	0.035

23.61 The Corporate Directorate consists of Finance & Commercial, Human Resources, ICT Operations, Strategy, Performance & Sustainability, Transformation, Customer & Cultural Services and the Legal and Democratic Services teams.

23.62 The role of Corporate Services is fourfold:

- a) to set strategic direction and support performance, strategy and delivery
- b) to provide direct support and services to residents (e.g., Customer Services, Libraries Service, the Revenues and Benefits team and the Land Charges Service)
- c) to support the rest of the organisation so they can provide the best services they can within financial and legal constraints.
- d) to provide those essential corporate & democratic services required of a Council of our size and scale.

24 Transformation and savings opportunities

24.1 For 2026/27, we will deliver £7.4m of savings through the Our Future Council (OFC) programme. Cabinet confirmed in October that OFC remains our main plan for changing how the whole council works so we can provide modern, reliable and affordable services.

24.2 For 2026/27 the focus is on practical changes that make the organisation simpler and more efficient. This includes redesigning services around customer needs, replacing our HR and Finance system, improving our contact centre, reducing duplication, using automation and AI where it makes sense, and tightening how we buy and manage external contracts. Together, these changes form a single programme of work to help us operate as **one council** and support a sustainable financial future.

24.3 During 2025/26, savings were delivered through restructuring customer services, business support, and the transformation management office, supported by voluntary redundancies, and vacancy management. The full year effect of these workforce changes will be realised in 2026/27, totalling £2.63m. These actions remain aligned to the Our Future Council business case approved by Cabinet in January 2025, which sets out plans to deliver £18.8m of recurring annual savings in future years.

24.4 In addition, further Our Future Council changes for 2026/27 will realise:

- 1) £2.5m from further changes in the new customer hub and changes to the council's strategic and enabling (corporate) functions. This will include changes to services that have moved into the customer hub in addition to the redesign of further functions to work within the new hub. As described in previous reports, the timelines for these changes are aligned to the implementation of a new HR and Finance system which is being replaced during 2026/27.
- 2) £2m following the continued review of third party spend and rationalisation of contracts.
- 3) £0.3m from the rationalisation of telephony contracts as a result of more modern contact centre telephony implemented through the Our Future Council programme

24.5 The delivery roadmap for all transformation initiatives delivering savings of over £0.5m in 2026/27 is included in appendix 5.

19 Local Council Tax support (LCTS) scheme

- 19.1 Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme in accordance with the requirements of the schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to either maintain the scheme or replace it.
- 19.2 No changes to LCTS are planned, meaning the highest award remains 100%, and is not limited to 2 children. More information about the scheme is available here: [Council Tax Support - Dorset Council](#)
- 19.3 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have confirmed an uplift of benefits for working age claimants by 3.8%. As set out in the policy, this means the weekly income tables used to award the agreed level of relief are revised as follows;

Award band	Household composition									
	SINGLE		COUPLE		1 CHILD		2 CHILD		3 OR MORE CHILD	
	FROM	TO	FROM	TO	FROM	TO	FROM	TO	FROM	TO
1 - 100%	£0.00	£98.00	£0.00	£154.00	£0.00	£180.00	£0.00	£249.00	£0.00	£318.00
2 - 80%	£98.01	£135.00	£154.01	£196.00	£180.01	£222.00	£249.01	£291.00	£318.01	£359.00
3 - 60%	£135.01	£171.00	£196.01	£238.00	£222.01	£265.00	£291.01	£333.00	£359.01	£402.00
4 - 40%	£171.01	£209.00	£238.01	£280.00	£265.01	£306.00	£333.01	£376.00	£402.01	£444.00
5 - 20%	£209.01	£245.00	£280.01	£323.00	£306.01	£349.00	£376.01	£417.00	£444.01	£486.00
6 - 0%	£245.01		£323.01		£349.01		£417.01		£486.01	

25 Flexible use of capital receipts

- 25.1 Capital receipts are the money councils receive from asset sales, the use of which is normally restricted to funding other capital expenditure or paying off debt. The receipts cannot usually be used to fund revenue costs. The direction introduces a new restriction that authorities may not use the flexibility to fund discretionary redundancy payments, i.e. those not necessarily incurred under statute. This does not affect other types of severance payments and, to be clear, does not restrict, including pension strain costs, which may still be qualifying expenditure.
- 25.2 The Government has committed to extending flexibilities that allow authorities to use the proceeds from asset sales to fund the revenue costs of projects that will reduce costs, increase revenue or support a more efficient provision of services. This flexibility is in place until 2030.

- 25.3 Flexible use of capital receipts can be used to fund the costs of some transformation. With this in mind a refresh to the Councils flexible use of capital receipts policy will come forward once more detailed business cases are developed for invest to save projects which will be able to draw upon the capital receipts pipeline approved at the October 2025 Cabinet.

26 Risk

- 26.1 Setting a budget is an exercise rooted in forecasting, which inevitably involves making a series of informed assumptions and scenario planning. Forecasting budgets is inherently risky because it requires making predictions about future conditions based on current information, historical data, and informed assumptions. However, the future is shaped by a complex mix of variables—such as changing government policies, economic fluctuations, demographic shifts, and unforeseen local events—that can quickly alter anticipated needs and costs. Even with careful scenario planning, the unpredictability of external factors means budget estimates are always subject to uncertainty, making it difficult to guarantee accuracy and stability in financial planning.
- 26.2 As a result, inherent risk is built into the budgeting process. Dorset Council, therefore, must remain agile, continually monitoring actual performance against budget and being prepared to implement mitigation measures if risks start to materialise or assumptions prove incorrect. This ongoing scrutiny and adaptability are essential to managing the volatility and uncertainty that underpin public sector financial planning.

Risk: Inherent volatility in the level of need for services

- 26.3 The inherent volatility in the level of need for services for vulnerable people who rely on councils stems from a range of unpredictable and interrelated factors. Demand can fluctuate rapidly due to demographic changes, such as an ageing population or shifts in family structures, as well as sudden economic pressures or public health crises. Additionally, localised events—like changes in benefit entitlements, or new legislative requirements—can all lead to unexpected increases in the number of residents requiring support. This volatility makes it challenging for councils to accurately forecast service needs and allocate resources efficiently, necessitating flexible and responsive planning to meet the evolving requirements of vulnerable individuals in the community.
- 26.4 The continued economic uncertainty means there remains considerable risk around our planning assumptions for growth in the levels of need and pressure on costs. The funding proposals set out in this paper provide for reasonable forecasts of growth in demand for Adults' Services and Children's Services but both locally and nationally, demand for people services continues to grow more quickly than the resources available.

Risk: Demographics

- 26.5 Dorset in particular face significant demographic pressures compared to the rest of England which drives an ongoing reliance on adult social care services. Alongside this, councils across the Southwest face rising levels of need for children's services and significant inflationary pressures continue to be felt across all commissioned service areas
- 26.6 For context, as an example, 31.0% of Dorset's current population is 65 and over (the highest of any unitary authority). This is significantly higher in comparison to the national picture, where 18.9% of the national population is aged 65 or over. The 80 and over population is currently 9.4% of Dorset's population, almost one in ten. The number of people 80 and over is expected to increase by 36% over the next 10 years, creating significant and sustained demand on its adult social care services. Dorset's proportion of population over 50 years old also could impact labour supply to our economy as health issues such as diabetes and hypertension may have the dual impact of reliance on health and care support, as well as reducing the local labour supply.

Risk: Transformation and savings

- 26.7 Included within the proposals are a significant range of savings required to be delivered through transformation across all services as well as the council wide OFC programme. As mentioned earlier in the report there is an inherent risk in any transformation programme which relies upon sound planning, to ensure the required work can and is completed in sufficient time to realise the required savings.
- 26.8 All transformation and service changes planned will be monitored and supported through a revised transformation framework and governance structure. This will include officer and member boards. oversight through audit and governance (assurance on risk and governance) and our committee process to provide assurance on performance and delivery.

Risk: Inflation

- 26.9 For the purposes of this report, references to inflation are typically referring to the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This tracks how prices have changes in the 12 months prior.
- 26.10 There is also still significant inflationary pressure in the economy with recent increases to inflation. The November 2025 inflation rate (CPI) was 3.2%.
- 26.11 Our approach to inflation to provide directorates with funding for general inflation at 2.5% with the requirement for services to manage inflationary uplifts within this envelope. Uplift requests will remain centrally co-ordinated by a senior officer group which will have some scope to mitigate where inflationary uplifts exceed the general provision.

26.12 It will be necessary for us to continue to carry out effective contract management so that we ensure that a robust and value for money approach is taken to supplier increases. We cannot afford to simply increase contract prices by inflation. We will work positively with our supply chain to discuss all aspects of contract performance – including pricing – but this must be within the context of overall affordability within the Council's budget.

Risk: High Needs Block

26.13 Dorset Council, like many other authorities nationally, has an accumulated overspend on the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

26.14 The Regulations in place to provide for the current accounting treatment of this deficit were due to fall away on 1 April 2023 but this has now been deferred until 1 April 2026. The immediate risk of this overspend falling to the Council to fund has therefore subsided but longer-term risk remains that the overspend will fall to be funded by councils.

26.15 The delays to the Government whitepaper on SEND and lack of clarity on how cumulative and future DSG deficits will be managed means there remains a significant risk for Dorset.

26.16 Furthermore, as the deficit grows, at the point at which it exceeds Council reserves, the Council would be technically insolvent. With no certainty as to the Government's plans as to how to finance the ongoing level of need nationally, the Council must therefore plan for the known situation, which is the ending of the override in March 2028. This is a position that many upper tier councils are in nationally; it is not unique to Dorset.

Risk: Future national strategy implementation

26.17 As referenced earlier in the report, when looking at how the mix of grant vs council tax funding has changed for Dorset grants previously received by the Council have been discontinued or have a different method of calculation. Nationally this has meant that more funding is going to other parts of the Country and the pressures of delivering services across a rural county are less impactful on the settlement.

26.18 There is a risk that this redistribution of resources continues to poorly serve Dorset and so is a major risk to long term financial sustainability.

Risk management and reporting

26.19 The Council has robust governance and reporting processes around risk and concerns around containing expenditure within the budget can be escalated through this framework at any time. The S151 Officer is required to provide assurance as part of the Budget Strategy, and this is set out later in this report.

27 Reserves, balances, contingency and resilience

General funds

27.1 As reported in the 2024/25 [outturn](#) report General Fund reserves were £31.6m with earmarked reserves totalling £114m.

27.2 In 2018 the Shadow Council commissioned an independent report from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) which recommended that the Council should retain a **minimum of 5%** of its budget requirement as a general fund reserve. The S151 Officer recommends that this approach is continued for 2026/27 and with reference to the net budget requirement calculation set out in Appendix 1, Cabinet is recommended to agree a **minimum level** for the general fund of £24.131m.

27.3 Due to the sustained level of financial pressure faced in recent years is likely to require to draw upon its reserves to manage emerging overspends. However, it is important to note that the preferred approach remains to mitigate such pressures from within service budgets wherever possible, rather than relying on reserves. This strategy not only supports long-term financial resilience but also encourages a culture of cost control and efficiency within individual services.

27.4 **[Draft paragraph until Cabinet papers are published]** As mentioned earlier in this report the Quarter 3 finance report on the Cabinet agenda for January 2026 flags that the current level of overspend could mean the Council is required to use its General Fund reserve, resulting in a balance of **[TBC for Cabinet]**

27.5 A further update on the General Fund position as at 31 March 2026 will be included in the 2025/26 outturn report presented to Cabinet in the summer of 2026.

Other reserves and reserves strategy

27.6 As well as the general fund, the Council has other earmarked reserves which are earmarked for a specific purpose. Typically, these are set aside to mitigate against specific risks that may arise during the year or beyond or they are restricted to only being used for a specific purpose e.g. s106 balances. These reserves cannot be repurposed without impacting on the mitigation they provide against the risk profile of the organisation.

27.7 As with the general fund reserve, reserve balances will be reduced as a result of the overspend. To protect the general fund, a review of earmarked reserves may need to take place.

Contingency budget

27.8 It is prudent for any organisation to set a contingency budget to provide for unforeseeable circumstances arising during the year. The key is to set the contingency budget as accurately as possible, so it strikes a good balance between allowing the organisation to manage risk whilst not causing a diversion of material funds away from front line services where there are clearly continuing pressures.

27.9 For 2025/26, held the following contingencies

Title	Value	Purpose	2025/26 Status
General contingency	£4.9m	This reserve provided funding for the pay award and general offset against overspends. This is forecast to be fully deployed.	Fully used
National Insurance / Inflation	£4.5m	Provided funding to offset complexities of inflation due to demand and government changes to national insurance.	Fully used
Council Plan & Cost of Living	£1.5m	£1m support delivery of the Council Plan £500k for continuing the Cost of Living Fund	Fully used
Extended Producer responsibilities	£2.1m	To meet the new cost of changes to service delivery.	Fully used

27.10 For 2026/27 the Council has £8.5m in contingency.

Title	Value	Purpose
General contingency	£5.0m	Providing funding for the pay award and general offset against overspends. This is forecast to be fully deployed. and provided for some fairly specific risks around inflation and pay award costs being in excess of funding provided in services own base budgets.
Inflation	£2.5m	To offset inflationary pressures.
Council Plan & Cost of Living	£1.0m	£0.5m to support delivery of the Council Plan. (Note: £0.5m remains held in Contingency after allocating £0.5m recurrently to services) £0.5m for continuing the Cost of Living Fund.

Resilience

- 27.11 The general fund level, earmarked reserves, and contingency budget all strengthen resilience through a well-structured budget process.
- 27.12 The Council continues to enhance its value for money framework, regularly reporting to the Audit & Governance Committee. This principle is vital to effective governance and must guide financial decisions, especially as financial pressures and rising costs impact the Council's cash-limited budgets while maintaining quality services for residents.

28 Capital programme (The Capital Programme section is draft ahead of the Q3 Finance management paper being presented to Cabinet)

- 28.1 A review of the capital programme has been undertaken to ensure that it remains deliverable and aligned with strategic priorities, it is essential to right-size the programme to match realistic delivery capacity. Limiting the annual capital programme to achievable levels reduces the risk of overcommitment, under-delivery, and misalignment with organisational objectives. This approach promotes effective resource management and strengthens confidence in delivery outcomes.
- 28.2 To support robust governance and accountability, the introduction of three formal gateways for capital projects is recommended: (1) Business case approval by Cabinet, (2) Budget allocation by Cabinet, and (3) Procurement approval by Cabinet or delegated authority. These checkpoints will provide clear oversight, ensure projects are properly scoped and funded, and maintain control throughout the delivery lifecycle.
- 28.3 Given the finite resources, both in terms of financial resources as well as capacity within staff/contractor resources the Capital programme over the short term is essentially fully committed. Any further projects or requests requiring Council finance which is achieved through borrowing will need to be funded within that ceiling by deprioritising existing projects.
- 28.4 There are opportunities to deliver additional projects through exploring the following options:
- 1) **Self-funding** – projects which deliver future reduced costs or generate income that are at least equal to the financing costs of the delivery are able to be added to the programme without putting further pressure on central financing costs. Examples of this could include housing projects where the cost of spot purchasing short term temporary accommodation is more expensive than the fixed financing costs and ongoing property management costs.
 - 2) **Increased capital receipts** – the capital programme assumes £12.9m of receipts over the 4-year plan. In the event that additional capital receipts are realised, this can be used to fund further capital delivery without incurring additional interest costs.

- 3) **Changes to interest rates** – The UK is currently experiencing much higher interest rates than have been seen in recent years. At the time of writing 30 year borrowing via PWLB is in excess of 6%. If interest rates were to materially reduce, this would reduce the financing costs associated with capital programmes. This could mean the current budgets for interest payable, could then be allocated to new projects as the Council could afford higher levels of capital spend.
- 4) **External contributions** – projects which are fully or partially funded by external contributions (grants, S106/CIL, developers' contributions etc.) all have reduced financing costs as these external contributions reduce the amount of money required to be borrowed to deliver the scheme.

28.5 The latest capital strategy and capital programme for the MTFP period, which totalled almost £550m, was agreed by Cabinet in February 2025.

28.6 Following the capital programme review, the current approved projects result in a total programme of £316.0m over five years, as summarised in the table below.

Capital Programme	Total Budget					
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total Budget 25/26-29/30
Full external funding	38,402	29,204	33,440	36,856	42,700	180,602
Partial external funding	14,843	0	0	0	0	14,843
Partial external funding	15,220	14,658	3,011	1,460	0	34,349
Council funded	9,065	9,536	10,659	(14,715)	(14,513)	32
Funded from other Reserves	0	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Receipts Applied	9,900	1,000	1,000	1,000		12,900
Minimum Revenue Provision	11,241	12,972	14,602	16,499	16,749	72,063
Self Funded	1,596	0	0	0	0	1,596
Total funding	100,267	67,370	62,712	41,100	44,936	316,385

28.7 In addition to the agreed programme, there is a pipeline of emerging projects that have not yet progressed through the required gateway approvals.

Capital Programme Pipeline	Total Budget					
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total Budget 25/26-29/30
Full external funding	585	0	0	0	0	585
Partial external funding	17,127	38,839	14,463	0	0	70,429
Partial external funding	0	0	15,230	22,396	17,687	55,313
Council funded	16,593	50,391	41,674	35,292	19,008	162,958
Self Funded	698	4,174	4,174	3,850	3,850	16,746
Total funding	35,003	93,404	75,541	61,538	40,545	306,031

28.8 Appendix 3 contains full list of projects.

28.9 This, along with the approved budget and updates since that date, mean a programme of £616m for the next five years, as summarised in the table below. Increases in the Minimum Revenue Provision budget (MRP) and Interest Paid budget have been factored into the 2026/27 revenue budget to meet the needs of the capital programme set out.

28.10 There are likely to be further requests for projects and programmes that arise during the year through funding from external resources. The Capital Strategy and Asset Management Group (CSAMG) which is chaired by the Executive Director for Place will review business cases for all projects before seeking approval in accordance with the Councils scheme of delegation. Given the pressures faced over the life of this MTFP CSAMG will need to be mindful of the revenue implications of all projects and act accordingly.

29 Engagement with and scrutiny of the budget

[Draft section for scrutiny committees which will be updated based on actual scrutiny feedback ahead of Cabinet]

29.1 In order to make the development of the budget inclusive, there have been a number of cross-party engagement sessions for all members. There are also specific directorate-focused arrangements in place for Portfolio Holders, and any member can ask questions or request information about financial management at any point.

29.2 As well as quarterly financial reports to Cabinet to keep all members abreast of budget development, there is also a separate and specific paper on early stages of budget process, principles and strategy which went to Cabinet in November 2025. Following this, was a good level of member engagement before during and after the three informal briefing events that took place between October 2025 and January 2026 prior to the meeting of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee and the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee in January 2026. Feedback from both Committees along with Cabinet responses is set out in [Appendix 6 available for Cabinet] for consideration and recommendation to full Council in February 2024.

30 Consultation & engagement

30.1 The 2026/27 budget proposals are driven by the new Dorset Council Plan and priorities

Public engagement

30.2 Dorset Council undertook an engagement exercise in November 2025 to help inform the decision making. This exercise provided an online budget simulator tool which residents could use to have a go themselves at setting an illustrative version of the council's budget, including making allocations for different services and setting the level of council tax. 745 residents submitted responses and [a report summarising these responses has been published](#) on the council's website and shared with members.

Consultation

30.3 The process of setting Council Tax involves consultations with:

- 1) **major precepting authorities:** including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service,
- 2) **local precepting authorities:** such as town and parish councils.

30.4 During this, the Council engages with these preceptors to thoroughly understand and incorporate their individual budget requirements. These consultations specifically focus on proposed plans for Council Tax levels and the respective precept needs of the preceptors.

30.5 This collaborative approach ensures that Council Tax rates are set in a manner that aligns not only with the Council's financial strategy but also takes into account the needs of the preceptors within our community.

30.6 The Executive Director for Place and their management team also regularly engage and consult with the business sector and managers throughout the organisation share information regularly with businesses in the supply chain to ensure they are aware of and can contribute to the conversations around priorities and resources.

31 S151 Officer assurance

[This section is draft until final report presented to Council]

Statutory context

31.1 Part 2 (Section 25) of the Local Government Act 2003 requires officers with responsibilities under s151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make a statement regarding the robustness of estimates and the adequacy of reserves at the time the budget is set.

31.2 There are also other safeguards aimed at ensuring local authorities do not over-commit themselves financially. These include:

- a) the Chief Financial Officer's powers under section 114 of the Local Government Act 1988, which requires a report to the Cabinet and to all members of the local authority if there is or is likely to be unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget;
- b) the Local Government Finance Act 1992, which requires a local authority to calculate its budget requirement for each financial year, including the revenue costs which flow from capital financing decisions. The Act also requires an authority to budget to meet its expenditure after taking into account other sources of income. This is known as the balanced budget requirement;
- c) the Prudential Code, introduced under the Local Government Act 2003, which has applied to capital financing and treasury management decisions;
- d) the assessment of the financial performance and standing of the authority by the external auditors, who give their opinion on the Council and the value for money it provides as part of their annual report to those charged with governance.

31.3 The robustness of the budget critically depends on the maintenance of a sound financial control environment including effective financial management in each of the Council's service directorates. Dorset Council's scheme of financial management sets out the responsibilities of all those involved in managing budgets and incurring commitments on behalf of the Council. The revised financial strategy statement is also a key document in setting out financial management arrangements, responsibilities and strategy for the Council.

Approach to financial management

31.4 The Council has well-developed arrangements for financial monitoring during the year. Budget performance is formally reported quarterly through the Cabinet and scrutinised by several other committees, including Audit & Governance Committee which also receives quarterly reports. The finance team operate as business partners, working alongside service managers to support financial management and control whilst delivering services. The Council's financial management system enables officers with budget management responsibility to interrogate financial information at any point in time.

31.5 Finance business partners routinely report to Directorate Leadership Teams each month and the S151 Officer meets weekly with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial & Capital Strategy. There is also an officer group - Capital Strategy and Asset Management Group (CSAM) - that monitors progress against the current capital programme and deals with the pre-Cabinet governance arrangements for managing the bidding and financing process for all capital expenditure proposals to Cabinet.

