



Cabinet

Date: Tuesday, 19 May 2026
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, Matt Bell (effective from 14.5.2026), Simon Clifford, 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.critchell@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 & Governance 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 21 April 2026.

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 14 May 2026.

When submitting your question or statement please note that:

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

5. 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.critchell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk 8.30am on Thursday 14 May 2026.

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

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| 6. | FORWARD PLAN | 13 - 22 |
| | To consider the Cabinet Forward Plan. | |
| 7. | 2026 FLOOD INVESTIGATION STUDIES | 23 - 36 |
| | To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Place Services. | |
| 8. | GREEN SEAFRONT GROUND STABILISATION & SHORE ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS - FUNDING REQUEST | 37 - 70 |
| | To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Place Services. | |
| 9. | MODERN SUSTAINABLE UNITARY - REIMAGINING THE ROLE OF DORSET COUNCIL | 71 - 88 |
| | To consider a report of the Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding. | |
| 10. | PROCUREMENT PIPELINE REPORT - OVER £500K (2026-27) | 89 - 96 |
| | To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy. | |
| 11. | UPDATE ON PUBLIC HEALTH DISAGGREGATION INCLUDING PLANS FOR FUTURE CONTRACTS | 97 - 106 |
| | To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Health and Housing. | |
| 12. | ADVOCACY AND INDEPENDENT VISITORS CONTRACT SPEND APPROVAL | 107 - 118 |
| | To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills. | |
| 13. | URGENT ITEMS | |
| | To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes. | |

14. EXEMPT BUSINESS

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

There are no exempt items scheduled for this meeting.



CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 21 APRIL 2026

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 Matt Bell, Cllr Piers Brown, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Craig Monks, Cllr Jon Orrell and Cllr Andrew Parry

Also present remotely: Cllr Carole Jones, Cllr Andy Todd, Cllr Belinda Bawden, Cllr Sherry Jespersen and Cllr Jane Somper

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

Jan Britton (Executive Director - Regeneration, Infrastructure & Growth), Bridget Betts (Environmental Advice Manager), Nina Coakley (Head of Transformation and Design), Sean Cremer (Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), Paul Derrien (Housing Enabling and Delivery Manager), Andrew Galpin (Infrastructure & Delivery Planning Manager), Mike Garrity (Corporate Director for Planning), Steven March (Service Manager for Housing Standards), Paul Rutter (Service Manager for Leisure, Arts and Cultural Services), Lisa Cotton (Interim Executive Director - Whole Council Modernisation and Customer Delivery), Sam Crowe (Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director - Children's Services), Steven Ford (Assistant Chief Executive), Iain Sim (Interim Corporate Director for Housing), Jonathan Mair (Director - Assurance (Monitoring Officer)) and Catherine Howe (Chief Executive)

62. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

63. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to report.

64. Public Participation

There were no questions/statements from the public for this meeting.

65. Questions from Councillors

There were no questions from Councillors for this meeting.

66. **Forward Plan**

The draft Cabinet Forward Plan for May 2026 was received and noted.

67. **Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - prioritisation of CIL funded infrastructure projects**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning set out the report and its recommendations for the allocation of uncommitted strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to deliver essential infrastructure needed to support new development.

In response to a question, the Cabinet Member confirmed that he would be happy to meet with West Parley Parish Council in respect of the West Parley Link Road Project, at a suitable date in the future.

It was proposed by Cllr S Bartlett and seconded by Cllr S Clifford

Decision

That Cabinet:

- (a) Agree to allocate strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) based on the projects and values shown in appendix A of the report of 21 April 2026 noting each allocated project was subject to inclusion in the Capital Programme and the development of an appropriate business case, and
- (b) Commit up to £600,000 of future CIL income in the West Dorset charging area per year to the Lyme Regis Cobb project, for a period of two years (to 2028), and
- (c) Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning, to agree a contribution of strategic CIL for the West Parley Link Road project, to be secured from the balance of uncommitted strategic CIL in the East Dorset charging schedule.

The contribution was subject to evidence being submitted to the council of the cost of the project and development viability. It was further recommended that future CIL income from the East Dorset charging schedule be considered should it be required.

Reason for the decision

To ensure the delivery of important infrastructure to support growth and development.

68. **Culture Strategy 2026 - 2031**

The Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement presented the Cultural Strategy 2026 – 2031, which had also been considered by the Place and Resources Overview Committee on 26 March 2026.

Culture played a vital role in enriching people's lives and strengthening the places in which they lived. The new Cultural Strategy provided a framework to support and sustain the cultural infrastructure to deliver lasting social and economic benefits while helping to attract internal and external investment.

In response to questions about sports and leisure facilities, the Cabinet Member said that while these were important, he was satisfied they were already covered by existing strategies and there would further consideration through the Leisure Strategy review.

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

Decision

That the Dorset Cultural Strategy 2026 – 2031 be adopted.

Reason for the decision

The Cultural Strategy would help to increase the opportunities of securing new investment into Dorset and maximise the leverage value of the council's own investment in arts, heritage and culture. This Cultural Strategy would be the foundation on which Dorset Council would set its own funding criteria, ensuring that all grant recipients were contributing to its priorities and ambition.

69. **Nitrogen Credit Pricing methodology**

The Leader of the Council presented a report on the Dorset Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund aimed to deliver nitrogen mitigation projects across Poole Harbour catchment. Cabinet considered the information and recommendations set out in the report and it was proposed by Cllr N Ireland and seconded by Cllr S Bartlett

Decision

That the methodology for setting the price for Poole Harbour nitrogen permanent credits (as set out in appendix 1) be agreed and allow for a discretionary adjustment of up to 10% to be applied, with authority delegated to the Executive Director of Place to respond appropriately to market conditions.

Reason for the decision

The selling of nutrient credits to developers was essential because it provided a mechanism for development to proceed legally, ensuring that nutrient impacts were mitigated. It also ensured legal defensibility, financial sustainability, a credible and trusted credit market, and strong governance through transparent, accountable pricing.

70. **Housing Standards and Tenants Rights Enforcement Policy**

The Cabinet Member for Health and Housing presented the report on the Housing Standards and Tenants' Rights Enforcement Policy. She proposed that recommendations 1 and 2 be agreed, as previously supported by the People and Health Overview Committee on 16 March 2026.

The Cabinet Member proposed an amendment to recommendation 3, asking that monthly financial updates be shared with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the People and Health Overview Committee, and that the policy be reviewed by an Overview Committee within its first year.

The recommendations and amendment were seconded by Councillor R Biggs. It was also noted that the policy had been considered by the Place and Resources Overview Committee on 26 March 2026.

Decision

That:

- (a) the Housing Standards and Tenants Rights Enforcement Policy 2026 be approved and adopted.
- (b) delegated authority be given to the Cabinet Member for Health and Housing, in consultation with the Interim/Corporate Director for Housing and Community Safety, to make minor changes to the Housing Standards and Tenants Rights Enforcement Policy 2026 including
 - i. the need to amend the policy to account for known future enactments which form part of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 implementation of the Renters Rights Act 2025; and,
 - ii. approval of operational procedure notes including but not limited to a methodology for determining the amount of Civil Financial Penalties under this policy for breaches of up to £7,000 and offences of up to £40,000.
- (c) updates on the financial arrangements be made available on a monthly basis to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the People and Health Overview Committee.
- (d) an update on the policy be provided to an Overview Committee at an appropriate time within the first year of its operation.

Reason for the decision

To ensure that the Council had a robust and legally compliant enforcement policy which enabled the effective enforcement of the Housing Act 2004, Renters Rights Act 2025, the 'Landlord Legislation' and other relevant statutory provisions affecting enforcement in the Private Rented Sector, which would be maintained 'up to date' as new known legal provisions were enacted.

71. **Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) 4**

The Cabinet Member for Health and Housing presented the report and its recommendations, which Cabinet supported unanimously.

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

Decision

- (a) That £662,000 capital and £4,796 revenue to be granted to Bournemouth Churches Housing (BCHA), who will act as the delivery vehicle and purchase the 4 properties using these funds and their own funds.

Completion of the purchase of the properties to be finalised by 31st March 2027;

- (b) That a lettings plan be in place with BCHA so Dorset Council can ensure the properties were allocated in accordance with the funding requirements.

Reason for the decision

The Council previously purchased and now owns 30 properties using funding provided through LAHF1 by Government and Dorset Council. While these homes will be used as temporary accommodation when vacant, the project required significant input from the Housing and Assets teams. In addition, as the Council was not a stock-holding authority, it could only offer non-secure tenancies.

LAHF4 funding required Afghan refugees to be offered secure tenancies. It was therefore recommended that the properties are provided, owned, and managed by a Registered Provider, specifically BCHA, to ensure secure tenancies could be offered to Afghan families.

72. **Transformation Update**

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Development and Transformation presented the report on the transitional transformation update, which set out progress since the last Cabinet report in October 2025. The report also sought approval to move to the next phase of work with details of required investment for 2026/27.

Cabinet noted and supported the proposal to July Full Council, as set out in appendix B, of the report regarding the approval of the updated use of flexible use of capital receipts and strategy policy.

It was proposed by Cllr B Wilson and seconded by Cllr S Robinson that the recommendations, which were unanimously supported.

Decision

- (a) That the progress to date in delivery of the 2025/26 plans including realised benefit outcomes, be noted.

- (b) That the 2026/27 delivery plan, including benefits, key milestones, and intended outcomes for the year be approved.
- (c) That the adjusted business change model for the HR, Procurement & Finance programme including the approach to resourcing, engagement, training, readiness, and adoption across all services, be agreed.
- (d) That Cabinet recommend to Full Council the use of up to £5.3m of flexible use of capital receipts and approve the remaining balance of £1.97m of the investment request of £7.27m be funded from reserves, for the transformation portfolio, enabling continued delivery of priority workstreams and associated benefits, including ERP – HR, Finance and Procurement system investment. To recommend approval of the updated use of flexible use of capital receipts strategy policy, summary of as set out in Appendix B of the report of 21 April 2026.
- (e) That the spend decision of £2.34m for digital initiatives pending final business case sign off across the next 6 months be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Section 151 officer.
- (f) That the updated governance and reporting cadence outlined in the report, including frequency, format, and escalation routes for programme oversight and decision making, be agreed.

Reason for the decision

The decision gave the council the direction, resources and oversight needed to deliver the 2026/27 transformation plan. They also make sure the ERP - HR, procurement and finance programme had the right support for business change. This allowed the next stage of investment to go ahead, keeps track of progress and risks, and ensure the planned benefits were achieved.

73. **Microsoft Licensing May 2026 to April 2027 - Spend over £500k**

The Cabinet Member for Transformation, Customer & Cultural Services presented the report to extend the Microsoft Enterprise Subscription Agreement and associated licensing spends. The recommendations were unanimously supported.

It was proposed by Cllr B Wilson and seconded by Cllr N Ireland

Decision

That a maximum spend of £2.332m be authorised on the final year of our current, extended Microsoft Enterprise Subscription Agreement and associated licensing spends through our compliantly contracted LSP, Boxxe.

Reason for the decision

To continue to be able to access critical operational licensing, after the 1 May2026 renewal date, authority was required to spend on the additional year of the current

Microsoft Enterprise Agreement, ahead of a formal re-procurement for 1 May 2027.

74. New Forest District Council Local Plan consultation

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning introduced the report and referred to the agreed response to the New Forest District Council's Local Plan consultation, subject to formal Cabinet endorsement.

It was proposed by Cllr S Bartlett and seconded by Cllr N Ireland

Decision

That the response agreed with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning be endorsed.

Reason for the decision

It was important that Dorset Council engaged with New Forest District Council in the production of their Local Plan and sought to address any cross-boundary issues constructively. The response to the consultation on the emerging Local Plan was part of that on-going cooperation.

The draft response in Appendix A to the report of 21 April 2026 had been submitted to the New Forest District Council. This draft response had been agreed with the Cabinet member for Planning and Emergency Planning.

After consideration by Cabinet, contact would be made with the District Council to either confirm that the submitted response was final or to adjust the response and submit a revised version to supersede the original draft response.

75. Marnhull Neighbourhood Development Plan 2024 - 2038

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning presented a report on the adoption of the Marnhull Neighbourhood Development Plan, 2024 – 2038 following an independent examination and referendum.

It was proposed by Cllr S Bartlett and seconded by Cllr N Ireland

Decision

(a) That the Council 'makes' the Marnhull Neighbourhood Development Plan, 2024 - 2038 (as set out in Appendix A of the report of 21 April 2026) part of the statutory development plan for the Marnhull Neighbourhood Area.

(b) That the Council offers its congratulations to Marnhull Parish Council and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group for producing a successful neighbourhood plan.

Reason for the decision

To formally 'make' the Marnhull Neighbourhood Development Plan, 2024 -2038 part of the statutory development plan for the Marnhull 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.

76. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

77. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business to report.

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 7.25 pm

Chair

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The Cabinet Forward Plan - June to September 2026 **(Publication date – 22 MAY 2026)**

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.

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

June

Dorset National Landscape grant funding 2026-2029 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open In January 2026 the hosted partnership team for the Dorset National Landscape should be notified of its grant allocation from Defra for 2026-2027 and indicative allocations for 2027-2029. All support delivery of the Management Plan previously adopted by Cabinet.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 23 Jun 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	Mike Garrity, Corporate Director for Planning mike.garrity@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Tom Munro, Dorset National Landscape Manager tom.munro@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth (Jan Britton)
Draft Outturn Report 2025/26 Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the 2025/26 Outturn report.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 23 Jun 2026		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer) sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Aspire Annual Report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the Aspire Annual Report.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 23 Jun 2026		Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Paula Golding, Corporate Director for Care and Protection</i> <i>paula.golding@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>
Bridport Reablement Centre Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Part exempt A report to provide an update on the Bridport Reablement Centre project, including approval on the Stage 2 Scheme and award of the build contract to the preferred construction partner.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 23 Jun 2026		Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care	<i>Sam Poole, Interim Corporate Director for Commissioning & Improvement</i> <i>samuel.poole@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director, People - Adults</i>
Dorset Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider extending the current strategy which expires 27 July 2026 until April 2027.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 23 Jun 2026		Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	<i>Sharon Attwater, Head of Housing</i> <i>sharon.attwater@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sam Brand, Service Manager for Housing Advice and Homelessness</i> <i>sam.brand@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities (Sam Crowe)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Dorset Council response to consultation on permitted development rights for onshore wind turbines in England Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To inform Cabinet of the response submitted to the Government's consultation on permitted development rights for onshore wind turbines, and to seek Cabinet endorsement of the response. The deadline for responding is 10 June 2026 (in advance of the Cabinet meeting) If Cabinet wish to submit any further comments in relation to the response, then these will be submitted after the consultation deadline.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 23 Jun 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning and Emergency Planning	<i>Anna Lee, Service Manager for Development Management and Enforcement</i> anna.lee@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director - Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth (Jan Britton)</i>
Capital Programme Review Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The Capital Programme has been subject to a review, this report outlines the work that has been done, the proposed changes and subsequent recommendations.	Decision Maker Dorset Council	Decision Date 16 Jul 2026	Cabinet 23 Jun 2026	Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	<i>Hannah Brown, Service Manager (Finance)</i> hannah.brown@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director - Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth (Jan Britton)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Dorset and BCP Council Local Transport Plan 2026 - 2041 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Following a successful consultation on the draft plan last year, the finalised new joint Local Transport Plan 2026 – 2041 is being preset ed for adoption.	Decision Maker Dorset Council	Decision Date 16 Jul 2026	Cabinet 23 Jun 2026	Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Owen Clark, Strategic and Policy Team Manager owen.clark@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jack Wiltshire, Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth (Jan Britton)</i>
July					
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 28 Jul 2026	People and Health Overview Committee 6 Jul 2026	Cabinet Member for Customer, Culture and Community Engagement	<i>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 Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i>
End of year performance report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open An end of year report on council plan delivery and broader organisational health.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	<i>Liz Crocker, Head of Strategy liz.crocker@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Chris Heighway, Performance and Analytics Team Manager chris.leighway@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Chief Executive</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
DFT rental E-scooter trial Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Seeking Cabinet approval to enable two areas of Dorset to introduce an e-scooter rental service trial. The two areas are: 1) Upton and Corfe Mullen 2) Weymouth, Portland, Chickereil and Dorchester.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026	Place and Resources Overview Committee 4 Jun 2026	Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Christopher Whitehouse, Projects Team Manager</i> <i>christopher.whitehouse@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Kate Tunks, Service Manager for Infrastructure and Assets</i> <i>kate.tunks@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth (Jan Britton)</i>
Youth Justice Plan Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To approve the Youth Justice Plan for 2026/27.	Decision Maker Dorset Council	Decision Date 22 Oct 2026	Cabinet 28 Jul 2026 People and Health Overview Committee 6 Jul 2026	Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>David Webb, Head of Service - Dorset Combined Youth Justice Service</i> <i>david.webb@bcpcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>
Dorset Community Safety Plan 2026 - 2029 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open New statutory three year community safety plan for the Dorset Council area. The plan has been written and agreed by the Council and partners through the Dorset Community Safety Partnership and now requires formal adoption by Dorset Council.	Decision Maker Dorset Council	Decision Date 22 Oct 2026	Cabinet 28 July 2026 People and Health Overview Committee 6 Jul 2026	Cabinet Member for Health and Housing	<i>Andy Frost, Service Manager for Community Safety</i> <i>andy.frost@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities (Sam Crowe)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
September					
July 2026 (period 4) financial management report 26/27 Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the Period 4 financial management report.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 8 Sep 2026		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	<i>Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i> <i>sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer</i> <i>sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i>
October 2026					
Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open This is the Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership's Annual Report 25/26 detailing the Partnership's activity from April 2025-March 2026 and is for Cabinet's information.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 6 Oct 2026		Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills	<i>Megan Cameron-Brown, Head of Quality Assurance and Partnerships</i> <i>megan.cameron-brown@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
November 2026					
Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To consider the adoption of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 10 Nov 2026	Place and Resources Overview Committee	Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Russell Goff, Senior Ranger</i> <i>russell.goff@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth (Jan Britton)</i>
September 2026 (period 6) financial management report 26/27 Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the period 6 financial management report 2026/27.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 10 Nov 2026		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	<i>Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i> <i>sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> , <i>Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer</i> <i>sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i>
December 2026					
Mid year performance update Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To provide an update on mid-year progress in council plan delivery and broader organisational health.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 8 Dec 2026		Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Performance and Safeguarding	<i>Liz Crocker, Head of Strategy</i> <i>liz.crocker@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> , <i>Chris Heighway, Performance and Analytics Team Manager</i> <i>chris.heighway@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Chief Executive</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
February 2027					
December 2026 Quarter 3 financial management plan 2026/2027 Key Decision - No Public Access - Open To consider the Quarter 3 financial management plan 2026/27.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 2 Feb 2027		Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	<i>Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i> sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)
Budget & Medium-term financial plan strategy report (MTFP) Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To consider the medium Term Financial (MTFP) and budget strategy.	Decision Maker Dorset Council	Decision Date 11 Feb 2027	Cabinet 2 Feb 2027	Cabinet Member for Finance & Capital Strategy	<i>Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i> sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, Corporate Development - Section 151 Officer

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

19 May 2026

2026 Flood Investigation Studies For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth

Report author and job title: Jack Wiltshire – Corporate Director Highways & Engineering

Email: Jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Highway Authority and Lead Local Flood Authority

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

1. Executive summary

This report sets out how Dorset Council is working alongside communities to learn from the flooding experienced during the winter of 2025–26, and to build stronger local resilience for the future. A £9.25 million programme of work is already under way, helping our communities to recover from the winter flooding and improve future resilience.

