Dorset Council

CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2026

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

Also present: Cllr Neil Eysenck and Cllr Carole Jones

Also present remotely: Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Les Fry, Cllr Margaret Goringe, Cllr Cathy Lugg, Cllr Craig Monks and Cllr Andy Todd

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):
Jan Britton (Executive Director - Economy and Environment), Sean Cremer (Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), Lisa Cotton (Interim Executive Director - Modernisation and Customer Delivery), Sam Crowe (Executive Director - Housing, Prevention and Communities), Steven Ford (Assistant Chief Executive), Jen Furnell (Corporate Director for Education and Learning), Julia Ingram (Director - Adult Social Care), Jonathan Mair (Director - Assurance (Monitoring Officer)), Catherine Howe (Chief Executive), Richard Freed (Service Manager for Commercial and Procurement), Jessica Maskrey (Head of Service – Assets & Property) and Lyn Cooch (Senior Nutrient Project Officer)

STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council took the opportunity to make a short statement, reflecting on the year so far and highlighting the challenges posed by extreme weather, as well as the resilience shown by communities and services across Dorset.

The statement noted that the county had experienced sharp contrasts within a short period of time, from flooding that affected communities and infrastructure to periods of intense heat and increased wildfire risk. This served as a reminder that extreme weather events were becoming less exceptional and were increasingly something for which we must be prepared.

The Leader went on to thank councillors, employees across all services, and the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service for their professionalism, adaptability and commitment. He acknowledged that, whatever the challenge, they had continued to deliver services and support residents.

The Leader also thanked Litter Free Dorset for its long-running campaign against disposable barbecues, which had ultimately helped to achieve meaningful change by reducing a significant risk to the countryside and coastline.

In conclusion, the Leader reaffirmed the Council's commitment to investing in climate adaptation, flood resilience and nature recovery.

51. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

52. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest to report.

53. **Public Participation**

There were no public questions for this meeting.

54. **Questions from Councillors**

There were no questions from councillors for this meeting.

55. **Forward Plan**

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

56. **July 2026 (period 4) financial management report 26/27**

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance provided an update on the current financial position, noting the pressures that were affecting all councils, including inflation, rising fuel costs, increased demand for support and the wider cost-of-living impact. He further highlighted the predicted budget pressures in areas such as adult and children's social care, emphasising that increased spending reflected the council's commitment to supporting vulnerable people and families.

At this stage, the Council was forecasting a net revenue overspend of £8.136m, representing 1.7% of the approved net budget of £466m. The Cabinet Member further advised that the reserves remained strong and debt levels remained stable.

At 6.42pm the fire alarm sounded and the meeting was adjourned to allow the evacuation of the building. The meeting reconvened at 7.14pm following confirmation that it was safe to re-enter the premises.

Responding to a question regarding the escalating Dedicated Schools Grant deficit, with costs rising sharply and the rate of increased acceleration, the Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance acknowledged the seriousness of the trend, noting government advice that funding would be proportionate but not unlimited. He confirmed that further clarification on repayment timing would need to be provided.

In response to comments made regarding opportunities to increase income or reduce expenditure through improved utilisation of Coombe House, the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education outlined current projections, the wider reform context and the forthcoming developments such as Osprey Quay opening in 2028. She advised that she would discuss the more detailed questions raised with the councillor concerned outside of the meeting.

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

Decision

(a) That the SLT's forecast as of July 2026 including progress in addressing demand for services and on the transformational and efficiency savings incorporated into the budget, be noted.

(b) That the addition of the Wimborne Community Sports Hub capital budget (£2.289m) to the Capital Programme (Business case in Appendix C), be approved.

(c) That the addition of the Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement Scheme Phase 5 (The Cobb) capital budget (£8.365m) to the Capital Programme, be approved.

(d) That the decision to extend the Mosaic contract which required a retrospective update to a September 2023 Cabinet record of decision (Appendix B), be noted.

(e) That the number and extent of contract exemptions, be noted. (Appendix B)

Reason for the decision

To enable Cabinet to consider the Council's current and projected financial position, approve the necessary amendments to the Capital Programme, and ensure that financial resources, reserves and future investment priorities were aligned with the Council Plan, supported sustainable service delivery, and informed the development of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and future budget strategy.

57. **Additional Procurement Pipeline Report - over £500k (2026 - 27) and Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2025 - 2026**

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance introduced the procurement pipeline report, noting the significant programme of planned investment across highways, transport, energy, and key in-house services. He highlighted that the report demonstrated the scale of commercial activity, supporting long-term planning, transparency and value for money across services.

The Cabinet Member also invited members to approve the council's Modern Slavery Transparency Statement and asked all councillors to familiarise themselves with its contents.

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

Decision

(a) Cabinet considered the contents of the report (of 8 September 2026) in respect of proposed additional more than £500k procurement activity for 2026-27 that was listed in Appendix 1 of the report and the Modern Slavery Transparency Statement and approve and agree:

(i) That the commencement of each of the procurement procedures (or variation) as listed (subject to an approved and available budget, business case) in the report.

(ii) That authority be delegated to the relevant Cabinet member, after consultation with the relevant Director to make the following decisions:

To agree final procurement documentation developed and refined with the broad scope of the procurement briefing notes (available on request)

To agree contract award subject to an approved and available budget (through a recommendation to award report provided the tender outcome are within + 5% of the budget agreed with Finance)

To note that approval of procurement activity within Appendix 1 of the report included authority to establish, join or utilise framework agreements, dynamic markets, and similar procurement arrangements where identified in the supporting procurement briefing note, together with the subsequent award of call-off contracts and associated agreements in accordance with the Council's rules.

(b) That the Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2025-2026, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, be approved for publication.

Reason for the decision

To approve the proposed procurement pipeline and associated delegations for contracts exceeding £500k, ensuring appropriate governance, oversight and flexibility in the procurement process, while also reaffirming the Council’s commitment to ethical procurement practices through the publication of the Modern Slavery Transparency Statement.

58. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

59. **Exempt Business**

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

Decision

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

Reason for taking the item in private

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

The live streaming was concluded at this juncture.

60. **Modification of Public Health Contracts over £500k: 0-19 Public Health Nursing and Sexual Health Services**

The Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention and Communities presented a report seeking approval to modify two Public Health Contracts of over the key decision threshold of £500k.

It was proposed by Cllr M Bell and seconded by Cllr S Robinson

Decision

That the recommendations set out in the exempt report of 8 September 2026 be approved.

Reason for the decision

To modify two Public Health Contracts over £500k: Sexual Health and 0-19 Public Health Nursing Services.

61. **Commercial Property Disposal**

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets presented at report that proposed the sale of the Council's freehold interest in a commercial property. In introducing the report, he also proposed an amendment to recommendation 2.2 of the exempt report of 8 September 2026.

It was proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr G Talyor

Decision

That the recommendations set out in the exempt report of 8 September 2026 and as amended, be approved.

Reason for the decision

To approve the disposal of the Council's freehold interest in the commercial property and to agree the arrangements necessary to complete the sale in accordance with the Council's asset management and financial objectives.

62. **Grant funding from LNMF for nitrogen mitigation, Poole Harbour Catchment**

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Planning Enforcement set out the exempt report regarding grant funding from the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund for nitrogen mitigation in the Poole Catchment area.

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

Decision

That the recommendations set out in the exempt report of 8 September 2026 be approved.

Reason for the decision

Dorset Council had a legal duty, as the competent authority under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), to ensure that new development did not adversely affect the integrity of protected habitats within Poole Harbour.

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 7.25 pm

Chair

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