



Place and Resources Overview Committee

Date: Thursday, 9 July 2026
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Meeting Room 1, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Members (Quorum: 3)

Ryan Hope (Chair), Andrew Starr (Vice-Chair), Piers Brown, Richard Crabb, Simon Gibson, Sherry Jespersen, David Northam, Roland Tarr, David Taylor and Val Potheary

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

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic & Governance Services
Meeting Contact 01305 224450 /antony.nash@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

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

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Agenda

Item	Pages
1. APOLOGIES	
To receive any apologies for absence.	
2. MINUTES	5 - 10
To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2026.	
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interests 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
antony.nash@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
by 8.30am on 6 July 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 antony.nash@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on 6 July 2026

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

6. PUBLIC BUS AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT TRANSFORMATION OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE 11 - 106

To receive the report from the Strategic and Policy Team Manager.

7. PARKING REVIEW AND STRATEGY 107 - 128

To receive the report from the Transport & Parking Strategy Lead

8. ENDORSEMENT OF DORSET LOCAL VISITOR ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN 129 - 162

To receive the report from the Service Manager- Economic Development & Skills

9. PLACE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 163 - 176

To review the Place and Resources Overview Committee Work Programme.

To review the Cabinet Forward Plan.

10. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items of business which the Chair 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.

11. EXEMPT BUSINESS

To consider passing the following recommendation:

Recommendation

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in item(s) because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

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

Reason for taking the item in private

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



PLACE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 4 JUNE 2026

Present: Cllrs Ryan Hope (Chair), Andrew Starr (Vice-Chair), Piers Brown, Richard Crabb, Simon Gibson, Sherry Jespersen, David Northam, Roland Tarr and David Taylor

Present remotely: Cllrs Val Potheary

Also present: Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Belinda Bawden, Cllr Nick Ireland and Cllr Shane Bartlett

Also present remotely: Cllr Alex Brenton

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

Jan Britton (Executive Director - Economy and Environment), Antony Nash (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), Jack Wiltshire (Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering), Owen Clark (Strategic and Policy Team Manager), Christopher Whitehouse (Projects Team Manager), Wayne Sayers (Transport Planning Team Leader) and Helen Jackson (Principal Transport Planner)

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

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 26 March 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

4. Questions from Councillors

There were no Questions from Councillors.

5. Joint Local Transport Plan 2026 - 2041

The report was introduced by the Cabinet member for Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth who set out the need for the Joint Local transport plan and the next stages of governance.

The Strategic and Policy Team Manager presented the key points of the report and the implications of the Local Transport Plan and the accompanying delivery plan. The Principal Transport Planner set out the vision for transport in Dorset and the six core objectives. The engagement undertaken was described and the financial commitments within the Plan and the aspirations of the plans.

The Committee welcomed the extensive governance process undertaken during the development of the Plan and acknowledged the improvements that had been made as it progressed.

During the discussion, consideration was given to the role of rail within the transport network, particularly in West Dorset.

Discussion took place regarding the geographic distribution of projects within the implementation plan, with concerns raised about potential disparities and the equitable distribution of investment across Dorset.

The focus of the Plan on people rather than vehicles was explored, together with how the Plan would align with planning processes and the Local Plan, including the potential impact on car journeys.

The particular challenges faced by rural communities were discussed, recognising the continued reliance on private vehicles and the importance of community transport in reducing that dependence. It was noted that a further report on this matter would be considered by the Committee in July.

Consideration was also given to the relationship between transport improvements and wider infrastructure requirements, including water infrastructure, and how these would be reflected within the implementation plan.

The discussion highlighted that different areas of Dorset have differing transport needs and that these should be reflected in delivery.

The Committee considered the monitoring arrangements for the Plan, including the key performance indicators that would be used to measure outcomes and assess its effectiveness.

Discussion also took place on the distribution of funding between the two councils, with emphasis placed on ensuring that funding is allocated fairly.

Congestion and journey times were considered, including the aspiration to reduce congestion and improve network performance. The processes required to secure funding from National Highways were also discussed.

The importance of partnership working with National Highways was recognised, together with the shared ambition of delivering highway improvements that support the objectives of the Local Transport Plan.

Recommendations

The recommendations from the report were proposed by Cllr Taylor and seconded by Cllr Crabb and carried with 7 votes for and 1 against.

The Place and Resources Overview Committee;

- Endorsed the Local Transport Plan 2026 – 2041 and recommend it for approval by Cabinet and adoption at Full Council.
- Supported delegated authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth, in consultation the Cabinet Member for Place Services, to approve any necessary minor non-material and non-policy altering changes that such do not materially alter the substance, objectives or strategic direction of the plan before it is published.
- Supported the delegated authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth, in consultation the Cabinet Member for Place Services, to approve timely updates to the Implementation Plan, where the need arises, to take account of changes of national policy, local priorities or funding.

6. **e-Scooter Micromobility Rental Service**

The Cabinet member introduced the paper and the background for the paper and handed to the Projects Team Manager who presented the key factors from the paper and the considerations that have been raised in engagement with disability groups and the police and crime commissioner while addressing the key concerns and the practical implications of the scheme.

During the discussion, concerns were raised regarding the potential for e-scooters to be hacked and used by individuals who did not hold valid driving licences. Consideration was given to the controls available to operators and the measures required to manage this risk.

The Committee discussed compliance rates associated with bikes and scooters being left outside designated parking bays. It was noted that Dorset currently achieves a compliance rate of 95%, indicating a high level of adherence to the scheme requirements.

The use of geomapping technology was explored, particularly its role in identifying areas where access restrictions or speed controls may be required. Discussion highlighted the importance of involving ward members, town councils and parish councils in identifying locations where additional controls may be necessary.

Safety requirements formed a significant part of the discussion. Assurances were provided that appropriate safety standards and mitigation measures would be incorporated into the procurement process and applied throughout the operation of the scheme.

The Committee also considered the commercial viability of e-scooter schemes. It was noted that a sufficient population base is required to sustain such schemes commercially, and that this had been a key factor in selecting the proposed trial locations.

Further discussion focused on safety concerns relating to the use of e-scooters on both pavements and the road network, and the potential impact on other road users and pedestrians.

The need for appropriate signage to support the operation of the scheme was also discussed, including its role in promoting awareness, compliance and safety.

Recommendation:

The recommendations set out in the paper were proposed alongside specific suggestions from the Committee debate by Cllr Tarr and seconded by Cllr Taylor and unanimously agreed.

The Place and Resources Overview Committee;

- reviewed and provided comment on the proposal to introduce e-scooter rental services in:
 1. Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell (via a competitively procured operator); and
 2. Corfe Mullen and Upton (via an extension of the existing BCP scheme);
- Examined the proposed delivery model, including the practical, legal and operational arrangements required to implement the scheme in accordance with Department for Transport (DfT) trial requirements.
- Provided direction and challenge on key aspects of the proposal including:
 1. The sustainability of the proposed operating areas;
 2. The adequacy of proposed controls relating to safety, parking and equalities impacts;
 3. The extent to which reliance on police enforcement presents an acceptable risk

The recommendations of geofencing to be coproduced with Ward Councillors, Town and Parish councillors and the response to the DfT to look to provision of warning signage was added to the report recommendations.

7. Place and Resources Overview Committee Work Programme

The Committee reviewed the work programme.

8. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

9. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.13 pm

Chairman

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Place and Resources Overview Committee

9 July 2026

Public Bus and Community Transport Transformation Outline Business Case For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s): N/A

Senior Leadership Team:

Jan Britton, Executive Director, Economy and Environment

Report author and job title: Owen Clark (Strategic and Policy Team Manager)

Email: owen.clark@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public [Choose an item.](#)

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report presents an Outline Business Case (OBC) discussing the options for improved public buses and community transport in Dorset and invites the Committee to review the evidence and provide feedback on the proposed strategic direction.
- 1.2 The OBC, presented in Appendix 1, identifies a transport system that is increasingly under pressure and not well suited to the future needs of a rural county. Bus services have declined in recent years and remain limited in frequency and coverage, particularly in rural areas. Community transport plays a vital role but is fragmented, reliant on short term grant funding, and not configured to operate at scale. At the same time, demand for specialist transport, particularly for SEND and Adult Social Care, is rising and is often met through high-cost, individually commissioned journeys. Taken together, the current system is fragmented, inefficient and increasingly difficult to sustain.
- 1.3 The OBC demonstrates that these challenges cannot be addressed through incremental changes alone. Improvements to individual services, while valuable, do not resolve the underlying issues of fragmentation and

inefficiency. The analysis shows that meaningful improvement requires a shift to a more coordinated, system-wide approach.

- 1.4 The proposed direction of travel is therefore to develop a more integrated transport system. This would bring together public bus services, community transport, flexible provision and specialist transport into a single coordinated network. In practice, integration means coordinated timetables, shared vehicles, common booking systems, and multipurpose journeys where possible. The aim is to improve access, make better use of existing vehicles and resources, and reduce reliance on high-cost bespoke transport where appropriate. Residents will see good outcomes: more flexible transport so that our residents can travel with greater independence and confidence. Enhanced public transport will also contribute towards our council plan climate priority through an enhanced public bus system that has the potential to reduce private car use.
- 1.5 The OBC identifies three key components of this approach:
 - 1) reshaping demand, including promoting independence and reducing reliance on specialist provision;
 - 2) improving integration across services through shared planning and coordination; and
 - 3) expanding flexible transport options, particularly in rural areas.
- 1.6 Technology will play an important enabling role, supporting better scheduling, improved use of data and a more consistent user experience.
- 1.7 The model also creates opportunities to work more closely with partners, including the NHS, to better align patient transport and reduce duplication.
- 1.8 Two broad options are presented for further consideration.
 - 1) An Integrated Service Improvement Model, which focuses on strengthening the existing system.
 - 2) A Fully Integrated Transport System, which represents a more comprehensive redesign.

These options reflect different levels of ambition, affordability and pace of change.

- 1.9 The key purpose of this report is therefore to:
 - a) provide Members with an overview of the case for change;
 - b) present the proposed strategic direction and options for improved transport services; and

- c) seek feedback to inform the next stage of development.
- 1.10 Member feedback will be used to refine the preferred approach ahead of preparing a Full Business Case and progressing the programme.
- 2. Recommendations**
- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
 - a) reviews the Outline Business Case and endorses the proposed strategic direction;
 - b) provides feedback on the options for improved transport services, and the preferred pace and scale of transformation to inform the development of the Full Business Case.
- 3. Reason for the recommendations**
- 3.1 The transport system is at a point where existing arrangements are no longer sufficient to respond to rising demand, particularly in SEND and Adult Social Care transport, alongside ongoing decline in public transport provision. Without a clear strategic reset, pressures on cost, access and service performance will continue to increase, limiting the council's ability to meet both statutory responsibilities and wider objectives.
- 3.2 The OBC provides a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of these issues and identifies a clear need to move toward a more integrated, system-wide approach. However, it also highlights that this represents a significant shift in how transport is planned and delivered, with implications for service design, user expectations and partnership working.
- 3.3 Early engagement with the Committee is therefore required to test the proposed direction, confirm the level of ambition and ensure that the Full Business Case is developed on a clear and supported strategic basis.
- 4. The Outline Business Case**
- 4.1 The OBC provides a structured assessment of Dorset's transport system and the options available to address current and future challenges. It has been developed following Cabinet direction in January 2026. Its purpose is to establish a clear and robust understanding of the issues facing the system, define the scale of change required and identify strategic preferred way forward for further development. At this stage, it does not set out a fully costed or deliverable solution but instead focuses on the overall proposed direction of travel and level of ambition.
- 4.2 The evidence presented in the OBC demonstrates that Dorset's transport system is operating under increasing pressure and is not functioning

effectively as a single, coordinated system. Services are currently delivered across a number of separate arrangements, including public bus services, community transport, Home to School transport and Adult Social Care transport. These services operate largely independently of one another, which limits coordination and results in inefficiencies across the system. This includes duplication of journeys, under-utilisation of vehicles and limited flexibility to respond to changes in demand or user need. These factors increase costs significantly.

- 4.3 Bus services have changed significantly in recent years, with reductions in some areas mainly due to wider national market pressures. In Dorset, this has affected how often services run and when they are available, particularly in rural areas. This work looks at how we can strengthen and improve the network so it better meets residents' needs in the future.
- 4.4 Community transport continues to play an important role in providing access for older and more vulnerable residents. However, the OBC identifies that provision is fragmented across a large number of independently operated schemes, is fragile due to short term grant funding arrangements, and is often reliant on volunteers to coordinate and deliver services. While these services deliver clear local benefits, they are not currently configured to operate at scale or to integrate effectively with other parts of the transport system. This limits their ability to respond consistently to demand and to form part of a more coordinated network.
- 4.5 The most significant pressures identified in the OBC relate to specialist transport services. Demand for SEND Home to School transport has increased steadily in recent years. This is driven by rising numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and increasing reliance on specialist placements, which are often located some distance from home. Journeys are typically delivered on a bespoke basis, which limits opportunities for sharing and increases cost. Adult Social Care transport presents similar challenges. Services are largely delivered through dedicated arrangements linked to day opportunities and are typically separate from the wider transport system. While these services are essential in meeting statutory duties, they are resource-intensive and offer limited scope for further efficiency under the current approach.
- 4.6 These operational challenges are reinforced by wider financial and structural pressures. The OBC highlights that Dorset receives comparatively lower levels of government funding for bus services than similar rural authorities, while demand for specialist transport continues to increase. Past and present government bus funding is provided in Appendix 2 of this report. As a result, a significant proportion of current expenditure is committed to maintaining

existing services. This limits the ability to invest in improvements, expand provision or develop alternative models.

- 4.7 Looking ahead, the OBC identifies a number of additional pressures that will further affect the system. These include demographic change, particularly an ageing population, national reforms to SEND and increasing expectations for more flexible, digitally enabled services. Taken together, these trends point toward a system that will become more costly and more difficult to operate unless changes are made.
- 4.8 The Strategic Case concludes that the current system is under increasing pressure and will need to evolve to continue meeting residents' needs in the long term. This report looks at how we can improve the way services work together so they remain reliable, accessible and affordable.
- 4.9 These conclusions are translated into a set of service requirements set out in Section 2.6 of the OBC. These requirements emphasise the need for a system that improves access and connectivity, operates in a more integrated way across services, provides greater flexibility in how journeys are delivered and is financially sustainable over the long term. These requirements form the basis for the development and assessment of options within the Economic Case.
- 4.10 The Economic Case builds on this analysis by considering how these requirements can be delivered. A wide range of options have been identified and assessed, covering demand management, service design, supply and system integration. The key finding from this assessment is that isolated or incremental interventions do not perform strongly on their own. Improvements in one part of the system are dependent on changes elsewhere. As a result, approaches that focus on a single element, such as expanding services or introducing policy changes in isolation, are unlikely to achieve the required level of improvement.
- 4.11 The OBC demonstrates that the highest-performing approaches are those that combine multiple interventions into a single, coordinated model. In particular, three elements are consistently identified as critical: reshaping demand, improving integration across services and expanding flexible transport options. This reflects the interdependent nature of the system and confirms that a more comprehensive, system-wide approach is required.
- 4.12 Based on this analysis, the OBC identifies a clear direction of travel. This is to move toward a more integrated transport system, where services are planned and delivered as a single coordinated network rather than as separate service arrangements. The proposed model brings together the core bus network, community transport, flexible and demand-responsive services, council fleet and specialist transport into a single framework. The intention is to create a

system that is more efficient, more responsive to demand and better able to meet a range of user needs.