Budget development

31.6 Member involvement in budget development has been extensive again this year, particularly through a series of service review meetings (lead by the Finance Portfolio holder and section 151 officer) with each of the Cabinet Members and their directorate leadership teams.

31.7 The budget itself has also been subjected to all-councillor scrutiny, firstly through briefing sessions, led by Executive Directors, then formally through the People and Health, and the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committees which were held in January 2026. These budget proposals have therefore been developed by the Council's officer group, led by the Executive Directors, and with significant input from members, and co-ordination by the finance team. In order to gain further assurance about the affordability of the Council's strategy and plans, each Executive Director is taking personal responsibility for their budget through a formal sign-off process which will also form part of their performance assessment during the year.

Control mechanisms required

- 26.9 Despite the steps taken to gain assurance and the processes, controls and monitoring that the Council has in place, the challenge and complexity of managing activity and associated expenditure within these estimates should not be underestimated.
- 26.10 The 2026/27 budget is reliant on a scale of savings and transformation which the Council has not previously been required to achieve and therefore a scale not previously required to be delivered. Continued, close monitoring – as referenced in our processes, above - will be required during the year and prompt action will be needed if performance and forecasts vary materially from budget.
- 26.11 As a result the spend control measures put in place during 2025/26 in regard to approval of expenditure and recruitment will remain in place during 2026/27 until such a time as there is delivery of the required savings to warrant relaxing these controls.

Impact of settlement

- 26.12 The Government has set out multi-year settlements allow us to be more certain over funding arrangements beyond the first year of our MTFP. This provides more certainty over the challenges to be faced and has put increased pressure on service redesign and transformation being the route to financial sustainability if Dorset is to avoid service cuts. In anticipation of a challenging multi-year settlement following the review the Council has an earmarked reserve. This can be drawn upon to meet an overspend in 2026/27 and so provides further reassurance of the robustness of the Council's overall financial standing.
- 26.13 Taking all these factors into consideration, I consider that:
- 1) the estimates prepared in line with the strategy explained in this report to be robust, including the existence of a contingency budget.
 - 2) the levels of reserves, as set out earlier in this report, to be adequate for the risks that the Council is currently able to anticipate, with a specific reserve earmarked to support the impact of the settlement.
 - 3) Deferring of the end date of the Regulations around the DSG overspend is helpful in providing this assurance for 2026/27 but the longer-term risk remains.
- 26.14 It must be noted that this statement is drafted on the presumption that Government will find a solution towards dealing with (and accounting for) the accumulated Dedicated Schools Grant deficit prior to the end of 2027/28, when the current statutory override is due to end. That is a considerable financial risk, and if a resolution to this is not forthcoming (in the financial year 2026/27) then the financial viability of the Council would need to be reconsidered.

27 Summary and conclusions

- 27.1 The financial climate remains extremely challenging. Progress in many key areas of transformation and service improvement will be crucial, a multi-year settlement provides a fresh opportunity for local government to invest effectively in future service strategy and ensure financial sustainability.
- 27.2 There are clearly still challenges ahead meaning the Council started planning for 2026/27 early to develop and implement robust plans to fit within our assumed budget envelope and to keep all members well informed around budget development and strategy.
- 27.3 **[Draft until Cabinet]** Members of the two scrutiny committees have considered the information in the draft budget proposals as part of their scrutiny processes and their feedback and recommendations are set out in Appendix 6 for Cabinet's consideration.
- 27.4 Whilst I believe these budget estimates to be robust and that reserves are adequate, significant risk remains due to the generally fragile operating environment for local government finance.

Sean Cremer
Corporate Director – Finance and Commercial (Acting Section 151 Officer)

Appendix 1a – Budget summary

Original Budget 2026/27						
	Pay £'000	Non- Pay £'000	Fees & Charges £'000	Grants & Contrib'ns £'000	Reserve Movements £'000	Net Budget £'000
People Services - Adults	36,821	259,282	(91,008)	(13,210)	(261)	191,624
Service user related	124	235,303	(80,212)	(5,059)	0	150,156
Adult Care Ops	22,923	1,179	(1,517)	(106)	0	22,479
Commissioning and Improvement	4,360	14,177	(5,219)	(5,291)	(261)	7,767
Directorate Wide	1,099	1,072	(89)	(45)	0	2,037
Housing and Community Safety	8,315	7,551	(3,972)	(2,708)	0	9,185
Corporate Development	46,903	66,772	(12,471)	(51,938)	(3,951)	45,315
Finance & Commercial	13,836	58,398	(8,053)	(51,605)	(643)	11,933
Workforce & People	3,968	274	(2,067)	0	(417)	1,759
ICT Operations	5,474	5,314	(1,439)	0	(85)	9,264
Directors Office	(659)	19	0	0	0	(640)
Strategy, Performance and Sustainability	12,582	2,493	(776)	(333)	(705)	13,260
Customer Hub	2,087	0	0	0	0	2,087
Business Support	3,110	0	0	0	0	3,110
Chief Executive Office	1,106	211	(84)	0	0	1,233
Transformation, Customer & Cultural Services	5,401	64	(53)	0	(2,101)	3,310
Place	60,826	115,358	(65,223)	(5,248)	(292)	105,421
Highways, Engineering and Transportation	17,358	63,381	(25,224)	(4,728)	(691)	50,096
Waste Reduction and Greenspace	25,963	32,940	(18,636)	(236)	(138)	39,894
Economic Development	1,847	2,896	(3,720)	0	694	1,717
Leisure, Arts & Culture	1,910	3,494	(2,006)	0	8	3,407
Directors Office	(316)	127	(16)	0	0	(206)
Assets and Property	3,247	11,593	(8,181)	0	54	6,713
Planning	10,817	927	(7,441)	(284)	(218)	3,802
People - Children	51,295	63,978	(8,269)	(11,880)	0	95,124
Quality and Assurance	4,732	112	(670)	(19)	0	4,154
Care & Protection	20,824	47,934	(1,159)	(4,976)	0	62,622
Commissioning & Partnerships	5,773	3,921	(2,922)	(270)	0	6,502
Education & Learning	16,461	3,768	(2,543)	(1,741)	0	15,945
Director's	3,506	8,244	(976)	(4,874)	0	5,900
B2SA	3,208	8,307	(842)	0	0	10,674
Team	3,208	66	(279)	0	0	2,994
Childrens	0	5,167	(563)	0	0	4,604
Adults	0	3,075	0	0	0	3,075
Legal & Democratic	7,271	3,437	(1,612)	0	0	9,096

Original Budget 2026/27

	Pay £'000	Non- Pay £'000	Fees & Charges £'000	Grants & Contrib'ns £'000	Reserve Movements £'000	Net Budget £'000
Assurance	1,252	623	(16)	0	0	1,859
Democratic & Elections Services	1,073	2,248	(50)	0	0	3,271
Land Charges	489	1	(807)	0	0	(318)
Legal Services	3,437	149	(187)	0	0	3,399
Archives	1,021	417	(552)	0	0	885
Public Health & Protection	9,253	15,328	(4,702)	(15,567)	0	4,312
Community and Public Prevention	5,883	2,387	(3,958)	0	0	4,312
Public Health	3,370	12,940	(744)	(15,567)	0	0
Central Finance	11,092	17,309	(4,107)	(19,252)	16,001	21,042
General funding	9,385	0	(47)	(19,153)	774	(9,041)
Capital financing	0	16,463	(4,060)	0	6,673	19,076
Contingency	0	0	0	0	8,554	8,554
Precepts	0	846	0	(100)	0	746
Retirement Costs	1,707	0	0	0	0	1,707
Total Non Schools Budget	226,670	549,772	(188,235)	(117,096)	11,497	482,609
Schools Budget	0	387,230	0	(387,230)	0	0
Budget Requirement	226,670	937,002	(188,235)	(504,326)	11,497	482,609

Funding						
Council Tax						(362,840)
Business Rates						(58,926)
Revenue Support Grant						(60,843)
Total Funding						(482,609)

Appendix 1b - Cost type analysis – budget 2026/27

Cost Type	Original Budget 2026/2027 £'000
Internal Charges (Expenditure)	11,615
Authority (Democratic) Costs	2,058
Pay Related Costs	226,670
Premises Related Costs	23,926
Transport Related Costs	38,279
Supplies and Services	530,262
Transfer Payments	132,484
Levies & Precepts	846
Third Party (Contracted Out) Payments	196,525
Net Schools Budget	1,007
Contingency and Movement in Reserves	16,493
Gross Expenditure	1,180,166

Government Grants (Specific)	(504,326)
Income, Fees & Charges	(193,231)
Gross Income	(697,557)

Budget Requirement	482,609
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Council Tax	(362,840)
Business Rates	(58,926)
Revenue Support Grant	(60,843)
Total Funding	(482,609)

Appendix 1c - Dorset Council restated starting budget summary

	Adjusted base budget 25/26	Movement between Directorates (e.g OFC)	Movement between Directorates of Fairer Funding	Restated base budget 25/26
People - Children's	£83,522,396	(£3,336,939)	£9,764,363	£89,949,820
Birth 2 Settled Adulthood	£9,220,600	(£212,700)	£0	£9,007,900
People - Adults & Housing	£166,466,437	(£1,655,705)	£14,471,603	£179,282,335
Public Health & Prevention	£3,999,028	£0	£0	£3,999,028
Place	£108,778,721	(£2,775,248)	£0	£106,003,473
Corporate Development	£50,404,198	£5,965,272	£0	£56,369,470
Service Budgets	£422,391,380	(£2,015,321)	£24,235,966	£444,612,025
Central Budgets	(£5,239,075)	£2,015,321	£22,304,356	£19,080,602
Total Budget	£417,152,305	(£0)	£46,540,322	£463,692,627

As part of setting the 2026/27 budget there have been two major realignment of service budgets shown in the table above.

The first is the movement of budget between directorate headings for service restructures. For example the OFC changes shown see a number of service areas centralised under Corporate Development. The movement of can be seen in the above table.

The second movement is the realignment of grant funding as a result of changes to the way funding is distributed as a result of the Fair Funding Review 2.0 Consultation. The provisional LGFS for 2026/27 sees a number of previously separately identifiable grants consolidated. As a result this see the amount of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) increase from £1.8m in 2025/26 to £60.8m 2026/27 with the majority of the increase coming from consolidating these grant streams not NEW funding. This realignment of budgets is cost neutral to services in terms of available resources but does have the effect of increasing the net budget shown for the affected Directorates. As a result of the changes to Government funding historical comparison of budgets risks being inaccurate.

Appendix 1d - Adults and Housing – summary of movements - pressures and savings

Adults and Housing

Baseline changes		Description
Pay inflation	£1,203,713	Council wide: Forecast impact of 26/27 Pay award
General Inflation	£5,762,201	Council wide: Impact of inflation
Fees and Charges income	(£3,622,692)	Council wide: Impact of the uplift in fees and charges
Gas and Electricity costs	£2,792	Council wide: Impact of forecast changes to utility costs
Cost of increments	£460,000	Council wide: Impact of staffing increments
Grants centralised in Fairer Funding model	£14,471,603	
Pension - employer's contribution adjustment	(£877,790)	The preliminary results of the actuarial valuation has provided some updated contribution rates from 2026/27. This adjustment reflects the reduced primary pension contribution transferring from the directorates back to Central to fund the secondary rate pension contribution.
Our Future Council year 1 workforce changes	(£1,655,705)	This reflects the transfer of employees from directorates to Corporate Services to work in the new Customer Hub, Business Support Hub and Transformation Management Office. Total budget transfer reflects £2.63m savings realised through Our Future Council year 1.
Pressures		
Care Package Growth	£11,405,000	Growth ask to support 4415 people with packages of care at an average cost of £887.11 per week. Care packages include care home placements, home care support, supported living, extra care, and direct payments.
Safeguarding resource	£140,000	Growth request for additional resources to meet increasing demand.
Mental Capacity Act resource	£250,000	Growth request for additional resources to meet increasing demand.
Prevention Contract	£444,000	Proposed reduction in the Prevention contract for 2025/26 was funded as a one-off and scheduled for review in 2026/27. It was determined that reducing the contract would increase costs in other areas of the Directorate, outweighing the intended saving.
Non-achieved Adult Social Care pay saving	£950,000	Prior-year pay savings that have not been permanently offset. Adult Social Care resource is considered critical to maintain service delivery.
Housing resource	£214,000	Growth request for additional funding to support critical unfunded posts within the Housing Directorate.

Redistribution of Public Health Grant funding	£284,233	The Public Health grant must be used for areas within its conditions. Following a review, Community Safety was identified as a statutory service that does not align with these conditions. As a result, funding has been withdrawn, and the grant will instead support other compliant areas within the Council.
Savings		
Transport Offer	(£200,000)	We are reviewing the provision of transport for carers and next of kin who live further away from the care home placement offered to their relative. This work will help us to use our fleet more efficiently and it also links to our future model for day opportunities and supports our ambition to achieve Age-Friendly status, ensuring families remain connected and individuals maintain strong social links.
Working Age Accelerator	(£750,000)	We are undertaking a review of the working age offer to ensure provision is focussed on individual strengths and desired outcomes. The approach promotes independence and choice by considering the least restrictive options, making better use of technology, and supporting positive risk-taking where appropriate.
Future Care Programme	(£2,900,000)	System wide end to end transformation programme with the aim of supporting more people to avoid a hospital stay, or to return home more quickly and to live more independently following a hospital stay
Provision of careline subscriptions	(£200,000)	The Council is reviewing its current offer for Careline subscriptions to ensure it remains affordable, sustainable, and aligned with residents' needs. This review will consider service accessibility, pricing structure, and options for future delivery models to maintain quality and support independence for individuals who rely on Careline services.
Self Funder Offer	(£75,000)	Local authorities are increasingly focused on ensuring fair and sustainable cost recovery for individuals who fund their own care. This includes recovering appropriate charges for services provided to self-funders and managing transitions when individuals' personal resources are depleted and they become eligible for local authority support. The aim is to maintain equity, financial sustainability, and compliance with statutory guidance, while supporting people to access care without disruption.
Vacancy factor increase to 3%	(£599,000)	Vacancy factor increase across Directorate.

**Adults and Housing current base budget
for 2026/27**

£191,173,791

Appendix 1e - Children's Services – summary of movements – pressures and savings

Baseline changes		Description
Pay inflation	£1,660,426	Council wide: Forecast impact of 26/27 Pay award
General inflation	£900,472	Council wide: Impact of inflation
Fees and Charges income	(£181,099)	Council wide: Impact of the uplift in fees and charges
Gas and Electricity costs	£17,928	Council wide: Impact of forecast changes to utility costs
Grants centralised in Fairer Funding model	£9,764,363	
Cost of increments	£610,000	Council wide: Impact of staffing increments
Pension - employer's contribution adjustment	(£1,247,985)	The preliminary results of the actuarial valuation has provided some updated contribution rates from 2026/27. This adjustment reflects the reduced primary pension contribution transferring from the directorates back to Central to fund the secondary rate pension contribution.
Our Future Council year 1 workforce changes	(£3,549,639)	This reflects the transfer of employees from directorates to Corporate Services to work in the new Customer Hub, Business Support Hub and Transformation Management Office. Total budget transfer reflects £2.63m savings realised through Our Future Council year 1.
Pressures		
High Needs Block Recharges	£200,000	The High Needs Block is money used to support children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities who require help beyond what schools normally provide. In previous years, some costs have been recharged to the High Needs Block. We are no longer able to do this because the circumstances of those children have changed eg they are older or at different schools, and therefore no longer meet the criteria to recharge.
Increase growth of children in care	£5,070,000	We have been working with an external partner that has predicted an increase in the numbers and costs of children coming into care.
Increased funding to provide additional support for children with special educational needs and disabilities that is not covered by the High Needs Block above	£500,000	There is an increase in the numbers of children and young people who need support and the cost of that support is also increasing so we have to increase our budget accordingly.
Increased funding for residential Children's homes that are run by Dorset Council	£445,740	We are opening an additional children's home so the additional cost is for its operation.
Budget movement from Children's to B2SA	£212,700	The movement of pay and partner contributions from Children's to B2SA, ensuring contributions and expenditure is reflected in the appropriate service.
Fostering: Increased fees, allowances and expected growth	£1,300,000	It is better for our children and better for Dorset Council to use our own foster carers wherever possible rather than those provided by agencies. This includes an inflationary increase for the money we pay to our foster carers and enables us to remain competitive against agency fees. We also plan to increase the number of in-house foster carers.

Additional Kinship Service Social Workers	£183,000	We would like more children to stay with extended family if they are unable to be with their birth parents. We need to increase the support to kinship carers and enable more assessments to take place.
Youth Fund	£100,000	We are committed to making Dorset the best place to be a child and this money provides a base budget of £200k to support activities for young people.
Services to reduce the risk of children coming into care	£300,000	This funding helps children who need extra support to stay safe and healthy. The council can provide services or financial help to families when it's essential for a child's welfare. This might include practical assistance, temporary accommodation, or essential items.
Non-achieved transformational saving	£1,622,000	The initial savings target for digital savings was ambitious and has partly been achieved over the past 4 years. Our future ambitions for digital solutions in Children's services are now included within our whole council transformation programme, including Our Future Council.
Savings		
Various initiatives to reduce the spend on Children in Care, primarily to reduce the number of Children in Care	(£4,200,000)	We are working with our external partner on our transformation programme to manage Children in Care need and reduce the overall costs. We are focused on ensuring children are in the right homes for them.
More places in children's homes run by Dorset Council	(£557,585)	By opening a new children's home, which Dorset Council will run, we will spend less with external providers
Additional income from other councils	(£100,000)	Income that we get from helping other local authorities to set up their programmes of improvement.
Savings made because of a new way of working	(£500,000)	A change to our locality model to both improve outcomes for children, young people and families and create efficiencies.
Introduce AI to support Special Educational Need (SEN) processes	(£300,000)	The use of AI will help us to improve the quality and timeliness of EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan) application process which means we do not need to employ additional workers.
Reduction in costs under section 17	(£200,000)	Section 17 funding helps children who need extra support to stay safe and healthy but we do not need to spend as much this year as previous years.
Overall budget reduction	(£164,000)	There are some non-statutory budget areas which we no longer need to include in our budget.
Additional income	(£162,500)	From partner organisations to meet national legislation and the needs of children
Outdoor Education	(£122,000)	Continue to adapt the Outdoor Education Service so that the income it generates pays for its running costs.
Children's current base budget for 2026/27	£95,124,217	

Appendix 1f - Birth to Settled Adulthood – summary of movements – pressures and savings

Baseline changes		Description
Pay inflation	£86,570	Council wide: Forecast impact of 26/27 Pay award
General Inflation	£155,516	Council wide: Impact of inflation
Fees and Charges income	£0	Council wide: Impact of the uplift in fees and charges
Gas and Electricity costs	£0	Council wide: Impact of forecast changes to utility costs
Cost of increments	£0	Council wide: Impact of staffing increments
Pressures		
Non-achieved savings target	£1,000,000	Savings targets were originally set for the Birth to Settled Adulthood programme early in its development. As the programme has matured, it has become clear that these savings are not achievable due to rising demand and the complexity of needs being supported.
Increased need	£700,000	Over the past year, demand for services has increased significantly, which has resulted in a higher growth requirement within the 2026/27 budget.
Budget movement from Children's to B2SA	(£212,700)	The movement of pay and partner contributions from Children's to B2SA, ensuring contributions and expenditure is reflected in the appropriate service.
Additional partner contributions	(£187,500)	Reflecting the additional partner contributions expected towards support packages, reflecting the changes in need the service is experiencing.
Savings		
Open internal short breaks provision	(£88,750)	Internally operated short breaks home scheduled for opening in the year. Funding has already been secured. Estimated November opening. (Will save money and will be a good news story for an area of deprivation (Portland) when it opens)

B2SA current base budget for 2026/27	£10,673,736
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Appendix 1g - Place – summary of movements – pressures and savings

Baseline changes		Description
Pay inflation	£1,927,992	Council wide: Forecast impact of 26/27 Pay award
General inflation	£1,808,072	Council wide: Impact of inflation
Fees and Charges income	(£2,538,552)	Impact of council-wide uplift in fees and charges
Gas and Electricity costs	£232,890	Council wide: Impact of forecast changes to utility costs
Cost of increments	£700,000	Council wide: Impact of staffing increments
Pension - employer's contribution adjustment	(£1,423,391)	The preliminary results of the actuarial valuation has provided some updated contribution rates from 2026/27. This adjustment reflects the reduced primary pension contribution transferring from the directorates back to Central to fund the secondary rate pension contribution.
Increased vacancy factor	(£741,000)	Vacancy factor increase to 3%
Our Future Council year 1 workforce changes	(£2,775,248)	This reflects the transfer of employees from directorates to Corporate Services to work in the new Customer Hub, Business Support Hub and Transformation Management Office. Total budget transfer reflects £2.63m savings realised through Our Future Council year 1.
Pressures		
Dorset Travel growth	£700,000	Estimate for costs of SEND in 2026/27 over and above the inflationary uplift (price increases and increased volumes)
Waste cost volatility	£615,700	Estimate for waste disposal based on latest known price information for recycle, glass etc, tonnages, and inflation correction.
Weymouth 2040	£450,000	Budget required to deliver regeneration, clean energy and economic growth priorities and to attract inward investment
Removal of DFE funding for Joint Use leisure centres	£189,312	Withdrawal of central government funding.
Cost of dealing with POPS (persistent organic pollutants) waste at HRCs	£106,000	Costs passed on from contractor due to legislation.
Additional disposal costs due to expected green waste tonnages	£91,000	Additional disposal costs due to expected green waste tonnages
Somerley Cross Border Usage - costs from Hampshire Council	£60,000	Estimate based on increased costs seen in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Additional resource on transport analysis	£50,000	
Closed Landfill	£38,000	Estimate for increase in testing / inspection costs based on latest costs seen.
HRC Premises	£20,000	Estimate for increase in rents / rates etc based on latest costs seen.
Savings		
Deleting posts that have remained vacant	(£864,656)	Permanent posts removed March/April 2025.
Reviewing the detail of SEND transport provision such as route optimisation to make it more effective and efficient.	(£500,000)	Further reviews to find efficiencies in SEND transport arrangements
Deleting posts that continue to remain vacant in the financial year	(£450,000)	Further post removals to take place in 2026/27.
Reduce the total grant allocation for sports in the community and arts/culture from £575k to £500k (this does not affect our leisure centres).	(£75,000)	Reduce the total grant allocation for leisure and the arts from £575k to £500k.
Reduction in street lighting costs through procurement	(£412,488)	Estimate based on current expectations of energy prices.
New digital technology for planning enforcement services reducing the need for temporary staff.	(£240,000)	Remove cost of additional temporary staff.
Commercial waste income	(£175,000)	New digital self-serve system will save time and bring in more income.
Increase in garden waste customers is generating more income.	(£91,000)	Increase over and above the corporate uplift, to compensate for expected increase tonnages.
New Household Recycling Centre booking system will reduce cross border usage and save money.	(£60,000)	Reliant upon HRC booking system.