Exceptional rainfall, including Storm Chandra, led to widespread flooding that affected homes, businesses, roads and vital services. Many communities experienced significant disruption, and in some cases devastating impacts. Following the initial emergency response, the Council has acted quickly to repair roads, clear gulleys and drains that were blocked by soil and detritus washed into drains by flood water and improve future flood resilience.

Work is already planned on a number of substantial repair and recovery schemes, which will be undertaken within the next few months, including £456,000 of investment at Old Sherborne Road in Cerne Abbas, Horton Road and Main Road in Godmanstone.

The next step is listening, learning and working together with communities and partner organisations.

Dorset Council as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) has a statutory duty under section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to investigate flooding incidents to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate to do so.

This report proposes a structured approach to discharging those duties through the production of two types of flooding investigation report:

- **Strategic Flood Investigation Reports:** where the scale or consequences of a flooding event make a detailed investigation necessary or appropriate; and
- **Community Flood Review Reports:** where a more proportionate, locality focused investigation is appropriate.

Both types of report will be published, shared with affected communities and partners and will inform future investment in flood resilience. Importantly, these investigations will focus on practical actions and quick wins, as well as longer term flooding solutions. Members, residents, town and parish councils, local businesses and partner organisations will be closely involved throughout.

By combining local knowledge with technical expertise, this programme will help communities to be heard, supported and better prepared for the challenges of a changing climate. All parts of Dorset are already benefiting from the extra investment in flooding resilience, and future investment is not limited to the areas identified for Section 19 investigations.

Cabinet is asked to approve this approach, the proposed investigation localities, and the associated governance and funding arrangements.

2. Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is asked to:

- 2.1 Approve the approach to the flooding investigations set out in this report including the use of Strategic Flood Investigations and Community Flood Reviews in accordance with the proposed framework.
- 2.2 Approve the areas for flooding investigations (Appendix A), comprising:
 - a. A Dorset-wide strategic overview report that looks at flooding issues in Dorset's three main river catchment areas.

- b. Strategic/Detailed Flood Investigations in accordance with the proposed criteria described in this report.
 - c. Community Flood Reviews where a Section 19 investigation is otherwise considered appropriate.
- 2.3 Allocate a capital budget of £5 million for flooding resilience measures, including but not limited to addressing the outcomes of Section 19 investigations; and
- 2.4 Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services and the Section 151 Officer, to authorise expenditure from that capital budget, with any individual scheme with a value exceeding £500,000 to be reported to Cabinet for specific approval.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 To meet Dorset Council's statutory duty under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, to investigate significant flooding, in a lawful, transparent and proportionate manner.
- 3.2 To ensure residents, town and parish councils and local businesses receive clear, practical and locality-specific flooding information and guidance that they can own and use for their benefit as part of our wider approach to climate adaptation.
- 3.3 To develop a consistent strategic picture across Dorset's main river catchments and the highway network, so that partners including the Environment Agency and Wessex Water can align actions and future investment.
- 3.4 To support an evidence-led programme to target the Council's flooding resilience funding. This strategic approach will optimise the opportunity to secure additional external match funding, to supplement the £9.25m already committed by the Council.

4. Background

- 4.1 Dorset experienced several intense rainfall events through January 2026, culminating in Storm Chandra (26–27th), which delivered exceptionally heavy rain onto already saturated ground. This led to increased surface water run-off

into already swollen rivers and streams, with groundwater reaching unprecedented levels.

- 4.2 Flooding was widespread across Dorset, affecting residential properties, businesses, the road network and sewage systems. In the worst cases, the internal property flooding to people's homes was devastating.
- 4.3 Following Storm Chandra, conditions remained unsettled through February and into March 2026. The Environment Agency's Wessex situation reports show that January 2026 was the second wettest on record for the Wessex area, with average rainfall being 200% of the long-term average with 190mm rainfall. Groundwater levels across the chalk aquifer were above normal to exceptionally high throughout February and March. Multiple Environment Agency groundwater flood warnings remained in force to the end of March. These extreme weather events are becoming more common linked to climate change and the need to build resilience in our communities through partnership is a critical part of our approach to climate adaptation.
- 4.4 A number of Dorset's main roads became temporarily impassable. These included:
 - Parts of the A37, A354, A350, A356 and the B3092
 - A35 from Organford Lane to A351 Bakers Arms
 - A35 at Winterbourne Abbas (National Highways Trunk Road)
 - A351 at Corfe Castle.
- 4.5 The Council recorded a 92% increase in reported potholes due to water damage, a 54% increase in other road defects again due to water damage and run-off, and an 83% increase in emergency callouts to close roads, establish diversions and support people suffering from flooding – compared to the same period last year.
- 4.6 In the immediate response to the road damage, over four thousand potholes have already been repaired, but many roads have suffered structural damage that has reduced their long-term integrity.
- 4.7 The next phase of recovery work is planned to run throughout Spring 2026, taking advantage of the drier conditions needed to make effective, long-term repairs. This will involve patching or resurfacing roads that have significantly deteriorated following the winter weather. Further improvements will be delivered following the flood investigations proposed in this report, to prepare the programme of work that will strengthen our local flooding resilience.

5. Recovery, Investigations and long-term improvements

- 5.1 Dorset Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority for its area. Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 requires Lead Local Flood Authorities to investigate flooding incidents to the extent that it considers investigation to be necessary or appropriate, to publish the results, and notify relevant risk management authorities. The act does not prescribe thresholds, formats, or report types. Decisions on the scale and form of investigation are matters of judgement informed by the nature and impacts of flooding events.
- 5.2 The flooding experienced across Dorset during the winter of 2025-26 was exceptional both in severity and in geographic extent. A large number of communities experienced flooding impacts, some of which if considered in isolation, would not ordinarily trigger a formal section 19 investigation under the Council's standard procedures. These procedures however did not anticipate flooding at the scale, duration and cumulative impact observed during winter 2025-26.
- 5.3 In these circumstances and having regard to the wording of Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, Dorset Council proposes to exercise its discretion so as to investigate a broader range of flooding incidents than would normally be taken forward for formal investigation.
- 5.4 This approach to the council's assessment is necessary and appropriate to do so in order to:
- Understand the cumulative impacts of widespread flooding;
 - provide communities with clarity and assurance during unprecedented disruption; and
 - inform a co-ordinated, evidence-led programme of flood recovery and future resilience.
- 5.5 The approach set out in this report does not replace nor amend the statutory test under Section 19. Rather, it represents a reasoned and proportionate application of that test in response to a flooding event of exceptional scale.
- 5.6 To ensure clarity, consistency and proportionality, Dorset Council proposes to undertake two forms of investigation under its Section 19 duties:
- Strategic Flood Investigations; and
 - Community Flood Review Reports.

- 5.7 The investigations will document what happened, clarify responsibilities, and co-produce practical resilience actions with communities and partners, while supplying robust evidence to prioritise Dorset Council's investment in flood resilience infrastructure. As part of the investigation process, evidence, feedback and suggestions will be sought from Local Members, Town & Parish Councils, residents, businesses, and partner organisations including the Environment Agency and Wessex Water. Appendix A shows the list of locations identified for investigation.
- 5.8 The Environment Agency has already undertaken a number of drop-in events about the recent flooding for members of the public. Dorset Council officers have attended these events and recorded feedback that will be included in the investigation reports. Details of the events are shown in Appendix 3.

Strategic Flood Investigations

- 5.9 Strategic Flood Investigation will be undertaken where the Council considers that the scale, severity or wider consequences of flooding make a comprehensive investigation necessary or appropriate. These investigations will typically be undertaken where flooding involves one or more of the following impacts:
- Internal flooding to five or more residential properties;
 - Flooding of two or more business premises;
 - Flooding of one or more items of critical infrastructure; or
 - A transport link being totally impassable for a significant period.
- 5.10 These factors are guidance criteria only and do not limit the Council's discretion to undertake a Strategic Flood Investigation in other circumstances where it considers this necessary or appropriate.
- 5.11 Strategic Flood Investigations will ordinarily include a fuller technical assessment, structured engagement with relevant risk management authorities, and strategic recommendations to inform future investment and partnership working.

Community Flood Reviews

- 5.12 Community Flood Reviews would be undertaken under section 19 where flooding has had clear local impacts that require further investigation, but where the Council considers that a more proportionate, locality-focused approach is appropriate, including in circumstances where the indicative criteria for Strategic Flood Investigations are not met.

5.13 Community Flood Reviews will focus on:

- Explaining what happened during the flooding event;
- clarifying the roles and responsibilities of relevant organisations and land owners;
- identifying practical actions and opportunities to improve local resilience; and
- supporting communities to better understand and prepare for future flooding.

5.14 These reviews will be led by Dorset Council and informed by community engagement. Communities not identified within appendix A will be able to request new flood resilience actions by providing structured evidence set out in an investigation pack available from floodriskmanagement@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

5.15 Both reviews will inform a Dorset-wide overview report that looks at flooding issues in Dorset's three main river catchment areas and the highway network, clarifying the roles of Dorset Council, Town and Parish Councils, Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils, the Environment Agency and Wessex Water. The strategic report will collate the community-based investigation reports and provide overarching recommendations for improving flood resilience.

5.16 At its meeting on 10 February 2026, Full Council recognised the exceptional impact of the Winter 2025–26 flooding and committed in principle to the creation of additional capital and revenue funding to support flood recovery and resilience, subject to Cabinet approval. Further detail is set out in the Financial Implications section of this report.

6. Alternative options considered

6.1 An alternative approach would be to limit investigations to only those flooding incidents warranting the most comprehensive form of investigation.

6.1.1 This approach is not recommended as it would give a lower level of support to communities that have suffered with flooding and could benefit from detailed investigation, but do not meet the criteria. Such an approach is likely to lead to unanswered questions, community dissatisfaction and a poorer level of flooding resilience.

- 6.1.2 The additional capital flood resilience investment should be based on local need. Without such a level of investigation, the subsequent investment programme may not align with the specific needs of affected communities.

7. Legal considerations

- 7.1 Dorset Council, as the Lead Local Flood Authority, has a duty under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to investigate flood incidents to the extent that it considers such investigation to be necessary or appropriate, to publish the results and to notify the relevant risk management authorities.
- 7.2 Any previous local guidance relating to flooding investigations was and remains non-statutory and cannot fetter the Council's discretion. The approach proposed in this report represents a lawful and rational exercise of that discretion in response to the scale and nature of flooding experienced during Winter 2025–26.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 In response to the exceptional flooding experienced during Winter 2025–26, Full Council at its meeting on 10 February 2026 recognised the need for additional investment to support flood recovery and longer-term resilience measures. At that meeting, Full Council committed in principle to the creation of additional funding of £5 million of capital and £250,000 of revenue, subject to the appropriate Cabinet approvals and budgetary processes.
- 8.2 The £250,000 revenue funding was made available immediately and has been used to fund additional gully and drain cleaning across the county. This recognised that many assets which were clear at the start of the winter became blocked by soil and detritus washed from roads and surrounding land during the prolonged and intense rainfall events.
- 8.3 This report therefore asks Cabinet to formally allocate a capital budget of £5 million for flooding resilience measures. The proposed allocation will support the implementation of actions arising from Section 19 flood investigations, Strategic Flood Investigations and Community Flood Reviews, alongside complementary flood recovery activity.
- 8.4 In addition to this proposed capital allocation, the wider £9.25 million programme referenced in this report comprises:

- approximately £3.6 million from existing Dorset Council revenue budgets and Department for Transport funding to address flooding-related highway maintenance and recovery; and
- up to £400,000 drawn from the Council's Severe Weather Reserve to fund Section 19 flood investigations and community-based reviews, noting that the costs of investigations cannot be capitalised.

8.5 Subject to Cabinet approval of the capital allocation, this report also proposes that authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services and the Section 151 Officer, to authorise expenditure from the £5 million capital budget. Any individual scheme with a value exceeding £500,000 will be reported to Cabinet for further specific approval.

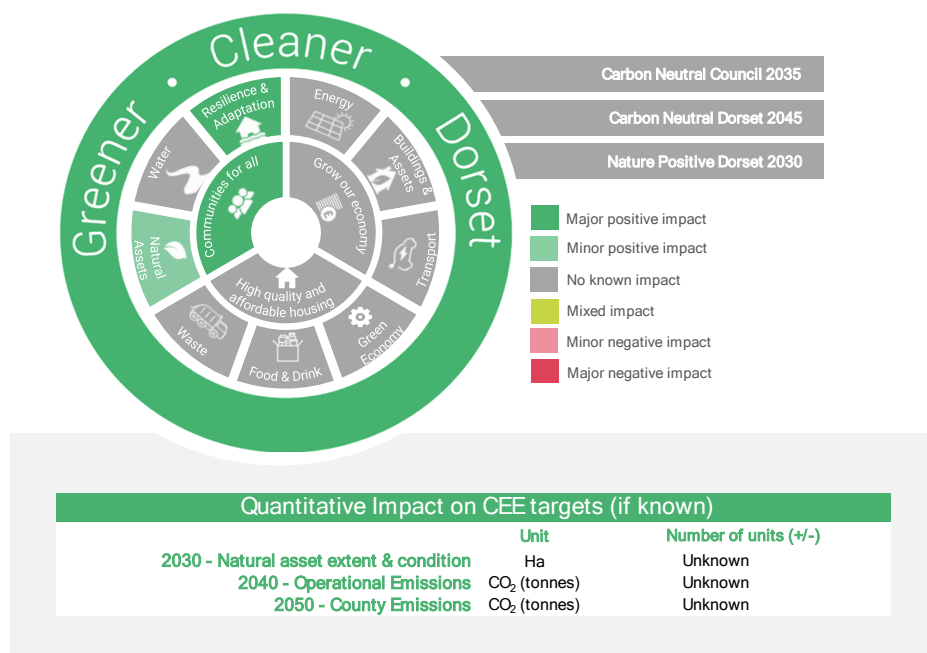
8.6 This approach ensures that flood resilience funding is applied in a controlled, transparent and evidence-led manner, aligned to statutory flood investigations and local priorities, while retaining appropriate financial and democratic oversight.

8.7 Table 1, Cost Summary

Immediate response and reactive maintenance (from existing budget) £	Additional Gully Emptying £	Flooding Related Road Maintenance (DfT Funded) £	Dorset Council Additional Flooding Resilience Capital £	Section 19 Investigations £	Total £
800k	250k	2.8m	5m	400k	9.25m

9. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

9.1 The programme supports climate adaptation, a clear priority area for the council, by improving the county's resilience to more intense rainfall and surface water flooding. Locality reports will include nature-based and catchment-based options where feasible (e.g., leaky barriers, floodplain reconnection, wetland creation), alongside maintenance and property-level measures. Designs will seek multiple benefits for biodiversity and water quality where appropriate.



10. Well-being and health implications

- 10.1 Flooding to property carries long-term mental and physical wellbeing challenges. Through this programme of work and empowerment of communities, we will be able to reduce the risk of flooding and increase community preparedness. This will benefit community health and well-being in the long term.

11. Other implications

- 11.1 None

12. Risk implications

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

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Medium

Some of the flooding experienced this year has been unprecedented. Severe flooding can isolate communities, impede connectivity and create immediate hazards that pose a threat to life. The action taken from this report will mitigate against the effects of future flooding and provide improved resilience,

although the risk remains significant as the trend for high impact severe weather events continues.

13. Equalities

- 13.1 A screening will be completed at programme launch and updated per locality. Engagement with communities will be inclusive and accessible. Specific attention will be paid to vulnerable groups including park home residents, and the Gypsy & Traveller community at Thornicombe.
- 13.2 All materials will be available in plain English, with alternative formats on request.

14. Appendices

- 14.1 Appendix A – List of investigation localities.
All flooding incidents listed have been considered under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

The categorisation shown reflects the proposed form of Section 19 investigation in each case.

Community (Parish)	Type of Investigation
Affpuddle and Turnerspuddle CP	Strategic Flood Investigation
Alderholt CP	Community Flood Review
Bere Regis CP	Community Flood Review
Blandford Forum CP	Strategic Flood Investigation
Bridport CP	Community Flood Review
Cerne Abbas CP	Community Flood Review
Charlton Marshall CP	Community Flood Review
Charminster CP	Community Flood Review
Dorchester CP	Community Flood Review

Ferndown Town CP	Community Flood Review
Frome Vauchurch CP	Community Flood Review
Godmanstone CP	Community Flood Review
Iwerne Courtney or Shroton CP	Strategic Flood Investigation
Milborne St Andrew	Community Flood Review
Moreton CP	Community Flood Review
Mosterton CP	Community Flood Review
Piddlehinton/Piddletrenthide	Community Flood Review
Pimperne CP	Community Flood Review
Puddletown CP	Community Flood Review
Shillingstone CP	Community Flood Review
Sixpenny Handley and Pentridge CP	Community Flood Review
Stourpaine CP	Community Flood Review
Sturminster Marshall CP	Strategic Flood Investigation
Swyre CP	Community Flood Review
Weymouth CP	Community Flood Review
Wimborne Minster CP	Community Flood Review
Winterborne Kingston CP	Strategic Flood Investigation
Winterborne Whitechurch	Community Flood Review
Bakers Arms Roundabout	Strategic Flood Investigation
A35 Winterbourne Abbas	Strategic Flood Investigation

Areas previously investigated that will not require new investigations:

Arne CP
Chideock CP
Motcombe CP

Portesham CP
Wareham Town CP
Winterborne Stickland CP
Winterborne Steepleton CP
Wool CP

14.2 Appendix B – Climate Wheel outputs

Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	Minor positive impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	Major positive impact
Council Plan Priorities	Impact
High quality & affordable housing	No known impact
Grow our economy	No known impact
Communities for all	Major positive impact
Climate and nature crisis	Major positive impact

14.3 Appendix C – Environment Agency Drop In Event Leaflet



The poster is for a 'Community Drop In' event. At the top, it features logos for the Environment Agency, Dorset Council, and Wessex Water (YTL Group). The main title 'Community Drop In' is in a large, bold font. Below the title, the text states: 'We understand that homes and businesses in your community may have been recently affected by flooding.' It then invites people to 'Join us' to share their experience and 'Speak to' the relevant agencies to understand support. It also encourages people to 'Find out' how to build resilience through flood warning services and PFR measures. A URL for more information is provided. On the right side, there is a list of hub locations and dates: 21 April in Weymouth, 23 April in Blandford, 14 May in Winterborne Stickland, 21 May in Sydling St Nicholas, and 4 June in Dorchester. A contact email is also listed. At the bottom, there is an illustration of houses on a hill with some water in the foreground.

Environment Agency **Dorset Council** **Wessex Water**
YTL GROUP

Community Drop In

We understand that homes and businesses in your community may have been recently affected by flooding.

Join us to share your experience of the recent flood events so we can better understand the impacts of flooding in your community.

Speak to the Environment Agency, Dorset Council, Wessex Water and partners to understand what support might be available.

Find out how you and your community can be better prepared and build resilience through the Flood Warning Service, preparing flood plans and Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures.