- 4.13 For example, this could mean more SEND learners receiving travel training so they can travel independently on public transport, or receive a personal travel budget to help them arrange their own travel, instead of the council providing transport. Community transport and flexible services could operate as local “spokes” collecting passengers from villages and connecting them to central “hub” bus stops, where they can transfer onto main bus routes or rail services. In some situations, there may be opportunities to bring people with similar journeys together so they can travel at the same time, making better use of available vehicles while maintaining appropriate support.
- 4.14 This approach is supported by improvements in technology and the use of data. The OBC highlights that digital tools, including shared scheduling systems, booking platforms and improved data integration, will be key enablers of a more coordinated system. These tools will support better planning of journeys, improved utilisation of vehicles and a more consistent experience for users. They also create opportunities to scale community and flexible transport provision in a way that is currently not possible.
- 4.15 The proposed model also creates opportunities for closer partnership working. In particular, there is potential to better align transport with health services, including NHS patient transport. This could reduce duplication of journeys, improve coordination and support a shift toward greater use of shared and mainstream transport where appropriate. More broadly, the approach supports a move toward more integrated public service delivery.
- 4.16 In addition, the OBC recognises the importance of aligning with wider regional developments. A more integrated and scalable transport system will better position Dorset to respond to changes in governance and funding, including the potential development of a Wessex Strategic Authority. This provides an opportunity to strengthen links with neighbouring areas and to maximise future investment.
- 4.17 To support further development, the OBC presents two option packages. The first is an Integrated Service Improvement Model, which focuses on strengthening coordination and delivery within the existing system. The second is a Fully Integrated Transport System, which represents a more comprehensive redesign of how the system operates. These options reflect different levels of ambition and provide a clear choice between a more gradual approach and a more transformational model with greater long-term impact. The key differences are highlighted below:

Theme	Integrated Service Improvement Model (ISIM)	Fully Integrated Transport System (FITS)
Overall approach	Builds on existing services with improved coordination	Redesigns the system as a single integrated network
Scale of change	Incremental improvements	Transformational change across the system
Integration	Partial integration between services	Full integration across buses, community and specialist transport
Delivery complexity	Low - builds on current structures	High - requires new ways of working and coordination
Risk	Lower implementation risk	Higher delivery and transition risk
Impact on access	Gradual improvements to services	Step-change improvement in access and connectivity
Use of technology	Improved use of current systems	Greater reliance on digital tools and shared platforms
Change for users	Limited changes	More significant changes, including greater use of shared transport
Financial impact	Modest efficiency and cost avoidance	Greater long-term efficiency and cost control
Long-term sustainability	Partial improvement	Strong improvement and more sustainable model

- 4.18 Overall, the OBC provides a consistent and strong case for change. It demonstrates that the current system is fragmented and increasingly difficult to sustain, that demand pressures will continue and that incremental improvements alone will not be sufficient. It identifies a clear direction toward a more integrated, system-wide approach, supported by technology, partnership working and more flexible service models.
- 4.19 The purpose of this stage is to confirm whether this direction of travel is supported and to seek Member views on the scale and pace of change. This will inform the development of the Full Business Case, which will set out the detailed delivery approach, financial model and implementation plan.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 A structured and proportionate approach was taken to identifying and assessing alternative options within the OBC. This is set out in Section 3 and follows established principles, ensuring that a wide range of potential interventions were considered before narrowing to a small number of credible strategic approaches.
- 5.2 The starting point was a comprehensive long list of options, developed across four broad areas: demand management and policy measures, changes to service design and delivery, expansion of transport supply and wider system integration. This ensured that both operational and structural solutions were considered, rather than focusing solely on individual service improvements.
- 5.3 A “do nothing” or continuation of the current model was considered at an early stage and discounted. Continuing with existing arrangements would not address declining bus provision, rising demand for specialist transport or the wider inefficiencies within the system.
- 5.4 A number of standalone or incremental options were also assessed. These included measures such as expanding individual services, increasing funding for community transport or making targeted changes to eligibility and policy. While these options can deliver localised improvements, the OBC found that they do not address the underlying structural issues. In particular, they do not resolve fragmentation between services or improve the overall efficiency of the system.
- 5.5 The appraisal process demonstrated that individual interventions tend to perform weakly when considered in isolation. For example, increasing transport supply without addressing demand pressures risks increasing costs, while demand management measures alone are unlikely to succeed without viable alternatives being in place. As a result, such options were not progressed further as standalone approaches.
- 5.6 The OBC therefore moves from individual interventions to considering combined options, where multiple changes are brought together into a coherent package. This reflects the interdependent nature of transport services, where improvements in one area depend on changes in others.
- 5.7 Through this process, a smaller number of integrated option packages were developed and tested against the programme objectives and critical success factors. These factors include improving access, supporting independence, delivering value for money and enabling long-term sustainability.
- 5.8 This led to the identification of two shortlisted approaches. The first is an Integrated Service Improvement Model, which focuses on strengthening coordination and improving the performance of the existing system. The

second is a Fully Integrated Transport System, which represents a more fundamental redesign of how transport is planned and delivered.

- 5.9 These options reflect different levels of ambition and complexity. The first offers a more incremental and lower-risk pathway, while the second provides greater potential for long-term benefits but requires more significant change. Both options are considered viable and provide a clear basis for further development.
- 5.10 Overall, the approach taken ensures that the preferred direction is grounded in a robust assessment of alternatives. It demonstrates that meaningful improvement cannot be achieved through isolated measures alone, and that a more integrated, system-wide response is required to address the challenges identified in the Strategic Case.

6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 The Council has a range of statutory duties in relation to transport provision, including Home to School Transport and responsibilities under Adult Social Care legislation.
- 6.2 The OBC explores how existing responsibilities can be delivered in a more efficient and sustainable way.
- 6.3 Any future decisions arising from the Full Business Case will be subject to detailed legal review, including consideration of procurement, equalities and public law obligations.

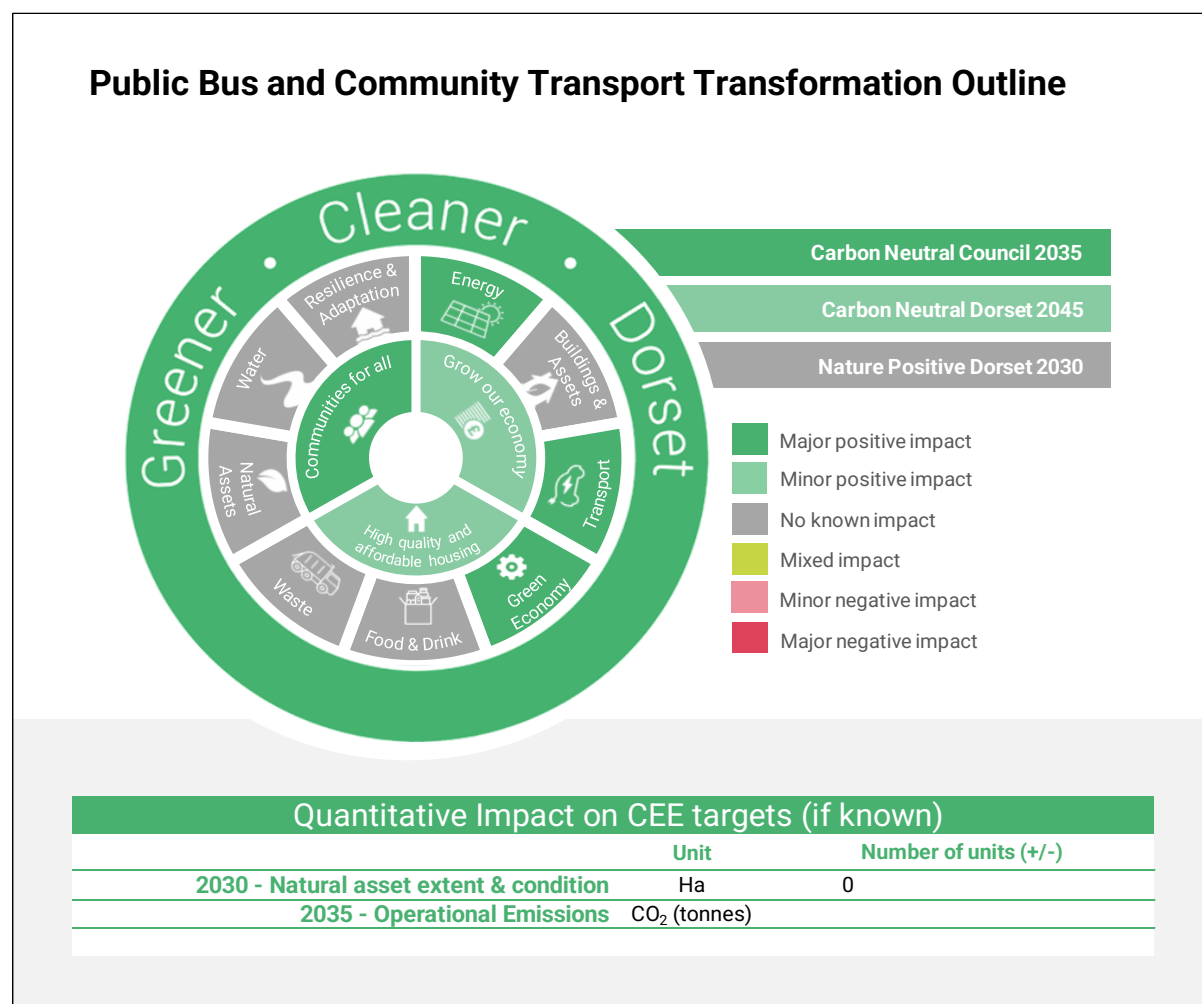
7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The council currently spends circa £40m per year on transport. Transport costs, particularly for SEND, are rising rapidly nationally, driven by increased demand, specialist provision and higher provider costs. The current transport model is therefore unsustainable.
- 7.2 At this stage, the report does not seek approval of funding or confirm detailed financial requirements. Instead, it establishes that:
- a) the current cost trajectory is not sustainable; and
 - b) a more integrated system offers the potential to improve efficiency and manage demand over time.
- 7.3 While this programme will require upfront investment, it aims to stabilise long-term expenditure by reducing reliance on high-cost provision, improving efficiency and supporting a shift toward more flexible, integrated transport solutions.

7.4 Detailed financial modelling, including costs, funding requirements and potential savings or cost avoidance, will be developed as part of the Full Business Case.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The climate decision wheel is presented below:



8.2 Improving public and community transport has the potential to support a shift away from private car use, reducing carbon emissions and supporting the Council's climate objectives.

8.3 A more integrated and efficient system can also reduce duplication of journeys and make better use of existing resources, contributing to wider environmental benefits.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 Transport is a key enabler of access to employment, education, healthcare and community life.

9.2 Improved public buses and community transport will support:

- a) reduced social isolation;
 - b) increased independence for older and vulnerable residents; and
 - c) improved access to services and opportunities.
- 9.3 Improved alignment with NHS patient transport also has the potential to enhance access to healthcare while improving efficiency across the wider system.
- 9.4 The programme also aligns with the council's commitment to becoming Age Friendly, recognising the important role that accessible and reliable transport plays in enabling older residents to remain independent, socially connected and active within their communities. By improving access to services and supporting more flexible, locally delivered transport options, the proposed approach has the potential to reduce isolation, support healthy ageing and enable people to remain living well in their own communities for longer.

10. Other implications

- 10.1 This programme is closely aligned to the ongoing car parking review, which is considering how parking policy and pricing can better support wider transport objectives. Together, these strands of work provide an opportunity to take a more coordinated approach to managing travel demand, improving access to services and supporting a shift toward more sustainable travel choices. In particular, changes to parking policy may create opportunities to reinvest income into public and community transport over time, while also encouraging greater use of shared and flexible transport options where appropriate. Aligning these programmes ensures that transport provision, demand management and revenue strategies are considered as part of a single, joined-up approach to improving the overall system.
- 10.2 This programme aligns closely with the council's wider Communities for All agenda, which focuses on strengthening relationships with residents, improving local access to services and enabling more place-based delivery. The move toward a more integrated transport system supports this approach by improving connectivity within communities, enabling more local access to services and reducing reliance on fragmented, service-specific provision. It also reflects a broader shift toward coordinating services around people and place, rather than organisational boundaries.
- 10.3 The programme will also connect with the Council's Community Conversations activity taking place from July to October. Transport is consistently identified as a key issue by residents, and these conversations will provide an opportunity to gather further feedback on local issues. This will support the development of the Full Business Case and help ensure that future service design reflects local priorities and lived experience.

- 10.4 The programme also supports a more regional approach to transport and aligns with the development of a potential Wessex Combined Authority. Creating a more integrated and scalable transport system strengthens readiness for future regional governance and enables closer alignment with neighbouring authorities. This is particularly important given that travel patterns, labour markets and service access extend beyond administrative boundaries, requiring a more coordinated sub-regional response.
- 10.5 A Wessex Authority would provide the opportunity to improve transport through greater strategic coordination, stronger influence over funding and the ability to plan services at a wider geographic scale. This includes aligning bus networks across boundaries, coordinating investment in infrastructure and supporting the development of more consistent and integrated service offers. For Dorset, the proposed programme provides a clear foundation for this by developing a place based, integrated transport system that can be scaled and aligned with regional priorities, helping to secure investment and deliver improved connectivity for residents and businesses.

11. Risk implications

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

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Low

- 11.2 The main risks relate to:

- a) continuing with an unsustainable transport model;
- b) increasing financial pressure if demand for specialist transport continues to grow; and
- c) the complexity of implementing system-wide change.

- 11.3 Mitigations include:

- a) Development of a Full Business Case with detailed financial modelling and phased implementation options.
- b) Early engagement with operators and suppliers to manage procurement risks and secure capacity.
- c) Integration of risk monitoring into project governance with escalation routes to senior leadership.

- 11.4 These risks will be managed through a phased approach and further detailed analysis at Full Business Case stage.

12. Equalities

- 12.1 Transport has a significant impact on equalities, particularly for:
- a) older residents;
 - b) disabled people;
 - c) young people; and
 - d) those living in rural areas without access to a car.
- 12.2 The OBC aims to improve access and reduce inequalities by creating a more inclusive and accessible transport system.
- 12.3 A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken at the next stage as proposals are developed in more detail.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 Supporting evidence accompanying this report includes:
- a) Appendix 1 – Outline Business Case
 - b) Appendix 2 – DfT Bus Funding Local Authority Comparisons
 - c) Appendix 3 - Climate Wheel Accessible Table and Recommendations
 - d) Appendix 4 - EQIA Screening

14. Background papers

- 14.1 Previous Committee Decisions:
- a) [Cabinet Decision, Thursday, 29th January, 2026](#)

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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Transforming Public Buses and Community Transport

Outline Business Case (June 2026)



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Executive Summary

Introduction

This Outline Business Case (OBC) sets out the case for transforming public buses and community transport across Dorset. It responds to Cabinet direction (January 2026) to explore a more sustainable, integrated approach to transport delivery.

The OBC provides an evidence-based assessment of the current system, future needs and potential options for reform. It does not seek to confirm final delivery arrangements or funding commitments, which will be developed through the Full Business Case (FBC).

Strategic Case – The Case for Change

Dorset's transport system is under increasing strain and is no longer well aligned to the needs of a modern rural county.

Bus services have declined in recent years and remain limited in frequency and coverage, particularly in rural areas. This limits the ability of residents to rely on services for everyday journeys and reinforces dependence on private cars or specialist transport. Although the council has intervened to maintain socially necessary services, the network remains insufficient to meet current and future needs.

Community transport provides essential access for rural and vulnerable residents, including older people and disabled users. However, provision is fragmented, inconsistently funded and heavily reliant on volunteers. While it delivers significant social value, its current structure limits its ability to scale, integrate or respond consistently to demand across the county.

The council's fleet operations support SEND, Adult Social Care and community services but operate within a constrained model. Vehicles are largely used during peak periods and are not easily shared across services due to operational, regulatory and workforce constraints. This results in under-utilisation of assets and limits opportunities to improve efficiency or expand provision.

SEND transport is a major and growing pressure within the system. Demand continues to rise due to increasing numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans and reliance on specialist provision, often located at a distance from home. The current model depends heavily on bespoke, individually commissioned journeys, making it resource-intensive and difficult to optimise.



Similarly, Adult Social Care transport is delivered through a predominantly dedicated system, focused on transporting individuals to and from day opportunities. Services operate separately from the wider network, reinforcing reliance on specialist provision and limiting opportunities to support independence or develop more local, flexible solutions.

Across the system, services are planned and delivered largely in isolation. This results in duplication, under-utilised capacity and a heavy reliance on high-cost, bespoke journeys. These challenges are compounded by Dorset's structural funding disadvantage compared to similar rural authorities, limiting the scope to improve or expand services.

The case for change is therefore clear. Dorset must move from a fragmented, service-specific model toward a more integrated and flexible transport system that makes better use of resources, supports greater independence and provides a sustainable long-term solution.

Strategic Objectives

The programme is designed to address these challenges through six key objectives:

- improving connectivity and reliability of services;
- enhancing access to employment, education and essential services;
- reducing social isolation and increasing independence;
- creating a financially sustainable and resilient transport system;
- supporting local communities and economic activity; and
- encouraging a shift toward more sustainable, low-carbon travel.

These objectives provide a clear framework for shaping future options and align with Dorset Council's wider priorities, including economic growth, strong communities and climate action.

Economic Case – Options and Preferred Direction

The Economic Case considers how these objectives can be delivered and assesses a wide range of potential options. The analysis demonstrates that incremental or isolated interventions will not address the scale of the challenge. Options focused on maintaining the current model or introducing limited improvements perform poorly against the programme's objectives and do not provide a sustainable solution.

In contrast, the highest-performing approaches are those that combine:

- demand management (including policy reform and travel training);



- expansion and diversification of transport supply; and
- integration of services and systems.

This demonstrates that only system-level change will address the underlying issues. The Preferred Way Forward is to move toward an integrated transport system, where services are planned and delivered as a single coordinated network. This model brings together:

- public bus services as the core network;
- community and voluntary transport supporting local access;
- flexible and demand-responsive services for rural areas; and
- targeted specialist provision for those with the highest needs.

It is underpinned by three interconnected principles:

- reshaping demand to reduce reliance on specialist transport;
- improving integration across services and providers; and
- expanding flexible, community-based transport options.

Two shortlisted option packages have been identified: representing a more incremental approach; and a more comprehensive system-wide transformation. These options provide a clear choice between pace and scale of change, which is a key decision point for Members.

Financial and Commercial Context

The Financial Case confirms that the current transport system is under increasing pressure, driven by demand growth and reliance on bespoke provision. Without change, these pressures are expected to continue.

The programme is therefore positioned primarily as a response to an upward cost trajectory, rather than a short-term savings initiative. Financial benefits are expected to arise over time through improved efficiency, reduced duplication and slower growth in high-cost provision.

