Public Document Pack

Cabinet

Date: Tuesday, 9 September 2025
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Membership: (Quorum 3)
Nick Ireland (Chair), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chair), Jon Andrews, Shane Bartlett, Simon Clifford, Ryan Hope, Steve Robinson, Clare Sutton, Gill Taylor and Ben Wilson

Chief Executive: Catherine Howe, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset.

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic Services
Meeting Contact 01305 252234 - kate.critchel@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

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1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES 5 - 12

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2025.

3. 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.

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 MS 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. Further information read Public Participation - Dorset Council

All submissions must be emailed in full to Kate.Critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on Thursday 4 September 2025.

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. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

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 kate.critchel@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk 8.30am on Thursday 4 September 2025.

Dorset Council Constitution – Procedure Rule 13 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.

15. EXEMPT BUSINESS

To consider passing the following recommendation:

Recommendation

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in item(s) No 16 because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

The public and the press will be asked to leave the meeting whilst the item of business is considered. (Any live streaming will end at this juncture).

Reason for taking the item in private
Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

16. ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR SEND PROVISION — 199 - 210

Para 3
To consider a report of the Cabinet Members for Property & Assets and Economic Development.

CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 29 JULY 2025

Present: Cllrs Nick Ireland (Chair), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chair), Shane Bartlett, Simon Clifford, Ryan Hope, Steve Robinson, Clare Sutton, Gill Taylor and Ben Wilson

Apologies: Cllrs Jon Andrews

Also present: Cllr Peter Dickenson, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Hannah Hobbs-Chell, Cllr Rob Hughes, Cllr Sherry Jespersen, Cllr Steve Murcer, Cllr Louie O'Leary, Cllr Mike Parkes, Cllr Andrew Parry, Cllr Jane Somper and Cllr Duncan Sowry-House

Also present remotely: Cllr Laura Beddow, Cllr Bridget Bolwell, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr Sally Holland, Cllr Stella Jones, Cllr Paul Kimber, Cllr Cathy Lugg, Cllr David Morgan, Cllr David Northam, Cllr Emma Parker, Cllr Byron Quayle and Cllr David Taylor

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):
Jan Britton (Executive Director - Place), Sean Cremer (Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial), George Dare (Senior Democratic and Governance Officer), Megan Rochester (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Mark Tyson (Corporate Director for Adult Commissioning & Improvement), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director of People - Children), Julia Ingram (Corporate Director for Adult Social Care Operations), Beth Whittaker (Interim Corporate Director for Education and Learning), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Rachel Partridge (Deputy Director of Public Health), James Ailward (Head of ICT Operations), Jessica Maskrey (Head of Service – Assets & Property), Louis Wicks (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice) and Paul Scothern (Service Manager Capital Commissioning)

Officers present remotely (for all or part of the meeting):
Steven Ford (Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Sustainability)

24. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25. **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Ireland declared an interest in Item 11 - Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system replacement programme. He would leave the meeting for the consideration of the item.

Cllrs Clifford, Bartlett, and Sutton declared they had an interest in the Dorset Innovation Park as they had been appointed to the Shareholder Committee and had not yet updated their register of interests.

26. **Public Participation**

There was one question from a member of the public. A copy of the full question and the response is set out in Appendix 1 of these minutes.

27. **Questions from Councillors**

There were no questions submitted by councillors.

28. **Forward Plan**

The draft Cabinet Forward Plan for September to December 2025 was received and noted.

29. **Procurement of Recovery and Community Resilience Contracts**

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care introduced the report. The FutureCare Programme was being used to reduce the length of stay in hospitals and to review how these services operate However, the contracts were due to expire with no further options for extension. It was critical, that the services are maintained whilst the longer-term plans are finalised. This paper requested permission for a direct award of a further contract to existing providers, pending the outcome of longer-term transformation planning.

The Cabinet Member apologised for the item being added late to the Forward Plan and thanked the Chair and Vice-Chair of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee.

A member questioned why there was no other option than to award a direct contract. The Cabinet Member explained that changes through the FutureCare programme were still being finalised and at the current time it was the best option financially and operationally. There would be a full tender for the contract when the outcomes of the FutureCare programme were known.

It was proposed by Cllr S Robinson and seconded by Cllr N Ireland.

Decision:

(a) That, the current performance and the importance of the Recovery & Community Resilience contracts in the operation of the local urgent and emergency care system, be noted
(b) That the use of the direct award process C under The Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 (PSR23), be approved, to award five contracts to the existing providers in order to continue the existing Recovery and Community Resilience (RCR) service; and
(a) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Adults & Housing, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, to make all necessary arrangements to give effect to the direct award to the existing providers.

Reason for the decision:

Dorset Council was the Lead Commissioner, on behalf of the Dorset Integrated Care System, for the Recovery and Community Resilience (RCR) contracts, which were funded in the main from NHS Contributions via the Better Care Fund. This was a critical service to avoid bed blocking with knock-on effects for the Integrated Care Board and the Council. There was an essential requirement to have established contract provision in place.

30. **Urgent items - SEND Capital Programme**

The following items of business were considered by the Chairman as urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The item was considered to be urgent to enable the works to take place over the summer.

SEND Capital Programme

The report was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills. The item enabled work to take place over the summer holidays at the Dorchester Learning Centre. The numbers of places the work would support was outlined. The Cabinet Member explained the reason why the item had not been added to the Forward Plan and thanked the Chairman of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee for allowing the urgent item.

In response to how the Cabinet Member would ensure transparency and accountability with the decision, the Cabinet Member explained this decision was about giving delegated authority for the project and that the decision and project was in the open domain.

In response to a member's question about the item being urgent, the Corporate Director for Education and Learning took full responsibility for the item being urgent, explaining that officers thought the project was covered by a previous delegation given to them by Cabinet in 2022, and it was realised too late to add the item to the Forward Plan or as a regular item on the agenda.

In response to a question about what would happen if the project was delayed, the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills advised that the work would need to wait until the next summer holiday period and there would be inflationary costs.

There was general support from members for the project to take place and to address capacity issues with placements. Members thanked the Corporate Director for Education and Learning for taking responsibility for the late report.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr S Clifford.

Decision:

(a) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Capital Strategy and the S151 Officer to enter into a contract for the project set out in the exempt Appendix B of the report to Cabinet 29 July 2025.

(b) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Director People – Children's to enter construction contracts at the appropriate time provided the project forms part of the SEND Capital Programme and the project cost is contained within the overall programme budget.

Reason for the decision:

To ensure no further delays were incurred for the project set out in exempt Appendix B and to ensure the appropriate delegation was in place for future projects which form part of the SEND Capital programme.

31. **Exempt Business**

It was proposed by Cllr S Clifford and seconded by Cllr B Wilson.

Decision:

That the press and the public be excluded for the following items in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Reason for taking the item in private:

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The live streaming was concluded at this juncture.

32. **Disposals Update**

The Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth introduced the report and outlined the proposals.

Non-Cabinet and Cabinet members discussed the report and asked questions of the Cabinet Member and officers.

Proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr S Robinson.

Decision:

That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report of 29 July 2025, be approved.

Reason for the decision:

(a) To manage the disposal of sites surplus to requirements as identified as priority disposals by the Council.

(b) To generate capital receipts and save holding costs.

33. **Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system replacement programme**

Cllr N Ireland left the meeting for the consideration of this item. The Vice-Chair, Cllr R Biggs, chaired the remainder of the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Development introduced the exempt report, highlighted the key areas and outlined the recommendations.

Non-Cabinet and Cabinet members asked questions of the Cabinet Member and officers.

It was proposed by Cllr B Wilson and seconded by Cllr S Clifford.

Decision:

That the recommendations, as set out in the report of 29 July 2025, be approved.

Reason for the decision:

To support to provision of a new ERP solution to transform our ways of working, as an integral part of the "Our Future Council" transformation programme.

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 7.25 pm

Chair

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Public Questions – Cabinet 29 July 2025

Question from Karen Tippins, resident of Shaftesbury

On 15 October 2024, Cabinet awarded £876,278 in s106 funding to Shaftesbury Town Council, based on an August 2024 application that included plans later found to be non-compliant with Building Regulations and cost estimates underestimated by hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Since that decision, the project has been redesigned by a new architect, will require a fresh planning application, and is now over £500,000 above the original budget.

The Section 106 agreement was for community use, yet the first floor is now proposed to be rented to Dorset Council for a Family Hub and to the NHS - both statutory, employment based uses. This change was never consulted on with residents, and the land at Mampitts Green, East of Shaftesbury is designated for recreational, not employment use.

Will the Cabinet and/or Scrutiny Committee initiate a review into the October 2034 Cabinet decision, in light of these material changes and concerns over planning compliance, cost, and use of public funds?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning

The S106 award approved by Cabinet on 15 October 2024 included eight conditions that Shaftesbury Town Council have to comply with before any funding or land will be released by Dorset Council.

Five of these conditions require Shaftesbury Town Council to provide various pieces of documentary evidence. These include a detailed operating plan, project costing & delivery plan, ringfenced bank account, external funding grant applications and engagement with community groups.

Shaftesbury Town Council submitted these evidence documents on 18 July 2025, and they are currently being reviewed for their compliance with the conditions.

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The Cabinet Forward Plan
October 2025 to January 2026
(Publication date – 8 SEPTEMBER 2025)

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."

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.

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
October 2025					
Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access - Open** Dorset Council has a legal requirement to create a Domestic Abuse Strategy as set out in the Domestic Buse Acy 2021. This was the second Strategy the Council had written such legislation came into place. The Strategy requires sign-off from the Council.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 9 Oct 2025**	People and Health Overview Committee 15 Sep 2025	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	*Andy Frost, Service Manager for Community Safety andy.frost@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Ian Grant, Programme Coordinator ian.grant@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)*
Age Friendly Communities **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access - Open** To provide an update on the Age Friendly Communities Programme.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 9 Oct 2025**	Health and Wellbeing Board 24 Sep 2025 People and Health Overview Committee 15 Sep 2025	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	*Sam Poole, Interim Corporate Director for Commissioning & Improvement samuel.poole@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)*
Empty Homes Strategy **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access - Open** Part of the wider Housing Strategy, this report will introduce a strategy which sets out how the Council intends to bring long term empty properties back into use.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 9 Oct 2025**	People and Health Overview Committee 15 Sep 2025	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	*Steven March, Team Leader Standards East steven.march@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
Dorset Council - Farms Estates Strategy **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access - Open** Draft strategy for Cabinet consideration and approval following development and appraisal by the Farm Advisory Panel.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 9 Oct 2025**		Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth	*David Haynes, Senior Rural Estates Sueveyor david.haynes@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jessica Maskrey, Head of Service – Assets & Property jessica.maskrey@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)*
New Forest Mitigation Strategy **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access - Open** To seek agreement to adopt the New Forest Mitigation Strategy and apply a tariff to qualifying development to help fund the Strategic Access, Management and Monitoring projects identified in the strategy, thereby allowing the Council to give planning permission in the east of the council area.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 9 Oct 2025**		Cabinet Member for Place Services	*Hilary Jordan, Service Manager for Spatial Planning hilary.jordan@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)*
Aspire Adoption Annual Report **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access - Open** To consider the Aspire Adoption Annual Report.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 9 Oct 2025**		Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	*Jane Maclennan jane.maclennan@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, People - Children (Paul Dempsey)*

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Get Dorset and BCP Working Plan **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access - Open** To gain Cabinet approval for Dorset and BCP's Get Britain Working Plan and the related connect to work plan, and delegate authority for subsequent changes and allocation of further funding.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 9 Oct 2025**		Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth	*Jon Bird, Service Manager for Economic Development and Skills jon.bird@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)*
Developer contribution funding for community facilities at Mampitts Green, Shaftesbury **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access - Open** To provide cabinet members with an update on progress with the award of s106 developer contribution monies for the Mampitts Green project, Shaftesbury. To secure agreement of funding milestone variations, and provisions to enable early funding drawdown to support progression of the project	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 9 Oct 2025**		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	*Hilary Jordan, Service Manager for Spatial Planning hilary.jordan@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, Place (Jan Britton)*
November					

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Council Plan Progress Report **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access - Open** A bi-annual report to Cabinet on Council Plan delivery.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 11 Nov 2025**		Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	*Liz Crocker, Head of Strategy liz.crocker@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Chief Executive*
Quarter 2 financial management report **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access - Open** To consider the Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Report 2024/25.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 11 Nov 2025**		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	*Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Heather Lappin, Head of Strategic Finance heather.lappin@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk*
Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and budget strategy **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access - Open** To consider the Medium Term Financial (MTFP) and budget strategy.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 11 Nov 2025**		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	*Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Heather Lappin, Head of Strategic Finance heather.lappin@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk*
December					

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
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 9 Dec 2025**	People and Health Overview Committee 3 Nov 2025	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	*Sharon Attwater, Service Manager for Housing Strategy and Performance sharon.attwater@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Andrew Billany, Corporate Director for Housing andrew.billany@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)*
Towards a new model of day opportunities transformation **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access - Open** 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 9 Dec 2025**	People and Health Overview Committee 3 Nov 2025	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	*Sarah Perrett, Commissioning Manager - Micro Provider & Voluntary Sector Development sarah.perrett@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Mark Tyson, Corporate Director for Adult Commissioning & Improvement mark.tyson@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
Partnership Principles and Statement of Reasonable Expectations **Key Decision** - Yes **Public Access - Open** To approve a set of Partnership Principles with Community Partners and To approve a Statement of Reasonable Expectations with Town Councils	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 9 Dec 2025**	People and Health Overview Committee TBC Place and Resources Overview Committee TBC	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	*Steven Ford, Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Sustainability steven.ford@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jennifer Lowis, Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement jennifer.lowis@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Chief Executive*
2026					
January					
Quarter 3 financial management report **Key Decision** - No **Public Access - Open** Quarter 3 financial management report.	**Decision Maker Cabinet**	**Decision Date 27 Jan 2026**		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	*Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Heather Lappin, Head of Strategic Finance heather.lappin@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
Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy **Key Decision** - Yes **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.	**Decision Maker Dorset Council**	**Decision Date 10 Feb 2026**	People and Health Overview Committee 3 Nov 2025 Cabinet 9 Dec 2025	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	*Sarah How, Service Manager for Housing Solutions sarah.how@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, People - Adults (Jonathan Price)*
Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget Strategy report **Key Decision** - No **Public Access** - Open	**Decision Maker Dorset Council**	**Decision Date 10 Feb 2026**	Cabinet 27 Jan 2026 Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee 22 Jan 2026 People and Health Scrutiny Committee 23 Jan 2026	Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	*Sean Cremer, Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Heather Lappin, Head of Strategic Finance heather.lappin@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk*
May					

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
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 15 Sep 2025	Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement	*Laura Cornette, Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships Laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jennifer Lowis, Head of Strategic Communications and Engagement jennifer.lowis@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* *Executive Director, Corporate Development - Section 151 Officer (Aidan Dunn)*

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.

Cabinet

9 September 2025

Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership (DSCP) Annual Report April 2024 – March 2025

For Information Only

Cabinet Member:
Cllr C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director:
P Dempsey, Executive Director of People - Children

Report author and job title: Megan Cameron-Brown, Head of Quality Assurance & Partnerships

Email: megan.cameron-brown@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk; dorsetscp@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk;

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

The 2024–2025 reporting year marks a significant milestone for the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP), following its formal separation from the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership in August 2024. This transition has enabled Dorset to tailor its safeguarding arrangements to better reflect local needs and align with national reforms, particularly those outlined in *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)* and the *Stable Homes Built on Love* review.

1.1 Strategic Leadership and Governance

DSCP has established robust governance structures, including the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Board and a Pan-Dorset Lead Safeguarding Partner meeting. These forums ensure strategic oversight, accountability, and alignment across agencies. Education has been successfully embedded as a statutory partner, enhancing multi-agency collaboration and ensuring the voice of education is central to safeguarding leadership.

1.2 Key Achievements

Key achievements were the integration of education as a statutory partner through the formation of the Education Safeguarding Board, which has strengthened multi-agency collaboration. The Partnership completed targeted multi-agency audits on intra-familial child sexual abuse and neglect, resulting in informed action plans to improve practice. Training and development efforts were robust, with 126 practitioners responding to post-training surveys—84% reported high confidence and 95% demonstrated strong knowledge application. The voice of children and families was amplified through co-production initiatives, feedback mechanisms, and tools such as Mind of My Own, enhancing engagement and service responsiveness. Additionally, the inaugural DSCP conference, “Finding Our Girls,” focused on violence against girls and received overwhelmingly positive feedback, further reinforcing the Partnership’s commitment to addressing priority safeguarding issues.

1.3 Future Planning

Looking ahead to 2025–2026, the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP will focus on several key initiatives to strengthen safeguarding practices across the county. These include conducting bi-monthly multi-agency audits to assess and improve service delivery, launching a revised neglect strategy and toolkit to support practitioners, and hosting a conference centred on the impact of mental health on children. The Partnership will also continue to embed learning from previous quality assurance activities and enhance independent scrutiny and practitioner guidance to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

1.4 Conclusion

The DSCP has demonstrated resilience, innovation, and commitment in its first year as a standalone partnership. Through strategic leadership, collaborative practice, and a relentless focus on the voice of children and families, the Partnership has laid a strong foundation for continued improvement and impact. The dedication of all partners has been instrumental in driving forward safeguarding excellence across Dorset.

2. The report

2.1 Please see the appendix

3. Alternative options considered

3.1 Not applicable.

4. Legal considerations

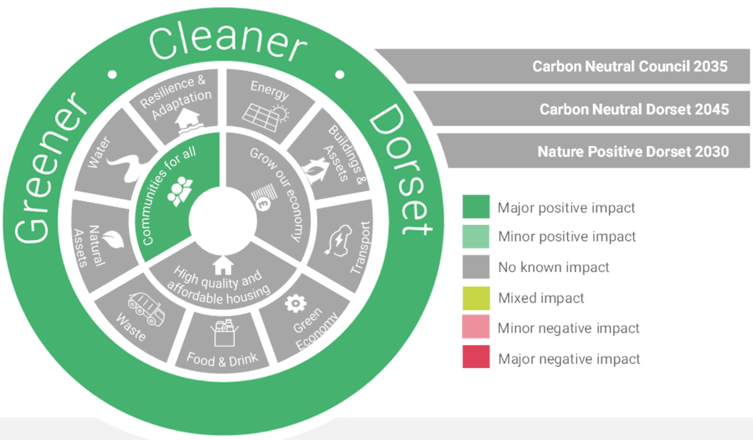
4.1 Not applicable. Statutory Report.

5. Financial implications

5.1 A strong safeguarding children's partnership has important financial implications. By promoting early intervention and coordinated multi-agency responses, it helps prevent escalation of harm, reducing the long-term costs associated with crisis services, health care, social care, and the criminal justice system. Effective safeguarding also improves service efficiency by streamlining processes, reducing duplication, and ensuring resources are targeted where they are most needed. Additionally, robust governance and accountability mechanisms support transparent budget planning and equitable funding contributions from statutory partners, as demonstrated by DSCP's shared funding model and investment in training, independent scrutiny, and statutory functions.

6. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

6.1



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)

	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	Unknown
2040 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	Unknown
2050 - County Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	Unknown

7. Well-being and health implications

7.1 A strong safeguarding children's partnership has profound well-being and health implications for children, families, and communities. It ensures that children are protected from harm, abuse, and neglect through coordinated multi-agency responses, which in turn promotes their emotional security, mental health, and overall development. By embedding trauma-informed practices and amplifying the voice of children and families, such partnerships foster trust, resilience, and early intervention—reducing long-term health inequalities and improving life outcomes.

8. Other implications

8.1 None

9. Risk implications

9.1 There is no decision needing to be made, this report is for information only. No risk.

10. Equalities

10.1 A strong safeguarding children's partnership actively promotes equality by ensuring that all children and families, regardless of background, identity, or circumstance, are protected and supported equitably. It helps to identify and address disparities in access to services, outcomes, and experiences—particularly for children and families from minority ethnic groups, those with disabilities, or those facing socio-economic disadvantage. Through inclusive practices, diverse representation, and culturally competent approaches, the partnership fosters a system where the rights of every child and family are upheld and their unique needs are recognised and met.

11. Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1: Dorset Safeguarding Childrens Partnership Annual Report 2024-2025.

12. Background papers

12.1 None.

13. Report sign-off

13.1 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 Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership

Annual Report 2024/2025

Contents

Section 1

Outlining the requirements set out in statutory guidance

The Safeguarding Children Partnership has a statutory responsibility, as set out in the Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance (2023) , for leadership and multi-agency co-ordination of "arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children." In other words, the Partnership is a strategic arrangement between the statutory safeguarding partners (Dorset Council Children's Services, Dorset Police, NHS Dorset, and Education has been more recently recognised as a statutory partner in the local –but not yet national - safeguarding children partnership arrangement) to ensure that there are effective child safeguarding arrangements in place in the local area.

As referenced, in the final Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (PDSCP) Annual Report 2023-2024, the previous PDSCP (including BCP Council) formally separated on the 1 August 2024 into two distinct Safeguarding Children Partnerships for each Local Authority area; the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) and the BCP Safeguarding Children Partnership (BCP SCP). The structure of the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership is set out in its multi-agency safeguarding arrangements document.

The rationale for the separation was underpinned by strategic changes, brought forward by the Stables Homes Built on Love review led by the Department for Education, which Dorset Council has been a wave one Pathfinder Local Authority for. This has brought with it a different operating model for Dorset Council Children's Services, in comparison to BCP Council Children's Services. In addition, the changes outlined in the Working Together Guidance 2023 posed an additional challenge for the Pan-Dorset arrangement. With the removal of the Independent Chair role, implementing the necessary changes becomes considerably more complex under a Pan-Dorset arrangement. By transitioning to a Dorset Safeguarding Partnership and a separate BCP Safeguarding Partnership, both areas have successfully adapted their structures and procedures seamlessly to align with the revised guidelines. There is a dedicated business team for each Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Whilst the Partnerships are now separate, there are some functions that have been agreed to be delivered jointly and these include:

- The safeguarding children training & development offer
- The child death overview panel arrangements (which is also joint with Somerset)

The Safeguarding Children Partnership website is also currently a joint website between the DSCP and the BCP SCP, which has been clearly structured into sections for each Safeguarding Children Partnership, as well as including a Pan-Dorset section which includes the above functions. There is a plan for the BCP SCP to establish their own website in due course.

Over the preceding 12 months, the DSCP recognised that to achieve the best possible outcomes:

- Children and families should receive targeted services that meet their needs in a coordinated way.
- There is a shared and equal responsibility between organisations and agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in the Dorset area.
- The responsibility to join up services locally rests with the safeguarding partners who have a shared and equal duty to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children across the Dorset area.

The Statutory Safeguarding Partners

Working Together 2023 defined the head of each statutory safeguarding partner agency (Dorset Council, NHS Dorset and Dorset Police) as the Lead Safeguarding Partner (LSP) who are as follows for the Dorset area:
• Catherine Howe, Chief Executive Officer, Dorset Council (for reporting period 24-25 this was Matt Prosser)
• Amanda Pearson, Chief Constable, Dorset Police
• Patricia Miller, Chief Executive Officer, NHS Dorset

As set out in Working Together 2023, the delivery of the multi-agency safeguarding functions and processes should be delegated to the Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) to allow the LSPs to focus on their joint functions and maintain strategic oversight.

In the Dorset area, the LSPs have identified the following senior officers in their respective agencies who have responsibility and authority for ensuring full participation with these arrangements:

• Paul Dempsey, Executive Director for People – Children, Dorset Council
• Mark Callaghan, Assistant Chief Constable, Dorset Police
• Pam O'Shea, Chief Nursing Officer, NHS Dorset

These representatives or delegates:
• Speak with authority for the safeguarding partner they represent.
• Take decisions on behalf of their organisation or agency and commit them on policy, resourcing, and practice matters.
• Hold their own organisation or agency to account on how effectively they participate and implement the local arrangements.

Pan-Dorset Lead Safeguarding Partner Meeting

In the new structures for each Safeguarding Children Partnership, there is a Pan-Dorset Lead Safeguarding Partner meeting which sits across both. This group meets, up to three times a year, to ensure the Lead Safeguarding Partners have strategic oversight of the multi-agency safeguarding functions. This meeting is structured into three sections: a Pan-Dorset section, a Dorset SCP section and a BCP SCP section. Some of the key Safeguarding Children Partnership items are presented to these meetings, including reviewing progress against the strategic priorities and agreeing the budget for each financial year. The Pan-Dorset section of the meeting allows for discussion and highlighting of any joint strategic issues across both Local Authority areas.

Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Board

The Dorset Safeguarding Children Board (previously called the Strengthening Services Board up to the 1 April 2025) is where the Delegated Safeguarding Partners deliver their joint functions, as set out in Working Together (2023). This is chaired by the Chief Executive of Dorset Council with representatives at executive level across the Partnership. The Board has been meeting 6-weekly; however, it was agreed at the last board on the 8th of May 2025, that the board would now meet quarterly. The first quarterly meeting has been scheduled for September 2025. Highlights from the Board are shared with the Lead Safeguarding Partner meeting.

Sitting underneath the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Board are several partnership groups and sub-groups (see Appendix 1 for structure). Each of these groups and sub-groups have a focus on delivering on a certain area of the multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements. For example, the Education Safeguarding Board has been established following the work Dorset Council have been completing as a Pathfinder for the Stable Homes Built on Love Review. This board specifically considers how education is driving forward the partnership priorities and has its own delivery plan against the priority areas.

Partnership Training and Development

The Safeguarding Children training offer continues to be offered as a Pan-Dorset function. This includes a core safeguarding training provision with this being open to attendance from a wide range of agencies, to ensure that there is a multi-agency attendance at the courses.

The administration and co-ordination of the training is paid by income generation.

The Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Training is a trusted and dependable provider, ensuring that organisations meet their safeguarding training requirements. Courses are commissioned through the Learning and Development Framework and meet the specific quality control and contract compliance measures.

The offer is regularly updated with both local and national changes in policy and procedure, as well as in relation to any specific learning that emerges from the completion of local rapid reviews, Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs) and any other quality assurance or scrutiny activity delivered by both the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership and the BCP Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Child Death Overview Panel

Statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 defines child death review partners as “local authorities and any Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) for the local area as set out in the Children Act 2004 (the Act), and as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017”.

When a child dies, in any circumstances, it is important for parents and families to understand what has happened and whether there are any lessons to be learned. The responsibility for ensuring child death reviews are carried out is held by ‘child death review partners,’ as defined within Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, and set out in current legislation. Child death review partners must make arrangements to review all deaths of children normally resident in the local area and, if they consider it appropriate, for any non-resident child who has died in their area.

Child death review partners, for two or more local authority areas, may combine and agree that their areas be treated as a single area for the purpose of undertaking child death reviews. Child death review partners in Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, Dorset, and Somerset have agreed to treat Pan Dorset and Somerset as a single area, resulting in a joint Pan Dorset and Somerset Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) undertaking child death reviews for Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole, Dorset, and Somerset children.

The CDOP panel met 7 times in 2024/25 and reviewed 59 deaths that have occurred prior to this annual reporting period of April 2024-March 2025: 31 Pan-Dorset deaths (16 Dorset and 15 BCP) and 28 Somerset deaths. There is a delay in child deaths being reviewed at a full CDOP, due to the information gathering process that needs to take place with involved agencies, including the deaths first being reviewed at local child death review meetings, before a review takes place at CDOP.

In addition, CDOP has been notified of a total of 25 deaths of Pan Dorset residents and 27 deaths of Somerset residents which have occurred during this annual reporting period of April 2024-March 2025. These deaths will be reviewed by CDOP within the next annual reporting period. In addition, there were 5 notifications of Out of County children, resident elsewhere who died within our areas (3 Dorset Out of County / 2 Somerset Out of County) – these deaths will be reviewed and recorded by their home Local Authority. The annual CDOP report April 2024-March 2025 is due to be published in November 2025.

Section 2

Dorset Area Profile

The population of the Dorset Council area is 384,809, a rise of 1.3% since the 2021 census. There are 73,056 children and young people aged 0-19 representing 19% of the total population, an increase of 0.5% since the 2021 census. 30% of the population are aged 65 and older (nationally 19%) and the working age population aged 16 to 64 represents 54% of the population.

English is the main language in Dorset with 98.2% of the population in 2021. There are though over 80 languages spoken across Dorset, however residents for whom non-English is a main language make up a very small proportion of the population. The top 5 languages spoken in Dorset are English with Polish, Romanian, Nepalese and Bulgarian spoken by 0.7% of the population. According to the 2021 Census 93.9% of the population are white British, a decrease of 1.7% from the 2011 Census with the remaining 6.1% of residents from Black and Minority Ethnic groups (national 25.6%), this rises to 7.8% for children and young people (aged 24 years and under). Just over half of our residents, who are from an ethnic minority, report as being 'White Other.' This is mainly made up of White European residents.

The beautiful landscapes and towns and villages of Dorset can conceal hidden challenges: there are significant areas of deprivation, mostly in urban areas (mainly Weymouth and Portland). Eleven areas in Dorset are within the top 20% nationally for high levels of multiple deprivation, ten of these within Weymouth and Portland (data from 2019). In 2018, South Dorset was ranked at 533 among 533 parliamentary constituencies in England for social mobility with some 70% of the population of the constituency living in Weymouth & Portland. There is rural deprivation linked to isolation and difficulty accessing housing, transport, and essential services. The Children's Society estimates that approximately 23% of Dorset Children are living in poverty, with up to 45% in some wards (2021).

There are 46,415 children from Reception to Year 14 in Dorset (January 2025 school census). Dorset has 158 Schools Academies, Maintained and Free. Overall, for the quality of education rated good or better by Ofsted, Dorset has 77% of all its education establishments rated as good or better and this is in comparison to the national picture of 84%. Overall, for the effectiveness of leadership and management rated good or better by Ofsted, Dorset has 86% of all its education establishments rated as good or better and this is in comparison to the national picture of 93%.

Attainment at the expected standard at Key Stage 2 for the combined Reading/Writing and Mathematics was at 55%, 5% below national and in the bottom 20% of all local authorities. At Key Stage 4, 42% of pupils achieved Basics (GCSE English & Maths) at grade 4 or higher, compared to 46% nationally. 63% achieved grade 5 or higher, compared to 65% nationally. Both indicators remain a challenge for Dorset. The gap between disadvantaged young people and their peers is still not where we need it to be and faced further challenge due to the pandemic and the impact on school attendance.

Crime is generally low with Dorset being within the top ten safest places to live in the UK. First Time Entrants of young people to the Criminal Justice System are relatively low in a national context.

1. Data taken from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-2023 population estimates, published July 2024

Section 3

Progress against statutory guidance

A) Activities Achieved and B) Impact

We have been implementing Education as a key safeguarding partner within our new safeguarding activity, in relation to Education being included as a statutory partner in the safeguarding children's partnership. This has involved the establishment of a dedicated Education Safeguarding Board, co-chaired by the Corporate Director for Education & Learning, Dorset Council, and a local head teacher, the board is made up of senior leaders from early years to post 16 education providers across Dorset. In addition, representatives from this Board attend the other Partnerships' sub-groups which allows for education's input in all areas of work across the child safeguarding partnership. The impact of this, is we now have education embedded in our safeguarding children's partnership as an equal statutory partner, which means that the voice of education is now evident across the partnership.

The neglect action plan that was formulated following the independent scrutiny work of neglect in 2023/2024. We have updated our neglect strategy. The impact of this is having a clear strategy on how we address neglect across our multi-agency partners in Dorset.

A multi-agency quality assurance activity has taken place in relation to intra-familial child sexual abuse, which is one of the Partnership's current priority areas. This has resulted in a report outlining the findings and recommendations. The partnership will now take this forward to develop actions to take forward to improve the confidence of front line practitioners in the partnership to work with children who have been sexually abused.

The first conference of the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership took place in collaboration with Dorset Council's Pineapple Project on the 25 November 2024. The Conference was titled: 'Finding our Girls'. The Conference was linked to our priority area number 1 - Violence experienced by children and young people - by specifically looking at violence against girls.

The conference had two keynote speakers, one of these being Laura Bates who is the founder of the Everyday Sexism Project. Laura talked about issues around global gender inequality and some of her campaign work around tackling this inequality. The conference also heard from Kendra Houseman, who is the founder of Out of the Shadows, which is a training and consultancy service which delivers safeguarding training informed by the experiences of survivors of abuse. In addition, we also heard from local agencies such as Paragon Dorset, which provides services to victims of domestic abuse, as well as an overview of the Chesil Hidden Girls initiative, which promotes safety of girls and women in the Weymouth & Portland area.

The conference was attended by 264 practitioners across the Dorset and BCP areas. We received a great response rate from attendees of 72% to polls and Q&A sections during the event.

We also received great feedback from attendees following the event including:

- 85% rated their experience at the conference as excellent
- 100% agreed that the conference had achieved its aims as set out at the beginning of the day
- 100% agreed that the conference has helped them think about what their organisation can do to support the violence against women and girl's agenda

The Partnership's conference followed a conference held by the Office for Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) earlier in the year, on the 16 July 2024, in relation to violence against women and girls. Partnership work in relation to violence against women and girls continues across the partnership.

In 2024-2025, a diverse range of training courses, including mandatory and priority sessions, such as:

- Safeguarding L2 Foundation
- Working Together (WT) Initial and Update
- Neglect
- Safer Recruitment and its Update
- Managing Allegations
- Online Safety
- Missing Exploited Trafficked Children (MET)
- Child Exploitation Basic Awareness
- Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) Introduction
- Domestic Abuse (DA)
- 7-point briefing aimed at practitioners, in relation to the local protocol on bruises or injuries to non-mobile babies and children, was shared following the review of the local protocol.
- Annual review of Pan-Dorset policies and procedures

Engagement and Impact of Training Attendance

The training co-ordinator is responsible for issuing a survey, to all attendees of the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children training offer, three months post their attendance at the course, to be able to assess the impact of the training in relation to their professional practice. The survey also includes a question around the practitioners' use of multi-agency toolkits, developed by each of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships, to support their practice in certain areas (e.g. working with parents/carers who are or have experienced domestic abuse.)

Our training programs have seen significant engagement with the completion of this survey, with a total of 126 responses received from staff across the Dorset Council area. Key highlights from these surveys include:

- **High Confidence Levels**: 84% of delegates reported feeling confident or very confident in applying their learning.
- **Knowledge Application**: 95% of delegates rated their knowledge as good or extensive.
- **Practical Changes**: 64 delegates reported implementing changes in their practice, positively impacting children, young people, and families.

(c) Evidence of the impact – including contributions of each safeguarding partner

Dorset Council Children's Services

In the last 12 months, Dorset Children's Services have been embedding and adapting the Families First for Children Pathfinder model. The aim of the programme was to test-and-learn approaches to increasing effective, preventative multi-agency support and protection services, in response to the Government's strategy 'Stable Homes, Built on Love', published in February 2023.