For additional information and advice:
<https://engageenvironmentagency.uk.engagementhq.com/dorset-and-wiltshire-groundwater-incident-response-2026>

Join us from 3-7pm at any one of our hub locations:

21 April - Weymouth: The Palm House, DT4 7TZ

23 April - Blandford: Pimperne Village Hall, DT11 8UZ

14 May - Winterborne Stickland: Pamela Hambro Hall, DT11 ONT

21 May - Sydling St Nicholas Village Hall, DT2 9NX

4 June - Dorchester: Stratton Village Hall, DT2 9WG

For more information or to register your interest please email:
floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk

15. Background papers

15.1 None

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)

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Cabinet

19 May 2025

Green Seafront Ground Stabilisation & Shore Road Improvement Projects For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s):

Cllr. G Suttle & Cllr. C Tomes

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton - Executive Director, Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth

Report author and job title: J Rose – Project Team Manager

Email: joseph.rose@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

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

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Swanage's seafront plays a central role in the town's identity, community life and visitor economy. However, increasing ground instability of the Green Seafront and longstanding accessibility issues along Shore Road now present escalating risks to public safety, highway network resilience and the long-term sustainability of this important seafront environment. These pressures are expected to intensify as a result of climate change, sea-level rise and more extreme weather events.
- 1.2 Dorset Council and Swanage Town Council have worked closely to develop two complementary projects to address ground instability affecting the Green Seafront and the longstanding safety and accessibility concerns along Shore Road.
- 1.3 Dorset Council's contribution to the Green Seafront project will stabilise part of the highway that is subject to ground movement. This collaborative working helps to ensure that stability issues on the Green Seafront do not further affect Dorset Council's highway network.
- 1.4 Swanage Town Council's Green Seafront Ground Stabilisation Project responds to confirmed evidence of progressive ground movement across Sandpit Field and adjoining areas. Professional monitoring has identified extensive defects affecting retaining structures, access routes and public spaces. Without intervention, continued deterioration would be likely to result in

progressive restrictions on access, increased unplanned highway maintenance and heightened public safety risk.

- 1.5 Swanage Town Council has developed a Strategic Outline Business Case which confirms that intervention is necessary, deliverable and aligned with local, regional and national policy objectives. Through public engagement, a preferred 'New Option' has been identified, delivering improved accessibility, enhanced biodiversity, increased climate resilience and adaptation along with wider community and economic benefits, at an estimated cost of £6.9 million. Swanage Town Council has secured £4.4 million towards the project and is seeking a £2.5 million capital grant from Dorset Council to address the remaining funding gap and complete the stabilisation necessary to support Dorset Council's highway.
- 1.6 Dorset Council's Shore Road Improvement Project addresses pedestrian safety, accessibility and public realm quality along a key seafront route. Following feasibility work and public engagement, a preferred option has been identified at an estimated cost of £2.5 million. Dorset Council has already committed £0.5 million through its Local Transport Grant. Approval is sought for a further £2 million from the Local Transport Grant to enable delivery.
- 1.7 Taken together, the projects represent a coordinated capital investment of £5 million by Dorset Council. This comprises £2.5 million of direct funding to support the stabilisation element of the Green Seafront project and £2.5 million for the Shore Road improvements, funded through the Department for Transport's Local Transport Grant.
- 1.8 The projects support the Council Plan 2024–2029 priorities and will help secure the long-term safety, resilience and quality of Swanage's seafront for residents, visitors and future generations. Helping Swanage to thrive now and into the future.

2. Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet approves the following:

- 2.1 Cabinet approves funding of £2.5 million as a capital grant for the New Option of Swanage Town Council's Green Seafront Ground Stabilisation Project; and, delegates authority to agree the terms and enter into a grant agreement for this purpose to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services and Dorset Council's Section 151 Officer.
- 2.2 Cabinet approves allocation of £2.5 million funding from the Local Transport Grant for the Shore Road Highway Improvement Project; and, delegates authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services to update the Highway Improvements Capital Programme.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 The recommendations support targeted investment in two complementary seafront projects in Swanage that directly contribute to Dorset Council's priorities of responding to the climate and nature crisis, supporting communities for all and growing the local economy. The Green Seafront Ground Stabilisation Project is required to address identified ground instability, protect public safety and secure the long-term resilience of a key coastal asset that supports year-round community use, major events and the visitor economy.
- 3.2 The Shore Road Improvement Project responds to safety, accessibility and public realm concerns along a prominent seafront route, improving pedestrian priority, accessibility and connections between the town centre, beach and seafront. Together, the projects deliver inclusive public spaces and sustainable investment that benefits residents, visitors and the wider local economy.

4. Strategic case and proposed approach

- 4.1 The Seafront is a central element of Swanage's identity, supporting everyday recreation, major events and the town's visitor economy. Tourism in Swanage is worth £77 million per annum to Dorset's economy, supporting over 1000 jobs within the town. Events on Sandpit Field alone attract over 100,000 visitors a year.



Swanage Seafront – Green Seafront Edged Red

- 4.2 There is a clear and escalating case for intervention on the Green Seafront. Ground instability has led to subsidence, cracking and progressive deterioration, affecting structural elements and key access routes across the area. Traffic management measures are currently in place on Walrond Road to protect public safety and instability is already affecting the highway network on De Moulham Road which is above and retained by the Green Seafront.
- 4.3 Professional monitoring and inspection provide clear evidence of the scale and severity of the issue. Recent monitoring has identified 56 defects (February 2026), demonstrating widespread deterioration across retaining walls, steps, paths and associated structures.

- 4.4 Without intervention, deterioration is expected to continue, increasing the likelihood of further access restrictions, disruption and reactive maintenance costs affecting both the Green Seafront and the surrounding highway network. In the worst case, further ground movement could result in sudden structural failure and the loss of key areas of the site, with consequential impacts on the adjacent highway.
- 4.5 The strategic importance of the Green Seafront will increase as climate change and sea level rise place greater pressure on beaches and adjacent public space. Failure to intervene risks public safety, loss of amenity, damage to the town's reputation and negative economic impacts for Swanage and neighbouring parishes.
- 4.6 In response to these issues, Swanage Town Council has developed the Green Seafront Ground Stabilisation Project. This project aims to address ground instability affecting the Green Seafront, ensuring the site remains safe, accessible and functional for public use over the long-term, while protecting and enhancing a vital community and economic asset.
- 4.7 The Town Council has produced a Strategic Outline Business Case to support the project which documents the rationale, options and proposed approach. The business case confirms that intervention is necessary and justified, provides confidence that delivery is feasible, supports the case for grant funding and sets out the basis for progressing to planning, market engagement and procurement of the construction contract by the Town Council.
- 4.8 The business case identifies that the project aligns with local, regional and national strategies and policies. It is embedded within Swanage Town Council's corporate priorities and seafront improvement ambitions, supporting wider objectives relating to sustainable tourism, community wellbeing, accessibility and climate resilience / adaptation.
- 4.9 Extensive public engagement has been undertaken for the Green Seafront project, including two rounds of engagement in 2023 and 2025, building on a wider Seafront Masterplan consultation in 2022.
- 4.10 In the second round of engagement, views were sought on a previously presented Essential Option and an alternative New Option. The preferred New Option aims to deliver many of the benefits of an earlier enhanced option but at a significantly lower cost, currently estimated at £6.9m. Whilst the Essential Option would address immediate stabilisation, it would not deliver the same level of accessibility, economic resilience or long-term value for money as the preferred New Option.
- 4.11 The New Option proposes a comprehensive and integrated approach to stabilising the Green Seafront while delivering significant improvements to accessibility, public realm quality, biodiversity and seafront facilities. It would create a continuous and more resilient Green Seafront, enhance the area's role as an events and recreational space and deliver wider community, economic and environmental benefits. Key elements of the New Option include:

- Filling in Walrond Road to create a continuous Green Seafront and enhanced events space spanning Sandpit Field and Weather Station Field.
 - Two new fully accessible pathways linking Shore Road to the Green Seafront, alongside a new internal pathway around the events space and broader accessibility improvements across the site.
 - A new toilet block on Shore Road providing accessible public toilets.
 - A new plaza area providing a seafront kiosk café and seating area next to Shore Road.
 - Significant additional planting to enhance biodiversity, together with additional trees to provide shade.
 - A secondary events space, offering an area suitable for families and small groups with views along the bay.
 - Improvements to the Spa Beach Hut area, including 46 new beach huts and accessible chalets, an accessible toilet for chalet users and an overall improved appearance and functionality.
 - Increased seating throughout the site, including new sculptural, stepped seating offering views across the bay.
- 4.12 Engagement related to the Green Seafront in 2022 and 2023 highlighted wider public concerns about Shore Road, including narrow footways, traffic management issues and parked cars reducing visibility for pedestrians crossing the road.
- 4.13 A feasibility study completed by Dorset Highways explored how Shore Road could be redesigned to address these issues. Potential upgrades included wider pavements, improved crossings, cycle facilities, bus stop improvements and new public realm features. These showed how the road layout could prioritise people while maintaining necessary access.
- 4.14 Dorset Coast Forum carried out engagement in summer 2025 alongside the Green Seafront project. Participants were asked about their preferences on four options, along with views on pedestrian improvements, crossings, parking, bus routing, cycle facilities, surfacing, planting and signage.
- 4.15 Following a detailed review of technical evidence, public feedback and site constraints, the Cabinet Member for Place identified that retaining two-way traffic while removing on-street parking was the preferred approach in-line with public preference.
- 4.16 Key Features of the Preferred Option:
- Changes to the streetscape will extend from just south of Ocean Bay Slipway to the junction of Victoria Avenue with De Moulham Road.
 - Footway widths are to be increased on the beach side of Shore Road up to approximately 2.5m.
 - Reduced speed limit on Shore Road from 30 to 20 mph.

- Parking is removed from Shore Road. Blue badge parking spaces and short term set down / pick up spaces created on one side of the Eastern section of Victoria Avenue with dedicated blue badge bays on De Moulham Road.
- Carriageway narrowing at pedestrian crossing points to slow vehicle speeds with crossings aligned to Green Seafront access points.
- Higher quality materials introduced at key locations to provide clear indication to drivers of pedestrian presence whilst helping partially sighted people to interpret the space.
- Provision of safe crossing points on De Moulham Road to improve access to the Green Seafront and onwards to Swanage beach.
- Updated wayfinding signage to help pedestrians and drivers navigate to key destinations.
- Changes to the junction of Northbrook Road and Victoria Avenue to improve visibility.

4.17 The Green Seafront and Shore Road projects have clear interdependencies and significant benefits arising from coordinated delivery. Shore Road will need to be closed during construction of the Green Seafront project and the carriageway may also require resurfacing after the works. Coordinating the delivery of both projects therefore provides an opportunity to minimise disruption to residents, businesses and the visitor economy, while ensuring efficient use of public funds and a cohesive approach to improving the seafront environment.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Four strategic options for the Green Seafront Ground Stabilisation Project have been developed and assessed by Swanage Town Council with close involvement and input from Dorset Council officers. The options have been evaluated against a set of critical success factors, including public safety, asset protection, economic resilience, accessibility, value for money and statutory compliance:

- a. Do nothing.
- b. Asset disposal.
- c. Do minimum intervention.
- d. Full re-stabilisation.

5.2 The appraisal concluded that the first three options (a, b and c) fail to manage risk adequately, do not meet project objectives and would result in unacceptable long-term consequences. Full re-stabilisation (d) is the only option that delivers the required outcomes and has therefore been taken forward. With full re-stabilisation identified as the strategic approach, deliverable design variants were developed and taken to public engagement.

- 5.3 Swanage Town Council has considered all reasonable funding options:
- Asset disposal would not generate sufficient funding and would undermine the Town Council's strategic objectives and financial sustainability.
 - Borrowing is unaffordable due to a combination of loan repayment costs and the significant impact on the Town Council's revenue budgets from the loss of interest on investment income.
 - Exploration of grant applications, including an approach to the National Lottery Heritage Fund have been unsuccessful and no further eligible grants for significant capital funding have been identified.
- 5.4 For the Shore Road project, the following alternative options were examined through feasibility work and public engagement:
- Full pedestrianisation of Shore Road, delivering significant pedestrian space but raising concerns around access, traffic displacement, servicing and emergency access.
 - A one-way traffic system, which reduced some conflicts but introduced wider network impacts and received mixed public support.
 - Do nothing, which did not address existing safety, access and public-realm concerns.
- 5.5 The preferred option of retaining two-way traffic while removing on-street parking provides a balanced solution. It delivers clear improvements to pedestrian safety and streetscape quality while maintaining essential vehicle access. This option was ranked highest overall during public engagement and offers a deliverable, value-for-money approach.

6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 The Town Council owns Sandpit and Weather Station Fields in its capacity as the sole corporate trustee of two charities. The Town Council cannot invest capital funding into land held in charitable trust. An application has been submitted to the Charity Commission to transfer ownership to the Town Council.
- 6.2 The preferred New Option requires the infilling of the eastern section of Walrond Road, which will require a stopping-up order to extinguish highway rights. An application will be submitted to the Secretary of State alongside the planning application, with in-principle support already received from the Highway Authority and relevant statutory undertakers.
- 6.3 The Shore Road scheme will require amendments to Traffic Regulation Orders, with formal consultation anticipated in autumn 2026.
- 6.4 Dorset Council officers are providing project management and professional consultancy services to Swanage Town Council, including access to existing Dorset Highways contracts where required. These arrangements have been formalised through a Collaboration Agreement between Dorset Council and Swanage Town Council.

- 6.5 The grant to Swanage Town Council can be given under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. This will be formalised through a grant agreement to be entered into by Dorset Council and Swanage Town Council.
- 6.6 This grant could constitute a subsidy for the purposes of the Subsidy Control Act 2022, which applies even though the recipient is a public body. This subsidy can be given under the Community and Regeneration streamlined route – strand 1 category 2 – because the grant is for the purposes of improving or creating new community infrastructure. The maximum subsidy value under this route is £2.5 million and the grant must not form more than 80% of the total project costs.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 Swanage Town Council currently has £4.4 million in capital funding allocated to the Green Seafront project. This is made up of capital reserves and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions – detailed in the following table:

Funding Source	Amount
Swanage Town Council Capital Receipts Reserve	£1,700,000
Swanage Town Council Earmarked Reserves	£1,910,000
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Swanage Town Council	£2890,000
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Dorset Council	£500,000
Total	£4,400,000

- 7.2 The estimated capital cost for the Green Seafront is set out in the following table. These estimates have been produced by Heidelberg Materials Ltd. which is engaged to provide Early Contractor Involvement (ECI). The estimates are based on a September 2027 construction start date with inflation included.

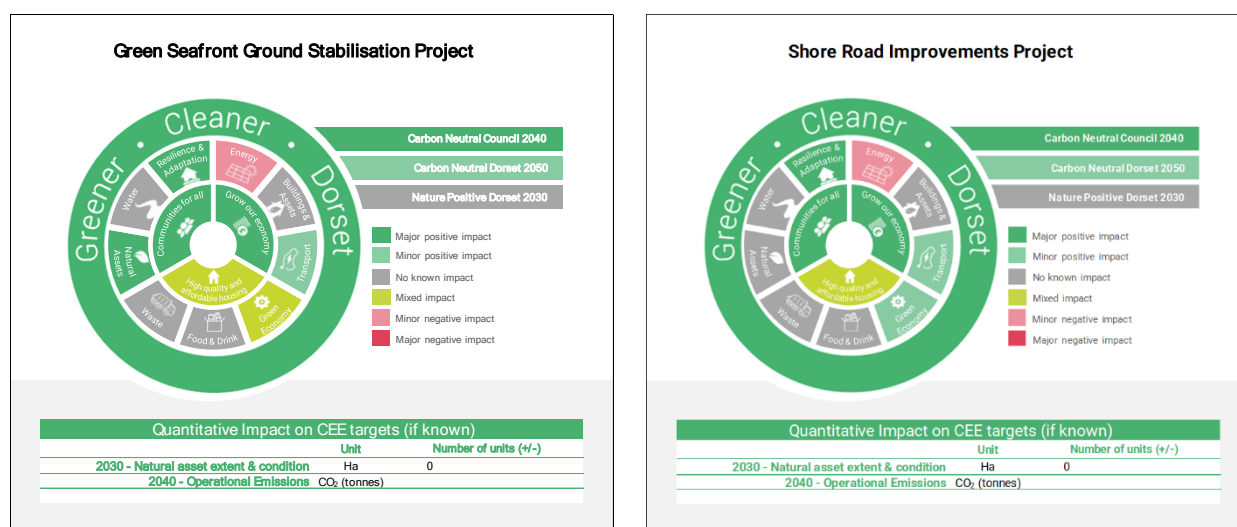
Current Financial Position	
Cost of Scheme	£6,900,000
Funding Available	£4,400,000
Funding Gap	£2,500,000

- 7.3 The New Option is preferred due to its wider economic and community benefits but is not currently affordable without additional funding. Swanage Town Council is seeking £2.5 million from Dorset Council as a capital grant to close the funding gap and enable delivery of the preferred New Option. There are no additional liabilities or ongoing revenue costs to Dorset Council associated with this project.
- 7.4 It is estimated that the cost to deliver the preferred option for Shore Road will be £2.5 million. Cabinet approved £500,000 funding from the Local Transport Grant (LTG) for the Shore Road Improvement project in November 2025, part of the Highways Capital Programme Forward Plan. The recommendations in

this report represent an increase of £2 million funding from the LTG to deliver the preferred option for Shore Road.

- 7.5 The removal of on-street parking is expected to result in a loss of parking income for Dorset Council, estimated at approximately £80,000 per annum. This is offset by reduced maintenance liability, environmental and accessibility benefits along with wider economic benefits.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications



- 8.1 The Green Seafront project supports Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency ambitions, delivering major positive impacts on natural assets, ecology and climate adaptation through long-term stabilisation of the seafront.
- 8.2 The project will deliver biodiversity enhancements through habitat creation, native planting and at least 10% biodiversity net gain, contributing to local nature recovery objectives.
- 8.3 A minor negative impact on energy is identified from new low-level lighting required for safety, which will be mitigated through energy-efficient, sensitively designed solutions.
- 8.4 The preferred Shore Road option supports Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency commitments, by rebalancing the street in favour of pedestrians and creating a safer seafront environment.
- 8.5 Transport benefits include reduced vehicle dominance, removal of on-street parking and improved pedestrian connectivity, encouraging walking, reducing congestion and lowering transport-related emissions while maintaining essential access.
- 8.6 A minor, temporary negative impact on energy use during construction is anticipated and will be mitigated through efficient construction practices.

9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 The preferred options for the Green Seafront and Shore Road projects will deliver significant wellbeing and public health benefits by improving the quality, safety and usability of Swanage's seafront.
- 9.2 The Green Seafront project will protect and enhance an important area of open space, supporting physical activity, relaxation and community events through significantly improved access, surfacing and landscaping, while contributing to improved mental wellbeing in a higher-quality seafront setting.
- 9.3 The Shore Road project complements these benefits by reducing vehicle dominance and improving pedestrian safety, with wider footways and safer crossings encouraging walking and healthier lifestyles.
- 9.4 Combined, the projects will strengthen connections between the town centre, beach and seafront, creating a more cohesive and welcoming environment, with construction impacts managed through coordinated delivery to minimise disruption.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 None identified.