At this stage, the OBC does not seek to confirm full funding requirements. Instead, it establishes the strategic direction, recognising that:

- detailed financial modelling will be developed at FBC stage;
- delivery will require a combination of existing resources, reprioritisation and future investment; and
- benefits will be realised progressively, with a focus on long-term sustainability.



The Commercial Case highlights that delivery will depend on a more coordinated and flexible provider market, requiring:

- stronger partnerships with bus operators and community providers;
- more integrated and outcome-focused commissioning; and
- a shift away from fragmented, service-specific contracts toward system-wide delivery models.

Management Case – Deliverability

Delivery will require a combination of existing resources, reprioritisation and future investment, with detailed modelling to be confirmed at FBC stage.

The programme is deliverable but represents a significant shift from current arrangements. Delivery will require coordination across multiple services, including transport, Adult Social Care and Children's Services, alongside engagement with operators, communities and service users.

A phased implementation approach will be essential to manage risk and ensure continuity of service. This will allow:

- early progress on demand management and lower-risk interventions;
- gradual expansion of transport provision; and
- progressive development of integration and coordination capability.

Strong governance, programme management and stakeholder engagement will be critical and will be developed in detail at Full Business Case stage.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This OBC demonstrates a clear and compelling case for change.

The analysis confirms that meaningful improvement requires a coordinated, system-wide transformation, rather than incremental change. An integrated transport system provides the most credible pathway to improving access, supporting independence and delivering long-term sustainability.

Subject to endorsement, the next stage will be the development of a Full Business Case. This will set out the detailed financial, commercial and delivery arrangements required to implement the programme, alongside a phased plan for delivery from 2027 onwards.



1 Introduction

This Outline Business Case (OBC) supports the decision set out in the Cabinet report (January 2026) to explore a more sustainable and integrated approach to transport delivery across Dorset. It builds on the direction agreed by Members to address growing pressures within the current system and to develop a clear, evidence-based pathway for reform.

The OBC provides a structured assessment of the available options, drawing on analysis of current performance, future demand and strategic priorities. It sets out how the council can move toward a more coordinated and efficient transport system, aligned with wider objectives for economic growth, community wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

This document establishes the case for change, identifies feasible options and assesses their merits. It is intended to support decision-making on the preferred approach and to provide a robust foundation for the development of a Full Business Case.



2 Strategic Case

2.1 Strategic Context

Dorset Council is developing a long-term programme to improve public and community transport across the county. We are currently at the Outline Business Case (OBC) stage. This stage is intended to make a clear case for change, examine a range of possible options, and identify a preferred approach that can be taken forward for more detailed development.

The OBC responds to Dorset's well-recognised challenges, including low bus service frequencies, limited weekend and evening provision, fragile community transport schemes, and a long-standing structural funding gap when compared with similar rural areas. These issues contribute to rural isolation, reduced access to employment and education, and greater dependency on private vehicles or specialist transport. A strategic shift is therefore needed to create a more reliable, inclusive and sustainable transport system for the county.

At this stage of the process, the council is exploring potential approaches for a transport system that strengthens public bus provision, improves integration between public and community transport, and introduces more flexible transport options to meet the needs of our rural communities. The OBC also considers how improved mainstream public and community transport may help reduce reliance on more expensive specialist adult and children's transport services, where appropriate, and promote greater independence for residents.

The OBC will be followed by a Full Business Case (FBC), which will provide detailed financial modelling, confirm the preferred option, outline procurement requirements and set out the final delivery plan. Endorsement of the strategic direction at this outline stage will allow the council to prepare for the necessary consultation, procurement activity and phased implementation aligned to the 2027/28 budget cycle.

2.2 How the Programme Supports Existing Policies and Strategies

This section sets out how the proposed programme aligns with, and supports the delivery of, local priorities and existing national and regional strategies. It demonstrates how the OBC builds on established priorities across transport, children's, adults' and community services, and how it contributes to wider objectives such as improving access, supporting independence and achieving financial and



environmental sustainability. This alignment provides a clear strategic foundation for the programme and helps ensure that the proposed approach is both consistent with policy direction and capable of delivering long-term benefits for Dorset.

2.2.1 Alignment with Dorset Council's Corporate Priorities

The programme directly supports Dorset Council's four strategic priorities:

Affordable housing

The programme supports the council's development of a new Local Plan, which seeks to deliver sustainable, well-connected housing growth across Dorset. As new housing is brought forward, there is a need to ensure that development is supported by transport systems that enable access to employment, education, health services and community infrastructure. A programme to transform public buses and community transport complements this by promoting accessible, place-based and lower-carbon travel options, helping to ensure that new and existing communities are not reliant on private car use. In doing so, it contributes to the delivery of more sustainable patterns of development, supporting the Local Plan's ambition to create inclusive, well-served and environmentally responsible communities.

Growing the economy

The programme supports the council's ambition to grow a sustainable and prosperous economy, as set out in both the Energising Dorset's Economy programme and the Economic Growth Strategy 2025–2040. These initiatives focus on attracting investment, creating high-value jobs and driving innovation, particularly in growth sectors such as clean energy and advanced manufacturing. Transport plays a critical enabling role by improving access to employment, skills and key economic sites, and by supporting the efficient movement of people and goods across the county. Reliable and accessible transport is widely recognised as essential for connecting people to economic opportunities and supporting productivity.

Communities for all

The programme supports this priority by strengthening local communities, reducing inequality and improving access to services. It also aligns with the council's Age Friendly Dorset initiative, which aims to create inclusive environments that enable people to remain active, independent and connected as they age. Together, these approaches recognise that access to reliable and flexible transport is a key enabler of community participation and wellbeing, particularly for older residents and those living in rural or more isolated areas.

The programme supports the council's shift towards community-centred public services. It does this by working closely with voluntary groups, operators, town and



parish councils, and residents to design services that reflect local needs and support local priorities. This approach recognises the essential role that volunteers and community transport providers play in serving rural areas and ensures that future planning strengthens these partnerships.

Responding to the climate and nature crisis

The programme supports the council's commitment to responding to the climate and nature crisis, as set out in the Council Plan and Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy. These strategies establish clear ambitions to reduce carbon emissions, protect and enhance the natural environment, and support the transition to a more sustainable, low-carbon economy. Transport is a key contributor to carbon emissions, and improving the way people travel is critical to achieving these objectives. Encouraging a shift from private car use to public and community transport reduces emissions, and improves air quality.

Collectively, these strategic alignments demonstrate that the programme is a key enabler of the council's vision to create stronger, more connected and sustainable communities across Dorset. By improving access, supporting independence, enabling economic growth and contributing to environmental objectives, the programme helps translate this vision into practical outcomes for residents and businesses. It ensures that transport is not considered in isolation, but as a central part of how the council delivers its wider ambitions, creating places where people can live, work and thrive now and in the future.

2.2.2 Alignment with National, Regional and Local Strategies

The programme is consistent with wider national, regional and local policy ambitions for improving public and community transport. This OBC sits within an established strategic framework that supports better access, reduced emissions and more inclusive mobility, while also responding to the changing nature of demand arising from reforms in Adult Social Care and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

At a national level, the programme aligns with Department for Transport policy, including Better Connected: A Strategy for Integrated Transport and the Government's Vision for Buses, which emphasise integrated, user-focused systems that improve accessibility, coordination and flexibility. These policies highlight the importance of bringing together different modes of transport, improving data and digital capability, and developing demand-responsive and locally tailored solutions.

The programme also aligns strongly with the statutory framework for Adult Social Care, particularly the Care Act 2014, which places a duty on local authorities to promote individual wellbeing, independence and prevention, including reducing social isolation and enabling access to services and community life. This is reinforced



through Care Act statutory guidance, which emphasises the importance of supporting people to remain active, connected and independent wherever possible. In this context, transport is recognised as a key enabler of Adult Social Care outcomes, rather than a standalone service. Local initiatives such as Age Friendly Dorset, highlight the importance of accessible, reliable and flexible transport in enabling older residents and vulnerable adults to remain active, independent and connected within their communities.

The programme also aligns with national policy direction for children and young people with SEND. The Department for Education's Schools White Paper and ongoing SEND and Alternative Provision reforms set out a clear shift toward a "local child, local school" principle. This approach seeks to ensure that more children and young people can have their needs met within local mainstream provision, supported by earlier intervention, strengthened inclusion and improved local services.

Over time, this direction of reform is expected to:

- reduce reliance on distant specialist placements;
- support increased access to education and support closer to home; and
- reduce the need for long-distance, high-cost and specialist transport provision.

While these changes will take time to fully materialise, they represent a fundamental shift in the system which directly affects transport demand, moving from a model characterised by long-distance, individual journeys toward one that is more localised and integrated within communities. This OBC reflects both the current pressures within the SEND transport system and the expected longer-term direction of travel.

The programme also aligns with emerging regional priorities, including the Western Gateway Strategic Transport Plan and associated Strategic Investment Plan, which emphasise the importance of improving connectivity across the South West and Western Gateway region to support economic growth, productivity and decarbonisation. These plans highlight the need for a more integrated transport system that better connects key economic centres, supports major investment opportunities and improves access to jobs and services across wider travel-to-work areas.

In addition, the programme is consistent with the direction of travel toward increased regional collaboration and the potential establishment of a new Wessex Combined Authority. A more integrated, system-based approach to transport provision will support future alignment of funding, planning and delivery at a broader geographical scale. By improving coordination across services and enabling more efficient use of resources, the programme helps position Dorset to respond positively to regional governance changes and maximise the opportunities for investment and collaboration that these arrangements are intended to unlock.



At a local level, the programme is closely aligned with the new Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2026–2041, which provides the long-term statutory framework for transport across Dorset. The LTP sets out a clear vision for a transport system that is safe, sustainable, inclusive and resilient, and explicitly seeks to support economic growth, improve health and wellbeing, and contribute to climate and environmental objectives. It represents a shift toward a vision-led, place-based approach, moving away from traditional demand-led planning and instead shaping a future system that offers genuine travel choice, reduces reliance on private car use and enables more sustainable patterns of development and movement.

The programme aligns closely with the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which sets the long-term vision for a better connected, easier-to-use and more reliable bus network. The BSIP priorities include improving coverage, reliability, integration between modes, simpler fares, and higher vehicle standards. The transport programme will contribute directly to these aims by strengthening the bus network, exploring flexible transport models and supporting community-based solutions.

The programme also complements ongoing work under the Enhanced Partnership with operators, supporting shared approaches to network planning, timetables and improvements to customer experience.

The programme also aligns with the council's ongoing parking review. There is a close relationship between parking provision and transport network performance, particularly in terms of managing demand, reducing congestion, improving air quality and supporting access to local centres. This OBC complements this work by improving the availability of alternative travel options, helping to support more balanced demand across both the transport network and parking estate.

More broadly, the programme brings together transport, Adult Social Care and SEND policy directions into a single, coherent response. By aligning transport provision with prevention, independence, localisation and inclusion, it supports a shift away from fragmented, service-specific provision toward a more integrated, flexible and sustainable system.

Further detail on National, Regional and Local priorities can be found in Appendix A.

2.3 The Case for Change

Dorset's current public bus and community transport offer is no longer able to meet the needs of a modern rural county. Services are constrained by long-standing structural challenges, including low frequencies on many routes, limited weekend and evening provision, and significant gaps in coverage across rural areas. These limitations affect residents' ability to travel independently, reach essential services, and take part in employment, education and community life. This also places pressure on specialist and supported transport services, which must fill gaps where



mainstream public transport is not available or reliable. As a result, there is growing reliance on more bespoke provision, including home to school transport for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and transport for Adult Social Care and day opportunities, which places additional strain on the overall system.

The county's rural geography and dispersed settlements mean that providing transport is inherently resource-intensive. At the same time, Dorset receives lower levels of transport funding than comparable rural authorities, limiting the ability to maintain or grow the network. This funding imbalance affects both public and community transport and contributes to long-term fragility within the system. Many community transport schemes operate with small budgets and rely heavily on volunteers, leaving them vulnerable to rising costs and inconsistent capacity. These structural issues also make it more difficult to respond effectively to increasing demand for specialist transport, which is often delivered through high-cost, individually commissioned services.

These pressures reduce social and economic opportunities for residents and risk widening inequalities, particularly for those without access to a car. They also make it difficult for the council to achieve wider ambitions around community resilience, sustainable travel and climate action. Without intervention, the network is likely to become increasingly fragile, with reduced patronage and fewer opportunities to integrate services or improve value for money. At the same time, continued growth in demand for specialist transport will further increase costs and limit the ability to reinvest in more flexible and accessible alternatives.

The Case for Change therefore focuses on establishing a transport system that is reliable, inclusive and financially sustainable. It identifies the need to strengthen the bus network, provide better links for rural communities, support and stabilise community transport, and explore flexible solutions where fixed routes cannot operate effectively. Alongside this, there is a need to take a more proactive approach to managing demand, ensuring that specialist transport is targeted where it is most needed, while enabling greater independence and supporting increased use of shared, community and mainstream transport options where appropriate. Addressing these challenges now will allow Dorset to move toward a coherent, long-term model of mobility that better supports residents, businesses and local places.

This OBC sets out the evidence for change and provides a structured assessment of potential options. The next section outlines the objectives that will guide the preferred approach and shape the future of Dorset's public and community transport network.

2.3.1 Objectives



The objectives of this programme describe the specific outcomes the council intends to achieve through transforming public buses and community transport. They reflect the issues identified in the Case for Change and provide a structured basis for option development. While they stand independently, each objective contributes directly to one or more of Dorset Council's four strategic priorities.

Objective 1: Create a more frequent and better-connected transport network

Desired outcome: A transport system that residents can depend on, with improved service frequencies, fewer gaps in rural coverage and stronger links between public, community and flexible services. More dependable services will reduce missed medical appointments, support daily life and help ensure that more residents can reach essential services without relying on a car.

Supports Council priorities: Growing the economy; Communities for all; Climate and nature.

Objective 2: Improve access to key services, employment, education and essential destinations

Desired outcome: Residents across Dorset, including those in rural and isolated areas, have improved, affordable access to jobs, education, healthcare, shopping and leisure. This will support local economic activity, reduce inequalities in access and help young people and working-age residents participate fully in Dorset's economic and community life.

Supports Council priorities: Growing the economy; Affordable housing; Communities for all.

Objective 3: Reduce social isolation and increase independence for residents of all ages

Desired outcome: A more inclusive transport system that enables older residents, disabled people, vulnerable people, young people and those without a car to travel independently with confidence. This includes strengthening community transport, improving mainstream services where appropriate, and ensuring that residents can access community life, social opportunities and support networks.

Supports Council priorities: Communities for all; Health and wellbeing.

Objective 4: Build a financially sustainable and resilient transport model

Desired outcome: A long-term, affordable transport system that reflects the realities of a rural county with dispersed settlements. This includes reducing reliance on specialist services where mainstream options are suitable, making better use of



resources and ensuring that the council can sustain improvements despite historic funding inequalities.

Supports Council priorities: Value for money; Growing the economy; Communities for all.

Objective 5: Support thriving, well-connected communities and local economies

Desired outcome: Better transport connections that strengthen town centres, support local businesses, encourage tourism and help residents engage in community life. Improved connectivity will make Dorset's local areas more resilient and attractive places to live, work and visit.

Supports Council priorities: Growing the economy; Communities for all.

Objective 6: Encourage the shift to sustainable, low-carbon travel

Desired outcome: More people choosing public or community transport instead of private cars, contributing to reduced carbon emissions and improved air quality. This objective supports Dorset's climate commitments and prepares the network for future moves toward cleaner vehicle technologies.

Supports Council priorities: Climate and nature; Sustainable development.

2.4 Existing arrangements (Business as Usual Scenario)

This section sets out the current transport arrangements in Dorset. It establishes the Business as Usual (BAU) scenario against which future options will be assessed. It describes how services are currently delivered, funded and used, and highlights structural issues that any proposed model must take into account. This provides the baseline for evaluating future improvements at Outline and Full Business Case stages.

2.4.1 Current Public Transport Network

Scale and Structure of the Network

Dorset's bus network is made up of a combination of commercial services, and a network of council-supported core inter-urban routes designed to connect key towns and rural communities, known as the Core Route network.

DfT [bus statistics](#) show that in 2024/25, bus services operated 5.57 million kilometres, of which 82% were operated commercially and 22% were supported by the council. The council plays a significant role as the Local Transport Authority by



supporting socially necessary services that are not commercially viable, particularly in rural areas. In 2024/25, Dorset Council supported 990,000 kilometres of bus mileage, providing essential connections in areas with low population density and limited travel choices.

The public bus network has shrunk 22% since 2019/20, a reduction of 1.91 million kilometres. This has been driven by a significant 29% reduction in commercial bus routes. In contrast the local authority supported network is growing, now 43% larger when compared to 2019/20, reflecting a growing need for the council to step in and ensure socially necessary services are maintained.

Core Route Network

The council has increased its influence over the Core Route (CR) network, which forms the backbone of Dorset's inter-urban bus system. These routes link major towns and market centres such as Weymouth, Dorchester, Blandford, Bridport, Lyme Regis, Sherborne, Sturminster Newton, Shaftesbury and Gillingham.