Place current base budget for 2026/27	£105,421,352
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Appendix 1h - Public Health and Protection – summary of movements – pressures and savings

Baseline changes		Description
Pay inflation	£183,098	Council wide: Forecast impact of 26/27 Pay award
General Inflation	£47,500	Council wide: Impact of inflation
Fees and Charges income	(£186,570)	Council wide: Impact of the uplift in fees and charges
Gas and Electricity costs	£4,937	Council wide: Impact of forecast changes to utility costs
Cost of increments	£50,684	Council wide: Impact of staffing increments
Pension - employer's contribution adjustment	(£135,898)	The preliminary results of the actuarial valuation has provided some updated contribution rates from 2026/27. This adjustment reflects the reduced primary pension contribution transferring from the directorates back to Central to fund the secondary rate pension contribution.
Pressures		
Bereavement Services maintenance cost increase	£22,000	The equipment at Weymouth Crematorium is aging, and as a result, maintenance costs have risen beyond what was planned in the budget.
Bereavement Services income lower than expected	£80,000	Bereavement Services earned less income than forecast, creating a shortfall against the budgeted target for covering operational costs.
Planned savings in Regulatory Services were not delivered	£70,000	The service was due to be restructured, but this was postponed to allow for its transition into the new Public Health & Prevention Directorate.
Market Cornhill reduced income from rentals	£60,000	The budget planned for a certain level of income from Cornhill market stall rentals. However, demand was lower than anticipated, so fewer stalls were rented, resulting in a shortfall in rental income.
Market legacy savings target unmet	£67,300	The income generated from the markets did not fully cover the costs of providing them, leaving some expenses unrecovered. However, it remains important to offer markets as they continue to play an important role for local communities.
Anticipated savings target was not delivered for 2025/26	£50,000	Savings were expected to come from extra income, helping to reduce costs. However, with fewer customers than expected, the income target could not be met, leaving some savings unachieved.

Public Health and Protection current base budget for 2026/27	£4,312,079
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Appendix 1i - Corporate Development and Legal & Democratic Services – summary of movements - pressures and savings

Baseline changes		Description
Pay inflation	£1,568,005	Council wide: Forecast impact of 26/27 Pay award
General inflation	£140,423	Council wide: Impact of inflation
Fees and Charges income	(£319,801)	Impact of council-wide uplift in fees and charges
Cost of increments	£477,019	Council wide: Impact of forecast changes to utility costs
Pension - employer's contribution adjustment	(£1,070,118)	Council wide: Impact of staffing increments
Increased vacancy factor	(£500,000)	Vacancy factor increase to 3%
Our Future Council year 1 workforce changes	£5,965,272	This reflects the transfer of employees from directorates to Corporate Services to work in the new Customer Hub, Business Support Hub and Transformation Management Office. Total budget transfer reflects £2.63m savings realised through Our Future Council year 1.
Pressures		
Increase in running costs for Customer Services out of hours service	£141,068	Due to changes to employment terms and conditions to our standby, overtime, and call-out rates for staff in the out of hours service.
Additional legal resource for adult court of protection cases	£100,612	Provide additional legal capacity to manage sustained high volume of adult court of protection cases.
Non-achieved procurement income and saving	£100,000	Projected income from commercial and sponsorship opportunities were found to be not feasible and a Supplier Incentive Scheme will be revisited in the future.
Communications restructure and investing in supporting the Armed Forces Covenant	£114,234	Addressing gaps in the council's communications and marketing function so it is ready and able to meet future organisational demand. Investing in resources as part of our ongoing commitment to support the Armed Forces Covenant as well as accommodate upcoming legislative changes that will devolve additional responsibilities to support the Armed Forces family to local government
End of contractual rebate income from schools	£73,800	Previously, income was received as part of contractual arrangements with maintained schools. These arrangements no longer exist largely due to academisation, and as a result, this income stream has ceased.
Non-achieved restructure saving across cultural services	£50,000	A proposed redesign of cultural services had been considered; however, after further analysis, the proposals were not feasible for 2025/26, and the reorganisation did not proceed at this time.
Additional cost to cover statutory purchasing templates	£12,000	The Procurement Act 2023 introduced new statutory requirements for public sector purchasing. To comply with these obligations, specific templates are now mandatory.

Savings		
Collection of income made more efficient through advanced technology	(£481,500)	Using more digital tools to improve the recovery of debt.
Automation of financial assessments	(£50,000)	The introduction of Open Banking is expected to improve efficiency within the Financial Assessments Team.
Software to automate council tax within back office systems	(£211,000)	We will implement software to automate council tax transactions. Current processing is largely manual.
Planned changes with elements of the people and workforce function	(£100,000)	Redesign of services to ensure efficient, future proof and sustainable delivery
Review and rationalisation of digital systems across the organisation	(£85,000)	Ensure that the digital applications used within the authority meet organisational wide needs and are sustainable.
Planned changes within elements of the finance team	(£35,000)	Service redesign across specific elements of the finance team delivered through a review of chargeable services for non-general fund work.
Corporate current base budget for 2026/27	£56,294,211	

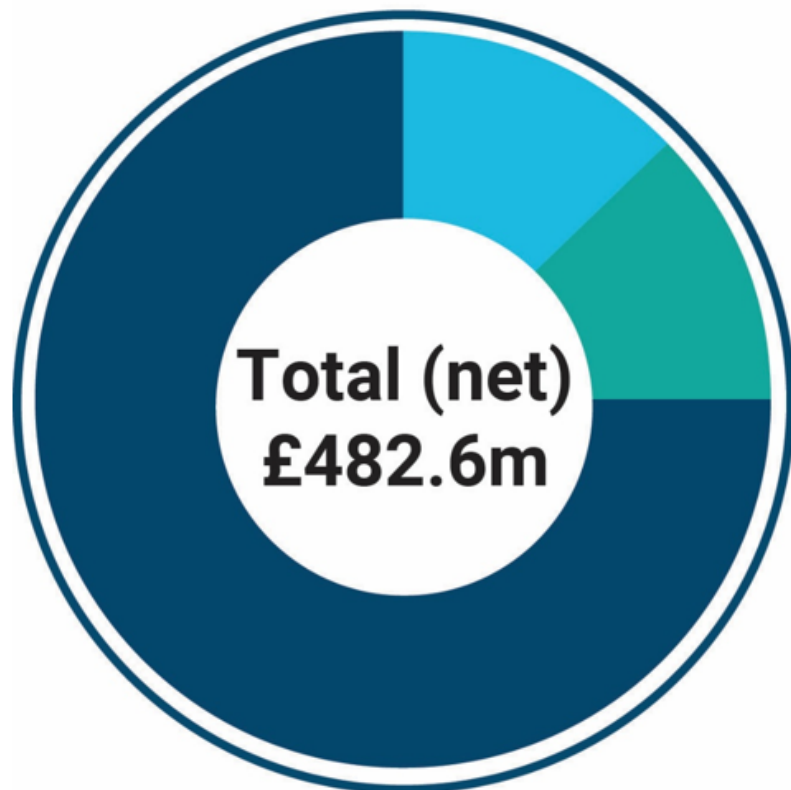
Appendix 1j - Central budgets – summary of movements

Baseline changes		Description
Pension - employer's contribution adjustment	£4,047,000	This is a budget movement as a result of early results of the pension review that show new contribution rates starting in 2026/27. This change means some pension costs will move from individual directorates back to Central to cover the secondary contribution rate.
Internal Our Future Council (OFC) transformation programme reduction in savings target	£3,600,000	The savings target for the OFC programme has reduced from £10m in 2025/26 to £6.4m in 2026/27.
Interest the council pays for capital programme borrowing	£2,500,000	This reflects the expected increase in borrowing costs for our capital programme.
Grants centralised in Fairer Funding model	£22,304,356	Grants previously shown net within service budgets are now shown centrally due to changes in how the Government provide funding to Councils as these service grants have now been consolidated into fewer grants.
Contingency adjustment - Higher than budgeted 2025/26 pay award increase (set nationally)	£2,500,000	The £2.5m for the additional pay award has been added back to the contingency. Inflation of the contingency budget.
Our Future Council (OFC) adjustment - Full year effect of the first phase OFC restructure	£2,015,321	This is a budget movement to reflect the overall budget saving achieved from the phase 1 restructure that forms part of the OFC programme.
Reduction in homelessness and temporary accommodation benefit subsidy	£1,337,530	This reflects a reduction in the recharge to Housing for non-recoverable homelessness expenditure. Reduction in benefit subsidy.
Discretionary council tax reliefs	£172,473	The discretionary reliefs relating to council tax weren't included in the 25/26 base budget.
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) adjustment	(£6,620,000)	A change to how the council calculates its annual charge to repay historic capital borrowing, affecting the timing and level of revenue costs.
Contingency adjustment - Reduction in contingency for inflation	(£1,508,299)	The amount held in the Contingency budget to fund inflationary costs has been reduced as it is anticipated that savings will be achieved through improvements in how we buy services.
Contingency adjustment - Reducing contingency Extended Producer Responsibility Funding	(£2,000,000)	This adjustment reflects the assumption that the EPR funding will continue, but will support the overall budget rather than being allocated to contingency.
Our Future Council - Commissioning & Procurement third party spend.	(£2,000,000)	This is the anticipated savings that will be achieved through reductions in third party spend during 2026/27.
Our Future Council - Future Design including Customer, Business Support, Strategic and Enabling	(£1,000,000)	This reflects the savings that will be achieved through delivering and enabling digital transformation through our contact centre and redesigning ways of working within our customer and strategic/enabling functions

Public Health funding for Voluntary and Community prevention related projects	(£500,000)	Funding from Public Health to support prevention and VCSE contributions.
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Central Finance current base budget for 2026/27	£19,609,306
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2026/2027 - Dorset Council sources of funding



Council Tax £362.8m (75.2%)

The money we receive from our residents to pay for the services we provide



Retained Business Rates £58.9m (12.2%)

The money we receive from businesses such as shops, offices, hotels and factories



Revenue Support Grant and Fair Funding Assessment £60.8m (12.6%)

The funding we receive from central government in the form of revenue support grant

Appendix 2

Council tax resolution

(This item requires all preceptors to have set their budgets. Due to the date of the preceptors meetings taking place up until 10 February 2026, this information will be published on the day of the meeting)

Appendix 3

Capital Programme

Project Name						Total Project Budget (Up to 29/30)
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	
DFT Highways Allocation	26,997	28,005	33,190	36,856	42,700	167,748
Property Improvements Programme (R&M)	7,184	0	0	0	0	7,184
Lyme Regis Environmental Plan phase 4	209	0	0	0	0	209
Portland Underhil to Wyke Regis FCERM Strategy	99	0	0	0	0	99
PHNWS Cliff Monitoring Scheme	74	0	0	0	0	74
Chesil Sea Wall Study	11	0	0	0	0	11
West Bay Sediment Tracer Study	6	0	0	0	0	6
Weymouth Harbour & Esplanade FCRM Scheme	0	485	0	0	0	485
Wimborne Market	123	0	0	0	0	123
Swanage Beach Renourishment Scheme (OBC)	69	0	0	0	0	69
Weymouth FCRM OBC	824	0	0	0	0	824
ITS (Traffic Signals) Asset Replacement	295	251	0	0	0	546
Dorset Waste Infrastructure - Blandford site	8,140	8,057	0	0	0	16,197
Weymouth Quay Regeneration Project WPBC	71	0	0	0	0	71
EDDC Sewage Treatment Works Infrastructure Renewal	80	387	0	0	0	467
A354 Corridor Transport Improvements	0	100	100	772	0	972
B3078 Julian's Bridge, Wimborne – pedestrian and cycle link	26	500	1,769	0	0	2,295
Electric Vehicle charging Infrastructure - on DC Property	200	310	0	0	0	510
Weymouth Swannery Bridge Pedestrian/Cycle Link	90	1,000	1,000	688	0	2,778
Electric Vehicle Charging Points - on public property	373	345	250	0	0	968
Gore Clump Safety Scheme	371	0	0	0	0	371
A351 Wareham Access Improvement	526	850	0	0	0	1,376

Project Name						Total Project Budget (Up to 29/30)
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	
Upton Safety Scheme	385	237	0	0	0	622
Maumbury Cross Junction Improvement	1,195	0	0	0	0	1,195
Schools Access Initiatives	317	251	0	0	0	568
Dorset Council Fleet Replacement Programme	6,485	2,900	0	0	0	9,385
Waste Containers & Infrastructure	600	650	631	204	0	2,085
Weymouth Harbour Walls (W&PBC)	916	0	0	0	0	916
Acquisition of temporary accommodation (Now Hardy House)	1,230	0	0	0	0	1,230
Aster Hostels	0	14	0	0	0	14
Dinahs Hollow	1,761	5,708	0	0	0	7,469
Crematorium Improvements - Overflow Provision	26	0	0	0	0	26
ICT Minor Capital Works & Projects	1,993	0	0	0	1,536	3,529
Capital Leverage Fund	287	0	0	0	0	287
Investing in cycleways	0	360	360	360	0	1,080
Sewerage Treatment Services Improvement works A	130	20	0	0	0	150
Sea defence works at Sandsfoot Castle, Weymouth	71	0	0	0	0	71
Maintenance of Traffic Control Equipment	423	250	250	320	0	1,243
Streetlighting schemes	731	575	0	0	0	1,306
Former District Council Assets	95	500	0	0	0	595
West Bay Harbour Wall Emergency Works	966	0	0	0	0	966
Sewerage Treatment Services Improvement Works B	35	700	700	700	700	2,835
Dorset Centre of Excellence - Property Improvement Programme (Strategic)	183	0	0	0	0	183
Public Toilets - Footfall Counters	66	0	0	0	0	66
Brackenbury Nursery (Portland)	674	0	0	0	0	674

Project Name	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total Project Budget (Up to 29/30)
Dorset Centre of Excellence - Phase 2	750	2,289	0	0	0	3,039
Shared Prosperity Fund Capital	268	0	0	0	0	268
Bridport Reablement Centre	1,730	7,720	16,970	1,200	0	27,620
School Streets	37	0	0	0	0	37
Swanage & Durlston Bay Cliff Management	60	54	0	0	0	114
Rural Prosperity Fund	620	0	0	0	0	620
Abbotsbury Road and B3154 Chickerell Road Junction Improvement	8	250	0	0	0	258
Tilly Whim	0	142	142	0	0	284
LUF Weymouth Peninsula	10,871	0	0	0	0	10,871
LUF Weymouth North Quay	807	0	0	0	0	807
LUF Weymouth West Harbour Sites	1,035	0	0	0	0	1,035
Bridport Connect - Demolition	166	0	0	0	0	166
Highways Capital Maintenance Corporate Funding	10,039	3,970	7,100	0	0	21,109
High Angle Battery	8	0	0	0	0	8
Childcare Expansion Capital	459	0	0	0	0	459
Access for All	3	0	0	0	0	3
WADT Melcombe House	542	0	0	0	0	542
Foster Carers Adaptations	417	250	250	0	0	917
Brit Catchment NFM Project	85	65	0	0	0	150
Fairfield Rd, Dorch, Phase 2	49	0	0	0	0	49
SHAP Women's Units 4 Verne Road	11	0	0	0	0	11
SHAP 18-25 Accommodation	476	0	0	0	0	476
Swimming Pool Capital Support	100	0	0	0	0	100
Replacement Parking Attendant Body Cameras	15	0	0	0	0	15

Project Name						Total Project Budget (Up to 29/30)
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	
Dorset Travel Software Procurement	8	0	0	0	0	8
Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund	3,627	0	0	0	0	3,627
Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme Phase 2	118	0	0	0	0	118
SHAP Park & Ride Modular Units	19	0	0	0	0	19
Milborne St Andrew Traffic Management	15	0	0	0	0	15
REFCUS S106/CIL	277	0	0	0	0	277
The Cobb - Emergency Repairs	350	0	0	0	0	350
LAHF 3 (REFCUS)	1,774	0	0	0	0	1,774
Verwood Hub Refurb	94	0	0	0	0	94
Redlands 3G Project-BUILD-NEW	667	0	0	0	0	667
Fairfield Car Park Lighting	50	0	0	0	0	50
23 Penrose Road Refurbishment	175	175	0	0	0	350
Cologne Rd Bovington	200	0	0	0	0	200
Total	100,267	67,370	62,712	41,100	44,936	316,385

Appendix 4

Capital Programme Pipeline

Project Name						Total Project Budget (Up to 29/30)
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	
Decarbonisation Main Fund	341	0	0	0	0	341
Access improv. Purbeck (Heathland Infra)	45	0	0	0	0	45
Wards Drove / ND Trailway	106	0	0	0	0	106
EDDC Wimborne Riverside LAP	15	0	0	0	0	15
Parley Cross	0	0	354	2,599	0	2,953
Modernising Schools Programme	3,500	4,733	4,700	4,337	0	17,270
Broadband Schemes	437	315	500	500	500	2,252
High Street Fortuneswell	190	0	0	0	0	190
Lyme Regis Environmental Plan phase 5	2,350	89	0	0	0	2,439
North Quay redevelopment	1,332	0	0	0	0	1,332
Building retrofit programme - Energy Efficiency measures	708	400	167	0	0	1,275
Piddlehinton G&T site pitches	308	650	0	0	0	958
Bridport Gateway Pavement Improvements	-10	0	0	0	0	-10
006738 - Dorset Innovation Park, Quadrant 2 - Light Industrial Units	95	0	0	0	0	95
Weymouth Relief Road	1,120	1,120	0	0	0	2,240
North Dorset Business Park	67	0	0	0	0	67
ICT Housing Software	136	0	0	0	0	136
Minor capital works (Property Improvements)	350	600	800	538	0	2,288
SEND capital strategy	3,000	12,214	7,298	7,000	7,000	36,512
Capital Contingency	2,165	2,000	2,000	2,000	934	9,099

Project Name						Total Project Budget (Up to 29/30)
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	
Car Parking Ticket Machines	150	138	150	150	0	588
Improvements to Carey Outdoor Education Centre	222	0	0	0	0	222
Improvements to Leeson House	203	0	0	0	0	203
Minor Capital Works Coast Protection	1,184	0	0	0	0	1,184
Children's Residential Sufficiency Programme	155	0	0	0	0	155
Weymouth Bowl Acquisition (2021/22 bid)	195	0	0	0	0	195
Climate Schemes	664	500	306	591	0	2,061
Replacement - Upgrading of Sign Shop Equipment	60	0	0	0	0	60
Compliance with EPC Legislation	0	450	0	0	0	450
Greenhill Chalets	300	100	243	0	0	643
Westport House Refurbishment	50	958	0	0	0	1,008
FOH County Hall Capital Works	1,540	0	0	0	0	1,540
Wimborne Developments	500	3,000	2,000	0	0	5,500
Innovation Park Capital Programme	1,500	6,800	894	0	0	9,194
Housing Capital Project Fund	0	1,824	1,824	1,500	1,500	6,648
Capital Funding for Annual Developments (housing)	0	750	750	750	750	3,000
Acquisition of Long Term Empty Properties	400	600	600	600	600	2,800
LAHF - Ukraine & Afghan Refugee Housing	30	0	0	0	0	30
Family Hubs	750	1,263	800	0	0	2,813
Installation of new PV	498	214	0	0	0	712
Low Carbon Dorset	324	0	0	0	0	324
DCIA Wessex	409	0	0	0	0	409
Giddy Green Footpath	8	0	0	0	0	8

Project Name	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total Project Budget (Up to 29/30)
B2SA Specialist Housing Development Fund	0	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	4,000
Dorset History Centre	0	546	0	0	0	546
Purbeck Sports Centre Squash Court Conversion-Accrual	5	0	0	0	0	5
Milldown Nature Reserve	2	0	0	0	0	2
NEW Dorset Centre of Excellence - Coombe House School Phase 3 development	250	3,991	13,565	2,419	0	20,225
NEW Chesil Cove Slope Stabilisation Scheme	1,326	9,157	0	0	0	10,483
NEW Weymouth Harbour & Esplanade FCRM Scheme (Phase 1)	0	1,000	14,278	8,559	9,253	33,090
NEW Swanage Beach Coastal Protection Scheme	650	4,556	0	0	0	5,206
NEW Swanage Town Coastal Defence Project	800	3,575	750	0	0	5,125
NEW Dorset Centre of Excellence - Phase 5	0	7,751	5,452	0	0	13,203
NEW Creating a Community Museum for Weymouth	0	150	0	0	0	150
NEW Application Portfolio Management	0	500	500	500	0	1,500
NEW Essential ICT Infrastructure Maintenance	0	1,250	1,250	1,250	0	3,750
NEW Vehicle Replacement Funding (2025 to 2029)	0	4,658	1,097	2,520	1,687	9,962
NEW Replacement Refuse Collection Vehicle Funding (Five Years)	2,508	5,152	4,830	9,550	5,546	27,586
NEW Investing to Save in Highway Infrastructure Assets in 2028/29 and 2029/30	0	0	0	7,100	7,100	14,200
Flexible Use of Cap Receipts - ERP Replacement	1,600	6,500	3,208	0	0	11,308
NEW Climate Schemes	1,125	4,900	6,225	8,075	4,675	25,000
NEW Match Funding Weymouth Harbour Walls Remediation: Walls F and G urgent works	1,340	0	0	0	0	1,340
Total	35,003	93,404	75,541	61,538	40,545	306,031

Appendix 5

Delivery milestones for all directorate transformation projects over £0.5m

Initiative	25/26 Qtr. 4	26/27 Qtr. 1	26/27 Qtr. 2	26/27 Qtr. 3	26/27 Qtr. 4
Increased in-house residential capacity for children and young people	Capital works commissioned	- Capital works undertaken - Recruitment of staff - Ofsted application	- Induction, onboarding and training of staff - Children identified for home	- Ofsted registration complete - Home opens and children placed - Half year savings achieved	
Revised children's operating model based on national reforms	Consultation period ends 12 Jan.	- New structure goes live - Workforce reduction confirmed - Benefits confirmed	- Benefits released following completion of notice period - Recruitment commences for new operational roles	All operational roles appointed	
Initiatives to reduce the spend on Children in Care, primarily to reduce the number of Children in Care	- Progress cohort 1 - Assessments for cohort 2 - Recruitment of staff - Some benefits realised from cohort 1	- Identify cohort 3 - Induction and training of staff - Integration in Mosaic - Further benefits realised from cohort 1 and early benefits from cohort 2	- Pilot the approach on further cohorts and business as usual - Further benefits realised from cohort 1 & 2 and early benefits from cohort 3	- Further benefits realised from cohort 1, 2 and 3. - Identified benefits from business as usual V-Care approach.	
Adults working age accelerator	25/26 benefit release - Capacity review to ensure continuation into 26/27	Continued project tracking and governance.	Continued project tracking and governance.	Continued project tracking and governance.	Continued project tracking and governance.
Adults Future Care programme	Programme workstreams continue to deliver. Short, medium and longer term plans defined. Programme leadership across system continue to meet frequently.	External support from Newton scheduled to withdraw and system take on continued delivery of work.	Implement delivery plan to move to BAU. Benefits tracking. System visibility supports data and system insights.	Implement delivery plan to move to BAU. Benefits tracking. System visibility supports data and system insights.	- Implement delivery plan to move to BAU. - Benefits tracking. - System visibility supports data and system insights.