11. Risk implications

- 11.1 Failure to progress stabilisation works would ultimately expose Dorset Council, as Highway Authority, to future unplanned liabilities and reactive intervention costs should ground movement impact Shore Road or De Moulham Road. In addition, the loss of public access to these large-scale event spaces would cause a significantly detrimental impact to the visitor economy.
- 11.2 The principal risks for the Green Seafront project relate to funding certainty and affordability of the preferred New Option. Planning permission will be sought for both options to mitigate risk associated with funding availability and cost uncertainty until tender responses are received, expected in early 2027.
- 11.3 The principal risks for the Shore Road project relate to securing sufficient funding to deliver the preferred option. There is also risk linked to public and stakeholder response to changes in parking and traffic management arrangements via a future Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) consultation.
- 11.4 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High
Residual Risk: Medium-Low
- 11.5 Approval of the recommendations materially reduces Dorset Council's exposure to safety, liability and future unplanned capital intervention. Residual risk is considered medium low as the greatest risks relating to funding will be

mitigated. Remaining risks primarily relate to potential cost escalation and timescales for securing statutory consents, both of which are managed through phased design development, ECI, early procurement planning and established governance / financial controls.

12. Equalities

- 12.1 The Green Seafront and Shore Road projects have been through Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs). Overall, both schemes are expected to deliver neutral to positive equalities outcomes and support Dorset Council's objective of communities for all.
- 12.2 For the Green Seafront, the preferred New Option delivers positive impacts to older people, disabled people, families and carers through enhanced accessibility, improved facilities and a wider range of usable, inclusive spaces, with no negative impacts identified for any protected groups.
- 12.3 The Shore Road preferred option improves pedestrian safety and accessibility through wider footways, reduced vehicle speeds and safer crossings, benefiting older people, disabled people, families and carers. The removal of on-street parking may have short-term impacts for some Blue Badge users. However, this will be mitigated through dedicated Blue Badge parking, pick-up and drop-off points and improved access routes.

13. Appendices

- A. Green Seafront EqIA.
- B. Shore Road EqIA.

14. Background papers

- 1. Green Seafront – Strategic Outline Business Case.
- 2. Green Seafront – Monitoring Report February 2026.
- 3. Green Seafront – New Option Layout.
- 4. Green Seafront – Engagement Outcome Report.
- 5. Shore Road – Preferred Option Concept Design.
- 6. Shore Road – Engagement Outcome Report.
- 7. Cabinet Report (November '25) – Highways Capital Programme Strategy.

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).

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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Template

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Before completing this form, please refer to the [supporting guidance](#). The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to consider the equality implications of your policy, strategy, project or service on different groups of people including employees of Dorset Council, residents and users of our services and to consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality.

Where further guidance is needed, please contact the Inclusion Champion or the [Diversity & Inclusion Officer](#).

1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Green Seafront Ground Stabilisation Project - Swanage

2. Is this a:

Project

3. Is this:

External (residents, communities, partners)

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

1. Maintain & Improve Quality of Swanage's Green Seafront
2. Support Dorset's Economy
3. Improve Delivery of Services on the Green Seafront
4. Reduce Cost of Providing Services on the Green Seafront
5. Ensure Statutory & Regulatory Compliance

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

In recent years, monitoring, inspections, and geotechnical assessments have been undertaken along the Swanage Green Seafront in response to significant ground movement and slope instability. These investigations have identified 55 defects (as of October 2025) across the site with some affecting the highway network at De Moulham Road, Walrond Road, and Shore Road.

Geotechnical advice indicates that the risk of sudden and severe ground movement will increase over time. This presents a growing threat to the community's ability to safely use the local highway network and adjoining green spaces. Without intervention to stabilise the land, there would also be major impacts on the local economy, particularly during the summer visitor season when events are held on the Green Seafront.

The objective of the project is to stabilise and enhance these important Green Seafront areas for the long-term benefit of both the Swanage community and its visitors. Ground movement is ongoing, and works are essential to ensure safety and safeguard future use. Monitoring continues and some areas have already been restricted for public safety.

During the first round of the Green Seafront Engagement in 2023, two options were presented: the essential option (£4.5m) and the enhanced option (£11.5m). The enhanced option was considered unaffordable and therefore not progressed to round two. In the second round (2025), views were sought on the previously presented essential option and a new alternative

option. The new option aims to deliver many of the benefits of the earlier enhanced option but at a significantly lower cost, currently estimated at £6.9m.

Key Features of the Essential Option:

- This option would stabilise the area and retain Sandpit Field as an events field, whilst retaining current features of the fields with greenery and stone walls.
- Replacement of the planting on the beach side of the field to create an attractive, biodiverse area close to the sea.
- Additional beach huts will be provided on the Spa area, in a very similar orientation and style to those that were there previously.

Key Features of the New Option:

- Filling in Walrond Road to make a continuous green seafront and enhanced events space across Sandpit and Weather Station Fields.
- Two new accessible pathways from Shore Road onto the Green Seafront, a new pathway around the event space and accessibility improvements across the site.
- A new toilet block offering accessible toilets on Shore Road.
- Accessible space providing a new seafront kiosk café and seating area adjacent Shore Road.
- Significant additional planting for wildlife and biodiversity, plus more trees for shade.
- A secondary quiet green space offering space for families and small groups with views along the bay.
- Improvements and alterations to the Spa Beach Hut area including 46 new beach huts and accessible chalets, an accessible toilet for chalet users and an improved look and feel to the area.
- Increased accessible seating across the site including new sculptural, stepped seating offering views across the bay.

The 2025 round-two engagement shows a slight public preference for the new option. However, full funding for this option has not yet been secured. As a result, the project team is continuing to progress both options while actively seeking the additional funding required to deliver the new option. This EqlA therefore considers both options and assesses the impact of each in relation to the protected characteristics.

Evidence gathering and engagement.

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

- Regular monitoring of movement, risks and defects on the Green Seafront and surrounding areas.
- Public engagement for Seafront Masterplan (2022-23)
- Public engagement for Green Seafront – Round One (2023)
- Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) with Heidelberg Ltd.
- Public engagement for Green Seafront – Round Two (2025)
- Dorset Insights – Area profile for Swanage
- Google Maps
- Visitor data from Southwest Research Company (2026)
- Topographical survey for area.
- Design drawings for Essential and New Options

7. What did this tell you?

- Ground is unstable and moving – currently 55 defects identified (October 2025)
- The cost of the enhanced option is unaffordable at £11.5m.
- Broad public support for the scheme. However, some questioning the need for stabilisation.
- Improved access and accessibility are consistently supported, in 2025 engagement 63.9% agreed the new option would enhance overall access and 60.2% supporting the filling in of Walrond Road.
- Most important factors for consideration in the 2025 engagement cited as improved green public space, accessibility, improved toilet facilities and cost of the project.
- Slight preference for the new option over the essential option with objections to the new option based on cost.
- Visitor data for 2023 suggests that Swanage received around 123,000 staying trips with 549,000 overnight stays and 807,000 - day visits. It is estimated that these 2023 visitors led to a local economy benefit of over £77m while visiting Swanage (The South West Research Company, 2025).
- Diversity – 93.1% white British and 6.9% ethnic minority
- Health of Swanage residents is generally good with almost 77% of Swanage residents reported having very good or good health
- Age of residents is higher than the rest of Dorset – 37.4% are 65+ compared to Dorset 30.5% and 18.9% for England and Wales.
- Older persons housing located near to Green Seafront.
- Some people park their cars on De Moulham and Walrond Roads to walk down to the beach for sea swimming.
- Walrond Road is on a steep gradient – 1:14 i.e. 1m rise for 14m travelled. Highway design guidance suggests a 1:20 is generally considered the maximum gradient for pedestrians and cyclists. It is not possible to achieve a shallower gradient than 1:20 due to the topography of the site.
- Blue badge parking availability is a concern for residents.
- The secondary event space provided in the new option is likely to be of a benefit to neurodivergent people as they can enjoy the seafront area away from the noise and activity of the beach.

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

Information gathered from rounds one and two engagement have informed this assessment. The following stakeholders were consulted:

- Swanage Town Council.
- Dorset Council Ward Members.
- Dorset Highways.
- Event Organisers.
- St. Aldhelm's Court Residents & Staff.
- Swanage & District Chamber of Trade.
- Local bus company.
- Accessible Swanage.
- Members of the Public.

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No

Is an EQIA required?

Not every proposal will need an EqlA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqlA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqlA, please answer the following question:

This project requires an EqlA.

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	Essential Option Neutral New Option Positive	Essential Option This option does not impact this characteristic as the Green Seafront will be reinstated in its current form. New Option Positive impact due two new accessible pathways from Shore Road onto Green Seafront, increased seating and shallower gradient paths replacing Walrond Road - 1:20 rather than 1:14. Additional accessible toilets in plaza area will be a significant positive to this group. Hard surface pathways around the Green Seafront will be provided to improve and level walking routes.
Disability	Essential Option Neutral New Option Positive	Essential Option This option does not impact this characteristic as the Green Seafront will be reinstated in its current form. New Option Highly positive impact on disability. Accessible toilets in plaza area will assist disabled people to use these facilities. Secondary event space will provide a quiet area for neurodiverse people to enjoy Swanage's seafront. Blue badge parking on De Moulham Road is being investigated with highway authority for access to primary and secondary event spaces. The two existing stepped paths from Shore Road will be replaced with steady gradient ramps at 1:20. Surfaced pathways around the Green Seafront will be provided to improve and level walking routes.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Essential Option Neutral New Option Positive	Essential Option This option does not impact this characteristic as the Green Seafront will be reinstated in its current form. New Option Accessible toilets in plaza area will be unisex which help to reduce the risk of discrimination or discomfort for trans and non-binary people.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Marriage or civil partnership	Essential Option Neutral New Option Positive	Essential Option This option does not impact this characteristic as the Green Seafront will be reinstated in its current form. New Option Potential for wedding and commitment ceremonies to be held on secondary event space.
Pregnancy and maternity	Essential Option Neutral New Option Positive	Essential Option This option does not impact this characteristic as the Green Seafront will be reinstated in its current form. New Option Potential for accessible toilets in plaza area to include baby change facilities. The existing stepped paths will be replaced with steady gradient ramps at 1:20 which are easier to navigate with pushchairs and buggies. Surfaced pathways around the Green Seafront will be provided to improve and level walking routes.
Race and Ethnicity	Essential Option Neutral New Option Neutral	Essential Option No impact on this characteristic. New Option No impact on this characteristic.
Religion and belief	Essential Option Neutral New Option Neutral	Essential Option No impact on this characteristic. New Option No impact on this characteristic.
Sex (consider men and women)	Essential Option Neutral New Option Neutral	Essential Option No impact on this characteristic. New Option No impact on this characteristic.
Sexual orientation	Essential Option Neutral New Option Neutral	Essential Option No impact on this characteristic. New Option No impact on this characteristic.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
People with caring responsibilities	Essential Option Neutral New Option Positive	Essential Option This option does not impact this characteristic as the Green Seafront will be reinstated in its current form. New Option Accessible toilets in plaza area may assist carers to help people to use these facilities. Secondary event space will provide a quiet area for neurodiverse people to enjoy Swanage's seafront providing opportunities for carers to utilise this space. Blue badge parking on De Moulham Road is being investigated with highway authority for access to primary and secondary event spaces this will help carers access the Green Seafront. The existing stepped paths will be replaced with steady gradient ramps at 1:20 which are easier to navigate with mobility aids. Surfaced pathways around the Green Seafront will be provided to improve level walking routes.
Rural isolation	Essential Option Neutral New Option Neutral	Essential Option No impact on this characteristic. New Option No impact on this characteristic.
Socio-economic deprivation	Essential Option Positive New Option Positive	Essential Option Events held on the Green Seafront include those that are free to attend. Failure to stabilise the Green Seafront would mean that these events no longer take place. Therefore, the retention of the Green Seafront even in its current form is a positive for those that are socio-economically deprived. New Option The new option is likely to represent a greater positive impact on this group. The increased size and year-round usability of the event space will encourage more events to be held providing more opportunities for low or no cost family entertainment. Improved and accessible public green space enhancing free to access open space on the seafront.
Single parents	Essential Option Neutral New Option Neutral	Essential Option No impact on this characteristic. New Option No impact on this characteristic.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Armed forces communities	Essential Option Neutral New Option Neutral	Essential Option No impact on this characteristic. New Option No impact on this characteristic.

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

Essential Option

The Essential Option delivers a largely neutral impact across most protected characteristics, as it reinstates the Green Seafront in its current form without introducing significant new features or removing existing ones. The main benefit relates to the continued safety and usability of the seafront following stabilisation works, preserving current levels of community access to green space and free or low-cost events, which provides a positive socio-economic impact.

New Option

The New Option provides substantial positive impacts across several protected characteristics due to improvements in accessibility, inclusive design and the diversification of usable spaces. The replacement of steep and stepped paths with 1:20 accessible gradients, the addition of new accessible toilets, and the provision of a quieter secondary event space significantly improve the seafront’s usability for older people, disabled people, neurodivergent people, carers and families with young children. The increased seating, shade and clear routes offer improved comfort and accessibility for people of all ages. The introduction of unisex accessible toilets also provides a positive impact for transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse people.

The expanded and more functional events area supports greater socio-economic benefits, enabling more year-round free or low-cost activities and reducing financial barriers to participation. No negative impacts have been identified for any protected group.

Construction Phase Impacts

Construction is planned to take place between September ’27 and April ’28 which is outside of the peak visitor and event season and will help to minimise disruption. The entire Green Seafront area will be closed for the duration of the works, which will temporarily impact access. Noise, vehicle movements, and changes to usual movement patterns may also present challenges for people with protected characteristics.

These impacts will be managed through a construction phase plan (CPP), which will set out how access and safety will be maintained throughout the works. The CPP will be supported by a communications plan which will include clear plans for advance communication of closures and diversion routes, consistent on-site signage and predictable phasing of activities.

Although the area must remain closed for safety reasons, the plan will aim to minimise uncertainty and disruption, particularly for disabled people, carers and neurodivergent individuals. Once works are complete, access and usability will be restored under the Essential Option and significantly improved under the New Option.

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
Construction Phase	Clear construction phase and communications plans that ensure safe access is maintained and changes to routes are clearly communicated.	Project Team	September '27
Blue Badge Parking	Continued working with highway authority to secure blue badge parking on De Moulham Road that relates well to accessing both the main and secondary event spaces.	Project Team	April '28
Baby Change Facilities	Ensure baby change facilities are provided in new accessible toilets.	Project Team	April '28

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: [Joseph Rose \(Dorset Council\)](#)

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: [Martin Ayres, Gail Percival & Culvin Milmer \(Swanage Town Council\)](#)

Date of completion: [9 April 2026](#)

Version Number: [3](#)

EqIA review date:

- [During development of Construction Phase Plan and Communications Plan – Date TBC](#)
- [At construction start – Anticipated September 2027.](#)
- [At construction mid-point – Anticipated Mid December 2027](#)
- [At construction completion – Anticipated April 2028.](#)

Equality Lead Sign Off: [James Palfreman-Kay – 9 April 2026](#)

Next Steps:

- the EqlA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and if in agreement, your EqlA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqlA, to get a better understanding.
- EqlA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer](#)

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1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

Shore Road Enhancement Project - Swanage

2. Is this a:

Project

1. Is this:

External (residents, communities, partners)

2. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

1. Improve pedestrian safety and access.
2. Support local economic activity.
3. Strengthen the seafront as a destination.
4. Better manage traffic.
5. Reduce environmental and climate impacts.

3. Please provide the background to this proposal?

Swanage's Green Seafront comprises Sandpit Field, Weather Station field and the Spa beach hut area. Due to significant ground movement and slope instability, essential work is required to stabilise the land. Engagement related to the green seafront stabilisation works highlighted wider concerns about Shore Road, including narrow footways, traffic management issues, and parked cars reducing visibility for pedestrians crossing the road.

In response, Swanage Town Council asked Dorset Council to investigate options to improve pedestrian safety, accessibility and the overall streetscape along Shore Road. A feasibility study explored how Shore Road could be redesigned to better meet these objectives. Options considered included full pedestrianisation, a one-way system, or keeping two-way traffic with changes to parking. Potential upgrades included wider pavements, improved crossings, cycle facilities, bus stop improvements and new public realm features. These demonstrated how the road layout could prioritise people while maintaining necessary access.

Following review by Swanage Town Council and Dorset Council members, four options were selected for public engagement:

- Option 1 – Full closure to vehicles
- Option 2 – Partial Closure with one-way southbound traffic
- Option 3 – Two-way traffic with parking removed
- Option 4 – Do nothing

Dorset Coast Forum carried out engagement from 1 May to 29 June 2025 alongside the Green Seafront project. Participants were asked about their preferences for the four options, along

with views on pedestrian improvements, crossings, parking, bus routing, cycle facilities, surfacing, planting and signage.

Following a detailed review of technical evidence, public feedback and site constraints, the Cabinet Member for Highways identified Option 3 - retaining two-way traffic while removing on-street parking as the preferred approach.

Key Features of the Preferred Option:

Scheme Extents: Changes to the streetscape will extend from just south of Ocean Bay Slipway to the junction of Victoria Avenue with De Moulham Road.

Footways: Footway widths are increased on the green seafront side of Shore Road up to around 2.5m. Beach Side of Shore Road remains as existing.

Parking: Parking is removed from Shore Road. Blue badge parking spaces and short term set down / pick up spaces created on one side of Victoria Avenue between De Moulham and Shore Roads.

Traffic Calming: Carriageway narrowing at pedestrian crossing points to slow vehicle speeds. Vehicles give way to oncoming traffic, alternating between north and southbound traffic giving way. Raised crossing at access to Spa beach hut area.

Placemaking: Enhance key locations with amenities to create 'meeting locations' along the seafront. Minimal locations to introduce seating, cycle parking and planting/street art. Introduction of higher quality surface materials to improve streetscape. There is a lower opportunity for this between key locations with this option.

Design Changes Emanating from Engagement:

The engagement process identified a series of design refinements that will now be explored:

- Footway widening will be focused on the beach side of Shore Road rather than the Green Seafront side.
- Reduce the speed limit of Shore Road to 20mph.
- Relocating key crossings on Shore Road to better align with the Green Seafront Ground stabilisation project.
- Introduce high-quality materials at key locations to provide clear indication to drivers of presence of pedestrians. These materials will also assist partially sighted people to interpret the public realm.
- Reduce street clutter through the removal of parking machines and relocating / rationalising signage.
- Adding new pick-up and drop-off points on Shore Road to assist parents and carers accessing Swanage Beach.
- Improving accessibility through dedicated blue badge parking on De Moulham Road.
- Provision of safe crossing points on De Moulham Road to improve access to Green Seafront and onwards to Swanage beach.
- Updated wayfinding signage to help pedestrians and drivers navigate to key destinations such as car parks and the beach.
- Changes to the junction of Northbrook Road and Victoria Road to improve visibility and help deal with issues relating to unclear priorities.

Evidence gathering and engagement.

4. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

- Public engagement for Seafront Masterplan (2022-23)
- Public engagement for Green Seafront – Round One (2023)
- Public engagement for Green Seafront – Round Two (2025)
- Dorset Insights – Area profile for Swanage
- Google Maps
- Visitor data from Southwest Research Company (2025)
- Topographical survey for area.
- Concept design drawings for preferred option.
- Design changes identified through the engagement process.