However, many CR routes currently operate at two-hourly frequencies, and several lack weekend or evening services. Only a limited number run on Saturdays, and there are no Sunday services on any CR routes. These structural limitations reduce convenience and limit use, particularly for shift workers, young people and those relying on public transport for essential weekend activities.

The council's increased control over the CR network is beginning to show clear benefits, with performance data indicating stronger and more resilient use across key inter-urban corridors. Patronage is growing steadily, demonstrating that a planned and strategic approach to timetable specification and service standards is helping to stabilise and strengthen delivery across the network.

Recent service enhancements, including the introduction of Saturday services on CR2, CR3 and CR6, have contributed to this improvement. These routes now demonstrate consistently higher weekly passenger numbers than before the service uplift. For example, CR2 frequently records 1,000–1,400 passengers per week, while CR6 has shown sustained patronage growth following its move to a six-day timetable. These trends indicate that a fuller service offer better meets the needs of residents who rely on these routes for work, shopping and essential travel.

Concessionary trips form a substantial share of total usage across all routes. This reflects the essential role these routes play for older people and those without regular access to a private vehicle. The consistently high level of concessionary use illustrates both the social importance of the CR network and the reliance of rural communities on accessible, predictable transport links.

The performance evidence indicates that the council's enhanced stewardship of the Core Route network is starting to deliver positive outcomes. As services become



more consistent and predictable, particularly with the extension to full Saturday operation, passenger numbers have increased, patterns of use have become more stable, and reliance among concessionary users remains strong.

These early improvements provide a clear case for further investment. Future enhancements to frequency, integration and reliability on the CR network are likely to expand the customer base, improve accessibility for those without cars, and maintain the resilience of the network throughout the year. The data demonstrates that where improvements have been introduced, residents respond positively, and usage increases. Building on this momentum will support the council's wider goals around inclusive access, local connectivity and long-term network sustainability.

Core Route passenger surveys undertaken in spring 2025 highlight the significant level of dependency on supported transport services within Dorset. Between 51% and 60% of core route passengers report having no access to a car, and 33–37% state they could not make their journey without the bus. This demonstrates the critical role that public transport plays in enabling access to employment, education, healthcare and day-to-day activities, particularly for those who are most transport-dependent.

Feedback from the Local Transport Plan consultation reinforces this finding, identifying public transport—especially bus services—as the number one issue for residents. Respondents consistently highlighted concerns around frequency, reliability and coverage, particularly in rural areas, and the impact this has on their ability to travel independently. Together, this evidence shows that the current network is both highly valued and heavily relied upon, but is not meeting existing or future needs. It also underscores the importance of strengthening the public transport offer as a core component of any future system, reducing reliance on more costly specialist provision while improving access and outcomes for residents across Dorset.

Passenger Use and Trends

The DfT's [Bus Statistics](#) show that across Dorset 6.1 million passenger journeys were made in 2024/25. This remains 20% below pre-pandemic levels.

Concessionary passengers make up 37% of all journeys, among the highest proportions in the South West. Concessionary journeys have been slow to recover post pandemic, with a million fewer journeys made in 2024/25 compared with 2019/20.

Network Performance and Reliability

Bus punctuality remains below targets set by Government. In 2024/25, 79% of scheduled departures were recorded as on time, compared with a target of 95%. While this marks improvement over pre-pandemic performance, reliability challenges



remain, particularly in peak seasons and coastal corridors with congestion pressures.

Commercial Bus Operators and the Enhanced Partnership

Dorset Council works with bus operators through a formal Enhanced Partnership, which provides a framework for joint planning, timetable coordination, network stability and alignment with BSIP priorities. Operators deliver most of the bus mileage in the county and continue to face pressures from rising costs, and low commercial viability in rural areas. The council's partnership model supports coordinated improvements but is constrained by available funding and limited levers in areas with low patronage.

In parallel with the Enhanced Partnership, the council has begun early work to understand whether alternative delivery models could better address the structural challenges facing the network. The council has submitted an Expression of Interest to the Department for Transport's Franchising Support Fund to undertake a franchising pre-assessment study, which would provide a robust evidence base comparing franchising, hybrid models and the best realistically achievable Enhanced Partnership scenario. This work is explicitly exploratory and does not represent a decision to pursue franchising; rather, it will assess the potential to improve outcomes including rural accessibility, network stability, integration with community transport, and long-term financial sustainability. The study will be undertaken collaboratively with operators and partners, ensuring that the Enhanced Partnership remains the primary delivery mechanism during this phase while enabling informed future decision-making.

Fleet and Vehicle Standards

Dorset's bus fleet has an average age of 9.4 years. There are currently no zero-emission buses operating on the network. Fleet renewal continues to be constrained by operator finances, the high upfront cost of vehicles, and the challenges associated with operating in a rural, low-density environment.

Investment in new vehicles, particularly zero-emission buses, and associated technology requires significant capital outlay and long payback periods. Providing longer-term contract certainty and stable service pipelines will be critical to de-risking these investments, enabling operators to commit to newer, cleaner vehicles and to invest in supporting infrastructure and workforce capability.

The council is beginning to address these challenges through targeted capital investment using its Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG) allocation. The current 2026/27 Delivery Plan includes a major project to electrify the Swanage bus fleet, combining investment in charging infrastructure with the introduction of zero-emission buses. This represents an important first step in developing a scalable model for fleet decarbonisation in Dorset, demonstrating how targeted



capital funding can accelerate transition where supported by appropriate infrastructure and operational planning.

Looking ahead, a coordinated approach will be required to deliver a sustained transition toward a lower-emission fleet. Without this alignment, progress toward zero-emission vehicles is likely to remain limited and uneven across the network.

2.4.2 Community Transport

Community Transport (CT) is a vital lifeline for rural residents, including older people, disabled residents and vulnerable adults, and those without access to a private car. Dorset has more than 75 community transport schemes, including dial-a-ride, community minibuses and volunteer car services. These provide flexible, accessible travel for essential trips such as shopping, medical and social appointments.

Dorset Community Transport (DCT), delivered by ECT Charity, plays a central role in community transport provision across Dorset, combining local delivery with the scale and capability of a national operator. Operating across Dorset, including demand-responsive transport, group travel, education transport and supported bus services, DCT provides essential access for people in rural areas where mainstream services are limited or unavailable. This transport often acts as a lifeline for individuals who would otherwise rely on taxis or be unable to travel at all.

The impact of DCT's services extends beyond transport provision, generating significant social value and supporting wider council outcomes. ECT Charity's Social Value assessment identifies over £1.25 million in annual social value, with strong evidence of improved independence, reduced loneliness and better access to essential services. User feedback shows that 85% of passengers report increased independence and 90% improved access to local facilities, demonstrating the role of community transport as a preventative intervention that supports health, wellbeing and reduced reliance on statutory services.

Despite these strengths, there is a clear opportunity to build on DCT's existing role by positioning it as a strategic delivery partner within an integrated transport model. This could include expanding demand-responsive provision, improving first- and last-mile connections to the Core Route Network, and supporting cross-sector transport needs including Adult Social Care and SEND. With established operational capability and a strong evidence base, DCT is well placed to move from a key provider to a central component of a more coordinated, resilient and scalable community transport network in Dorset.

CT provision in Dorset is highly fragile, relying heavily on volunteers and inconsistent funding. Budget comparisons show the council's CT support is significantly lower than neighbouring rural authorities, contributing to gaps in provision and ongoing risks to sustainability. For example, the ATCO Survey 2024 Report highlighted that



Dorset spent £5,813 on CT from its core budget in 2023/24, compared with £426k in Devon, £974k in Somerset and £122k in Wiltshire. Council CT funding has increased in the last two years, with £60k in grants issued in 2025/26.

CT services are well-used but inconsistently integrated with the wider network, and there is no digital booking or shared platform in place. This limits their visibility, coordination and ability to scale.

2.4.3 Home to School Transport

Home to School Transport (HtS), particularly for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), represents a significant and growing pressure within Dorset's current transport system. Demand for transport support has increased in recent years, driven by rising numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), greater reliance on specialist provision, and increasing travel distances between home and education settings. These factors are contributing to a steady increase in cost and complexity within the existing system.

The current HtS model is characterised by a high reliance on bespoke, council-commissioned transport, including taxis and specialist vehicles. A substantial proportion of journeys, particularly within SEND, are delivered on a single-occupancy basis, often over long distances to access suitable provision. This reflects both the complexity of need and the limited availability of viable alternatives within the wider transport network. In many cases, pupils cannot reasonably be accommodated on existing public or shared transport services due to a combination of journey times, service availability, and individual support requirements.

Dorset's rural geography further intensifies these pressures. The decline in commercial bus services and limited coverage of the current network mean that mainstream transport is not consistently available as an alternative. As a result, the council is required to provide dedicated transport for a growing number of pupils who might, in a more connected system, be able to travel via shared or mainstream modes. This creates a structural dependency on high-cost provision and limits opportunities to optimise routes or increase vehicle utilisation.

The system is also shaped by fragmentation between transport, education and SEND planning processes. Placement decisions are sometimes made independently of transport considerations, leading to longer journeys and reduced opportunities to coordinate travel across cohorts. While route planning and procurement processes are in place, national evidence indicates that local authorities have already implemented many of the traditional efficiency measures, such as route optimisation and contract management, with limited scope for further savings under the current model.



Costs per pupil within SEND transport are significantly higher than mainstream school transport, reflecting the bespoke nature of provision. National benchmarking highlights that these costs can be substantial, particularly where single-occupancy or long-distance journeys are required. Demand continues to grow, and there is limited evidence that pressures will reduce in the short term, given wider SEND system dynamics and the time required for national reforms to take effect.

Overall, the current HtS system within Dorset is highly effective in meeting statutory duties, ensuring that eligible children and young people can access education safely. However, it is also resource-intensive, increasingly complex, and heavily dependent on bespoke provision, with limited integration into the wider public and community transport network. These characteristics form a key component of the Business as Usual baseline and highlight the scale of the challenge in delivering a more sustainable, integrated transport system for the future.

2.4.4 Adult Social Care Transport

Adult Social Care (ASC) transport in Dorset operates as a specialist system designed to support access to day opportunities. The current model is built around a combination of council-owned fleet, commissioned taxi provision and limited community transport, with services predominantly delivered as dedicated, home-to-provision transport rather than as part of an integrated transport network.

The core of the system is a fleet of council-operated buses transporting individuals to and from day services. These vehicles require D1-licensed drivers and are legally restricted to specific contracted journeys, which prevents flexible use for wider community access or cross-service deployment. As a result, vehicles are typically used for peak movements only and remain under-utilised for the remainder of the day. This creates a structurally inflexible model, limiting the ability to support more personalised, locality-based or community-anchored approaches to care.

Alongside the in-house fleet, the system relies heavily on taxi and private hire provision, particularly for individuals with complex needs or where shared transport is not feasible. However, this market is increasingly constrained, with limited wheelchair-accessible capacity, rising costs and competition for vehicles (particularly from school transport) reducing availability and increasing financial pressure.

Key Characteristics of the current model include:

- **High reliance on specialist and bespoke transport** - Journeys are predominantly delivered through dedicated services rather than shared or mainstream options, reflecting both user need and a lack of viable alternatives in the wider transport system.
- **Limited flexibility due to fleet and regulatory constraints** - The current fleet is dominated by larger vehicles that are restricted in how they can be used,



preventing integration across services and limiting responsiveness to changing patterns of demand.

- **Significant rural accessibility challenges** - Availability, affordability and accessibility barriers, particularly in rural areas, mean many users cannot access services without dedicated transport, reinforcing reliance on the ASC system for even routine journeys.
- **Workforce and operational pressures** - The system depends heavily on D1-qualified drivers, with recruitment, retention and shift patterns presenting ongoing challenges. Limited availability of passenger assistants further introduces safety and lone-working risks, particularly for individuals with higher support needs.
- **High operating costs and inefficient asset utilisation** - The current model is resource-intensive, with high costs associated with fleet ownership, maintenance, insurance and fuel.
- **Limited integration with community and voluntary sector provision** - While there is evidence of latent capacity and willingness among VCSE organisations to expand transport provision, this is currently fragmented and under-coordinated, limiting its role in supporting ASC transport needs.

Importantly, evidence shows that transport is a fundamental enabler of Adult Social Care transformation. Without more accessible, flexible and integrated transport options, individuals are unable to access the wider range of community-based services and activities envisaged within the emerging Day Opportunities model.

An aligned and strategically coordinated transport offer across Dorset will deliver both financial efficiencies and improved outcomes within Adult Social Care. By optimising transport provision, the council can reduce duplication, maximise vehicle utilisation, and achieve cost savings that can be reinvested into services. At the same time, improved transport accessibility will enable individuals to attend day opportunities, community activities, and support services more flexibly, supporting independence and wellbeing. Crucially, a more integrated transport model will also strengthen the council's ability to place individuals requiring residential care within Dorset on framework arrangements, rather than out-of-county. By facilitating reliable transport links for next of kin, carers, and family members to visit care home placements locally, this approach promotes stronger support networks and reduces reliance on higher-cost external placements. Collectively, this creates a more sustainable, person-centred system that delivers better value while improving quality of life for Dorset residents.

There are clear opportunities to move toward a more integrated and efficient system. These include:



- Improved utilisation of fleet and assets across services, enabling vehicles to be used throughout the day and across ASC, SEND, community transport and flexible services rather than in isolated peaks;
- Transition toward a more versatile fleet of vehicles, reducing costs, easing workforce constraints and enabling more flexible, multi-purpose use;
- Stronger integration with community and voluntary transport providers, where there is clear appetite to expand provision if supported;
- Development of shared and collaborative transport models, including taxi-share, volunteer car schemes and multi-use fleets;
- Alignment with locality-based and hub-and-spoke service models, supporting access to a wider range of community activities; and
- Closer integration with mainstream and flexible transport networks, reducing reliance on bespoke provision where appropriate and supporting greater independence.

Overall, the evidence demonstrates that while the current ASC transport model provides a necessary and reliable baseline, it is financially costly, operationally inflexible and insufficiently integrated to support future service transformation. Without change, pressures on specialist transport provision are likely to increase, reinforcing the need for a more coordinated, flexible and system-wide approach to transport delivery in Dorset.

2.4.5 Dorset Travel's Internal Fleet

Dorset Travel operates a mixed delivery model combining externally contracted provision with an in-house fleet that plays a targeted role in service delivery. The current fleet comprises 83 vehicles, including 62 minibuses, 16 cars and 5 vans, with minibuses forming the core of operational capacity for both SEND and Adult Social Care transport.

The fleet supports a range of essential services, including home to school transport for learners with SEND, adult day centre transport, limited mainstream provision and dial-a-bus services. Vehicles are allocated dynamically based on service demand rather than being fixed to individuals, with many drivers taking vehicles home overnight to enable efficient route starts across a dispersed and rural geography. This operating model is critical in ensuring coverage across the county but introduces constraints in terms of flexibility, fleet utilisation and future service redesign.

Fleet usage is heavily concentrated around peak periods, particularly morning and afternoon journeys associated with school and day centre transport. As a result, vehicles are largely committed during these times, with only limited availability during the middle of the day. In practice, this available time is required for essential



activities including cleaning, maintenance, compliance checks and repositioning of vehicles for subsequent routes. This limits opportunities to increase utilisation without impacting reliability or requiring additional resource. The fleet is also required to operate with a relatively high level of spare capacity, with 19 vehicles held in reserve to ensure continuity of service in the context of high mileage and frequent maintenance requirements.

The workforce model further shapes fleet operation. Drivers are generally employed on flexible arrangements linked to specific routes and service times, rather than standard full-time contracts. This reflects the peak nature of demand but constrains the ability to extend services or introduce additional journeys without increasing staffing costs. Driver licensing arrangements also introduce operational limitations. While some drivers operate smaller vehicles under standard car licences, larger vehicles such as 16-seat minibuses require drivers to hold D1 or equivalent licences. This creates a dependency between vehicle allocation and driver availability, limiting flexibility and constraining the ability to scale up more efficient vehicle types. Expanding services or increasing utilisation would therefore require additional recruitment, training and licensing, with associated cost implications.

The fleet itself is under increasing pressure from a combination of high weekly mileage and an ageing vehicle base, leading to reliability issues and increased maintenance demand. A replacement programme is in place, including the introduction of more flexible vehicle types and a transition toward HVO fuel for emissions reduction. However, this is funded on a like-for-like basis and does not provide capacity for wider fleet transformation. A transition toward electric vehicles, presents significant challenges under the current model. The reliance on drivers taking vehicles home, long rural routes and limited charging infrastructure create operational and financial barriers to adoption, with no additional funding currently available to support transition.

Overall, the Business-as-Usual position is characterised by a fleet that is essential to delivering high-need services but operates within tight operational, workforce and financial constraints. While the fleet provides resilience and targeted capability, it is not currently configured or resourced to deliver significant improvements in efficiency, integration or capacity without broader changes to service design, demand patterns and investment.

2.4.6 Funding and Current Transport Expenditure

Dorset receives one of the lowest levels of Government bus grant funding in the South West, significantly lower than neighbouring rural authorities such as Somerset, Devon and Wiltshire. Dorset's allocation for 2025/26 was £3.42 million, compared to £10.47 million for Devon and £6.4 million for Somerset. The Local Authority Bus Grant has been confirmed for 2026/27 to 2029/30 and reinforces this funding gap.