Commissioning & Procurement 3rd party spend	• Analysis of current spend and contract value Full roadmap produced of contracts to be rationalised	• Detailed plans produced Initiate contract changes with suppliers as identified and prioritised.	• Contract changes with suppliers as identified and prioritised. • Benefit release as identified by detailed plans.	• Contract changes with suppliers as identified and prioritised. • Benefit release as identified by detailed plans.	• Contract changes with suppliers as identified and prioritised. • Benefit release as identified by detailed plans.
Our Future Council design across Customer, Business Support, Strategic and Enabling Page 111	• Mapping of changes, preparation for consultation • Contact centre initial release of capability • Roadmap for ERP implementation and associated structural design • ERP build begins • Year 2 Customer Experience organisational design • Roadmap for further Customer and Business Support technology • New comms structure go live March 26 • ICT design work	• Year 2 Customer Experience design work • Strategic and Enabling/ERP • Consultation Launch - ICT restructure	• Potential wider consultation commences with the parts of the organisation impacted.	• New structure goes live and notice for those exiting issued	• Workforce benefit release
Review how SEND transport provision is provided.	• Recruit additional review officer resource • Develop detailed delivery plan • Begin to identify high-cost travel cases and commence reviews	• Implement delivery plan • Continue case by case reviews • Reconfigure transport accordingly • Track progress	• Continue to implement delivery plan • Continue case by case reviews • Reconfigure transport accordingly • Track progress	• Continue to implement delivery plan • Continue case by case reviews • Reconfigure transport accordingly • Track progress	

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People and Health Scrutiny Committee

21 January 2026

Corporate Complaints Team Annual Report 2024-25

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr R Hope, Customer, Culture and Community Engagement

Local Councillor(s):**Senior Leadership Team:**

J Mair, Director of Legal & Democratic

Report author and job title: Antony Bygrave – Complaints Manager

Email: antony.bygrave@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public

Executive summary

This annual report provides an update on the numbers, types and outcomes of complaints made against services at Dorset Council across the Directorate. There are also appendices that meets statutory reporting requirements of Children's and Adult's Services.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Committee scrutinises and notes the Annual Complaints Report for 2024/25.

2. Reason for the recommendation(s)

2.1 To have an awareness of the numbers and types of complaints and the organisational learning.

3. Key Messages for 2024/25

- 3.1 Dorset Council received 1919 Complaint Contacts. This is an 17% increase from the 1659 the previous year and the highest number of complaints in Dorset Council's 6 year history. However, we are still encouraged that the Complaints function is still easy to find, and people are feeling empowered to use the function. Complaints is a learning mechanism for Dorset Council as well as an early warning system. This report highlights the areas of possible concern as well as the valuable organisational learning.
- 3.2 Out of the 1919 contacts, 1117 of these were managed and responded to as formal complaints. The focus on early resolution continues to pay dividends for both council staff and those complaining but we need to ensure that we don't obstruct statutory processes due to the significantly increased demand. The Ombudsman's Handling Code gives clear guidance to what is and is not a complaint, and lays out the expectations for Local Authorities to follow.
- 3.3 Of the 1919 complaints received, 802 were considered as cases where resolution could be met without the undue process of the formal complaints route, or where other processes were more appropriate. Again the Ombudsman's Handling Code has limited informal resolution and we have experienced the rise in complaint volumes as predicted in last years report, as there is no 'Informal/Stage 0' option. We welcome the clarity and will still apply common sense, but through the complaints process.
- 3.4 The Ombudsman report that 85% of complaints they investigated were upheld. This is similar to other organisations, and does show a slight increase on the 79% upheld the previous year both locally and (again) as an average across comparable authorities. However, this only tells a small part of the story. The Complaints Team received and managed 1919 complaints in 2024-25 which is the highest number since Dorset Council was formed. Councillors and Members should be heartened that of these complaints only 151 (7%) reached the Ombudsman at all. This demonstrates that the majority of the time Dorset Council get it right first time, and have a positive culture around complaints, learnings and actions.
- 3.5 Of the 151 approaches only 39 were investigated and 33 of these upheld. The key observation from the Ombudsman's figures are that we are missing an opportunity to resolve upheld complaints in line with their financial remedies guidance. The Corporate Complaints Team provide remedies guidance to managers as part of the process, and the expectation is we recognise this if we are upholding complaints. Essentially Dorset Council want to do the Ombudsman's job for them in terms of upheld complaint investigations and as a Council we only achieving this on a small number of

cases. This is a point to improve on as an authority. Dorset Council met the recommendations in 100% of these cases.

Directorates	2024/25	2023/24
Childrens Services SEN	15	21
*Childrens SC	1	0
Adult SC	8	7
Adult non SC (Housing)	2	0
Place - Planning	2	3
Place SEN Transport	2	0
Place Highways	0	2
Place Env Health	1	0
Corp - Revs n Bens	2	0
TOTAL	33	33

- 3.6 Timescales are a possible concern to highlight as 18% complaint responses were recorded as overdue compared to 17% the previous year. Although the cases are being assigned promptly, this demonstrates that the increased volumes into the Complaints function, coupled with the conflicting priorities of service managers, is starting to have a more serious impact on our ability to meet the deadlines.
- 3.7 The complaints procedures operated by the Council vary in timescales for responses. The Whole Authority procedure is 20 working days, the Children's Services Social Care procedure is 10 working days, up to 20 by exception (with automatic escalation to an independent investigation if not met. This can be costly). The Adult Social Care procedure does not specify exact timescales, and we are now looking to establish these on a case by case basis depending on the gravity and risk of the complaint and the time needed to investigate it. Corporate Services come out of this very well, but pressures in Children's, Adults and Place seem to be contributing to these delays.
- 3.8 Of the 1919 complaints received, 11% were fully justified and 12% partially. This shows a small increase on the 9% upheld the as the previous year. It may still seem surprising that so few complaints are considered to be justified by responding managers, but the real challenge is to ensure the justified complaints contribute to the lessons learned and continual improvement.

- 3.9 With the increase in complaints comes an opportunity, and we are happy to report a 61% increase in learnings generated from complaints. 317 cases presented organisational learning and reflection compared to 196 the previous year. It does evidence that Dorset Council are getting value from the complaints presented to us.
- 3.10 We are pleased to report 556 compliments across the directorates compared to 520 the previous year. This is something for Dorset Council to celebrate and hopefully presents a more balanced report on service perceptions. It is still clear that people were more likely to voice complaints, than compliment a job well done. These split into directorates as follows: Place 310, Childrens 111, Adults 103, Corporate 32.
- 3.11 In addition, we received 72 code of conduct complaints regarding Dorset Council and Town and Parish Councillors in Dorset (some 160 councils and 1,400 councillors). This is a 27% Increase on the previous year and follows the general trend of increased complaints to Dorset Council . Of the 72, 22 related to Dorset Council Councillors and 50 Town and Parish. Of these, just 4 were investigated and none upheld at the time of this report. In line with our approach to other complaints, we will look in the future to how we can learn from complaints about councillors as part of promoting high standards of conduct.
- 3.12 The Complaints Team, as an Assurance function, continue to make a difference in promoting a culture of learning from complaints despite continuous challenges across the directorates. We are also pleased to report that we are able to support managers across the directorates in resolving complaints without undue process, where possible.

4. Alternative options considered

Not applicable

5. Legal considerations

Childrens and Adults Social Care complaints are subject to statutory processes.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 As in previous years, SEND related complaints still dominate the Ombudsman's involvement. This again is largely due to children out of education in Dorset and a lack of available, suitable placements. This is a national issue, but we have taken steps to improve communication and be more available before matters escalate to complaints.

6.2 Dorset Council financial remedies in 2024-25 resulting in a total cost of £40,630 which is consistent with previous years, although there was a single payment that was not claimed from the previous year of £63,150. The total sum paid from Ombudsman cases was therefore £103,510.

6.3 In addition to this, we have worked hard to pre-empt Ombudsman outcomes as part of the complaint handling process and have also paid £42,621 for SEND related complaints, outside of any involvement from the Ombudsman.

6.4 In the other directorates, The Ombudsman required a financial remedy in the following cases:

Place:

- 23019627 - Mr F £250 as a remedy for the uncertainty and the distress this caused, along with a formal apology. (Anti Social Behaviour)

Adult Non Social Care (Housing) – total £500:

- 2318994 - Pay Mr X £300 for the distress caused by the uncertainty of his housing
- 23021413 - apologise in writing to Mrs C, and pay her £200 to acknowledge the distress and uncertainty the Council's faults caused her, including her loss of review rights.

Adult Social Care – total £1550 in remedies and an agreement to refund £7,914.14. More information appears in the appendices

6.5 In addition Stage 2 investigations cost Children's Services £15,986 for Independent Investigators compared to 12,394.84 the previous year.

6.6 Whilst reporting on the outgoing finance it is important to note that the Complaints Team have generated **£9,240.17** (up from £7376) from schools by providing a complaints advice service.

7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

7.1 None

8. Well-being and health implications

8.1 The consistently high volume of complaints, coupled with associated vexatious behaviour continues to have an impact on the wellbeing for colleagues involved with complaint handling and response. The team and associated colleagues are regularly encouraged, through line management and other Dorset Council support, to be mindful of themselves and their colleagues in-keeping with our behaviours

9. **Other implications**

9.1 None

10. **Risk implications**

10.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

11. **Equalities**

11.1 Policies have been subject to equalities impact assessments.

12. **Appendices**

12.1 Appendix A – Children’s Services Statutory Information

Appendix B – Adults Services Statutory Information

13. **Background papers**

13.1 None

14. Report sign-off

14.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

		2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	
	Number of FORMAL complaints	747	772	1117	2024/25 saw a significant increase in formal complaints (detailed overleaf).
	Number of INFORMAL complaints	1091	816	802	2024/25 saw a very slight reduction in informal complaints (detailed overleaf).
	Upheld approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman compared to total received	26/114	33/117	33/39	In 2024/25 the LGSCO investigated 39 complaints, 33 of which were upheld.
	Timescales (overdue)	21%	18%	18%	In 2024/25 18% of all complaints exceeded the deadline for response.
	% fully justified complaints	9%	8%	11%	2024/25 continued to saw 11% of complaints reported as fully justified.
	% part justified complaints	11%	9%	12%	2024/25 saw 12% of complaints reported as partially justified.
	Compliments	537	568	556	We recieved 556 compliments in 2024/25.
	Learnings	212	192	317	We gathered 317 learnings from complaints in 2024/25, a 61% increase on the previous year (details overleaf).

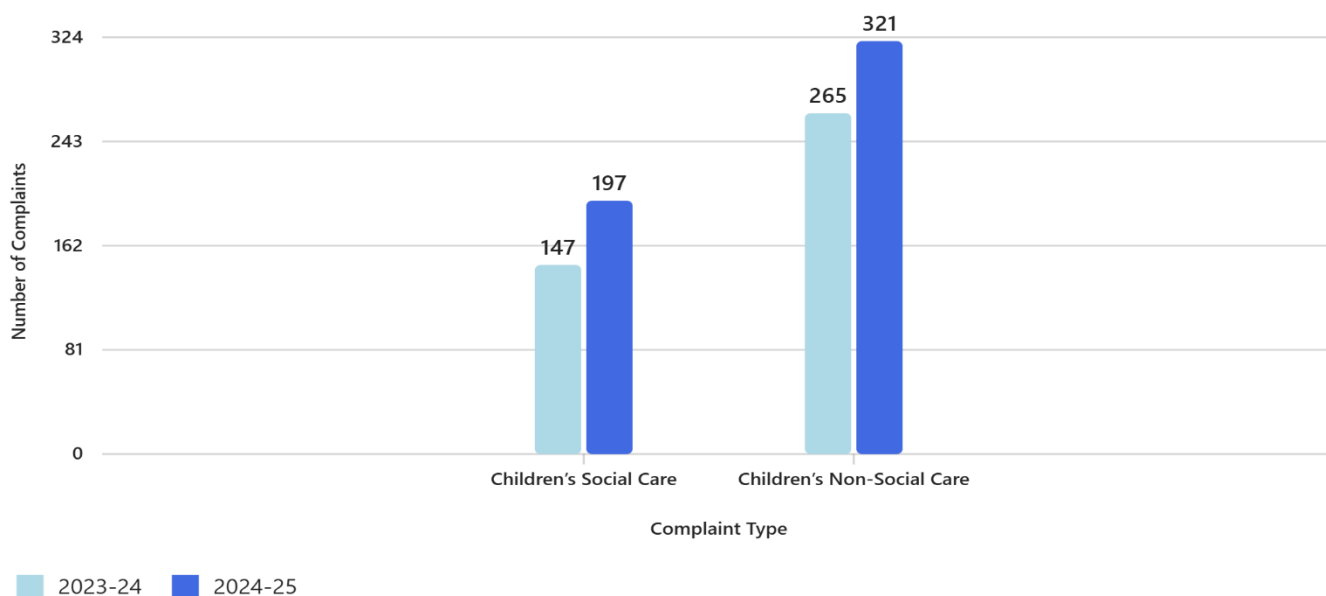
Total Complaints Overview

1919 Complaints

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Appendix A: Children's Service Statutory Reporting Requirements

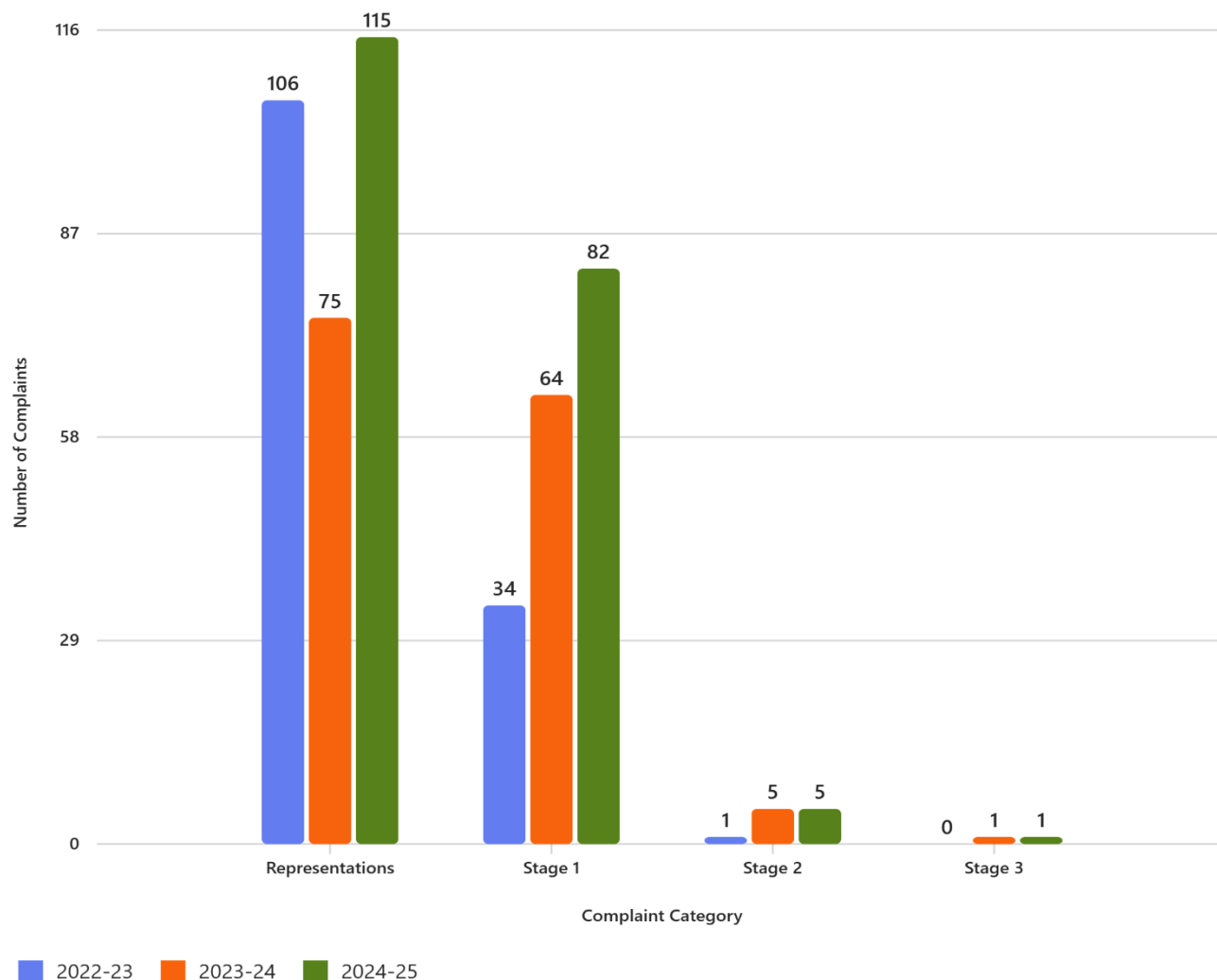
There has been an overall 17% increase in Complaints across Dorset Council, but the increase in Childrens Services complaints is proportionately higher on 2024-25 with a 34% increase in Social Care complaints, and 21% increase for Non Social Care.



Complaint Type	2024-25	2023-24	%
Childrens Social Care	197	147	+34%
Childrens Non Social Care	321	265	+21%

Most complaints received are from parents and not necessarily representing the voice or best interest of the child. However, more of the issues raised in 2024-25 have qualified for the statutory process and escalation route to stage 2 and 3.

Children's Social Care	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
Representations	115	75	106
Stage 1	82	64	34
Stage 2	5	5	1
Stage 3	1	1	0
LGSCO approaches	1 but with no injustice	1 with 1 upheld (passed back to Council)	5 with 1 upheld



Again 5 cases were accepted at Stage 2 detailed below. This is the same as the previous year. A SWAP audit pointed towards a delay at STAGE 1 being the main cause of the increase in escalation requests. However in each case, there was a financial element that was the cause of a disagreement over the outcome at Stage 1. Timescale is however a factor and we have introduced an escalation protocol to ensure senior oversight. This only tells a small part of the story as the Complaints Team and service Managers have worked together really effectively in 2024-25 and managed to de-escalate several requests for stage 2s, by meeting and resolving matters. [Interestingly, 2 Stage 2 requests are from Young People, which indicates more comfort in escalating complaints](#)

Children's Whole Authority (Non Social Care)	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
Representations	62	66	129
Formal Complaint	253	182	180
LGSCO approaches	25 with 15	24 with 21 upheld	35 with 16 upheld

Stage 2 Complaints

These are the cases that progressed to Stage 2 in 2024-25

CASE no	Team locality	Brief Subject	Outcome Upheld/ Part/Not	Total cost of IO	Total cost of IP	Additional cost
COM/6406	CWAD	There has been a delayed and insufficient response to address the family's need for support.	Partially Upheld	£3745.00	£1992.50	None
COM/3472	Purbeck	Via Advocacy – Role of Social Worker in supporting a parent in Prison	Still Under investigation after delay and change of IO	TBC	TBC	TBC
COM/6872	CWAD	Via Advocacy -Issues relating to the way social services has behaved towards young person. Newly presented historic matters could not be investigated at stage 2	Original Complaints resolved at stage 1.	£1,752	£405	
COM/5670	CWAD	Safeguarding and failure to act for a child in need with Autism and intellectual disability	Largely not upheld and heard at Stage 3	£1459	£90	
COM/6660	Child Protection	Formal complaint regarding the family's interactions with children's social care.	Still Under investigation	TBC	TBC	TBC
TOTALS				£6,956	£2,487.50	
OVERALL COST					£9,443.50	

Local Government Ombudsman (LGSCO)

The Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) investigates complaints from the public about councils and other bodies providing public services in England. It also investigates complaints about registered social care providers.

Social Care

Only 1 Social Care Case was presented to the Ombudsman:

Dorset Council (24 002 245)

Summary: Mrs X complained about failings in the Council's child protection investigation. There was some fault in the Council's communication and record keeping, as well as a delay giving Mrs X a report before a meeting. However, there was no fault in the Council's decision-making processes and no significant injustice.

Non Social Care

Of the 33 UPHELD cases across Dorset Council in total, 15 of 33 were in Childrens Services relating to SEND matters and children out of education. Although a concern, this is a 29% reduction in upheld cases

The findings are outlined below

CHILDRENS NON SC (SEN)

- **Dorset Council (24 004 153)**

Statement Upheld Alternative provision 31-Jan-2025

Summary: Mrs X complains the Council failed to provide her child with a suitable education. There were delays in arranging alternative provision after the Easter break in 2024 and this is fault. It resulted in a loss of education for a period of nearly seven weeks. The Council has agreed to remedy this injustice.