Pathfinder areas have designed, and are now delivering, services across four key policy pillars:

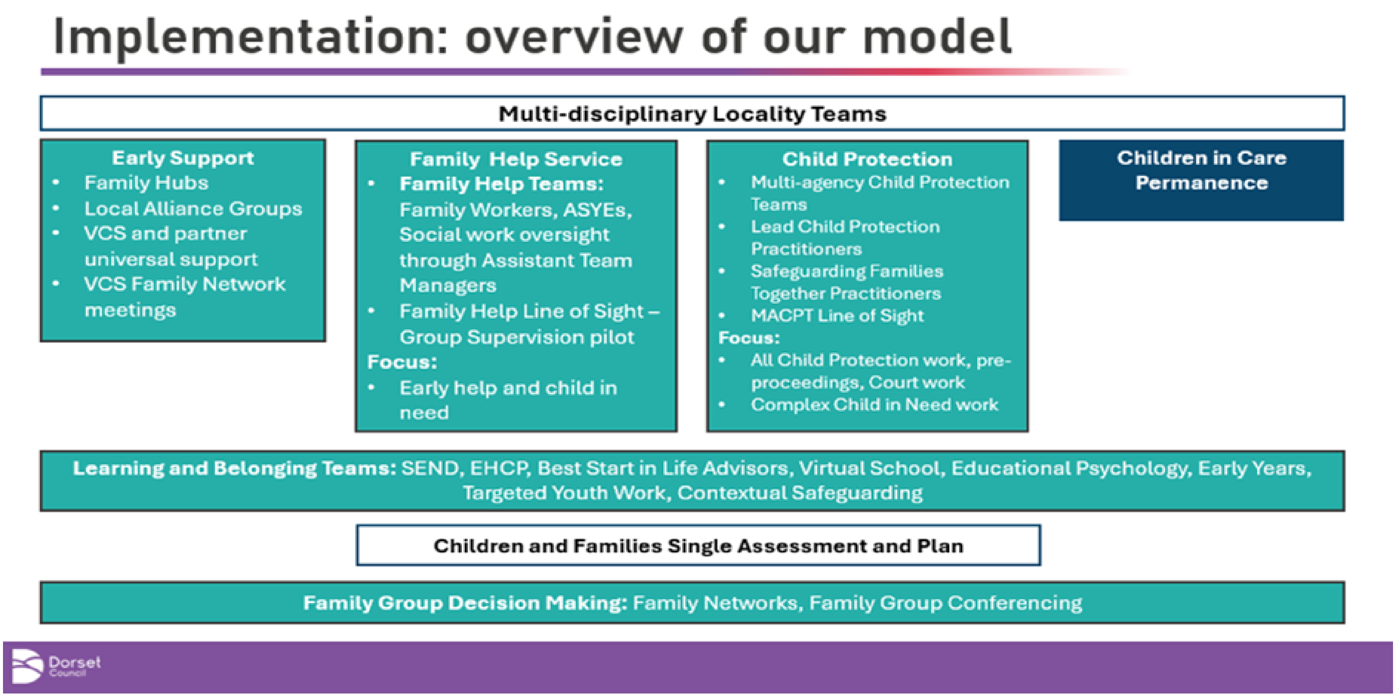
1) Family Help,
2) Child Protection,
3) Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
4) Family Networks.

The Families First for Children (FFC) Pathfinder programme concluded on 31 March 2025, having successfully demonstrated the feasibility of its delivery model and significantly influenced national policy. As the programme transitions into a business-as-usual phase, service delivery and transformation will continue in accordance with the locally agreed and costed plans. This marks a pivotal step in embedding the Pathfinder model into routine practice.

On 20 March 2025, the national guidance for the Families First Partnership Programme was published, introducing several key changes from the earlier Wave 1 and Wave 2 Design Specifications. Notably, the new guidance provides greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams and the Lead Child Protection Practitioner. It also omits specific requirements for Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, as these are now addressed in the updated *Working Together to Safeguard Children* framework. Furthermore, Family Network Support Packages will not be implemented, and Family Group Decision Making will be mandated only at the pre-proceedings stage, although its use is encouraged earlier in the process.

In response to the updated national guidance, work is actively underway to adapt the local model (as outlined in the diagram below) to ensure full alignment with the new design specifications by March 2026. This adaptation process is critical to maintaining consistency with national expectations, whilst preserving the strengths of the local implementation.

In March 2025, Dorset welcomed Ofsted inspectors for the ILACS inspection, which resulted in an 'outstanding' rating for Children's Services. The final report highlighted the positive impact of the Families First Pathfinder model on both practice and outcomes. Inspectors noted that effective social care practice was evident across all pillars, with statutory duties being met. The 'Family First' approach was praised for empowering families and fostering ownership of their improvement plans. Additionally, secure multi-agency decision-making, through effective line of sight meetings, was recognized as a key strength. The introduction of single-family help assessments, by skilled practitioners, was also commended. The report acknowledged the significant governance and oversight provided by the Pathfinder partnership, as well as the local authority's strong learning culture and openness to external scrutiny. Multi-agency collaboration was further emphasized, with partners from health, education, and police sectors contributing to a deep, shared understanding of children's experiences at both strategic and operational levels.



Birth to Settled Adulthood/Transitions

The Birth to Settled Adulthood program, in Dorset, is designed to provide dedicated support services for children and young people with complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as they prepare for adulthood. This service launched in April 2024 and aims to support individuals from birth to 25 years of age.

The Birth to Settled Adulthood (B2SA) programme has made significant progress in the last year, with key developments across service delivery, integration, and strategic planning. Phase 1 implementation focused on expanding Mosaic system access, piloting Care Act assessments, and launching a new outcomes framework. The Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) pathway was further developed, alongside the establishment of a Keyworker Service and a commissioning strategy. Data and performance monitoring remain a priority, with a Power BI dashboard in development. A partnership with Oxford Brookes University is supporting evaluation through a survey rollout planned for late 2025.

Phase 2 has refocused priorities on integration, communication, and targeted support, including the Best Start in Life and All Age Continuing Care initiatives. The Dorset Keyworker Service, a critical NHS priority, is progressing toward full implementation, aiming to reduce inpatient admissions for young people with complex needs. In parallel, the housing strategy has advanced with innovative models to increase supply, improve standards, and meet complex accommodation needs. This includes leasing temporary and settled accommodation, piloting bespoke housing solutions, and reviewing allocation policies. Despite challenges such as limited resources and high demand, the programme continues to drive forward with a strong cross-directorate approach, ensuring young people are supported to live safe, independent, and fulfilling lives.

Dorset Children Services Ofsted Outcome

During March 2025 we went through an Ofsted ILACS inspection of our Children's Services. The report was published on the 9th May 2025. The grading achieved is in the table below.

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children in care	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	**Outstanding**

Ofsted quoted in the report that:

"Thinking 'Family First' has empowered families and enabled them to have ownership of their plans to support improvement in their lives. Effective line of sight meetings brings about secure multi-agency decision-making and have become an integral part of practice. Of particular note is the careful introduction of single-family help assessments implemented by skilled practitioners"

Dorset Council Education & Learning

The 2023 update to Working Together to Safeguard Children acknowledges the key role of education in safeguarding and sets out the requirements for local areas to create an environment which enables education settings to be fully engaged, involved and included in local safeguarding arrangements. The Families First for Children Pathfinder required Pathfinder areas to implement a range of activities to test and learn 1) how these arrangements might be put into practice and 2) the impact of such arrangements.

In Dorset, we have worked together to create a system that builds on the work already undertaken by settings to safeguard children, optimising the input of the education sector leaders. Ultimately putting the voice, wisdom and expertise of education at the heart of safeguarding leadership. The Dorset Education Safeguarding Board has been established as part of the Families First for Children reforms and aims to strengthen the voice of education within safeguarding.

The work of the Education Safeguarding Board and Members is to:

- To identify and discuss topics of interest, issues and risks raised by educational providers and, where required, to highlight these to the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) and make recommendations.
- To evaluate the nature and quality of safeguarding within educational settings through a range of quality assurance activity, including audits, analysis of data, feedback from practitioners, children and carers and section 175/157 audits.
- To support educational providers with awareness of and compliance with national legislation, policies, guidance, best practice and findings from national case reviews related to safeguarding including highlighting changes.
- To liaise with educational providers to provide awareness and understanding of any key local developments in relation to safeguarding including guidance, findings from inspection, audits and case reviews.
- To feedback to the DSCP on the implication of decisions and policy changes relating to safeguarding in education settings.
- To support/develop training and learning opportunities with the safeguarding partnership training team in respect of safeguarding and education.
- To provide an opportunity for educational providers to identify and share best safeguarding practice and consider themes from Ofsted / Independent Schools Inspectorate reports / inspections.
- To support education settings to be inclusive and respond effectively to issues of diversity including supporting the sector to respond to the changing and complex needs of children with SEND both within mainstream, specialist and alternative provisions.
- To enable representatives from educational settings to link with the work of the DSCP, attend subgroups as appropriate and provide feedback to the Education Safeguarding Board.

- To develop a work plan to carry out such work as agreed with the DSCP in line with the partnership and the group's priorities.
- To have oversight and ensure completion of actions that arise from Rapid Review and Child Safeguarding Practice Review.
- To report annually on the work plan and contribute to the production of the DSCP's annual report.
- Education Safeguarding Board members will seek the views of their respective setting/organisation/ sector groups and bring forward and key areas for discussion at in turn Board members will cascade key messages to their settings and sector groups.

The Board consists of representatives from key educational bodies and others, including Early Years, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, Special Schools, Post 16 provision, Alternative Providers, Learning Centres, Independent Schools, Virtual School and Dorser Council Children's Services.

The safeguarding Board meets four times within an academic year. The first year has run between September 2024 – September 2025. During this first year the board has identified a number of key workstreams that are currently in train and led on by different members of the board.

Dorset Police

Over the last 12 months, the Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) resources have been aligned along local authority boundaries to allow for more effective partnership working. The structure that has been aligned to the Families First for Children Pathfinder has now been introduced, with regular monitoring in place. Dorset Police attend national Pathfinder meetings, which illustrate the progress Dorset has been able to make in comparison to some other areas. The CAIT team has continued to see high levels of demand and is therefore investing in additional staff (4 officers/staff).

Dorset Police have identified a need to increase the omni-competence in the MASH staff to be able to respond to high demand within the different demand areas, such as Public Protection Notifications (PPN's), attending and contributing to strategy discussions and child protection case conferences. On average, the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) process 1200 Child Public Protection Notices a month. On average, the MASH is collating 110 strategy discussions a month. In 2024, 142 requests were made under Sarah's Law legislation. The Police have provided reports for all initial child protection conferences in the last 12 months.

A new PPN form contains a mandatory voice of the child section, which ensures officers/staff completing the form obtain this. Our Investigative Standards Team have been commissioned to complete audited reviews of crimes, stop search forms, PPN's and other material generated in working with young people. The reviews include whether the voice of the child has been captured. The Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT) review all referrals regarding online abuse to ensure safeguarding advice is required and the appropriate action taken.

The Right Care Right Person (RCRP) principles ensure that individuals, requiring a public service, are dealt with by the right public service. Dorset Police, together with partner agencies, have now successfully implemented RCRP.

For example, partners from health and social care will conduct their own welfare checks before contact with the police, this means the correct professional is engaged who is best placed to deal with the individuals needs, rather than historically the police being asked to take responsibility.

Dorset Police recognise that care is required when assessing risks to children who are often needing extra support with the challenges they face. Care must be exercised to ensure that the child's voice is heard, whilst ensuring their best interests are protected and responded to. Control Room staff and officers have received training in this area and are supported through ICT decision making tools. Where an immediate threat to life

or risk of serious harm exists, Police Officers will always respond.
Dorset Police are currently involved in exploring and implementing a pathway of sexual harm behaviour work to divert juveniles to an education pathway, where the offending does not warrant a criminal justice approach.

Dorset Police are anticipating a National Child Protection Inspection (NCPI) over the next 12 months. This will be carried out by HMICFRS. To prepare, the Force has established an internal board that will be driving quality assurance work and taking note of the findings of other Forces' NCPI reviews.

NHS Dorset (Integrated Care Board)

The Integrated Care Board (ICB) is a statutory partner for both BCP and Dorset safeguarding children partnership's. NHS Dorset continues to collaborate closely and actively participates with statutory duties. NHS Dorset has continued to follow local multi agency partnership procedures for safeguarding children in the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership. NHS Dorset internal safeguarding assurance group (SAG) has monitored safeguarding governance quarterly, throughout the year. Highlights from this group are shared with the Chief Nursing Officer. NHS Dorset oversees the governance arrangements for the NHS providers in the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

NHS Dorset chairs the Dorset CSPR sub-group and, as part of that, has chaired several Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice reviews, (LCSPRs), ensuring any identified learning, recommendations and actions are shared within the NHS.

NHS Dorset has led on implementing ICON across the NHS and this has been introduced to Children's Social Care, and other agencies, to ensure that parents and carers receive consistent messages regarding responding to crying babies.

NHS Dorset had led on revising the bruising and other injuries to non-mobile babies and children protocol and is currently leading the review of the local unborn baby protocol.

Aggregated Scrutiny

Whilst the Partnership, under the PDSCP arrangement, had recruited independent scrutineers with subject matter expertise for each specific area of scrutiny required. Going forward, the DSCP have agreed to recruit to an independent scrutineer role who will provide scrutiny on our strategic priorities and the functioning of the partnership.

During 2024-2025, the partnership completed two multi-agency assurance activities; a multi-agency learning circle and the intra-familial child sexual abuse quality assurance work.
The learning circle enabled the partnership to bring together frontline practitioners from across agencies to reflect on the child's journey through services and understand any learnings to improve multi-agency working to improve outcomes for this child. To prepare for the learning circle each agencies completed a chronology, this was then combined into one complete chronology that was shared with partners prior to the learning circle. This exercise alone demonstrated the missed opportunities that happens because of not having a multi-agency chronology for children where multiple partners are working to address the needs of the child and family. The partnership is hoping to test the development of a multi-agency chronology in 2025-2026 through the multi-agency child protection team and the changes that will be made to Dorset's model to align with the national families first guidance.
The Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership undertook a multi-agency quality assurance activity, in respect of assessing the effectiveness of the multi-agency response to intra-familial child sexual abuse (IFCSA) of children under 18 years of age in the local area. As per previous Partnership quality assurance activities, this

involved the triangulation of findings from a few quality assurance activities including audits on a selection of children, young people and families' case records, obtaining the views of parents and the voice of multi-agency practitioners and managers.

The quality assurance process identified several strengths in this area of practice including:

- Strong multi-agency collaboration was evident for the majority of the families audited, where effective information sharing between key agencies such as the school, children's social care and health services supported a co-ordinated response
- Child-centred practice was consistently demonstrated, with children's voices being actively included in planning processes.
- Timely interventions were noted across the majority of families audited with recognition particularly for the Police in implementing preventative strategies, such as the use of Sarah's Law.

The quality assurance activity also identified a number of areas for development including:

- Risk assessments completed were sometimes outdated or insufficient
- There was a lack of professional curiosity in relation to the protective capacity of non-offending parents
- Supervision and management oversight were inconsistent, with limited evidence of contingency planning or reflective supervision
- Delays in police investigations negatively impacted children's emotional wellbeing and planning
- Professionals working with the families demonstrated over-optimism, underestimating risks and prematurely closing or stepping down families without fully resolving the concerns

Broadly, the quality assurance activity identified the following themes for development by the Partnership going forwards:

- The need for increased professional confidence and training in working with children and young people experiencing sexual abuse
- There is further work to be done to highlight the importance of understanding the emotional complexity of family dynamics, particularly when children do not disclose their abuse due to loyalty or affection for the abuser, or even fear or what would happen if they told.
- The quality assurance work highlighted a lack of specialist tools and professionals with the right level of expertise to interpret the voices of non-verbal or neurodiverse children.

These areas of development have formed the basis of an action plan that is being overseen by the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership to ensure that the learning is embedded in practice. The action plan will be drive forward by the task and action subgroup which meets 6 weekly. The progress of this action plan will be overseen by the multi-agency quality practice action group and is due to be reviewed at the September 2025 meeting.

Voice of children and families

The voice of our children and families has continued to be a priority for the partnership in 2024-2025. This has been demonstrated in the following activities:

- Feedback, engagement, and co-production are all part of the work we do. A Family Engagement officer has been supporting with work aligned to both Pathfinder and Safeguarding Partnership priorities. Undertaking some co-production of the Section 47 advice and support, now offered by Quality Assurance Reviewing Officers, was developed first with parents who had already been subject to Child Protection processes, to understand how we could strengthen our practice. We are also seeking feedback in relation to our Family Group Conferences and Family Network Meetings to support, enhance, and strengthen our offer.

- The families also volunteered to help shape leaflets and guidance to inform families of our new offer.
- We are further developing our family engagement and involvement and have been working with the Family Rights Group to develop the Dorset Participation Forum (Family Advisory Boards). This is building on the Safeguarding Families Together evaluation and feedback from families to help provide scrutiny, challenge and guidance on our safeguarding partnership arrangements.
- We have worked directly with children and young people in the co-design of the Gender Identity Toolkit for Practitioners. This has now been quality assured by the legal team and will progress through Children's services and then Dorset Council Senior Leadership sign off, followed by partnership governance to be signed off at the Dorset Safeguarding Children board.
- We ensure that our practice across the multiagency partners is trauma informed and all direct work with children is age appropriate, empathetic and relational.
- When we undertake multiagency audit work, we aim to gather feedback from both parents and children regarding the services they have received.
- At key decision-making points we ensure that we speak to children, whether that be for their Child in Care review and Child protection conferences.
- To further support our work with children we have committed to using Mind of My Own with children and young people. We are rolling this out gradually to support and embed this practice across services,

Young People's Voice: Insights from the Pineapple Project Survey

The 2025 Pineapple Project survey, building on its 2022 origins in Chesil Locality, has significantly expanded its reach to include all locality areas and genders across the county. With 1,548 responses, the survey offers a powerful and diverse representation of young people's experiences, perceptions, and needs regarding safety in their communities. The findings reveal both commonalities and disparities across age groups, genders, and localities, providing a rich foundation for targeted action and systemic change.

Young people articulated a clear understanding of what contributes to their sense of safety. The presence of friends and family, good lighting, visible police presence, and access to safe community spaces such as youth clubs and gyms were among the most frequently cited factors. Notably, over 800 respondents highlighted the importance of having designated safe places with trusted adults, reinforcing the value of community-based guardianship. However, a concerning number—over 480—also reported feeling safer when carrying items for self- protection, including personal alarms and, alarmingly, weapons. This underscores a pressing need to address both perceived and real threats in their environments.

Experiences of harm were widespread and deeply troubling. A significant number of young people reported being followed (421), sexually assaulted (262), approached by people in cars (232), and subjected to street harassment (352). These experiences were disproportionately reported by young women, highlighting the gendered nature of safety concerns. The data also revealed that harm is not limited to physical violence but includes a spectrum of violations such as being filmed without consent and exposure to gang-related crime. These findings demand a holistic safeguarding response that recognizes the full continuum of harm.

When it comes to disclosure, young people primarily turn to parents (1175), friends (937), and other family members (504). However, a substantial number also reported not telling anyone (142), citing barriers such as fear of not being believed (958), fear of punishment (805), and not wanting parents to find out (922). These contradictions—where 75% say they would tell a parent, yet 64% don't want parents to know—highlight the complexity of trust, fear, and autonomy in young people's lives. The data calls for a nuanced approach to safeguarding that includes empowering peer support, building trust in professionals, and engaging parents as informed partners.

The survey also revealed that 43% of respondents felt there was “no point” in disclosing harm, and 61% feared they wouldn’t be believed. These figures are a stark reminder of the systemic barriers that silence young people and the urgent need to create environments where their voices are heard, validated, and acted upon. The Pineapple Project’s emphasis on community guardianship, peer support, and contextual safeguarding is a direct response to these needs, aiming to build a culture where safety is not only prioritized but co-created with young people.

Funding

The Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership is committed to the principles of equitable and proportionate funding with shared and equal responsibilities as set out in Working Together (2023). There is a dedicated Business Team to support the work of the partnership across the Dorset area. The budget will also fund the Partnership’s statutory functions, such as completion of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Independent Scrutiny activity.

The PDSCP separated on 1 August 2024 and the balance of partnership funding of £76,390 was transferred to the new partnership arrangements. Each partnership received £38,195, a 50% share of the available balance.

From 1 August 2024 a dedicated team supported the DSCP work, funded by contributions from Dorset Council, NHS Dorset ICB and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Dorset. As at the 31 March 2025 the DSCP funding balance was £60,716.

The DSCP contributions for 2025/26 are expected to total £151,570. This funding plus the carry forward balance will be used to fund the work of the DSCP.

(c) Future Plans

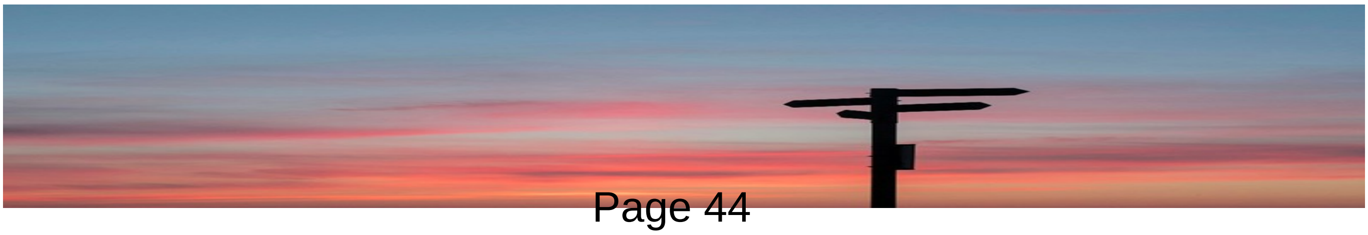
Going forward in 2025/2026 the partnership will be completing multiagency audits bi-monthly against the priority areas, auditing the journey of 5 children and families across the partnership. This will begin in quarter 3.

In quarter 3 of 2025/2026 we also have planned a multi-agency assurance activity which will be scrutinised by an independent scrutineer is planned to take place in quarter 3 this year in relation to pre-birth to 2-year-olds. This is following 4 rapid reviews that took place across quarter 4 2024/2025 and quarter 1 2025/2026 in relation to non-accidental injuries to non-mobile babies and neglect.

The training team plan to relaunch the Neglect offer for free, aligning with the launch of a new strategy and toolkit. A proposal approved by the Dorset SCP MAQPAG recommends a 5% uplift on course fees, linked to the cost-of-living rise. Cancellation fees for free courses have increased from £25 to £30.

£10,000 from the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Training Team budget will be used by DSCP (MAQPAG) for free training offers linked to LCSPRs or annual conference costs, as each partnership will have its own conference.

The DSCP’s next annual conference, due to be held in December 2025, will have a focus on Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing.



Section 4

Additional Information

Priority areas

The previous Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership agreed three priority areas for their work from 2023/2024, and these continued for 2024/2025 (as set out below). These priority areas are currently being reviewed, now that the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership has been formed as a separate partnership, and the updated priorities will be published on the DSCP website shortly.

Priority One: Violence experienced by children and young people including.

- Sexual violence and abuse
- Domestic violence and abuse
- Physical violence and knife crime

A) Sexual violence and abuse

Data, included in the Partnership's Performance Report for Quarter 3 (2024/2025), shows that the overall number of children at risk of sexual exploitation has been increasing over the last three quarters.

Dorset Multi-Agency Child Sexual Abuse toolkit

As previously reported, in the Partnership's annual report 2023/2024, a Dorset multi-agency child sexual abuse toolkit had been devised and published, on the DSCP website, aimed at multi-agency practitioners to provide them with additional guidance and support in this area of practice. The impact of this toolkit on practitioners' practice is continually being assessed by the Partnership, through multiagency audits and independent scrutiny activity. In addition, the partnership completes a 3-month impact survey, which is distributed to those who have attended the Safeguarding Children Partnership training offer, in relation to practitioners' use of the toolkit. What we have currently found is that there is limited evidence that practitioners or managers are using the toolkits to support the work they are doing with children and families. Individual agencies and partners are developing strategies to socialise the toolkits with practitioners and set reminders for them to be used in our work with children and families. The bi-monthly audit exercise will enable us to regularly review the use of toolkits and track improvement overtime.

Dorset Extra-Familial Risk and Harm

During 2023/2024, the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership renewed their strategic approach to working with Extra-Familial Harm. Extra-familial harm is defined as safeguarding risks to children and young people that present outside of the home environment, for example through drugs, gangs, youth violence or sexual and criminal exploitation. During 2024/2025, the Partnership continued to develop their strategic response to extra-familial harm and have published an extra-familial harm toolkit, on the DSCP website, for use by multi-agency practitioners. This includes key documents, such as the terms of reference for the governance structure in the Partnership in relation to extra-familial harm, including for the tactical and strategic groups.

An Extra Familial Risk and Harm Panel has been in place since September 2023. This is a multi-agency panel, held on a weekly basis. There continues to be good partnership engagement with these Panels.

The work of the Pineapple Project, part of the wider Chesil Hidden Girls concept, continues to develop in its mission to safeguard the young women of Dorset, when they are outside of their family homes and in the local community. The work of Chesil Hidden Girls was highlighted at the Violence Against Women and Girls conference, led jointly by the Pineapple Project & the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership in November 2024. The Pineapple Project are continuing to develop their number of community guardians across the Weymouth, Portland Dorchester and Swanage areas.

In 2025/2026, the Partnership have scheduled multi-agency audits to take place to test that the Extra-Familial Harm strategy has been embedded and to take forward any identified learning and recommendations as required.

B) Domestic violence and abuse

CSPs (Community Safety Partnership) in Dorset lead on the multi-agency response to Domestic abuse across the partnership and the updated strategy for 2025-2029 is currently being agreed and will be published shortly on this page Dorset community safety partnership - Dorset Council

Domestic Abuse training to all frontline police staff has included the importance of capturing the voice of the child and their wider safeguarding needs. Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Panels review Dorset Police's response to Domestic Abuse and the Force is also a member of the Wessex Domestic Abuse Joint Interoperability Group with the Crown Prosecution Service to identify good practice and areas for improvement.

Domestic abuse quality assurance work – implementation of the action plan

The Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership undertook a multi-agency quality assurance exercise, in respect of partnership work with families where there was domestic abuse and a specific focus in audit activity on under 5s during 2023/2024, as reported in last year's annual report.

During 2024/2025, the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership implemented the learning identified in the action plan.
Action taken by the Partnership: The existing multi-agency policies, procedures and toolkits in relation to domestic abuse were reviewed to ensure that they had specific guidance in relation to undertaking assessments where there is domestic abuse including child to parent abuse and coercive controlling relationships between young people. This included reviewing the High-Risk Domestic Abuse (HRDA) procedure that also sits within the multi-agency domestic abuse toolkit.

In addition, the Partnership sought assurance from Dorset Police, Dorset Healthcare, NHS Dorset on behalf of primary care and Children's Social Care in relation to the assessment tools they use for working with domestic abuse and that they have appropriately considered this learning point. All of these partner agencies provided assurance in relation to the assessment tools that they utilise and the further development work that is happening within each agency in relation to ensuring the voice of the child, young person and parents/ carers are effectively captured and responded to.

Action taken by the Partnership: The timely issuing of reports for child protection conferences has been taken forward by the Families First for Children Pathfinder, as part of the test and learn phase of this programme. This is being tracked through the multi-agency chid protection action group.

Action taken by the Partnership: The multi-agency safeguarding children training offer in domestic abuse was reviewed to ensure that the learning identified through the quality assurance activity was included, and this is now part of the training programme for multi-agency practitioners for 2025/2026.

In addition, 7 pilot sessions have taken place across a selection of Dorset schools in relation to training on coercive control which has been delivered by You Trust. These have been received well by the schools, strengthening the schools understanding of spotting the signs of coercive control in relationships. These sessions are currently being fully evaluated, led by the Safeguarding Schools team in Dorset Council, to see if these could be rolled out wider across all Dorset schools.

Action taken by the Partnership: Dorset Council colleagues in the Community Safety Partnership have established a business case for a digital actions management system that would allow for better tracking of actions from HRDA. This was endorsed by the (HRDA) Quality Assurance Group and is currently being progressed, with completion of this scheduled for 2025/2026.

C) Physical Violence and Knife crime

Work in relation to knife awareness and knife crime sits within the Community Safety partnership (CSP), recognising the collective need to support and address this within the community.

Dorset Police continue to support Operation Sceptre (a national initiative in relation to knife crime) across Dorset and this includes diversions, targeted intervention for those most at risk of being involved in knife crime, and educational work for schools across the County with the firearms and knife education work (FAKE). F.A.K.E. is also supported by the safer school's network and our education colleagues, reaching between 2500 and 3000 young people twice a year. Work continues, throughout the Dorset local authority area, around the serious violence duty with working groups targeting knife crime intervention and education for young people, along with funding opportunities to support this work. The Dorset Police Safeguarding Hubs incorporate knife crime and physical violence when considering exploited children. Those identified as being high-risk will be 'managed' in conjunction with both Dorset Council and BCP Council.

The Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership recognises that limited multi-agency quality assurance activity has yet been completed in relation to physical violence and knife crime. The Partnership are proposing for the strategic priority areas 2025-2027, that this priority area is renamed to extra-familial harm which will include physical violence, knife crime, sexual violence and abuse, including online abuse. Although the data shows that public place violent crimes and knife crimes shows stability in this area, with numbers broadly similar to the same quarter last year, this does remain an area of concern and thus has been proposed to be retained as a priority area going forwards.

Priority Two: Children's mental health and emotional well-being

Children's mental health and emotional well-being continues to be a priority area for the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership. However, in recognition that there are several elements to this area which are not all overseen by the DSCP, the Partnership have proposed to narrow the focus of this priority area, going forwards for 2025-2027, to the impact of children's and parental mental health and well-being on children.

Dorset Police will seek to minimise the occasions young people are arrested and taken to a custody environment and will use voluntary attendance where possible. If they are arrested, there is an increased focus to ensure they are dealt with quickly and effectively and will be screened for achieving a 'reachable moment' to connect with the young person. The Force has become more effective at using and enforcing bail conditions, civil orders and Domestic Violence Protection Notice's to lessen the emotional impact of domestic abuse on children within the household.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Transformation

CAMHS is undergoing a transformation currently, and this will include having a presence at the Family Support and Advice Line (the 'front door' to Dorset Children's Services), as well as offering support in schools. This is due to be implemented in 2025/2026.

Priority Three: Neglect

During the past year, Dorset Police took part in the Neglect Scrutiny Panel and is now implementing the learning identified which included greater professional curiosity. Training has been provided to officers and staff to inform them of what they should be looking for when in a house or engaging with young people. Allocation of children and young people where neglect is a feature will be discussed at the Force Tasking meeting to ensure appropriate ownership.

Independent Scrutiny Project – Implementation of the action plan

During 2023/2024, an independent scrutiny project was commissioned by the Partnership focusing on neglect.

During 2024/2025, an action plan has been implemented and progressed to address the learning and recommendations from the scrutiny activity. This is still being finalised and due to be completed in 2025/2026.

Some of the actions completed to date are the following:

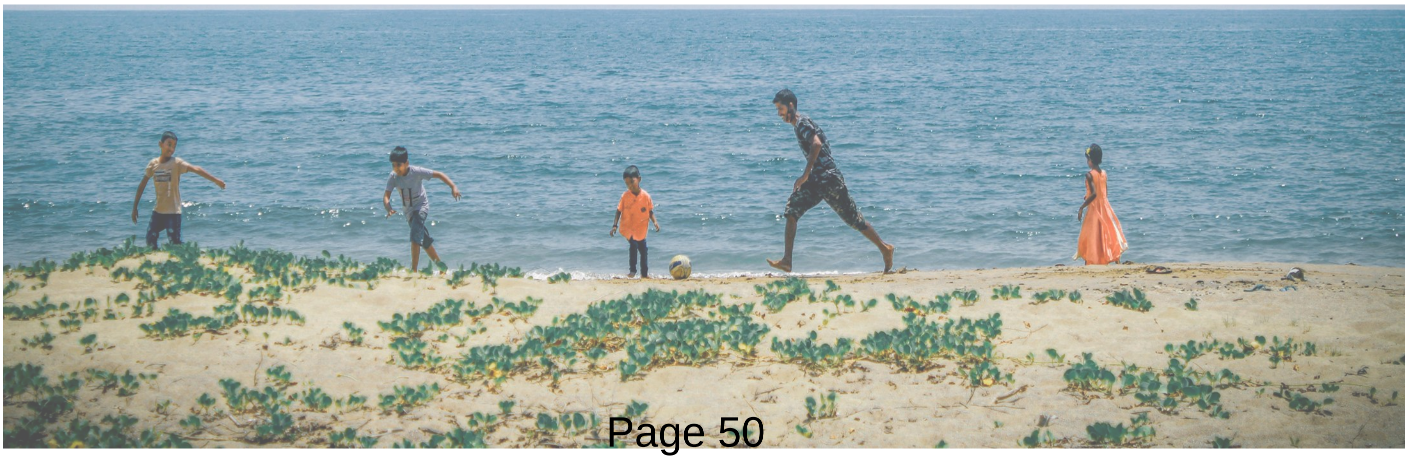
- The Partnership's neglect strategy has been revised and updated, and is due to be published alongside the updated neglect toolkit – once finalised – in 2025/2026
- Dorset Police have completed an audit on their neglect figures as the number of cruelty and neglect crimes declined between Quarter 2 2022/2023 and Quarter 2 2023/2024, which is in contrast to the national picture of a 106% increase in child cruelty and neglect offences in England in the past 5 years (NSPCC 2023, 106% increase in child cruelty and neglect offences in England in the past 5 years | NSPCC). Furthermore, the Partnership's dataset had identified a corresponding reduction in the number of children starting child protection plans under the category of neglect. The findings from the audit showed that there does not appear to be a significant change or discrepancies in the category of the reasons why the offence of cruelty or neglect has been recorded. The findings do not suggest that there have been any errors in recording cruelty or neglect offences based on category. Based on the information known at this time, there does not appear to be an obvious causation for the reduction in cruelty or neglect offences recorded by Dorset Police other than a genuine reduction in the number of offences being reported to Dorset Police or to Dorset Children's Social Care.
- A review of the neglect multi-agency child safeguarding training offer is underway and will be completed once the neglect toolkit has been revised so that the training offer can promote the use of these tools amongst the multi-agency practitioner attendees.

Section 5

Future Planning - Next steps

There are several key areas currently under development in the partnership including:

- Completion of independent scrutiny of our multi-agency audit in relation to pre-birth to 2-year-olds and implementation of the actions agreed following the learnings and recommendations identified.
- Appointment of a scrutineer
- Implementation of the actions from the intra-familial child sexual abuse quality assurance work through an action plan
- Development of further guidance for practitioners in relation to learning reviews, including Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs), where they are involved in these which can be linked to our local guidance document on the serious incident notification, rapid review & LCSPR process.
- Review of the Partnership dataset to align with the revised and updated strategic priorities
- Review of Partnership arrangements around harmful sexual behaviour in children and young people, including development of a framework/local pathway for agency response to this.
- To continue to ensure the voice of practitioners and children, young people and families is central to the work of the Partnership
- To increase the oversight of the Multi-agency Quality Practice and Action Group, all subgroups including the Multi-Agency Child Protection Board will be required to complete quarterly reports. Non-statutory agencies, such as the Youth Justice Service, strategic alliance etc will also be invited to report key highlights quarterly.
- In the development of the Partnership's strategic priorities in the future, the independent scrutineer will develop and run a workshop to support LSP to identify and confirm the priorities, using both data and feedback from partners. This will include having already had discussions with partners in MAQPAG and the Partnership board prior to the workshop. This will continue to ensure priorities are selected using both data and senior operational partner's feedback.