The structural funding disadvantage highlighted in table 2.1 has a direct impact on the scale and reliability of public transport services.

Table 2.1 – Local Authority Bus Grant Allocations 2026/27 to 2029/30

Authority	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
BCP Council	£5,639,948	£5,700,628	£5,761,307	£3,200,860	£20,302,743
Cornwall	£10,006,522	£10,071,332	£10,136,143	£3,418,756	£33,632,753
Devon and Torbay	£14,179,760	£14,292,588	£14,405,415	£5,951,665	£48,829,428
Dorset	£3,972,903	£4,007,304	£4,041,704	£1,814,608	£13,836,519
Gloucestershire	£8,219,147	£8,287,468	£8,355,789	£3,603,947	£28,466,351
North Somerset	£4,337,550	£4,363,801	£4,390,053	£1,384,771	£14,476,175
Plymouth City	£4,641,228	£4,699,356	£4,757,483	£3,066,231	£17,164,298
Somerset	£7,196,198	£7,252,745	£7,309,292	£2,982,878	£24,741,113
Swindon	£2,780,397	£2,814,699	£2,849,001	£1,809,438	£10,253,535
Wiltshire	£6,314,363	£6,356,661	£6,398,959	£2,231,217	£21,301,200

The council currently spends a significant proportion of its budget on transport services, with a total Dorset Travel budget of £39.6m in 2024/25. A large share of this funding is directed toward home to school transport, particularly for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), where costs have increased considerably in recent years due to rising demand, more complex needs and higher contract prices. While growth in 2024/25 was lower than in previous years, ongoing demand continues to place pressure on the system.

At the same time, expenditure on mainstream school transport and supported public transport services remains significant, reflecting both rising costs and continued reliance on these services. Overall, the current spending profile shows that a substantial proportion of funding is committed to specialist and statutory provision. This limits the scope to invest in more integrated and shared solutions, reinforcing the need to improve efficiency and better manage demand while maintaining support for those with the highest needs.

The current BAU funding position limits the council's ability to increase frequencies, expand weekend services, invest in infrastructure or develop alternative transport models without targeted investment and reduced spend on specialist transport services.

2.4.7 Business as Usual (BAU) Summary



Across Dorset, the existing transport system is highly fragmented, increasingly costly, and structurally constrained, with different elements, commercial bus services, supported routes, community transport, Home to School Transport and Adult Social Care transport, largely operating in isolation. While each component plays a critical role in meeting statutory duties and supporting access to services, the overall system lacks integration, flexibility and resilience. This results in a model that is heavily reliant on bespoke, service-specific transport solutions, particularly in rural areas where mainstream provision is limited or unavailable.

The evidence shows a consistent pattern across all parts of the system: limited commercial viability, declining or insufficient rural connectivity, and growing dependence on publicly funded transport provision. This is compounded by a reliance on specialist vehicles, constrained operator and workforce markets, and funding models that do not provide long-term certainty. As a result, public funding is increasingly being used to maintain essential access rather than to improve or transform the network, while demand for high-cost services, particularly SEND and Adult Social Care transport, continues to rise.

Crucially, the current system does not operate as a coherent network. Assets are under-utilised, services are not coordinated across user groups, and opportunities for shared or mainstream travel are often unrealised. This limits the ability to support independence, increases reliance on door-to-door provision, and constrains the delivery of wider council objectives, including health, inclusion, economic participation and carbon reduction.

In summary, while the Business as Usual model is effective in meeting immediate needs and statutory obligations, it is a system under increasing pressure, operationally inefficient and insufficiently integrated to respond to future demand or support service transformation. Without a shift toward a more coordinated, flexible and system-wide approach, Dorset will remain locked into a cost-intensive model that reinforces dependency, limits accessibility, and places increasing pressure on council budgets.

2.5 Current and Future Needs

This section describes the service needs that must be addressed in order to deliver the programme objectives. It highlights the key “service gaps” in the current Business as Usual (BAU) model and explains how these gaps will shape the design and assessment of future transport models. The needs identified here reflect both current shortcomings and the anticipated future pressures facing Dorset’s transport system.

2.5.1 Current Needs



1. Need for more frequent and reliable services

Across Dorset, public bus services often operate at low frequencies, with many core routes running only every two hours, and several with no weekend or evening provision. This restricts residents' ability to plan regular travel and reduces trust in the network. Reliability also remains below target, with only 78% of departures on time, against a target of 95%.

Service gap: Insufficient service frequency and punctuality, particularly on inter-urban and rural routes.

Driver for change: Establishing a transport system that residents can depend on for daily travel.

2. Need for improved rural connectivity

Large parts of rural Dorset have no viable alternative to the private car, and two-thirds of rural residents live in areas with minimal or no bus provision. Connectivity gaps prevent many residents accessing education, employment and essential services.

Service gap: Limited coverage and poor connections between rural settlements and main centres.

Driver for change: Ensuring all communities have meaningful access to essential services through improved fixed, flexible or supported transport.

3. Need for sustainable and resilient community transport

Community Transport (CT) provides essential lifeline services for older and disabled residents, but provision is fragile, reliant on volunteers and inconsistently funded. Dorset's CT spending is far lower than neighbouring rural councils, leaving services vulnerable.

Service gap: Inconsistent availability of CT services and lack of resilience in volunteer-dependent models.

Driver for change: Strengthening CT to ensure it can reliably fill gaps where commercial and supported bus services are not viable.

4. Need for integrated, accessible and user-friendly services

The current system lacks the integration needed to support seamless travel. Timetables are not consistently coordinated, real-time information varies across operators, and there is no unified planning or booking platform linking public, community and flexible services. Residents report difficulty accessing journey information or switching between modes.

Improved alignment of transport will enhance access to day opportunities and community activities, enabling people to participate more flexibly and maintain independence and wellbeing. At the same time, it will support a stronger focus on in-



county residential placements by making it easier for family members, carers, and next of kin to visit those in care homes within Dorset. This will help reduce reliance on higher-cost out-of-county placements while maintaining vital personal connections for individuals receiving care.

Service gap: Fragmented transport offer with limited integration.

Driver for change: Creating a coherent network that is easy to use, plan and understand.

5. Need to support independence and reduce isolation

High levels of concessionary use, ageing demographics and limited car access indicate a strong need for accessible mainstream transport. A significant proportion of passengers state they could not travel without the bus, and many rural areas are “transport deserts,” increasing risk of social isolation.

Service gap: Inadequate support for residents who depend on public or community transport for independence.

Driver for change: Delivering inclusive, age-friendly and accessible transport options.

6. Need for a financially sustainable model

Dorset receives significantly lower bus grant funding than similar authorities and has limited capacity to increase investment under BAU. Rising contract prices, ageing fleets, and demographic pressures further affect sustainability. Current arrangements rely heavily on council-subsidised services that may not be viable long term.

Service gap: Financial model dependent on low grant funding and fragile service arrangements.

Driver for change: Developing a long-term funding and delivery model appropriate for a dispersed rural county.

2.5.2 Future Needs (Emerging and Anticipated)

1. Growing demand linked to demographic change

Dorset has one of the oldest populations in England. As the number of older residents continues to increase, demand for accessible and flexible transport will rise, placing further pressure on both mainstream and specialist services.

Future need: A transport system that can support increasing levels of age-related and mobility-related travel needs.

2. Need for decarbonisation and cleaner transport



As Dorset progresses towards climate commitments, there will be increased need for investment in cleaner fleets, charging or refuelling infrastructure and modal shift initiatives. Dorset currently has no zero-emission buses, meaning future systems must consider pathways to a lower-carbon network.

Future need: A plan for transitioning to low-carbon fleet and infrastructure as part of wider climate goals.

3. Increased expectation for flexible, digitally-enabled services

Passenger expectations, particularly amongst younger generations, are shifting toward on-demand, real-time and digitally supported mobility. Dorset currently has no Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) scheme and limited digital integration across modes.

Future need: More flexible options supported by accessible digital tools that complement conventional public transport.

4. Future pressures on specialist transport (Home to School & Adult Social Care)

Demand for specialist services is expected to rise due to demographic and legislative trends. Without improvements to mainstream transport, specialist services will face increasing costs and higher dependency.

Future need: Clearer links between mainstream transport changes and opportunities to reduce pressure on specialist services.

2.5.3 Key Service Gaps Driving Future Model Development

These gaps define the critical drivers against which future models will be tested:

- Insufficient frequency and reliability on core and rural routes
- Limited evening and weekend provision
- Large rural coverage gaps, creating dependency on cars and specialist transport
- Fragile community transport unable to meet growing demand
- Lack of integration between public, community and flexible transport
- Inadequate support for independent, inclusive travel
- Growing pressures on the current funding model given Dorset's low grant allocation
- Fleet not aligned with future decarbonisation requirements
- Limited digital capability across the transport system
- Growing pressure on specialist transport due to unmet mainstream needs

These service gaps form the baseline criteria for assessing future models during the FBC stage.



2.6 Potential scope and service requirements

This section defines the potential scope of the programme and the service requirements needed to deliver a future transport system that is integrated, sustainable and aligned to changing service models.

These requirements:

- define the scope of potential interventions to be considered;
- provide a framework for developing and assessing options in the Economic Case; and
- ensure consistency between the long list, short list and Preferred Way Forward.

The future transport system is expected to operate as a coherent, integrated ecosystem, capable of meeting a wider range of needs across:

- education (including SEND);
- Adult Social Care and day opportunities;
- access to healthcare, employment and community life; and
- rural and low-density areas where traditional provision is limited.

To support this, the scope must allow for consideration of:

- policy reform,
- service redesign,
- market development, and
- system integration.

2.6.1 Service Requirements Framework

Table 2.2 translates the evidence presented in the Strategic Case into a clear set of requirements, distinguishing between core (essential) elements and desirable enhancements. These requirements provide the framework for developing and assessing options, ensuring that future proposals are focused on delivering a transport system that is accessible, integrated and financially sustainable.

Table 2.2 Service Requirements Framework

Requirement Category	Core (Essential) Requirements	Desirable (Enhancement) Requirements
Access to Services	Provide reliable access to education, health, employment and community services across urban and rural areas. Enable inclusive access for a wide range of user needs.	Improve local connectivity and alignment with community-based services and hub-and-spoke models. Enhance access to a wider



Requirement Category	Core (Essential) Requirements	Desirable (Enhancement) Requirements
		range of social and economic opportunities.
Financial Sustainability and Value for Money	Deliver within a sustainable financial envelope. Reduce reliance on high-cost bespoke transport. Improve utilisation of existing resources.	Strengthen long-term affordability through innovative funding and delivery models. Enable reinvestment and efficiency gains through system optimisation.
Integration	Enable coordination across SEND, ASC, community and public transport. Support shared journeys and reduce duplication. Move toward a single integrated system.	Introduce enhanced coordination mechanisms (e.g. digital platforms, shared booking). Improve visibility of demand, capacity and performance across the system.
Flexibility and Responsiveness	Support a mix of regular and demand-responsive journeys. Respond to dispersed and variable demand, particularly in rural areas.	Enable more dynamic service models (e.g. flexible routing, hybrid provision). Improve responsiveness to real-time demand and service change.
User Outcomes and Independence	Enable individuals to travel as independently as possible through travel training and personalised support. Support access to a range of activities while maintaining specialist provision where required.	—
Localisation and Community Alignment	—	Align with locality-based service delivery and community-led solutions. Enable place-based transport planning reflecting local needs.
Market Development	—	Support development of a diverse provider market, including VCSE organisations, micro-providers and social enterprises. Enable innovation in delivery models.



Requirement Category	Core (Essential) Requirements	Desirable (Enhancement) Requirements
Digital Enablement	—	Introduce digital tools for journey planning, scheduling, booking and data sharing. Improve system coordination and user information.
Environmental Sustainability	—	Support transition to lower-emission vehicles and reduced mileage. Contribute to wider carbon reduction objectives.
Workforce Sustainability	—	Improve resilience, recruitment and retention across providers and volunteers.

This section establishes a clear, outcome-focused framework for shaping the future transport system. It defines what the system must deliver, and what good looks like across different dimensions.

This provides a robust foundation for:

- developing a long list of options, and
- identifying a Preferred Way Forward that is aligned with the council's strategic objectives and future service needs.

2.7 Main benefits

This section sets out the main benefits associated with achieving the programme's objectives. These benefits represent the positive changes experienced by individuals, communities, the council or the wider economy when the programme delivers its intended outputs and outcomes.

Outcomes describe what the programme achieves (e.g., improved access, reduced isolation). Benefits describe the measurable or observable advantages that arise from those outcomes (e.g., increased employment participation, reduced costs, improved wellbeing). Benefits are grouped by category, beneficiary, and benefit class.



Table 2.3 Summary table of the main benefits

Category	Benefit	Key Beneficiaries	Indicative Quantified Impacts	Supporting Evidence
Economic	Improved access to employment and skills	Working-age residents; young people; employers	• Increased participation in employment/ training • Reduced missed education sessions	Limited transport currently restricts access to jobs and education, particularly in rural areas; improved connectivity supports participation
	Increased productivity and efficient use of time	Service users; public services; operators	• Reduced journey and waiting times • Fewer missed appointments • Improved vehicle utilisation	Current system includes inefficiencies and duplication; integrated scheduling improves system performance
Social and Community	Reduced social isolation and improved wellbeing	Older adults; ASC users; rural communities	• Increased participation in community activity • Reduction in reported isolation indicators	Local evidence links lack of transport to isolation; community transport shown to improve social participation
	Increased independence and preparation for adulthood	SEND learners; ASC users; families	• Higher proportion of independent travel • Reduced reliance on specialist transport	Comparator authorities demonstrate independence gains through travel training and stepped support models



	Improved equity of access	Rural communities; low-income households; non-car users	• Improved service coverage • Reduced rural-urban access gap	Current provision is uneven; flexible and community models improve rural accessibility
Environmental and Climate	Reduced emissions and environmental impact	Wider community; Dorset Council	• Reduction in vehicle mileage • Lower CO₂ emissions per journey • Increased use of low-emission vehicles	Current system includes duplicate and single-occupancy journeys; shared and optimised transport reduces emissions
	Reduced car dependency and mode shift	Residents without viable alternatives; wider transport network	• Increased use of shared/public transport • Reduced reliance on private vehicles	Survey evidence shows high car dependency driven by lack of alternatives; improved services support modal shift
Financial and Operational	Reduced reliance on high-cost specialist transport	Dorset Council; transport system	• Reduction in taxi spend • Lower cost per journey • Slower demand growth (cost avoidance)	Current system heavily reliant on bespoke transport; demand management reduces cost pressures over time
	Improved asset utilisation	Dorset Council; transport providers	• Increased vehicle occupancy rates • Reduced empty mileage	Evidence of underutilised fleet and duplication; integration improves efficiency
	Long-term system sustainability	Dorset Council; residents	• Stabilisation of transport costs • Reduced demand growth for	Without reform, demand and costs will continue to rise; integrated



			specialist services	systems improve resilience
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2.8 Strategic Case Conclusion

The Strategic Case demonstrates a clear and compelling need for change. Dorset's current transport system is constrained by structural challenges, including limited public transport provision, a fragmented delivery model and increasing financial pressure. These issues are particularly acute in a rural context, where dispersed demand makes services more costly to provide and more difficult to coordinate. At the same time, growing reliance on specialist transport services, particularly for SEND home to school transport and Adult Social Care, is placing additional strain on resources and limiting the ability to invest in more flexible and accessible alternatives.

The analysis set out in this section highlights that the current system is not well aligned to future needs. While it continues to meet key statutory requirements, it does not consistently support wider objectives relating to accessibility, independence, economic participation and environmental sustainability. Evidence from users, stakeholders and consultation demonstrates strong reliance on transport services, alongside clear gaps in provision, with public transport identified as a critical issue. This reinforces the need for a more integrated and responsive approach.

In response, the Strategic Case has established a clear Service Requirements Framework, defining both the essential and desirable characteristics of a future transport system. This framework reflects the need to improve access to services, manage demand more effectively, make better use of existing resources and support a shift toward more sustainable and community-based travel options. It also ensures that future options are grounded in a shared understanding of outcomes and priorities, rather than individual service constraints. The framework also reflects the need to better align transport provision with wider demand management tools, including parking policy, to support a more efficient and balanced overall system.

Taken together, the evidence confirms that a continuation of current approaches will not deliver a sustainable or effective transport system. Instead, there is a need for coordinated, system-level change, enabling a move toward a more efficient, flexible and user-focused model, better aligned with strategic priorities and future growth ambitions.

The following Economic Case builds on this foundation by identifying and assessing a range of potential options to achieve the objectives set out in this Strategic Case.



3 Economic Case

The Economic Case considers how the objectives and service requirements set out in the Strategic Case can be delivered in practice. It identifies and assesses a range of potential options and approaches, examining the extent to which they meet the defined requirements, and provide a sustainable basis for future transport provision.