- **Dorset Council (24 012 300)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 16-Jan-2025

Summary: We will not investigate this complaint about missed special education provision for Miss X's child. The Council has already upheld her complaint and offered Miss X a suitable remedy for the injustice to her and her child, and further investigation by us would therefore not be proportionate.

- **Dorset Council (24 000 817)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 23-Dec-2024

Summary: Miss Y complained about the way the Council dealt with Z's Education, Health and Care needs assessment and the special educational provision in their Education Health and Care Plan. We have found fault by the Council, causing injustice, in failing to: consult with school A or other schools before issuing the final EHC Plan in 2023; properly consider Miss Y's request for free school transport; and deliver the SEN provision in Z's EHC Plan. The Council has agreed to remedy this injustice by apologising to Miss Y, making payments to reflect the impact on Z of the missed SEN provision and the time and trouble, travel costs and distress caused to Miss Y and a service improvement.

- **Dorset Council (23 019 263)**

Statement Upheld Alternative provision 17-Dec-2024

Summary: Miss X complained the Council failed to secure suitable education provision for her son from late 2022 to mid-2024. She said the Council had not addressed her concerns, or adapted the provision to meet her son's needs. We have found the Council at fault for failing to properly consider its section 19 duty between October 2022 and January 2023. However, on a balance of probabilities, we find this did not cause an injustice. Other parts of Miss X's complaint, about later time periods, concern matters which are part of, connected to, or could have been part of, an appeal to the SEND Tribunal. We cannot investigate these matters. We explain why in our decision statement.

- **Dorset Council (24 003 542)**

Statement Upheld Alternative provision 05-Dec-2024

Summary: Ms X complained the Council failed to provide a suitable education for her daughter, Y, between November 2023 and July 2024 when she was unable to attend school due to anxiety. The Council was at fault. It will apologise to Ms X and pay her £2,400 to recognise the period of suitable alternative provision Y missed, and the distress this caused Ms X.

- **Dorset Council (24 002 157)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 08-Oct-2024

Summary: Miss X complained the Council failed to provide her child, Y, with appropriate education and provision in line with Y's Education, Health and Care Plan. The Council was at fault which caused Miss X and Y frustration and distress and meant Y missed out on some education provision. The Council should apologise and make a payment to Miss X.

- **Dorset Council (23 019 593)**

Statement Upheld Alternative provision 30-Sep-2024

Summary: The Council was at fault because it did not issue an amended EHC Plan for Y within statutory timescales. This caused avoidable frustration, distress, uncertainty and a delay in appeal rights. The Council did not secure educational provision in Y's Education, Health and Care Plan for half a term. This caused Y a loss of educational provision to which he had a legal entitlement. The Council will apologise, make payments of £150 to Ms X and £1000 to Y and issue Y's amended Education Health and Care Plan without further delay.

- **Dorset Council (23 018 030)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 29-Sep-2024

Summary: Miss Y complained about the way the Council dealt her child, Z's special educational needs support and alternative provision. We have found finding fault by the Council, causing injustice, in failing to: provide Z with a suitable education; and complete the EHC Plan review process within statutory timescales. The Council has agreed to remedy the injustice by apologising, making a payment to reflect the distress caused and the impact on Z of the missed education.

- **Dorset Council (23 019 949)**

Statement Upheld Alternative provision 08-Sep-2024

Summary: Mrs C complained about the Council's decision not to assess her daughter for an Education, Health and Care Plan and a statutory Care Needs Assessment. We found the Council was at fault. This caused Mrs C unnecessary distress and meant that S missed two terms of education. The Council agreed to our recommendations to address the injustice its actions caused Mrs C and S.

- **Dorset Council (23 015 263)**

Statement Upheld Alternative provision 21-Aug-2024

Summary: The Council failed to ensure Y received suitable fulltime education, either by supplementing provision when Y was put on an extended part-time timetable by the school, or when Y became unable to attend school due to medical needs. This was fault and caused loss of education, distress, created additional caring responsibilities and caused unnecessary time and trouble. The Council will apologise, make a symbolic financial payment, and carry out service improvements. The complaint is upheld.

- **Dorset Council (23 014 194)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 05-Aug-2024

Summary: Mrs E complains her son's school was following an out-of-date Education, Health and Care Plan. We uphold her complaint due to fault by the Council in its actions around this. Mrs E also complains about the school's actions around a teacher's use of language, inappropriate emails and suspensions of children with special educational needs. Our decision is these are internal management issues within the school, and so not in the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

- **Dorset Council (23 015 090)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 01-Aug-2024

Summary: Mrs Y complains there were failings in the way the Council provided her grandchild Z with alternative educational provision while carrying out an education health and care needs assessment and Z could not attend school causing distress and loss of educational provision. We found fault as the Council delayed the education health and care needs assessment and issuing a final education health and care plan. The Council has accepted it was at fault and apologised which is suitable action for it to take. We have found no evidence of fault by the Council in the way it considered whether to provide Z with alternative provision. So we have completed our investigation.

- **Dorset Council (23 015 704)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 06-May-2024

Summary: The Council was at fault for delays in issuing an Education, Health, and Care Plan, for Mrs X's son. That fault caused Mrs X an injustice because she was left with avoidable distress and inconvenience in following up as to what the Council were doing, as well as having a delayed right of appeal. It also has left Mrs X with uncertainty about what special education provision her son may also have missed out on because of delays. The Council have agreed to remedy Mrs X's injustice in line with my recommendation.

- **Dorset Council (23 012 891)**

Statement Upheld Special educational needs 21-Apr-2024

Summary: Mrs X complained about delays in the education, health and care plan process. She said the Council has failed to provide suitable alternative provision; delayed naming a suitable school for her son and said the communication has been poor. We find the Council was at fault. This caused significant stress to Mrs X and her son missed out on education. The Council has agreed to several recommendations to address this injustice caused by fault.

Dorset Council financial remedies in 2024-25 resulting in a total cost of £40,630 which is consistent with previous years, although there was a single payment that was not claimed from the previous year of £63,150. The total sum paid from Ombudsman cases was therefore £103,510.

In addition to this, we have worked hard to pre-empt Ombudsman outcomes as part of the complaint handling process and have also paid £42,621 for SEND related complaints, outside of any involvement from the Ombudsman.

Which customer groups made the complaints;

Of the small number of complainants who categorised themselves, we present the following data on who is complaining to children's services Social Care

Advocate	3
Child in Care	4
Customer	53
Grandparent	5

Individual	3
Other Relative	3
Parent	26
Solicitor	1
Young Person	3

The types of complaints made;

Most complaints fall under subcategories of Service Provision, largely around delays of perceived failures to deliver a

Communication	6%
Data	2%
Disagreement with Decision	12%
Misconduct	2%
Service Provision	78%

The outcome of complaints;

Of the complaints received for Children's Social Care in 2023-24 only 11% were considered Fully Justified by operational managers shows there is some level of justification as outlined below:

Fully Justified 11% the same as previous year

Partially Justified 11% down from previous year

(NB: The Ombudsman often consider partially as upheld)

Not justified 78%

In 2024-25 the Complaints Team have improved the quarterly reporting and added extra value in terms of learnings and actions from complaints. In many cases however the complaints process is used by parents who are unhappy with records held that cant be legally altered, or require compensation for a sense of wrongdoing, this cannot be achieved through the process.

Children in Care

The table below demonstrates a breakdown of Children in Care complaints. All complaints by young people are coming to the Complaints team via an advocacy service. The numbers continue to be low, but we have had 2 cases progress to Stage 2 which indicates a greater level of awareness of the process, and confidence in using it the have their voices heard.

Year	Number of Complaints
Children in Care 2024-25	3
Children in Care 2023-24	3
Children in Care 2022-23	10
Children in Care 2021-22	8
Children in Care 2020-21	15

Children in Care 2019-20

10

Advocacy is described as supporting children to have their say and making sure their views and wishes are taken into consideration on decisions and matters that affect them, it is also about ensuring that rights are upheld. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the right of children to be listened to in decisions which affect them.

There is a statutory duty to provide an independent advocacy service that supports children and young people to have their views and wishes taken into account when key decisions are being made about their lives.

An advocate can help if:

something needs to be started, changed or stopped, for example, if the child is unhappy about their treatment by children's social care or there are worries about plans being made, such as a move a child needs support during meetings to make sure their voice is heard children need advice and want to know their rights

a child needs support to make a complaint

In 2023-24 we have identified just the 3 cases that related to children in care, all via an advocate representing the voice of the child through the complaints process. You will note the figures are consistently low by comparison to the overall figures.

Children in Care (CIC)

In Q1 there were no complaints from CIC or advocacy, but one that progressed to stage 2 from the previous year. This complaint was largely not upheld and contained a lot of historic complaints which were out of scope of the process. We did our best to resolve the case, but the IO and IP agreed that the outcomes requested were financial

In Q2 there was 1 CIC complaint regarding a young person (YP) that wanted to make it known their views regarding placements being a place of safety, with carers that understood young people with traumatic backgrounds.

In Q3 there was 1 CIC complaint where a YP felt that their carers had no experience with young people, who have had a traumatic background. The complaint was also against the foster carers, not providing a caring environment. Also a complaint against the Local Authority for failing in their duties by placing them in an environment where he experienced abuse and was not kept safe.

In Q4 there was 1 complaint from CIC via advocacy regarding a request to change their Social Worker

Compliance with timescales, and complaints resolved within extended timescale as agreed;

The table below shows the majority of all Stage 1 cases for Children's Services Social Care were within the 20-day statutory timescale. However there was a concern identified in Q2 and an escalate protocol was put in place to seek improvement. We expect to see progress on 24-25

Timescales	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
0-20 Working Days	77%	86%	85%
20+ days	23%	14%	15%

As always, closer observation reveals that some cases exceed the 20 days as a result of agreeing a more informal approach and resolution after the receipt of the original complaint, with good work from locality managers. This can

include follow up calls and meetings, so the figure in isolation does not tell the whole story of the journey of the complaints.

learning and service improvement, including changes to services that have been implemented and details of any that have not been implemented;

Learning points are collected at all stages of the complaints procedure. At stage 1, Operational Managers identify learning from complaints and learning actions. At Stages 2 and 3, action plans are compiled based on the recommendations of the investigator's or panel chair's report. In addition, the LGSCO will include recommendations to remedy complaints, and actions are monitored by the complaints team to ensure that they are completed.

How we disseminate learning

Quarterly reports to Children's Services Leadership Team produced by the Complaints team

Dissemination of the quarterly report to Operational Managers to be discussed at Service Team Meetings.

The complaints team also feed into the performance data for SLT each quarter

How we learn from complaints

Improvement in Stage 1 responses - Additional Training to be provided to Team Managers on how to complete and present and stage one investigations, within statutory timescales. The Complaints Team Manager will be attending meetings to advise and update

Operational Managers to ensure that Team Managers and Social Workers are clear about the need to record meetings. Robust quality assurance processes put in place.

Improved use of complaints as a measure of performance and quality control:

Evidence of sharing of quarterly reports in QAudits and closing loop with service managers. Identifying trends early

Examples of learning from Complaints:

We have collected 46 really good quality and robust organisational learnings in 24-25 which is really encouraging. This is a 48% improvement on the 31 learning cases in 23-24.

Case ID	What we have learned from Complaints	What we have done as a result to improve practice
COM/6315 and COM/6345 (C SC – LW)	Family repeatedly stepping in to provide care for a child should generate curiosity as to what is happening for the child and why the parent is not able to provide care themselves; this is particularly the case when risks have previously been identified. Professionals should not justify inaction through a "family arrangement" if there is enough information on record to suggest this is not the case	Ensuring assessments are holistic and include information held by other agencies and consider the views of those people important to the child, including wider family. Assessments need to ensure that known risks around mental health are given sufficient weight in terms of the impact this has upon a child now and in the future. The absence of information being shared by Health is going to be escalated further to prevent other



	Special Guardianship payments have been delayed.	children potentially being at risk as a result of an absence of information sharing. This has now been remedied and complainant will receive a back payment and ongoing payments, as per the support plan.
COM 6500 (C WA) DMC	It took seven months to issue an EHC plan	Training under Section 44 (2) of the Children and Families Act 2014 with regards to duty to reassessment of children or young person with an EHCP
COM6179 (CSC) Fostering BL	1. Important learning – The impact of changes in social workers upon foster carers and children living within the foster family. Has and can lead to not feeling supported, instability and/or inconsistent support. 2. EHCP drift, it is recognised at strategic level improvement are required around processes. Important for Foster carers to be supported in meetings	1. On going work to reduce changes in social workers. This should be on going- but is already recognised. 2. Process being improved. This is part of much bigger process and work is on going 3. Permanent workers where practically possible to attend necessary meetings or arrange for alternative support person to attend. This has been completed- conveyed to staff members. Other key notes; Social Worker would like the opportunity to repair the relationship and move forward. Work towards this has begun but understandably will take time. When will the educational psychologist assessment report be available/ shared? This was shared in February When can the complainant expect to receive the further amended draft EHCP which was prepared on 5th Feb? This is completed The Educational psychologist has shared in a recent email that Reese's name is onto panel to request specialist assessment on 12th March. This is correct
COM/6411 C WA (LC)	As a father with parental responsibility not being met	The importance of not signing off the social workers assessments without



	informed or included during the period of our involvement with child. • Parent should have been contacted at the time of the referral and views included within the Children & Families assessment. • Should have been invited to attend all Child in Need meetings and these should have been held separately to enable both parents to attend and be part of the planning • Should have been kept up to date about any new concerns and been involved in the safety planning for child during these times, and should have been a part of the decision making • Parent raised these issues with the social worker during the period that the child remained open to service and they were still not addressed to a satisfactory level.	both parents having been contacted and given the opportunity to have their views and input included. • To ensure that through 1:1 supervision and case oversight officer continuously reminding social workers to ensure their practice is inclusive and that at point of closure being agreed, both the resident and non-resident parent are a part of this.
COM/6732 SEN (LW)	Manager recognises that we should have been more proactive in our searches for educational provision by speaking to our settings on the telephone when consultations were being sent out.	Manager to ensure that, in future, we are not only relying on emails when we are consulting for educational provision for our young people, and that we keep families regularly updated also. LW has queried how and when this will be implemented.
COM 7223 CSC (DMc)	Need to focus on cases during transfer from CP to Permanence and that identified actions are checked and followed up	Discussed at a Team meeting under 'Practice Matters'
COM/6975 CSC (BL)	We have recognised that learning needs to take place around SGO orders and the need to continue to share information and involve those who hold the order even if the child has left their care.	An assessment to look at risks outside the home which include drugs and influences that can take place in the community has been started and TM has requested this is completed within two weeks and that the outcomes are shared with guardians The youth workers in Weymouth and Portland are also aware of the YP and we keep in close contact to ensure any worries are shared and acted on.



COM/7239 C SC (LC)	Team have not always got things right, particularly in managing consistent communication. The impact of this has been to leave the complainant feel marginalised and disempowered.	Manager has asked the team to ensure that an email with an update on progress made and a forward plan, alongside any relevant advice is sent to the key family members each week so that all know the same thing at the same time. Manager has also asked those involved to ensure that all meetings are minuted and shared with those present promptly.
COM/6926 C SC (LC)	The social worker failed to produce a written assessment in a reasonable timescale and there were inaccuracies within that assessment. Social worker also talked about her personal life and her broader caseload which was inappropriate.	Manager has confirmed that the social worker's conduct has been formally addressed with her.
COM/6524 C WA (KR)	Alleged mistreatment by social worker, insufficient support, and lack of consideration for other agencies' information	Although no immediate issues were found with the social worker's practice, Dorset Council acknowledges the need for improved professional curiosity and apologises for the impact on the complainant's trust.
COM 7140 C SC (DMc)	Section 20 not explained properly to young person and all options explored	Leaflet for young people has been produced to make it clear what options are available to them.
COM/7064 LC	We would like all social workers for our children and young people in care to text them or call them to wish them happy birthday and happy Christmas. Sending a card is also something that can be done, especially if the social worker is not in so you would know you are cared about. We have heard you and I will ask the team manager to talk to the social workers about why this is so important.	<i>CIC had a new phone number in April and asked SW to save the number when she dropped you and your friend off. She was driving at the time and may have then forgotten to do so. I accept that these little things can mean so much and we need to be mindful of this.</i> In respect of the meeting, I have spoken to SW, and she has said there was a genuine misunderstanding. She was expecting confirmation from your foster carer that the time was ok to see you and as did not receive this. Your foster carer did not realise she was waiting for this. We need to remember that no matter how busy we get, our young people need to be seen and heard.
COM/7566 LC	When spoke to SW, unsympathetic and refused to accept language such as aggression, abuse and SW made us feel that we were lying about the severity of the incidents and appeared to dismiss them. We also felt that she was patronising and lecturing us when she spoke to us on the phone.	met with SW to discuss complaint and recorded the reflection in personal supervision. We talked and reflected on how we can ensure the families are treated with care and compassion, having their views listened to and considered. Within that we thought about how we as practitioners consider our working style and how this may be perceived by parents. SW has been able to reflect on how approach was perceived by parent and is sorry for any upset



		that she may have caused as this was not her intention.
COM/6315 C SC (LW)	Action 1 Ensuring assessments are holistic and include information held by other agencies and consider the views of those people important to the child, including wider family. Assessments need to ensure that known risks around mental health are given sufficient weight in terms of the impact this has upon a child now and in the future. Family repeatedly stepping in to provide care for a child should generate curiosity as to what is happening for the child and why the parent is not able to provide care themselves; this is particularly the case when risks have previously been identified. Professionals should not justify inaction through a “family arrangement” if there is enough information on record to suggest this is not the case. Action 2 The absence of information being shared by Health needs to be escalated further to prevent other children potentially being at risk as a result of an absence of information sharing. Action 3 Special Guardianship payments have been delayed.	Action 1 Meeting held between to discuss outcomes of file review. Encourage consultations with MH SFT practitioners for advice and guidance where MH is factor. If there is a challenge in receiving information this should be escalated. Ensure through supervision and oversight that all agencies are being consulted. Ensure learning and development (which take place as part of pathfinder) for importance of family networks and those connected to a child. SMs and TM’s to review other cases in teams in chesil where maybe family arrangements where there has been no legal. Ongoing learning and development. Review of family arrangements from will be shared. Action 2 Encourage consultations with MH SFT practitioners for advice and guidance where MH is factor. If there is a challenge in receiving information this should be escalated. Ensure through supervision and oversight that all agencies are being consulted. Ensure learning and development (which take place as part of pathfinder) for importance of family networks and those connected to a child. Reflective session to take place by SMs with TM. Action 3 This has now been remedied and complainant has received a back payment and ongoing payments as per the support plan.
COM 7223 CSC (DMc)	Need to focus on cases during transfer from CP to Permanence and that identified actions are checked and followed up	Discussed at a Team meeting under ‘Practice Matters’
COM/7792 LC	Childs missing episode on the 23 rd September 2024	XX are now instructed/guided to call mother immediately if child leaves the sight of supporting adults whilst in the community, this includes leaving the XX without a supporting adult. Once a telephone call is made to Mother XX supporting adult will call the police and then drive to your mother’s property, positioning the car on the road leading to the property in attempt to prevent and discourage any unwanted behaviour.



		In response to your complaint, manager has scrutinised the incident documentation for factual information and has completed a lesson's learnt to understand what changes can be made to improve response to situations that may occur in the future and learn from this. We have amended child's risk assessment to instruct/advise supporting adults to call parent before calling the police. Our embedded police colleague has completed sessional work with child in managing safety and behaviours. We have also liaised with our local police service and there is a marker put on your mother and grandparents home address.
COM/6847 C SC (INFORMAL) (BL)	Data Breach Learnings The assessing social worker had misunderstood the consent to share form, believing this to mean that you had given your permission for this information to be included.	Following this incident, the manager worked with the complainant and his ex-partner to compile an assessment that was agreeable to both parties and the new document does not contain this personal information. A request has been made for all copies of the previous document to be deleted and the new assessment is now recorded on our electronic record. To ensure that this does not happen again the issue was immediately brought to the notice of the whole team and clarification of the consent to share process was communicated.
COM/7826 C SC (LW)	Child was assaulted by another individual living at an address, whilst in care.	The manager changed the Social Worker, and the team the child is in, the day following the incident. Manager will be very careful in matching child with any young people if he does move somewhere else with other young people. Manager to speak to the Police to check an area before child is moved, to consider the risk within the area. Manager is also completing a viability assessment on the brother of the complainant.
COM 7358 C SC (DMc)	Language and behaviour used by foster carer unacceptable	Training to be provided for foster carers To explore training opportunities for previous carer and family



	Carers had no experience with young people who have had a traumatic background	
COM/7863 C SC (KR)	The Social Worker sent the complainant the review Child and Family Assessment which outlined Dorset Council's recommendation and decision to step down our involvement from a Child in Need Plan. The Complainant stated that they did not receive the email.	In response to the complaint, manager has identified some key areas for learning, including ensuring that families are aware of our intention to step down our involvement from a Child in Need plan and for this to be discussed in a meeting with professionals and with the family prior to the meeting. Manager to work with the Social Worker to ensure these conversations are had verbally with families so our decision can be talked through, and so families do not feel this has been sprung upon them.
COM/7863 C SC (KR) (same complaint)	It was the Social Worker's understanding that an Advocate would be able to support a parent, regardless of Dorset Council stepping down the child's Child in Need plan. This was incorrect and the appropriate service for free, confidential, accurate and impartial advice and support relating to Education to families living in Dorset with children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and parents and carers is SENDIASS.	Manager will be reminding the team of the referral and eligibility process for the Advocacy services within our local offer to ensure that everyone is clear on the eligibility for accessing these services and to avoid any confusion or undue stress on families.
COM/4647 C SC (KR)	In this case, the lack of consistent involvement and delays in response are recognised as sources of frustration for the father warranting compensation as a goodwill gesture to acknowledge these service lapses and the resultant impact on the family.	An apology and the £500 payment aligns with the Local Government Ombudsman's Financial Remedies Guidance, which advises symbolic payments when service failures cause inconvenience or distress.
COM/7846 C SC (CB)	Complaint about having to chase SW for dates of meetings and minutes.	Social worker now aware of the need to get Core Group meeting minutes recorded and to send the records to everyone who attended the meetings. 3 month reminder set for complaints to check that this is being actioned.
COM/7921 C SC (CB)	Our Social Worker is from overseas and sometimes communication can be a barrier. We are working alongside them to help reduce this.	A support plan is already being created alongside Social Worker in helping to aid and develop their communication style.
COM 8111 C SC (DMc)	Not all information recorded	Reminded the Team of importance of recording at the time of event so they have all the right information on hand



COM/8092 C WA (KR)	Social workers should avoid taking work-related telephone calls during personal emergencies.	The social worker involved has been advised not to take work-related calls during personal emergencies. This learning will be shared with the wider team during the next team meeting on 6 February 2025.
COM/8198 C WA (KR)	- The importance of ensuring clarity and proper understanding of concerns and requests through appropriate channels. - The need to address and differentiate safeguarding concerns, information requests, and court-related matters clearly. The significance of maintaining positive working relationships between all parties involved for the child's best interests.	- Reviewed records and engaged with relevant social workers to ensure accurate understanding and response. - Confirmed procedures for handling safeguarding concerns and thresholds for investigations. - Allocated a new social worker with a planned handover to ensure continuity and support. Offered a meeting with senior staff to clarify roles, responsibilities, and improve collaboration.
COM/8390 C WA E&P Permanence (KR)	Contact for visit arrangements should be confirmed by phone if not agreed in person or via email and unannounced visits can cause frustration and should be avoided where possible.	Social workers will be instructed to confirm future visits either during a visit or by phone if prior agreement is not reached.
COM 8293 C SC (DMc)	Team Manager been advised that good practice would have been to share the ongoing communication with Miss X with the Complaints Team and Miss X be offered the opportunity to submit formal complaint	Discussed at supervision meeting
COM/8453 CSC LC	character statement from someone who said they are a trainee social worker for Dorset Council. She later identified this person as *****. Customer stated that officer has provided completely false information in their witness statement. Customer is concerned that officer is having a lot of involvement with ex on a personal level. X told me the purpose of her call was that she wants to ensure that someone who is giving these false statement, giving advice and stating they are a trainee Social Worker are not accessing her records.	Whilst employees can provide character references for friends/family, xxxx should not have submitted this character reference using her student social worker title. This is not appropriate and should not be associated with Dorset Council. This has been discussed with the officer and is being addressed with her. checked the systems and xxxx has not had access to records, or children's records or files or ex's children's records. As an outcome of this investigation and peace of mind and the protection xxxx we will now lock down the records so xxxx will not have access to any of these records.