Section 6

Conclusion

As we conclude the DSCP's first Annual Report for the year 2024-2025, we take a moment to appreciate the continued drive for innovation and development in child safeguarding in the local area. This has been particularly notable in the work of partner agencies, as part of the Families First for Children Pathfinder. Dorset continue to act as a blueprint for strengthened safeguarding arrangements, particularly in relation to the involvement of Education within the Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The establishment of separate Safeguarding Children Partnerships has been delivered successfully and without any impact to the business-as-usual arrangements of the Partnership.

Our continued efforts in quality assurance, data analysis, scrutiny activity and service improvement has enhanced the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

The voice of the child and young person continues to be a cornerstone of our work, and significant developments have been made in this area because of the Families First for Children Pathfinder programme, as well as other innovative safeguarding work.

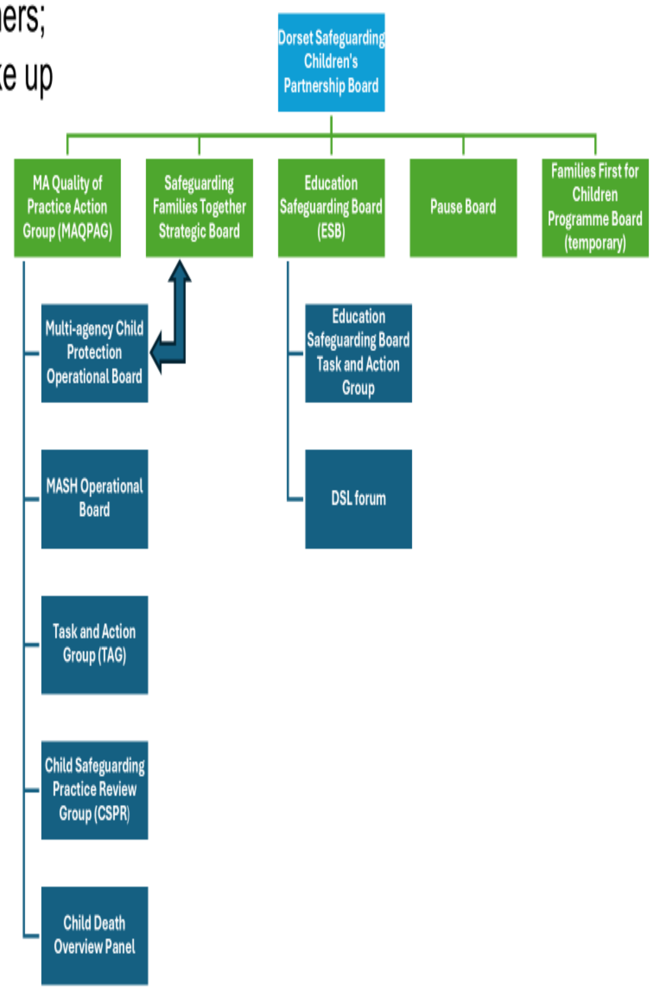
As we look to the future, we are emboldened by our current and previous successes and strides taken in further developing our multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements. We continue to strive for better and take forward any learning identified, both from a local and national perspective.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to every individual and organisation that has contributed to our mission. Your support has been invaluable, and it is through our continued partnership that we will forge a path towards a safer, more nurturing environment for all children and young people in the Dorset area.

Appendix one

Dorset Safeguarding Children's Partnership: Education as an equal Safeguarding Partner

There are senior operational staff from the four partners; health, local authority, police and education that make up the core membership of the subgroups.



Dorset Council

Cabinet
9 September 2025
New Street Lighting Policy
For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s):
All

Executive Director:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title:
Jack Wiltshire, Corporate Director Highways & Engineering
Email:
jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Highways Act 1980

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

This report sets out a new direction for the council's street lighting strategy, introducing a smarter, more sustainable approach to illuminating our highway network. At its heart is a bold recommendation to adopt a new street lighting policy that brings together advanced LED technology with lower colour temperatures, paired with environmental zoning and customising lighting to specific areas.

Using streetlights with lower colour temperatures can bring real benefits. It helps protect people's health, local wildlife, and reduces light pollution, making it easier to enjoy the night sky. This approach underpins the council plan priority to respond to the climate and nature crisis helping to cut energy costs, carbon emissions and reduce the environmental impact.

In addition to this change, our street lighting service provider is exploring a major investment to replace 18,500 outdated lanterns at no upfront cost to the council. In return, they propose taking a 75% share of the energy savings until their contract concludes in 2032. This investment could unlock significant, long term environmental and financial gains for Dorset.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 Cabinet is recommended to -

1. Adopt the new street lighting policy for new and replacement lighting in Dorset. The policy includes the new environmental zoning, recommendations for dimming and the use of lower correlated colour temperature (CCT) LEDs in new streetlights, with the CCT typically not exceeding 2700K. The policy also enables town and parish councils to fund additional costs if there is a local preference for alternative equipment such as brackets, columns and lanterns.

2. Agree a key decision to work with our street lighting service provider, who plans to invest in replacing 18,500 outdated lanterns over the next two or three years at no cost to the council. In return, the service provider will receive 75% of the energy savings until their contract ends in 2032.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 Limiting colour temperatures for new and replacement street lighting in Dorset brings health, ecological and dark sky benefits. This new policy takes a Dorset specific approach to street lighting that balances modern technological advancements, health and wellbeing, Dorset's unique environment, our climate ambitions and recognised best practice.

3.2 The council will also realise the cost, carbon savings and ecology benefits of the obsolete lamp replacement programme. This arrangement means the council avoids a £6.5 million capital investment and still benefits from an estimated £100K per year in revenue from its 25% share of the energy savings. This emphasises the multiple benefits of installing lower energy and climate friendly technologies, where lower costs can either offset investment or ongoing revenue costs.

4. The need for a new street lighting policy

4.1 Dorset Council's current street lighting policy identifies the benefits from moving from inefficient old style sodium lights to Light Emitting Diode (LED) streetlights. LED streetlights can reduce energy consumption by up to 60%. This programme has been an integral part of the climate programme for the council due to the reduction in carbon emissions and is a key underpinning programme of the council plan priority to respond to the climate and nature crisis.

4.2 LED streetlights typically have a much whiter light than the old sodium lights. The lighting can also feel very intense if you look directly at the LEDs. Complaints made to Dorset Council show that some people preferred the warmer light that came from the old lighting systems.

4.3 The corelated colour temperature (CCT) of LED streetlights is stated in the temperature unit of kelvin. When CCTs are stated, it is a gauge of how yellow or blue the light emitted is. Warm light is typically considered to be in the range of 2200-3000K, with cool white light being over 4000K. Although natural daylight can be around 6500K, it would appear as a blue/white light if used in an LED and this is what some people are most likely to object to.

4.4 With better technology, the efficiency and corresponding energy consumption of LED powered streetlights continues to improve. The gap in efficiency between high and low CCT lights also continues to decrease. Currently, the lights used by Dorset Council at 4000K are around 60% more energy efficient than the old sodium lights. A 2700K unit is around 52% more energy efficient that the old sodium lights.

5. Development of a new street lighting policy

5.1 Historic highway policies with a focus on reducing upward light pollution and replacement of nearly all our streetlights with full or semi cut off lanterns has resulted in healthy dark skies over Dorset but, more recently, some communities and individuals have raised concerns about some LED lights which were introduced to help reduce carbon emissions. These concerns related to the impact of LED lights on people's health, local wildlife, and the need to reduce light pollution to make it easier to enjoy the night sky.

5.2 The concern expressed about the potential health impacts of artificial light, have been related to the growing use of modern LED lighting that is richer in blue wavelengths compared with older lighting. Newer LED lighting has benefits including being more energy efficient. However, concerns have been raised by some residents about the current lighting policy, under which older street lighting has been replaced with newer LED street lighting in recent years. Lower CCT lighting is seen as being better from health risk, wildlife and ecological perspectives than higher CCT lighting.

5.3 The health effects of artificial light at night could influence human health by disturbing sleep and circadian rhythms. Many properties of light exposure influence circadian rhythms, including: "the duration, intensity and the wavelength composition, the timing of the light exposure and the history of the light exposure". The risk of health impacts due to light pollution is the subject of ongoing research. Further details of the possible health implications are detailed in the advice from the UKHSA shown in the Place & Resources Committee Report and APSE report in the background papers.

5.4 A policy review has been undertaken because of those concerns and the advancement of LED technology. A dark sky consultant was employed to give an external perspective to this process. The proposed policy takes a precautionary approach to these concerns by introducing a specification that means new lanterns will emit less blue wavelength light. If approved, Dorset Council will be the first authority in the country to limit colour temperatures for health, ecological and dark sky benefits.

5.5 Various options have been investigated and were discussed at Place & Resource Overview Committee on 13 March 2025. The key considerations and recommendations have been used to help shape the new policy. Overview committee supported consulting on a new policy and replacing sodium lights with 2700K lights to save energy costs and carbon emissions. Overview committee wanted to enable town and parish councils to fund additional costs if there was a local preference for alternative lighting equipment and for the new policy to make the environmental zoning clearer.

5.6 Typically, standard columns and brackets are used for streetlights. In some cases, there is local interest in using alternative equipment such as Victorian style columns or bespoke lanterns. Such alternatives are available, although they are likely to have an additional cost. If local town and parish councils want suitable alternative equipment and can fund the additional costs, the new policy more clearly identifies how to make such changes.

5.7 Public consultation took place in March and April 2025 to determine residents' views on potential policy changes. The consultation results have been used to inform the new policy and are summarised below:

I. Preference for warmer lighting source (typically within the 2200k-3000k range)

II. Concern about impact of LED on wildlife

III. Mixed opinion over the impact of LED on human health

IV. Concern about impact of LED on sky quality and light spill

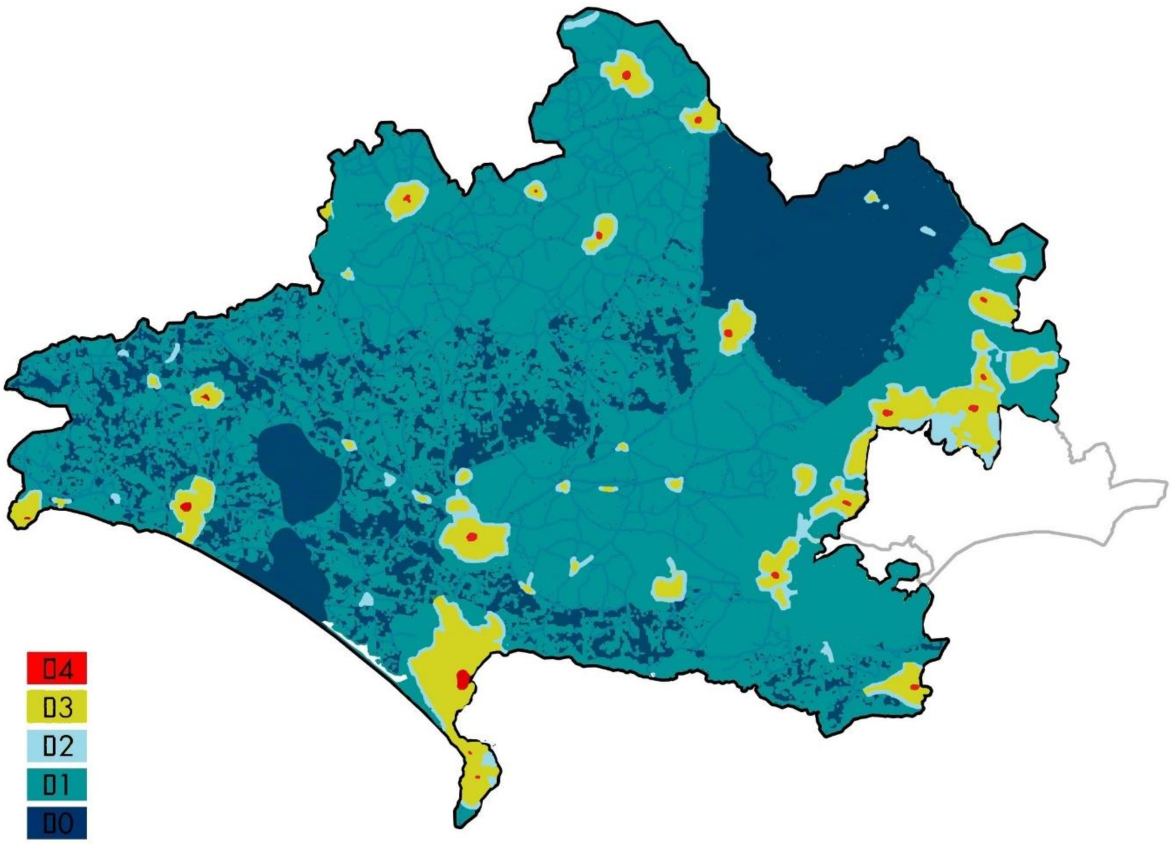
V. Agreement that residents should cover their windows at night

VI. Mixed opinion over impact of reduced lighting on crime and personal safety

VII. Mixed opinion over the part night switch off timing

VIII. Agreement that lights could be dimmed where safe to do so

5.8 Environmental zones are used to determine the level of new street lighting required in each part of Dorset and these zones have been reviewed as part of the new policy. An approximate illustration of the new zones is shown here:



Map Key

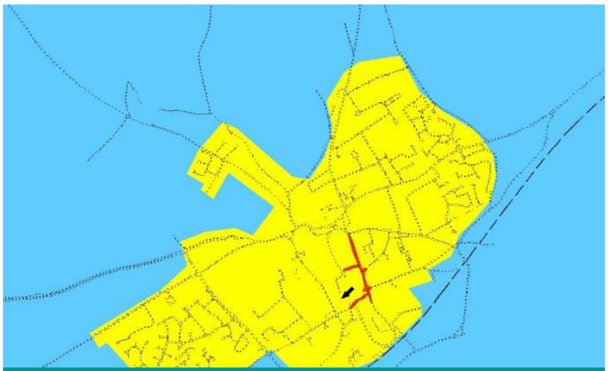
Zone D0 - Dark Sky Areas or Reserves (Protected environmental areas & dark skies) no or limited illumination

Zone D1 - Areas that currently have very low population densities (under 100 persons per sq km) and no, or intermittent lighting

Zone D2 - Areas that have sparse population densities (less than 150 persons per sq km) and some roads already lit

Zone D3 - Medium / high population densities (over 150 persons per sq km) with most roads already lit

Zone D4 - Town centre high night-time activity



Sherborne – an example using the old policy’s environmental zoning map where the Light blue was zone 2, the Yellow was zone 3, the Red was zone 4

Sherborne – an example of the new policy’s environmental zoning which uses the lower population density to reduce the rural area zone to D1 from D2.

5.9 Changes introduced to the policy include:

- Clarity on environmental zone, population density and highway lighting

Clear and detailed criteria guide the selection of lighting zones, starting with national guidance and enhanced by local factors like population density and Dorset’s unique highway characteristics. As shown in the maps above, each area’s lighting approach is thoughtfully tailored. In collaboration with a dark sky specialist, the council has also introduced improved controls on colour temperature and upward light, supporting both environmental goals and community well-being.

- Emphasis on residents' expectations to cover windows at night

Public consultation, to determine residents’ views on potential policy changes, agreed it is usual to expect residents in urban and suburban areas to cover their windows at night to reduce artificial light from the lit highway.

- Dimming lights included in the part night switch off by 50% at 10pm GMT

Both public consultation and a dark sky specialist supported dimming of lights where safety and risk allow, which will reduce light pollution as a direct result. Dimming lights already deemed safe to switch off at midnight by half is a significant reduction in light pollution which also brings carbon reduction benefits.

- Upgrades to equipment appearance to be funded in partnership by local councils

  The council is committed to working closely with local communities, giving town and parish councils the opportunity to fund alternative lighting options that reflect local heritage and identity. This partnership approach ensures that community preferences can be embraced within the service.

- Making clear the service complaint process and legal basis

  In 2006, the PFI contract outsourced the street lighting service, including handling complaints. The legal setup and the provider’s complaint process - similar to the council’s - are now clearly explained.

6. Replacement of obsolete lamps

6.1 In addition to a new policy, the service provider is considering replacing 18,500 obsolete lanterns over the next two or three years, at their cost and within their existing contract terms. This offer is conditional that the service provider retains 75% of the energy savings until the PFI contract ends in 2032. This capital investment is an estimated £6.5M outlay that would otherwise fall to the council shortly after the PFI contract ends. Using current energy costs, officers calculate that this investment would save approximately £400K per year. Around £300K each year would be returned to the PFI service provider by increasing the existing contract payments each month, leading to a £100K per year net saving for the council.

6.2 Officers recommend that Cabinet support this investment and share of the energy savings, which will bring several benefits to the council and at no cost to the taxpayer. The carbon saving will be immediate and significant, followed by retaining 100% of the energy savings after the PFI ends. The ecology benefits will be a reduction in light pollution, also the new lamps will have a colour temperature of 2700K which is warmer than our current policy states.

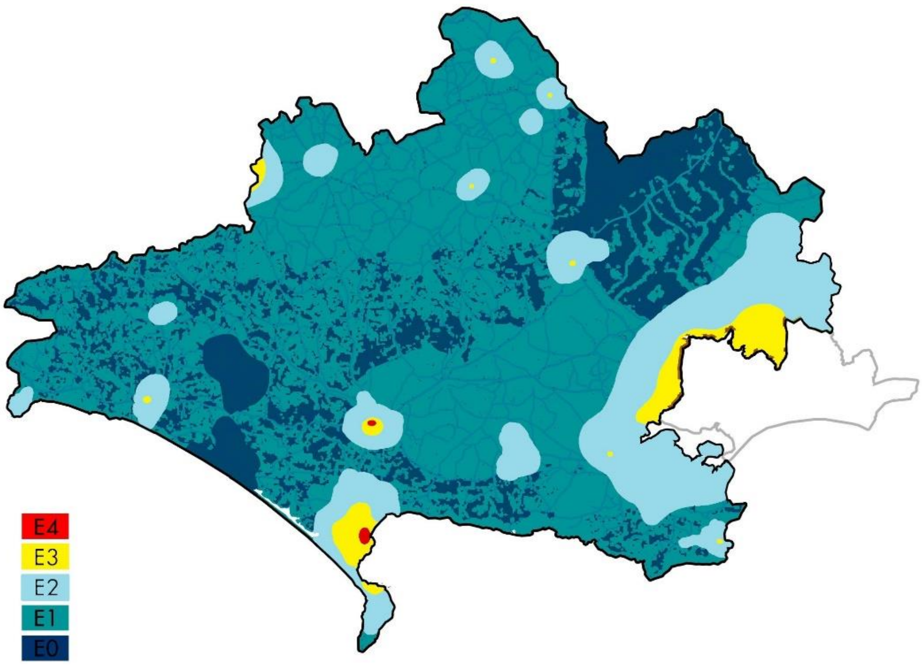
7. Alternative options considered

7.1 The new policy includes recommendations made by a dark sky specialist and will improve Dorset's already very good night sky quality. However, one option considered but not taken forward was to identify environmental zones purely by using Sky Quality Meter values, rather than the rural or urban nature of the location. This alternative approach was considered but deemed impractical and undesirable for use on the public highway. The table below from national guidance on reducing obtrusive light, gives clear descriptions for each zone, but only brightness levels for the most rural:

Table 2: Environmental zones

Zone	Surrounding	Lighting environment	Examples
E0	Protected	Dark (SQM 20.5+)	Astronomical Observable dark skies, UNESCO starlight reserves, IDA dark sky places
E1	Natural	Dark (SQM 20 to 20.5)	Relatively uninhabited rural areas, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, IDA buffer zones etc.
E2	Rural	Low district brightness (SQM ~15 to 20)	Sparsely inhabited rural areas, village or relatively dark outer suburban locations
E3	Suburban	Medium district brightness	Well inhabited rural and urban settlements, small town centres of suburban locations
E4	Urban	High district brightness	Town / City centres with high levels of night-time activity

7.2 Taking this approach would result in most towns and urban areas in Dorset being classed and lit as if sparsely inhabited when they are clearly not, as illustrated in a draft map by the consultant:



7.3 Setting the environmental zone by its existing sky brightness alone and not considering population or urban nature would see the street lighting intensity used in the residential areas of our towns reduce more than the public consultation results suggests would be acceptable. The result would be dark areas between streetlights (unless additional streetlights were installed), increasing the risk to highway users and a disproportionate impact on some groups in society e.g. the perception of women's safety at night.

7.4 Independent consideration by the Local Government Ombudsman has previously concluded that the council was justified in including multiple factors in its lighting zone selection and not just basing it on the existing sky brightness alone. The proposed policy therefore uses the national guidance on each zone as it's starting point, adding categories of population density for further clarity, and then describing each unique highway situation in Dorset and how they will be lit.

8. Legal considerations

8.1 Dorset Council has a legal power to light the highway and a duty to do so in some circumstances, with a duty of care to users of the highway.

9. Financial implications

9.1 The financial implications are dependent on the number of new lights that are installed or replaced and the efficiency of those replacements in the coming years.

9.2 The capital investment to replace 18,500 obsolete lanterns is an estimated £6.5M outlay by the service provider that would otherwise fall to the council shortly after the PFI contract ends. Using current energy costs, officers calculate that this investment would save an approximate £400K per year. Around £300K each year would be returned to the PFI by increasing the existing contract payments each month, leading to an estimated £100K per year saving for the council.

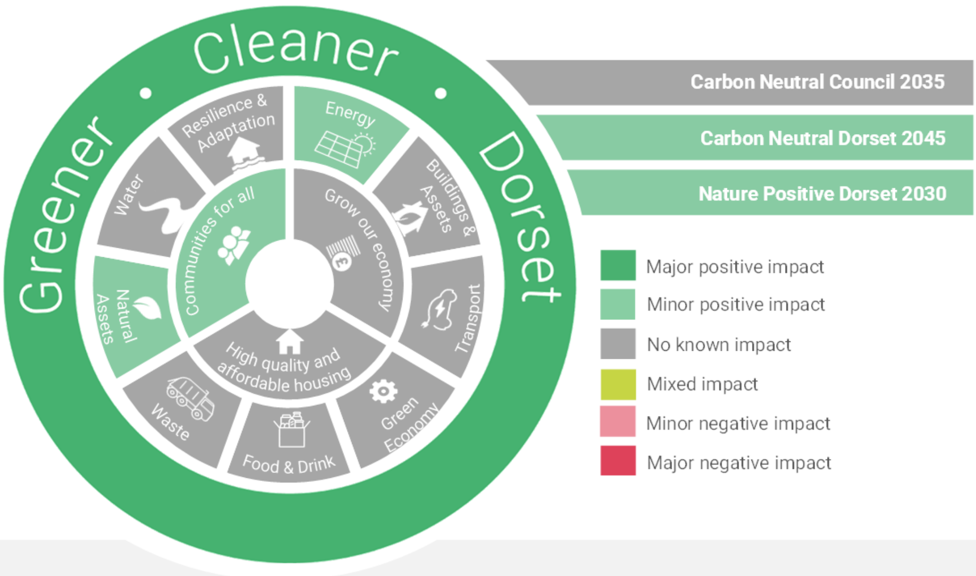
9.3 Changes to the part night lighting operation to dim lights between 10pm and midnight GMT will generate further savings. Although the technology to implement this is not present in existing lights, the 18,500 replacement lanterns could include for it, potentially saving a further £36.5K each year.

10. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

10.1 Sky quality - Upward light spill and/or high colour temperature streetlights have a negative effect on the quality of the nighttime sky. DarkSky International certify luminaires with a maximum CCT of 3000K and an uplight allowance limited to 0.5% of total output. Turning off lights entirely is the best way to improve night-time sky quality, but there is a general concept that lower CCTs have a less detrimental impact.

10.2 Ecological impact - Artificial night lighting can affect wildlife, and cooler light and excessive intensity can have a damaging effect on several species.

10.3



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)

	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	Unknown
2040 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	Unknown
2050 - County Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	Unknown

10.3 The Climate Wheel - The new policy will introduce streetlights with lower correlated colour temperature (CCT) LEDs. While these LEDs consume slightly more energy than those used in the current replacement programme, they remain significantly more efficient than the older, high-energy streetlights. The proposed replacement of 18,500 outdated lanterns - each with higher energy consumption - ensures that the overall direction continues to deliver carbon savings.

11. Well-being and health implications

11.1 The health effects of artificial light at night are discussed in section 5 above and in the background papers.

12. Other implications

12.1 None identified.

13. Risk implications

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

Current Risk: Low Residual Risk: Low

14. Equalities

14.1 Advice received from other highways authorities, and our dark sky consultant is that dimming lights up to 50% is generally not noticed by the public. The intended changes aim to minimise adverse impacts by ensuring that critical areas remain lit. While certain groups may feel some impacts and fear of crime may increase, steps have been taken to mitigate these by maintaining lighting in key areas and monitoring any new issues that might develop.

15. Appendices

15.1 Appendix 1 - This is the draft text for the new policy; a new document will be produced if approved.

16. Background papers

16.1 Place & Resources Overview Committee Report Street Lighting Review.pdf and APSE report Appendix 8.1 APSE Energy Report.pdf

17. Report sign-off

17.1 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 Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member(s).

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<u>Dorset Council</u>
<u>DRAFT Street Lighting and Illuminated Signs Policy 2025</u>

Changes made in 2025 to the policy are in red

1.0 Introduction

This policy sets out the requirements and standards for all new or replacement external public highway lighting, as adopted by Dorset Council. It is written to assist the council meet its corporate aims. The council will be guided by the requirements set out in this document but in some cases, it will not be practicable or desirable to meet all the current national standards and policy requirements.

Dorset Council, as Highway Authority, is automatically a Lighting Authority. Town and Parish Councils can also be Lighting Authorities as well as those Social Housing Groups – previously part of historic councils – with powers to provide lighting on the highway with the consent of the Highway Authority.

2.0 Street Lighting Objectives

The aim of this policy is to assist in ensuring that the following Street Lighting Objectives, listed in no particular order, are met:

- To improve the night-time safety of road users and members of the community.

- To reduce crime and the fear of crime during the hours of darkness.

- To provide public lighting that is cost effective, considering energy conservation and sustainability.

- To minimise the adverse effect on the environment whilst still enhancing the night-time ambience.

- To maintain the lighting asset to prevent premature structural failures

In conjunction with this policy the street lighting specification, as included in the council's own guidance for new streets, sets out the detailed requirements for developers to meet the standards of this Policy.

This document incorporates, wherever practicable, all relevant codes of practice and legislation, together with good industry practices and the national policies from the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) and the UK Lighting Board.

3.0 Lighting Provision

There are several environmental factors that need to be considered when contemplating installing exterior highway lighting schemes. Firstly, whether there a real need to install lighting at all. If there is then the energy usage and light pollution must be taken into consideration (with sensitivity, if practicable, toward the daytime appearance of equipment).

The unique natural environment of Dorset means that we enjoy some of the darkest skies in England, using the Bortle scale as a reference most of our towns & landscapes already qualify to have healthy night skies. So, this policy sets a table of highway areas as below, to define how they will be lit so that we continue to protect that environment while still achieving a balance with highway safety and the public's perception of safety.

Population density; 300 people per sq km is the average in the UK, 150 is the average in Dorset and unique to Dorset using census data Population density - Census Maps, ONS

Environmental Zone D0

Dark Sky Areas or Reserves (Protected environmental areas & dark skies)

No or limited illumination.

Highways will only be lit where required by statute or safety issues that cannot be resolved by any other means. Lit all night and compliant with standards.

Full cut off lanterns, no upward tilt, CCT to not exceed 2700 but ideally lower where practical.

Environmental Zone D1

Areas that currently have very low population densities (under 100 persons per sq km) and no, or intermittent, lighting.

Highway will only be lit where required by statute or safety issue that cannot be resolved by any other means. Lit all night and compliant with standards.

Ad hoc intermittent footpath lighting only where supported by the town or parish council. Lit part night, dimming where appropriate and restricted to strategic locations e.g. bus stops etc.

Full cut off lanterns, no upward tilt, CCT to not exceed 2700 but ideally lower where practical.

Environmental Zone D2

Areas that have sparse population densities (less than 150 persons per sq km) and some roads already lit.

A – All Traffic Routes. Minor roads with a significant number and density of urban highway features e.g. roundabouts, traffic calming, pedestrian crossings. Lit all night and compliant with standards.

B – Local distributor and residential roads with some urban highway features present. Lit part night where permitted by statute and safety audit, compliant with standards.
C – Residential roads with no urban highway features present. Lit part night and compliant with standards.

Full cut off lanterns, no upward tilt, CCT to not exceed 2700 but ideally lower where practical.

Environmental Zone D3
Areas that have medium / high population densities (over 150 persons per sq km) with most roads already lit:

A – All Traffic Routes. Minor roads with a significant number and density of urban highway features e.g. roundabouts, traffic calming, pedestrian crossings. Lit all night and compliant with standards.
B – Local distributor and residential roads with some urban highway features present. Lit part night where permitted by statute and safety audit, compliant with standards.
C – Residential roads with no urban highway features present. Lit part night and compliant with standards.

Full cut off lanterns, maximum 5 degree upwards tilt, CCT to not exceed 2700 but ideally lower where practical.

Commented [JB1]: can we add "but ideally lower where practical?

Environmental Zone D4
Town centre areas with high night-time activity

Lit all night and compliant with standards.

Upward light ratio no greater than 15%, CCT to not exceed 3000 but ideally lower where practical.

4.0 Obtrusive Light

Obtrusive light is light which falls outside of the area to be illuminated or causes annoyance, discomfort and distraction to the public. In extreme cases it reduces the ability to see. Obtrusive light can be divided into three categories:

Skyglow – caused by luminaries emitting light upwards or at high angles of elevation. This light is then scattered by dust particles and water droplets resulting in the familiar orange glow above urban areas.

Glare – an intense blinding light, usually seen against a dark background, which reduces a person's visual performance. Poorly designed, installed and maintained lighting can cause glare that affects the vision of pedestrians, cyclists and drivers, creating a hazard rather than increasing safety.

Light Trespass - light that falls where it is not needed or wanted e.g. light shining into bedrooms hinders sleep and reduces privacy.

Although it is not possible to negate obtrusive light designs will try to minimise or mitigate their effects, where possible, in accordance with the environmental zoning system. In artificially lit areas some light spill and pollution must be expected by residents living nearby, similar to the noise and atmospheric pollution that must be expected from vehicles using the Highway, it is therefore reasonable for residents to take their own steps in reducing the artificial light that must normally expected in suburban or urban areas by fitting and using curtains, blinds and black out etc.

To this end a national publication by the ILP, 'Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light' is used to determine the acceptable limits for obtrusive light into bedroom windows, according to the environmental zone and population density etc. while still providing adequate lighting to the Highway.

5.0. Light sources

The type of light source used on the highway has a significant effect on the night-time scene, due to the different appearances produced and is one of the key elements in assisting the highway user.

Although a variety of sources have been used historically, to maximise efficiency in the appropriate circumstances, Light Emitting Diodes (LED) will now normally be used in all situations. Existing lanterns, using traditional types of light sources, will remain in use until the energy savings generated will offset the cost and environmental impact of their replacement with LED.

The Correlated Colour Temperature (CCT) of LED sources can vary, with the warmest (yellower light) being the least efficient and the coldest (white/blue light) the most efficient.

6.0 Road Safety

At night, traffic levels in Dorset reduce significantly when compared to daytime levels. However, a significant proportion of collisions occur during the hours of darkness. Street lighting may help to reduce the number of these collisions, but design guidance now requires a safety vs. lifetime cost evaluation to justify new or replacement lighting outside of urban areas. This may result in some rural highways having their lighting systems removed, instead of replaced.

7.0 Crime Reduction and Community Safety

The Crime and Disorder Act places an obligation on the local authority to develop and implement safer community strategies. The provision of modern public lighting, designed to the appropriate standard, is a tangible way in which the Authority's commitment to the provision of a safer and more attractive community can be demonstrated. This includes for an improvement in:

Personal Security - Lighting in areas of high pedestrian use helps reduce the risk of crime against the person.

Assisting the use of closed-circuit television - Installing lighting with good colour rendering increases the efficiency of the cameras in identifying suspects, colour of clothing and vehicles.

Crime against property, including car crime - Well-lit industrial, domestic and commercial areas aid the police in carrying out their duties and deterring the criminal.

Reduction of vandalism - Vandals are less likely to cause damage when they can be seen.

Increased ' feel good' factor (perception of safety) - Good lighting that creates the right ambience, increases the feel-good factor and the perception of safety. This, in turn, facilitates improved pedestrian use of our towns during the hours of darkness.

8.0 Energy

Energy is supplied via a competitively won contract. Both this tender process and continuing industry research into more energy efficient equipment, ensure best value in terms of energy consumption.

A term contract is in place with an external supplier to provide energy for street lighting assemblies, illuminated signs, lit bollards, beacons, subways, traffic signals, bus stop information displays and speed cameras.

9.0 Part Night Lighting and Dimming

A trial of part night lighting in selected rural communities was first introduced back in November 2008 but, in 2011 and faced with significant budget reductions, several options to save a significant percentage of the street lighting budget within a short period were considered. These options included dimming, temporary/permanent switching off units or part night lighting. Part night lighting was chosen as this approach ensures that the asset is appropriately used, balancing safe pedestrian and vehicular movements on the highway with the need to reduce costs.

Part night lighting now operates in all quiet and residential roads, but the lighting service is maintained all night in town centres, high crime areas, designated traffic routes, areas with road humps, roundabouts and other high risk locations.

Anyone using roads when the lights are switched off needs to make their own assessment of the possible risks, taking their own appropriate actions to mitigate those risks down to a level acceptable to them.

Part night lighting is carried out by an “intelligent” photocell which turns off each lantern between approximately true midnight (halfway between dusk and dawn) and 05.30 GMT (or approx. 01.00 and 06.30 BST in summer). True midnight can vary from clock midnight by a changing margin over the year, so the indicated operating times are not exact.

Part night operation will include dimming lights to 50% of their output from 22.00 GMT until midnight GMT when they will switch off (so dimming at approx. 11.00 and 13.00 BST in summer) where this is technically possible, to further reduce carbon emissions and obtrusive light in quiet and residential roads.

High crime areas were determined from the www.police.uk website using 'all crime' data. The high crime designation is compiled using data from similar policing areas in England and Wales.