Building on the evidence of need for change, this section applies a structured and proportionate appraisal process to move from a broad long list of interventions to a smaller number of coherent and deliverable options. The focus is on identifying solutions that not only address current challenges, but also support long-term outcomes, including improved access, greater integration, and enhanced financial sustainability.

3.1 Critical success factors

The Critical Success Factors define the key conditions that must be met for the programme to be considered successful. They provide a clear basis for:

- assessing the long list and shortlist of options;
- identifying the Preferred Way Forward; and
- ensuring that the selected approach delivers the intended outcomes for users, services and the wider system.

The CSFs are directly derived from the service requirements framework set out in the Strategic Case. They will be applied consistently throughout the Economic Case to:

- screen the long list of options, ensuring only those capable of meeting core requirements are taken forward;
- assess the relative performance of shortlisted options, including trade-offs between cost, deliverability and outcomes; and
- support the identification of a Preferred Way Forward that provides the best overall fit with programme objectives.

At a minimum, any option progressed beyond the long list stage must demonstrate that it:

1. delivers reliable and equitable access to key services;
2. operates within a sustainable financial envelope;
3. improves integration across transport services and modes;
4. supports flexibility and responsiveness to changing demand; and
5. contributes to improved user outcomes and independence.



Options that do not adequately meet these core conditions will not be considered further.

Table 3.1 - Core (Essential) Requirements

Requirement Category	Success Criteria	Indicative KPIs / Measures
Access and inclusion	The preferred solution must ensure that residents can reliably access essential services, including education, health, employment and community activities, regardless of location or personal circumstances. This includes: • equitable provision across urban and rural areas; • accessibility for individuals with a range of needs and capabilities; and • the ability to support both essential and broader participation journeys.	• Coverage of transport provision across rural areas (% population within service reach) • Missed appointment / non-attendance rates linked to transport
Financial Sustainability and Value for Money	The preferred solution must provide a sustainable financial model, addressing current cost pressures and reducing reliance on high-cost provision over time. This includes: • improved efficiency and utilisation of resources; • reduction in the use of high-cost bespoke transport where appropriate; and • delivery of cost avoidance and long-term value for money.	• Cost per passenger journey • Total spend on specialist (taxi) provision • % reduction in high-cost journeys • Budget variance against forecast



Integration and System Coherence	The preferred solution must move beyond fragmented provision toward a more integrated transport system, with improved coordination across services. This includes: • alignment across SEND, Adult Social Care, community transport and public transport; • increased opportunities for shared journeys and pooled demand; and • reduced duplication of services and assets.	• % of journeys delivered through shared transport • Fleet utilisation rate (%) • Number of integrated routes/services across ASC, SEND and community transport • Reduction in duplicate routes or contracts
Flexibility and Responsiveness	The preferred solution must be capable of responding to changing and variable demand, particularly in rural and low-density areas. This includes: • support for flexible and demand-responsive services; • the ability to accommodate diverse journey types and patterns; and • alignment with evolving service models, including more localised and community-based provision.	• % of journeys delivered through flexible/DRT/shared services • Average journey booking lead time • Ability to accommodate non-standard journeys (qualitative or % acceptance rate)
User Outcomes and Independence	The preferred solution must contribute to improved user outcomes, with a focus on independence, wellbeing and participation.	• % of users travelling independently or with reduced support • Reduction in reliance on specialist transport over time



	This includes: • supporting individuals to travel independently where possible, with appropriate support; • enabling access to a wider range of social, economic and community opportunities; and • maintaining targeted provision for those with complex or high levels of need. appropriate and access a broader range of opportunities.	• User satisfaction scores (overall and by cohort)
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Table 3.2 - Desirable Requirements

Requirement Category	Success Criteria	Indicative KPIs / Measures
Localisation and Community Alignment	Transport provision reflects local needs and supports community-based services.	• Alignment of services with hub-and-spoke or locality-based provision • Stakeholder satisfaction (parish councils, VCSE)
Market Development	A diverse, resilient provider market is established and sustained.	• Number and diversity of providers in the system • % of services delivered by VCSE/micro-providers • Market capacity indicators (e.g. coverage, availability)
Digital Enablement	Improved coordination and user experience through digital tools and data.	• % of services using integrated scheduling/booking systems



		• Availability of real-time or accessible travel information • Data completeness and reporting capability across services
Environmental Sustainability	Transport contributes to reduction in emissions and environmental impact.	• % of low/zero-emission vehicles in fleet • Total fleet emissions (CO₂e) • Reduction in vehicle mileage per passenger journey
Workforce Sustainability	Workforce model is stable, resilient and fit for future demand.	• Staff and driver vacancy rates • Staff turnover rates • Proportion of services deliverable without specialist licensing requirements • Volunteer participation levels (where applicable)

3.2 Long List Appraisal Methodology

This section sets out the methodology used to assess the long list of options and identify those to be taken forward for further consideration.

The methodology applied is a proportionate, staged appraisal process, moving from a broad long list to a smaller number of credible and deliverable options or option packages.

The long list appraisal represents the first stage of option filtering. At this stage, the focus is on strategic fit and deliverability, rather than detailed financial or economic analysis, which will be undertaken at the full business case stage.

Each option has been assessed against the core (essential) service requirements, which act as a minimum viability threshold. Options that did not sufficiently meet these criteria were not taken forward. Options that met the core requirements were



further assessed against the desirable (enhancement) requirements. This stage enabled differentiation between options in terms of their potential to deliver wider system benefits and long-term value.

A high-level assessment of deliverability was undertaken, considering:

- complexity of implementation, including cross-service dependencies;
- reliance on external factors, such as market capacity and transport network availability;
- organisational readiness, including governance and capability; and
- potential risks to service continuity and access during transition.

Options considered undeliverable within a reasonable timeframe or risk profile were not progressed.

Particular weight was given to options that contribute to multiple requirement areas and enable system-level change.

The fully applied scoring matrix across the long list (Options 1-29) is set out within Appendix C.

The long list appraisal demonstrates clearly that not all options are capable of delivering the required level of system change. A number of options, including the 'do minimum' baseline and continuation of existing delivery models, were assessed as performing poorly against the Critical Success Factors. As a result, these options have been excluded from further consideration.

In contrast, a number of options were identified as making a strong contribution across multiple assessment criteria. These include:

- demand management measures, such as policy reform and travel training;
- service model changes, including more flexible delivery models and improved use of fleet;
- expansion of community and demand-responsive transport provision; and
- system-level enablers, such as integrated planning and shared scheduling.

However, the appraisal also highlights that no individual option performs strongly across all Critical Success Factors when considered in isolation. Instead, the highest-scoring interventions are interdependent. For example:

- demand management measures reduce reliance on specialist transport but require alternative supply to be viable;
- expanded community and flexible transport improves access but requires coordination and integration to operate efficiently; and
- integration mechanisms unlock efficiency but are dependent on changes to service design and delivery models.



This demonstrates that isolated or incremental changes will not deliver the required outcomes, and that a more coordinated, system-level approach is necessary.

Overall, the appraisal indicates that the most effective solutions are those that combine:

- demand management,
- supply expansion and diversification, and
- system integration and coordination.

These findings provide a clear and robust basis for:

- rejecting low-performing standalone options; and
- developing a shortlist of coherent option packages that reflect different levels of ambition and integration.

3.3 Preferred Way Forward

The Preferred Way Forward is to transition Dorset's transport system from a service-specific and high-cost model to an integrated, flexible and community-focussed system that supports independence, improves access, and ensures long-term financial sustainability.

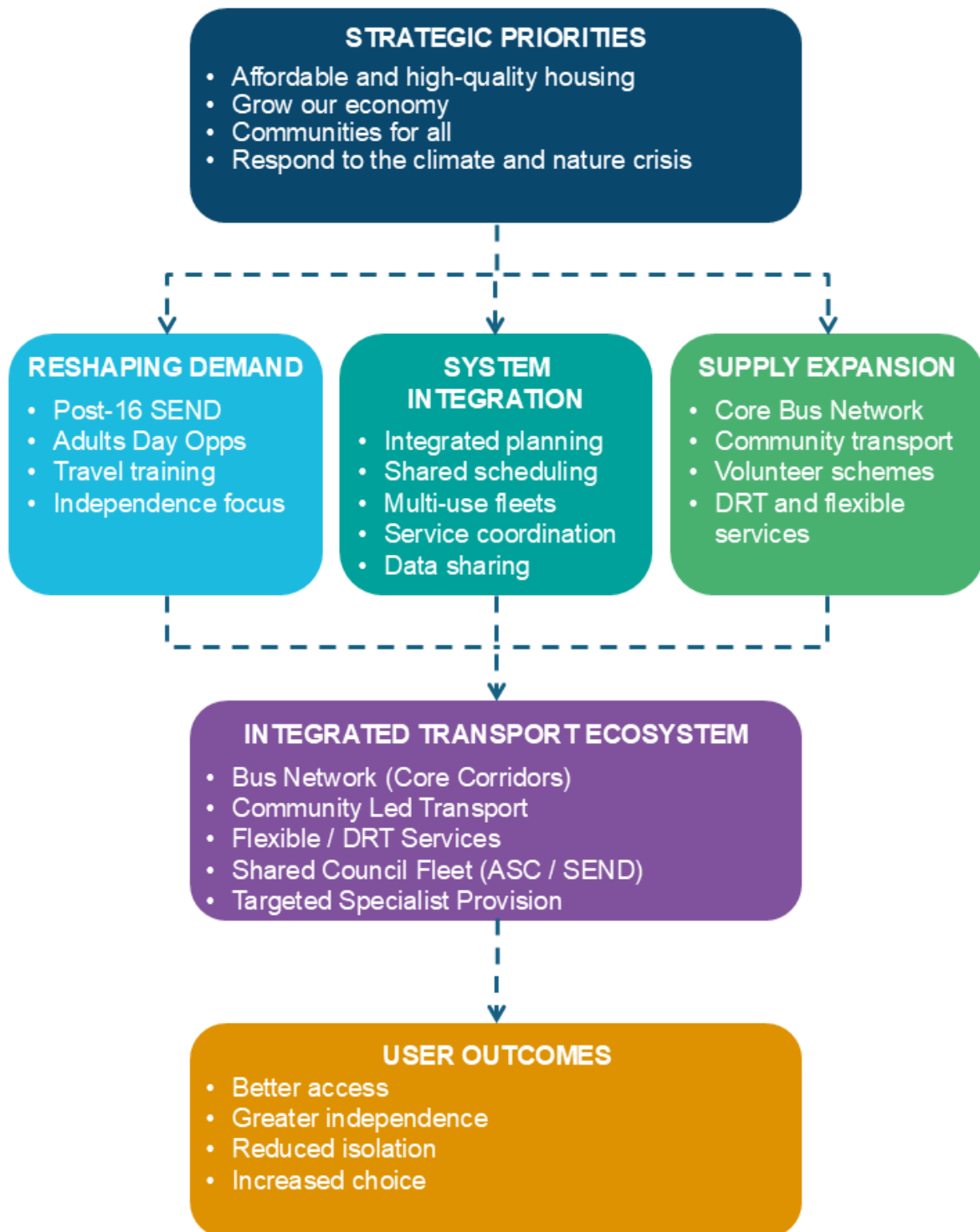
The long list appraisal demonstrates that incremental or standalone interventions will not deliver the level of improvement required. The Preferred Way Forward brings together a single, coordinated operating model that reshapes both demand and supply.

The Preferred Way Forward is to move toward a fully integrated transport model, which brings together policy, service design and delivery into a coherent system. It also reflects the key finding from the long list appraisal that the highest-performing options are those that operate in combination, rather than in isolation.

The Preferred Way Forward is underpinned by a conceptual Integrated Transport Operating Model, shown in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1 - Conceptual Integrated Transport Operating Model



This model brings together three mutually reinforcing components:

1. Reshaping Demand

Demand for specialist transport is reduced and better targeted through:

- reform of Post-16 SEND transport policy;



- changes to Adult Day Opportunities transport models; and
- increased emphasis on independent and supported travel, including travel training.

This ensures that:

- specialist provision is focused on those with the highest need; and
- a greater proportion of journeys can be delivered through shared and mainstream transport options.

2. System Integration

Transport services are planned and delivered as a coordinated system, rather than within separate service silos.

This includes:

- integrating transport across services;
- shared scheduling and coordination to enable pooled journeys;
- use of multi-purpose vehicles across different user groups; and
- improved data sharing and system visibility.

This element is critical to:

- improving efficiency;
- reducing duplication; and
- making best use of available resources.

3. Expanding Flexible Supply

The supply of transport is broadened and diversified through:

- strengthening the core bus network;
- expanding community-led transport and volunteer provision; and
- introducing more flexible and demand-responsive services where fixed routes are not viable.

This enables:

- improved access, particularly in rural and low-density areas; and
- greater flexibility to meet a wider range of user needs.

These three components combine to create a single, integrated transport ecosystem comprising:

- a core bus network, providing primary connectivity;
- community and locally led transport, supporting local access;



- flexible and demand-responsive services, addressing dispersed demand;
- a shared council fleet, used across service areas; and
- targeted specialist provision for individuals with complex needs.

This integrated approach also complements the council's parking strategy, creating opportunities to better manage demand across the network by providing viable alternatives to car travel and supporting a more balanced approach to parking provision and pricing.

While the Preferred Way Forward represents a transformational model, it is recognised that delivery will require a phased and managed implementation approach.

This reflects:

- the need to manage risk and service continuity;
- dependencies between demand, supply and integration measures; and
- the requirement to build capability, market capacity and system infrastructure over time.

In practice, this is likely to involve:

- early implementation of policy and demand management measures;
- phased expansion of community and flexible transport provision; and
- progressive development of integrated planning and coordination.

3.4 Shortlisted Options

Building on the Preferred Way Forward, the long list of options has been consolidated into a small number of coherent option packages for further appraisal in the full business case. The shortlisted options represent integrated packages of interventions, each offering a distinct but credible approach to delivering system change.

The shortlisted packages have been developed by grouping together the highest-performing and mutually reinforcing options identified through the appraisal process.

Each package:

- represents a complete end-to-end approach to service delivery;
- includes a combination of:
 - demand management measures;
 - supply-side improvements; and
 - system integration elements; and
- has been designed to be internally coherent and deliverable as a single model.



Crucially, the packages differ in the pace, scale and depth of transformation, allowing a clear comparison between:

- a more incremental approach, and
- a more comprehensive system redesign.

3.4.1 Shortlisted Option Packages

Option Package 1: Integrated Service Improvement Model

This option represents a moderate level of transformation, focused on improving performance within the existing system structure while introducing greater integration and flexibility.

The package combines:

- targeted demand management, including policy reform and travel training;
- expansion of community and flexible transport provision; and
- improved coordination and shared use of services.

This approach delivers:

- improved access and user outcomes;
- greater efficiency in the use of existing resources; and
- progress toward a more integrated system.

However, integration remains partial, with some elements of the system continuing to operate separately. As a result, while this option meets the core requirements, it does not fully address underlying structural inefficiencies.

Option Package 2: Fully Integrated Transport System

This option represents a comprehensive, system-wide transformation, aligned with the Integrated Transport Operating Model described in Section 4.3.

It combines:

- full implementation of demand management measures;
- significant expansion and diversification of transport supply; and
- a high degree of system integration, including shared planning, scheduling and commissioning.

Under this model, transport services operate as a single coordinated system, enabling:

- maximum use of shared journeys and assets;
- improved access across all geographies and user groups; and
- a step change in financial sustainability and operational efficiency.



This option provides the strongest alignment with the Critical Success Factors and offers the greatest potential to deliver long-term system benefits, but requires a higher level of change and programme delivery capability.

The two shortlisted packages provide a clear basis for comparison:

- Option Package 1 prioritises deliverability and lower complexity, with more limited transformation;
- Option Package 2 prioritises system integration and long-term impact, with greater implementation complexity.

Both options represent credible approaches to improvement and meet the minimum requirements set out in Section 4.1. However, they differ in the extent to which they realise the full benefits of an integrated transport system.

The shortlisted option packages will be taken forward for detailed economic appraisal in the Full Business Case, including:

- assessment of costs and benefits;
- consideration of risks and deliverability; and
- evaluation of value for money.

This will provide the evidence required to confirm the Preferred Way Forward and support decision-making.

3.5 Risks and Deliverability

As set out in Section 4.3, two shortlisted option packages have been identified for further consideration. Both options are capable of meeting the core service requirements and represent credible approaches to improving the current transport system.

At this stage of the Economic Case, a high-level assessment of risks and deliverability has been undertaken to:

- identify key challenges associated with each option;
- understand the relative complexity of implementation; and
- inform the development of a Preferred Way Forward.

This assessment is proportionate to the Outline Business Case stage. A more detailed and quantified evaluation of risk, affordability and deliverability will be undertaken as part of the Full Business Case (FBC).

Across both options, it is recognised that moving away from the current model will require careful sequencing and strong programme management to ensure that benefits are realised without adversely affecting service users.



3.5.1 Key Risks

The principal risks associated with this option include:

- **Complexity of system integration:** Delivering an integrated model requires coordination across multiple services, providers and stakeholders, which increases implementation complexity.
- **Dependency on market capacity:** Expansion of community transport, flexible services and alternative provision is dependent on the availability and capability of the provider market.
- **Transition risk:** Moving from the current model to a new system may create short-term risks to service continuity, particularly for vulnerable users, if not carefully managed.
- **Delivery capability and governance:** Successful implementation will require strong programme leadership, robust governance arrangements and appropriate resourcing.

