

CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2025

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

Present remotely: Cllrs

Apologies: Cllrs Ben Wilson

Also present: Cllr Belinda Bawden, Cllr Piers Brown, Cllr Spencer Flower, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Hannah Hobbs-Chell and Cllr Andrew Parry

Also present remotely: Cllr Alex Brenton, Cllr Sally Holland, Cllr Robin Legg, Cllr Cathy Lugg, Cllr Stella Jones, Cllr Andy Todd, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr Jack Jeanes, Cllr David Morgan, Cllr David Northam, Cllr Jane Somper and Cllr Andrew Starr

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

Jan Britton (Executive Director - Place), Sean Cremer (Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director of People - Children), Sam Crowe (Director of Public Health), Steven Ford (Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Sustainability), Catherine Howe (Chief Executive), Sue Bellamy (Senior Planning Policy Officer), Bridget Betts (Environmental Advice Manager), Liz Crocker (Head of Strategy), Mike Garrity (Corporate Director for Planning), Paul Rutter (Service Manager for Leisure, Arts and Cultural Services), Nick Webster (Head of Growth and Regeneration), Jack Wiltshire (Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering) and Amy Smith (Local Nature Recovery Officer)

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

The Leader of the Council invited the Cabinet Member for Health and Housing to address the meeting regarding the Corporate Director for Housing. The Cabinet Member advised that Andrew Billany was leaving the Council in January 2026, following five years of dedicated service. She expressed her appreciation for his significant contribution to housing and for the personal support he had provided to her in her role.

1. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. Declarations of Interest

Cllr N Ireland declared an interest in respect of item 8 “Dorset National Landscape Management Plan”. He advised Cabinet that he would leave the room whilst the item was considered.

Cllr S Clifford declared an interest in respect of item 14 as a Dorset’s representative and a director of Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership. He advised Cabinet that he would leave the room whilst the item was considered.

3. Public Participation

There were no public questions or statements to consider.

4. Questions from Councillors

There were no questions from councillors.

5. Forward Plan

In presenting the plan, the Leader of the Council advised that the report entitled “Statement of Reasonable Expectations between Dorset Council and parish and town councils” had been deferred from the December Cabinet meeting. This was following its consideration by Place and Resources Overview Committee on 24 November 2025. The Leader confirmed that further work would be undertaken before the report was submitted to Cabinet at its next meeting in January.

The draft Cabinet Forward Plan was received and noted.

6. Council Plan Progress Report

The Leader of the Council introduced the Council Plan Progress report, outlining the work completed throughout the year to enable effective delivery of the Council Plan in the years ahead. The Leader noted that many of the items considered by Cabinet closely aligned with Dorset Council’s key priorities.

Cllr G Taylor and Cllr C Sutton also took the opportunity to highlight progress within their respective portfolio areas.

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland and seconded by Cllr G Taylor.

Decision

- (i) That the establishment of the council plan monitoring framework as a key component of the Strategic Performance and Risk Monitoring Framework, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be noted.
- (ii) That the publication of the council plan reporting dashboard, providing transparent access to performance data, be noted.

- (iii) That progress to date and the development of foundational programmes that support delivery of each council plan priority, be noted.
- (iv) That early delivery highlights and case studies demonstrating impact of our work, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, be noted
- (v) That the updated enabling strategy and policy framework that underpins council plan delivery, as set out in Appendix 3 be approved.
- (vi) That the refined performance framework for the Communities for All priority, for ongoing monitoring following co-design work and as set out in Appendix 4, be approved.

Reason for the decision

The decision supported the council's commitment to robust governance, transparency, and continuous improvement by aligning with the reporting mechanisms set out in Dorset Council's Strategic Performance and Risk Monitoring Framework. Specifically, this approach established a twice-yearly reporting cycle to Cabinet on progress against the Council Plan, comprising of a mid-year update and an annual end-of-year performance report in summer.

The production of an annual report aligns with Local Government Association (LGA) guidance on performance management for local authorities to ensure consistency with sector best practice.

7. **Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

The Leader of the Council presented a report on the Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The LNRS set out a statutory framework for reversing biodiversity decline and enhancing climate resilience across Dorset. The report had been co-produced with BCP Council and Natural England. Cabinet was advised that DEFRA and BCP Council had already approved the strategy.

In response to a concern regarding the reference to the use of veterinary medicines and the rationale for reducing their use on farms, the Local Nature Recovery Officer advised that the recommendations within the strategy had originated from some farmers themselves, with the intention of exploring alternative methods to reduce disease occurrences in a more natural way. The strategy was not designed to instruct farmers on what to do, but rather to support those alternative methods, if that was considered appropriate.

The Leader of the Council reminded Cabinet that the strategy had been shaped through extensive stakeholder engagement and public consultation, this included representatives of the National Farmers Union.