Areas to remain lit all night were identified by survey using the Ordnance Survey mapping, highway data, aerial photography and Google Street View. This is supplemented with limited site surveys to clarify areas of uncertainty. There are insufficient resources to undertake a full risk assessment of every road and footpath.

No arrangements exist for modifying the areas subject to part night lighting, nor are resources available to monitor changes in crime rates. If statistical evidence of a significant change in crime levels in a particular area is brought to the attention of officers the circumstances will be investigated and, if required, funding will be sought to make any changes, so ensuring that the policy guidelines are met.

If the public highway is modified, for example by a scheme that installs road humps, the cost of converting the street lighting back to all night lighting will be met by the scheme promoter.

All new estate roads offered for adoption will be subject to the part lighting policy before being maintained at the public expense.

10.0 Street lighting Maintenance

This Street Lighting Policy and its related specification standards seeks to comply with recommendations set out in the Code of Practice for Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure, the statutory Electricity at Work Act, Health & Safety Legislation and CDM regulations.

To ensure that streetlights and illuminated signs are maintained to a satisfactory standard Dorset Council employs a service provider via a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract, let in 2006. In general, this contract covers all aspects of the service including areas such as routine maintenance, electrical testing, night scouting, non-routine repairs, random repairs, new works, structural maintenance and emergency cover.

A small team of Dorset Council staff administers the contract; assists and advises local people, local parish and town councils, housing associations and also deals with enquiries made by our own members and MPs.

To maintain a high standard of service provision across Dorset every streetlight and illuminated sign is cleaned, serviced and inspected in accordance with its designed parameters and good industry practice.

Electrical testing of each unit is undertaken in line with national regulations. Structural inspection and testing are carried out at recommended intervals.

To identify faulty lights, night inspections are carried out by patrol at regular intervals.

Dependent upon the situation there is a defined target response time for the service provider to repair any fault, including where the replacement of equipment is necessary. In general emergency calls are attended within 2 hours with almost all straightforward repairs carried out within 5 working days. If a fault is due to a power failure or unit replacement, then this could take up to three weeks to rectify.

11.0 Street Lighting Replacement

The current PFI contract is for twenty-five years and during the first five years it required the replacement of nearly 28,000 units with a further limited replacement program completed in 2019, resulting in nearly all the asset stock being replaced prior to the end of the contract. The replaced units have a design life of at least 50 years, with minimal routine maintenance required to achieve this target.

Where replacements are required, designs are carried out by the service provider, who seeks to achieve a British Standard for Lighting which is appropriate to the highway use and Dorset Council's own environmental policy. This results in the alteration of some historic column positions, where efficiencies in the design process have been achieved or additional positions are required to meet modern standards. Most residential roads and traffic routes also see an increase in column height, further increasing efficiency and minimising the number of additional positions required to meet today's lighting standards.

Advances in technology mean that lanterns designed today can be more energy efficient and better reduce light pollution. The installation of more modern equipment assists in reducing energy consumption.

Lantern replacements are carried out at the same time as column replacements. Lanterns on units not being replaced may also be replaced under maintenance. The type of light source and lantern shall be in line with the PFI contract.

Column and lantern replacements will be of similar appearance and quality e.g. functional for functional or Victoriana for Victoriana etc. If local town and parish councils wish for alternatives in equipment e.g. changing functional to bespoke or functional to Victoriana, then they can fund the improvements or meet the additional costs if a maintenance replacement is being planned. If this upgrade includes building mounted lights, then listed buildings consent will be obtained and all local engagement carried out by that town or parish council.

In Conservation Areas, authority is delegated to the Executive Director for Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services, to agree funding for heritage style lighting equipment in place of standard equipment.

12.0 Design

The Policy for design and approval of lighting schemes is based on the principles listed in Section 2.0. In this way Dorset Council's Street Lighting Policy is having a positive direct impact on the nature of Dorset's local environment.

The consequence of designing street lighting to produce zero upward light pollution will usually result in additional units being installed with subsequent increases in the energy consumed and future maintenance costs if the applicable lighting standards are to still be met. A careful balance is therefore being struck between using minimal resources, both locally and globally, and achieving minimal light pollution.

In addition to a quality-based maintenance programme Dorset Council also has a policy to take a proactive lead role in providing guidance to local developers, parish and town councils and housing associations to ensure high quality design for new or replacement street lighting. To ensure the appropriate lighting standard, relevant to the "Zone" Dorset Council designs most of the new street lighting itself using national design standards. It also checks all third-party designs, offering advice to ensure that Dorset Council's own Street Lighting Policy and Specification are met.

In new developments, lanterns can be affixed to buildings, particularly where footways are narrow and subject to considerable pedestrian traffic. Wayleave Agreements will be required in these circumstances.

To ensure that public funds are used to best effect Dorset Council also requires a commuted sum to cover all additional costs of non-standard street lighting furniture installed by developers. Only if approved in terms of its design and suitability shall such equipment then be authorized for subsequent installation. The commuted sum shall cover the full cost of both installation and subsequent maintenance, the latter including for any additional energy related running costs over the costs for a standard unit.

13.0 Attachments on Street Lighting Columns

Lighting columns are not designed to take the additional load of any type of attachment, other than small traffic signs. As an inappropriate attachment could result in damage or structural failure any proposed attachment must first receive written authority in principle from the Street Lighting Team. Every application is considered with public safety in mind and weighed against any potential merits put forward for such an attachment.

If any third party wishes to attach a sign, festive light or local advertising etc to a street column it may be possible provided that the column has been specially designed to safely hold the required attachment. Alternatively, a replacement street lighting unit to an appropriate standard may be installed, if the full costs of doing so are met by the third party.

No cross road spans of catenary lights, cables, bunting or other similar attachments are to be fixed to lighting columns, as it is not always possible to ensure the minimum 5.8m (7.5m on abnormal load routes) height clearance in the middle of the span and the high risk of traffic then contacting with the span.

A considerable number of lighting columns already have traffic signs attached to them even though they have not been specially designed for such. This has largely come about through past pressures to keep the highway environment as uncluttered as possible by utilising lighting columns as signposts. Although it will be permissible to fix smaller traffic signs to lamp columns that have been specially designed to withstand the additional loading, fixing signs totalling more than 0.6 sq. metres to standard columns will no longer be permitted. The Street Lighting Specification, for standard columns, allows for the attachment of signs at 2.5m from the ground and up to a total of 0.6 sq. metres installed per lighting column.

If the written authority of the Street Lighting Principal Engineer is obtained a license, to erect equipment within the highway, must also be obtained from the relevant highway authority and permission to attach the load obtained from the PFI street lighting service provider. As all risk in the asset rest with them, this permission will be dependent upon the agreed detail of loads, fixings, insurances, use of approved contractors etc and can only be obtained from the PFI service provider.

Some types of attachments may involve planning issues, with the impact on the environment may be seen to be detrimental, in such cases approval from the local planning authority must first be obtained.

14.0 Public Interface and Complaints Procedure

The street lighting service in Dorset is externalised to the private sector by means of a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract. This contract is under the Local Authorities (Contracting out of Highway Functions) Order 1999, made under the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 and which places a duty on the service provider to act on behalf of the authority.

The PFI contract covers all aspects of the service, including any service user's contacts and includes a complaints process to mirror that of the council, where they act on behalf of the authority according to the statute above. The service provider is required to respond to any concerns within 5 working days and act in a reasonable manner when resolving them, residents will be directed to the service provider in all matters arising from the front-line service. If residents remain dissatisfied by the decision of the service provider, then they will be directed to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

Where concerns relate to backward light spill into bedroom windows the service provider has an established procedure for determining whether a shield can and should be fitted. If a shield or other adjustment is reasonably required, then this is carried out by the service provider at no cost to the resident.

Queries relating to Dorset Council’s policy and the PFI contract are dealt with by the in-house Dorset Council team.

Cabinet

9 September 2025

July 2025 (Period 4) financial management report 2025/26

Portfolio Holder:
Cllr S Clifford, Finance & Capital Strategy

Local Councillor(s):
All

Senior Leadership Team:
S Cremer, Corporate Director, Section 151 Officer

Report Author: Sean Cremer
Job Title: Corporate Director, Finance and Commercial
Tel: 01305 228685
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Report Status: Public

Executive Summary:

1. This Period 4 (P4) financial management report provides a comprehensive overview of Dorset Council's financial performance as of 31 July 2025, offering critical insights into forecasted outturns, budget pressures, savings delivery, and strategic financial risks for the 2025/26 fiscal year.

1.1 At the end of July, the Council is forecasting a £7.705 million overspend, representing 1.8% of the total budget requirement of £417.2 million. This pressure - largely due to the rising cost of adults' and particularly children's social care placements and packages (£6.4m) and a delay in savings from the Our Future Council (OFC) transformation programme (£5m), partially offset by £3.5m in contingency releases. SLT is preparing to implement enhanced financial controls to manage discretionary spending and reinforce budget discipline in order to protect the year end position.

1.2 The Council continues to operate in a challenging national context, with rising demand, inflationary pressures, and systemic underfunding. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit is forecast to reach £148.18 million, posing significant cashflow risks despite the statutory override extension to March 2028. The Safety Valve agreement with the Department for Education remains under review, with contributions withheld pending a revised plan submission

1.3 Directorate-level forecasts show mixed performance:

a. Children's Services face a £4.016m overspend, driven by rising costs in external placements and increasing complexity of care needs. Despite this, the service is on track to deliver its £7.182m savings target.
b. Birth to Settled Adulthood (B2SA) reports a £1.368m overspend, with its £1m savings target currently unmet due to demand and market cost pressures.
c. Adults & Housing forecasts a £0.853m overspend, primarily from increased demand in adult care packages. The directorate has achieved 52% of its £10.597m savings target.
d. Public Health & Prevention shows a £0.44m overspend, with several savings at risk due to staffing and income shortfalls.
e. Place Directorate projects a £0.434m underspend, though risks remain due to market volatility and unachieved vacancy savings.
f. Corporate Development and Legal & Democratic Services report minor variances, with ICT costs and restructuring delays contributing to pressures.

1.4 The OFC programme, central to the Council's transformation strategy, is forecast to deliver £5m of its £10m savings target with the remainder phased into future years. Governance measures are being strengthened to accelerate delivery and align service-level savings with corporate objectives.

1.5 The capital programme totals £169.7m for 2025/26, with £31.7m (19%) committed by July. Slippage and re-profiling are being actively managed, with oversight from the Capital Strategy and Asset Management Group

1.6 Debt management remains a priority, with £36.6m in outstanding sundry debt, of which £25.6m is deemed collectable. Deferred payments and gross without prejudice debts are being monitored closely.

1.7 For the first time, the report includes data on contract exemptions, with seven exemptions totalling £668k.

1.8 In conclusion, Dorset Council faces significant financial pressures requiring decisive action. SLT will introduce strengthened controls and reprofile transformation efforts to mitigate risks. These measures, alongside ongoing monitoring, will inform the 2026/27 budget strategy and ensure the Council remains on a path toward financial sustainability.

2. **Recommendation**:

Cabinet is asked to:

2.1 Note SLT's forecast of the full year's outturn for the Council, made at the end of July 2025 including progress of the transformational and efficiency savings incorporated into the budget;

2.2 Note SLT will be bringing forward financial control measures in response to the forecast position.

2.3 Note the capital programme for 2025/26;

2.4 Note the number and extent of contract exemptions.

3. **Reason for Recommendation**:

3.1 The Council is legally required to set a balanced budget every year, and so must deliver services within the resources made available through the revenue and capital budgets for 2025/26. This report summarises the Council's forecast financial performance for the year at the end of July 2025.

3.2 The operating environment for Local Authorities across the UK remains challenging with increasing numbers of Local Authorities issuing Section 114 notices and exceptional financial support (EFS) in recent years. External factors are bringing pressure to bear through increased demand, rising costs and complexity, in addition to reducing funding. These factors, together with the findings of the SWAP investigation and review of contract procedures and the officer scheme of delegation, mean that effective management and monitoring of activities and budgets has never been more important.

3.3 It is therefore essential to understand the developing financial performance and projected position this year. This ensures that resources are deployed to deliver the Council's services in line with the Council Plan priorities, and so that the organisation remains in good financial health and that service delivery remains sustainable. The Council makes a significant contribution in supporting employment, training and economic prosperity, as well as being a provider and commissioner of critical public services. Balancing all of these strategic, and often, competing priorities is a responsibility is taken extremely seriously.

3.4 The number and extent of contract exemptions is also included for the first time below in response to a recent external audit.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 Financial implications are covered within the body of this report.

5. Climate Implications

5.1 The Council's budget continues to fund action set out in the climate and ecological emergency action plan, including a £10m capital expenditure commitment over the term of the current MTFP.

6. Well-being and Health Implications

6.1 The Council has continued its focus on keeping people safe and well, it works closely with health partners in order to ensure that public services as a whole work closely to help people stay well.

6.2 The Council continues to play an essential role in distributing government grants to individuals, businesses and other qualifying groups during the year as well as delivering high-quality public services.

7. Other Implications

7.1 None specific.

8. Risk Assessment

8.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High
Residual Risk: High

8.2 The residual risk reflects the operating environment for council finances across the UK as these are under extreme pressure.

8.3 The current risk reflects pressures faced by this Council and are outlined within the commentary on the revenue budgets and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) position.

8.4 Revenue budget - mitigation will be required to prevent further draws on reserves which have reduced from 2023/24 to 2025/26 and will reduce further if required to meet the forecast revenue overspend.

8.5 DSG - looking ahead, further pressure on the Council's reserves comes from the cumulative deficit on the DSG, which is forecast to exceed available reserves by the end of 2025/26. Whilst an extension has been agreed to the statutory override to March 2028, the cashflow pressure remains.

8.6 Based on the Fair Funding Review 2.0 consultation the revised funding from Central Government does not provide confidence that the underlying, systemic underfunding for Local Government service delivery will be addressed. As a result, it is expected that the local and national pressures the Council is facing in the current financial year can be expected to continue over the medium term.

8.7 Taking both the local and national operating environment into consideration, the S151 Officer, the Council's Chief Finance Officer, establishes the current risk assessment as *high* and that readers of the report should expect:

i. the budget gap for next year (2026/27) should be expected to widen
ii. delivering a balanced budget to require a reprioritisation of service delivery to ensure ongoing financial sustainability.

9. Equalities Impact Assessment

9.1 No specific equalities issues have emerged in drafting the Council's various reports on financial performance and position.

10. Appendices

10.1 Appendix A - Savings Plans

Appendix B – Climate Wheel

Appendix C – Contract Exemptions

11. Background Papers

11.1 2024/25 draft outturn report
2025/26 budget strategy report

12. Budget Setting 2025/26 and context

12.1 2024/25 ended with an overspend of £10m in service budgets and an overspend on the Our Future Council savings of £8.6m which was offset by Central Finance adjustments of £11.9m, resulting in a net £6.7m overspend. Setting the budget for 2025/26 saw rebasing of the ongoing pressures within service budgets increasing by £19m, £14.6m of which was in the Adults and Housing directorate.

12.2 The Council's *budget requirement* is £417.2m and was funded from new homes bonus (£3.2m), business rates (£70.2m), revenue support grant (£1.8m) and council tax (£342m).

12.3 In setting the budget the Council included £44.6m of savings, efficiencies, grants and income broken down as; savings and efficiencies including new service grants and income of £12m, managing and meeting need differently of £14m, as well as reducing 3rd party spend of £3m and operating more efficiently as a Council of £14.4m including £10m from Our Future Council programme. budget strategy report.

12.4 If budget pressures were not already a sufficient driver the SWAP audit report brings with it a focus upon the need for more stringent financial management across the whole council. The direction to implement changes recommended by SWAP is being overseen by a member working group drawn from the Audit and Governance Committee and led by the Cabinet member for Finance and Capital Strategy.

13. Overall projection

13.1 At the end of July, the Council is forecasting an overspend of £7.705m, which represents 1.8% of the Council's budget requirement (£417.2m).

13.2 This forecast is of a concern as it identifies unbudgeted service pressures of £6.4m, and a forecast shortfall in Our Future Council of £5m. These are partially mitigated by release of contingency funding of £3.5m.

13.3 Without mitigation the current forecast will require use of reserves. SLT are therefore recommending additional budget control measures be designed and implemented in order to ensure that discretionary spend is more closely managed collectively in addition to the current budget control measures managed within directorate budgets.

13.4 Section 12 of the report also outlines a number of forecast uses of reserves. In the event that the £7.705m forecast improves, there remains an underlying reliance on reserves during 2025/26, which will need to be replenished during the life of the current MTFP.

13.5 The directorate variances are summarised in the table below.

Directorate	Net Budget £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000	Forecast (Overspend)/ Underspend £'000	
People - Adults & Housing	166,312	167,164	(853)	(0.5%)
People - Children's	82,563	86,579	(4,016)	(4.9%)
Place	109,538	109,104	434	0.4%
Corporate Development	41,268	41,447	(179)	(0.4%)
Birth 2 Settled Adulthood	9,046	10,414	(1,368)	(15.1%)
Legal & Democratic Services	8,560	8,526	35	0.4%
Public Health & Prevention	4,378	4,821	(444)	(10.1%)
Total Service Budgets	**421,663**	**428,055**	**(6,391)**	**(1.5%)**
General Funding - including Our Future Council	(41,238)	(36,597)	(4,641)	(11.3%)
Capital Financing	22,630	22,630	0	0.0%
Contingency	4,253	753	3,500	82.3%
Precepts/Levy	21,560	21,591	(31)	(0.1%)
Central Finance	(438,678)	(438,536)	(142)	(0.0%)
Retirement costs	1,702	1,702	0	0.0%
Whole Authority	**(8,108)**	**(403)**	**(7,705)**	
Dedicated Schools Grant budgets	8,108	60,642	(52,534)	

13.6 More detail on the specific directorates is set out in the following paragraphs.

Children's Services

13.7 The Children's Services forecast is £86.579m compared with a net budget of £82.563m an overspend of £4.016m (4.9%).

13.8 The Birth to Settled Adulthood service is now a separate area containing budgets from Adults and Children's Services. The table below reflects this change.

People Services - Children	Net Budget £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000	Forecast (Overspend)/ Underspend £'000	
Quality Assurance	4,091	4,091	0	0.0%
Care & Protection	57,347	61,517	(4,169)	(7.3%)
Commissioning and Partnerships	6,341	6,341	0	0.0%
Director's Services	(267)	(367)	100	37.4%
Education and Learning	15,254	15,201	53	0.3%
DSG Recharges	(204)	(204)	0	0.0%
Total Directorate Budget	**82,563**	**86,579**	**(4,016)**	**(4.9%)**

Care & Protection

13.9 The overspend sits within Care and Protection, the social services side of the directorate. Children in Care continues to be the significant pressure within the Service.

13.10 Other areas, including Special Guardianship Orders, The Harbour Services and use of psychologists are forecast to underspend.

Children in care

13.11 As mirrored nationally, pressure on external placements for our children in care population continues. Increasing numbers of Children in Care not only impact placement budgets, but non-placement budgets are also affected including assessment costs, legal, interpreter fees and travel costs.

13.12 The Children in Care placements budget is currently forecast to overspend by £4.167m, with an additional £0.250m overspend in non-placement costs.

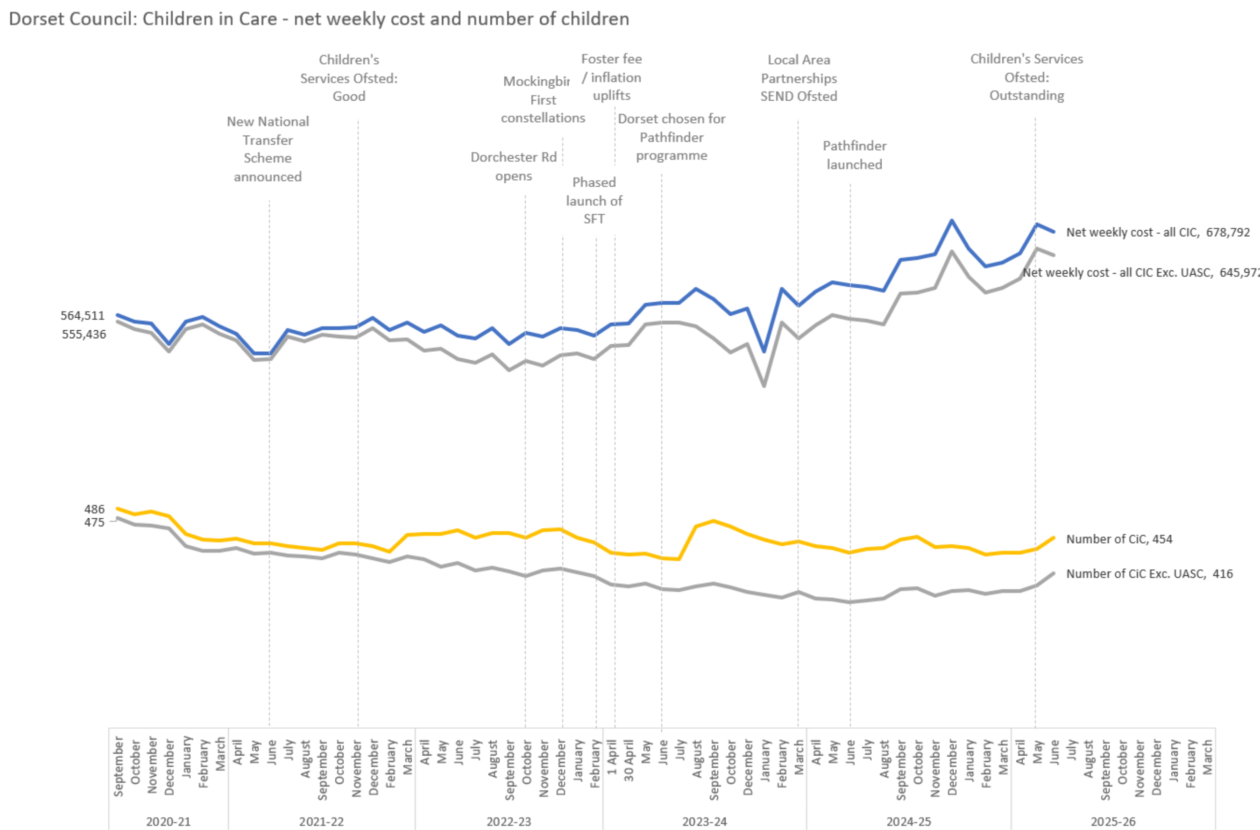
13.13 An overspend is reported for supporting our children in care, and this is mainly driven by three factors: our children’s needs increasing in complexity, inflation and an external residential placement market that isn’t functioning effectively, as referenced in the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) published in 2022, which was a market study into children’s social care provision. Children's social care market study final report - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

13.14 Section 9.22 lists the strategies and approaches to mitigate the impact of the above.

13.15 Dorset's Children in Care has reduced since September 2020 (475), although there has been a recent increase in numbers from 397 in April 2025, to 416 in early July 2025.

13.16 Dorset Council fostering placements have increased to the 2020 levels (212) although there has been an increase of six external residential placements since April 2025, taking this cohort to 50.

13.17 Weekly average costs for external residential placements have risen from an average of £4.27k in 2020 to the current average of £6.4k, an increase of 50%. External fostering has increased from £0.96k to £1.2k, an increase of 25%.



13.18 If the number of children in care (exc. our unaccompanied children) had remained at 475, at June 2025 averages, it is estimated an additional £4.7m of annual cost would be incurred.

13.19 Dorset Council are seeking to return the Children in Care trajectory downwards and influence the placement mix of the cohort, through:

i. Through our work in the Families First For Children Pathfinder, we are continuing to rebalance the system. Strong partnership work (including education) in communities, our conversation-based Family Support and Advice Line, integrated ‘Thrive’ locality model, and expanded innovative edge of care Harbour offer, is delivering the right services and support to families and their children, and at an earlier and therefore lower level of intervention.

ii. Participating in the Southwest regional pilot trialing a regional fostering recruitment and retention hub

iii. Year five of the transformation programme, for example Mockingbird for foster carer placement stability.

iv. Starting to implement Vcare as a tool and way of working

v. Our own in-house provision. Two children’s homes have recently been inspected with Good and Outstanding outcomes, delivering better value for money and experiences for children. Further capital investment in this area continues.

vi. The number of permanent social workers in our workforce has remained steady, with consistently manageable caseloads allowing our workers to build strong relationships with the families they serve. High case loads can lead to placement instability.

vii. Exceptions to higher caseloads have been rare and typically due to specific reasons. Our recruitment efforts, 'grow our own' initiatives, and retention plans are yielding positive results. As of March 2025, each Child Protection social worker supports an average 14 children, Family Help teams 15 children and Permanence teams 12 children, enabling them to foster meaningful relationships with the children under their care.

viii. Maintaining constructive conversations with providers to understand their cost base and reasons for price uplifts before any agreements are finalised.

Savings

13.20 Children’s Services are currently forecast to achieve the full value of budgeted savings, £7.182m (excluding B2SA).

Families First for Children Pathfinder

13.21 Dorset Council are a Pathfinder authority for Families First for Children reforms. Pathfinder finished in March 2025 and Dorset are supporting the nation rollout of the reforms.

13.22 There are three grants to support Families First for Children reforms: A Pathfinder Grant, the Prevention Grant and Families and Children's Grant. All are currently forecast to be spent.

Risks and mitigations

13.23 This is the forecast outturn position at the end of July. The main risks for Children's Services that may further impact the outturn position are: inflation (including cost of living upon the children and families we support as this may increase demand), delivering capital projects on time and on budget (there are revenue implications for late projects), new placements and placement changes, delivery of transformation savings, and new government policy that may not be funded.

13.24 Children's Services will continually review grants and other funding sources, plus regularly review the vacancies to help reduce the overspend.

Birth to Settled Adulthood

13.25 The Birth to Settled Adulthood forecast is £10.414m compared with a net budget of £9.046m an overspend of £1.368m (15.1%).

13.26 The Birth to Settled Adulthood service is now a separate area containing budgets from Adults and Children's Services. The table below reflects this change.

People Services - Birth to Settled Adulthood	Net Budget £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000	Forecast (Overspend)/ Underspend £'000	
Team	2,766	2,766	0	0.0%
Children's	3,454	4,823	(1,368)	(39.6%)
Adults	2,825	2,825	0	0.0%
Total Directorate Budget	**9,046**	**10,414**	**(1,368)**	**(15.1%)**

13.27 B2SA aims to improve support for children and young people with complex needs or disabilities as they transition into adulthood. By integrating multiple internal and external services into a single, coordinated team, the programme seeks to enable smoother—and potentially more cost-effective—transitions to independence. There are further phases with this programme.

13.28 The Birth to Settled Adulthood (B2SA) service has a savings requirement of £1 million, which is currently forecast to be unmet. A recovery plan is being developed but rising demand and increased market costs since the target was set in 2022 present significant risks to its delivery.

13.29 There are 385 children who are receiving (or have received) one or more services during 2025/26.

13.30 The Adult's element of this service supports young adults (18-25) transitioning into independent living arrangements and long term care solutions. The service is currently funding 38 individuals, with supported living representing the most significant area of expenditure. At this stage, a breakeven position is reported; however, a contingency has been built into the forecast to accommodate future demand identified through the birth to settled adulthood pathway.

13.31 Demand for the services is predominantly for externally commissioned support packages, direct payments and short breaks. The cause is a mixture of inflation, increased complexity and the difficulty finding providers through the direct payment mechanism.

13.32 This is an evolving area and will change and practices, processes and budgets continue to match to meet the B2SA requirements.

Adults Services & Housing

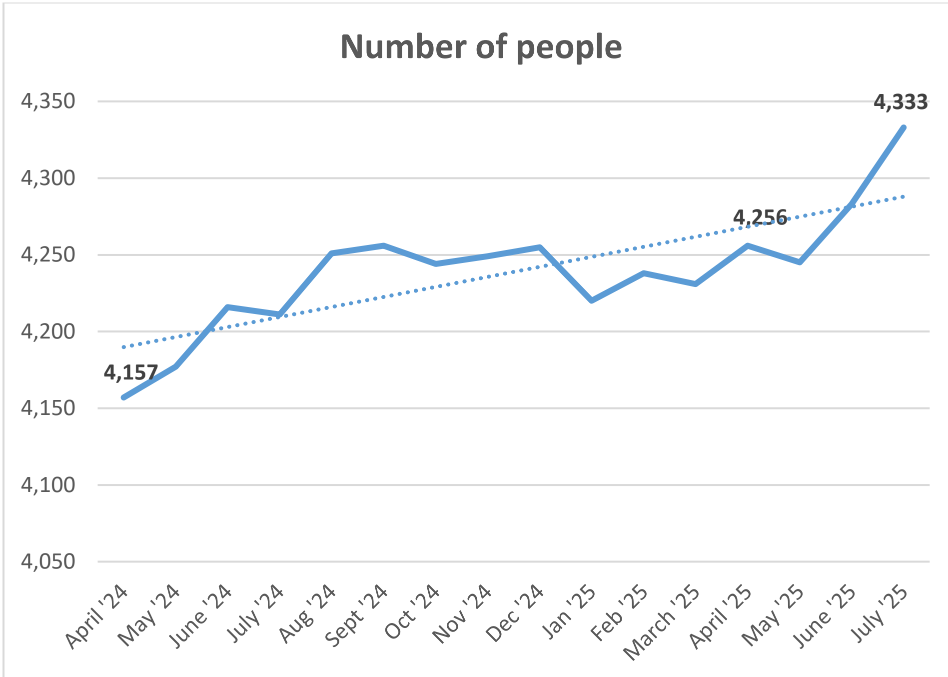
13.33 The Adults Services & Housing Directorate is currently forecasting a net expenditure of £167.164m against a budget of £166.312m, resulting in a projected overspend of £0.853m (0.5%).

People Services - Adults	Net Budget £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000	Forecast (Overspend)/ Underspend £'000	
Adult Care Packages	128,017	128,656	(640)	(0.5%)
Adult Care	20,724	20,724	(0)	(0.0%)
Commissioning & Improvements	7,615	7,835	(220)	(2.9%)
Directorate Wide	1,874	1,874	(0)	(0.0%)
Housing & Community Safety	8,082	8,075	7	0.1%
Total Directorate Budget	**166,312**	**167,164**	**(853)**	**(0.5%)**

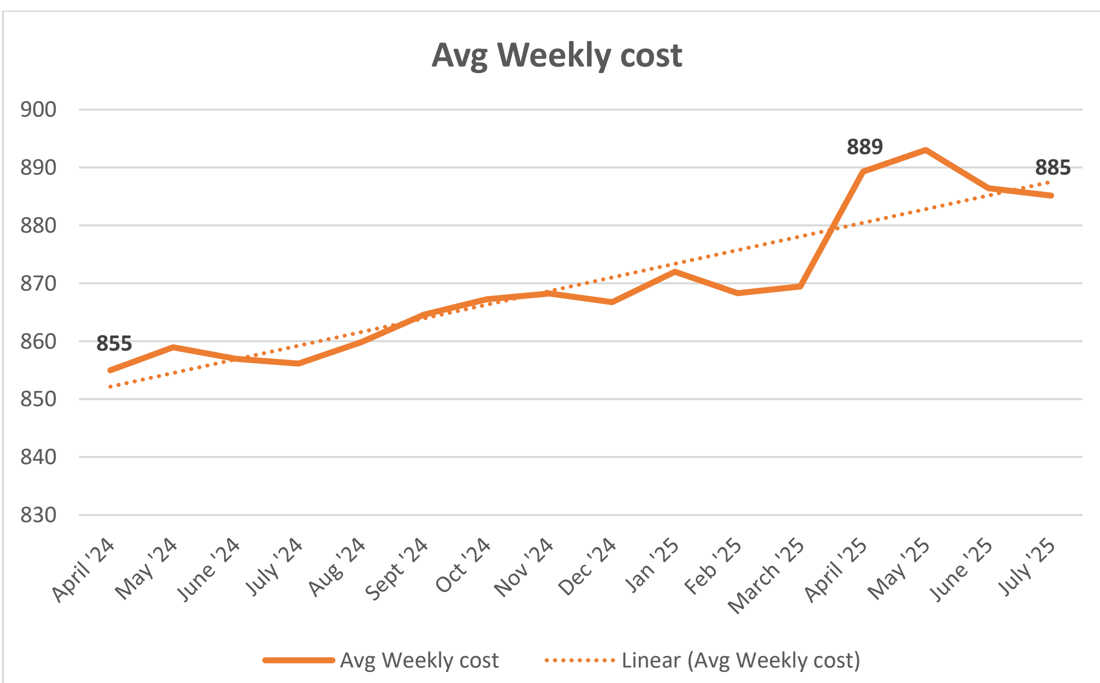
Adult care packages

13.34 The primary contributor to this overspend is adult care packages, which are forecast to exceed budget by £0.860 million. This estimate reflects the current cohort of individuals receiving support. As a needs-led service, predicting future demand remains complex and uncertain, particularly at this early stage of the financial year.

13.35 Between April and July 2025, the number of individuals supported increased from 4,256 to 4,333, representing a net growth of 77 people. This rise in demand is a key contributor to the current budget pressure.



13.36 During the same period, the average weekly cost of care packages decreased slightly from £889 in April to £885 in July. It is important to note that April costs include annual uplifts, which temporarily elevate the baseline. While the cost trend appears stable, the combination of increased demand and elevated baseline costs continues to drive financial pressure.



13.37 Additionally, there has been continued growth in the Section 117 (S117) aftercare for people who have been detained in hospital under certain sections of the Mental Health Act cohort, further intensifying demand and expenditure. These patterns highlight the evolving complexity of adult care needs and reinforce the importance of robust forecasting and responsive budget management.

13.38 To help manage demand and improve outcomes, the directorate is actively engaged in the FutureCare programme—a system-wide initiative launched in January 2025. Delivered in partnership with health and care organisations across Dorset, FutureCare aims to transform urgent, emergency, and intermediate care services.

The programme focuses on:

i. Reducing unnecessary hospital admissions and improving discharge processes.
ii. Delivering responsive, safe, and person-centred care across home, community, and hospital settings.
iii. Enhancing prevention and early intervention to avoid escalation of care needs.
iv. Improving data sharing, workforce investment, and collaboration with voluntary and community sectors.

13.39 These efforts are expected to support budget containment and inform planning for future financial years.

13.40 Care packages continue to be reviewed under the oversight of Corporate Directors, in line with the scheme of delegation. Existing system-wide activity is focused on reviewing packages for appropriateness, exploring joint funding opportunities, and assessing eligibility for continuing healthcare. These efforts are being factored into the forecasting process to improve accuracy and financial control.

13.41 The directorate remains focused on managing both cost and demand pressures. Prevention programmes and targeted interventions are central to efforts to contain the forecast overspend, with many savings initiatives centred around demand management. Despite these measures, the demand-led nature of the Adult Care budget requires ongoing and proactive oversight.

Housing

13.42 Housing is currently forecasting an underspend of £0.007m (0.1%).

13.43 Homelessness approaches remain high although there are seasonal dips through the summer months. Resources are being targeted at the front door, and changes in triage processes mean the directorate is now working in real time on cases as individuals approach the Council.