These risks can be mitigated through a phased and sequenced delivery approach, including:

- early implementation of lower-risk demand management measures;
- gradual expansion of transport provision; and
- progressive development of integration capabilities.

This approach allows learning and refinement over time, reducing risk while maintaining momentum. Further detailed analysis will be undertaken at Full Business Case stage to:

- quantify and assess risks in greater detail, including likelihood, impact and mitigation measures;
- develop detailed delivery plans, phasing and timelines;
- assess market readiness and capacity;
- confirm affordability and funding requirements; and
- establish robust governance and programme management arrangements.

This will ensure that the Preferred Way Forward is supported by a deliverable and fully costed implementation plan, with clearly defined risk management strategies.

At Outline Business Case stage, both shortlisted options are considered **deliverable**, but with differing levels of risk and complexity.

3.6 Economic Case Conclusion

The Economic Case demonstrates that the challenges identified in the Strategic Case cannot be addressed through incremental change or isolated interventions. The assessment of the long list shows that options based on maintaining the current



model, or introducing limited improvements, do not meet the Critical Success Factors and would not deliver a sustainable or effective transport system.

In contrast, the options that perform most strongly are those that combine demand management, expansion of transport supply and improved system integration. The appraisal therefore confirms that meaningful improvement requires a coordinated, system-wide approach, rather than a series of standalone measures.

Of the shortlisted options, the Integrated Service Improvement Model provides a deliverable, lower-risk approach with moderate benefits. However, the Fully Integrated Transport System offers a more comprehensive solution, with significantly greater potential to improve access, enhance efficiency and deliver long-term financial sustainability through a coordinated operating model.

An Integrated Transport System is identified as the Preferred Way Forward. While complex to deliver, its risks can be managed through phased implementation, and it provides the clearest route to achieving a sustainable, integrated and user-focused transport system. The Full Business Case will develop this approach in detail, including implementation, costs, risks and delivery arrangements.



4 Commercial, Financial and Management Cases

4.1 Commercial Case

The Commercial Case considers how the market can support delivery of the Preferred Way Forward, and the approach the council will take to secure services that maximise public value. Moving to an integrated transport system represents a shift away from commissioning individual services in isolation, toward a more coordinated and flexible delivery model. This requires a commercial approach that enables different providers to contribute to a single, system-wide offer.

4.1.1 Market Capability and Capacity

The current transport market in Dorset is broad but fragmented, comprising commercial bus operators, taxi and private hire providers, community transport organisations, and a wider voluntary and community sector. Each of these providers delivers elements of the existing system, but their contribution is constrained by the way services are currently designed and commissioned.

A detailed assessment of the market is required to determine that there is sufficient capacity within the market to support the Preferred Way Forward, and that commissioning arrangements are restructured to enable greater flexibility and coordination. In particular, there is clear potential for community transport and VCSE providers to expand their role where supported, and evidence that flexible and demand-responsive transport models are increasingly deliverable in comparable areas. The future model will therefore focus on enabling the market to operate more effectively across service boundaries, rather than relying on a single provider type.

4.1.2 Attractiveness of the Future Delivery Model

The attractiveness of the future delivery model to providers will depend on the extent to which it offers stability, flexibility and viable operating models. The Preferred Way Forward is expected to enhance this by moving toward longer-term, more outcome-focused arrangements that allow providers to operate across multiple service areas. This improves vehicle utilisation and reduces reliance on narrowly defined contracts, increasing commercial viability.

In considering risk apportionment, the council will retain responsibility for strategic and system-wide elements, including overall planning, demand management and integration. Operational risks relating to service delivery will be shared with providers



where appropriate, with care taken not to transfer risks that the market is unable to manage effectively. Payment mechanisms will need to evolve to reflect this approach, moving away from single-route or single-user contracts toward arrangements that incentivise efficiency, flexibility and shared journeys. These principles will ensure that delivery is both commercially sustainable and aligned with the programme's objectives.

4.1.3 Commercial Strategy

The commercial strategy will align with the council's broader objectives of maximising public value and improving efficiency through collaboration. This includes increased use of joint commissioning across service areas such as Adult Social Care and SEND, as well as opportunities to aggregate demand to achieve economies of scale. The council will also seek to develop stronger partnerships with VCSE organisations and local providers, enabling a more diverse and resilient delivery model. Overall, the Commercial Case supports a transition to a more strategic, partnership-based approach to transport delivery.

The programme will be developed in alignment with related initiatives, including the parking review, to ensure a coordinated approach to demand management, network efficiency and user behaviour.

4.2 Financial Case

The Financial Case considers the affordability of the Preferred Way Forward and the extent to which the council is able to support its delivery. At this stage, the assessment focuses on the overall financial context, the likely profile of costs and benefits, and the availability of resources, recognising that more detailed financial modelling will be undertaken at Full Business Case stage.

4.2.1 Current Financial Position

Transport services in Dorset are currently subject to increasing financial pressure. This is driven by growth in demand, particularly in SEND and Adult Social Care transport, alongside a high level of reliance on bespoke and individually commissioned provision. These factors result in a cost base that is both high and difficult to manage, with limited flexibility to respond to changing demand.

Without intervention, these pressures are expected to continue, leading to further increases in expenditure and increasing risk to the sustainability of current service models. The Preferred Way Forward is therefore positioned not only as an improvement in service delivery, but as a necessary response to an upward financial trajectory.



4.2.2 Affordability and Funding

The Preferred Way Forward will require a combination of initial investment and ongoing revenue funding. Upfront costs are likely to include system development, service redesign and market development activity. The programme is primarily expected to deliver financial benefits through cost avoidance and savings. These benefits arise from reducing reliance on high-cost provision and improving the overall efficiency of the system.

The affordability of the programme will depend on the balance between these initial investments and longer-term reductions in cost growth. Funding is expected to be drawn from existing service budgets, supported by reallocation of resources as efficiencies are realised. Opportunities to secure external funding will also be explored where available.

4.2.3 Financial Constraints and Risks

The key financial constraints relate to the availability of resources within existing budgets and the timing of benefits realisation. There is a risk that upfront investment requirements may precede the delivery of savings, requiring careful financial planning and phasing.

There is also inherent uncertainty in the scale and timing of cost avoidance, particularly where benefits are dependent on behavioural change or market development. These risks will be addressed through robust financial modelling and sensitivity testing at Full Business Case stage.

4.2.4 Stakeholder Support

There is strategic support for the direction of travel across internal stakeholders, including transport, Adult Social Care and Children's Services. This reflects a shared recognition of the need for a more sustainable and integrated approach. This support provides a strong foundation for progressing the Preferred Way Forward, subject to confirmation of detailed financial arrangements at the next stage.

4.3 Management Case

The Management Case sets out how the programme will be delivered successfully, including governance, stakeholder engagement and programme management arrangements. At this stage, the focus is on demonstrating that the programme is achievable and that there is a clear pathway to developing detailed delivery plans.

4.3.1 Stakeholders and Roles



The programme will involve a wide range of stakeholders across the council and beyond. Internal stakeholders include transport, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, finance, procurement and corporate leadership. These services will need to work together closely to deliver an integrated approach.

Externally, delivery will involve transport operators, community transport organisations, VCSE partners, parish and town councils, and other service providers. Users themselves are also a critical stakeholder group, and their needs and experiences will inform the design and delivery of services. Effective engagement across all of these groups will be essential to ensuring successful implementation.

4.3.2 Deliverability and Organisational Readiness

The programme represents a significant change from current delivery models, but it builds on existing services, partnerships and capabilities. The council already has experience of commissioning transport services and working with a range of providers, which provides a strong foundation for delivering a more integrated system.

However, the programme will require the development of new capabilities, particularly in relation to system integration, coordinated planning and market development. It will also require effective management of change across multiple service areas. These challenges are recognised and can be addressed through a structured and phased approach, supported by appropriate governance and resources.

4.3.3 Programme Management and Governance

Delivery will be supported by a formal programme management framework, managed through the Transformation Office and the Transport Beacon Team, providing clear governance, accountability and oversight. This will include defined roles and responsibilities, structured decision-making processes, and mechanisms for managing risk and performance.

The programme will need to be delivered in phases, allowing for learning and adjustment as implementation progresses. This approach will help to manage risk and ensure that services continue to operate effectively during the transition period.

4.3.4 Development of Detailed Delivery Arrangements

Further work is required to develop detailed management arrangements, including implementation plans, governance structures, resource requirements and engagement strategies. These elements will be developed as part of the Full Business Case, alongside detailed financial and commercial proposals.



This next stage will ensure that the Preferred Way Forward is supported by a fully developed, deliverable plan, with clear milestones, responsibilities and performance measures.

4.3.5 Conclusion

The Management Case demonstrates that the programme is achievable, provided it is supported by strong governance, effective stakeholder engagement and a phased approach to delivery. It establishes a clear basis for progressing to Full Business Case stage, where detailed arrangements will be confirmed and refined.



5 Conclusions and Next Steps

This OBC demonstrates a clear and robust case for transforming Dorset's transport system. It confirms that the current model is not sustainable in the context of increasing demand, financial pressure and the need to improve access, integration and flexibility. The assessment of options shows that meaningful improvement cannot be achieved through incremental change alone, and that a more coordinated, system-wide approach is required.

The analysis identifies an integrated transport system as the Preferred Way Forward. This approach offers the greatest potential to deliver improved outcomes for residents, enhance efficiency in the use of resources and support long-term financial sustainability. While complex to deliver, the risks can be managed through a phased implementation approach and robust programme governance.

Subject to approval, the next stage of the programme will focus on the development of a Full Business Case (FBC), which will translate the Preferred Way Forward into a detailed and deliverable implementation plan. This will include:

- development of a phased delivery programme, setting out sequencing, milestones and priorities;
- detailed financial modelling, including costs, benefits and funding arrangements;
- further assessment of commercial delivery models and market engagement;
- detailed risk assessment and mitigation planning; and
- establishment of governance, programme management and performance frameworks.

In parallel, early progress will be taken forward on priority areas where there is a clear evidence base and lower delivery risk, including demand management measures and improvements to coordination and integration.



Appendix A - National, Regional and Local Policy Framework

Policy / Document	Date	Relevance to the OBC	Link
Better Connected: A Strategy for Integrated Transport (DfT)	2026	Sets out the Government's long-term vision for a joined-up, user-focused transport system, emphasising integration, accessibility, use of data and partnership with local authorities. Provides a clear national framework for integrated transport models.	Better Connected Strategy [gov.uk]
The Government's Vision for Buses (DfT)	2026 (updated)	Establishes expectations for reliable, inclusive and affordable bus services, with stronger local authority leadership and integrated service delivery. Directly supports improvements to bus networks within this OBC.	Vision for Buses [gov.uk]
National Bus Strategy – Bus Back Better (DfT)	2021	Emphasises the need to reverse decline in bus usage, improve service quality and develop Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs), supporting investment in core routes and integrated local systems.	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-back-better [mcl-transport.co.uk]
Local Transport Plan Guidance (DfT)	2026	Provides statutory and policy guidance on developing LTPs, including requirements for evidence-based planning, integration and delivery aligned to national priorities.	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-transport-plans [gov.uk]
Transport Act	2000	Establishes the statutory duty for local authorities to prepare Local Transport Plans and promote safe, integrated, efficient	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/38 [legislation.gov.uk]



		transport systems. Forms the legislative basis for the LTP.	
Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act	2026	Introduces reforms with a focus on inclusion, early intervention and local provision ("local child, local school"), supporting reduced reliance on specialist placements, more localised services and a corresponding reduction in demand for long-distance transport over time.	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2026/21/content/enacted
SEND Code of Practice (0–25 years)	2014 (updated 2024)	Provides statutory guidance on supporting children and young people with SEND, including joint commissioning, integration and transport implications linked to access to education.	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25 [gov.uk]
Children and Families Act (SEND framework)	2014	Introduces Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), creating duties on councils to ensure integrated support across education, health and care, including access arrangements.	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6
Care Act	2014	Establishes duties on local authorities to promote wellbeing, independence and prevention. Requires councils to consider transport as part of enabling access to care and support services where needs are identified.	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23 [legislation.gov.uk]
Care Act Statutory Guidance	2016 (ongoing)	Reinforces the need to support independence and ensure access to services, including consideration of transport arrangements as part of meeting eligible needs.	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-2014-part-1-factsheets [gov.uk]



Dorset Economic Growth Strategy 2025–2040	2025	Provides long-term framework for growth, highlighting the importance of transport connectivity and access to labour markets.	https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/dorset-s-economic-growth-strategy-2025-to-2040
Dorset Council Plan 2024-2029	2024	Establishes Council priorities, including climate action, strong communities and economic growth, all of which rely on improved transport provision.	https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-council-plan-2024-to-2029
Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Strategy	2024	Sets out commitments to reduce carbon emissions and protect the environment, reinforcing the need for modal shift and sustainable transport solutions.	https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/natural-environment-climate-ecology-strategy-2023-25-refresh
Local Transport Plan 2026–2041 (Dorset & BCP)	2026	Provides the statutory long-term transport strategy, promoting a vision-led, integrated and sustainable transport system that underpins this OBC.	(Final publication link to be inserted)
Western Gateway Strategic Transport Plan	2023	Regional strategy focusing on improving connectivity, supporting economic growth and enabling investment across the Western Gateway region.	https://westerngatewaystp.com
Western Gateway Strategic Investment Plan	2024	Identifies infrastructure and transport investment priorities to support regional growth and productivity, including enhanced connectivity and mobility.	https://westerngatewaystp.com
Age Friendly Dorset	2023	Supports inclusive communities by ensuring older residents can remain active and connected, highlighting the importance of accessible and reliable transport services.	https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/age-friendly-dorset
Dorset Council Parking Review	2025	Internal review that highlights links between parking and transport.	(Internal document / link pending publication)



		Supports demand management and mode shift objectives aligned with this OBC.	
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Appendix B – Long List of Options

Policy and Demand Management Options

Option	Description	Primary Requirements Addressed
Option 1: Do Minimum (Baseline)	Maintain current eligibility, policies and delivery models with incremental efficiencies only.	Access (minimum), Financial sustainability (limited)
Option 2: Post-16 SEND Policy Reform	Introduce a stepped, needs-led transport policy, including travel training, personal travel budgets and graduated support to enable independent travel and reduce reliance on specialist provision over time.	Financial sustainability, Independence, Integration
Option 3: Adults Day Opportunities Transport Reform	Reshape transport and support care providers to develop and cost their own transport and align transport provision with locality-based service delivery to reduce travel distances and demand for bespoke transport.	Financial sustainability, User outcomes
Option 4: Expansion of Travel Training	Scale up Independent Travel Training across Post-16 SEND and Adults cohorts.	Independence, Access
Option 5: Increased Use of Personal Travel Budgets (PTBs)	Expand PTBs across applicable cohorts to support family- and user-led solutions, providing a flexible alternative to commissioned transport and enabling demand to shift away	Flexibility, Financial sustainability



	from specialist provision where appropriate.	
Option 6: Walked Route Assessment Reviews	Undertake process redesign to support reassessment of closed routes and transport provision.	Access, Financial sustainability
Option 7: Demand Management and Travel Behaviour Programme	Develop a coordinated programme to manage travel demand across services, including promotion of independent travel, modal shift to public and community transport, and alignment with parking policy and charging mechanisms.	Access, Financial sustainability

Service Model and Delivery Design Options

Option	Description	Primary Requirements Addressed
Option 8: Maintain Existing Fleet Model	Continue use of large, specialist vehicles and fixed routes.	Access (limited), Integration (low)
Option 9: Fleet Transformation	Transition to flexible, multi-use vehicles that can operate across multiple services, including vehicle types suited to rural demand patterns and shared use across multiple services.	Financial sustainability, Flexibility, Integration
Option 10: Hub-and-Spoke Service Model	Align transport with locality-based service delivery, enabling access to distributed services.	Localisation, Access, Flexibility
Option 11: Flexible Scheduling and Routing	Introduce greater flexibility in routes and scheduling across services, enabling dynamic route planning, improved vehicle	Flexibility, Integration



	utilisation and better alignment with multi-user demand.	
Option 12: Blended Transport Model	Combine multiple transport types (bus, DRT, community, specialist) within a coordinated offer, designed around user needs and integrated planning across services.	Integration, Access, Efficiency