It was proposed by Cllr N Ireland and seconded by Cllr C Sutton

Decision

- (i) That the final Dorset Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) be approved for publication, recognising its role as a statutory framework for nature recovery across the county.

- (ii) Cabinet agreed to integrate the LNRS into relevant council policies and decision-making, including planning, land management, climate adaptation, and public health and support the ongoing delivery of the LNRS.
- (iii) Cabinet acknowledged and thanked the contributions from stakeholders, including BCP Council, Natural England, community groups, farmers, landowners and residents, in shaping the strategy through the development and consultation phase.

Reason for the decision

To ensure Dorset Council complies with DEFRA requirements under the Environment Act 2021 by adopting and integrating the Local Nature Recovery Strategy as a statutory framework. This approach supported the reversal of biodiversity decline, strengthen climate resilience, and guide sustainable land use across the county.

At this juncture the Leader of the Council left the room for the consideration of the following item.

Cllr R Biggs (Vice-chair) in the chair.

8. **Dorset National Landscape Management Plan**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning introduced a report on the Dorset National Landscape Management Plan. Cabinet was advised that Dorset Council had a statutory duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to review and adopt a five-year management plan.

Cllr S Bartlett proposed the adoption of the management plan, and this was seconded by Cllr R Biggs.

Decision

That the Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2026 – 31 be adopted.

Reason for the decision

To ensure that the statutory responsibilities in relation to the National Landscapes were met.

Cllr N Ireland return to the meeting.

Cllr Ireland in the Chair

9. **Adoption of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Management Plan**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning presented a report setting out the detail of adopting the Cranborne Chase Partnership Plan. Dorset Council was legally required to prepare and publish a management plan for the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Board had completed a revised Management Plan for 2025-2030, following a consultation process.

It was proposed by Cllr S Bartlett and seconded by Cllr J Andrews

Decision

That the Cranborne Chase Partnership Plan (Management Plan) as set out at Appendix 2 of the report, be adopted.

Reason for the decision

Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 required the council to, 'prepare and publish a Management Plan which formulated [their] policy for the management of the AONB and for carrying out of their functions in relation to it.' Adoption of the management plans prepared by each National Landscape, for and on behalf of the local authorities that fall within the protected areas, helped to fulfil this part of the requirement.

10. **New Forest Recreation Mitigation Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning introduced the report on the New Forest Recreation Mitigation Strategy. The strategy had been developed jointly by nine local authorities to secure contributions from new residential development towards mitigation measures.

In response to questions, Cabinet was advised that the Council had a statutory duty to deliver the strategy and mitigate any development impact and planning permission could not be granted unless these impacts were addressed, as this was a prerequisite for development.

The Council could not approve development that would adversely affect the integrity of a protected habitat, and this was the core purpose of the proposed strategy.

It was proposed by Cllr S Bartlett and seconded by Cllr J Andrews

Decision

- (i) That the New Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy 2025, be agreed in principle. Any minor changes to the final version of the Strategy, be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning in consultation with the Corporate Director for Planning.

- (ii) That the Strategy be applied within the 13.8km buffer and 15km buffer for larger sites to allow planning permissions to be granted
- (iii) That as an interim arrangement, secured funding be transferred to the New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) to extend their existing mitigation scheme whilst the new partnership scheme was established
- (iv) That, authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning in consultation with the Corporate Director for Planning for the agreement of guidance on proportional contributions for other over-night accommodation.

Reason for the decision

The New Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy provided a long-term solution, and temporary arrangement, expanding the existing mitigation scheme to cover affected parts of Dorset. This would enable permissions to be granted in the interim. Joining the partnership scheme avoided the need for Dorset Council to develop its own complex alternative, which would delay planning consents.

11. **Report to Change Cabinet decision of delegations for Highway Service Contract (HTSC)**

The Cabinet Member for Place Services presented a report seeking approval to amend the Cabinet's decision of the 20 May 2025 regarding the procurement of the Highways Term Service Contract (HTSC).

Members were further advised that the amendment was necessary to address an error in the original decision.

It was proposed by Cllr J Andrews seconded by Cllr S Bartlett

Decision

That the decision in minute 7 (c) of Cabinet of 20 May 2025 be replaced by the following decision:

That:

“Decisions to award contracts and works orders made under the Highways Term Service Contract (HTSC) up to the value of £500k, and the approval of associated term and conditions be made by officers in accordance with the Officer Scheme of Delegation.”

Reason for the decision

To not disapply the Officer Scheme of Delegation for Dorset Council.

12. Average Speed Cameras - A30 Sherborne dual Carriageway

The Cabinet Member for Place Services set out a report proposing to install average speed cameras on the A30 Sherborne dual carriageway to address road safety concerns.

In response to questions from the local ward member, the Cabinet Member agreed to have a discussion with him and the highways team regarding crossing points and the proposed location of the speed cameras.