Professionals need to ensure they have explicit permission to share information, either through statutory guidance or with the consent of the children and family involved. This includes when sharing information with other family members.

Maintaining confidentiality within a family is complex and checks should always be made of the records to confirm what can and cannot be shared with each family member. A handover of key information between practitioners and their managers in respect of any changes in family's circumstances should take place after periods of absence to ensure clarity about what has happened and what information can be shared with whom.

Data Protection and Appropriate Action to take

Managers need to contact Data Protection Team as soon as possible following a potential breach to seek advice about immediate actions to mitigate risk and distress to the family. When aware that a data breach has occurred, advice must be obtained from the Data Protection Team about immediate actions required. Information on how to report a data breach can be found at <https://intranet.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/task/report-a-data-breach/> Unless advised otherwise, contact should be made with the family to alert them to the breach and to provide apologies, reassurance and information about what the service will be doing to rectify the situation and mitigate the risks.

Safeguarding, the Legal Framework and Good Practice

Reference Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers.

A summary of statistical data about the age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and ethnicity of complainants

All complainants to Dorset Council are sent an equality and diversity monitoring form as part of the complaint process. Complainants are asked to complete this form but it is completely voluntary. This year we had a 70% uptake. The percentages are based on those who completed the form only and not specific to Children's Services as they are anonymous

Gender

- **Female:** 49.2%
 - **Male:** 34.0%
 - **Prefer not to say:** (6.5%)
 - **Prefer to self-describe:** (0.7%)
 - **Non-Binary:** (0.3%)
 - **Missing:** (9.3%)
-

Gender Assigned at Birth

- **Yes:** (80.5%)
 - **Prefer not to say:** (8.5%)
 - **No:** (0.7%)
 - **Missing:** (10.4%)
-

Age Group

- **55–64:** (17.7%)

- **35–44:** (16.7%)
 - **45–54:** (16.2%)
 - **65–74:** (13.5%)
 - **25–34:** (12.8%)
 - **75–84:** (5.6%)
 - **19–24:** (3.2%)
 - **Over 85:** (1.2%)
 - **16–18:** (0.8%)
 - **Missing:** (12.4%)
-

Disability Status

- **No:** (54.0%)
 - **Yes:** (21.1%)
 - **Prefer not to say:** (13.9%)
 - **Missing:** (11.0%)
-

Ethnicity

- **White - British:** (69.1%)
 - **Prefer not to say:** (4.0%)
 - **White - Other White background:** (1.6%)
 - **Other ethnicities:** <1%
 - **Missing:** (22.2%)
-

Sexual Orientation

- **Heterosexual/Straight:** (66.2%)
 - **Prefer not to say:** (14.7%)
 - **Bi:** (1.8%)
 - **Other:** (1.7%)
 - **Gay Woman/Lesbian:** (1.0%)
 - **Gay Man:** (0.9%)
 - **Missing:** (13.8%)
-

Religion or Belief

- **None/no religion:** (34.8%)
- **Christian (all denominations):** (29.9%)
- **Prefer not to say:** (12.0%)
- **Atheist:** (2.5%)
- **Other religions:** <3%
- **Missing:** (17.4%)

A review of the effectiveness of the complaints procedure

The Complaints Team send out forms to gather feedback from complainants about their experience of complaining in order to continually improve the service. Regrettably there has been very little uptake on this and there is no reportable data of any value established.

Compliments

Finally we are happy to advise that Childrens services received 95 compliments in 2024-2025 so genuinely heartening to see

The positive sentiments and hope it presents more of a balanced critique of the service

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Appendix B: Adult's Services Statutory Information**Report: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Findings and Statutory Complaints Reporting – Dorset Council****Reporting Period: 2024–2025****Overview.**

The Infographic provides key information at a glance in a format that allows the Quarters to be directly compared. We include the specific the number of complaints and the manner in which they were considered. We have specified the number of complaints which were justified, and the number referred to the Ombudsman. Complaints should be regarded as an important tool and be performance monitored to ensure the Council can evidence that we are a learning organisation. Compliments should also be valued and communicated effectively to staff. Good practice and learning should be disseminated. These are feedback as soon as we receive them and are highlighted in internal quarterly reporting

1 Complaint Volumes

The Corporate Complaints Team reports a notable increase in complaints for 2024–25 compared to the previous year:

Directorate	2024–25	2023–24	% Change
Adult Social Care	201	126	+60%
Adult Non-Social Care	133	126	+6%

This increase is partly attributed to improved complaint capture protocols, ensuring that complaints received via MPs or the Chief Executive are now routed through a single point of entry where possible. This has resulted in a more accurate and representative picture of complaints across Adult Services.

2 Complaint Themes and Subject matter

We report on the following themes, shown below by Quarter

Q1

Complaint Themes	2024-5
Service Provision / Quality of Service	15
Disagreement with Decision	15
Finance	8
Customer Service	4
Communication	2

Q2

Complaint Themes	2023-4
Service Provision / Quality of Service	23
Disagreement with Decision	12
Finance	4

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Customer Service	1
Communication	1

Q3

Complaint Themes	2024-5
Service Provision / Quality of Service	17
Disagreement with Decision	13
Finance	10
Customer Service	2
Communication	5
Other	2

Q4

Complaint Themes	2024-25
Service Provision / Quality of Service	21
Disagreement with Decision	4
Finance	3
Customer Service	4
Communication	4
Other	1

3 Learning and Engagement

Dorset Council's Complaints Team are very proud of the fact we have collected 64 learning points from complaint cases in 2024-25. This is an increase of 220%, which demonstrates a tremendous improvement in engagement, and doubtless a success from the Teams steps in channelling complaints correctly through the process, and preventing over-escalation and bypassing process. A full list will appear in the forthcoming annual report.

There is no doubt that the engagement with the Quality Assurance (QA) group, and regular meetings with locality heads have improved the ability to learn from complaints and implement service improvements.

Case ID /Team or Locality	What we have learned from Complaints	What we have done as a result to improve practice
COM/2304	There were gaps in decision-making, communication and practice regarding the status of the placement at Casterbridge Lodge.	To avoid a repetition of the errors that occurred we will be reviewing matters with the practitioners and managers involved with a view to supporting their ongoing professional development.

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COM/6470 Formal ASC (BL)	Communications from both Dorset Council OT's + external services can be overwhelming and confusing – we need to be more mindful of the amount of information provided to service users, and the way information is communicated	APM will make every effort to discuss this with the Occupational Therapists in the team and further appropriate organisations such as Millbrook Healthcare ensuring that communication needs are identified and prioritised appropriately to reduce any confusion and/or anxieties moving forward.
COM/6683 ASC KR	In response to your complaint, we have concluded that we could have communicated more frequently and consistently with the complainant and his representatives, and the complaint is partially justified.	To prevent other users of the service experiencing a similar outcome we have put in place clear tracking of the financial assessment, with checks at 1, 2 and 3 weeks to ensure these are returned to allow the financial assessment to be completed and where absent individuals will receive confirmation at week 4 that they will be responsible for the full cost of their care.
COM 6723 Formal ASC (DMc)	Guidance not clearly documented with new care home placement in respect of having family and friends visit	Social Worker spoken to. Ensure no miscommunication going forward
COM 6704 Formal ASC (DMc)	Confused language used by the Council regarding different financial assessments	Be more explicit in guidance and start date for charging people who self fund and clarifying expectations about the care and support available
COM 6758 Formal (KR)	Investigation findings: - The accommodation officers provided generic advice on housing benefits and did not follow up due to lack of further contact. - The tenant was incorrectly advised to wait for a housing benefit award before making payments,	Learnings from this complaint: - Improved Communication: Clear and accurate information about rent payments and housing benefits must be provided to tenants to prevent confusion and avoidable arrears. - Enhanced Training: Accommodation officers require better training to understand and explain discretionary housing payments accurately.

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	leading to arrears. They later made a payment of £835 towards these arrears. • The property was not inspected before letting, leading to non-compliance with mandatory requirements. Remedial training and strict performance measures have been implemented. • The gas check was delayed, making the property non-compliant at let. • Mould in the property was attributed to living conditions and lack of ventilation, not present at initial inspection. • The property was cleaned prior to tenancy except for the carpets due to electricity supply issues. • The washing machine was not initially checked or PAT tested, but was replaced after	• Rigorous Property Inspections: Properties must be thoroughly inspected before letting to ensure compliance with safety and habitability standards. • Timely Maintenance Checks: All necessary certifications, such as gas checks, must be completed before a property is let. • Comprehensive Cleaning: Ensure all aspects of property cleaning, including carpets, are completed before tenancy begins, addressing any logistical issues such as electricity supply. • Pre-Let Appliance Testing: Conduct PAT testing and functionality checks on all provided appliances to ensure they are in working order before tenants move in. • Responsive Repairs: Promptly address reported issues with property fixtures and appliances to maintain living standards and tenant satisfaction. • Continuous Monitoring: Implement strict performance measures and regular monitoring to ensure compliance with all procedures and policies. “In conclusion I can confirm that there have been several noncompliance issues and failures in service delivery, I have discussed these serious concerns with my team and have started putting strict measures in place so this is not repeated in the future as well as ensuring these tasks are embedded within our policies and
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	being reported defective.	procedures, which will be rigorously measured and monitored on a regular basis.”
COM/6785 ASC (KR)	Special Equipment always carries more risk as it cannot be exchanged for another held as stock within the local equipment service, but practitioners continue to request changes to the stock catalogue to meet the needs of Dorset residents	We plan to review the guidance to staff on the repair or replacement of special equipment to reduce unnecessary delays in resolving the issues.
COM/6935 (LC)	apologised for not allocating a professional until the 30 th of April 2024 when the referral was first given to us in Feb 2024. This was due to the shortage of staff within our team. The case was always an urgent case to prioritise, and the service did their best to prioritise this case.	a social work has been allocated to the case, we recognise the need to communicate with the NHS team more effectively in the future. a 117 response is always prioritised, therefore, any delay in allocation would be minimal. Also, manager will attend the 117 discharge meetings when available, and this will continue if a professional has not been allocated.
COM/6925 ASC (KR)	• Contact Dorset Council’s CHC Team to explore the possibility of backdating the start date for the CHC funding. • We will look further into the actions of the initial allocated worker further due to the impact their actions have had on complainants capital sum. This is to ensure this does not happen in the future.	• Continue to review waiting lists to minimise delays in allocation. We have also made changes to the way the team process new referrals into the team so we can see people sooner where possible.
COM/6371 A SC (LW)	Complainant gave clear instructions of wanting to give notice of accommodation. We have not provided care and	Manger confirmed that they have now put measures in place to ensure that this doesn’t happen again in the future. I am sorry for any distress that this may have caused you.

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	support in the timely manner that we would expect it to be delivered. Upon reflection, care should have been reallocated to a named worker to coordinate and support the complainant's care needs, which would have perhaps prevented this issue.	
COM 7065 A SC (DMc)	Unhappy with communication style of staff	Discussed with appropriate staff.
COM 6956 ASC (KR)	Raised the issue that clear concerns about the quality of care being provided by the care home I believe that the issues have been raised with the provider and that they have taken steps to address the concerns'	A Social Worker will be assigned to this case to coordinate with you and the provider to address concerns. The concerns and the provider's response have been forwarded to the Quality & Improvement team, who will seek a response and action plan from the care home. This will be monitored during regular inspections.
COM 7065 ASC (DMc)	Style of communication	Staff member spoken to and advised for future communication
COM/6885 A SC (BL)	Communication has been below standard expected of Dorset Council	Financial assessment has been requested and a request to expedite due to delay New social worker arranged - they will be in contact to discuss monitoring of Direct Payments Concerns to be discussed with original social worker during supervision session(s) and feedback will be provided to family by end of June 2024
COM/7071 ASC (BL)		There will be an initial review of placement in mid-July We are currently searching to commission an alternative care home that will be closer to

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		family, however being mindful of subjects' best interests
COM/ 7087 ASC (KR)		Discussed the learning points: how changes to care are communicated to service users with the previously allocated SW. I have also reiterated the importance of checking dates before sending out information. As previously mentioned, I have also re-allocated the case at your request
COM 6912 ASC (DMc)	Crisis experienced by adult in social care which should have been dealt with differently by the Team	System wide safeguarding enquiry taking place to ensure lessons are learnt from this
COM/7211 A WA (LW)	One of the team's Social Workers had contact with Destiny Healthcare, and the Council copied and pasted the email received from CQC and sent it to the Registered Manager and CEO of Destiny Healthcare who were able to determine who had raised this. Manager acknowledges that we could have made the enquiries in a way that would have made the complainant less identifiable to the employer and also acknowledges that, given the complainant had previously raised concerns with his employer, there was a risk that he could have been identified by them.	Manager to review the information we provide to complainants at the start of the complaints process, so we ensure expectations regarding anonymity are realistic. Manager will also be following up with the worker involved and the wider Safeguarding Team to make sure information is shared appropriately in future.
COM/7610 A SC (CC)	Client felt care plan was not effective/suitable.	A joint visit undertaken by ASC and OT would have enabled them to discuss the manual handling and care plan with Mrs G and her daughter together which may have been more effective and better joined up working.

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		In future if a DC OT is also involved we will try and undertake a joint visit to address all concerns for the individual at one time.
COM/7256 A SC (LW)	The financial declaration and how charging would be implemented by Dorset Council was not explained clearly to the complainant by Altogether Care.	Manager advised that it was a pilot scheme that was being run at the time and Adults have now provided Altogether Care with some appropriate wording to hand out in the future.
COM/7243 ASC (LC)	Failure to communicate or advise on Joint Funding Customer found out through an appeal about the joint funding application outcome That this had happened two months prior to your appeal but not communicated	offer apology on behalf of Dorset Council that this outcome was related in this way and that no formal notification was communicated to family at an earlier point. We recognise that this outcome should have been communicated to customers representatives at a much earlier stage and have since amended processes to prevent such a situation occurring for others in the future.
COM/6920 ASC (BL)	Contents of assessment were recorded incorrectly, and this impacted receiving grant	Partial Justification Discussed with worker to ensure that points of view of family members are clearly recorded on assessment. Manager to also consider further training required Offer of reassessment
COM/7366 ASC (KR)	Replaced SW from the individual case as requested by the complainant and removed references to complainant criminal past in the personal care plan (which bears no relevance to care plan)	
COM/7415 ASC (KR)	The complaint left a voicemail for a final assessment to be moved, this was not picked up until after the date of the assessment	• Apologies were given • In response to the complaint, the assessment manager "considered the monitoring of the team email inbox during the busiest periods of the year and put in place new processes to ensure that emails requesting that appointments are rearranged are picked up in a more timely manner."

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COM/7243	1. Errors contained within the response, specifically the following points of the chronology: 2. grievance at the costs you have incurred in appealing the outcome of CHC eligibility with NHS Dorset	An apology for the quality of communication about this was included in the last letter to you and I wish to reiterate that in this letter to you as well. Having reviewed the correspondence between yourself and the officer concerned, I can see that you did not receive responses that you wished for during this period. discussed this with management team. Feedback on this point will be used for future team training. For this, apology on behalf of our service.
COM/7446 A SC (KR)	Officer gave information and advice about considering a move to St Martin's House, including that prospective tenants should be on the housing register and have a critical need for care and support. Manager identified learning around the clarity of the information given by Officer, which may have helped daughter to understand the purpose of extra care housing and why the Officer believed the father would not be eligible.	The phrase "critical" does not explain that prospective tenants need to require 24-hour care and manager has addressed this with the officer as part of his learning and development. Manager has worked with Officer to develop his professional curiosity skills which may have negated the need for complainant to call back in with further information about father's situation and led to a smoother customer journey to the Locality Team.
COM/7503 A SC (LW)	A referral for advocacy was not made at an earlier stage	The benefits of joint working with our Advocacy colleagues will be shared in supervision sessions and re-visited in our next Team Meeting. I have also spoken to our admin team, to request that Swan Advocacy are invited to a team meeting in the near future, to discuss how we can work more closely. Manager confirmed that, as a team, they are undertaking updated training in relation to Autism and working with services users who have Personality Disorders. The aim of this is to

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	Update training in relation to Autism and working with services users who have Personality Disorders	improve the customer journey and minimise the frustrations/complaints that you have highlighted.
COM/7594 A SC (BL)	Complainant felt bombarded with emails.	The use of effective communication will be addressed in a supervision session, by the manager, with the social worker. Manager will also be proposing actions of ongoing training in respect of the access and use of effective communication with our customers, in particular those within the deaf and blind community.

	What we have Learned	What we have done
COM/4826 (TB)	There was a gap in the two-way communication and understanding which was unrelated to the cost of care.	Manager discussed with social worker and explored and agreed learning around the following; 1. To summarise what was agreed at any future meetings and send this out to those involved for clarity. 2. To organise follow-up calls and to check in with relevant parties and evaluate progress. 3. To instil methods to maintain these and adhere to them as good practice standards.
COM 4516 (DMc)	Communication during assessment process could be clearer to ensure the completion of assessments are transparent	CHC Hub to review communication throughout the assessment process and confirm good practice
COM/4221 (LC)		As a conclusion, I think your complaint is partially justified, the garage was entered and the mobile hoist brought through into the home causing distress to both your parents, however these events could have been avoidable given that various OT's on duty covering the previous 2 weeks had requested that the hoist be moved into the home. ***** regrets entering the garage to locate the hoist and will not do so again in similar circumstances. We have allocated the case to an alternative Occupational Therapist and your family will not have to work with ***** going forward.
COM/4896 (LW) (A SC)	Alongside the Major Adaptation Panel we hold for funding, we hold a complex case panel where there is conflict of opinion between staff and families so w	Manager will be taking this recommendation back to the Housing Standards Team, Adult Social Care service and Commission service as well as our contract provider.

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	can look at the issues across the service before they escalate.	
COM/4862 (A SC – Purbeck)) (LW)	Social Worker did not follow Dorset Council policies in relation to the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) or follow best practice when assessing care needs.	Manger will discuss the concerns raised with the Social Worker and ensure that she undertakes further training in relation to completing Mental Capacity Act Assessments, understanding the DoLS procedures and legal requirements and further development in assessing under the Care Act.
COM/4911 A SC North (BL)	Breakdown in clear communication between Service User, Social Worker and Medical Professional Unnecessary distressed caused	PARTIALLY JUSTIFIED In order to adopt a more positive relationship between service user and Dorset Council, decision has been made to end Social Worker's involvement and if necessary, transfer case to another SW should further support or work be needed. If there are no further concerns raised by Safeguarding teams and all parties are satisfied and happy, then service users request for referral will be ended with no further action.
COM/4626 A WA Housing Solutions (BL)		Goodwill gesture made £549.13
COM/4571 A SC (LW)	- We did not communicate effectively after we received the first complaint. - There was a void of time before the Locality Manager picked up the complaint when the previous person responded left Dorset Council. - We did not effectively keep the complainant updated with the progress of the complaint.	- Head of Specialist Services feels he should have been more proactive in offering an apology, when staff member left and has taken this learning on board. - Head of Specialist Services has reminded the team that, if someone has attended a meeting, they should be sent a copy of notes / minutes.