5. What did this tell you?

- Pedestrian safety on Shore Road is a concern for residents.
- There is broad support to improve the public realm on Shore Road.
- Public preference of for two-way traffic with parking removed.
- Visitor data for 2023 suggests that Swanage received around 123,000 staying trips with 549,000 overnight stays and 807,000 - day visits. It is estimated that these 2023 visitors led to a local economy benefit of over £77m while visiting Swanage (The South West Research Company, 2025).
- Diversity – 93.1% white British and 6.9% ethnic minority.
- Health of Swanage residents is generally good with almost 77% of Swanage residents reported having very good or good health
- Age of residents is higher than the rest of Dorset – 37.4% 65+ compared to Dorset 30.5% and 18.9% for England and Wales.
- Older persons housing located near to Green Seafront.
- Blue badge parking availability is a concern for residents.
- There are currently no dedicated blue badge parking bays on Shore Road. However, the parking is well used by people with blue badges.

6. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

Information gathered from rounds one and two engagement have informed this assessment. The following stakeholders were consulted:

- Swanage Town Council.
- Dorset Council Ward Members.
- Dorset Council Cabinet Member Responsible for Highways.
- Leader of Dorset Council.
- Event Organisers.
- St. Aldhelm's Court Residents & Staff.
- Swanage & District Chamber of Trade.
- Local Bus Company.
- Accessible Swanage.
- Members of the Public.

7. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No

Is an EQIA required?

Not every proposal will need an EqlA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqlA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqlA, please answer the following question:

This project requires an EqlA.

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	Positive	Older residents (37.4% of Swanage's population) will benefit from wider pavements, reduced vehicle speeds, improved crossing points and clearer wayfinding. These changes support safer movement for people with reduced mobility, slower walking speeds or balance issues. Families with young children will also benefit from safer pedestrian routes and dedicated drop-off/pick-up points. There may be some negative impacts associated with the loss of parking on Shore Road for those that require parking near to their destination. Parking cannot be retained on Shore Road due to the need to widen pavements, reduce vehicle speeds and improve visibility at crossings. These changes are essential to improve safety for disabled people and older residents. Dedicated blue badge parking is therefore relocated rather than removed.
Disability	Positive	Long-term improvements include wider footways, safe crossings, reduced street clutter, accessible surfacing and new blue badge parking on De Moulham Road, which will improve access for people with mobility, sensory or cognitive impairments. Removal of parking on Shore Road may initially impact Blue Badge holders, but repositioned blue badge bays and new drop-off points mitigate this issue. Construction will temporarily reduce access and increase noise, which may affect disabled and neurodivergent people. Blue badge bays to be provided on De Moulham Road during construction.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral	No impact on this characteristic.
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	No impact on this characteristic.
Pregnancy and maternity	Positive	Wider pavements, safer crossings and new pick-up and drop-off areas improve access for parents with pushchairs or buggies, expectant mothers and visitors carrying equipment for the beach. Construction-phase communications will help ensure predictability for users.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral	No impact on this characteristic.
Religion and belief	Neutral	No impact on this characteristic.
Sex (consider men and women)	Neutral	No impact on this characteristic.
Sexual orientation	Neutral	No impact on this characteristic.
People with caring responsibilities	Positive	Safer pedestrian routes, better visibility at crossings, and new drop-off/pick-up points support carers transporting children, older people or disabled residents. Construction will temporarily complicate movement routes, mitigated through planned communications and safe access measures.
Rural isolation	Neutral	No impact on this characteristic.
Socio-economic deprivation	Neutral	No impact on this characteristic.
Single parents	Positive	Improvements to pedestrian safety, crossing points and new drop-off/pick-up areas make independent travel with children easier. Clearer wayfinding supports those visiting the beach with equipment or pushchairs.
Armed forces communities	Neutral	No impact on this characteristic.

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

The preferred option is expected to produce significant long-term positive impacts for older people, disabled people, families with young children, carers and those with mobility or sensory impairments. Wider pavements, reduced vehicle speeds, relocated crossings, improved surfacing and clearer wayfinding will substantially improve safety and access for these groups.

The removal of parking on Shore Road may create short-term negative impacts for Blue Badge holders and people who rely on close proximity parking. However, these are mitigated by new disabled bays on De Moulham Road, new drop-off/pick-up points and improved access routes.

Construction works between September '27 and April '28 will temporarily reduce accessibility and create additional noise and movement. This may particularly affect disabled people, neurodivergent people and carers. These impacts will be managed through a Construction Phase Plan and clear communications strategy to ensure predictable access, logical diversions and minimised disruption.

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
Construction Phase	Clear construction phase and communications plans that ensure safe access is maintained and changes to routes are clearly communicated.	Project Team	September '27
Blue Badge Parking During Construction	Blue badge bays to be marked on De Moulham Road at construction start. These will be temporary bays as De Moulham road will be resurfaced following construction of the green seafront scheme. Permanent bays will be marked following resurfacing.	Project Team	September '27

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Joseph Rose (Dorset Council)

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: David Brown (Dorset Council) Martin Ayres, Gail Percival & Culvin Milmer (Swanage Town Council)

Date of completion: 9 April 2026

Version Number: 3

EqIA reviews:

- During development of Construction Phase Plan and Communications Plan – Date TBC
- At construction start – Anticipated September 2027.
- At construction mid-point – Anticipated Mid December 2027
- At construction completion – Anticipated April 2028.

Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palfreman-Kay – 9 April 2026

Next Steps:

- the EqlA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and if in agreement, your EqlA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqlA, to get a better understanding.
- EqlA authors are responsible to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer](#)

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Cabinet

19 May 2025

Modern, Sustainable Unitary – reimagining the role of Dorset Council

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

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

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team: Catherine Howe, Chief Executive

Report author and job title: Steven Ford, Assistant Chief Executive, Catherine Howe, Chief Executive

Email: steven.ford@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Catherine.Howe@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: N/A

Report status: Public

1. Executive summary

Dorset Council is operating in a period of significant change. Demand for services is increasing, resources remain constrained, and public trust in institutions is under pressure. At the same time, social, technological and policy change is moving quickly. Local government was designed for a different era, and continuing to work in the same way will not be enough to meet residents' expectations or to sustain services over the longer term. Beyond that, not changing the way we work risks missing out on the opportunities that these changes present to make sure that Dorset Council, and the communities we serve, are best placed to thrive into the future. The council's administration has outlined an ambitious council plan which needs an effective and future focused organisation to deliver that ambition.

The current three-year government funding settlement provides a short period of relative financial stability. This creates a limited but important opportunity to look ahead and make the larger changes needed to put the council on a more sustainable footing. This work is about ensuring the council can continue to provide long-term stewardship for people and place. Many councils throughout England are now undergoing local government re-organisation (LGR) as the government looks to redefine the geography of local democratic institutions. Dorset Council became a unitary authority in 2019. While unitarisation has delivered many benefits, the full

potential of being a single organisation has not yet been realised. Nationally, there has been little discussion about what reform should look like specifically for unitary councils. Dorset has an opportunity to lead by example by setting out a clear and practical model that delivers good-value, future-proof services for residents.

To do this, the council needs greater clarity about how it works, how decisions are made, and how activity is aligned across services and with partners. The vision of becoming **a modern, sustainable unitary council** provides this shared direction. It sets out the council's purpose, the outcomes it is working towards, and the principles that guide decisions and use of resources, in support of democratically agreed priorities. Representative democracy is central to the council's purpose. As the council changes how it works, it is essential that the role of elected members as decision makers and community leaders is strengthened. The aim is to ensure that political priorities are translated clearly and consistently into delivery, investment decisions and ways of working, while maintaining democratic accountability.

Four foundational elements underpin this journey:

1. working with communities
2. prevention
3. modernisation
4. the skills and agency of the workforce

While some councils have focused on one or two of these areas (see appendix 1 for case studies), no authority has yet brought all four together within a single, coherent vision. This paper sets out the case for doing so and explains the organisational, workforce and partnership changes needed to support the council's priorities and ensure it remains responsive in a changing environment.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

2.1 Cabinet is asked to endorse the vision and principles of a modern, sustainable unitary council, and the overall journey required to achieve this.

Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 To ensure members understand the proposed direction, how it supports delivery of council priorities, and how it aligns with existing change programmes.

3.2 To ensure members are sighted on how this organisational journey will develop over time, with appropriate links to democratic processes built in.

4. **The report**

Local councils and increasingly strategic authorities, derive authority through their democratic mandate. Through elections and formal decision-making, residents set

the priorities that councils pursue during a term of office. This remains one of the foundational strengths of local government and a core source of legitimacy.

However, the context in which this mandate is exercised has changed. Councils face sustained financial pressure, rising and more complex demand, and higher expectations about responsiveness and outcomes. At the same time, many residents feel that decision-making does not always lead to visible improvements in their day-to-day experience. Public trust in institutions is under strain. These pressures are not the result of any single policy or organisational failure. They reflect deeper structural and societal shifts that challenge traditional service-led and siloed models of delivery. In this context, the risk is not a lack of democratic intent, but **fragmentation**: well-intentioned decisions pulling in different directions, short-term fixes crowding out long-term prevention, and organisational complexity obscuring accountability and impact.

The vision of a modern, sustainable unitary responds to this challenge by providing **clear operational direction without constraining democratic choice**. It does not set strategic priorities - those remain the role of elected members. Instead, it establishes a shared understanding of:

1. the purpose the organisation
2. the outcomes it is working to achieve
3. the principles that guide decisions and use of resources

This helps ensure that democratically agreed priorities (especially in the council plan) are delivered coherently and consistently, regardless of service boundary, funding source or organisational structure.

Crucially, the vision is a **direction, not a destination**. While the shift is expected to take place over the next two to three years, the vision does not prescribe specific policies or limit future administrations. It provides a stable framework within which different political priorities can be pursued effectively and sustainably.

It makes decision-making clearer, aligns officer activity with member intent, supports partnership working around shared outcomes, and provides a common reference point for explaining change to employees, partners and communities.

Organisational vision

A modern, sustainable unitary council can be described through three linked ideas:

- **Modern**: being modern is about more than technology. It means using up-to-date ways of working, reducing unnecessary complexity, and bringing together people with different skills to focus on shared outcomes. This includes more flexible and collaborative working across teams and ensuring that professional practice reflects the world we operate in today. This work is overseen through the council's transformation portfolio and as articulated in

April cabinet, the continued development of this portfolio depends on a shared vision for what it means to operate as a modern, sustainable, unitary council.

- **Sustainable:** sustainability includes financial stability but goes further than this. It means having the capacity, skills and resilience to respond to future pressures and unexpected events. This will be reflected as we develop our Medium-Term Financial Plan. It also means supporting a healthy workforce and playing a full role in the long-term sustainability of Dorset's communities, including addressing the climate and nature emergency as part of everyday decision-making.
- **Unitary:** as a unitary authority, the council must act as a single organisation rather than a collection of separate services. Working in this way allows the council to make better use of resources, reduce duplication and work more effectively with communities and partners. This principle runs through all aspects of the vision.

Together, these elements support a council that works to shared values, makes evidence-based decisions and adapts as circumstances change. This is not about a single programme or project, but about how the organisation operates day to day.

Local government can and should be at the heart of the changes required to drive public service reform. It does not require permission from central government or other partners, and how we create a new vision for our organisation, new ways of working with our partners and communities will be critical if we are to become a council that is seen as a key partner in the delivery of outcomes that matter to our communities.

In doing so, it shifts the organisation from managing pressure in isolation to intentionally shaping a system that is better able to deliver the outcomes that matter most to Dorset's communities, now and in the future.

Foundational elements

The vision is supported by four key areas of work:

1. **Working with communities:** deepening place based working so decisions are shaped closer to the people they affect, and we work effectively in partnership with our communities (as outlined in the March 3 Cabinet paper, 'Working with communities').
2. **Prevention:** taking a whole council approach to preventing problems early, rather than responding late and at higher cost.
3. **Modernisation:** continuing the work of Our Future Council transformation to update systems, processes and ways of working so the organisation operates efficiently and consistently.

4. **Our workforce:** developing the skills, confidence, productivity and capacity of employees, and ensuring Dorset Council is an employer of choice.

Becoming a modern, sustainable unitary creates the conditions for more deliberate, evidence-led and participatory change. Without this shift, financial sustainability would increasingly rely on reducing services in reactive ways. Instead, the vision supports a move towards earlier intervention, better use of resources and stronger outcomes for residents.

Engagement

The vision has been shaped by engagement with employees, members and partners, as well as by the council's democratic role within the wider system.

Since August 2025, the council has held a series of engagement activities with employees, including 'Conversations with Catherine', leadership events and an online feedback form. These sessions focused on experiences of working at Dorset Council and views on the proposed vision.

Around 300 employees attended in-person sessions, contributing approximately 1,400 comments and questions. A further 100 colleagues shared feedback through the online form.

Key themes included:

- To work better together to remove siloed ways of working and join up approaches.
- To share a clear organisational vision for change, enabling more meaningful engagement.
- To bring consistency and alignment of approaches across services to remove duplication.
- To clearly communicate roles, responsibilities and decisions.
- To ensure clear development opportunities and career pathways for employees.
- To make better use of our data to support faster, better-informed decisions.

Overall, engagement showed strong commitment to the council's purpose alongside frustration with workload, complexity and lack of clarity. While there was plenty of positive feedback, there was broad support for the vision of a modern, sustainable unitary, particularly around clearer leadership, simpler processes, better workforce support and improved collaboration. This colleague participation will continue as we move towards the vision.

Throughout 2025, we also engaged with the voluntary and community sector, as well as town and parish councils, with support from Volunteer Centre Dorset and the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC). The wide-ranging feedback indicated that, while Dorset Council is generally seen as a valued partner, but at times it can be challenging to work with.

As a large and complex organisation, Dorset Council can be difficult to navigate and connect with, which has led some organisations to feel that we do not always understand the needs of local communities or work with our community partners in the most effective ways. We want to address this by strengthening our understanding of our communities and improving how we work in partnership. This will be explored through the programme of community conversations in 2026, which will help to design new, more effective and joined-up ways of working with communities.

Member engagement on the journey towards becoming a modern, sustainable council through webinars and ongoing updates will form a key part of the process moving forwards. It is also imperative that this organisational journey is understood by all members as it develops, with appropriate interfaces with democratic processes embedded into the process.

Customer experience and insight

Engagement has been complemented by evidence from customer insight. Residents experience the council as a single organisation, but not always as a joined-up one. While staff are valued, customers can face fragmented journeys, multiple points of contact and the need to repeat information.

The council's transformation work aims to improve this experience by simplifying access to services, joining up systems and designing around customer journeys rather than organisational boundaries. Early progress includes the new customer hub, clearer digital information and better use of insight to reduce avoidable contact and improve consistency.

What the journey could look like in practice

Much of the work needed to become a modern, sustainable unitary is already underway through existing transformation, modernisation and workforce programmes agreed by Cabinet. This paper provides the framework that connects this work into a single, clear direction.

Recent changes to the Senior Leadership Team structure are intended to support more collaborative working across services and a stronger focus on shared outcomes. Further work on governance and operational arrangements will help ensure priorities are delivered clearly and effectively.

The next phase is not just about starting new initiatives, but about making existing work more visible, connected and measurable, aligned to the council's long-term role and financial position. The following section highlights areas of work that are already underway or in development that will be integral to the delivery of the vision.

Key programmes of work and indicative milestones

Community conversations and place-based working (2025–2029)

Work is already underway to strengthen how the council engages with communities.

A structured programme of community conversations will be delivered during 2026 to support stronger place-based working and local decision-making. This approach will bring together councillors, town and parish councils, voluntary groups and partners to explore local needs, test approaches and shape future neighbourhood governance. Insights from these conversations will inform policy, governance and budget decisions from 2027 onwards. The approach is intended to become a repeatable way of working rather than a one-off exercise.

Importantly, the process of community conversations aims to build trust between Dorset Council and local partners, create a space for genuine co-design and further empower local leadership to build community resilience.

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and digital transformation (2025–2029)

Implementation of new core HR, payroll and finance systems, alongside wider digital investment, will provide more consistent processes, better data and as a result stronger decision-making, supporting the council's long-term sustainability.

Strengthening decision making and internal governance (2025 – 2029)

As we work to design a less siloed and more integrated organisation it is essential that our governance and decision making reflects this ambition. To underpin this a review of internal governance has been carried out and is now being implemented. This establishes stronger, more crosscutting decision-making that supports effective prioritisation and delivery of council priorities.

By strengthening internal governance, proposals and recommendations are developed and tested through forums that consider the council as a single system and are grounded in our shared vision for a modern, sustainable unitary. This approach improves the quality, coherence and impact of work as it progresses from internal development to formal democratic governance structures led by elected Members.

The next phase of work will consider the landscape of partnership boards and how the council engages within these spaces to best reflect council priorities and new ways of working.

Service planning in the change 2026-2029

More stable funding enables a move to multi-year service planning. This will allow services to plan for the future, align workforce development and support a coherent approach to change, with regular review and oversight.

By 2029, this approach will support the delivery of council plan priorities alongside the realisation of the council's ambition to operate as a modern, sustainable unitary authority, with multiyear service plans acting as an anchor to maintain focus and coherence across the transformation journey.

Beacon teams and test-and-learn delivery (2025–2026)

New ways of working, and new technology, are already being tested through the new customer hub, business support and digital delivery. During 2026, learning from the beacon teams will be scaled and applied more widely, embedding the 'test-and-learn' approach as a normal part of service improvement.

People and workforce (2025–2027)

Leadership redesign and matrix working are already underway, providing the structural foundations for change. The next phase focuses on redesigning the council's approach to strategic workforce planning, alongside targeted change support, to ensure the organisation has a clear, sustainable plan for developing the skills, capability and capacity required to deliver a modern, sustainable unitary council. During 2025–26 this work will strengthen workforce design, development and cultural change, with new ways of working embedded and sustained by 2027.

Many of the complex challenges that we wish to tackle through the leadership redesign and council plan delivery will also require employees to have skills and capabilities to work effectively in complex systems – with communities, statutory and voluntary sector partners. Learning and Development needs will need to consider how we effectively support these skillsets and capabilities, including convening, navigating and problem-solving complexity, from a human-centric point of view.

We will also make it easier for employees to participate in open conversations by using clear, trusted ways to listen and respond. This means using different mechanisms to create the conditions and environment for two-way conversations, building participation skills for both internal and external engagement.

Prevention as a shared principle

Prevention runs across all areas of the vision. The creation of a new Executive Director post to focus on this agenda reinforces its importance.

Earlier engagement with communities, redesigned services, better use of data and a more skilled workforce will help the council address issues earlier and more effectively.

This shift requires cultural change, breaking down organisational boundaries and working more closely with partners. Together, these changes support better outcomes for residents and long-term sustainability for the organisation.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 No change was also considered, but this would not deliver on the vision required to support the transition required to become a modern, sustainable unitary.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act introduced a new duty for all local authorities to create 'effective neighbourhood governance' structures. The aim is to support decision making closer to communities. Dorset Council's ambitions to work more closely with its communities, including the Community Conversations approach set out in this paper, provides a platform to explore and develop neighbourhood governance models alongside communities, Parish and Town Councils, Ward Councillors and local stakeholders. This will be a crucial step in fulfilling this legal duty, as well as becoming a modern, sustainable unitary council.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The vision of becoming a modern, sustainable unitary council is fundamentally rooted in the need to rebalance how the council deploys its resources — continuing to move away from managing escalation and failure demand, and towards anticipating need earlier and intervening more effectively at lower cost. The benefits of this are already seen in the council's MTFP effective early intervention work has meant that Dorset hasn't faced the volatility experienced by some councils across its social care responsibilities.