13.44 Effective early prevention work by the triage and tenancy sustainability team has resulted in fewer clients facing homelessness. The shift towards upstream prevention work has proven highly effective. While this approach can be labour intensive, the financial benefits are clear – particularly in reducing the use of bed and breakfast (B&B) and temporary accommodation. Outcomes for individuals improve, and the overall risk of homelessness is reduced. Current data shows that 7 in 10 people who approach Dorset Council have their situation resolved before homelessness occurs.

13.45 As prevention efforts become more successful, the flow of households into temporary accommodation decreases, leading to fewer statutory decisions. This improvement is evident when comparing the number of acceptances year on year, which is contributing to significant savings and improved performance.

13.46 The number of households in B&Bs continues to decline. The number of single households in B&Bs has improved in line with the B&B reduction plan. Successful placements often depend on the availability of self-contained accommodation to meet individual needs.

13.47 Family placements in B&Bs have also reduced. Families are being allocated alternative temporary accommodation more quickly. Notably, the number of family households in B&Bs for longer than six weeks has significantly decreased, with no households in this category at the end of June.

Public Health and Prevention

13.48 Public Health and Prevention is currently forecasting a net expenditure of £4.821m against a budget of £4.378m, resulting in a projected overspend of £0.44m (10.1%)

People Services - Public Health and Prevention	Net Budget £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000	Forecast (Overspend)/ Underspend £'000	
Community and Public Protection	3,844	4,288	(444)	(11.5%)
PH Joint Partnership	0	0	0	0.0%
People - Children's	0	0		
Public Health	533	533	0	0.0%
Total Directorate Budget	**4,378**	**4,821**	**(444)**	**(10.1%)**

13.49 The position reflects the challenges in delivering some of the savings' targets set during budget planning. These include:

i. A vacancy factor that is unlikely to be realised due to low staff turnover.

ii. An income target uplift of £100,000, with current projections indicating only £50,000 is achievable.

iii. A planned saving from regulatory services reduction, of which £40,000 has been achieved as a one-off, leaving £70,000 still to be identified and delivered.

13.50 Current performance indicates that several of the savings put forward are at risk. Continued monitoring and mitigation planning will be essential to manage the financial position going forward.

13.51 The Public Health Grant for 2025/26 for Dorset Council is £16.258m.

13.52 Public Health is currently forecasting a breakeven position. Following the disaggregation of the previously shared service, work is underway to review and stabilise operations as a newly formed directorate. This transitional phase includes reassessing service delivery models and financial planning to ensure long term sustainability.

Place directorate

13.53 When setting the 2025/26 budget for Place, the Council approved a net budget of just over £108m. This was an increase of £4.1m from the prior year, where the equivalent budget was circa £103.9m. Since then, the service “Community and Public Prevention” has been moved out from the Place Directorate and into the new Public Health & Prevention Directorate together with its budget of circa £3.8m.

13.54 During July, a savings target of £3.535m related to OFC savings was removed from Place Directorate and returned to Central Finance. As a result, and considering other in-year budget movements, the Place budget as at July is circa £109.5m.

13.55 The overall forecast for Place Directorate for July 2025 is a projected favourable position of £0.434m (0.4%), with a projection of £109.1m net spend against a net budget of £109.5m.

Place	Net Budget £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000	Forecast (Overspend)/ Underspend £'000	
Highways	5,524	5,093	431	7.8%
Dorset Travel	42,903	42,840	63	0.1%
Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM)	1,070	1,081	(11)	(1.0%)
Greenspace	3,294	3,334	(40)	(1.2%)
Health & Activity	144	144	(0)	(0.0%)
Commercial Waste & Strategy	17,230	17,130	100	0.6%
Waste - Operations	17,766	17,766	0	0.0%
Fleet	184	184	0	0.0%
Weymouth 2040 Ancillaries	410	410	0	0.0%
LUF	0	0	0	0.0%
Economic Development	1,472	1,528	(56)	(3.8%)
Harbours	16	63	(47)	(302.3%)
Leisure, Arts & Cultural Services	3,276	3,152	124	3.8%
Directors Office	2,217	2,217	0	0.0%
Assets & Property	8,182	8,182	0	0.0%
Planning	5,851	5,980	(129)	(2.2%)
Total Directorate Budget	**109,538**	**109,104**	**434**	**0.4%**

13.56 It is worth reiterating at this early stage that the Place Directorate is greatly affected by external factors which cannot be easily predicted at this early stage of the year. Examples include how global markets affect the prices of recyclate material, and how the wider economy affects the levels of income for items such as car parking, planning fees, and garden waste scheme sign up etc.

13.57 Across the Place Directorate there is circa £0.250m of vacancy factor not yet achieved. The rate of progress in the year to date suggests that this is achievable but is not guaranteed. This means that there is risk that the forecast could worsen by circa £0.250m in relation to unachieved vacancy factor savings.

13.58 There are several movements of funding that have taken place, of which the significant ones are as follows:

a) A virement of £0.450m in total from Dorset Travel to provide funds for various unfunded projects and initiatives led by the Strategic Lead Corporate Director, as follows:
   i) Supporting the Green Energy proposals in Weymouth (£125k)
   ii) Urban renewal in Weymouth (£195k)
   iii) Future plans around the Dorset Innovation Park (£130k)

b) A virement of £0.450m from Dorset Travel into Assets and Property to provide mitigation for interim staffing costs including partial funding for temporary staff costs working on asset disposals.

c) A virement of £0.150m into Assets and Property from the contingency budget as a partial contribution to temporary staff costs working on asset disposals.

d) A virement of £0.235m was received from contingency to compensate for the proposed additional income to be received from evening parking charges. Although the saving was built into the budget for 2025/26, the decision was taken not to proceed.

e) A virement of £0.250m was received from contingency to implement work relating to using HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil) as fuel in DC vehicles.

13.59 Other caveats for this report are:

13.60 The start of the new academic year sees a significant number of contracts renewed in Dorset Travel for SEND transport and to a lesser extent for mainstream school transport. The budget allows for potential uptick in costs as a result. However, given the size of the budgets (£13m for mainstream school transport and £24m for SEND transport) even a small percentage change in costs can mean a big change in expenditure. For this reason, the forecast for Dorset Travel will be much clearer after the effect of the new school year contracts are known.

13.61 In a similar vein, the forecast for PFI Streetlighting is potentially subject to significant change when the annual price uplift for electricity is announced each September.

13.62 Commercial Waste and Strategy is incurring expenditure at several waste sites to make improvements following advice from the Health and Safety Executive. The work is not expected to exceed £0.5m although that figure is not certain at this stage. There is no funding for this work as part of the revenue base budget, however the expected costs can be met from money received from central government specifically for waste services (Extended Producer Responsibility funding grant).

13.63 Commentary on the specific Place Directorate services is as follows:

Highways

13.64 The Highways budget is forecast to be underspent by £431k. This is primarily due to the current cost of utilities (energy) in street lighting. However, there will not be complete certainty on this until September, when the annual price increase in energy is confirmed. Highways includes Parking Services, which currently is not forecasting any variance of significance.

Dorset Travel

13.65 Overall, Dorset Travel is projecting a £63k underspend on a net budget of £43.3m. The underspend is in relation to slightly lower Passenger Assistant costs in the year to date. However, given the scale of activity, and the price volatility seen in the market in previous years, these figures should be considered as indicative only and need to be kept under regular review.

Commercial Waste and Strategy

13.66 An underspend of £100k is predicted. This is the net effect of a worsening recyclate price creating a budget pressure but offset by lower tonnages seen in the year so far. This budget line is volatile and needs to be kept under constant review.

Waste Operations and Fleet

13.67 There are no variances to report at this early stage of the year.

Weymouth 2040 and Levelling Up revenue

13.68 These areas started the financial year with zero base budget. Funding has now been provided for various projects under these headings, via a transfer of funds from Dorset Travel. The various projects are expected to be contained with the funding available.

Economic Development

13.69 The Economic Development service is forecasting a £56k adverse variance around the Tourism service, which is a combination of vacancy factor, in-built savings, and staffing budget pressure. The Digital Place service includes significant in-built savings of circa £320k, and this forecast assumes that those savings will be found through reduced staffing costs.

Harbours

13.70 All three harbours (Weymouth, West Bay, and Lyme Regis) are set with a net nil budget i.e. any costs incurred are expected to be met from harbour income. Weymouth and West Bay harbours have reserves, and any surplus or deficit at year end is applied to the relevant reserve. However, Lyme Regis harbour does not have any funds in reserve.

13.71 Lyme Regis harbour is currently projected to be £47k over budget around staffing issues including seasonal hours.

13.72 Given the above point about lack of reserves at Lyme Regis, the £47k overspend would therefore fall to Dorset Council general reserves.

Leisure, Arts and Cultural

13.73 The projection of £124k underspend is the net effect of unbudgeted Leisure review costs and vacancy factor, offset by predicted utility costs and some staff vacancies.

Assets and Property

13.74 Assets and Property are incurring additional costs in relation to staffing, particularly for additional staff who have been employed to work on asset disposals. However, additional funding has been provided from within the Place Directorate as mentioned above, in the sum of £0.450m from Dorset Travel and £0.150m from contingency.

13.75 Assets and Property have several savings in-built into the budget which are dependent on a restructure to take place. The restructure is in progress.

13.76 The current year saw additional funds added to the repairs & maintenance base budget in the sum of £2m for compliance, plus an additional £1m added as a one-off for fire related compliance work

13.77 Overall, the Assets and Property service is currently forecast to be on budget i.e. nil variance.

Planning

13.78 Overall, an £129k adverse variance is projected, largely due to income. Adverse variances are partially offset by several vacancies. Income for planning applications and building control always fluctuates significantly from one month to the next. Pre-application advice is performing positively and is a useful barometer of future planning applications, while the national uplift in statutory housing targets is likely to see an increase in planning applications later in the autumn when the fixed 5-year supply period comes to an end. Building control has seen similar fluctuations but market share remains robust and there may be further increases in activity in advance of the 2026 introduction of the Building Safety Levy as developers seek to get in before the deadline.

Mitigations are as follows:

- Active vacancy management
- Active promotion of discretionary chargeable services and expanding the offer
- An anticipated uplift in housing applications during the later part of this financial year
- Minimisation of spend on other budget lines which will mitigate any budget pressures elsewhere.

Corporate Development

13.79 The Corporate Development forecast is £41.447m compare with a net budget of £41.268m, showing a minor overspend, with a variance of £179k (0.4%).

Corporate Development	Net Budget £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000	Forecast (Overspend)/ Underspend £'000	
Financial & Commercial	10,517	10,563	(46)	(0.4%)
Human Resources	1,903	1,903	0	0.0%
ICT Operations	8,909	8,992	(83)	(0.9%)
Chief Executive's Office	1,154	1,154	0	0.0%
Directors Office	232	232	0	0.0%
Strategy, Performance and Sustainability	13,092	13,092	0	0.0%
Digital Change	2,322	2,322	0	
Transformation	3,138	3,188	(50)	(1.6%)
Total Directorate Budget	**41,268**	**41,447**	**(179)**	**(0.4%)**

13.80 **Finance & Commercial** is reflecting the impact of a reduced income stream following the dissolution of the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership at the end of March 2025. Dorset Council had previously received an annual contribution of £60k, which will no longer be available. Some residual activities will continue to support the final closure of the organisation.

13.81 **ICT Operations** is reporting an overspend of £83k, primarily driven by increased Microsoft licensing costs. The annual renewal exceeded the allocated budget by £30k, and the anticipated £50k savings from a planned reduction of 200 licenses will not be achieved. This is due to delays in Our Future Council timings, which prevented confirmation of license reductions within the required deadlines of the Microsoft agreement.

13.82 **Transformation, Customer and Cultural Services are showing an** overspend of £50k, this relates to a restructure originally proposed which could not be progressed due to other restructures taking place. The saving is now held to be reviewed alongside wider service savings and transformation.

Legal & Democratic Services

13.83 The Legal & Democratic forecast is £8.526m compared with a net budget of £8.560m, an underspend of £35k (0.4%).

Legal & Democratic	Net Budget £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000	Forecast (Overspend)/ Underspend £'000	
Assurance	1,737	1,741	(5)	(0.3%)
Democratic & Elections Services	3,113	3,113	0	0.0%
Land Charges	(315)	(343)	28	9.0%
Legal Services	3,055	3,043	12	0.4%
Archives	970	970	0	0.0%
Total Directorate Budget	**8,560**	**8,526**	**35**	**0.4%**

13.84 **Land Charges** is currently forecasting a modest underspend, primarily driven by higher-than-anticipated fee income. The volume of search requests has exceeded budget expectations, resulting in a projected income above target. This increased activity may be linked to recent policy changes regarding council tax on second homes.

Central Finance budgets

13.85 The forecast for central finance budgets is £428.458m compared with a net income budget of £429.771m, is a forecast overspend of £1.3m (0.3%).

Central Finance	Net Budget £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000	Forecast (Overspend)/ Underspend £'000	
Our Future Council Savings	(10,000)	(5,000)	(5,000)	(50.0%)
General Funding	(31,238)	(31,597)	359	1.1%
Capital Financing	22,630	22,630	0	0.0%
Contingency	4,253	753	3,500	82.3%
Precepts/Levy	21,560	21,591	(31)	(0.1%)
Central Finance	(436,976)	(436,834)	(142)	(0.0%)
Total Central Budgets	**(429,771)**	**(428,458)**	**(1,314)**	**(0.3%)**

Transformation and savings plans

Our Future Council – Whole Council Transformation

13.86 The 2025/26 Dorset Council budget includes a portfolio of savings plans across each directorate, alongside the Our Future Council (OFC) whole council transformation programme. OFC is designed to modernise shared functions across the organisation and underpin them with appropriate, enabling technology.

13.87 The programme delivers cross-cutting transformation, focusing on service redesign, digital capability, and improved delivery models. It supports the

Council's ambition to operate more efficiently and deliver better outcomes for residents and communities.

13.88 The approved business case for OFC included a savings target of £10.0m for 2025/26, with further savings profiled for 2026/27 and 2027/28. These contribute to the Council's overall savings portfolio and form part of the return on investment required to deliver the organisational and technological changes.

13.89 The savings requirement built into the 2025/26 budget is illustrated in the table below:

Opportunity	Business Case £m	July position £m
Our Future Council consolidation	5	1
Third Party Spend	1	1
Removal of vacancies	2	0
Review of span and controls	2	0
Voluntary redundancy	0	3
Total savings	**10**	**5**

Progress to Date – July 2025

13.90 The programme is currently forecasting delivery of £5m in savings for 2025/26. This reflects implementation of new operating models, a voluntary redundancy programme, third party spend review and initial service redesign efficiencies.

13.91 Workstreams such as commissioning and procurement are progressing and expected to contribute more significantly over the three-year programme.

Savings Area	Confidence Level for 25/26	Commentary
Consolidation	Low	Confidence is currently low due to extended implementation timelines. Further clarity will be provided as revised delivery plans are confirmed.
Third-Party Spend	Low	Low confidence in delivery. Analyst expertise has been requested to review spend in detail and identify immediate opportunities. Outcomes of this work,

Savings Area	Confidence Level for 25/26	Commentary
		expected in December which leaves little time in-year to realise benefit.
Vacancies	Low	Confidence is low at present. A review is underway to ensure vacancy-related savings are accurately reflected.
Voluntary Redundancy (VR)	Low	Low confidence based on level applications, exit dates and value of savings available to be released in 2025/26 alignment with the approved business case.

Forecast Position – July 2025

13.92 As of July 2025, the programme is forecasting an under-delivery of £5.0m, primarily due to:

- A £4.2m shortfall in vacancy-related savings.
- A £0.8m reduction in forecasted savings from third-party expenditure, which is offset by release of £0.8m contingency.

13.93 While the initial forecast reflects a shortfall against the year one target, this is not unexpected at this stage of a multi-year transformation programme. The Council remains confident in its ability to build on progress to date, with transformation savings to be realised in future months and years. The enhanced budget control measures proposed in 13.3 will ensure that vacancy management, third party spend, and discretionary spend across the council is more closely managed collectively, addressing the shortfall and extending the timescale for the delivery of transformation outcomes.

14. Governance and Oversight for Our Future Council

14.1 The programme is closely supported and monitored through a robust governance framework including officer and cross-party member boards. This has now prompted a proactive set of actions to:

- Accelerate investment in enabling technology.
- Embed alignment between service-level and whole-Council savings and transformation plans to avoid duplication and competing priorities.
- Ensure all savings initiatives are captured within the overall portfolio and programme milestones.
- Undertake a full review of vacancy management assumptions that underpin year one savings delivery.

14.1 These actions reflect the Council's commitment to maintaining momentum and ensuring that the programme continues to deliver against its strategic objectives.

15 Next Steps

15.1 A revised investment case, building on the original business case, will be brought forward to a future Cabinet. This will support delivery of the enabling technology, digital and change management requirements to ensure the programme remains on track to meet its medium- and longer-term objectives.

16 Savings - Adults & Housing

16.1 The Adults and Housing directorate has a savings programme in place to deliver £10.597m. At this stage, £5.529m (52%) has been achieved. Below details the progress on each of the programmes.

16.2 A total of 27 savings programmes have been developed across Adult Social Care and Housing, each varying in scale, complexity and east of delivery. These initiatives collectively demonstrate a strong commitment to financial sustainability and service transformation.

16.3 Key achievements include securing £1.8 million from the Social Care Grant, £785,000 through Better Care Fund growth, and significant progress in reablement, working age support, and day services. Operational efficiencies—such as reducing void costs, eliminating B&B use, and improving temporary accommodation are also underway to deliver savings.

16.4 While some programmes have already delivered full savings, others are progressing through implementation or refinement stages, reflecting a balanced and strategic approach.

17. Savings – Children's

17.1 The Children's Services directorate has a savings programme to deliver £7.182m. To date, £6.862m has been achieved.

17.2 Children's Services compare and benchmark nationally and against statistical neighbours who are Ofsted Good or Outstanding to help demonstrate value for Money. From the LG Futures 'Finance Intelligence Toolkit 2024/25 Subscription – Financial Benchmarking – Unit Costs', Dorset's unit costs were 10.7% lower than average. Unit cost is calculated by calculating unit costs for various components of Children's Services, from Children in Care to Youth Justice. The Ofsted inspection of Dorset local authority children's services in March 2025 was deemed 'Outstanding', and the Ofsted Area SEND inspection of Dorset Local Area Partnership in March 2024 achieved the highest result possible.

17.3 **Family Hubs** - a network of Family Hubs, embedded in communities in Dorset where families can get the support they need. External contributions (£1m), earned through successful bids, has enabled eight family hubs to be opened across the county (Ferndown, Wimborne, Wareham, Swanage, Bridport, Dorchester, Sturminster and Littlemoor), with three more (Blandford, Weymouth and Portland) to be opened over the coming months. In line with Department for Education service expectations, all Hubs are providing information and activities for families with children from conception to age 25 (with SEND). Family Hubs bring together workers and services from multiple agencies in one place. A digital offer is also provided, which includes a new parenting app, available for free for all parents and carers of children aged 0-5 in Dorset to support young children's development. Following the Department for Education's recent publication of Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life, we are preparing for future delivery from April 2026, which will include Home Learning Environment (HLE) and Parenting support programmes. These evidence-based programmes will become part of Dorset's core funding for Best Start Family Hubs from April 2026. Funding details and further information on expectations to be shared in the autumn.

17.4 **Mockingbird** - Mockingbird has continued to grow in strength and support for our foster carers across Dorset over the last 12 months. Whilst we have not seen a growth in constellation numbers, we have had 3 hub home carers leave and 3 new hub home carers recruited. The reasons for leaving their hub home positions were due to changes in family circumstances and significant health changes which led to the families not being able to offer the support and homes for our children in care. The newly recruited hub homes for Draco, Aquarius and Orion constellations have settled in well and are providing support that enabled emergency/unplanned homes to teenagers, buddy support to newly recruited foster carers. Collaboration with Pegasus and Gemini constellations provides consistent wrap around support which includes offering short breaks, accessing monthly constellation activities and stepping into the foster family homes to provide direct parenting support. These strategies continue to enable our children to have safe and settled homes with a network of familiar people and support. The current constellations support 57 children and 41 fostering households. We are recruiting for the Advance Practitioner/Mockingbird Liaison worker role which will enable us to expand and continue to strengthen the programme over the coming months. We aim to launch a further 2 constellations during this financial year.

17.5 **Safeguarding Families Together** - is a whole family, strengths-based approach to safeguarding children. The design encompasses a co-located multi-disciplinary team that includes children's social workers and specialist adult practitioners from domestic abuse, substance use/recovery and mental health services, which initially piloted in Chesil, Dorchester and West and from October 2024 rolled out across Dorset. 305 children from 166 families are currently receiving help under SFT. We are now seeing evidence of families successfully stepping down from Child Protection plans or Child in Need plans and sustaining change.

17.6 **Early Support and Digital Family Offer** - is about making Children's Services digital by design, shaping services around families' needs and making online access the preferred choice. Some parts of the project, like machine learning and AI, link closely with the Our Future Council programme. Progress depends on having enough digital capacity to keep things on track and deliver benefits. Recent updates include, the booking system and NEXUS contract are now managed by Corporate, The Directory and secure file have moved to Commissioning and Service redesign work is closed due to team changes. Digital work on User Experience (Iteration 2) and Personalisation is on hold due to limited resources and dependencies on OFC projects. However, the Family Information Service is now scoping the first stage of personalisation—families share basic information and receive tailored support, like childcare options or extra nappy sacks**.**

17.7 **Service savings** – In addition to the above savings totalling £3.9m, Children's identified an additional £3.28m of savings as part of the 2025/26 budget set. Savings range from additional Social Care Grant allocations being retained centrally, through to increased vacancy factors.

All the savings in this category are forecast to be achieved, although not without risk. For example, service delivery being impinged through vacancies being held for longer and the reporting requirements of grants**.**

18. Savings – Birth to Settled Adulthood

18.1 **Birth to Settled Adulthood** – in April 2024 the new 0-25 Birth to Settled Adulthood Service for children with disability and complex needs was launched. This is a partnership between Children's Services, Adult Services, the Health Service, and Dorset Parent Carer Council, and managed within Children's Services. It is designed and committed to the provision of a consistently good service for disabled children and young people and their families, which continues seamlessly from childhood to young adulthood. The phase 2 timeline working on the integration with Health is underway. To date the savings of £1m have not been realised and a plan is being formulated to address.

19. Savings - Place

19.1 The Place Directorate budget for 2025/26 includes £4.740m of in-built specific savings targets. This is in addition to in-built vacancy factor targets.

19.2 The savings fall across 47 budget lines, and so they are not reported individually here, but are as referenced in the budget setting report.

19.3 At this stage, two savings proposals are marked as Red. These are:

- The proposals to charge for car parking in the evening was not pursued (£235k)
- An alternative model for Tourism is not on track (£84k).

19.4 At this stage, the majority of savings are marked as "Amber" meaning that, whilst the savings cannot be considered "banked" as yet, they are broadly on track.

19.5 In summary, of the £4.740m savings, just over £1m can be considered as achieved with a further £3.388m subject to further ongoing monitoring.

20. Savings – Corporate

20.1 The Corporate savings target for 2025/26 is £2.7m, which is in addition to in-built vacancy factor targets. To date £1.34m (50%) have been achieved. Of the remainder £0.4m (14%) are on target to be achieved, £0.8m (29%) are low risk and are still likely to be achieved and £0.2m (7%) are deemed high risk and are unlikely to be achieved this year.

20.2 The high-risk items include £125k within ICT, primarily due to the annual Microsoft renewal exceeding the budget by £30k. Additionally, the expected £50k savings from a planned reduction of 200 licenses will not be realised, and there have been further increases in software costs. Within Transformation, Customer and Cultural a £50k saving was anticipated from a restructure originally proposed; however, this restructure is no longer considered feasible.

21. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

21.1 2024/25 ended with a £37.3m overspend. At the 31 July 2025, the forecast outturn is a £52.534m overspend for 2025/26. Adding the historic cumulative deficit position, a revised cumulative deficit would be £148.18m. This figure reflects the withholding of DfE contributions whilst the safety valve agreement is being reviewed. If the agreement is reinstated and previously committed contributions are received this would reduce to a cumulative deficit of £111.84m after DfE and Council contributions.

21.2 Any deficit associated with the DSG is kept off councils' balance sheets because of the statutory override set out in The Local Authorities Capital Finance and Accounting (England) Regulations. This was extended from March 2026 to March 2028 in June 2025.

21.3 Until March 2028 the deficit is therefore held separately from the general fund, however, there remains an underlying cashflow pressure from carrying a £148m deficit meaning that the Council has access to £148m less cash than it would otherwise. As a result, interest foregone during 2025/26 on the deficit equates to £4.9m of pressure met by the General Fund. This is £4.9m which could otherwise be spent on local service delivery.

21.4 As the deficit grows, there will come a point at which it exceeds Council reserves, and the Council would be technically insolvent. However, the government announced a two-year extension to the statutory instrument in June 2025, and in addition, will set out their approach to SEND reform in a white paper in the autumn. These commitments from the government should mean the future risk is lowered.

23. Safety Valve

23.1 To address the deficits nationally the DfE introduced the Safety Valve Programme. As mentioned earlier in this report, Dorset's agreement is currently under review, with partner contributions being withheld.

23.2 The agreement with the Department for Education in March 2022 to help eradicate the cumulative DSG deficit and support a return to a balanced in-year DSG position by 2026-27. Dorset Council will contribute £33m of revenue as part of the agreement. Additionally, Dorset are investing £47m into capital schemes across the county.

23.3 To date, the DfE funding received totals £23.75m and Dorset Council contributions equal £15m. As at the 31 July 2025, no DfE contributions for 2023-24 and 2024-25 have been received.

23.4 A revised plan was submitted in March 2025. This is part of the DfE Enhanced Monitoring and Support (EMS) programme and includes allocated DfE advisors.

23.5 The financial advisors have reviewed the March plan, and the practice advisor visited Dorset in July 2025. An updated plan is required by the 12 September once demographic, capacity and other alternative strategies have been input into the model.

24. Local Context

24.1 A significant driver for the historic deficit is the continued rise in the number of children and young people who require an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). Chart 1 demonstrates this growth since the introduction of the SEND reforms introduced in 2014.

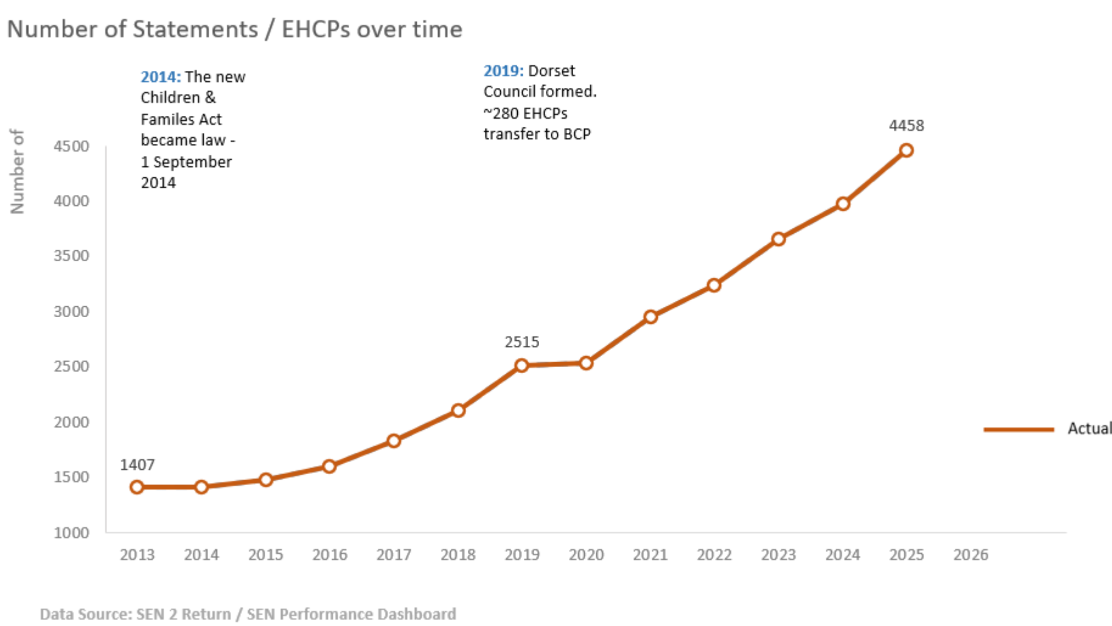


CHART 1: Number of pupils with an EHCP since 2013

24.2 There has been a notable increase in Independent Special School Placements, with current forecasts indicating 305 FTE at an average cost of £67,377. This compares to the budgeted 261 FTE at £74,000. Although the average unit cost is lower than anticipated, the higher volume of placements is contributing to a projected overspend on Independent Special School Placements of £1.19m.

24.3 The DSG budget for financial year 25/26 was set with a starting in-year deficit of £51.11m. The majority of the movement from this starting deficit to the current overspend position of £52.534m is the forecast position on Independent Special School Placements mentioned above.

24.4 Learning Centres and Resourced Provision funding is seeing overspends of £1.13m as a result of high top-ups and additionally commissioned places for 25/26 academic year. However, these pressures have been partially mitigated by the removal of a previously forecasted cost, linked to a review whose conclusion has now been deferred to the next financial year.

24.5 A new EHCP database, Synergy Case Management, was implemented on 7th May 2025. Due to delays with reporting and data cleansing, EHCP data as at the end of July is currently unavailable but detail will be provided in the Q2 report.

25. Local Authority Trading Companies (LATC)

25.1 The council has involvement with three LATC's that support the work of the council. This report focuses on the financial performance of the LATC's and highlights any material financial matters which could impact the Council's finances.

New company at the Dorset Innovation Park

25.2 Cabinet recently approved setting up a new company in relation to the Dorset Innovation Park. Set up is in progress.

Care Dorset

25.3 In the second year of trading, Care Dorset achieved a profit of £0.010m, generated from a total revenue of £31.9m. This marks a positive financial outcome, particularly in the context of a growing and evolving service portfolio. Notably, the gross profit margin improved from 12.55% to 13.65%, reflecting enhanced control over the direct cost base and more efficient operational management.

25.4 The majority of Care Dorset's income is derived from Dorset Council, which funds both the block contract and the registered reablement services through the Better Care Fund. Additional revenue streams, which account for just 5% of total income, ensures the organisation remains well within the local authority trading company procurement threshold, with over 80% of its revenue coming from its controlling authority.

25.5 During the reporting period, Care Dorset successfully completed the operational set up of a new extra care service in Gillingham. This involved the recruitment and training of a dedicated team of twenty colleagues, preparing them to deliver high-quality support. The expected revenue generated from this service in the upcoming financial year contributes to the organisation's continued growth.

25.6 Staffing remains the most significant cost for Care Dorset, with the total pay expenditure reaching £23.3m. The organisation employed 872 colleagues, of whom 841 were directly involved in service delivery. The reliance on agency staff was reduced by 35% compared to the previous year, indicating progress in stabilising the workforce and improving cost efficiency.

25.7 The second largest cost area related to property and equipment. Property rent totalled £2.3m, with £2m attributed to Dorset Council owned properties.

25.8 As of 30 September 2024, Care Dorset Holding Ltd reported a cash balance of £5m alongside debtors of £2.2 million and creditors of £7.8 million. The most significant creditor balances were linked to unsettled rent charges from Dorset Council, pending finalisation of occupancy agreements, and accrued utility costs awaiting invoicing. Since the end of the financial year, Care Dorset has made substantial payments totalling £2.8 million to Dorset Council, covering rent and utility obligations.

Dorset Centre of Excellence Ltd

25.9 The Dorset Centre of Excellence Ltd was established in June 2021. The Company became leaseholder of the site previously owned and occupied by St Mary's Independent School in May 2022 and opened Coombe House School in the same month.

25.10 Coombe House provides education for children with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND). The Dorset Centre of Excellence Ltd is a limited company, 100% owned by Dorset Council.

25.11 The accounting year end for the Dorset Centre of Excellence Ltd is 31 March and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025 are not yet published.

25.12 Turnover for the Company was £6.2m in 2025/26 (£3.3m for 2023/24). The Company received fees from Dorset Council of £6.0m for 2025/26 (£2.9m for 2023/24).

25.13 The Company anticipate a reported surplus before tax of £736k for 2024/25 (£493k pre-tax loss 2023/24). This is significantly ahead of the performance forecast in the 5-year Business Plan (revised and approved March 2024) which anticipated a surplus of £233k.

25.14 The Company continues to meet growth targets in pupil numbers and staff in line with the 5-year Business Plan (revised March 2024). The surplus for year ending 31 March 2025 was achieved with minimal development of other commercial activities on the site, pupil numbers not yet at capacity and cost pressures from inflation and Teachers' Pension Scheme employer contribution increases.

25.15 The Company purpose is to provide special school places for Dorset children at a fee significantly below the market rate. An agreement was made to increase the annual fee to £52k as of April 2025 after the fee had remained at £42k per pupil since opening in May 2022. This increased fee is still far below the current average cost of an Independent Special School setting. Any future surplus will support maintaining a low fee for Dorset placements

Connect2Dorset

25.16 Connect2Dorset is a joint venture with Commercial Services Group (a company wholly owned by Kent County Council). The new service came into effect at the beginning of April 2024 and provides the Council with contingent agency, contract and interim employees.

25.17 The long-term aim of Connect2Dorset is to improve the quality of our agency workers, and where suitable convert agency workers to permanent employees.

26. Central Finance and Contingency

26.1 **Central Finance –** These budgets include income from council tax and business rates. A business rates surplus of £2.5 million has been identified; however, this has not yet been reflected in the forecast, as it is anticipated that the surplus will also be required to fund OFC.

26.2 **Capital Financing** At the end of the 2024/25 financial year, the Council revised its approach to calculating the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). This change was primarily introduced to better align the charge with the actual usage of assets over time, while continuing to ensure a prudent level of provision is maintained to support the repayment of debt.

26.3 The change in the calculation also results in a reduced budget requirement, with an anticipated underspend. However, this has not yet been reflected in the forecast, as it is expected that the underspend will be needed to support the funding of Our Future Council.

26.4 **Contingency** The Council's base budget included a contingency of £13m.

26.5 The Contingency budget includes £4.5m allocated for inflation, originally set aside due to the complex impacts of inflation driven by demand and changes to national insurance policy. To help mitigate the overall overspend and the reduced savings from the Our Future Council programme, £1.0m has now been released.

26.6 A further £2.5m has been released following confirmation of the Nationally agreed pay award at 3.2%.

27. General fund position and other earmarked reserves at year-end

27.1 Any overspend at the end of the year will mean a drawn down from reserves will be required. At the end of financial year 2024/25 the council held £31.632m in the general fund and £114m in earmarked reserves which was a reduction of £7.859m from the previous year.

27.2 Based on the revenue forecast as at the end of 2025/26 there will be a requirement for the following use of reserves:

i. £7.705m from the general fund overspend, £5m of which is required to cover Our Future Council.
ii. £5.1m contribution to the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2026/27.