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COM/3651 A WA Housing (LC)	Confusion and poor communication regarding when complainant's mother had started paying for her accommodation.	In recognition of DC's part in this, we have agreed not to pursue outstanding fees.
COM5414 Financial Assessment (BL)	Consideration of all information available before coming to a decision.	Discussion with team re ensuring all appropriate information has been gathered. Action completed 01 Sept'23
COM/5070 Housing (LC)	Email sent to both parties using cc function resulted in a minor breach of the tenants data.	Manager has spoken directly to the officer responsible and her manager - it was a genuine error. She is aware of the use of CC and BCC in emails. Email guidance has been issued to all officers in Housing Standards about the use of BCC and CC on emails. Use of BCC and CC was discussed at a team meeting Reminder emails to the Housing Standards team about the issue and use of BCC and CC have since been sent.
COM/5922 (BL) ASC Safeguarding	Partial justification We need to be clear in our dealings with service users when discussing matters over the telephone and when we are not in an office environment – this can help to minimise any misunderstanding or confusion The provider and Registered Manager should have advised of the current situation at the home, enabling the complainant time to consider whether the placement was suitable. As the CQC are the regulator it is their responsibility to ensure that Providers exert their duty in this respect. Dorset Council acknowledges actions regarding the care home as being too late given the complainants experiences, however the circumstances around the complaint have had an impact and are contributing	Team discussion to ensure noise during phone calls is minimised or an explanation is provided to ensure this is not misconstrued in future. We have reissued guidance to all providers about the identification and management of contractures. This is to ensure that these are prevented from developing, and that the manual handling of any person with a contracture is managed carefully to reduce the person experiencing pain and any further reduction in mobility. As part of NHS England (enhanced health in care homes programme) work has been initiated to improve the quality of, and access to, healthcare advice and support in care home settings. Dorset Council are now awaiting final decision from the NMC

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	to learning across the system to help ensure that other people and families in similar circumstances do not have the same experience.	
COM/5853 (KR) ASC	When a staff member is off sick we need to ensure we check promptly what appointments they have on the day and make contact in a timely manner to cancel/rearrange, hopefully limiting the impact on the clients	Manager to discuss with Management colleagues in the team to ensure there is a robust process in place for this
COM/5981 A SC (BL)		Considering the individual circumstances XXXX, their age and recognising the changes in their health condition, I have decided to make a compassionate decision for her to remain at XXXX and be funded by Dorset Council. We confirm that we will be backdating this award to the date their funding fell below the threshold as advised by the latest financial assessment.
COM/5226 A SC (BL)	Though SW acted in the best interests (re safeguarding concerns) the intervention was misplaced as they did not consult the LPOA's	We will be taking forward some refresher training for teams around working with people who have LPOA's and decision making. Fee's will be reimbursed (£2,600)
COM 6239 A SC (BL)	Social Worker used inappropriate language when speaking to complainant	Social Worker apologised and matter discussed in supervision
COM/6344 ASC – LC	Best Value search was requested within 4 months of previous search moving a placement from temporary to perm. Feedback from brokerage was that this was not necessary and a desktop review of market was sufficient.	Improvements in process between Brokerage and Ops around use of BVS. This will be linked into the brokerage development workstream of transformation.
COM/6242 ASC – KR	Customer felt the duty worker lacked empathy towards situation	As a learning point, I will ensure that they reflect on how they ask questions and also how they offer advice on alternative provisions that may have already been tried
COM/5654 A SC (LW)	The Council will review its response to the safeguarding concern and consider what different steps it should have taken.	The Safeguarding Team should have considered progressing the concern to a section 42 (2) enquiry, this would have been the appropriate response to the concerns raised to allow a full review to have taken place. Further training has

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	The Council will also review the way it monitors safeguarding training within the care providers it commissions.	taken place within the service, and we have now incorporated an authorisation process at each stage of the safeguarding process. Reminder sent to team by manager stating: Please ensure you always triangulate the information you monitor during the visits ensuring: • You check the provider's policies and procedures and that they have a copy of Dorset's Safeguarding policies in place. • Ensure the provider is aware that they must report all safeguarding concerns including those that may relate to another provider or health & social care organisation. • Training records demonstrate all staff have received safeguarding training and that the provider assesses staff understanding through supervision and that refresher training is available. • Any incidents identified within care records and supporting documentation that you identify as a safeguarding concern are followed up with the provider to ensure an appropriate safeguarding alert has been raised with the Safeguarding Triage Team. Also discussed at team meeting.
COM 6394 ASC (KR)	Dealing with complex conversations on the telephone phone, particularly specialised needs	Discussions with duty worker and consider any training and learning to support duty role
COM/7895 A SC (LW)	The standard process for completing trusted assessments at the time of this DST occurring did not include members of the DST being contacted by Dorset Council following the DST occurring. Manger stated that there would be value in doing this going forward.	When receiving trusted assessor assessments in the future, the family member of the person will be contacted directly by Dorset Council staff to confirm the views given and provide opportunity for clarification of the needs for the person being assessed. Before signing off the DST, the member of staff in the Dorset Council CHC Hub will query if the recommended outcome has already been shared

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		with the family member if they were in attendance at the DST meeting.
COM/6708 (LC)	- Customer asked that the debt generated by Council error, be expunged. - Customer asked for letter of apology, not an email. The email sent to me followed on from a corrected email and, to date, I have been unable to print it out. - An invoice or credit note, that states that the 'debt' is cancelled and was generated due to Internal error. - Furthermore, there is new information, supplied to Direct payments, of Juliet's income for the year in question. She effectively received less from Universal credit which would have resulted in a different and reduced care payment.	following complaint the outstanding debt has been removed from our invoicing system. Unfortunately, the wording that can be used on the invoices is limited to certain phrases but the invoice received should be considered in line with this letter which clarifies that the customer did provide the evidence of the change in the mothers income to Dorset Council and the invoice was raised due to an internal error when the information was not shared with other teams who also required the information. The resultant debt has therefore been cleared from the invoicing system in full and apologised sincerely for distress caused to as a result of this error. In response to complaint, manager has put some training in place across the team, to ensure clarity around the sharing of information between teams where necessary, whilst also having consideration for the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
COM 7447 A SC (DMc)	Carers did not attend at expected time Carers did not provide appropriate service when finding person on the floor	Community hospitals to reiterate with all individuals leaving hospital on a short-term service that individuals and their families are aware that the support is not time specific – review of comms by care allocation team which confirmed when booking RCR support for discharge, email states care time unspecific Staff to consider if there are any risks that individuals might attempt to get out of bed unsupported, what telecare could support others present in the property to be alerted via sensors to prevent the likelihood of a fall and subsequent long periods on the floor and to consider any fall detection or lifting equipment that could

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		support an individual in this circumstance – Shared at discharge and flow meeting with acute and community hospital leads and completed September 2024
COM/ ASC LC	Referral to Compass	Apology that no referral was made to Compass until customer had to intervene and quote Dorset policies. We will review why this was missed and ensure that staff are reminded of the appropriate process for such referrals to prevent similar situations.
	Prioritisation of Financial Assessment	Social care worker should have requested a financial assessment as soon as KF was identified as having eligible needs and being below the capital limit, regardless of how they would be met. This has been addressed with the social worker, and manager has arranged for the whole team to have an updated training session around direct payments so they are clear on the process and improvements can be made to avoid this again. Acknowledged that this may have created confusion and inconvenience. Training has also been arranged for the financial assessment process and practitioners' advice.
	Hourly rate discrepancy	Regarding the rate of £15.50 that you were initially given and the subsequent communication from Compass stating that only £13 per hour could be paid, apology for the confusion and inconsistency. This is a discussion that the social worker should have had with the customer, and I apologise if this was not the case. Manager has requested that the newly allocated social worker review this with you to ensure the appropriate rate is paid.
	Request for bank statements and GDPR	We understand customers discomfort in providing personal bank statements and the concerns around GDPR compliance. Your concerns about GDPR are being taken seriously, and manager has spoken with the financial team to address them appropriately. They responded that your bank statements were requested as you had chosen to be a DWP appointee for X and subsequently had her income paid into your account. Therefore, although the account is solely in your name, the money belongs to customer and daughter. Should you wish not to

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		disclose your details, you can arrange for X's income to be paid into an account in X's name. Apology that you have not received the paperwork, including a copy of the care plan, from the Social Worker. This documentation is essential, and the delay is unacceptable. Customer did not get feedback promised in the letter from the Area Manager, dated 14th June 2024. Appropriate training has been put in place following feedback. There has also been a newly named social worker, and we have addressed the supervision issues with the previous social worker.
	Care Plan documentation	
	Feedback from area manager	Apology for lack of communication. A simple text or email introduction should have been arranged, and we will address this.
	New social worker contact	
COM/7739 A SC CB	Complaint around standards at young person's accommodation - list of actions required and monitoring needed.	Live action plan set up by complaints to monitor. Social worker allocated to review actions with facility manager after 1 month and 3 months.
COM/8026 LC	Have been on a waiting list for a social worker, to be told my son is not unwell enough	In response to complaint, have changed the way the referrals are screened at the point they are received into the team. We now have a staff member calling the person, or the referrer, upon receipt of it into the team. This enables us to gather the information needed to fully risk assess a situation prior to making allocation decisions. Customers situation discussed with the Area Practice Manager for Carers in Dorset, who has advised we create a referral for the customer. This will be to offer support in caring role. Manager confirmed that contact with the Carers Case Worker has already been established with a view to undertaking the assessment at the earliest mutual convenience.
COM 7932 A SC (DMc)	Request for a potential package of care declined by the care allocation team and there being a communication breakdown at	Support implemented for workers and discussed in supervision and at team meetings

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	this point which prolonged the process	
COM 7884 ASC (CB)	Staff member did not fully understand impact of their communication with customer with sensory loss.	Staff working with deafblind individuals are to attend training on sensory loss and deafblind training. SW to attend within the next 6 months.
COM 7571 ASC (CB)	Complaint about communication with customer from Traveller community	In response to your complaint, we have revisited our approach to supporting people from the Traveller community and are actively seeking an update to our training of July 2022 to ensure that we have a good understanding of the issues facing people from those communities when working with us to achieve positive outcomes for them.
COM/7608 A NSC (JK)	Complaint regarding ASB and safety fears from DC RSI property	• Increased Surveillance: Installing security cameras in communal areas to monitor and deter anti-social activities. • - Regular Patrols: Enhancing the frequency of patrols by housing officers and community safety teams to ensure regular monitoring and immediate response if anti-social behaviour is detected. • - Support Services: Offering support services and counselling for those involved in anti-social behaviour to address underlying issues and prevent recurrence. • - Enforcement Actions: Enforcing tenancy and licence agreements strictly, including issuing warnings, penalties, and Notices to Quit for repeated breaches, which could lead to eviction. • • - Collaboration with Police: Working closely with the police to ensure a prompt response to criminal activities and anti-social behaviour, and to aid in the prosecution of offenders. • - Educational Programs: Introducing educational programs aimed at promoting good behaviour, conflict resolution, and respect for communal living.
COM/6300 LGSCO A SC (KR) Paid: £200	The Council and Trust acted correctly in changing Miss Y's support but failed in communication, causing distress to Miss Y and Mrs X. They will apologise, improve processes, and make a symbolic payment.	• Apologise and pay £100 each to Miss Y for distress caused by poor communication regarding her ASD. • Apologise and pay £100 each to Mrs X for uncertainty caused by failing to record Miss Y's wishes on information sharing. • Within three months, report to the Ombudsmen on staff training in

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		ASD communication, accurate record-keeping, and revising protocols collaboratively with Miss Y and Mrs X.
COM/8032 A SC (CB)	Complaint about comments made by social worker.	Staff coached to be more reflective of their comments and the environment in which they are made.
COM/8154 ASC (BL)	We must emphasise to the individual authorising the care package of the direct impact in any delay of agreement can have long-term psychological impact to the person who was deemed fit for discharge from a hospital setting.	Partially justified We will in future ensure this information is emphasised to facilitate a quicker timeframe to authorise.
COM/7681 ASC (CB)	In response to your complaint we will continue to work with our health colleagues to ensure that they are clear around services being provided upon people's discharge from hospital. We will ensure the outcome of this complaint is shared with the teams within the council involved to provide clear learning in relation to communication and managing issues quickly to alleviate stress to complainants.	We have spoken to the hospital managers about the discharge hub communication of D2A packages of care.
COM/8165 LC	Signed paperwork to handover appointee of sons finances. Name was wrong, and customer had not initialled the changes, so the document wasn't legal. Concerns with sons finances being taken over and requested another social worker.	Manager spent time discussing finances and confirmed benefits now go into his bank. Discussed that at this time we would not be in a position to change Jakes social worker. In response to complaint, have reminded staff that if changes are made on documents they need to be initialled by the person.
COM/7757 LC	There was difficulty in transferring your care and support to Somerset Council Financial assessment review update sent whilst moving	In response to complaint, we have reminded staff of our responsibilities when someone moves to another local authority area to ensure a smooth continuation of care.

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COM/8069 LC £300	Failure to Communicate or Even Advise on Joint Funding	We have decided not to investigate Mr X's complaint about poor communication relating to funding his mother's care. The Council has upheld the complaint and apologised. It will make a payment to Mr X to recognise the uncertainty caused.
COM/7712 KR ASC	Communication Issues: Acknowledged that communication between and within services did not meet expected standards, resulting in unnecessary stress and anxiety for the complainant's family. Recognised the need to ensure other staff members are fully informed and prepared to provide support when a social worker is unavailable. Staff Interaction and Sensitivity: Identified that staff interactions, particularly within the Integrated Community Rehabilitation Team (ICRT), need improvement in the use of language and non-verbal communication to maintain professionalism and clarity. Care Assessment and Delivery: Recognised the limitations in care assessments, including the importance of in-person evaluations where possible, and the need for accurate documentation. Financial Guidance and Clarity: Acknowledged the importance of providing clear and accurate information about financial policies (e.g., Deferred Payment Agreements and the 12-Week Property Disregard) to avoid confusion.	Improved Communication Protocols: Reviewed internal communication processes to ensure better coordination between departments and services. Reinforced the importance of maintaining accessible and up-to-date case records for all team members. Staff Training and Reflection: Held reflective discussions with team members to improve the use of language and tone in interactions with service users. Emphasised the need for greater sensitivity and clarity when providing recommendations and addressing concerns. Care Assessment Practices: Promoted in-person assessments where practical and enhanced protocols for remote assessments. Implemented a review process to ensure care assessments are accurate before being shared with families. Financial Guidance Procedures: Obtained legal advice to address unique financial situations and established a precedent for handling similar cases in future. Improved training for the Finance Team to ensure clear and consistent communication about care costs and financial contributions.
COM/7339 KR ASC	Acknowledgment of a disconnect between assessed care needs and actual care provision, particularly regarding one-to-one	Revamping the duty system to adopt a more consistent approach to managing cases.

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	care needs, which were identified but not actioned promptly. Recognition of inadequate communication between social services, the family, and care providers, leading to confusion and frustration. Identification of inconsistent handling of cases due to the involvement of multiple duty workers and a lack of case allocation. Understanding that miscommunication regarding funding responsibilities caused stress and misunderstanding for the family. Realisation that errors and delays in processes, such as assessments and brokerage for care, contributed to unsuitable placements and insufficient care.	Commitment to ensuring a clearer communication process between service users, their families, and the council, with a focus on aligning care assessments with outcomes before starting brokerage searches. Decision to waive the service user contribution for temporary residential care in this case to address the miscommunication and resulting stress. Reflection on the need for thorough documentation and accurate care plans, particularly in urgent cases, to avoid similar errors in future placements. Addressing the overall handling of this case as a learning point to improve service delivery moving forward.
COM/ 7755 KR ASC	Dorset Council acknowledges the concern regarding the delay in undertaking a review of care needs. They recognise that due to pressures within the team, there was difficulty in allocating cases promptly. The Council learned that the communication between the team and the complainant could have been improved, especially when managers were unavailable. The issue of not offering an alternative contact in the absence of key staff has been noted. The complaint highlighted the need for a more timely review, particularly in cases involving	The Council has highlighted the importance of offering contact with any available manager when a primary manager is unavailable, ensuring that complainants can access support in such situations. Dorset Council is prioritising the case mentioned and aims to allocate the case soon, recognising the importance of allocating high-priority cases like the one mentioned in the complaint. Dorset Council intends to address the concerns regarding the lack of local support for people with Acquired Brain Injury, which will be discussed during the review. They have reinforced the message that if there is a change in circumstances, the complainant should contact the duty officer immediately for further assistance.

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	individuals with complex needs such as Acquired Brain Injury.	
COM 8323 A SC (DMc)	Ensure the correct 'Nearest Relative' is identified	Reminded AMHP to pay due diligence to correct identification of a patient's Nearest Relative. Remidner sent to the Team to investigate who NR is as per Section 26 of the Mental Health Act

COM/8180 Weymouth CB	Complaint about discrepancy in invoice for care charges	I am currently in the process of liaising with our invoicing team to request that your Mother's invoice is amended. You telephoned to cancel the weekend care visits and I apologise that this was not actioned.
COM/7503 Weymouth SC BL	Complainant should have been placed with the most appropriate team from the offset	Reassured that frontline staff receive mandatory training when working with people with autism. Yearly refreshers LM has gone through training records for staff to ensure all up to date Complainants case transferred to relevant team - CMHT Advice given on requesting reassessment Reviewing internal processes to better ensure residents receive a better service ongoing and that others are also supported in the best way.
COM/8284 Financial assessment team CB	Complaint re poor communication around the financial assessment and what is required for the assessment	The Finance and Assessment Team Manager has recognised that there is some learning identified in responding to queries resulting from the financial assessment, and will address this with their team.
COM/8361 ASC MCA (KR)	Miscommunication occurred between the 111 referrals, AAT, and the complainant, leading to confusion and distress and technical issues affected call connections, potentially hindering communication.	Steps will taken to review processes to minimise similar occurrences in the future.
COM/8351 ASC North (KR)	Verbal aggression towards staff or professionals is not acceptable and needs to be addressed to ensure respectful interactions.	A review meeting has been arranged to assess ongoing care and support needs, involving relevant professionals and the support provider, Altogether Care.

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	- The importance of considering the individual's preferences and support needs, especially when they do not identify as having a learning disability. - Concerns regarding the approach of staff, specifically about the social worker being perceived as bossy, were noted, indicating the need for improved communication.	- A referral has been made to SWAN Advocacy for an Independent Advocate to ensure the individual's voice is heard effectively. - Future concerns will be managed promptly through the duty team if ongoing social work or nursing support is no longer required.
COM/8206 ASC MCS (KR)	DC acknowledges the significant delay in completing the financial assessment and recognises the need for more timely decision-making when senior manager approval is required.	Measures have been implemented to ensure that decisions requiring senior manager approval are addressed more promptly in the future.
COM 8353 A SC (DMc) Financial remedy £500	Proper process to risk assess and mitigate concerns or take into account views of service user and views of family when planning transition to another placement at a care home	New practice guidance and staff training being rolled out in March which includes risk assessment training and timely assessments. Now have a more robust complex case forum.
COM 8632 A SC (DMc)	When communicating with service users or their families via email, always check 'junk mail' to ensure no communication is lost	Staff made aware of this and asked to ensure they always check 'junk mail'
COM/8518 A SC (KR)	The importance of ensuring formal complaints are properly recorded in the system to prevent misunderstandings. The need for clear communication regarding staff availability and alternative contacts. The significance of internal processes for monitoring care providers and addressing concerns.	Complaints and concerns are logged by the Quality Improvement team for monitoring and follow-up. Automatic out-of-office responses now direct individuals to alternative contacts to avoid communication delays. Ongoing provider monitoring ensures concerns raised are considered during quality assessments.
COM/8462 LC	Was a Best Interest assessment ever completed	From reading the records that are available, manager unable to find a Mental Capacity Assessment or a Best

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	• Was a mental health assessment completed for customer around capacity • Was a health and wellbeing assessment ever completed • Who did you have down as the next of kin? • Social Worker informed you that Michael was a priority • SW suggested that she would make sure that officer sent an apology - Bucket List – is there something in place for someone when they are dying	Interest Meeting regarding a move into property. I reviewed your request for customer to return to your care and I am unable to confirm that this was followed up by the Social Care Team. - Capacity Assessments are decision specific, and professionals are required to assess someone's capacity surrounding that particular decision. - A Strengths and Needs Assessment was completed on the 30/01/23 and a Care and Support Plan was completed on the 31/01/23. The Care and Support Plan was sent to you on the 17/02/23 by post. - I am unable to respond to this query due to data protection issues. - I am unable to discuss this with officer as she is currently unavailable but, from records, officer can see that customer spoke to her regarding concerns that you had. However, there is no record of the above statement. - The records indicate that the officer explained to you that Dorset Council's policy is to ask people not to shout at staff and to end the call if they continue. - Customer was able to support care user to have an improved garden space with furniture, Individuals can be supported to complete an end-of-life plan; this can be completed with their family and carers to ensure their voice is heard. I am unable to see if this was completed for him as this would be held within his health records. In response to your complaint, officer has considered what the Learning Disability Team can do differently to ensure that a person's voice is heard. Requests from family members should be considered and professionals should follow the Mental Capacity Act 2005, completing capacity assessments and holding best interest meetings to ensure the circle of support are all in agreement with the next steps. I apologise that this was not completed for Michael. The Learning Disability Team are committed to improving their practice in supporting individuals with a learning disability during their end of life. We regularly review findings from Learning from
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		Lives and Deaths – People with a learning disability and autistic people (LeDeR).
COM/8261 KR	DC has recognised the need to ensure that individuals receiving support services have access to regular reviews to assess whether their needs are being met and their intended outcomes are being achieved.	As a result of this case, the Council has decided to allocate a member of the Learning Disability Team to conduct a review of the individual's needs. The approach aims to ensure that support services remain appropriate and responsive to the changing needs of service users.
COM 8459 A SC (DMc)	Social worker could have been clearer in recording her evaluation of the risks associated in lack of personal care for complainant, specifically following review of professionals' meetings	Manager has followed up with her. Manager also did discuss the risks in more details during the Round Table meeting on 22 November 2024.
COM/4571	Complaint regarding unsafe housing of daughter with learning disabilities.	Complaint is fully justified and is being progressed to a Safeguarding Enquiry.
COM/8431 A SC (CB)	Initial visits were missed due to human error.	We have put in a new method of checking allocated calls to stop this happening again. The lessons learnt are as follows. Uncovered work is now checked nightly by the staff member and registered manager as a failsafe to ensure no missed visits on the grounds of un-allocation. -Office team members will be booked onto conflict resolution training on how to support upset/distressed customers over the phone. -
COM/8364 ASC (BL) Financial remedy £300	Escalation of concerns not successfully concluded due to structural changes. Communication/timeliness of response delayed. Communication and clarity of information shared with complainant has not been clear or concise. There have been similar issues regarding the Trusted Assessor Review (TAR) - it was not clear this was a chargeable service, as the process is new. Historical comments made regarding concerns already	Head of Service has made the decision to instruct our Credit Control team to cancel in full the service user charges made for this package of care, which amount to £452.60 in total Communication regarding the TAR process is to be made clear to all service users. We acknowledge delay in providing response and offer our unreserved apology and we are working together on strategies to avoid delays like this in the future. Having taken into account the circumstances, Dorset Council would like to offer payment of: £300 for inconvenience caused in line with LGSCO guidelines

	raised direct to provider will not be revisited, however we offer reassurances that these concerns are noted, and that provider is subject to robust ongoing monitoring by DC's Quality Improvement Team.	
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4 LGSCO Findings

The Ombudsman reported 33 UPHELD cases across Dorset Council as a whole authority. Of these only 8 were related to Adult Services.