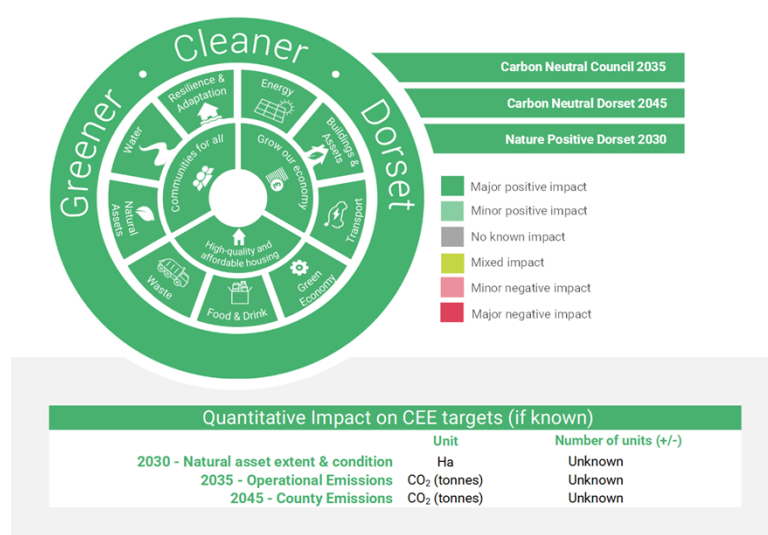
7.2 This shift is essential to long-term financial sustainability, as reliance on high cost, late-stage interventions is not affordable within the medium to long-term financial outlook facing local government.

7.3 Sustainability in this context extends beyond the requirement to set balanced budgets. This depends on having the organisational capacity and financial resilience to make deliberate choices: investing earlier to prevent escalation; simplifying structures and processes that drive duplication and cost; stopping or redesigning activity that no longer adds value; and prioritising resources towards outcomes that reduce long-term demand. A stronger "one council" approach – supported by better data, clear accountability and integrated financial, workforce and system planning - is intended to support this by enabling earlier identification of need, better targeting of support, and more coordinated use of existing resources across service boundaries.

7.4 Delivering this shift will need to be underpinned by strong financial and operational foundations, including consistent processes, robust management

information and integrated financial, workforce and service data. Modern enabling systems (e.g. **a new HR, Payroll and Finance System (ERP)**) are a key component of this, supporting improved forecasting and scenario modelling to help allocate resources and develop stronger evidence base for preventative and anticipatory decision-making.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications



8.1

At the heart of the vision of a modern, sustainable unitary is a commitment to embed the climate and nature work into our DNA, framing all that we do to work towards the principle of becoming an environmentally responsible employer. The climate and nature operational group working with strengthened strategic leadership will ensure that all aspects of council operations are considered as part of this journey.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 One of the key focus areas of a modern, sustainable unitary is on prevention. While prevention is complex, at its heart is the principle that through more sophisticated, targeted and join-up approaches, it should be possible to reduce demand over time for health and well-being related issues.

9.2 In response to concerns raised during colleague engagement pertaining to workload, the journey towards becoming a modern, sustainable unitary will embed greater automation and demand management allowing employees to focus on tasks that have more intrinsic value and are human-centred.

9.3 We also need to think carefully about the work that we do and where appropriate stop doing things which are no longer relevant or have value. Like barnacles on a boat, an organisation can pick up activities that need reviewing and releasing and doing this carefully is important for creating capacity for staff.

10. Other implications

N/A

11. Risk implications

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

Current Risk: High: There is a risk that the benefits of organisational modernisation are not fully realised if cultural and structural change is not aligned with transformation of the council's core systems.

Residual Risk: Medium: The ERP programme mitigates this risk by providing a consistent operational and data foundation aligned to the principles of a modern, sustainable unitary council.

Current risk: Medium: There is a risk that employees will not engage with or fully understand the principles of a modern, sustainable unitary, hampering the cultural changes required.

Residual risk: Low: ongoing staff participation, structural changes and future workforce design will all form part of the ongoing commitment to ensure that employees are informed and have the right working environment and tools to adapt and embrace new ways of working.

12. Equalities

12.1 As this paper outlines a vision, it is considered that an EqIA is not required at this stage. As proposals develop, an EqIA will be undertaken to consider the impact of establishing a modern, sustainable unitary council on the workforce and customers.

As part of activity to realise the vision of becoming a modern, sustainable unitary council, and on the direction of the Chief Executive, work is underway to accelerate three aspects of our Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy and action plan:

1. **Love our spaces** - workplace accessibility and inclusion, leading on to looking at hybrid working arrangements.
2. **Community cohesion** - building a shared sense of belonging, mutual respect, and positive relationships among people from different backgrounds, both internally and externally.
3. **Living our values** - focussing on how our values are experienced day to day by colleagues – in how we treat one another, how we lead, how decisions are made, and how it feels to work together across Dorset Council.

Progress is reported to the EDI Strategic Board on a bi-monthly basis.

13. Appendices

13.1 Case studies from other public organisations of the four foundational elements (to follow)

14. Background paper

14.1 N/A

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 1: Case studies from other public organisations of the four foundational elements

Shared approaches to prevention

The Preston Model: Economic Prevention through Community Wealth Building

Preston City Council pioneered Community Wealth Building (CWB) as a form of economic prevention. By using the spending power of anchor institutions (like the university, police, and local government), the council aimed to prevent the 'leakage of wealth' from the local economy.

Since 2013, the Preston Model has re-routed millions of pounds back into the local economy, providing a buffer against the deindustrialisation and austerity that had previously crippled the city.

A 2023 study in *The Lancet* and a 2025 follow-up in the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) confirmed that CWB in Preston directly correlated with improvements in mental health and life satisfaction.

The BMJ study specifically noted a 4% growth in employment compared to similar cities, with the most significant benefits felt by ethnic minority groups, men, and those with disabilities. This demonstrates that economic prevention and building a resilient local economy has direct clinical impacts on the population.

Impact

- Wealth Re-routing: £70 million of anchor institution spending re-routed back to Preston since 2013.
- Regional Investment: £200 million additionally invested across the Lancashire economy.
- Job Creation: 4,500 new jobs created through local supply chain development.
- Unemployment Rate: Reduced from 6.5% in 2014 to 3.1% in 2017 (well below the UK average).
- Poverty Reduction: Lifted the city out of the bottom 20% of the UK's most deprived local authorities.

Learn more

- [New study confirms CWB benefits](#)

- [Community](#) [Wealth](#) [Building:](#) [Preston](#)

The Role of Integrated Care Systems (ICSs)

Integrated Care Systems, formalised in 2022, represent a shift from competition to collaboration between the NHS, local government, and the voluntary sector.

Most ICSs have now prioritised prevention at a strategic level, recognising that by 2040, an additional 2.5 million people in England will be living with a major illness.

Successful ICS models use ‘split-screen thinking’ to maintain a focus on both tactical short-term needs and strategic long-term preventative goals.

By utilising high-quality, joined-up data, these systems can identify high-impact cohorts—individuals who are driving current and future demand—and intervene early.

Early preventative interventions are estimated to achieve a 33% reduction in ill health and could unlock a £320 billion rise in GDP over 20 years by keeping people in the workforce for longer.

Impact

- North of Tyne CA used its devolution deal to join up prevention measures and map system activity
- Growing Health Together in E Surrey integrates prevention into neighbourhood teams, collaborating with PCNs and communities
- West Yorkshire ICB emphasises routine conversations with communities to understand the root causes of distress
- Nottingham and Nottinghamshire established clear guiding principles for embedding prevention across all system levels

Learn more

- [Unlocking prevention in integrated care systems | NHS Confederation](#)
- [Unlocking prevention in integrated care systems: A guide to balancing short- and longer-term impact](#)

Co-designing with communities

The Barking and Dagenham Ecosystem: Every One Every Day

Barking and Dagenham Council pioneered an ambitious co-design experiment through the 'Every one Every Day' project (2017–2023).

This initiative built a practical participation system designed to make everyday activities such as cooking, gardening, and making the foundation for social cohesion and economic resilience.

The project was structured around a network of neighbourhood shops that acted as incubators for resident ideas. Unlike traditional funding models that require complex business cases, this ecosystem provided residents with tools, space, and technical support to test their ideas.

The council's role was that of an enabler rather than a provider. By providing Everyone's Warehouse, a 3,300m² makerspace, the council gave residents the means of production to solve their own challenges.

A notable insight is that 98% of the opportunities were designed to be child-friendly, ensuring that caregivers (disproportionately women) were not excluded from the co-design process. While the formal foundation closed in 2024, the legacy continues through rehomed equipment and resident-led groups that outlast the initial funding.

Impact

- Resident Reach: Nearly 10,000 local residents involved in initiatives
- Project Creation: Over 300 new projects, learning programmes, and collaborative businesses created
- Social Cohesion: 34,000 hours spent together by neighbours; trust in neighbours scored 8/10
- Economic Development: 450 residents joined collaborative business programmes; social enterprises in catering, food, and textiles emerged

Learn more

- [The Project Story — Every One Every Day](#)
- [Every One Every Day | Relationships Project](#)
- [Community participation: Every One Every Day](#)

Modern ways of working, agency and skills to lead change

Government Digital Service (GDS / gov.uk)

The United Kingdom's Government Digital Service (GDS) provides a useful example of how agile methodologies can be institutionalised at a national scale.

Since its inception in 2011, GDS has moved through three distinct phases:

1. the creation of a new digital paradigm
2. the professionalisation of digital skills
3. the eventual absorption of these capabilities into the wider civil service

Before the GDS, government IT was dominated by massive, multi-year contracts that often resulted in services that were obsolete by the time they launched.

GDS introduced the "Digital by Default" standard, which mandated that services be designed around user needs through an iterative process of Discovery, Alpha, Beta, and Live phases.

One of the most critical insights from the GDS experience is that agile transformation is not merely a technical change but a leadership challenge. True agile leadership at all levels is required to drive business agility, the ability of the entire organisation to respond to external shifts.

Impact

- Risk Profile: Low with risks addressed early through prototyping
- User Feedback: Continuous and integrated into every sprint
- Funding Structure: Incremental funding tied to progress and outcomes
- Core Values: Responding to change and delivering user value
- Organisational Role: Cross-functional teams and dynamic capabilities

Learn more

- [Government Transformation Strategy - GOV.UK](#)
- [Dynamic capabilities in the public sector: The case of the UK's Government Digital Service](#)

Essex County Council: Essex Digital Service (EDS)

In November 2025, Essex County Council merged its Technology Services and Service Transformation teams to create the Essex Digital Service (EDS). The EDS is

designed to be a unified force for change, combining technical expertise with digital innovation to solve problems faster.

Implementation of the EDS followed a set of modern digital principles, including service standards and repeatable patterns and digital as a 'team sport'.

The team adopted a multidisciplinary approach, using agile, iterative methods to create services designed around user needs. By securing technological foundations such as modern data ingestion pipelines and automated patching, the council has built a scalable operating model that moves away from piecemeal, transactional digital initiatives.

The EDS also prioritised building in-house capability, using training and upskilling alongside the delivery of outcomes. This included a Centre of Excellence model to support Citizen Developers within the council.

By making all new source code open and reusable, the EDS is ensuring that digital transformation is sustainable and cost-effective, reducing the coordination overhead that historically hampered progress in the local government system.

Impact

- Merging teams allowed for faster problem-solving and reduced the duplication of digital efforts across the council
- The WCT strategy, enabled by EDS, is on track to realise significant savings through the exploitation of AI and data-driven targeting of core services
- Adopting the GDS (Government Digital Service) standards ensured that new digital experiences were simple, accessible, and intuitive for residents

Learn more

- [EDS - building a modern digital future for Essex](#)
- [ECC whole council transformation summary](#)

Social Innovation

Greater Essex - The Essex Caring Commission

Essex County Council is currently undertaking a fundamental reconfiguration of its public services to create what it terms a "preventative state". The driving force

behind this transformation is the realisation that rising demand for acute health and social care is outstripping available funding, necessitating a "Prevention First" approach that tackles the wider determinants of health—such as housing, transport, and work—at their source.

The 2024-2025 reports from the Essex Caring Communities Commission outline twenty-three actions designed to inspire local leadership and transform services. A central feature of this modernisation is the proposed "Caring Essex: Residents Assembly," which allows a representative cross-section of the public to shape the shift toward prevention and weigh the trade-offs involved in radical service redesign. The impact of social innovation in Essex is measured through the Essex Innovation network, which has seen significant growth.

These results illustrate how modernisation can be achieved by "building capability and competence into communities". By investing in social capital and community-owned infrastructure—such as the e-bike hubs in Uttlesford or the creative collaborations that engage over 3,200 residents—Essex is creating a network of support that reduces the long-term burden on the local authority's core budgets.

Impact

- Community Innovation Labs: 32 active projects; 8,500+ people reached
- Sustainability Projects: 25 green projects; 2,800 tonnes of CO2 saved
- Community Investment: £850,000+ channelled to grassroots innovation
- Lives Impacted: 15,000+ residents directly benefiting from projects
- Flood Defence (Southend): £2.1M flood damage prevented; 500+ homes protected
- Rural Connectivity: 12 villages connected via e-bike hubs; 85% carbon reduction

Learn more

[Essex Caring Communities Report](#)

Cabinet

19 May 2026

Procurement Pipeline Report – over £500k (2026-27)

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr S Clifford, Finance & Capital Strategy

Local Councillor(s): N/A

Senior Leadership Team:

S Cremer, Director Resources (Section 152 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)

1. Executive summary

- (1) This report provides Cabinet with a forward view of planned / known procurement activity that is expected to exceed £500,000 and therefore requires Cabinet approval as a Key Decision before procurement activity is launched. The report has historically gone to Cabinet twice yearly to support good governance, transparency, and forward planning. As agreed with Commercial Board representatives and Democratic and Governance Services, the “Procurement Forward Plan Report” has been renamed to the “Procurement Pipeline Report” (to avoid confusion with the Democratic Services’ forward look and align with Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) terminology).
- (2) The attached Appendix 1 lists the pipeline items expected to exceed £500,000 (whether a new procurement or planned contract variation). The list is indicative and values, scope and timings may change as budgets and priorities change. The process has not changed, but this year the Cabinet appendix 1 now includes a short description of each contract to improve clarity and transparency. The Council also uses this forward look approach to support statutory transparency requirements under the Procurement Act

2023, including the need to publish a forward-looking pipeline notice for relevant contracts.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

Cabinet is asked to consider the contents of this report and agree:

- 2.1 To delegate authority to the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder, after consultation with the relevant Executive Director or Director, to:
- 2.2 To begin each of the procurement procedures (or variation) listed in Appendix 1 (subject to an approved and available budget); and
- 2.3 Final procurement documentation developed within the broad scope set out in the procurement briefing notes (available on request); and
- 2.4 Contract award (via a recommendation to award report / Executive Decision as appropriate) provided the tender outcome is within + 5% of the budget agreed with Finance when each project begins subject to agreement of the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Capital Strategy.
- 2.5 The Committee supports continued early engagement with Commercial & Procurement for higher-value and higher-risk activity. The Committee endorses the use of the pipeline as a key governance and assurance tool.

3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**

Delegation (where appropriate) supports timely delivery, while recognising that sensitive / high value / out-of-scope matters can still be brought back to Cabinet:

- 3.1 To provide visibility of upcoming procurement activity across the organisation.
- 3.2 To support better planning, prioritisation and use of Council resources.
- 3.3 To ensure compliance with: Procurement Act 2023 and Dorset Council Contract Procedure Rules.
- 3.4 To strengthen audit assurance and reduce unplanned or reactive procurement.

4. The report

- 4.1 Appendix 1 provides Cabinet with visibility of procurement activity expected to exceed £500,000, to support planning, transparency and assurance (including new procurements and variations). Commissioners complete supporting briefing notes for higher value/complex procurements (this information is relied upon to complete Appendix 1); these do not form part of the Cabinet paper but can be made available on request to support Cabinet and Portfolio Holders and are reviewed by the Cllr S Clifford, Finance & Capital Strategy and S Cremer, Resources Director, Section 151 Officer.
- 4.2 Procurement activity must not be launched until the necessary governance approvals are in place and the call-in period has expired, to ensure compliance with Democratic Services requirements. It does not replace: individual business cases or approved initiation documentation, formal approvals, or financial authorisation processes. Lower-value, routine procurements are managed through existing delegated arrangements and are not typically included unless a Key Decision is triggered. Initiation documentation usually includes: budget source confirmed, route to market and rationale, key risks and mitigations, social value / climate considerations (where relevant) and intended evaluation approach and timeline.

Procurement Act 2023

- 4.3 In addition to providing a forward view of planned procurement activity, this report also provides Cabinet with a general update on procurement activity across the Council, including the successful launch and award of contracts under the Procurement Act 2023. The Act represents a long-term change programme for the organisation and the market. Its requirements will be phased in over time as legacy contracts let under the previous Public Contracts Regulations 2015 expire and are replaced. This report therefore supports Cabinet oversight of both forward planning and the Council's transition to the new procurement regime.
- 4.4 The Procurement Act 2023 came into force in February 2025 and introduces a new framework for the way public sector procurement is planned, advertised, awarded and reported. For Dorset Council, this represents a significant but gradual change, rather than a single point of implementation. Legacy contracts let under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 will continue to operate until they expire, are extended, or are replaced. Over time, an increasing proportion of the Council's procurement activity will therefore be undertaken under the Procurement Act 2023. The Act places stronger expectations on up-front planning, transparency and reporting, including the publication of pipeline notices for higher value contracts. It also

introduces new processes and system requirements for both officers and suppliers. Cabinet is therefore asked to note that implementation of the Act is a long-term organisational change programme, requiring time for officers, members and the supplier market to fully adapt to the new arrangements.

- 4.5 As the new regime beds in, suppliers will also need to become familiar with revised processes, notices and compliance requirements. During the transition period, a mixed market will exist where some contracts are governed by legacy arrangements and others by the new Act. The Council is therefore taking a proportionate and pragmatic approach, supporting suppliers through clear documentation, early market engagement and consistent messaging, while ensuring statutory compliance is maintained.

Our Future Council

- 4.6 The procurement pipeline also supports the Council's wider OFC programme, in particular the ambition to work more effectively as one Council. Increased visibility of planned procurement activity enables earlier collaboration across services, identification of opportunities to consolidate contracts, and more strategic use of the Council's buying power. Over time, this will support a simpler, more consistent contract landscape and reduce avoidable duplication across directorates and improve manageability and support better value from the Council's collective purchasing power.
- 4.7 Dorset Council's procurement forward plan has consistently been presented as an indicative and flexible tool, rather than a fixed or exhaustive list. Previous Cabinet reports have made clear that the pipeline reflects the position at a point in time, based on known service, commissioning and transformation plans, and that it may be necessary to bring additional or amended procurement activity to Cabinet as priorities, funding or service delivery models evolve. This approach recognises the dynamic environment in which the Council operates and allows procurement activity to respond proportionately to emerging requirements, whilst maintaining appropriate Cabinet oversight of Key Decisions.
- 4.8 Over the past year, the Commercial & Procurement service has continued to adapt to a period of significant change, including the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023, internal transformation programmes and evolving organisational priorities. The team has supported services through this transition by embedding new processes, delivering targeted training and guidance, and ensuring that statutory and constitutional requirements are met while maintaining service delivery. This has included building internal capability, supporting suppliers as they adapt to new requirements, and responding flexibly to emerging pressures. Cabinet is asked to note the

progress made in strengthening the Council's commercial capability during this period of sustained change.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 An alternative approach is for services to continue submitting separate standalone Key Decision reports to Cabinet for each procurement, outside of the twice-yearly cycle. Not maintaining a pipeline would: reduce transparency, increase procurement risk and limit early engagement opportunities.