Following a further question, the Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering confirmed the proposal was backed by data on serious injuries and fatalities, which supported funding from the Department of Transport. Further details could be shared with the relevant councillor outside of the meeting.

The introduction of speed cameras on the A30 at Sherborne was generally supported by members, and it was proposed by Cllr J Andrews and seconded by Cllr S Clifford

Decision

That the allocation of Department for Transport funding for the installation of an Average Speed Camera system on the A30 Sherborne dual carriageway, supporting our commitment to creating safer and stronger communities.

Reason for the decision

Road Safety was a statutory duty under section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and a strategic priority for Dorset Council. Collision data indicates a high number of serious incidents along this stretch with many vehicles recorded significantly exceeding the posted speed limit.

Evidence from multiple studies demonstrated that average speed camera systems were highly effective in reducing speeds and consequently collisions and casualties. investment in such a system on the A30 was considered a proportionate and evidenced-led intervention.

At this point Cllr S Clifford left the meeting for the consideration of the following item.

13. Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership Closure

The Cabinet Member for Property, Assets and Economic Growth presented a report on the closure of the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (DLEP) following the Government's decision to cease funding for LEP's. Members were further advised that Dorset Council had worked with BCP Council to manage the transition and closure process.

It was proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr S Robinson

Decision

- (i) That in its capacity as a Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (DLEP) (CIC) company member, Cabinet resolved to ratify the decision to transfer and accept the following residual DLEP funds to Dorset Council.
 - (a) £866,951.67 revenue
 - (b) £2,498,208.50 capital
 - (c) £1,275,000 capital loan repayments due
- (ii) That Cabinet agrees that the Council, in its capacity as a DLEP (CIC) company member, and as Accountable Body for the DLEP, to transfer a sum of £4,640,160.18 to BCP Council as their share of the residual DLEP funds.
- (iii) That any further accrued interest on the DLEP funds, prior to their transfer, be split equally between Dorset Council and BCP Council.
- (iv) That funds for the benefit of the community, be ringfenced and in accordance with the Objects of the DLEP.
- (v) That received funds be maintained in an appropriate reserve budget to be allocated subject to the council's financial regulations and in accordance with the received legal advice on compliance with the Community Interest Company Regulations 2025.
- (vi) That the resignation of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy from the DLEP Board, be noted and that officers formally close the DLEP following successful transfer of the above funds and resignation of Board Members.
- (vii) That authority be delegated to the Head of Legal Services to finalise any legal documentation required.

Reason for the decision

The acceptance of the revenue and capital funding for community benefits in the Dorset Council area would help deliver the Council Plan and Economic Growth Strategy and wider economic and social objectives.

Cllr S Clifford returned to the meeting.

14. Future Leisure Management

The Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement introduced a report on the future management of the Council's leisure centres.

Members were advised that the current leisure contracts at Ferndown, Bridport and Dorset would expire on 31 March 2026 and following appraisal, the preferred approach was to procure a single leisure operator, supported by a detailed procurement strategy to be developed by Max Associates. To maintain continuity of service during the procurement process, it was proposed to extend existing contracts for two years from April 2026, with an additional option for a further year.

It was proposed by Cllr R Hope and seconded by Cllr S Clifford

Decision

- (i) That the procurement of a single leisure contract operator, be agreed and Max Associates be recommissioned to develop the Dorset Leisure Centres Procurement Strategy required to achieve this.
- (ii) That the Dorset Leisure Centres Procurement Strategy be brought back to Cabinet for consideration and final approval of the strategy's recommendations in September 2026.
- (iii) That the Service Manager for Leisure, Arts and Cultural Services be authorised to agree contract extensions for Ferndown Leisure Centre, Blandford Leisure Centre and Dorchester Sports Centre for a further 2 years from the 1 April 2026 with an option for a further 1 year.

Reason for the decision

Procuring a single leisure contractor was best able to meet Council priorities and financial goals. A procurement strategy would set the timetable, tendering approach, service specifications, and risk management. Extending current contracts ensured centres stayed open during this process and transition.

15. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

16. **Exempt Business**

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr J Andrews

Decision

That the press and the public be excluded for the following item(s) 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.

17. **Future Leisure Management**

The exempt appendix associated with the report “Future Leisure Management” was not discussed at the meeting. The report was considered in open business as set out in no 14 of these minutes.

18. Acquisition of Land Neighbouring Dorset Innovation Park

The Cabinet Member for Property, Assets and Economic Growth presented an exempt report of the acquisition of land neighbouring the Dorset Innovation Park.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr N Ireland.

Decision

That the recommendations set out in the exempt report of 9 December 2025 be approved.

Reason for the decision

Acquiring land that neighbours the Dorset Innovation Park would help develop the long-term strategic role of Dorset Innovation Park (DIP) as the centre of the defence industry in Dorset facilitating defence company growth.

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 7.28 pm

Chairman

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