27.3 Unless some currently earmarked reserves can be repurposed, this could mean the Council is required to use its General Fund reserve, reducing the balance from 7.58% of General Fund (General Fund/Annual Budget allocation) to 6.88% (after the budgeted £4.774m into reserves is applied). Depleting reserves at this rate in a single year would be a cause for real concern as the minimum operating level for the council to hold in its general fund would be 5%.

28. Capital programme and financing

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

28.2 The 2024/25 capital outturn was reported to Cabinet in June 2025 and the result of that was that there was programme slippage of £22.770m into 2025/26.

28.3 This, along with the agreed budget and updates since that date, mean a programme of £494.7m for the next five years, as summarised in the table below.

Capital Programme	Total Budget					
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total Budget 24/25-29/30
Full external funding	33,842	2,938	2,768	0	0	39,548
Partial external funding	63,168	21,992	0	0	0	85,160
Partial external funding	0	25,224	29,462	18,349	17,687	90,722
Council funded	49,767	54,744	45,618	18,140	3,359	171,628
Funded from other Reserves	0	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Receipts Applied	5,800	9,900	1,000	1,000	1,000	18,700
Minimum Revenue Provision	11,241	12,972	14,602	16,499	16,749	72,063
Self Funded	5,879	4,432	2,850	2,750	1,000	16,911
Total funding	**169,697**	**132,202**	**96,300**	**56,738**	**39,795**	**494,732**

28.4 The spend and commitments against the programme of £169.7m at 31 July 2025 was £31.7m (19%). The programme is under continuous review to monitor the progress of all approved projects and to identify any issues that may impact on the overall programme. Where slippage is identified the project budgets will be reprofiled within the overall programme.

28.5 The project budgets for the current year are outlined below.

Directorate	No. of projects	Project Budget £,000	Spend / Commitments £,000	Variance £,000	% Spent
Adults & Housing	20	8,940	1,431	7,509	16%
Children's	13	17,798	2,811	14,987	16%
Place	113	125,502	26,136	99,366	21%
Public Health & Prevention	1	26	0	26	0%
Corporate	12	17,431	1,314	16,117	8%
Total	**159**	**169,697**	**31,692**	**138,005**	**19%**

28.6 The movements in the project budgets since the beginning of the financial year are shown in the table below.

Directorate	01/04/2025 £,000	Adjustments £,000	Re-profiling £,000	New funding £,000	Q1 Budget £,000
Adults & Housing	13,756	-526	-4,290	0	8,940
Children's	38,732	0	-23,946	3,012	17,798
Place	129,975	-5,659	1,186	0	125,502
Public Health & Prevention	26	0	0	0	26
Corporate	17,349	82	0	0	17,431
Total	**199,838**	**-6,103**	**-27,050**	**3,012**	**169,697**

28.7 Changes to the Capital scheme since the beginning of the financial year include the following items.

28.8 There has been an adjustment of £6.1m relating to Lyme Regis Environmental Plan Phase 5 - The Cobb. The original funding is no longer available so a new proposal will be brought forward.

28.9 There has been re-profiling of £27.0m into future years to more accurately reflect the timing of works and therefore spend incurred. This includes Dorset Centre of Excellence - Phase 5 £7.8m; SEND capital strategy £7.0m; Lyme Regis Environmental Plan Phase 5 - The Cobb £6.1m; Reablement Centres £4.3m and Dorset Centre of Excellence - Coombe House School Phase 3 development £3.7m.

28.10 There has also been new external funding of £3.0m confirmed, most significantly £2.7m relating to the SOCA Board programme of works.

28.11 It is too soon to forecast what level of slippage we might anticipate into future years, based on previous financial years it is unlikely that all aspects of the programme will be deliverable this year based on the current rate of spend.

28.12 The delivery of the capital programme is reviewed monthly by the Capital Strategy and Asset Management Group (CSAMG).

29. Sundry debt management

New invoices for 2024/25

29.1 The total value of debts (invoices) raised between 1 April 2025 and 31 July 2025 is £84.2m, a breakdown by directorate is shown below:

Total debt raised	2025/26 £'000
Adults & Housing	£24,705
Children's Services	£2,726
Place	£12,255
Corporate	£44,545
Total	**£84,231**

Overall amounts owed

29.2 Looking at debt across all years, the balance of sundry debt outstanding at 31 July 2025 was £36.6m.

29.3 The breakdown of the current sundry debt is as follows:

Total Debt					
Directorate	**Total due £'000**	**Less than 30 days £'000**	**30-90 days £'000**	**90-365 days £'000**	**Over 365 days £'000**
Adults & Housing	28,438	803	2,342	8,692	16,601
Children's Services	575	239	75	72	189
Place	5,802	709	1,031	2,212	1,850
Corporate	1,831	515	1,146	83	87
Grand Total	**36,646**	**2,267**	**4,594**	**11,059**	**18,726**

29.4 £28.4m of the £36.6m of outstanding debt is within Adults & Housing. Of which, some relates to deferred payment arrangements, or care provided through gross without prejudice.

29.5 After adjusting for these the debt which is currently collectable is as follows:

Collectable Debt					
Directorate	Total due £'000	Less than 30 days £'000	30-90 days £'000	90-365 days £'000	Over 365 days £'000
Adults & Housing	17,390	1,349	1,736	5,605	8,701
Children's Services	575	239	75	72	189
Place	5,802	709	1,031	2,212	1,850
Corporate	1,823	508	1,146	83	86
Total	**25,591**	**2,805**	**3,988**	**7,972**	**10,826**

Prior year performance

29.6 At the end of 2024/25 the Collectable Debt arrears were £43.36m and to date £25.8m (60%) has been collected.

29.7 The next table breaks down performance for prior year debts.

Prior year arrears	Amount owed 31/03/2025 £,000	Collected in year £,000	Amount outstanding 31/07/2025 £,000	% collected
Pre 1 April 2019	641	43	598	7%
2019/20	777	-9	787	-1%
2020/21	1,203	-7	1,211	-1%
2021/22	1,163	-9	1,172	-1%
2022/23	1,942	87	1,855	4%
2023/24	3,247	267	2,980	8%
2024/25	34,383	25,462	8,921	74%
Total	**43,356**	**25,833**	**17,523**	**60%**

Deferred payments

29.8 Deferred payments are debts that relate to adult care provided by Dorset Council, which have been secured against the property of the customer. The Council will eventually receive full payment of the debt when the property is sold.

Deferred Payments					
Directorate	**Total due £'000**	**Less than 30 days £'000**	**30-90 days £'000**	**90-365 days £'000**	**Over 365 days £'000**
Adults & Housing	4,308	-189	294	1,261	2,943

Gross without prejudice

29.9 Gross without prejudice debts also relate to adult care, the debt is raised but not actively pursued whilst a care act assessment and subsequent financial assessment is undertaken to determine whether the recipient of the care is financially assessed as able to contribute towards the cost of their care.

Gross Without Prejudice					
Directorate	**Total due £'000**	**Less than 30 days £'000**	**30-90 days £'000**	**90-365 days £'000**	**Over 365 days £'000**
Adults & Housing	6,739	-357	312	1,826	4,958

29.10 The negative figure in the “Less than 30 days” category reflects a credit that was processed through Mosaic following the receipt of the necessary documents. The timing of this adjustment meant that it wasn’t matched against the relevant charges at the time the reports were produced.

30. Write-offs

30.1 The write-offs processed so far this year are shown in the table below. There is adequate provision to cover these debts, which are a relatively small proportion of the total outstanding debt (0.28%).

Debts written off	2025/26
	£'000
Adults & Housing	12
Children's Services	0
Place	0
Corporate	0
Total	**12**

31. Council tax and business rates debt management

<u>Council tax</u>

31.1 The value of council tax debt raised in 2025/26 is £431.1m and £162.6m has been collected to date. The collection rate at 31 July 2025 is 37.73%, which is slightly less than the corresponding position from the previous year, which was 38.14%.

31.2 It is important to highlight that, while the percentage collected is slightly lower than the previous year, the total debit raised in 2025/26 is £38m higher than in 2024/25.

<u>Business rates (non-domestic rates – NDR)</u>

31.3 The value of business rates debt raised in 202/26 is £119.6m and £51.2m has been collected to date. The collection rate at 31 July 2025 is 42.88%, which is slightly less than the corresponding position from the previous year, which was 45.27%.

31.4 The initial dip on NDR was anticipated as a reliable taxpayer, with a significant number of liabilities, who has historically paid as a one-off payment at the start of the year, has opted to pay over an instalment plan throughout the year from this year. We are confident full payment will be received, just now throughout the year rather than as a one-off payment.

Write offs

31.5 The write-offs processed by the Revenues & Benefits Service during the year are shown in the table below.

Debts written off	**2025/26 £'000**
Council tax	2
Business rates	0
Housing Benefit overpayments	23
Total	**25**

Financial planning, strategy and the MTFP

31.6 The Council has already started the process of refreshing the MTFP and developing the budget strategy for 2026/27 which, as well as meeting new pressures, will also need to deal with any ongoing pressures from 2025/26.

31.7 Changes to Council Funding through the Fair Funding review, will potentially have significant impact to the Council. As a result, it is expected that the local and national pressures the Council is facing in the current financial year can be expected to continue over the medium term.

31.8 Taking both the local and national operating environment into consideration, readers of the report should expect:

i. the budget gap for next year (2026/27) to widen

ii. delivering a balanced budget to require a reprioritisation of service delivery to ensure ongoing financial sustainability.

31.9 Recent budget rounds have seen significant turbulence and volatility, and the backdrop to setting the budget for next year is likely to be very similar, with uncertainty around prices, markets and labour.

31.10 The first update of the refreshed update of the MTFP financial model will come to Cabinet in November for endorsement of the planning assumptions for the year ahead, as well as the longer-term financial planning horizon.

32. Number and extent of contract exemptions

32.1 Appendix C includes the number and extent of contract exemptions, and the narrative is included in the appendix.

32.2 Contract breaches may occur when suppliers or the council fail to meet agreed terms, such as deadlines or service standards, posing financial, reputational, and legal risks. These breaches are typically operational contract management matters and remain confidential and excluded from standard reporting until they published in accordance with legislation.

32.3 Contract exemptions, meanwhile, are permitted in accordance with the council's Contract Procedure Rules ("CPR" which apply to the procurement award and management of contracts for goods, services and works). The council's CPR provide for advance approval to depart from the standard rules, where certain criteria are met; for example to allow a contract to be awarded directly to one supplier, after investigating the market and identifying the only that supplier could perform the contract. Each exemption request and approval or rejection is documented.

32.4 A Section 5 (Local Government and Housing Act 1989) report is a formal legal report issued by the council's Monitoring Officer where it appears that any proposal, decision or omission of the council (by committee or officer) has or is likely to be unlawful or amount to maladministration or injustice. Section 5 reports, follow a separate public process and are not included in the paper. The Monitoring Officer has not issued any such reports in 2025/26.

33. Summary, conclusions and next steps

33.1 2025/26 continues to be an extremely challenging time for local government, with inflationary and demand pressures impacting on income and expenditure. There remains a large degree of financial uncertainty and, having reviewed expenditure for the first four months of the year, Dorset Council's prudent financial forecast is a £7.705m budget pressure.

33.2 Steps proposed to mitigate this with additional spend controls while the transformation work is reprofiled will be closely monitored and reported on in the next monitoring report. These controls will broadly fall into the three areas of:

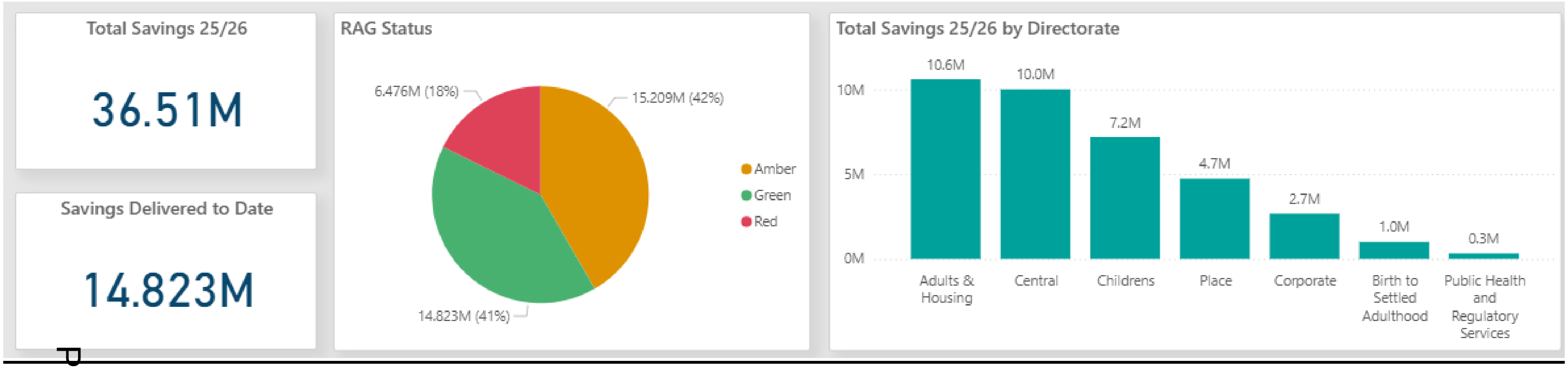
i. Consolidated establishment & vacancy management which will better align the council's transformation objectives
ii. Acceleration of the work already being undertaken to address 3rd party spending as the 'commissioning and procurement' workstream of our future council
iii. In year spending controls with respect to discretionary and/ purchase order spend which will also reinforce learning from the SWAP audit

33.3 Members are asked to note these planned spending controls as well as reprofiling of the spending / transformation programme which will be reflected in the next monitoring report.

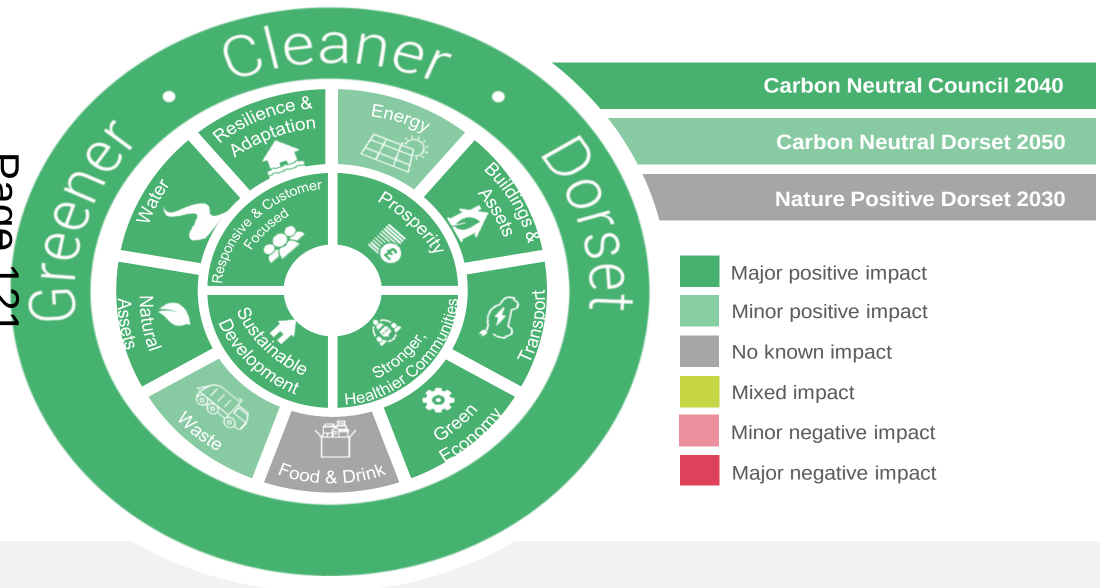
33.4 The information contained within this report will form the basis of the starting position for the 2026/27 budget setting process, which will once again prove to be extremely tough as the Council seeks to achieve its priorities whilst meeting the growing cost of demand, all from within limited funds.

Sean Cremer
Corporate Director – Finance and Commercial (S151 Officer)

Appendix A - Savings



Appendix B – Climate wheel



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)

	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	0
2040 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	0

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	minor positive impact
Buildings & Assets	major positive impact
Transport	major positive impact
Green Economy	major positive impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	minor positive impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	major positive impact
Water	major positive impact
Resilience and Adaptation	major positive impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Prosperity	strongly supports it
Stronger healthier communities	strongly supports it
Sustainable Development & Housing	strongly supports it
Responsive & Customer Focused	strongly supports it

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
Find out energy use of buildings that are being brought into the Dorset Council carbon footprint, as this will affect our ability to hit our carbon reduction targets	
Find out energy use of any new build buildings that are being added to the Dorset Council carbon footprint, as this will affect our ability to hit our carbon reduction targets	
Support the acceleration of heating and energy and water efficiency through cavity and solid wall insulation, draught proofing, improved glazing and shading, and high energy and water efficient smart appliances	
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
Look at ways to reduce the amount of waste produced	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	

Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

Appendix C

Commercial Exemptions April to July 2025.

The table below gives the data for the exemptions that have taken place between April and July 2025, the data includes the number of exemptions per directorate and the extent (value) of these exemptions.

Exemptions	Number of exemptions *	Total value of exemptions (£)*
Adults	1	£131,016.44
Children's	1	£19,096.00
Corporate	0	£0.00
Place	5	£518,072.21
Public Health	0	£0.00
Total	7	£668,184.65

*data is correct as submitted by internal stakeholders.

Many of the extensions relate to Place, approximately three quarters of the value of the Place exemptions (£386,364) relate to one exemption, this was for urgent work that was required for repairs.

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V2/25

Cabinet

9 September 2025

Additional Procurement Forward Plan Report – over £500k (2025-2026) and Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2024-2025

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: Richard Freed, Service Manager Commercial & Procurement

Email: RICHARD.FREED@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

1. The Dorset Council budget of £417.2 million for 2025/26 was approved by Full Council on Tuesday 11 February. A procurement forward plan report for 2025-2026 was approved by Cabinet on 26th March 2025. This paper follows on from the budget approval and seeks approval to launch additional procurement activity not covered in March 2025.

   This paper has historically proceeded to Cabinet twice a year and its purpose is as follows:

   For procurement activity, a Key Decision, which requires Cabinet prior approval is a proposed procurement with financial cost or saving to the council of £500k or more. This report provides notice of the additional planned / known procurement activities that will need Cabinet prior Key Decision approval for 2025-26. Commercial & Procurement have collaborated with colleagues across the Directorates and reviewed the contract management system to establish an additional procurement programme for 2025-26. Procurement activity, within that programme, that are known / likely to exceed the £500k Key Decision threshold are set out in Appendix 1 for Cabinet's consideration.

Under Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (MSA), the Transparency in Supply Chains (TISC) provision requires all commercial organisations with an annual turnover of £36 million or more to publish a Modern Slavery Transparency Statement each year. This statement must also be uploaded to the government's Modern Slavery Statement Registry. This report provides the annual update of the Council's Modern Slavery Transparency Statement for the financial year 2024–2025.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 Cabinet is asked to consider the contents of this report in respect of proposed additional over £500k procurement activity for 2025-26 that are listed in Appendix 1 and the Modern Slavery Transparency Statement and to agree:

- to begin each of the procurement procedures listed in Appendix 1 (subject to an approved and available budget) to the Report.

- to delegate authority to the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder, after consultation with the relevant Executive Director to make the following decisions:

2.1..1 To agree final procurement documentation developed and refined within the broad scope of the procurement briefing notes (available on request)

2.1..2 To agree contract award subject to an approved and available budget (through a recommendation to award report and recorded in an Executive Decision form by the decision maker)

2.1..3 To publish the proposed Modern Slavery Transparency Statement for 2024-2025.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 Additional Procurement Forward Plan: Cabinet is required to approve all Key Decisions with financial consequences of £500k or more. It is good governance therefore to provide Cabinet with a summary of all proposed procurements, that individually are estimated to be a total value of £500k or more, prior to procurement procedures formally commencing.

3.2 Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder (in consultation with the relevant Executive Director) to agree final procurement documentation to be used for each of the procurements listed in Appendix 1. Those procurement documents will be developed and refined, based on the information and scope set out within each of the procurement briefing notes (prepared by service officer leads in advance of this report and available on request). The final procurement documents may include refinements to the scope and description, term or value of the contract to be procured, or the route to market, to take account of up-to-date information including relating to the Council's transformation programme.

3.3 Cabinet is asked to note that while delegation of authority is granted, it is not mandatory to exercise it, and there are circumstances where it might be prudent to bring a Key Decision outlined in this paper back to Cabinet; for example, sensitive decisions, high value decisions, or decisions which would be outside of the scope of the delegation or beyond the scope of the original briefing note informing this report.

3.4 For the avoidance of doubt, whoever holds the delegation has authority to make the final decision; whether to make a decision, or refer a matter back to Cabinet.

3.5 Whoever holds the delegation must exercise it in consultation with named consultees. They may also consult with other members such as informal cabinet or professional and service officers. The report enables Cabinet to identify whether any reports for procurement activities should be brought to Cabinet for specific executive decision, otherwise they will be dealt with under the delegation outlined.

3.6 Modern Slavery Transparency Statement: It is a statutory requirement for the Council to publish a Modern Slavery Transparency Statement on an annual basis.

4. The report

4.1 Additional Procurement Forward Plan: This report provides for Cabinet consideration, in Appendix 1, additional procurement activity within the 2025-2026 procurement programme (and onwards), which are known/likely to secure contracts exceeding the £500k threshold.

4.2 Modern Slavery Transparency Statement: The Modern Slavery Act was introduced in 2015 to provide victims of modern slavery with greater protections and police with greater powers. Section 54, The Transparency in Supply Chains Provision (TISC) of the MSA requires commercial entities with an annual turnover of £36m or more to publish annually a Modern Slavery Transparency Statement and for this to be added to the government-run online Modern Slavery Statement Registry. Appendix 2 provides the proposed Statement for financial year 2024-2025 for Cabinet's consideration, as produced by a cross-directorate Modern Slavery Group, as a revision to the previous published Statement.

5. **Commercial and Procurement updates**

5.1 Much of the content from previous procurement updates remains applicable and will not be reiterated here. This paper focuses on key highlights and changes since the last report, ensuring relevance and avoiding.

5.2 Grants: The Commissioned Grants for Direct Community Benefit Policy was approved by Dorset Council's Cabinet on 24 June 2025. The policy introduced a structured and transparent framework for awarding grants as an alternative to traditional procurement, specifically where there is a direct community benefit. It aligns with national government grant standards and aims to streamline commissioning for the Voluntary and Community Sector while maintaining value for money and accountability. The route to market, whether via a grant or a contract, can shift depending on the nature of the funding relationship. The Government Functional Standard for Grants in addition to the policy provides guidance on when grants are appropriate, typically for funding activities that deliver public benefit without direct procurement. If the objectives or structure of the relationship change, the route may need to be reassessed and adjusted accordingly.

5.3 Our Future Council – Commercial and Procurement Considerations: Given the scale and ambition of the Our Future Council programme, the Commercial and Procurement team will continue to prompt stakeholders to build flexibility into new contracts, specifications (including opportunities for consolidation), and procurement notices. Legal changes must be clearly articulated within the original contract to ensure enforceability and compliance. Flexibility remains critically important as internal teams are expected to undergo change, which may necessitate contract variations, reallocation of responsibilities, or changes in service delivery. Consolidating spend (where appropriate) and reviewing contract scope will help manage financial pressures and improve value for money. The external environment also remains unpredictable, with evolving legislation, market volatility, and shifting community needs. Internally, organisational change adds further complexity. These factors reinforce the need for agile, resilient commercial arrangements that can adapt to both anticipated and unforeseen developments.

5.3.1 Contract Procedure Rules and Commercial Strategy Update: Following the UK's exit from the European Union and the introduction of new procurement legislation, the Council's Contract Procedure Rules require an update to ensure alignment with the evolving legal framework. Similarly, the Commercial Strategy will be refreshed to reflect these changes and support the delivery of Our Future Council. Interim updates will be issued as the programme rolls out, ahead of a finalised strategy that incorporates legislative reform, organisational priorities, and lessons learned through implementation.

5.3.2 In line with the adopt-not-adapt principle of OFC, procurement decisions must continue to prioritise proportionality and value for money, ensuring that processes are streamlined, outcomes-focused, and aligned with national standards without unnecessary customisation.

5.4 Existing Contracts, Frameworks, and Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS) – Legal and Governance Considerations: Existing Contracts, Frameworks and DPS (excluding those for health services) continue to be governed by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR15) unless the Procurement Act 2023 applies. This includes modifications to existing contracts and call-offs under established Frameworks or DPS'.

5.4.1 Call-off contracts under Dorset Council Cabinet approved frameworks are generally not treated as separate key decisions. There is an implicit assumption that call-offs from Dorset let frameworks or DPS arrangements previously approved by Cabinet are permissible, provided they remain within the scope and value limits of the original approval. Where Dorset Council creates its own frameworks, Cabinet approval is typically required (to establish the framework at a particular value) due to the strategic and financial significance. In these cases, Cabinet approval has been cleared historically for the framework itself, and call-off contracts must be approved in line with the Council's Scheme of Delegation (SoD), based on contract value and impact.

5.4.2 For clarity, Dorset Council also calls off from external frameworks (e.g. YPO, CCS, ESPO), which it did not create and therefore they are included historically where relevant in appendix 1. For clarity, any task orders or statements of work under a particular call off contract are treated implicitly as delegated decisions. Finally, a service may request Cabinet approval to use an external framework, enabling it to operate under the same governance principles as Dorset Council-created frameworks.

5.4.3 Notwithstanding the above, exceptionally high-value or sensitive call-offs may warrant additional reporting or scrutiny, even if technically within delegation. Delegation principles have been outlined above and in previous Procurement Forward Plans. Service areas are reminded that they could choose to do so in certain circumstances, and they should liaise with the respective Director and Portfolio Lead around these matters. There is an implicit **understanding that** once Cabinet approves Dorset Council created framework or DPS, officers may proceed with call-offs under that framework without returning to Cabinet, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

5.5 The Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 came in to force on 1st January 2024. Within these Regulations there are requirements to publish two reports annually under Regulations 25 and 26; these are an Annual Summary and Monitoring Requirements. The first reporting period being from 1st January 2024 until 31st March 2025, and the reporting having to be published no later than six months following the end of 2024/2025 financial year. As a pragmatic and proportionate way to meet these requirements of The Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 (PSR23), Commissioners from Public Health are working with the commercial and procurement business partner, in conjunction with other colleagues including the legal team, to develop the reporting which will be shared with the Public Health and Prevention Directorate Management Team to discuss with stakeholders, which will likely be published on the Public Health page on the Dorset Council website. Cabinet is invited to comment on whether they wish to receive the PSR23 reporting as part of future updates, or if they would prefer it to be presented separately given its statutory significance.

5.6 Procurement Act 2023 Implementation and Strategic Procurement Themes: The implementation of the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) represents a significant cultural shift, requiring dedicated time and engagement from internal stakeholders. Alongside this, there are ongoing technology challenges and the complexity of operating under multiple legal regimes for the foreseeable future. The Council continues to adopt an iterative approach, learning lessons and embedding continuous improvement as part of the wider Our Future Council transformation programme. Procurement must remain proportionate and strategic balancing priorities such as SME[1] engagement, social value, and modern slavery while ensuring that the procurement process itself delivers value. This includes minimising administrative burdens, consolidating spend where appropriate, and maintaining flexibility in contracts to accommodate organisational restructuring and external uncertainties. These principles are essential in navigating financial constraints and delivering outcomes that support the Council's long-term objectives. The Commercial and Procurement team continues to engage with the Local Government Association (LGA), Crown Commercial Service (CCS), and relevant regional procurement networks, including through Dorset Council's paid membership in the Central

[1] 11. To qualify as an SME, legally an enterprise must have:
a. fewer than 250 staff; and
b. less than or equal to £44m in annual turnover or a balance sheet total of less than or equal to £38m. Source: Supplementary information: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises definition (HTML) - GOV.UK

Buying Consortium (CBC). These partnerships support shared learning, alignment with national guidance, and consistent implementation of the Procurement Act 2023. They also provide access to collaborative opportunities, market intelligence, and best practice that strengthen the Council's commercial capability. For example, the Council has chosen to adopt a set of procurement templates aligned with those used by several other councils participating in the regional forum, supporting consistency, shared learning, and efficient implementation.

During July and August 2025, the Government was consulting on further reforms to public procurement, with responses submitted by 5 September 2025. These proposals, likely to amend the Procurement Act 2023 include mandatory SME and VCSE spending targets, expanded use of direct awards, compulsory in-house delivery assessments, enhanced social value metrics, and exclusion criteria for poor payment practices. As an active stakeholder working with a diverse supplier base, including VCSEs and grant-funded partners, Dorset Council is well-positioned to contribute to this consultation. The Commercial and Procurement team responded through existing collaboration channels which provide regular opportunities to engage on national policy matters.

6. Alternative options considered

6.1 Procurement Forward Plan: An alternative approach is for Services to continue submitting separate and standalone Key Decision procurement reports to Cabinet for approval. They can do so, outside of the twice-yearly cycle and for decisions that they deem require additional scrutiny.

6.2 Modern Slavery: Relating to modern slavery risks and actions, Cabinet may wish to consider whether the issue of a modern slavery statement warrants a dedicated, standalone report, given its significance and cross-cutting implications.

6.3 No other alternative options have been identified at this stage. The proposed approach is considered the most appropriate to meet the Council's objectives, ensure compliance with legal and procurement requirements, and manage associated risks effectively. The decision reflects current operational needs and strategic priorities.

7. Legal considerations

7.1 The Council acknowledges its responsibilities under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and other relevant legislation, and Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and Procurement Act 2023. Dorset Council's Legal Services have been consulted to ensure that procurement practices, supplier engagement, and policy commitments are aligned with statutory duties and evolving case law. It is recognised that some legislative areas remain untested, and the potential for legal challenge cannot be fully eliminated. The Council will continue to monitor legal developments and seek advice to mitigate risk and uphold compliance across its operations and supply chains.

8. **Financial implications**

8.1 Procurement Forward Plan: Service budgets incorporate funding required for the procurements set out in this report. The following will be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case / procurement project initiation and sourcing report and rationale for each procurement: how the contract and supplier(s) will be effectively managed to deliver saving targets that are incorporated into the financial plan; whether full funding is available in the budget provision, after savings have been accounted for (and incorporating break points and scale up / down provisions due to budget changes in future years); and the intended best approach to assess the contract performance and supplier relationship to manage expectations in respect of annual price increase amid a higher level of financial pressures that has not been experienced for many years.

8.2 Modern Slavery: No additional financial implications. This is a report in respect of a Statement which reflects on the Council's current position and outputs for financial year 2023-2024 regarding modern slavery.

9. **Natural environment, climate & ecology implications**

9.1 Procurement Forward Plan: To be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case / procurement project initiation and sourcing report and rationale for each procurement if applicable.

9.2 Modern Slavery: Not applicable. This is a report in respect of a Statement which reflects on the Council's current position and outputs for financial year 2024-2025 regarding modern slavery.

10. **Well-being and health implications**

10.1 Procurement Forward Plan: to be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case / procurement project initiation and sourcing report and rationale for each procurement if applicable.

10.2 Modern Slavery: Publishing annually a Modern Slavery Transparency Statement supports well-being and health implications within the Council's supply chains and wider communities, by ensuring transparency of the Council's policy and approach to responding to and mitigating the risk of Modern Slavery.

11. **Other implications**

11.1 None, although wider implications will be considered by the relevant project team.

12. **Risk implications**

12.1 Procurement Forward Plan: The level of risk is to be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case / procurement project initiation and sourcing report and rationale for each procurement. The purpose is to ensure that any potential issues are anticipated and mitigated to minimise their impact on the Council's objectives and operations. Effective risk management supports the Council in achieving its goals while ensuring compliance with regulations and maintaining financial stability. Financial pressures to the Council's budgets remain. All decisions and recommendations must therefore be mindful of the actual and potential impact of financial pressures, especially when committing future funding. Additionally, it is recognised that where legislation is untested and there will be legal challenges across the public sector. The Council has dedicated legal advice to minimise the risk although the risk cannot be eliminated. The possibility of facing such challenges can never be completely removed.

12.2 Modern Slavery: Dorset Council is committed to preventing modern slavery and human trafficking in all aspects of its operations and supply chains. We recognise our responsibility to uphold ethical standards and safeguard vulnerable individuals through robust procurement practices, staff training, and partnership working. This statement outlines our approach to identifying risks, promoting transparency, and ensuring compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

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

- Current Risk: MEDIUM

- Residual Risk: LOW

13. Equalities

13.1 Procurement Forward Plan: To be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case / procurement project initiation and sourcing report and rationale for each procurement if applicable.

13.2 Modern Slavery: Publishing an annual Modern Slavery Transparency Statement is a positive policy in that it is setting out the Council's commitment to opposing Modern Slavery and acting ethically with integrity and transparency.

14. Appendices

14.1 Appendix 1: 2025-26 Additional Procurement Forward Plan where the contract value is expected to exceed £500k.

14.2 Appendix 2: Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2024-2025.

15. Background papers

[Procurement Forward Look Cabinet Report MARCH 2025.pdf]

16. Report sign-off

16.1 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 Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendix 1 - September 2025 Procurement Forward Plan where the contract value is expected to exceed £500,000

This list is indicative and the time, spend and scope will fluctuate depending on budget and council priorities

No.	Contract Description	Portfolio / Portfolio Lead	Executive Director	Contract Term (Initial)	Term Extensions beyond initial (Recommended)	Estimated spend over Initial Contract Term	Spend Extensions beyond Initial (Recommended)	Potential Market Route	Risk Category	Comments
1	Hotel & Guest House Portfolio Management	Property Assets and Economic Growth / Cllr Richard Biggs	Jan Britton	5 years	2 years	£530,000	£180,000	Call off from Framework/DPS	Medium	The route to market may evolve as the Service clarify requirements and ensure alignment with objectives.
2	Sewerage Treatment Services Improvement Works Contract(s)	Place / Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	2 years (Phase 1)	3 years (phases 2 and 3)	Phase 1 - £1,200,000	Phases 2 and 3 - £2,050,000	Tender - Open ***or*** Call off from Framework (TBC)	Medium	These requirements may be met be under one or more contracts – the final structure of any procurement(s) and contract(s) is yet to be determined. In respect of this, this briefing note is intended to cover the potential for multiple procurements (within the overall scope and value of these requirements).
3	Vehicles - 3.5t vehicles	Place / Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	12 months	N/A - one off purchase contract	£1,378,206	N/A - one off purchase contract	Call off from Framework/DPS	Medium	
4	Vehicles - 15t RCV's	Place / Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	12 months	N/A - one off purchase contract	£1,200,000	N/A - one off purchase contract	Call off from Framework/DPS	Medium	
5	Vehicles - 32t grabs	Place / Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	12 months	N/A - one off purchase contract	£550,000	N/A - one off purchase contract	Call off from Framework/DPS	Medium	
6	Vehicles - Buses	Place / Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	12 months	N/A - one off purchase contract	£1,645,735	N/A - one off purchase contract	Call off from Framework/DPS	Medium	
7	Vehicles - Car derived vans	Place / Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	12 months	N/A - one off purchase contract	£1,163,280	N/A - one off purchase contract	Call off from Framework/DPS	Medium	
8	Vehicles - LGV tippers	Place / Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	12 months	N/A - one off purchase contract	£951,808	N/A - one off purchase contract	Call off from Framework/DPS	Medium	
9	Vehicles - RCV call-off contract	Place / Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	54 months	N/A - one off purchase contract	£25,078,160	N/A - one off purchase contract	Call off from Framework/DPS	Medium	Under the proposed call-off contract, purchase orders will be placed annually for each years' vehicle (RCV) requirements. Each years' purchase order is likely to exceed £500k. It is intended that the Executive Director and Portfolio Lead are able to authorise the purchase orders of the vehicles each year, under delegation, without having to seek further cabinet approval (within the overall scope and value).
10	Statutory Newspaper Advertisements	Place / Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	3 years	2 years	£900,000	£600,000	Call off from Framework/DPS	Medium	
11	6 new traveller pitches, at Piddlehinton	Place / Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	1 year	N/A - one off Works contract	£1,250,000	N/A - one off Works contract	Call off from Framework/DPS	Low	The route to market may evolve as the Service clarify requirements and ensure alignment with objectives. Noting caveats and risks regarding this external funding. Approval to award will be subject to the funding from Homes England.
12	Speech, Language and Communication Service	Children's / Cllr Clare Sutton	Paul Dempsey	1 year	1 year + 1 year	£500,000	£1,000,000	Direct Award Process A (Health Regulations)	Medium	
13	Learning and Development Services	Children's / Cllr Clare Sutton Adult SC / Cllr Steve Robinson	Paul Dempsey Jonathan Price	4 years	2 years + 2 years	£3,240,000	£3,240,000	Other	Low	Potential market route will either be using existing national or regional Frameworks or an open framework under new procurement regulations or in accordance with CPR's. Approval to award will be subject to budget confirmation.

Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2024-2025

This statement is made pursuant to Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and constitutes Dorset Council's Modern Slavery Transparency Statement for the financial year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Introduction

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. There is no typical victim of slavery. Victims can be men, women, or children of all ages and nationalities. The following definitions are encompassed within the term 'modern slavery' for the purposes of the Modern Slavery Act 2015:

- 'slavery' is where the ownership is exercised over a person
- 'servitude' involves the obligation to provide services imposed by coercion
- 'forced or compulsory labour' involves work or service extracted from any person under menace of a penalty and for which the person has not offered themselves voluntarily
- 'human trafficking' concerns arranging or facilitating the travel of another with a view to exploiting them. It is irrelevant whether the person consents to the travel. Both modern slavery and human trafficking are crimes. Trafficking is not limited to people coming from abroad; it can happen within the UK too (from one region to another).

Our Organisation

Dorset Council Plan 2024-2029 was approved by Full Council on 5 December 2024 and is founded on a vision of working together to create a fairer, more prosperous and more sustainable Dorset for current and future generations. This ambitious and bold Council Plan sets out four key priorities to be delivered by 2029 to help us tackle some significant and complex challenges:

- provide high-quality and affordable housing
- grow our economy
- communities for all
- respond to the climate and nature crisis

These priorities are underpinned by our principles of partnership and prevention.

Inclusiveness is the heartbeat of our organisation, and our values are:

- Respect
- Openness

- Together
- Curiosity
- Accountability

We are committed to opposing Modern Slavery in all its forms and recognise the important role we can play as a public sector organisation in its identification and disruption.

Modern slavery is a complex and often hidden crime, requiring a proactive confident response in our efforts to identify and support victims and those vulnerable to exploitation by others.

We have a zero-tolerance approach to any form of Modern Slavery, and we are committed to acting ethically with integrity and transparency in all that we do, whether alongside our internal workforce or externally with partners and suppliers.

The council has Safeguarding Slavery Leads (SSLs) located within each Directorate. These roles provide important support, guidance, and signposting when concerns about modern slavery arise.

In this past year, two adult safeguarding provider webinars have been delivered, focusing on modern slavery and exploitation, particularly arising in the Health and Care Sector.

We are committed to thoroughly investigating any and all alerts to potential modern slavery within our provider networks and supply chains, with learning being used to further develop and strengthen practice. This includes questions arising internally or from the public.

A new cuckooing protocol has been developed by involving housing staff alongside third sector and provider partners. An important new protocol, this will continue to be developed as it becomes established.

The Council is a lead partner of the Pan-Dorset Anti-Slavery Partnership that works collaboratively across both Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Councils in all matters relating to modern slavery and exploitation

Our Supply Chain Due Diligence

Over half of the Council’s annual budget is spent on buying external goods, services and works. Spend ranging from Stationery to ICT Infrastructure (Corporate); Speech Therapy to Residential Placements (People – Children); Adult Day Services to Residential Care (People – Adults); School Transport to Surface Dressing (Place); School Nursing to Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services (Public Health Dorset). Given the scale of our external spend, we recognise the importance of effective procurement processes and contract management that takes measures to identify and mitigate modern slavery within our supply chains.

It is a requirement, within our internal project initiation process (pre-procurement) for project teams to evidence their assessment of modern slavery risk in respect of the requirements to be procured. This includes what would be their approach within the procurement process to address any identified risk, and how it is proposed this will be managed with the eventual supplier in contract.

We will however continue to review and assess our internal commercial activities to ensure we take into consideration the different risks associated in our supply chains, including modern slavery and human trafficking, and that we seek to mitigate these risks. We continue to review our policies and procedures, to ensure that they are effective and appropriate, and we will update these as necessary. However, we recognise such policies and procedures must be proportionate to the size of the commissioning, procurement, contract, or supplier. This includes consideration of the impact of any process on SMEs and VCSEs. In practice this means:

- being proportionate in the overall approach
- ensuring barriers to participating in new commissioning or procurements are not created
- ensuring unnecessary burdens are not placed on SMEs and VCSEs

The use of data and intelligence gathered as part of commercial activity, including early market engagement, will help to assess whether the modern slavery risk is relevant to the subject matter of the contract and shape specification requirements. Knowing the risk of modern slavery guides the approach to contract management and how to work alongside our suppliers to identify and mitigate risk.

Our Policies and Procedures

The current key policies and procedures which contribute to minimising the risk of modern slavery and human trafficking in our organisation and our supply chain include the following:

- **Protocol and Guidance for Modern Slavery**
  The Council has worked with partners across Dorset to develop the local Modern Slavery Protocol, which sets out how to deal with any potential cases of modern slavery and links to the mandatory responsibilities to notify cases through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).
  Protocol and Guidance for Modern Slavery - Dorset Council

- **Commercial Strategy – Commissioning and Procurement**
  This strategy is the mechanism to ensure that the commercial approach to commissioning and procurement takes place in accordance with the Council's strategic aims, that it is effective and delivers best value to residents of the Council's local authority area. It is subordinate to the Council's Constitution and is complemented by the Council's Contract Management Procedure Guide. The Strategy sets the importance of effective contract management that includes taking measures to identify and mitigate modern day slavery risks in contracts.
  Commercial strategy - commissioning and procurement - Dorset Council

- **Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure**
  This describes the Council's commitment to support and protect whistleblowers, and the steps to be taken to blow the whistle on serious wrong-doing (known as making a 'protected disclosure') and how the Council will respond. It applies to all council employees and other workers; including freelance staff; temporary and agency staff; trainers; volunteers; consultants; and contractors.
  Document Whistleblowing Policy - Dorset Council

- **Safeguarding**
  Modern Slavery is included and categorised as a type of harm in the local Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board Procedures.
  Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board - Dorset Council

  Tackling child exploitation underpins the councils work on addressing extra familial risk and harm, as part of the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

- **Dorset Council's Equality Scheme**
  The Council is committed to the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion in both employment and the delivery of services. The Equality Scheme sets out the Council's key quality objectives and demonstrates the work that the Council is doing to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.
  Equality scheme - Dorset Council

Training

We have in place for our staff a Safeguarding Learning Pathway that provides understanding on how to protect the rights of others to live in safety and free from abuse and neglect. This pathway gives staff a basic overview of what safeguarding is and how we can all work together to protect the rights of others. This pathway includes Modern Slavery training which in turn includes the Home Office Modern Slavery e-learning training and links to local protocols. This training is mandatory for all staff and completion of the training is rigorously monitored by the Council's Learning and Development Team(s). Staff involved in people related service delivery may well be subject to more high-level training that is more specific to their roles, which is also monitored.

A further learning pathway is available to our staff that focuses on "Modern Slavery and Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management". This provides some background on the Modern Slavery Act and the considerations of the Act in terms of engaging with suppliers and their supply chains, whether through commissioning, or procurement, or contract management. It includes an assessment tool to review level of modern slavery risk against:

- industry type
- nature of workforce
- supplier location

- context (in which the supplier operates)
- commodity type
- business / supply chain model

In addition to updating and improving our Dorset Council website content for modern slavery, work has been undertaken to raise the profile of the work internally including making it easier for staff to access support and information via the intranet.

Approval for this Statement

This statement was approved by the Council's Cabinet on 9 September 2025, Agenda Item XX Additional Procurement Forward Plan 2025-26 and incorporating the Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2024-2025.

ADD HERE LINK OF CABINET MINUTES

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Cabinet

9 September 2025

All-Age Pan-Dorset Appropriate Adult Service - contract extension approval

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr S Robinson, Adult Social Care

Local Councillor(s): n/a county wide

Senior Leadership Team:
J Price, Executive Director of People - Adults

Report author and job title: Tina Ironside, Strategic Commissioner
Email: tina.ironside@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Under Section 38 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Local Authorities have a legal duty to ensure the provision of appropriate adults for children (under 18) who are detained, questioned, or strip-searched by police.

Although police have a statutory duty under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) to secure an appropriate adult for vulnerable people, there is no corresponding legal obligation for any authority to ensure the availability of appropriate adults for vulnerable adults (e.g. those with learning disabilities, autism, mental ill health).

Refer to 4.2 to 4.4 for further details.

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

1.1 Appropriate adults safeguard the interests, rights, entitlements and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults who are suspected of a criminal offence.

1.2 Dorset Council have a contract with The Appropriate Adult Service (TAAS) to deliver this service when another appropriate adult is not available. This contract expires on 30 September 2025.

1.3 We are seeking approval to extend TAAS's contract for 6 months. The original total contract value was under £500,000, so it did not require Cabinet approval. However, this extension takes the total value to £529,977.

1.4 The service is jointly commissioned by Dorset Council, BCP Council and the Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner. A formal agreement between these partners have delayed re-procuring this service, hence the need to extend the current contract.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 Council is recommended to approve extension of the existing contract for the All-Age Pan-Dorset Appropriate Adult Service with TAAS from 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 In early 2025 Dorset Council scheduled a new procurement of this service so that a new contract would be in place for 1 July 2025. However, this was subject to all partners signing a Participation Agreement. Unforeseen delays finalising this agreement with partners have led to extending the re-procurement timeline and requiring an extension to the contract with the current provider. This agreement has now been signed by all partners.

3.2 With this extension there is also an opportunity to bring the contract into line with financial years which is beneficial to all. If the new contract starts on 1 April 2026, its term will span financial years, whilst the current contract is across two financial years. This makes financial planning easier for Dorset Council, our partners and the provider who will be awarded the contract.

4. The report

4.1 Appropriate adults[1] safeguard the interests, rights, entitlements and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults who are suspected of a criminal offence. The appropriate adult can be a parent, carer or other responsible relation or friend. When these options are not available, alternative representation must be available.

4.2 The Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE)[2] sets out the rules and safeguards for the appropriate adult role. Appropriate adults provide safeguards to prevent miscarriages of justice because of evidence obtained from vulnerable suspects, which could lead to unsafe and unfair convictions because of their vulnerability.

4.3 Local Authorities (LAs) have a statutory duty to provide appropriate adults for children under 18 years. Relevant LA employees or the Youth Justice Service can be the appropriate adult. However, this is not always possible, including when a child or young person is taken into custody in the evenings, overnight and at weekends. A consideration is also made of who, in the child's best interests, should act as their appropriate adult. For serious alleged offences, the priority might be an experienced appropriate adult (provided by TAAS). Whilst for other offences, a person who knows the child well could be more suitable, if they are available to attend the custody suite in a reasonable time.

4.4 Whilst vulnerable adults are also required to have an appropriate adult, a gap in the law means there is not a statutory duty outlining which agency is responsible. The government have created an appropriate adult partnership agreement[3] between Police and Crime Commissioners and LAs to plug this gap. This summarises responsibilities, including joint commissioning and monitoring of appropriate adult services. The National Appropriate Adult Network campaign[4] policymakers to further address this disparity.

4.5 Partners made a local decision to include care leavers aged 18 to 25 years old as vulnerable adults who have the right to an appropriate adult. Whilst they are adults, it was agreed that the costs would be met from the children's element, due to our corporate parenting responsibilities.

4.6 The absence of an appropriate adult when required can result in:

- evidence being ruled inadmissible in court
- miscarriages of justice
- extended detention times
- failure to protect vulnerable individuals' rights

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[1] About Appropriate Adults - National Appropriate Adult Network

[2] Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 Code C 1.7 and Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Section 38 (4): Code of Practice

[3] Appropriate adult PCC-local authority partnership agreement - GOV.UK

[4] Statutory provision - National Appropriate Adult Network

4.7 After an initial pilot, a partnership was formed to jointly commission an appropriate adult service in 2021 with:

- Dorset Council: Children's Services (lead) and Adults' Services
- BCP Council: Children's Services and Adults' Services
- Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC)

4.8 Following a thorough options appraisal, a decision was made to procure through the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) Appropriate Adult Dynamic Purchasing System[5]. The Appropriate Adult Service (TAAS) was subsequently awarded the contract.

4.9 The initial term was 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2023, with two optional 1 year extensions, which were both used. This meant the contract was due to end on 30 June 2025.

4.10 Dorset Council had planned to run another tender via the YPO Appropriate Adult Dynamic Purchasing System in early 2025, so that a new contract would be in place for 1 July 2025. However, this was subject to all partners signing a Participation Agreement. This agreement was drafted by Dorset Council's legal team to outline responsibilities between the Lead Commissioner (Dorset Council) and the Participating Authorities (the other partners).

4.11 Delays finalising and signing this agreement subsequently delayed this procurement and led to extending TAA's contract for 3 months until 30 September 2025. Dorset Council's exemptions process was sufficient approval for this extension, because:

- it was in accordance with Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCR2015), including being below the threshold for Light Touch Regime services (6.1)
- the total contract value also remained below £500,000 (Cabinet approval threshold)

4.12 Unforeseen continued delays to finalise and sign the Participation Agreement led to the procurement timescales being adjusted again. This agreement has now been signed, so we can progress with the procurement in September 2025.

4.13 The delay means we are required to extend TAAS's contract from 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026. The original total contract value was under £500,000, so it did not require Cabinet approval. However, this extension of the contract term takes the total value to £529,977. This is £29,977 above the threshold that requires Cabinet approval.

[5] YPO Appropriate Adults DPS – 1015

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 The tender process could have progressed without the Participation Agreement in place. However, as the contract will be between Dorset Council and the provider, there are risks if situations change with any partners. For example, if any partner wanted to withdraw from the arrangement or reduce their financial contribution throughout the term of the contract.

5.2 We must extend the contract to ensure Dorset Council and our partners can continue to provide appropriate adults for children and vulnerable adults.

5.3 Whilst TAAS's contract could have been extended for shorter time for a lower value, partners agreed 31 March 2026 so that:

- there is sufficient time for a TUPE[6] process. These regulations protect employees' rights if the incumbent provider is not awarded the new contract and the service is transferred to a new provider
- the benefits of a contract that spans financial years (described in 7.7)

6. Legal considerations

6.1 The Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPS) DPS was awarded under the Light Touch Regime as per the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) Notice in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCR 15) and the financial threshold at the time of OJEU. The revised total contract value of £529,977, £635,972 including VAT, remains below the current financial threshold for Light Touch Regime £663,540 inclusive of VAT. Therefore, under PCR15 the proposed extension is permitted.

6.2 Our responsibilities to provide appropriate adults to children, young people and vulnerable adults are outlined in 4.2 to 4.4.

[6] TUPE means Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)

7. Financial implications

7.1 Historical analysis of data and negotiations with partners led to an agreement of how costs would be split between partners, as per the tables below. These splits apply to the current contract and the new contract that will start from 1 April 2026 (which is underpinned by the Participation Agreement).

Adult's element

Partner	Overall % split	LA % split
DPCC	39%	
BCP Council	61%	60%
Dorset Council		40%

Children's element
(including care leavers)

Partner	Overall % split	LA % split
DPCC	30%	
BCP Council	70%	60%
Dorset Council		40%

7.2 One of the reasons for splitting costs this way is because responsibility for providing an appropriate adult is determined by where a child or vulnerable adult is detained in custody, not where they live. Some may even live in other parts of the country.

7.3 When TAAS agreed to extend their contract until 30 September 2025, they did not request an increase because it was just for 3 months. However, when they were asked to extend for a further 6 months, they said the hourly rate was not sustainable and requested 3.6% increase. Partners had already agreed their financial contributions for the new contract when it was initially due to commence on 1 July 2025. This is sufficient to cover this increase, so all three partners agreed this could be applied to this extension period with TAAS.

7.4 Partners pay TAAS an hourly rate for the actual number of hours their appropriate adults spend with a children, young people and vulnerable adults held in custody each month. Therefore, we are only charged for actual usage rather than a specific monthly value.

7.5 Historically, contributions for the children's element have been sufficient for actual usage. Partners have needed to top-up their contributions at the end of most contract years for the adult's element, due to higher than forecasted demand.

7.6 Based on spend in the 2024/25 contract year, the forecasted cost to extend TAAS's contract for an additional 6 months is £49,827. It is proposed to round this up to £60,000 as a contingency for a potential spike in demand. It is unlikely this full amount is required, but as it remains below the PCR2015 Light Touch Regime threshold (6.1), it is sensible to ensure there is more than sufficient funds to fulfil the remainder of the contract.

7.7 An added benefit of the new contract starting on 1 April 2026 is that it will span financial years. The current contract's term requires partners to agree and manage their contributions across two financial years. This is problematic for financial planning, especially when the contributions are not sufficient. This is also likely to be more attractive to providers on the market, for the same reason.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The contract requires appropriate adults to arrive as soon as possible after the police request is made, normally within one hour and always within two hours. This means the provider must recruit appropriate adults that live close to Weymouth and Bournemouth custody suits. This reduces travel and its impact on our environment and climate.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 A key element of the role of an appropriate adult is to protect the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults whilst they are held in custody. This includes ensuring they can participate effectively and are treated in a fair and just manner. For example, by ensuring:

- they are offered food, drink and medical assistance if required
- proper provision is made for rest
- access to a solicitor has been offered

10. Other implications

10.1 Approval of the recommendation to extend TAAS's contract has wider implications than just Dorset Council, but also for our partners BCP Council and the Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner.

10.2 Dorset Council, BCP Council and Dorset Youth Justice do not have capacity to directly provide appropriate adults from their own employees for all those eligible; especially during out-of-hours. They are also not always best placed to be the appropriate adult, as described in 4.3.

11. Risk implications

11.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current risk: **High**

The likelihood of not meeting our responsibilities to provide appropriate adults if we do not extend TAAS's contract is assessed as 'certain' and the impact 'moderate'. Therefore, the current risk to the council and our partners is assessed as **high**.

Residual risk: **Low**

Extending TAAS's contract mitigates the risks of not meeting our responsibilities. It reduces likelihood to 'unlikely' and 'limited' impact. Therefore, the residual risk to the council and our partners is assessed as **low**.

12. Equalities

12.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed in preparation for procurement of the current contract. This paper is merely recommending we extend this arrangement and does not materially change who the service is delivered too.

13. Appendices

None

12 Background papers

None

13 Report sign-off

13.1 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 Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).

V1/25

Cabinet

9 September 2025

Dorset Council Property and Housing Repairs – Replacement of RMMSCW Framework

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr R Biggs, Property & Assets and Economic Growth

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Julian Wain - Strategic Property Adviser
Email: julian.wain@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary

1.1 This report seeks authority to replace the former Repairs, Minor Maintenance and Small Capital Works Framework (RMMSCW) with new contractual arrangements for the delivery of building repairs and maintenance services to Dorset Council operational, tenanted and housing properties.

1.2 The report explains the process that has led to the recommended approach and the procurement process to follow.

1.3 The report also identifies the need for an interim solution between 30 September 2025 and 1 April 2026 (with the ability to extend up to 1 April 2027) and seeks the necessary authority for implementation.

2. Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is requested to:

2.1 Approve the approach to the long-term replacement of the RMMSCW Framework and authorise the procurement of the measured term contracts and identification of an appropriate framework for the commissioning of small capital works.

2.2 Approve the approach to the interim solution while the long-term contracts are procured.

2.3 Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Place in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Property and Assets and Economic Growth to award interim contracts described within Appendix B, under the Westworks Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), subject to available budget.

2.4 Delegate to the Executive Director Place in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Property and Assets and Economic Growth and the Executive Director Corporate/ s151 and the Director Legal and Democratic the authority to select the most appropriate DPS for the procurement of Capital Works.

2.5 Delegate to the Executive Director Place in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Property and Assets and Economic Growth and the Executive Director Corporate/ s151 and the Director Legal and Democratic the authority to award and agree the terms of the long-term contracts described in Appendix B, subject to available budget.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 To ensure the ability to deliver repairs and maintenance and small capital works to Council buildings and housing properties and to approve the procurement of the long-term solution which is intended to enhance the provision and cost effectiveness of these services to the Council's estate.

4. The report

4.1 Background

The Council's former RMMSCW framework has now expired, and orders issued under it cease on 30th September, with no possibility of extension. The Council needs to establish a new contractual approach for delivering property and housing repairs. The Council has fundamentally reviewed how repairs and maintenance in Assets and Property and Housing Services are undertaken and is seeking the optimum solution.

The old framework was originally established by Dorset County Council in 2017. For the following reasons a like for like replacement is not appropriate:

- The change from a County Council to a unitary authority.
- The required introduction of housing repairs.

- Organisational changes requiring streamlined and effective contract management and a simplified administration process.
- The need to reduce the number of lots to reduce the resources needed to manage the contractual arrangements.
- The need to improve cost management to respond to volatile building cost conditions and to the financial challenges affecting local authorities.
- A need for improvement in the coverage of the area, particularly with regard to out of hours calls.
- The current Council approach to procurement which involves considering whether to make use of an existing regional or national framework depending on service need and value.

4.2 Objectives of new procurement

Bearing in mind the above and the need to adopt modern and effective good practice, the Council's key objectives in this procurement are as follows:

- A repeatable and effective process (both in day-to-day repairs and maintenance and in capital works)
- An effective service with a timely emergency response.
- Value for money and appropriate costs
- Appropriate coverage across the council areas
- Coverage over all asset types
- Good performance and quality management through effective KPIs
- Adopting a Life Cycle approach

This approach offers local contractors the opportunity to be involved, and the proposal has benefited from their feedback following engagement. The proposal ensures there are no barriers to local participation. Nonetheless, it reflects that the Council's contractor pool will benefit from the introduction of new entrants, potentially bringing cost and quality improvements.

In accordance with the Council Plan's commitment to 'respond to the climate and nature crisis', contractors will be expected to operate in the most sustainable way possible, and the evaluation of bids will consider not only their strategies on climate change and reducing waste but also test the benefits that their ways of working, materials choices and supply chain will bring.

4.3 The process

The following activities have been carried out in arriving at the solution proposed below:

- Desktop review and consideration concerning the existing framework and the needs and objectives of the Council.
- Review of best practice elsewhere
- Benchmarking
- Discussions with framework providers

The proposal has been shared with internal and external stakeholders during the engagement sessions, including local and incumbent contractors.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation

The engagement and consultation process has involved meetings with the stakeholders from internal Departments, staff involved in delivering the current service and current and potential future suppliers. A questionnaire has been sent to current contractors.

For the contractor market the Council held a well-attended engagement day and also offered some fully subscribed one-to-one sessions. Outcomes from those sessions was shared with all attendees to ensure equity and fairness. Key feedback from the market is set out at 4.4.1. and referred to elsewhere in the report.

4.4.1 Feedback

Key feedback related to the potential combination of mechanical and electrical services in one contract. While this was the original ambition, principally because it offers economies of scale, and is a feature of local authority services elsewhere, contractors pointed out that there were challenges to the co-joining of two different services, and that it was potentially a barrier to local contractor participation, as few local contractors were equipped to deliver this style of contract.

Further feedback reflected a pleasing willingness to engage with the social value agenda and contribute to the Dorset community. National contractors attending the engagement day also made these comments.

Threshold levels for day-to-day contracts and small capital works together with the relative weightings of price and quality are discussed below.

4.5 Long-Term Proposal

4.5.1 Contractual Approach and Lot structure

The proposed approach is that through open tender the Council will procure and award separate contracts for building fabric maintenance, electrical and mechanical repairs for council operational, tenanted and housing properties. Housing repairs will be included in the scope of these contracts.

Two contractors will be appointed (for each type of contract) to cover east and west Dorset respectively, and provision will be included in the contracts for cross area working where necessary. Contractors can only win one each of the area contracts to ensure resilience in the service for the Council. A plan showing the Area Split is attached at Appendix A.

Housing voids will be let as one countywide contract as will the specialist service areas of lifts, drainage and sewage, fire alarms and suppression, automatic doors, and asbestos with one contractor each.

The rationale behind this approach is to deliver the following:

- Open, transparent, and effective procurement.
- Encourage ownership and accountability amongst appointed contractors.
- Reduce the supply chain and consequently the administrative burden, together with the high number of transactions.
- Facilitate good contract management.
- Allow for the development of consistent, equitable and sustainable long-term relationships with suppliers.
- Combine service lines between housing and property.
- Over time, facilitate improvement in rates and in the delivery of service including appointment and attendance processes.

All contracts will be JCT 2016 Measured Term Contracts. Contracts will be let for a 4-year term with potential to extend by two further one-year periods.

The approach is summarised at Appendix B

4.5.2 Housing, council operational and tenanted properties

It is recommended that housing council operational and tenanted properties are let under one contract, Dorset Council has a responsibility to repair and maintain both housing and operational and tenanted properties as a Unitary Authority. By combining these three types of property under one contract, the following benefits can be achieved:

- ***Collaboration****:* Cross-team collaboration between Asset and Housing teams to deliver the four key priorities outlined in the Dorset Council Plan.
- ***Clear ownership and commitment*** to housing repairs by both Council and contractor
- ***Economies of scale*** resulting from a single, consolidated contract.
- ***A consistent and simplified rate card***, making it easier for both teams to operate efficiently.
- ***A standardised repairs and maintenance process*****,** with consistent KPIs regardless of property type.
- ***Multiskilled Engineers****:* Over time, the development of multi-skilled engineers capable of maintaining any property type across the region.
- ***Social Value***: Long-term investment in social value outcomes, including support for local employment and local suppliers.

However, it is recommended to keep Housing Voids (Empty Properties) under a separate contract for the following reasons:

- ***Multiple Service Lines***: Voids do not fall within a single service line and require input from multiple disciplines, including mechanical, electrical, and building fabric maintenance. It would therefore be difficult to allocate Voids to just one of these service lines. Void works should be managed as an individual package, with clear ownership by a single contractor. This approach ensures accountability and prevents the work from being fragmented across different service lines.
- ***Prioritisation***: Void works have their own set of priorities and must not be delayed due to contractors from other service lines being diverted to urgent tasks elsewhere.
- ***Distinct Supply Chain***: Using a different contractor for Voids helps avoid confusion and ensures the work is clearly identifiable and attributable to the appropriate provider.

4.5.3 Small Capital Works and Revenue schemes

Initially it was felt that the Council should continue to operate its' own framework for this type of works, but the administration of such a framework, at a time when the Council Assets and Property resources are in demand across a wide range of issues and projects is costly and resource intensive. The current Council approach is, as has been noted elsewhere, to use national and regional frameworks and DPS rather than run them in house.

Work will be carried out to establish the most cost effective and appropriate Framework or DPS for capital works and equivalent value revenue schemes above £100,000 up to a maximum of £500,000. Key feedback from the market engagement was that only allowing spend on small capital works in the reactive contracts to the original proposal of £50,000 was too low. £50,000 was unlikely to cover the necessary scope of work for small capital projects and therefore this threshold should be raised. It is now proposed to be £100,000.

4.6 Interim solution

The tender process for the long-term solution to property and housing repairs will not be completed and the new contractors ready for mobilisation until the new year. The estimate is that the new contractors will commence work on the 1st April 2026. Accordingly, there is a need for an interim solution to allow works to be carried out from the end of the current arrangement on 30 September 2025 until 1 April 2026 (with the ability to extend the interim arrangements until 1 April 2027).

Having considered the alternatives, the recommendation is to procure a set of short-term contracts to cover the necessary types of repairs and maintenance work, using The Westworks DPS. While these are only expected to be required for 5 months, to ensure appropriate contingency these are being sought for a 9-

month period with an option to extend for further 3-month periods, if necessary, up to 18 months.

There is no need to seek a further extension to the housing voids contract as the ability to extend Gen One's temporary contract has already been agreed by Cabinet in April 2025.

4.6.1 Procurement route – Interim Solution

The interim solution is being procured through the Westworks DPS which was the most cost effective of those considered, at 1.5% levy on the cost of works as opposed to 2% and 2.5%. It also allows ease of access for incumbent contractors, a number of whom are already signed up.

Interim contracts to allow work to be commissioned are being tendered through the frame-work and subject to members approval and available budget can be let shortly.

4.6.2 Lot Structure – Interim solution

The lot structure for the interim solution is very similar to that which will apply in the longer-term solution. Building Fabric Repairs, Electrical Services and Mechanical Services, together with Programmed Planned Maintenance for the latter two services, will be tendered in two lots each based on east and west Dorset with one contractor for each service. Bidders may tender for all lots, but for the reactive repairs services and planned maintenance can only be appointed to one area.

In this instance, electrical and mechanical planned works are being separated from the reactive works to ensure capacity.

For specialist services Drainage, Lifts, Automatic Doors and Fire Alarms and Protection Equipment the services will be tendered on a Council wide basis. One contractor will be appointed. There is no restriction on tendering or award.

All contracts will be signed up based on JCT 2016 Measured Term Contracts.

4.7 Evaluation

For both the interim and the longer-term solutions, the evaluation criteria are proposed as follows:

Criteria	Weighting (%)
Price	50
Quality	40
Social Value	10

The departure from the Council's recommended 60% price threshold to a 50% /50% price/quality split reflects consideration and feedback about the relative priority of these, and the range of views in the market.

Price is inevitably a critical component as the Council is aiming to reduce rates and mitigate cost in what remains a volatile cost environment. However, the quality component should be encouraged, as a higher quality weighting may promote a focus on outcomes as well as cost, hopefully encouraging performance, reliability, and contract investment. Quality emphasis is also seen as encouraging innovation and expertise, with a potential correlation to better lifecycle value.

The recommended 50/50 weighting allows for both these factors.

Appointing one contractor to east and one to west Dorset and not allowing the same contractor to win both to ensure resilience may have some cost implications. However, ensuring the mitigation of risk and the ability to deal with contractor issues or external events is considered to outweigh this. The influence of the difference in areas and the 50% quality weighting may in any event render comparisons difficult.

4.8 Training and development

Hand in hand with the new contractual arrangements will come a requirement for improved training for staff. This will not only strengthen the contract management of these contracts but will also align with the general Assets and Property improvement plan.

A training plan is currently being drafted with the involvement of legal and procurement.

4.9 Next steps and timetable

Subject to Members approval the next steps will be to conclude the evaluation of tenders received through the Westworks DPS and allocate contracts to cover works for the interim solution.

For the longer-term approach, the aim is to procure the contractors during autumn 2025 with a view to awarding contracts in the new year and commencing work under them from 1st April 2026.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 A range of alternative options has been considered including the use of Council run Frameworks and appointing all contractors through a regional or national framework or a DPS.

Do nothing is not an option as that would then require the issuing of purchase orders on each and every job and a level of procurement administration that would be unsupportable by any local authority.

Use of a framework or DPS for the long-term solution would be entirely possible but would place continued burden on local suppliers in joining frameworks to give them an equitable chance of being awarded contracts. Use of DPS or framework undoubtedly limits the extent of the market with the opportunity to bid, mitigating against wide open tendering and the opportunity for new and innovative contractors to be appointed.

For the short-term solution, there are limited alternatives. There is insufficient time for an open tender or letting a Council Framework which would mean issuing of a purchase order for every job with all that involves.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 Legal advice has been sought on the options to secure an ongoing service following the end of the existing arrangement on 30th September 2025.

Advice has confirmed that the Westworks DPS offers a compliant route to market for the interim solution allowing the award of contracts as required by the client team. If it is not possible to have these interim contracts in place for 30th September, then advice has been provided on how short-term services can be purchased in accordance with the Council's constitution until the interim contracts are in place.

No specific framework has been identified for the long- term solution but there are a number of options that will offer a position compliant with existing procurement law.

Dorset Council must hold a licence to use the JCT contract terms before entering into the contract. This licence must be obtained by the client department.

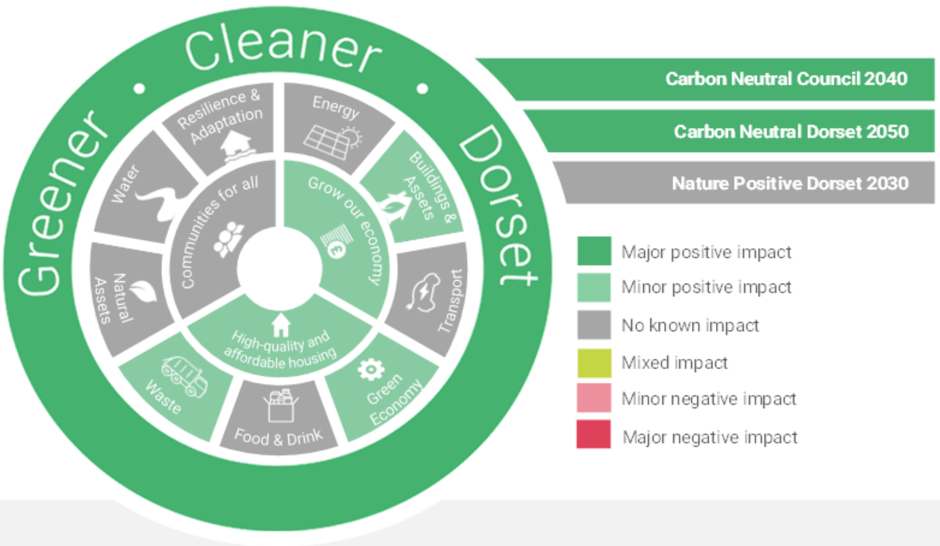
7. Financial implications

7.1 The annual spend on the reactive day to day maintenance is estimated at £4.8m which means that for the interim solution through the Westworks DPS the anticipated spend is £2.4m from1 October 2025 to 1 April 2026.