6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 The Council's procurement activity operates within the Council's Constitution (including Contract Procedure Rules and the Scheme of Delegation) and relevant procurement legislation. The Procurement Act 2023 introduced enhanced expectations around: forward transparency, pipeline notices. Maintaining a clear pipeline supports compliance with statutory duties and defensible decision-making. Individual procurements will continue to receive legal advice where required.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 No procurement will be formally commenced until the budget has been confirmed and signed off by the relevant Finance Business Partner as part of the Council's approval and assurance process. Final awarded contracts may include additional provisions for extensions or optional periods, subject to: ongoing budget availability, financial approval processes, opportunities for service consolidation or value-for-money improvements over the life of the contract. Service budgets incorporate (the "up to") funding required for the procurements set out in this report. Detailed affordability and value for money are considered through each project's business case and procurement documentation. The pipeline supports better financial management by enabling early identification of cost pressures, supporting value for money decisions and reducing unplanned extensions or emergency procurements.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 8.1 To be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case and procurement documentation, where applicable.

9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 To be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case and procurement documentation, where applicable.

10. Other implications

10.1 N/A

11. Risk implications

11.1 The key risk is that pipeline estimates may change as budgets and service priorities change; Appendix 1 is therefore indicative. The level of risk associated with each procurement is considered and managed by the relevant project team as part of the business case, procurement project initiation and sourcing rationale. This includes the identification of delivery, commercial, financial and legal risks, alongside appropriate mitigations, to ensure that potential issues are anticipated and addressed in a proportionate manner. This approach supports informed decision-making, protects the Council's objectives and operations, and ensures compliance with relevant legislation and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

11.2 The wider financial context remains challenging and continues to place pressure on Council budgets. All procurement decisions and recommendations must therefore be mindful of both the immediate and longer-term financial implications, particularly where commitments extend over multiple years or rely on uncertain funding streams.

11.3 In addition, the Council continues to operate within a changing and, in some areas, untested legislative landscape as the Procurement Act 2023 is implemented across the public sector. It is recognised that this may give rise to legal challenge, as markets and authorities adapt to new requirements. The Council takes dedicated legal advice throughout the procurement process to minimise risk and support defensible decision-making. While such risks can be mitigated, they cannot be eliminated entirely and are managed within the Council's established governance and assurance framework.

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

Current Risk: MEDIUM

Residual Risk: LOW

12. Equalities

12.1 To be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case and procurement documentation, where applicable

13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1: May 2026 Procurement Pipeline where the contract value is expected to exceed £500,000.

14. Background papers

- 14.1 Procurement Forward Look Cabinet Report March and September 2025 (previous versions).

15. Report sign-off

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Assurance and Governance Director (Monitoring Officer), the Resources Director (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).

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Appendix 1 - May 2026 Procurement Pipeline 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, service demand, or reshaping of requirements and council priorities.

Final awarded contracts may include additional provisions for extensions or optional periods, subject to: ongoing budget availability, financial approval processes, opportunities for service consolidation or value-for-money improvements over the life of the contract.

Spend figures relating to Contracts, Frameworks and DPS are derived from financial and operational data and represent the most accurate position. Some variance may arise due to the nature of decentralised call-off arrangements and system limitations.

No procurement will be formally commenced until the budget has been confirmed and signed off by the relevant Finance Business Partner as part of the Council's approval and assurance process.

Ref.	Contract Name	Description	Cabinet Member	Executive Director/Director	Contract Term (Initial)	Estimated spend over Initial Contract Term	Term Extensions beyond initial (Recommended)	Estimated spend over Term Extensions (Recommended)	Estimated Total Spend	Potential Market Route
1	Children's Services Specialist Assessments and Interventions for Social Care	The contracts will buy specialist assessments and interventions for children and families.	Cllr Clare Sutton	Paul Dempsey	2 years	£ 1,300,000.00	5 x 12 month extensions	£ 3,350,000.00	£ 4,650,000.00	Other
2	Active, Passive & Fire Consultancy Fire Works & Services	Buying and managing fire safety systems and services to ensure ongoing Council compliance. This includes getting expert help for fire risk assessments, fire safety plans, and checking fire doors.	Cllr Richard Biggs	Jan Britton	4 years	£ 8,000,000.00	2 x 1 year extensions	£ 2,000,000.00	£ 10,000,000.00	Call off from Framework/DPS
3	Supply of Vehicle Parts and Associated Services	This contract is for one managed service to meet Dorset Council's fleet needs. It covers supplying vehicle parts, tools, materials, and consumables, keeping essential items in stock at Council sites, delivering other items when needed, and arranging one-off services to support vehicle maintenance.	Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	5 years	Up to £7,100,000.00	2 x 1 year extensions	£ 3,500,000.00	£ 10,600,000.00	Call off from Framework/DPS
4	Waste Treatment and Disposal Contract	This contract is for the disposal of municipal "black bag" waste collected at the kerbside by Dorset Council's waste service.	Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	10 years	Up to £130,000,000	2 x 2 year extensions	£ 30,000,000.00	£ 160,000,000.00	Tender - Open
5	Estate Management Services	This contract is to appoint one main provider to manage the Council's properties and supporting the Estates and Finance teams with leases, lettings, valuations, property management, business rates, and general property advice as required.	Cllr Richard Biggs	Jan Britton	4 years	£2.4m (Core) £1.3m (Hotels - Variant) i.e. Bidders would submit a core price PLUS an additional price, should DC elect to take up this option	2 x 1 year extensions	£1.4m (Core) £0.7m (Hotels - Variant) i.e. Bidders would submit a core price PLUS an additional price, should DC elect to take up this option	£3.8m (Core) £2.0m (Variant) Total Including Variant £5.8m NB: total variant option applies if the Hotel & Guest House Estate Management Procurement is unsuccessful	Call off from Framework/DPS
6	Framework for the Supply of Highway Construction Materials	This framework is for the supply of essential highway construction materials, including ready-mixed concrete, asphalt surfacing materials, dry stone aggregates and aggregates used for surface dressing.	Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	8 years (with entry points at years 3 and 6)	£ 27,000,000.00	N/A	N/A	£ 27,000,000.00	Open Framework
7	Reablement Services	This contract is for recovery focussed home-based Reablement services to enable prevention of hospital admission and hospital discharge.	Cllr Steve Robinson	Julia Ingram	5 years	£ 18,000,000.00	2 years	£ 7,000,000.00	£ 25,000,000.00	Competitive Process (Health Regulations)
8	End user computing devices (ESEE)	The contracts will buy laptops, desktop computers, and related equipment, and replacing old devices so the Council maintains performance and security.	Cllr Ben Wilson	Lisa Cotton	2 years 1 month	Up to £2,000,000	N/A	N/A	Up to £2,000,000	Call off from Framework/DPS
9	Wide Area Network and SIP telephony lines	Providing internet and network connections for Council buildings and other locations, along with the Council's main external phone service.	Cllr Ben Wilson	Lisa Cotton	3 years	Up to £700,000	2 x 12 months	Up to £470,000	£ 1,170,000.00	Call off from Framework/DPS
Updates - additional spend/time/scope beyond original approval										
A	Supporting Progress & Inclusion (Alternative Provision)	This contract covers Alternative provision ("AP") education services for children of school age who cannot attend their usual school due to exclusion, medical, or other reasons, so they can continue receiving appropriate education.	Cllr Clare Sutton	Paul Dempsey	2 years 9 months	£ 23,750,000.00	N/A	N/A	£ 23,750,000.00	Other
B	Transportation Engineering Professional Services (TEPS) Contract	The contract provides flexible access to specialist transport and engineering expertise to support the planning, design and delivery of highways and infrastructure projects, ensuring schemes are delivered safely, sustainably and cost-effectively where additional capacity or technical input is required.	Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	5 years	£ 5,000,000.00	3 years + 2 years (Note in current 3 year extension)	£ 5,000,000.00	£ 10,000,000.00	Other
C	Laboratory Testing Services	The contract commissions laboratory testing services to support safeguarding and legal proceedings, providing evidence to inform decisions on whether a child or young person's care environment is safe and meeting their needs.	Cllr Clare Sutton	Paul Dempsey	3 years, 10 months and 2 weeks; 16 May 2024 and ending 31 March 2028	This is an existing contract requiring an increase to the Total Contract Value from £500,000 to £750,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
D	Passenger Transport – Dynamic Purchasing System	The contract commissions passenger transport services for mainstream and SEND education, Adult Social Care, childcare settings and public transport routes, delivered through a Dynamic Purchasing System of approved suppliers. It supports the safe and efficient movement of approximately 9,000 service users across the council's transport network.	Cllr Jon Andrews	Jan Britton	4 years	£ 20,000,000.00	Until February 2029	£ 227,000,000.00	£ 247,000,000.00	Call off from Framework/DPS

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Cabinet

19 May 2026

Update on Public Health Disaggregation including plans for future contracts For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr G Taylor, Health and Housing

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:

S Crowe, Executive Director of Housing, Communities and Prevention

Report author and job title: Rachel Partridge, Deputy Director of Public Health

Email: Rachel.Partridge@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public Choose an item.

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

- 1.1 This report updates members on progress following the disaggregation of Public Health Dorset in April 2025 and the establishment of two separate Public Health teams within Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council. It also sets out the proposed future direction for how Public Health functions and services will be delivered and commissioned, including where joint working between the two councils should continue.
- 1.2 Over the past year, the priority has been to establish the two new Public Health teams while maintaining stability and continuity of services for residents. During this period, a number of Public Health programmes and contracts have continued to operate on a joint basis. This approach has ensured services remain effective and responsive while a longer-term review of commissioning and governance arrangements has been undertaken.
- 1.3 Members are asked to consider and agree a set of guiding principles that will shape future decisions. These principles emphasise that joint working should continue only where there is a clear benefit—such as improved quality, efficiency or value for money—while moving increasingly towards a place-based approach with clearer accountability within each council. Where services remain jointly commissioned, appropriate governance and oversight

arrangements will ensure transparency, effective performance management and statutory assurance through the respective Directors of Public Health.

- 1.4 An overview is provided of anticipated contract and procurement activity for 2026/27 and 2027/28. This includes those services that are expected to remain joint, those that will transition to a single lead authority over time, and those subject to re-procurement when existing contracts expire. All proposals have been developed with legal, procurement and finance colleagues and are aligned with existing contractual commitments and the three-year indicative Public Health Grant settlement from April 2026.
2. Cabinet is asked to consider the report and endorse the progress made to date, agree the proposed principles for future joint commissioning, and support the recommended future direction for Public Health services. Approval is also sought by Cabinet to delegate procurement-related decisions, within agreed governance and financial thresholds, to enable timely decision-making and ensure Public Health services continue to support improved health outcomes and reduce inequalities for residents.

3. Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is asked to:

- 3.1 Endorse the work completed to establish the Public Health teams within Dorset and BCP councils and the continued good performance in line with statutory responsibilities for Public Health as set out in the 2012 Health and Social Care Act.
- 3.2 Agree the proposed principles for the planned joint commissioning of Public Health services where it makes sense to continue to do so to maintain service quality, performance, efficiency and value for money for the residents of Dorset.
- 3.3 Agree the principle that where commissioning and procurement decisions are required for any services that remain jointly provided, the lead commissioning authority's decision making and governance route will be followed. This includes respecting thresholds where Cabinet agreement is required under that lead authority's scheme of delegation.
- 3.4 Agree the proposed future direction for the delivery of public health functions and services through the two Public Health teams in Dorset and BCP council.
- 3.5 Delegate responsibilities for decisions associated with future procurement approaches where Dorset Council leads, to the Cabinet Member for Health and Housing in consultation with the Executive Director for Housing, Communities

and Prevention in line with appropriate scheme of delegation and procurement regulations.

4. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 4.1 It has been a year since two new Public Health teams were established in BCP and Dorset Councils. This paper and recommendations provide updates to elected members on the progress establishing the new Public Health teams. They provide an overview of the preferred options for how we intend to commission and provide Public Health functions and services in the future.
- 4.2 It is timely to review and set the future ambitions for the Public Health functions and services over the coming years in line with the 3-year indicative ring fenced grant allocation and the ambitions set out within the Dorset Council Plan.

5. Report

- 5.1 When Public Health Dorset disaggregated in April 2025, many Public Health programmes and contracts remained jointly managed by colleagues located across the two new Public Health teams in BCP and Dorset Council. Over the past year we have been reviewing and working through arrangements and further establish and strengthen the two Public Health teams. NHS structures are changing with the Integrated Care Board in Dorset being replaced by a larger strategic Cluster and two “Places” under the two Health and Wellbeing Boards of BCP and Dorset Councils. Creating two unitary council based public health teams aligns with this direction of travel. This is an important time for review and to agree the future arrangements for providing Public Health functions in Dorset Council and BCP Council, including identifying which Public Health contracts should remain joint where it makes sense to do so.
6. To guide our work and recommended direction of travel the senior Public Health leadership teams, led by the Executive Director of Housing, Communities and Prevention in Dorset Council and Director of Public Health and Communities in BCP Council, and in consultation with the respective lead elected members for Public Health, have developed some guiding principles.

Our guiding principles

Joint Working – only where it makes sense

- We are two separate teams, with our own work priorities unless there is a good rationale for working together.

- We'll keep joint Public Health contracts and programmes that benefit from scale.
- Joint oversight groups will set direction and keep things on track for joint work. Programme plans will be overseen jointly by the Directors of Public Health for their statutory assurance role whilst performance will be monitored on a Local Authority basis through the established governance structures within Dorset Council and BCP Council for clear member engagement and oversight.

Moving toward a Place-Based focus

- We will increase delivery and accountability within each local authority.
- The work will be phased through 2026/27 to ensure an effective and smooth transition.
- It is important to note that some big contracts won't change until 2027–28 due to existing contract terms. These contracts are monitored jointly and continue to provide good services for our residents.

Fairness and equity

- Leadership, commissioning, and support functions will be shared fairly.
- We'll review support functions where capacity is uneven – things like intelligence, communications, Community Health Improvement Service contracts (CHIS) processing, and procurement.
- Schedules will be updated alongside the Joint Sharing Agreement for 2026/27.
- The shared focus of both Public Health teams, under the leadership of the Directors of Public Health and Cabinet and Lead elected members for Public Health is to ensure public health outcomes are delivered equitably across BCP Council and Dorset Council.

- 6.1 This report was taken through People and Health Overview Committee in Dorset Council on 28 April, and was broadly supported by Members with no amendments to recommendations.
- 6.2 The plans for the upcoming contracts and procurement activity for the Public Health Services and activities in 2026/27 and 2027/28 will be subject to the necessary governance, legal and procurement processes as appropriate for each contract by the agreed lead Local Authority.
- 6.3 The proposed contracts and procurement activities have been developed with support from legal and procurement colleagues and all proposed joint contracts

have been taken to the Commercial Board for awareness and approval in accordance with Dorset Council processes.

- 6.4 A focus of the Joint Sharing Agreement between BCP and Dorset Council relates to the management of contracts, commissioning and payments due to the need to have clear legal frameworks for the flow and payments of Public Health funding between the two Local Authorities where we have existing joint contracts. These are summarised in appendix 1
- 6.5 Another key mandated function of Public Health in Local Authorities is to provide advice and guidance to the NHS. There are a number of ways we currently fulfil this duty including Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs), evidence reviews and development and input into Integrated neighbourhood teams and the development of place based partnerships. There are currently significant changes associated with the clustering of Integrated Care Boards, focus on strategic commissioning and delivery of the NHS 10 year Plan For Health, as well as a shift towards place and neighbourhood working. We are currently working with colleagues at NHS Dorset, the ICB cluster and local health providers to identify how we can effectively and efficiently provide Public Health advice, guidance and support through the changes, whether at the cluster level, a BCP or Dorset Council or at a neighbourhood level.
- 6.6 There are a number of other mandated functions that Directors of Public Health need to fulfil for their statutory functions. These are important roles and functions to consider through existing governance structures in the future in Dorset Council through People and Health Overview and Scrutiny committees, however the focus of this current paper is specifically on agreeing the proposed future direction for the Public Health contracts and note the input to the changing NHS structures.

7. Alternative options considered

- 7.1 The alternative arrangements for a complete separation of all Public Health functions, services and contracts was considered neither feasible or desirable.

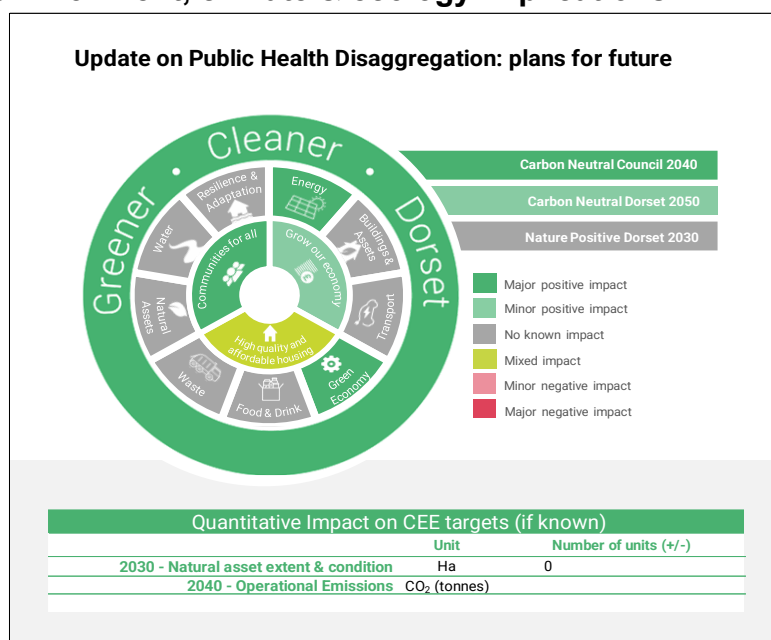
8. Legal considerations

- 8.1 The existing Joint Sharing agreement and any subsequent revisions and updates provides the legal framework for BCP and Dorset Councils to work together to provide and commission public health services on behalf of their residents. Any future contracts will be established in accordance with the necessary legal, procurement, financial and governance arrangements as determined on a case-by-case basis.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 The Public Health functions and services are funded through the ring fenced Public Health Grant given to each upper tier Local Authority. Dorset Council and BCP each received a 3 year indicative settlement from April 2026 and all Public Health services and contracts have been modelled to ensure these are delivered within the grant amount. The efficiency and value for money considerations are part of the rationale to commission mandated Public Health services jointly where this is beneficial.

10. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications



11. Well-being and health implications

- 11.1 Public Health is a statutory requirement for all upper tier Local Authorities. There is a clear ambition to retain and provide high quality public health functions and services to support the health and wellbeing of the residents for Dorset and BCP residents and reduce inequalities in outcomes.

12. Other implications

- 12.1 Not applicable

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 The work of Public Health provides high quality services to the residents of Dorset and seeks to improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities in outcomes. Equality Impact Assessments are completed and performance data is regularly reviewed to mitigate and address an inequalities of access and outcomes.