As a percentage it would read as a big increase on 2023-24 as only 7 were upheld that year. However, this is an increase of 1 case

Dorset Council met the recommendations in 100% of these cases. The cases and outcomes are captured below:

- [Dorset Council \(23 004 865\)](#)

Statement Upheld Assessment and care plan 08-Jul-2024

Summary: There was fault as the Council did not invite Ms B to its Care Act assessment of her relative, Mr C. The Council continued to pay Mr C's care home fees for several months, even though Mr C was a self-funder. This meant that Ms B then received a large invoice which had to be paid immediately. The Council has agreed to apologise and make a small payment to Ms B to reflect the distress caused by the fault.

- [Dorset Council \(24 006 665\)](#)

Statement Upheld Assessment and care plan 19-Mar-2025

Summary: There was fault in the Council's communication and record keeping. The Council also did not always follow its complaint process and there was a small delay in the financial assessment.

- [Dorset Council \(24 007 557\)](#)

Statement Upheld Assessment and care plan 13-Mar-2025

Summary: Mrs B complained about the Council's poor communication, a delay in taking actions and a failure to carry out a continuing healthcare checklist. We have found fault in the Council's actions and the Council has agreed to apologise, pay a financial remedy and carry out the checklist.

- [Dorset Council \(24 009 449\)](#)

Statement Upheld Charging 27-Nov-2024

Summary: We have decided not to investigate Mr X's complaint about poor communication relating to funding his mother's care. The Council has upheld the complaint and apologised. It will make a payment to Mr X to recognise the uncertainty caused.

- [Dorset Council \(24 002 786\)](#)

Statement Upheld Charging 16-Oct-2024

Summary: We will not investigate this complaint about a failure by the Council to act on the complainant giving it notice that she wished to move from her supported living accommodation. This is because the Council has accepted it was at fault and provided a suitable remedy to the complainant which addresses the injustice caused. Further investigation would therefore unlikely lead to a different outcome.

- [Dorset Council \(23 014 444\)](#)

Statement Upheld Other 08-Aug-2024

Summary: We found no fault by a Council and Trust in terms of their decision to change Miss Y's support arrangements. However, we did find fault with how they communicated those changes to Miss Y and her mother, Mrs X. The Council and Trust will apologise for this and make changes to prevent similar problems occurring in future. They will also make a symbolic payment to Miss Y and Mrs X to recognise the distress this caused them.

- [Dorset Council \(23 012 384\)](#)

Statement Upheld Assessment and care plan 02-Jun-2024

Summary: Mrs X complains the Council has not dealt properly with adult social care for her and her son Mr Y. The Council is at fault because it has been unable to provide the care Mr Y needs. Mrs X and Mr Y suffered missed care provision and avoidable distress. The Council should pay Mrs X and Mr Y £1,000 each.

- [Dorset Council \(23 019 751\)](#)

Statement Upheld Assessment and care plan 13-May-2024

Summary: We will not investigate this complaint about the Council's delay in assessing Miss Y's needs to facilitate a planned move of accommodation. The Council has accepted fault and proposed a personal remedy and service improvements via its internal complaint process, and investigation by us would not achieve a more meaningful outcome.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

While the number of upheld Ombudsman cases in Adult Services remains relatively low, the increase in overall complaints and recurring themes such as communication failures, delays, and record-keeping issues highlight areas for continued focus.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen communication protocols with service users and families.
 - Ensure timely assessments and clear care planning.
 - Continue to monitor and learn from complaints and celebrate compliments.
 - Maintain and improve cross-departmental engagement to embed learning and service improvement.
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People and Health Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Meeting Date: 23 January 2026

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Performance Monitoring	To review the most recent performance information and use this to agree items to add to the committee work programme for further analysis.	Chris Heighway – Performance and Analytics Team Manager Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	
Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) strategy	- To scrutinise the council's budget and medium-term financial plan for the year 2026-27 - To make any recommendations to Cabinet.	Sean Cremer – Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial (Section 151 Officer) Cllr Simon Clifford – Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy	
Complaints Annual Report	- To review the complaints annual report and statutory children's services complaints data.	Antony Bygrave – Complaints Manager Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	

Meeting Date: 10 March 2026

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Housing Strategy	To scrutinise and review the Housing Strategy.	Iain Sim – Interim Corporate Director for Housing Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	
Children out of school or in home education		Jen Furnell – Corporate Director for Education and Learning Cllr Clare Sutton – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Skills	

Meeting Date: 1 April 2026

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Performance Monitoring	To review the most recent performance information and use this to agree items to add to the committee work programme for further analysis.	Chris Heighway – Performance and Analytics Team Manager Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	

Meeting Date: Unscheduled Committee Items

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Integrated Neighbourhood Teams		Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	•
Better Care Fund		Sarah Sewell – Head of Commissioning for Older People, Home First and Market Access Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	•
Children and Young People's Mental Health		Cllr Clare Sutton – Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	• Raised at the meeting on 22 September 2025. • To review the changes to CYP Mental Health services after 12 months
Young Carer Support		Cllr Clare Sutton – Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	• Raised at meeting on 17 November • Summer 2026
Reablement service performance		Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	• Raised at meeting on 17 November

			TBC 2026
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Informal Work of the Committee:

Date	Topic	Format	Members	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
May 2026	Annual NHS Quality Accounts		People & Health Scrutiny Committee	George Dare – Senior Democratic Services Officer	To provide a response to local NHS Trust Quality Accounts.
Quarterly	Review of the committee's performance and risk dashboards.	Informal Meeting	People & Health Scrutiny Committee	Chris Heighway – Performance and Analytics Team Manager	Review of the dashboards to identify potential future areas for review by the committee.
2 progress	Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)	Enquiry Day / Working Group	Cllrs Coombs, Somper and Bolwell	Kath Saunders – Head of Locality and Strategy (North)	Decision to establish an enquiry day was made at the People & Health Scrutiny Committee on 24 October 2024.

Annual Items:

Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report – November
 Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report
 Complaints Annual Report and statutory children's services complaints reporting
 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan – January
 Community Safety Annual Report
 Birth to Settled Adulthood – Independent Chair's Annual Report

The Cabinet Forward Plan - January to April 2026

(Publication date - ???)

Explanatory Note:

This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Cabinet and Council. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions

Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions of the Cabinet which are likely to -

- a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (**Thresholds - £500k**); or
- b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

c) determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Cabinet Members and Portfolios 2024/25

Nick Ireland	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding
Richard Biggs	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth
Jon Andrews	Place Services
Shane Bartlett	Planning and Emergency Planning
Simon Clifford	Finance & Capital Strategy
Ryan Hope	Customer, Culture and Community Engagement
Steve Robinson	Adult Social Care
Clare Sutton	Children's Services, Education & Skills
Gill Taylor	Health and Housing.
Ben Wilson	Corporate Development and Transformation

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
2026					

January

Quarter 3 financial management report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open Quarter 3 financial management report.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 29 Jan 2026		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	<i>Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial</i> <i>sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>
Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget Strategy report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open	Decision Maker Dorset Council	Decision Date 10 Feb 2026	Cabinet Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee People and Health Scrutiny Committee 29 Jan 2026 22 Jan 2026 21 Jan 2026	Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	<i>Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial</i> <i>sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>
Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan 2021 - 2038 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Item relates to the making (adoption) of the plan subject to a	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 29 Jan 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	<i>Ed Gerry, Community Planning Manager</i> <i>ed.gerry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
favourable outcome in the referendum being held on 4 December 2025.					
Climate programme capital workstreams over £500K Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Seek approval/delegated authority for specific climate capital workstreams over £500k threshold.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 29 Jan 2026		Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	Steven Ford, Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Sustainability steven.ford@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Antony Littlechild, Sustainability Team Manager antony.littlechild@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Section 151 Officer
 Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood development Plan Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Item relates to making (adoption) of the plan subject to a favourable outcome in the referendum being held on 4 December 2025.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 29 Jan 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	Ed Gerry, Community Planning Manager ed.gerry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)
New Forest National Park Local Plan consultation response Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open A response to the New Forest National Park Local Plan consultation.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 29 Jan 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	Terry Sneller, Strategic Planning Manager terry.sneller@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)
East Devon Local Plan	Decision Maker	Decision Date		Cabinet Member for	Mike Garrity, Corporate

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
consultation response Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Response to East Devon District Council Local Plan consultation.	Cabinet	29 Jan 2026		Planning and Emergency Planning	<i>Director for Planning</i> <i>mike.garrity@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Hilary Jordan,</i> <i>Service Manager for Spatial Planning</i> <i>hilary.jordan@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
Active Travel Infrastructure Plan Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The Active Travel Infrastructure Plan sets out the network for walking, cycling and wheeling. This includes identified improvements and guides future investment decisions. The plan has been reviewed by the Place and Resources Overview Committee.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 29 Jan 2026		Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Christopher Peck, Principal Transport Planner</i> <i>christopher.peck@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jack Wiltshire,</i> <i>Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering</i> <i>jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
School Admission Arrangements 2027-2028 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The annual statutory duty to determine the Admissions Arrangements and the Co-ordinated school transfer scheme for the academic year 2027-28.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 29 Jan 2026		Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Ed Denham, School Admissions Manager</i> <i>ed.denham@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To receive the Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 29 Jan 2026		Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Sunita Khattra-Hall, Corporate Director for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Families sunita.khattra-hall@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>
LADO (Local Authority Safeguarding Officer) Annual Report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To receive the LADO Annual Report.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 29 Jan 2026		Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Sunita Khattra-Hall, Corporate Director for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Families sunita.khattra-hall@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>
Combe House Annual Performance Report 2025 Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the annual performance report produced by the Dorset Centre of Excellence.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 29 Jan 2026	Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE) 1 Dec 2025	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>
March					

Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy Key Decision - Yes	Decision Maker Dorset Council	Decision Date 16 Apr 2026	People and Health Overview Committee Cabinet 2 Feb 2026	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	<i>Sarah How, Service Manager for Housing Solutions sarah.how@dorsetcouncil.g</i>
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Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Public Access - Open Proposed revisions to the councils Housing Allocations Policy, which governs how social housing is allocated to applicants on the housing register. The revised policy update aims to ensure fairness, transparency and compliance with legal requirements while addressing local housing need. Key changes may include amendments to priority criteria, eligibility requirements, changes to relevant legislation and operational procedures.			3 Mar 2026		ov.uk Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)
Dorset Tenancy Strategy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open A tenancy strategy to set out the kinds and circumstances for different types of tenancies that should be provided to social rented housing tenants, including arrangements for fixed term tenancies, for registered providers which hold stock in the Dorset local authority area, to pay attention to when formulating their tenancy policies.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 3 Mar 2026	People and Health Overview Committee 2 Feb 2026	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	Sharon Attwater, Service Manager for Housing Strategy and Performance sharon.attwater@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Iain Sim, Interim Corporate Director for Housing iain.sim@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Working with Communities Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To endorse the approach to working with communities in 2026 and 2027. To approve a Statement of Reasonable Expectations with Town Councils	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 3 Mar 2026		Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	<i>Jennifer Lowis, Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement</i> <i>jennifer.lowis@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> , Sam Crowe, Director of Public Health <i>sam.crowe@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Chief Executive</i>
Housing Standards Enforcement Policy & Statement of Principles for Determining Financial Penalties Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To agree the adoption of a new Housing Standards Enforcement Policy & Statement of Principles for Determining Financial Penalties to account for legislative changes being enacted under the Renters Rights Act 2025.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 3 Mar 2026	People and Health Overview Committee 2 Feb 2026	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	<i>Steven March, Service Manager for Housing Standards</i> <i>steven.march@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> , Iain Sim, Interim Corporate Director for Housing <i>iain.sim@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) 4 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open In the Spending Review in June, the Government announced a fourth round of the Local Authority	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 3 Mar 2026		Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	<i>Paul Derrien, Housing Enabling Team Leader</i> <i>paul.derrien@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> , Vikki Jeffrey, Senior Housing Funding and Delivery Officer <i>vikki.jeffrey@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Housing Fund (LAHF) 4 committing £950m to deliver a four-year programme nationally (from April 2026). This report will inform Cabinet that DC had been awarded £662,000 of capital grant and £4, 796 of revenue grant from MHLG to acquire 4 properties. Two of these properties were to be used as settled housing for refugees from Afghanistan and the other two to be used as temporary accommodation for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.					
Towards a new model of day opportunities Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Fully exempt To consider the results of the consultation on the future of day services in Dorset and use this information to shape a way forward for these services. The consultation was launched on a set of proposals across Dorset arising from Cabinet's agreement in principle to the new model for these services at its meeting on 10 September 2024.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 3 Mar 2026	Health and Wellbeing Board People and Health Overview Committee 11 Feb 2026 2 Feb 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Sarah Perrett, Commissioning Manager - Micro Provider & Voluntary Sector Development sarah.perrett@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Karen Stephens, Interim Head of Service - Market Relationships, Major Contracts, and Over 65's karen.stephens@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
E-scooter hire scheme: Weymouth,	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Place and Resources	Cabinet Member for	<i>Christopher Whitehouse,</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Portland and Dorchester; and Upton and Corfe Mullen Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To consider any recommendations from February Place & Resources Overview Committee on whether the Council should take advantage of the DfT's offer to local authorities to allow e-scooter rental trials. The paper is dependent on permission being granted by DfT and an application has already been made, the results of which would be known soon.	Cabinet	3 Mar 2026	Overview Committee 5 Feb 2026	Place Services	<i>Projects Team Manager christopher.whitehouse@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
Crisis and Resilience Fund Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The Crisis and Resilience Fund is replacing the Household Support Fund from April 2026. In December, National Government will give us the final detail of what will be included within the fund and we will shape our community offer accordingly and will bring it to P&H Overview Committee and Cabinet for agreement to commence on the 1 April 2026.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 3 Mar 2026	People and Health Overview Committee 2 Feb 2026	Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement	<i>Laura Cornette, Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships Laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Katie Hale, Head of Revenues and Benefits katie.hale@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Section 151 Officer</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - prioritisation of CIL funded infrastructure projects Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To provide an update on arrangements for spending strategic CIL. The report will address the clarification of current CIL funding commitments and the identification and prioritisation of CIL funded projects to be supported through the Capital Programme process.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 3 Mar 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	Andrew Galpin, Infrastructure & Delivery Planning Manager andrew.galpin@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)
Dorset National Landscape grant funding 2026-2029 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open In January 2026 the hosted partnership team for the Dorset National Landscape should be notified of its grant allocation from Defra for 2026-2027 and indicative allocations for 2027-2029. All support delivery of the Management Plan previously adopted by Cabinet.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 3 Mar 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	Mike Garrity, Corporate Director for Planning mike.garrity@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Tom Munro, Dorset National Landscape Manager tom.munro@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)
National Planning Policy Framework consultation response	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 3 Mar 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	Mike Garrity, Corporate Director for Planning mike.garrity@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Response to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework – proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system consultation.					<i>gov.uk, Terry Sneller, Strategic Planning Manager</i> <i>terry.sneller@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
Biodiversity Duty report 2023-24 Key Decision - No Public Access - Open This report outlines the actions taken by Dorset Council to comply with the Biodiversity Duty under the Environment Act 2021. It presents Dorset Council's first report on biodiversity summarising policies, objectives and actions to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the whole council.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 3 Mar 2026	Place and Resources Overview Committee 5 Feb 2026	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	<i>Bridget Betts, Environmental Advice Manager</i> <i>bridget.betts@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Mike Garrity, Corporate Director for Planning</i> <i>mike.garrity@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)</i>
Procurement arrangements for specified services for Children's Services Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The report seeks to clarify procurement arrangements for specified services to enable continuation of service delivery.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 3 Mar 2026		Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Kelly Henry, Head of Good Care Provision, Safeguarding and Business Support</i> <i>kelly.henry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
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April

Transformation Update Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Sets out the context, progress to date, and the rationale for targeted investment for transformation. This will ensure Dorset Council remains resilient and fit for the future, full aligned with Council Plan priorities and our medium-term financial plan.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 21 Apr 2026		Cabinet Member for Corporate Development and Transformation	<i>Nina Coakley, Head of Change</i> <i>nina.coakley@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Lisa Cotton, Corporate Director for Customer and Cultural Services</i> <i>lisa.cotton@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Chief Executive</i>
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May

Financial Provision for the Voluntary Community Sector Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The current 5-year financial agreement for the VCS will be coming to an end in October 2026. This paper will propose the new support for them.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date	People and Health Overview Committee	Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement	<i>Laura Cornette, Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships</i> <i>Laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jennifer Lowis, Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement</i> <i>jennifer.lowis@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, Corporate Development - Section 151 Officer</i>
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Private/Exempt Items for Decision

Each item in the plan above marked as 'private' will refer to one of the following paragraphs.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the shadow council proposes:-
 - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

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Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd Forward Plan - January to March 2026 (Publication date – 18 DECEMBER 2025)

Explanatory Note:

This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions

Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions which are likely to -

- (a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (**Thresholds - £500k**); or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

In determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Committee Membership 2025/26

Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Cllr Richard Biggs – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets, and Economic Growth

Cllr Steve Robinson – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Health and Housing

Cllr Ben Wilson – Cabinet Member for Corporate Development and Transformation

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
January 2026				

Dorset Council Delegated Decisions (as required) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note any decisions taken under delegation.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 19 Jan 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Dorset Council Organisational Update Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To present the developments on the part of the Council relevant to Care Dorset.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 19 Jan 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Samuel Poole, Interim Corporate Director for Commissioning & Improvement samuel.poole@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Care Dorset Update Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an update for shareholder members on matters relating to Care Dorset.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 19 Jan 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
March 2026				

Dorset Council Delegated Decisions (as required) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note any decisions taken under delegation.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 23 Mar 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Dorset Council Organisational Update Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To present the developments on the part of the Council relevant to Care Dorset.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 23 Mar 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Samuel Poole, Interim Corporate Director for Commissioning & Improvement samuel.poole@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Care Dorset Update Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an update for shareholder members on matters relating to Care Dorset.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 23 Mar 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>

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Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
Care Dorset Annual Business Plan Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Part exempt For the Shareholder Committee to consider progress in delivering the 5-year business plan, and any review of the plan as necessary.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 23 Mar 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Adults</i> <i>(Jonathan Price)</i>
Trading Company proposal Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Fully exempt Proposal to establish a new trading company.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date 23 Mar 2026	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Adults</i> <i>(Jonathan Price)</i>
Annual Reports				

Care Dorset Annual Business Plan (March) Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Part exempt For the Shareholder Committee to consider progress in delivering the 5-year business plan, and any review of the	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date March	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Adults</i> <i>(Jonathan Price)</i>
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Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
plan as necessary.				
Review of Terms of Reference (June) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note the shareholder committee terms of reference.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date June	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	<i>Grace Evans, Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer</i> <i>grace.evans@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>
Care Dorset Annual Performance Report (June) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the Care Dorset Annual Performance Report.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date June	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>
Annual report and Year end accounts (June) Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To receive the annual financial report.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd	Decision Date June	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Managing Director, Care Dorset Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)</i>

Private/Exempt Items for Decision

Each item in the plan above marked as 'private' will refer to one of the following paragraphs.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the shadow council proposes:-
 - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.



The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE) Forward Plan November 2025 to March 2026 (Publication date – 29 OCTOBER 2025)

Explanatory Note:

This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

Definition of Key Decisions

Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions which are likely to -

- (a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (**Thresholds - £500k**); or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

In determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

Committee Membership 2025/26

Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Cllr Richard Biggs – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth

Cllr Ryan Hope – Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement

Cllr Clare Sutton – Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education & Skills

Cllr Gill Taylor – Cabinet Member for Health and Housing

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
December 2025				

Dorset Council Delegated Decisions (if required) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note any decisions taken under delegation.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 1 Dec 2025	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>
Dorset Council Commissioner's Report Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an overview of the current position in relation to delivery by the Dorset Centre of Excellence against the commissioning agreement.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 1 Dec 2025	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Ross Bowell, Head of Service - Health, Education & SEND Commissioning ross.bowell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>
DCoE - Report of the Chair of the Board Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an update on the	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 1 Dec 2025	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Chair, Dorset Centre of Excellence Executive Director, People – Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
current situation at the Dorset Centre of Excellence and the Coombe House School, including progress made in relation to governance, leadership, staffing, estate, community use and finance.				
Annual Performance Report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open Do consider the Coombe House Annual Performance Report.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 1 Dec 2025	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Chair, Dorset Centre of Excellence</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Children</i> <i>(Paul Dempsey)</i>
March 2026				

Dorset Council Delegated Decisions (if required) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note any decisions taken under delegation.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 9 Mar 2026	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Executive Director, People - Children</i> <i>(Paul Dempsey)</i>
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Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
Dorset Council Commissioner's Report Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an overview of the current position in relation to delivery by the Dorset Centre of Excellence against the commissioning agreement.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 9 Mar 2026	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Ross Bowell, Head of Service - Health, Education & SEND Commissioning</i> <i>ross.bowell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>
DCoE - Report of the Chair of the Board Key Decision - No Public Access - Part exempt To provide an update of the current situation at the Dorset Centre of Excellence and the Coombe House School, including progress made in relation to governance, leadership, staffing, estate, community use and finance.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date 9 Mar 2026	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Chair, Dorset Centre of Excellence</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Cabinet Member	Officer Contact
Annual Reports				
Review of Terms of Reference (June) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To note the shareholder committee terms of reference.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	<i>Grace Evans, Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer</i> <i>grace.evans@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i>
Annual Performance Report (December) Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the Coombe House Annual Performance Report.	Decision Maker Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)	Decision Date	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Chair, Dorset Centre of Excellence Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)</i>

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5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
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 - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
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