For the long-term solution with capital works included the annual spend is estimated at £65m over the life of the contract (4 years with 2x 1year extensions). This includes capital works (subject to capital budget approval) as well as day to day (revenue) spend.

These are contained within the existing repairs and maintenance budgets (which are £5.4m revenue, £7.2m capital) and there are no implications on budget levels.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications



Quantitative Impact on CEE targets (if known)

	Unit	Number of units (+/-)
2030 - Natural asset extent & condition	Ha	Unknown
2040 - Operational Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	Unknown
2050 - County Emissions	CO_2 (tonnes)	Unknown

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 For the Council's operational and tenanted buildings, the improvement of repairs and maintenance services will ensure health and safety and indirectly improve well-being of those visiting and using the buildings. For housing properties, the quality of repairs is a well- known factor in the health and well-being of residents and therefore as well as ensuring health and safety and compliance one would expect to see health benefits delivered as well. It should be remembered that those accommodated in the housing properties administered by the Council are those in most housing need and likely to be correspondingly vulnerable.

10. Other implications

10.1 None

11. Risk implications

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

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Medium

12. Equalities

12.1 The Equalities Impact Assessment for this procurement is attached at Appendix 'C '. The impacts on the protected groups are neutral or potentially positive. Enhanced and cost -effective property repairs should benefit all sectors of the community.

13. Appendices

Appendix A – Dorset Council – East/West Lot split

Appendix B – Lot and Award Summary

Appendix C – Scope of Services

Appendix D – Equalities Impact Assessment

14. Background papers

14.1

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 Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendix A – Dorset Council – East West Lot split

Appendix B – Lot and Award Summary

The repairs requirements are split into the following contracts and lots with the following eligibility for award:

Building Fabric Maintenance - 2 contracts - Lot 1 West, Lot 2 East. This will include any Planned and Preventative Maintenance for BFM.

- *Contractors can only be awarded 1 Lot and must state their preference between the Lots.*

Reactive Electrical Works – 2 contracts – Lot 1 West, Lot 2 East. This will include planned and preventative maintenance.

- *Contractors can only be awarded 1 Lot and must state their preference between the Lots.*

Reactive Mechanical Works – 2 Contracts Lot 1 West, Lot 2 East. This will include planned and preventative maintenance

- *Contractors can only be awarded 1 Lot and must state their preference between the Lots.*

Housing Voids (Empty Properties) – 1 Countywide contract

<u>Specialist Service Lines</u>

Reactive and Planned Maintenance- Lifts – 1 Countywide contract

Reactive and Planned Maintenance- Drainage & Sewage – 1 Countywide contract

Reactive and Planned Maintenance- Fire alarms and Fire Suppression – 1 County wide contract

Reactive and Planned Maintenance- Automatic doors – 1 countywide contract

Reactive and planned maintenance – Asbestos – 1 countywide contract

Contractors may bid for all or any of specialist countywide works contracts and may in theory be awarded them. Potentially they could also win one lot of each of the reactive and planned contracts and housing voids.

Small Capital Works and major revenue works above the value of £100,000 will be allocated to contractors drawn following further competition from a national or regional framework, the most appropriate of which is still to be determined.

Appendix C- Scope of Services – Long term solution

Scope of Services – Interim Solution

Lot	Number of Suppliers	Service Lines
Mechanical (Re)	2 (across 2 Lots)	Plumbing, Mechanical, HVAC, catering equipment, gas works (where appropriate and not in compliance categories)
Mechanical (PL)	2 (across 2 Lots)	Gas works (testing), Plumbing works, HVAC, Access, catering equipment, boilers.
Electrical (Re)	2 (across 2 Lots)	Electrical, Emergency Lighting
Electrical (PL)	2 (across 2 Lots)	Rewiring, PAT testing, installations Emergency Lighting
BFM (Re and Planned)	2 (across 2 lots)	Fabric Repairs, Roofing, Glazing, Doors, Asbestos Works
Specialist (Re and Planned)	1 Specialist supplier per service line	1. Fire alarms, Security alarms, Fire suppression 2. Lifts 3. Automatic Openings 4. Drainage

Scope of service – long term solution

Lot	Number of Suppliers	Service Lines
Lot 1 Mechanical (Re & PL)	2 Total (1 per region East and West)	Including Mechanical works, mechanical installations, drainage and sewerage, plumbing, hot & cold water installations including catering (mechanical only).
Lot 2 Electrical (Re & PL)	2 Total (1 per region East and West)	Including, Electrical works, emergency lighting periodic testing, PAT testing and new replacement installations

Lot 3 **BFM (Re and PL)**	2 Total (1 per region East and West)	Fabric Repairs, Roofing, Glazing, Doors, above ground run off Drainage, locks.
Specialist (Re and Planned) Lot 4 through 9	1 Specialist supplier per service line	1. Automated Doors, Shutters, Barriers, Gates & Smoke Curtains 2. Lightning Protection *3.* Fire and Security Alarms and Fire protection Installations including sprinkler and fire suppression systems *(Note - AR to explore this category and make up)* 4. Lifts and Hoists. (Passenger Lifts, Goods Lifts, Platform Lifts, Stair Lifts) 5. Fall Protection 6. Asbestos removal 7. Legionella testing 8. Voids

Appendix D - Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Template

1. Initial information

Dorset Council Property and Housing Repairs – Replacement of RMMSCW Framework

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

Review of policy, project, strategy, project or service

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

Both internal and external

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

The aim of the procurement is to replace the existing Dorset Council Framework so that there is an extant procurement regime through which to carry out repairs and small capital works to Council buildings, both operational, tenanted and housing.

The Council's key objectives in this procurement are as follows:

- A repeatable and effective process (both in day to day and in capital works)
- An effective service with a timely emergency response.
- Value for money and appropriate costs
- Appropriate coverage across the council areas
- Coverage over all asset types
- Good performance and quality management through effective KPIs
- Adopting a Life Cycle approach

What matters is what works, but local contractors are welcomed, and it is key that barriers are not placed to impede their involvement. The views of incumbent contractors have been taken into account in formulating the approach

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

The previous Dorset Council RMMSCW Framework, used to appoint contractors for repairs and small capital works has expired and following previous extension and long-term contract orders, can no longer be used. Accordingly, the Council needs to replace this Framework with new arrangements.

To establish the best solution,the process followed has included desktop review and benchmarking, stakeholder engagement throughout the Council and considerable market engagement with incumbent and potential future suppliers including both an engagement day and one to one sessions.

Evidence gathering and engagement

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

- Dorset Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Our Workforce data – Dorset Council
- Diversity Topic Data – Dorset Council

7. What did this tell you?

- Dorset at 30% has significantly more elderly people than England and Wales at 18.1%
- Adherents to the 5 major non-Christian religions amount to 1% of Dorset's population
- 6.1% of Dorset residents are from an ethnic minority as opposed to 19.5% nationwide. 40% of those 6.1% are 'white other'.
- 20%of Dorset's population are classified as disabled under the Equality Act 2010 definition.
- 2.2% shared that they were gay, lesbian, bisexual or had another non-hetero sexual orientation as opposed to 3,.1% nationally
- Of Dorset Council employees relatively little can be said as a result of the high proportion of non -declarations. This has resulted in a limited picture and figures purporting to show an under representation as compared to the Dorset area.

- However 64.3% of Dorset Council employees are female as opposed to 52.4% for the same group in Dorset as a whole. The equivalent figures for men are 35.7 to 47.6%

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

- Dorset Council Strategy Performance and Sustainability Staff.
- Assets and Property Senior staff

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No

Is an EQIA required?

Yes.

It is arguable that as the impacts are likely to be positive or neutral but there is value in testing this.

Assessing the impact on different groups of people

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.
- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different protected characteristics.

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Neutral	The projected improvements to the repairs contracts and management should provide a better service and may foster better relations with this protected group.
Disability	Neutral	The projected improvements to the repairs contracts and management should provide a better service and may foster better relations with this protected group.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Unclear	The numbers are very small in this protected group and it is therefore difficult to identify the impact with certainty. However, the projected improvements to the repairs contracts and management should provide a better service and may foster better relations with this protected group.
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	The projected improvements to the repairs contracts and management should provide a

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		better service and may foster better relations with this protected group.
Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral	The projected improvements to the repairs contracts and management should provide a better service and may foster better relations with this protected group.
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral	The projected improvements to the repairs contracts and management should provide a better service and may foster better relations with this protected group
Religion and belief	Neutral	The projected improvements to the repairs contracts and management should provide a better service and may foster better relations with this protected group
Sex (consider men and women)	Neutral	Projected improvements should provide a positive impact to people of either sex
Sexual orientation	Neutral	The projected improvements to the repairs contracts and management should provide a better service and may foster better relations with this protected group
People with caring responsibilities	Neutral	The projected improvements to the repairs contracts and management should provide a better service and may foster better relations with this protected group

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Rural isolation	Positive	The new contractual arrangements are intended to enhance the coverage of the Property and Housing repairs service and improve response times throughout the Council area, particularly with regard to out of hours calls. This is anticipated to have a positive impact on this protected group.
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive	The new contractual arrangements are intended to enhance the coverage of the Property and Housing repairs service and improve response times throughout the Council area, particularly with regard to out of hours calls. This is anticipated to have a positive impact on this protected group.
Single parents	Neutral	The projected improvements to the repairs contracts and management should provide a better service and may foster better relations with this protected group
Armed forces communities	Neutral	The projected improvements to the repairs contracts and management should provide a better service and may foster better relations with this protected group

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
	N/A		

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: *Julian Wain*

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: *Jessica Maskrey, Peter Jackson*

Date of completion: 28/08/25

Version Number: V2

EqIA review date: TBC

Equality Lead Sign Off: TBC

Next Steps:

- the EqIA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.

- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.
- EqIA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to Diversity and Inclusion Officera

Cabinet

9 September 2025

Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr S Bartlett, Planning and Emergency Planning

Local Councillor: Cllr Roland Tarr

Executive Director:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Ed Gerry, Community Planning Manager
Email: ed.gerry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Localism Act 2011
Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary

1. The neighbourhood plan has been subject to independent examination and referendum. The purpose of this report is to formally 'make' (adopt) the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan part of the development plan for use in planning decisions in the Knightsford Neighbourhood Area.

2. **Recommendations**

2.1 The following recommendations are made:

a) That the Council 'makes' the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan (as set out in Appendix A) part of the statutory development plan for the Knightsford Neighbourhood Area.

b) That the Council offers its congratulations to Knightsford Parish Council and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group for producing a successful neighbourhood plan.

3. **Reason for the recommendations**

3.1 To formally 'make' the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan part of the statutory development plan for the Knightsford Neighbourhood Area. In addition, to recognise the significant amount of work undertaken by the Parish Council and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group in preparing the plan and to congratulate the Council and the Group on their success.

4. Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan

4.1 The neighbourhood plan area for Knightsford, which includes the parishes of Tincleton, West Knighton, West Stafford and Woodsford, was originally formally designated by Dorset Council in July 2021. The area was formally amended on 24 July 2024. This was to reflect minor changes to the parish boundary at West Knighton resulting from the Community Governance Review. Following significant amounts of consultation and research Knightsford Parish Council (the Qualifying Body) submitted the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan, and associated documents, to Dorset Council in August 2024.

4.2 The plan, and its associated documents, were subject to formal consultation from 2 December 2024 to 27 January 2025. Dorset Council subsequently made arrangements for an independent examination of the plan as required by The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

4.3 The examination was conducted by Andrew Mead BSc (Hons) MRTPI MIQ and his report on the plan was published on 31 March 2025. The Examiner's Report concluded that subject to a number of modifications the plan should proceed to referendum.

4.4 Cllr Shane Bartlett (Portfolio Holder for Planning and Emergency Planning) decided on the 22 May 2025 that the examiner's recommended modifications should be incorporated within an amended version of the neighbourhood plan and that the amended plan should proceed to referendum. Furthermore, Cllr Bartlett decided that a recommendation to 'make' the Knightsford Parish Neighbourhood Plan should be made to a Cabinet meeting after the referendum if the result of the referendum was in support of making the plan and there are no other issues identified that would go against such a decision.

4.5 The Council held a referendum on 24 July 2025 with the area covered by the referendum being the Civil Parishes of Tincleton, West Knighton, West Stafford and Woodsford. This is the same area to which the neighbourhood plan applies. In the referendum 201 people (88%) voted in favour of the plan with 27 people (12%) voting against the plan. The turnout was 28.29%.

4.6 Where a referendum results in more than half of those voting, voting in favour of the plan, the Council must 'make' the plan as soon as reasonably practical unless it considers that this would breach, or be incompatible with relevant environmental regulations or human rights requirements.

4.7 The Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan, as proposed to be ‘made’, is attached at Appendix A. More than 50% of those who voted in the referendum voted in favour of the plan.

5. **Alternative options considered**

5.1 In this instance there are no reasonable alternative options available to the Council following the favourable outcome in the referendum. The Council is legally required to ‘make’ (adopt) the neighbourhood plan.

6. **Legal considerations**

6.1 A legal challenge could be made against the decision to **‘**make’ the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan. Such a challenge could be made on the basis that the neighbourhood plan does not meet the basic conditions, is not compatible with the Convention rights or because it does not comply with the definition of a neighbourhood development plan. However, the independent examiner who examined the plan has considered these matters in light of the consultation responses made to the plan. The Council has also considered these matters and is of the view that there is no basis for reaching a different view to the examiner.

7. **Financial implications**

7.1 When a decision has been formally made to progress an original version of a neighbourhood plan (rather than a review) to referendum, Dorset Council has previously become eligible for a grant of £20,000 in respect of the plan. This grant is intended to cover the costs associated with the Council’s input into the production of the neighbourhood plan including the costs associated with the examination and referendum. The Government has not yet confirmed the grant support for local planning authorities for the 2025/26 financial year. However, it is anticipated that it will be the same, or similar, to the grant support that has been available in previous financial years.

8. **Natural environment, climate & ecology implications**

8.1 The neighbourhood plan has been prepared in accordance with national planning policy and guidance which seeks to deliver sustainable development through planning decisions including by improving biodiversity and mitigating and adapting to climate change. The independent examiner who conducted the examination of the plan considers that the plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.

8.2 As this report is pertaining to the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan, there is no specific requirement for including a climate decision-wheel in this instance.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 The plan has been prepared in accordance with national planning policy and guidance which seeks to deliver healthy, inclusive and safe places.

10. Other implications

10.1 The neighbourhood plan will form part of the development plan for the Knightsford Neighbourhood Area alongside other current adopted plans including the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan (2015). Planning applications, which will be considered by Dorset Council, will be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

11. Risk implications

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

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

12. Equalities

12.1 Part of the independent examiner's role was to consider whether the neighbourhood plan would breach or otherwise be incompatible with any of the Convention rights within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998. No issues were raised by the examiner in this regard.

13. Appendices

Appendix A: Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan
Appendix B: Examiner's Report

14. Background papers

14.1 Documents relating to the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan can be accessed via the following webpage:

Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan - Dorset Council

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 Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder.

Report on the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan 2023 – 2033

An Examination undertaken for Dorset Council with the support of Knightsford Parish Council on the October 2024 submission version of the Plan.

Independent Examiner: Andrew Mead BSc (Hons) MRTPI MIQ

Date of Report: 31 March 2025

Contents

Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan (KNP/the Plan) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – the Knightsford Parish Council (KPC);
- The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Knightsford Neighbourhood Area as shown on Map 1 on page 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan;
- The Plan specifies the period during which it is to take effect: 2023 - 2033; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

1. Introduction and Background

Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan 2023–2033

1.1 The Group Parish of Knightsford includes the parishes of Tincleton, West Knighton, West Stafford and Woodsford. The Group Parish is located immediately to the east of Dorchester and extends over low lying countryside through which flows the River Frome and its associated watercourses. In 2021, the population of the Knightsford Group Parish was about 900.[1]

1.2 The preparation of the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan (KNP/the Plan) began in 2021. Led by the Steering Group, evidence was collected, consultations were held during the intervening period and the final version of the Plan was submitted to Dorset Council (DC) in October 2024[2], representing about 3 years' work for those involved.

[1] 2021 Census; paragraph 2.2.1 of the Plan.
[2] I note that in answer to one of my questions of clarification the Plan was submitted in October 2024. However, in November 2024, the front cover of the Plan was altered to include the Plan period and paragraph 7.1.8 of the Plan was updated to include a reference to appeal decision APP/D1265/W/23/3317274 which had just been issued.

The Independent Examiner

1.3 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the KNP by DC with the agreement of Knightsford Parish Council (KPC).

1.4 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector and have experience of examining neighbourhood plans. I am an independent examiner, and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

1.5 As the independent examiner, I am required to produce this report and recommend either:

(a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or

(b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or

(c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.

1.6 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ('the 1990 Act'). The examiner must consider:

- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions.
- Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are:
    - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
    - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
    - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
    - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'; and
    - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area.
- Whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum.

- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ('the 2012 Regulations').

1.7 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

The Basic Conditions

1.8 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations (under retained EU law)[3]; and
- meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

1.9 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the Plan does not breach the requirement of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.[4]

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

2.1 For the purposes of this examination, the Development Plan for the Knightsford area, excluding policies relating to minerals and waste development, comprises principally the strategic policies in the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (WDWPLP). The WDWPLP was adopted by West Dorset District Council in October 2015 and is to be replaced by the Dorset Council Local Plan. The Local Development Scheme for DC suggests an adoption date for the Local Plan in winter 2027.

[3] The existing body of environmental regulation is retained in UK law.
[4] This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

2.2 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented. Unless otherwise stated, all references in this report are to the December 2023 NPPF and its accompanying PPG. [5]

Submitted Documents

2.3 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, as well as those submitted which include:

- the draft Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan 2023 – 2033 (submission version October 2024);
- Map 1 of the Plan which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Plan relates;
- the Consultation Statement (October 2024);
- the Basic Conditions Statement (October 2024);
- the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report (November 2024);
- the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Report (February 2024);
- the supporting evidence documents available on the Dorset Council web site, including the Knightsford Area-Wide design guidance and codes, AECOM (April 2023);
- all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation;
- the joint response dated 24 February 2025 from KPC and DC to the questions of clarification in my letter of 3 February 2025[6]; and
- the late submission from the Land Value Alliance on behalf of West Stafford LVA LLP dated 19 February 2025; my subsequent letter to KPC and DC dated 27 February 2025; and the joint response from both Councils dated 5 March 2025.

Site Visit

2.4 I made an unaccompanied site inspection to the KNP area on 5 February 2025 to familiarise myself with it and visit relevant locations referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

2.5 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I considered hearing sessions to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections to the Plan and presented

[5] A revised NPPF was published on 12 December 2024 which includes transitional arrangements for neighbourhood plans. Paragraph 239 of the December 2024 NPPF advises that it will only apply to neighbourhood plans submitted after 12 March 2025.
[6] View all the documents at: https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/knightsford-neighbourhood-plan

arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum. No requests for a hearing session were received.

Modifications

2.6 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications separately in the Appendix to this report.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

3.1 The KNP has been prepared and submitted for examination by the KPC, which is a qualifying body. The KNP extends over all the Group Parish comprising the Parishes of West Knighton, West Stafford, Tincleton and Woodsford designated by DC in June 2021 (this designation was applicable for the purposes of the Regulation 14 stage consultation). DC governance changes in April 2024 led to a small amendment to West Knighton Parish which resulted in a change to the Plan area and which was approved by DC in July 2024 (the Plan area as shown on Map 1 of the October 2024 submission version). I am satisfied it is the only Neighbourhood Plan for Knightsford Group Parish and does not relate to any land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Plan Period

3.2 The Plan period is from 2023 to 2033 as clearly stated on the front cover.

Neighbourhood Development Plan Preparation and Consultation

3.3 The Consultation Statement (CS) describes the thorough preparation of the Plan with involvement of the public and various stakeholders at the stages of the process. A Steering Group (SG) was formed early in the preparation process of the Plan, with representatives from all four parishes. The SG met regularly and updates on progress were provided at KPC meetings. A section of the KPC website was set up for neighbourhood plan matters. The development of the evidence for the Plan included a Residents Survey in June 2022 and a Business Survey in November 2022. An Options Consultation was carried out in October 2023 which included a drop in session and further meetings at West Stafford, Tincleton and West Knighton. In March 2024, a consultation was carried out of owners of potential Local Green Spaces and I note the omission of one landowner who was then consulted separately later in the process.

3.4 The pre-submission Plan was published for consultation under Regulation 14 of the 2012 Regulations from 18 March 2024 until 3 May 2024. An overview of the analysis of comments made by statutory consultees, including DC, and members of the public are summarised in Appendix 4 (pages 50 to 95) of the CS together with the responses of the Neighbourhood Plan Group and any resulting changes to the Plan.

3.5 The final version of the Plan was submitted to DC on 10 October 2024 although, as stated in footnote 2 above, minor updates to it occurred in November 2024. Consultation in accordance with Regulation 16 was carried out from 2 December 2024 until 27 January 2025. 12 responses were received about the Plan, including those from DC. An additional late submission was received and forwarded by DC which, together with subsequent comments by KPC and DC, I have taken into account in the report. I am satisfied that a transparent, fair and inclusive consultation process has been followed for the KNP, that has had regard to advice in the PPG on plan preparation and engagement and is procedurally compliant in accordance with the legal requirements.

Development and Use of Land

3.6 The Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with s.38A of the 2004 Act.

Excluded Development

3.7 The Plan does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'.[7]

Human Rights

3.8 The Basic Conditions Statement (BCS) notes that no issues have been raised in relation to the possible contravention of Human Rights. These are fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights. I am aware from the CS that considerable emphasis was placed throughout the consultation process to ensure that no sections of the community were isolated or excluded. I have considered this matter independently and I am satisfied that the policies will not have a discriminatory impact on any particular group of individuals.

4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

EU Obligations

4.1 The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) concluded that no significant negative effects are considered likely in the implementation of the KNP. The spatial strategy supports infill development and small-scale

[7] See section 61K of the 1990 Act.

affordable housing exception sites, as well as conversion, replacement or subdivision of existing rural buildings; this level of growth will support resident needs without impacting upon the rural nature of the neighbourhood area. Minor positive effects are therefore considered likely with regards to community wellbeing. Broadly neutral to minor positive effects are predicted in relation to the rest of the SEA objectives. Statutory consultees did not dissent from these conclusions and raised no objections to the submitted Plan.

4.2 The HRA screening exercise considered the potential threats, pressures and activities which may affect the Poole Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA), the Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar, the Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs SAC from issues related to recreational pressure, air quality and water quality. The HRA identified that Policy 17 (allocation of residential development on land north of Yoah Cottage) was considered possible to cause likely significant effects to the habitats sites identified above. The subsequent Appropriate Assessment (AA), concluded that there is the potential to result in increased recreational pressure on the Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar but that this could be mitigated by specific policy additions to the Plan. However, Policy 17 was deleted from the Regulation 15 version of the Plan. In order to overcome potential negative impacts on the water quality of the Poole Harbour SPA due to nutrient neutrality issues, arising from Policy 17 (now deleted) and also from possible housing infill provided for by the policies in the Plan, the AA recommended the inclusion of appropriate text in the Plan which noted the requirement for nutrient neutrality that exists for the Poole Harbour SPA. This has been accommodated in paragraph 7.1.10 of the Plan and Clause 4 of Policy 16. Natural England commented that any significant effects on any SAC, SPA, Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming one of those habitat sites is unlikely.[8]

4.3 I have read the SEA Report, the HRA and the other information provided and, having considered the matter independently, I agree with the conclusions. Therefore, I am satisfied that the KNP is compatible with EU obligations as retained in UK law.

Main Issues

4.4 Having considered whether the Plan complies with various procedural and legal requirements, it is now necessary to deal with whether it complies with the remaining Basic Conditions, particularly the regard it pays to national policy and guidance, the contribution it makes to the achievement of sustainable development and whether it is in general conformity with strategic development plan policies. I test the Plan against the Basic Conditions by considering specific issues of compliance of all the Plan’s policies.

[8] Email from Natural England dated 27 January 2025.

4.5 As part of that assessment, I consider whether the policies are sufficiently clear and unambiguous, having regard to advice in the PPG. A neighbourhood plan policy should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence.[9]

4.6 Accordingly, having regard to the Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan, the consultation responses, other evidence and the site visit, I consider that the main issues in this examination are whether the KNP policies (i) have regard to national policy and guidance; (ii) are in general conformity with the adopted strategic planning policies; and (iii) would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development?

Vision and Objectives

4.7 The vision for the KNP is based on issues raised by the community during the initial stages of the consultation process. The succinct vision is described in paragraph 3.1.1 of the Plan. Notwithstanding an objection to the vision, I do not accept that it is incompatible or inconsistent with the determination of planning applications under Section 38(6) of the 2004 Act. A series of objectives have then been developed to help to achieve the vision and which form the basis for the sixteen specific land use based policies.

Conserving Local Character

Policy 1. Development set in rural landscapes

4.8 Policy 1 describes requirements for development set in the rural landscapes which feature strongly in the Plan area. The policy has regard to national guidance[10], generally conforms with Policies ENV1, ENV3 and ENV10 of the WDWPLP and meets the Basic Conditions.

Policy 2. Wildlife corridors and biodiversity

4.9 Policy 2 considers opportunities for enhancing the biodiversity of wildlife corridors, tree planting and encouraging public access where appropriate. The policy has regard to national guidance[11], generally conforms with Policies ENV2 and ENV3 of the WDWPLP and meets the Basic Conditions.

General Design Principles

4.10 There then follows a series of detailed design policies which draw heavily on the excellent Design Guidance and Codes document produced by AECOM as part of the supporting evidence for the Plan.

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[9] PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.
[10] NPPF: paragraphs 180 & 191.
[11] NPPF: paragraphs 180 & 185.

Policy 3. Plot formation, building set back, orientation and boundary treatments
Policy 4. Incorporating the car in developments – parking guidelines
Policy 5. Density, building heights and rooflines
Policy 6. Building mix
Policy 7. Materials and architectural details
Policy 8. Extensions and conversions – general principles
Policy 9. Sustainability in design

4.11 Whereas each of these policies has regard to national guidance, generally conforms with the strategic policies of the WDWPLP, as detailed below, and meets the Basic Conditions, it seems to me that the Design Code developed by AECOM deserves greater recognition in the Plan. Therefore, I recommend that paragraph 4.3.3 of the Plan is expanded by the inclusion of a sentence as detailed in **PM1**.

KNP Policy	WDWPLP Policy	NPPF (paragraph ref.)
Policy 3	ENV10, ENV11, ENV12	131, 135, 136
Policy 4	ENV10, COM9	131, 108
Policy 5	ENV10, ENV11, ENV12	131, 135
Policy 6	ENV10, ENV12	131, 135
Policy 7	ENV10, ENV12	131, 132, 135
Policy 8	ENV10, ENV11, ENV12	131, 135
Policy 9	ENV12	131, 159

Policy 10. Local Green Spaces

4.12 Policy 10 designates four Local Green Spaces (LGS) detailed on pages 27 and 28 of the Plan and listed in the policy, each of which I visited on my inspection of the area. LGS designation should only be used where the green space is:

a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.[12]

[12] NPPF: paragraph 106.

LGS should also be capable of enduring beyond the end of the Plan period.[13] I agree that each LGS, excluding Land east of Wynd Close, West Stafford, meets the designation criteria.

4.13 Although I accept that the Land east of Wynd Close, West Stafford is in reasonable proximity to the community it serves, is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land, there is little of substance to suggest that it is demonstrably special to the local community, beyond being a typical field on the edge of a village, with a public footpath passing through it. I saw the site on 5 February before the latest written exchange of representation but, having learned about the issues in the CS (pages 10, 69 and 70), nothing is raised in the representations including the previous public use of the field, the field boundaries, the proximity of the Manor House and Talbothayes Lodge or the ecological value of the site, which causes me to alter my initial conclusions from the site visit. Therefore, I shall recommend the deletion of Land east of Wynd Close as LGS. **(PM2)** Subject to that modification, the policy would have regard to national guidance as referenced above, would generally conform with Policy ENV3 of the WDWPLP and would meet the Basic Conditions.

Policy 11. Important local views and landmarks

4.14 Policy 11 aims to safeguard important local views and landmarks by resisting development which would degrade the views and the significance of the landmarks by virtue of scale, massing, design and poor location. The views are described in Table 2. An objection was raised to the description of The Castle at Woodsford as standing in relative isolation. However, I agree with the Plan. Even when seen against the backdrop of the nearby agricultural buildings, it appears as a feature standing alone, visually significant and worthy of its description as relatively isolated.

4.15 Subject to one reservation, the policy has regard to national guidance[14] and generally conforms with Policy ENV1 of the WDWPLP. My reservation is that the map base of Appendix 4 which shows the Views referred to in Policy 11 is so indistinct that the identification of their location can be extremely challenging for non-residents who may still be persons interested in the Plan and the policies. (In my case, also with the use of a smart phone and the GPS enabled Ordnance Survey App). I note the Appendix states that the base is a Tree Canopy Map (by Friends of the Earth). I recommend that in order to provide the necessary clarity, an Ordnance Survey map base is used for Appendix 4 with colouring which does not favour clumps of trees at the expense of features which enable the viewpoint to be accurately and speedily located. **(PM3)** Subject to accepting that recommendation, the policy would meet the Basic Conditions.

[13] NPPF: paragraph 105.
[14] NPPF: paragraph 180.

Policy 12. Development in proximity to heritage assets

4.16 Policy 12 considers new development in proximity to heritage settings. In order to avoid being overly prescriptive whilst still retaining the sense of how heritage assets would have been experienced in their immediate setting and wider landscape, I shall recommend the qualification of such a consideration to being "likely to have been experienced …". The policy would then have regard to national guidance[15], would generally conform with Policy ENV4 of the WDWPLP and would meet the Basic Conditions. **(PM4)**

Improving Road Safety and Opportunities for Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding

Policy 13. Village roads and Quiet, Low Traffic Routes
Policy 14. Prioritising walking, cycling and horse riding

4.17 Policy 13 and Policy 14 each seek to protect the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders using roads and other rights of way in the area. Both policies have regard to national guidance[16], generally conform with Policy COM7 of the WDWPLP and meet the Basic Conditions.

Retaining and Improving our Local Community Facilities

Policy 15. Supporting community facilities

4.18 Policy 15 supports the retention of existing community facilities and the provision of new small-scale facilities. The policy has regard to national guidance[17], generally conforms with Policies COM2, COM3, COM4 and COM5 of the WDWPLP and meets the Basic Conditions.

Meeting our Housing and Employment Needs

Policy 16. Meeting local housing needs in the Plan area

4.19 The minimum housing target for the Plan area in the Plan period is 6 dwellings, comprising 1 completion on an extant planning permission and a windfall allowance of 5 dwellings.[18] In its Regulation 16 representation, Dorset Council does not dissent from that estimate. Policy 16 of the Plan indicates that it is expected that the requirement will be met through infill within the development boundary of West Knighton; small-scale affordable housing exceptions sites adjacent to West Knighton or as infill in West Stafford; conversion, replacement or subdivision of existing rural buildings; and the provision of rural workers dwellings where such a functional need is demonstrated.

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[15] NPPF: paragraphs 205 & 206.
[16] NPPF: paragraph 104, 108 & 110.
[17] NPPF: paragraphs 97 & 102.
[18] Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan: Paragraph 7.1.2.

4.20 Policy 16 also indicates the mix of dwelling types which should be delivered; the aim for the tenure of affordable housing and the local connection criteria; and the need to ensure that development does not cause an adverse effect on the integrity of European sites. The policy has regard to national guidance[19], generally conforms with Policies SUS1 and SUS2 of the WDWPLP and meets the Basic Conditions. Representations suggested that there was a need and desire for (new) housing in Tincleton, but I am satisfied that the Plan meets the Basic Conditions so far as the housing requirement is concerned. Therefore, I see no need to consider additional housing sites in Tincleton or, indeed, elsewhere in the Plan area.

Projects

4.21 The Plan lists three projects at appropriate sections in the Plan. These are items which the community is seeking but cannot be delivered through planning policies, which are not considered as part of the examination and which will not form part of the statutory Development Plan. Nevertheless, they represent aspirations or actions which would benefit the community and demonstrate an attribute of the neighbourhood planning process.[20]

Overview

4.22 Therefore, on the evidence before me, with the recommended modifications, I consider that the policies within the KNP are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the WDWPLP, have regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

4.23 A consequence of the acceptance of the recommended modifications would be that amendments will have to be made to the explanation within the Plan in order to make it logical and suitable for the referendum. Further minor amendments might also include incorporating factual updates, correcting inaccuracies, such as the title of the Dorset Council Housing Allocation Policy in Policy 16 (3), typographical and punctuation errors, any text improvements suggested helpfully by DC in their Regulation 16 consultation response and other similar minor or consequential changes (such as paragraph numbering) in agreement with DC. None of these alterations would affect the ability of the Plan to meet the Basic Conditions and could be undertaken as minor, non-material changes.[21]

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[19] NPPF: paragraphs 60, 82 & 83.
[20] PPG Reference ID: 41-004-20190509.
[21] PPG Reference ID: 41-106-20190509.

5. Conclusions

Summary

5.1 The Knightsford Neighbourhood Plan has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard to all the responses made following consultation on the KNP, and the evidence documents submitted with it.

5.2 I have made recommendations for four modifications to ensure the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

The Referendum and its Area

5.3 I have considered whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. The KNP, as modified, has no policy which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary, requiring the referendum to extend to areas beyond the Plan boundary. I recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan should be that of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Concluding Comments

5.4 The KPC, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and other voluntary contributors are to be commended for producing a comprehensive Plan. The Plan is logical, very informative and, other than the aforementioned Map at Appendix 4, well-illustrated. I enjoyed examining it and visiting the area, which could have been quite challenging had the River Frome been in flood. The Consultation Statement and the Basic Conditions Report were extremely useful. The Plan benefitted greatly from the constructive comments from DC at the Regulation 14 stage, the subsequent positive response from KPC and the changes to the Plan. The Regulation 16 comments from DC were also very helpful as were the answers from the Councils to my questions. Subject to the four recommended modifications, the KNP will make a positive contribution to the Development Plan for the area and should enable the attractive character and appearance of the Knightsford Group Parish to be maintained whilst enabling sustainable development to proceed.

Andrew Mead

Examiner

Appendix: Modifications

Proposed modification no. (PM)	**Page no./ other reference**	**Modification**
PM1	Paragraph 4.3.3.	Add: **"It is expected that proposals for development will have regard to the design guidance advice contained in the Knightsford Area-wide design guidance and codes: April 2023."**
PM2	Policy 10 and Table 1.	Delete Land east of Wynd Close, West Stafford as LGS.
PM3	Appendix 4	Use an Ordnance Survey base for the four maps on which to locate the Viewpoints relevant to Policy 11.
PM4	Policy 12	Amend the first bullet point to: "how the heritage assets are and would **likely to** have been experienced in their immediate setting and wider landscape."

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