15. Appendices

- 15.1 Appendix 1 BCP and DC planned Joint Public Health contract work during 2026/27.

16. Background papers

- 16.1 Dorset Council Cabinet Paper 23rd February 2025: [Public Health disaggregation](#)
- 16.2 People and Health Scrutiny Committee 22nd September 2025: [An update on arrangements for public health in Dorset Council following disaggregation](#)

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 Portfolio Holder.

Appendix 1 BCP and DC planned Joint Public Health contract work during 2026/27

Contract	Activity	Proposed Lead Local Authority	Timeframe
	Agree Joint Sharing Agreement for 2026/27	BCP & DC	For April 2026
Community Health Improvement Service (CHIS) contracts	Novation of BCP contracts to BCP. Includes contracts for NHS Health checks, smoking cessation, Drug & Alcohol treatment, Contraceptive services.	BCP & DC	For 2027/28
Integrated Sexual Health and HIV service	Procurement of replacement contract	BCP	For 1 st April 2027
0-19 Public Health Nursing service	Procurement of replacement contract	DC	For 1 st October 2027
Breastfeeding Network Peer Support	Review and procurement to replace existing contract.	TBC	June 2027
Online Smoking Cessation Service	New contract following successful pilot	DC	In progress
Dental Epidemiological survey	Establish compliant contract for existing service provision	DC	In progress
Supervised toothbrushing	Procurement for new service as temporary arrangement.	BCP	In progress
Weight management services	Replace existing contracts	TBC	For 1 st July 2027
Smoking cessation support	Replacement/extension of existing contract (Allan Carr Easy Way)	TBC	For Oct 2026
	Vapes supply	TBC	For 1 st April 2027

Contract	Activity	Proposed Lead Local Authority	Timeframe
AI text messaging	Procurement for new service	DC	Early part of 2026/27
MyQuit app or equivalent	Replacement of existing provision	DC	For April 2027
SmokeFree app or equivalent	Replacement of existing provision (cost and volume)	DC	TBC – when existing provision is fully utilised
LiveWell Dorset digital platform	New contract or arrangement to replace existing contract	DC	For 1 st April 2027
Health Checks	Consideration of new model of service provision	TBC	From 2027/28
Healthy Movers	New grant award for 3 years	DC	From April 2026

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Cabinet

19 May 2026

Advocacy and Independent Visitor maximum contract spend approval For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr C Sutton, Children's Services, Education & Skills

Local Councillor(s): N/A applicable county wide

Senior Leadership Team:

P Dempsey, Executive Director – Children's Services

Report author and job title: Tina Ironside. Strategic Commissioner

Email: tina.ironside@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

1. Advocacy

The Children Act 1989 (sections 26A, 24D and 26)¹ states local authorities must provide advocacy for:

- children in care
- children in need
- care leavers

This applies when the child is making or thinking about making a complaint or representation about local authority services.

Children detained or treated under the Mental Health Act 1993 (section 130A)² also have a legal right to an advocate.

Government guidance makes it clear that councils should ensure children can access advocacy more broadly, especially where:

- their views conflict with professional opinion
- power imbalance is obvious
- they struggle to engage safely or confidently

¹ [Section 26A of the Children Act 1989](#)

² [Section 130A of the Mental Health Act 1983](#)

Local authority obligations to provide advocacy are also rooted in the Human Rights principles within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2. Independent Visitors

Local authorities have a statutory duty under section 23ZB of the Children Act 1989³ to appoint Independent Visitors for children in care where it would be in their best interests, and they must actively consider this for each child.

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

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 An Independent Visitor is an adult volunteer appointed by a local authority to visit, befriend and advise a child in care. They offer a consistent, trusted relationship focused on the child's wellbeing; someone who spends time with them, listens, and supports them as they grow up.

Independent Visitors:

- are there for the child, not to assess or make decisions
- provide friendship, stability and advice
- complement, but not replace social workers, carers or advocates

- 1.2 An advocate is an independent person who helps a child or young person have their voice heard in decisions that affect them. An advocate helps the child say what they want, makes sure adults listen and supports them to challenge decisions safely if needed.

Advocates:

- support children and young people to understand their rights
- helps them express their views, wishes and feelings
- can speak on the child's behalf or help the child speak for themselves

- 1.3 In September 2023 Cabinet gave approval for the procurement of the Advocacy and Independent Visitors Service for children and young people, based on an estimated contract value of £500k and a term of 4 years. This enabled us to scope a procurement exercise based on need and budget. A contract was subsequently tendered and awarded to the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). The contract was for 3 years from August 2024 with a value of £569k, with an option for 3 additional years, so potentially until July 2030, at a cost of a further 192k per year. No further approval has since

³ [Section 23ZB of the Children Act 1989](#)

been sought from Cabinet to cover the costs which are over the £500k approved in September 2023 and this report seeks to correct that.

- 1.4 The contract with NYAS is performing well, with increasing numbers of children benefiting from advocacy and Independent Visitor support. The contract is regularly overseen, and performance scrutinised by Corporate Parenting Board alongside contract management processes.
- 1.5 The contract spend will exceed the £500,000 estimate originally approved by Cabinet during the 2026/27 financial year. Cabinet approval is therefore sought to increase the maximum contract value to £1,300,000, reflecting the initial contract term of the three-years and the optional extension years built into the contract, subject to continued strong performance. This also allows us to reflect any increase in need for the service across the contract term.
- 1.6 Increasing the maximum spend limit will enable the Council to:
 - extend Independent Visitor support to more children in care and care leavers in 2026/27; and
 - provide capacity and flexibility to respond to future growth in demand for advocacy and Independent Visitor services, including over the three optional extension years
- 1.7 Setting this spend limit does not commit Dorset Council to spend up to the agreed total contract value. It allows up to respond appropriately to need and have consistency of service and also allows for an amount of contingency should it be needed. Dorset Council's internal scheme of delegation will be followed to secure the required additional approval and use of contingency and contract extension processes.

2. **Recommendation**

- 2.1 Council is recommended to approve a maximum spend limit of £1.3million on this contract which will ensure our children and young people have access to an advocate or Independent Visitor in accordance with our local authority responsibilities.
- 2.2 Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Children's Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills to negotiate and authorise any further contract extensions or amendments subject to the spend limit in 2.1.

3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**

- 3.1 The procurement of Dorset's Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service was included in the Additional Procurement Forward Plan 2023-24 approved by Cabinet in September 2023⁴. The Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service line stated an estimated contract spend of £500k and a 3-year contract term in accordance with procurement advice at the time.
- 3.2 During 2026/27, contract spend will exceed the £500,000 originally approved by Cabinet. We also anticipate continued growth in the need for Independent Visitors and advocacy across the remainder of the contract term, including the three optional extension years, should the contract continue to perform well. Through the procurement work the current contract value is up to £192,000 per annum for a three-year term plus 3 optional year extensions. The amount requested for approval reflects the need to continue to negotiate and increase the use of Independent Visitors and advocacy.
- 3.3 Further Cabinet approval is sought for a spend limit to cover the contract value and term, plus increases to allow for actual and anticipated need.

4. The report

NB: details of NYAS's tender submission that are commercially sensitive and are not essential to the context of this report have been omitted.

- 4.1 The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) was awarded Dorset's Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service contract from 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2027, with the option to extend on an annual basis until 31 July 2030.
- 4.2 NYAS has now reached the capacity of the contract for matching children in care with an Independent Visitor. This is positive, as it means more children are being supported than was forecasted.
- 4.3 There are children in care on NYAS's waiting list that cannot be matched unless capacity is increased. Additionally, more children in care will benefit from being referred for an Independent Visitor during the term of the contract.
- 4.4 Care leavers aged 18 to 25 who are already matched with an Independent Visitor would benefit from continuing their relationship, if they wish.
- 4.5 It is beneficial for Children's Services to have the authority to increase the budget for this contract according to need. This would provide the flexibility to grow the service gradually, rather than committing to a large, upfront increase to the contract.

⁴ [Cabinet decision Sept 23 Procurement Forward Plan](#)

- 4.6 The number of hours of advocacy increased in the current contract from the previous contract. Whilst NYAS have remained within the maximum contracted advocacy hours since the new contract started, we also want flexibility to agree increases to the advocacy element during the term of the contract, if there is need.
- 4.7 This report is seeking Cabinet approval for an increased maximum spend limit for this contract.
- 4.8 Any proposed increases to Independent Visitor numbers and advocacy hours will be dependent on available budget and the provider's capacity. This contingency spend limit may not be used, it just gives flexibility for Cabinet to delegate further approval within the council's governance processes for entering into agreements. Section 7 details the actual and contingency approval increase.

5. **Alternative options considered**

- 5.1 Not increasing capacity within the contract is an option. However, this would mean that either:
- not all children and young people who would benefit from an Independent Visitor or advocate can have one and we would not meet our legal obligations and responsibilities
 - we would need to spot purchase these services at a higher cost
- 5.2 We could decide to end the contract in July 2027 and not use the 3 optional annual extensions and procure the service again. However:
- procurement is a costly and resource intensive process to undertake
 - a higher rather than lower value replacement contract is likely
 - the contract is performing well

- 5.3 Therefore, neither of these alternative options are viable.

6. **Legal considerations**

- 6.1 The Children Act 1989 (sections 24D and 26) imposes a duty on local authorities to provide advocacy for children in care, children in need, and children who are care leavers. The Children Act 1989 (section 23ZB) further imposes a duty on local authorities to appoint Independent Visitors for children in care where it would be in their best interests. Cabinet approved an estimated spend of £500,000.00 for this service on 5th September 2023. The Contract was subsequently awarded to National Youth Advocacy Service

(NYAS) and commenced on 1st August 2024 for an initial period of 3 years. The contract included scope for extensions (3 x 1 year) and for the price to be varied.

- 6.2 The costs of the initial 3-year contract, the desire to take up the 3-year extension, and the increase in actual and forecasted demand has resulted in the need for an increased spend limit of £1,300,000. This variation to the total contract value needs Cabinet approval. The increase is lawful under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Financial implications

- 7.1 The total budget for this contract from 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2030 is £1,152,000 (including the three optional extension years).
- 7.2 Increasing the number of children matched with an Independent Visitor in the 2026/27 contract year onwards will incur an additional cost of £10,127.
- 7.3 Cabinet approval is required for a spend limit contingency to provide flexibility to increase Independent Visitor matches and advocacy hours, where need is identified and agreed. Including the amount set out in 7.2, the proposed maximum spend limit is £1,300,000 across the full six-year contract period.
- 7.4 The proposed spend limit reflects analysis of historical demand and anticipated growth in need. As set out in paragraph 4.8, approval of this limit does not commit Dorset Council to spend the full amount.

7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 8.1 The climate wheel is not applicable as this paper relates to an existing contracted service with no change in delivery method, just quantity.

8. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 A fundamental purpose of advocacy and Independent Visitor services are to improve outcomes for children and young people, including their well-being and health.
- 9.2 Dorset Council require the contracted provider to be responsive to advocates and Independent Visitor referrals to minimise impact on emotional well-being for children and young people.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 Dorset's new advocacy approach evolved when we were pathfinders for the Department for Education's (DfE) Families First for Children programme. In April 2025 the DfE rolled out the Families First Partnership (FFP) to all local authorities in England. Its purpose is to rebalance the system towards earlier,

family-centred help and stronger multi-agency child protection, keeping families together where it is safe to do so and reducing unnecessary escalation into care. FFP strengthens expectations that children's voices are heard, supported and represented, and it explicitly relies on existing statutory advocacy duties, especially where children are involved in child protection, family decision-making and care proceedings.

10.2 In addition to regular contract management reporting, NYAS report to Dorset's Corporate Parenting Board each autumn.

11. Risk implications

10.3 The level of risk has been identified below:

Risk: Not all children and young people who want one and are eligible have access to an advocate or Independent Visitor

Context:

- here is a statutory duty to provide advocacy and to actively consider Independent Visitors for children in care.
- the contract has reached capacity for Independent Visitor matching and there is a waiting list, meaning some eligible children cannot currently access support. Trends indicate advocacy capacity will also be exceeded by the end of 2026/27.

Current risk	Residual risk
High Likelihood: Likely Independent Visitor demand already exceeds capacity and advocacy may exceed it by end 2026/27. Severity: Moderate Risk of children's voices not being heard, safeguarding issues being missed, adverse inspection findings and reputational impact.	Medium If Cabinet approves a maximum spend limit that enables capacity to be increased: • Independent Visitor waiting lists can be reduced. • flexibility exists to respond to increased demand. • oversight via contract management and Corporate Parenting Board continues. Likelihood: Possible Demand may still fluctuate year to year. Severity: Moderate

12. Equalities

- 2.1 The decisions sought within this paper do not change which children and young people will benefit from the services; only that we can provide them to more of them, including a higher age range if they are matched with an Independent Visitor (care leavers up to 25 years).

13. Appendices

- 13.1 Appendix 1: Case studies evidencing impact

14. Report sign-off

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

Appendix 1: Case studies evidencing impact

Independent Visitors case study

actual name has been changed

Background

Holly entered foster care following a period of instability and family breakdown. Over time, she experienced several changes in where she lived, each one affecting her confidence and sense of security. By the time she learned about the Independent Visitor service, Holly felt overwhelmed by the number of new adults in her life. She shared that she was “tired of new people” and wasn’t sure an Independent Visitor would be any different or able to understand what she had been through. Despite her hesitation, Holly did express a wish to get out of the house more, spend time with someone who wasn’t part of her professional network, and “do normal things”: relaxed, everyday activities that weren’t linked to school, appointments, or support plans. These early conversations shaped a fully child-led matching approach.

Child-led matching process

The Independent Visitor Coordinator placed Holly’s voice, preferences, and pace at the centre of the process. Within three months, a carefully selected Independent Visitor was identified; someone with lived experience of care, shared interests in arts and crafts and cinema trips, and a calm, friendly approach. Holly was given clear, age-appropriate information and offered choice at every stage, including the right to say no. A supported introductory visit took place with her foster carer present to help Holly feel safe. This approach reflected the service’s commitment to trauma-informed and relational practice.

Initial engagement and reluctance

At first, Holly was quiet and cautious. She gave short answers, kept her distance, and didn’t feel ready to trust straight away. In response, NYAS and the Independent Visitor planned a low-pressure first outing to do something familiar and fun, not too long, and with her foster carer nearby at the start. This allowed Holly to stay in control and reduced the pressure to connect before she felt ready.

Turning point: the first supported visit

The first outing became a key turning point. Seeing her foster carer relaxed and comfortable helped Holly let her guard down. The Independent Visitor’s own lived experience meant they could gently normalise how Holly was feeling; reassuring her that it was okay to be wary and that many children feel the same after moving between different homes.

The conversation felt natural and unforced, and Holly later said it felt “different to talking to social workers” and that her Independent Visitor “gets it.”

Growth, engagement and outcomes

Over the following weeks, Holly’s confidence grew. She began choosing her own activities, from cinema trips to creative outings, and started to look forward to seeing her Independent Visitor. She became more relaxed, opened up more in conversation, and increasingly led the pace and direction of visits.

Holly now:

- chooses the activities for each visit
- engages consistently and with enthusiasm
- expresses trust and enjoyment in spending time with her Independent Visitor
- shares her thoughts and feelings more openly

She has told the service she feels listened to, safe, and not judged, which are key indicators of improved emotional wellbeing and relational security.

The value of a care-experienced Independent Visitor

Holly’s Independent Visitor’s lived experience has been central to the success of the match. It has helped to:

- reduce the power imbalance
- create a foundation of empathy and understanding
- help Holly feel seen without needing to explain everything
- provide a positive, relatable adult role model

Holly has said it helps knowing her Independent Visitor has “been through similar stuff and is okay,” reinforcing that her feelings are normal and that positive futures are possible.

Oversight and support

NYAS maintains regular oversight through check-ins with Holly, her Independent Visitor, and her foster carer. The pattern of visits, Holly’s emotional wellbeing, and her engagement are monitored closely to ensure the match continues to be safe, enjoyable, and centred around her wishes.

Impact summary

Holly’s story demonstrates:

- Timely matching: achieved within three months
- Trauma-informed practice: pacing, choice, and emotional safety embedded throughout
- Improved wellbeing: increased confidence, happiness, and social engagement

- Trusted relationship: consistent, dependable adult outside professional networks
- Role-modelling: powerful impact of a care-experienced volunteer

Conclusion

Holly's experience shows the profound impact a well-matched Independent Visitor can have on a child who has experienced multiple moves and uncertainty. What began with understandable reluctance has grown into a positive, trusting relationship that supports Holly's emotional wellbeing, confidence, and sense of being genuinely understood. Her story reinforces the value of child-centred, trauma-informed, relational practice, and the unique strength that care-experienced volunteers bring to Dorset's children and young people.

Advocacy case studies

names have been changed

1. Anna – Managing professional contact at school

Age range: 12+

Context: Anna shared that unexpected visits from professionals during the school day left her feeling “upset”, “shocked” and reluctant to engage. She wanted all contact to happen at home unless essential.

Advocacy impact: The advocate presented Anna's wishes clearly at her ICPC, ensuring professionals understood the impact unexpected contact had on her.

Outcome: The plan was updated to prevent school-based visits unless absolutely necessary and with prior notice. At her RCPC, Anna confirmed this had been followed and said she felt much happier.

1. Finn – Choice of school placement

Age range: 12+

Context: After entering care, Finn expected to join Oak Upper School with his friends but was instead enrolled in a different school linked to his placement. He felt unheard and wished to remain with his peer group.

Advocacy impact: The advocate met with Finn who said he wanted to make a complaint about the move of school for him from the area where he knew everyone and he wanted to stay with his school friends. He felt there was “no one listening” to him about his choice of school.

Outcome: The complaint resulted in Finn being permitted to attend his chosen school.

2. Kylie and Keen - Returning home to mum

Age range: 15+ and 12+

Context: Over approximately 18 months, the siblings regularly told their advocate that they were unhappy in their foster placement and wanted to return to their mother's care.

Advocacy impact: Their advocate ensured these wishes were consistently recorded and discussed at CIC Reviews, influencing ongoing care planning.

Outcome: Both young people have now successfully returned to live with their mother, with support in place.

Nina – Transition, recovery and education

Age range: 18+

Context: The advocate first began working with Nina in December 2023, when she was at Child in Need, she spent some time building a relationship with her, as she had some additional needs and attended a specialist school. Nina then suffered a mental health crisis which resulted in a serious incident at home. She was in hospital after this, and the advocate continued to visit, gaining her views to ensure her voice was heard during a very stressful period. She then went into short-term accommodation, as she was unable to live at home. She was also unable to attend school, which she had previously enjoyed. She was supported by the advocate during the transition to her permanent home. During this period it is notable that Nina changed homes, service providers and social workers, as she turned 18, and advocacy provided the one professional constant in her care. Nina had often told the Advocate she wanted to go to school again, so once settled they asked for this to be addressed. They reviewed her previous EHCP, suggesting amendments, and attended review meetings. They reviewed all provision in the EHCP with Nina's views in mind to ensure they aligned, before sharing this with the education lead.

Advocacy impact: Advocacy provided stability through these changes, supporting Nina in hospital, helping her navigate transitions, and assisting with reviewing and amending her EHCP to ensure her educational needs and wishes were reflected.

Outcome: A search for suitable education provision is now underway, and Nina has settled well into her permanent home. Advocacy remained her consistent support throughout a period of significant upheaval.