Supply Expansion and Market Development Options

Option	Description	Primary Requirements Addressed
Option 13: Maintain Current Community Transport Model	Continue with existing fragmented community transport provision.	Access (partial), Integration (low)
Option 14: Core Route Frequency Uplift	Lift service frequencies from 2 hourly to hourly on the CR3, CR4, CR5, CR6, CR7 and CR20. Estimated Cost: £2m per year (to be confirmed following operator engagement and retendering)	Access, Integration
Option 15: Full Saturday Service Rollout	Complete the rollout of Saturday services on the CR4, CR5, CR9, and CR20. Estimated Cost: £700k per year (to be confirmed following operator engagement and retendering).	Access, Integration
Option 16: Public Transport Network Optimisation	Review and redesign the core bus network to improve connectivity, reliability and integration with community and flexible transport, focusing on key corridors,	Access, Integration, Flexibility



	interchange points and access to growth locations.	
Option 17: Expand Community Transport Capacity	Grow existing community transport provision through extended collaboration between the council, local community and voluntary providers, to integrate community transport with public bus services to provide first-mile/last-mile connectivity and support access in rural and low-density areas.	Access, Localisation
Option 18: Develop Local Transport Hubs	Establish local coordination points for community and flexible transport services.	Integration, Localisation
Option 19: Enable VCSE and Micro-Provider Market	Expand participation of smaller providers through commissioning and support.	Market development, Flexibility
Option 20: Introduce Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)	Develop new flexible transport services where fixed routes are not viable, particularly in rural areas and to complement the core bus network.	Flexibility, Access
Option 21: Multi-User Shared Services	Enable vehicles and services to be used across multiple user groups (e.g. ASC, SEND), reducing duplication and maximising asset utilisation across the system.	Integration, Efficiency
Option 22: Young Person Discount (16–25)	Offering a third off adult fares on all bus services. Commercial operators would be reimbursed for lost income, on the basis that operators should be overall no better and no worse off from the scheme. Estimated Cost: £750,000 per year.	Independence, Access



System Integration and Enabler Options

Option	Description	Primary Requirements Addressed
Option 23: Maintain Current System Structure	Retain separate planning, commissioning and delivery structures.	Integration (low)
Option 24: Enhanced Integrated Transport Function	Integrate transport functions across Adult's, Children's and Dorset Travel to enable system-wide planning, coordination and performance management.	Integration, Efficiency
Option 25: Shared Scheduling and Coordination	Implement cross-service scheduling to enable pooled journeys and improved utilisation.	Integration, Efficiency
Option 26: Digital Platform for DRT Coordination	Introduce digital tools for booking, scheduling and data integration to support real-time scheduling, booking and system integration across transport modes and providers.	Digital enablement, Integration
Option 27: Integrated Commissioning Model	Align commissioning across services to enable flexible, outcome-based delivery.	Efficiency, Market development
Option 28: Transport and Parking Strategy Alignment	Align transport service improvements with parking policy, including pricing, demand management and utilisation strategies, to support mode shift and improve network efficiency.	Integration, Access, Efficiency
Option 29: Performance and Data Framework	Improve system-wide data, KPIs and performance monitoring.	Efficiency, Integration



Appendix C –Option-Level Scoring

Scoring Scale

Score	Definition
++	Strongly meets requirement / delivers significant improvement
+	Meets requirement / delivers moderate improvement
0	Neutral / limited contribution
–	Weak against requirement
--	Fails to meet requirement

Critical Success Factors

- Access and Inclusion
- Financial Sustainability
- Integration and System Coherence
- Flexibility and Responsiveness
- User Outcomes and Independence

Policy and Demand Management

Option	Access	Financial	Integration	Flexibility	Outcomes	Overall
1. Do Minimum	0	--	--	–	–	Very Low
2. SEND Reform	+	+	+	+	++	High



3. Adults Day Opportunities Reform	+	+	+	+	+	High
4. Travel Training	+	+	+	0	++	High
5. PTBs	+	+	0	+	+	High
6. Walked Route Reviews	+	+	0	0	+	Moderate
7. Demand Management Programme	++	++	+	+	++	Very High

Service Model and Delivery

Option	Access	Financial	Integration	Flexibility	Outcomes	Overall
8. Existing Fleet	0	–	--	--	–	Very Low
9. Fleet Transformation	+	++	+	+	+	High
10. Hub-and-Spoke	++	+	+	++	++	Very High
11. Flexible Scheduling	+	+	+	++	+	High
12. Blended Model	++	++	++	++	++	Very High

Supply and Market

Option	Access	Financial	Integration	Flexibility	Outcomes	Overall
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13. Current CT Model	0	0	–	0	0	Low
14. Core Route Uplift	++	–	+	0	+	Moderate – High
15. Saturday Services	+	–	+	0	+	Moderate
16. Network Optimisation	++	++	++	+	+	Very High
17. Expand CT	+	+	+	+	+	High
18. Transport Hubs	+	+	++	+	+	Very High
19. VCSE Market	+	+	+	+	+	High
20. DRT	++	+	+	++	+	Very High
21. Multi-User Services	+	++	++	+	+	Very High
22. Young Person Discount	+	–	0	0	+	Moderate

System Integration and Enablers

Option	Access	Financial	Integration	Flexibility	Outcomes	Overall
23. Current Structure	0	–	--	–	–	Very Low
24. Integrated Function	+	+	++	+	+	Very High
25. Shared Scheduling	+	++	++	+	+	Very High



26. Digital Platform	+	+	++	+	+	High
27. Integrated Commissioning	+	++	++	+	+	Very High
28. Transport + Parking Alignment	+	+	++	+	+	High
29. Performance Framework	0	+	+	0	0	Moderate





Appendix 2 – Summary of DfT Bus Grant allocations awarded to South West and Neighbouring Authorities

DfT Funding Received from 2021/22 to 2025/26*

Authority	Total
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council	£15,815,519
Cornwall Council (including Isles of Scilly)	£27,062,620
Devon County Council	£27,884,774
Dorset Council	£5,189,309
Gloucestershire County Council	£11,992,575
Hampshire County Council	£20,178,335
North Somerset Council	£4,810,390
Plymouth City Council	£6,144,422
Somerset Council	£19,725,841
Swindon Borough Council	£3,550,355
Torbay Council	£2,910,764
West of England Combined Authority	£119,204,683
Wiltshire Council	£10,121,057

*Funding for this period including BSIP, BSIP+ and Local Authority Bus Grant (capital and revenue)

DfT Funding Allocated for 2026/27 to 2029/2030*

Authority	Total
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	£20,302,743
Cornwall	£33,632,753
Devon and Torbay	£48,829,428
Dorset	£13,836,519
Gloucestershire	£28,466,351
Hampshire County Council	£52,036,693
North Somerset	£14,476,175
Plymouth City	£17,164,298
Somerset	£24,741,113
Swindon	£10,253,535
West of England (separately receives Transport for City Regions funding)	£-
Wiltshire	£21,301,200

*Consolidated Local Authority Bus Grant Funding (capital and revenue)

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Appendix 3 – Climate Wheel Accessible Impact Assessment & Table of Recommendations

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

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

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	minor positive impact
High-quality and affordable housing	minor positive impact
Communities for all	strongly supports it

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
Reduce overall fuel consumption by increasing vehicle occupancy and minimising duplicate journeys.	Yes – integrated scheduling and shared services will reduce mileage and improve vehicle utilisation.
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
Prioritise shared, public and flexible transport over individual journeys where appropriate.	Yes – the model shifts demand toward shared transport and reduces reliance on bespoke provision.
Progressively transition to electric or zero-emission vehicles where operationally feasible.	Partially – EVs will be introduced where suitable, but HVO and other low-carbon options will continue where operational constraints limit full transition.
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
Minimise environmental impacts from fleet operations through efficient vehicle maintenance and cleaning practices.	Yes – existing fleet management practices will continue and be supported through more efficient use of vehicles.
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Initial information

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

Public Bus and Community Transport Transformation

2. Is this a (please delete those not required):

New policy, project, strategy, project or service

3. Is this (please delete those not required):

Both internal and external

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

This programme aims to improve public buses and community transport across Dorset. It responds to growing demand, limited services and increasing costs. The current system is fragmented and difficult for many people to use.

The programme seeks to create a more joined-up transport system. This will help people access services, jobs, education and their communities more easily. It will also support greater independence for residents, particularly older people, disabled people and those living in rural areas.

The main aims are to:

- improve access to transport across the county, especially in rural areas;
- make services easier to use and better connected;
- reduce reliance on high-cost, individual transport where appropriate;
- support independence and reduce social isolation; and
- create a more sustainable and efficient system over time.

The programme will bring together different types of transport, including buses, community transport and specialist services, into a more coordinated system. It will also make better use of available vehicles and resources.

There will be a greater focus on flexible and shared transport options, supported by improved use of technology. This includes better planning of journeys and improved coordination between services.

The programme will also involve working more closely with partners, including health services and local communities, to better understand needs and improve how services are delivered.

Overall, the aim is to create a transport system that is more accessible, inclusive and able to meet changing needs in the future.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal?

This proposal has developed in response to growing pressures on Dorset's transport system. These include rising demand, reduced public transport provision and increasing costs, particularly for specialist transport such as SEND and Adult Social Care.

Bus services have declined, especially in rural areas, with fewer routes and lower frequencies. This has made it harder for people to access jobs, education, healthcare and community activities. At the same time, demand for specialist transport has increased, with more people relying on council-arranged home to school, SEND and adult day opportunities journeys.

The current system is delivered through separate services. Public buses, community transport and specialist services are planned and funded independently. This has led to a system that is not always efficient, with some journeys duplicated and others not well served.

Cabinet's decisions in January 2026, identified the need for a more joined-up approach. This led to the development of the Outline Business Case, which sets out options for improving how transport is planned and delivered.

There is also a wider policy context shaping this work. National transport policy, SEND reforms and Adult Social Care priorities all focus on improving access, supporting independence and delivering services closer to home. Locally, engagement with residents has highlighted transport as a key concern, particularly in rural communities.

The proposal is therefore part of a planned programme of change. It aims to move away from the current model toward a more coordinated approach that better meets current and future needs.

Evidence gathering and engagement

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

A wide range of data and evidence has been used to inform the development of this proposal and to support the EqlA.

The Outline Business Case provides the primary evidence base. This includes quantitative data on transport provision, usage and cost. Key datasets include bus network coverage and service levels, community transport provision, and demand for specialist transport, including SEND and Adult Social Care. This has enabled a clear understanding of how services are currently used and where gaps in provision exist.

The analysis also draws on financial data, including trends in transport expenditure and cost pressures within specialist transport. This provides insight into how demand is changing and the sustainability of the current system over time.

Demographic and population data has been used to understand current and future demand. This includes information on ageing populations, rural communities and groups more likely to rely on public or supported transport. This is important in identifying groups that may be disproportionately affected by changes and where improved access could have the greatest impact.

The development of the proposal has also been informed by engagement and resident insight. This includes findings from the Big Conversation and other engagement exercises, which consistently identify transport as a key issue, particularly in rural areas and for people without access to a car. This qualitative evidence helps to explain how transport barriers affect people's day-to-day lives.

Benchmarking with other local authorities has also been undertaken, including comparison of transport models and policy approaches. This provides evidence of what has worked elsewhere and highlights opportunities for improvement within Dorset.

The work has also been informed by relevant national and local policy, including SEND reform, Adult Social Care priorities and wider transport strategy. These policies emphasise improving access, supporting independence and delivering more local, integrated services.

Together, this evidence provides a comprehensive picture of the current system, the needs of different groups and the potential impacts of change. It supports a proportionate EqlA by identifying where impacts are likely to arise and where mitigation or further engagement may be required as proposals are developed further.

7. What did this tell you?

The evidence confirms that access to transport is uneven across Dorset, particularly in rural areas. Reduced bus services and limited coverage mean that many residents, especially those without access to a car, face barriers in reaching jobs,

education, healthcare and community activities. This has a disproportionate impact on older people, young people, disabled people and those on lower incomes.

Secondly, the data highlights a growing reliance on specialist transport, particularly for SEND and Adult Social Care. This reflects increasing levels of need but also shows that many journeys are being met through bespoke arrangements rather than through a wider, shared system. This can limit independence for individuals and increases overall costs, reducing the ability to invest in broader services.

The evidence also shows that the current system is fragmented and difficult to navigate, particularly for people who need to use more than one type of transport. Separate services, inconsistent availability and varying eligibility criteria can create complexity and reduce accessibility for users.

Importantly, engagement and insight from residents confirm that transport is a key barrier to participation and wellbeing. Feedback highlights issues such as isolation, limited travel choices and difficulty accessing essential services, particularly in rural communities.

At the same time, the evidence identifies opportunities. The use of technology, more flexible transport models and better coordination between services could improve access and make better use of existing resources. There is also potential to work more closely with partners, including health services, to reduce duplication and improve outcomes.

Overall, the evidence indicates that while the current system meets essential needs, it does not provide equitable or sustainable access for all groups. A more integrated and flexible approach is needed to reduce inequalities, improve independence and ensure that the transport system better supports the needs of Dorset's communities.

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

Work to develop the Outline Business Case has involved officers from across the council, including transport planning, Dorset Travel, Adult Social Care, Children's Services and the Transformation Office. This has ensured that the assessment reflects the needs of different service areas and user groups, particularly those who rely on SEND and Adult Social Care transport.

The programme is also linked to wider engagement work across the council, including the Community Conversations taking place during the summer. These will provide further opportunities to hear directly from residents, community groups and partners.

Further targeted engagement will be carried out as the programme develops, particularly with service users, families and groups representing protected characteristics. This will ensure that the next stage of work is informed by lived experience and that potential impacts are fully understood.

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

Further information will be required to support detailed decision making at the next stage. In particular, additional work will be needed to better understand how different groups may be affected by specific changes to service delivery.

Further engagement will also be required with residents, service users and representative groups, particularly those with protected characteristics. This will provide more detailed insight into lived experience, barriers to travel and the potential impacts of proposed changes.

There is also a need for more detailed operational and delivery information. This includes how an integrated system would function in practice, how services would be coordinated across providers and how technology and data would be used to support delivery.

Finally, more detailed financial modelling will be required to understand the costs, benefits and potential impacts on different parts of the system over time.

This additional information will be developed as part of the Full Business Case. It will ensure that future decisions are based on a clear understanding of impacts, risks and opportunities, and that appropriate mitigation can be put in place where needed.

Is an EQIA required?

An EqIA is required for this programme. The proposal represents a significant strategic change to how transport services are planned and delivered across Dorset, including services that are relied upon by a wide range of residents, many of whom have protected characteristics.

The evidence set out in the Outline Business Case shows that transport has a direct impact on access to services, independence and participation in daily life. Changes to transport provision, particularly where there is a shift toward more shared or flexible models, have the potential to affect groups differently, including older people, disabled people, young people and those living in rural areas.

As such, it is important to ensure that the potential impacts on different groups are fully understood and that appropriate mitigation is identified. An EqIA provides a structured and proportionate way to assess these impacts and to demonstrate that the council is meeting its Public Sector Equality Duty.

At this stage, the EqIA screening only has undertaken, reflecting the strategic nature of the OBC. A detailed EqIA will be developed alongside the Full Business Case. This will be informed by further data, engagement and service design work, ensuring that equality considerations are fully integrated into the development of the final proposals and any subsequent implementation.

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		
Disability		
Care Experience		
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity		
Marriage or civil partnership		
Pregnancy and maternity		
Race and Ethnicity		
Religion and belief		

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Sex (consider men and women)		
Sexual orientation		
People with caring responsibilities		
Rural isolation		
Socio-economic deprivation		
Single parents		
Armed forces communities		

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqlA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqlA:

Officers involved in completing the EqlA:

Date of completion:

Version Number:

EqlA review date:

Equality Lead Sign Off:

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 [Diversity and Inclusion Officer](#)



Place and Resources Overview Committee

9 July 2025

Parking Review and Strategy For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr J Andrews, Place Services

Local Councillor(s): All councillors

Senior Leadership Team:

Jan Britton, Executive Director for Economy and Environment

Report author and job title: David Rosselli, Transport and Parking Strategy Lead

Email: david.rosselli@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Dorset Council

Report status: Part Exempt (Appendix 2)

1. Executive summary

1.1 This report provides an overview of the strategic direction arising from the Dorset Council Parking Review. The 2023 introduction of new parking machines enabled this review to have extensive data to analyse. This review represents the first comprehensive, data-led assessment of council-operated parking across Dorset and identifies a clear need for modernisation to address traffic flow, congestion, air quality, unsafe parking behaviours, road safety, kerb space uses, local environment, seasonal pressures, fairness, accessibility, and alignment with wider transport, climate and urban enhancement objectives.

The review concludes that while overall utilisation of Dorset Council car parks is moderate, demand is highly concentrated in a small number of central and coastal locations, particularly during peak seasons. This creates congestion, poor air quality and reduced accessibility, while large peripheral and seasonal parking sites remain underused for much of the year. Current pricing structures, enforcement capacity and resident parking arrangements limit the Council's ability to manage this demand effectively.

The proposed direction is not revenue-led but focuses on improving availability, supporting economic activity, improving public confidence and ensuring compliance with statutory duties. Key themes include demand redistribution through town-level pricing and lengths of stay, modernised enforcement, improved resident parking offers, review of underused assets, stronger integration with public transport and climate objectives, and using parking surplus income to support improved bus and community transport services.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Place and Resources Overview Committee:

- Notes the strategic direction of the Dorset Council Parking Review.



- Reviews the detailed data in Appendix 2.
- Supports the emerging strategic direction for parking management.
- Comments on further policy development and phased implementation.
- Inspects the display of new parking machines and technology presentation that could enable the changes suggested in the review.

3. Reason for the recommendations

3.1 The recommendations enable Place and Resources Overview Committee to consider the evidence base, ensure alignment with Council priorities and provide constructive ideas before detailed proposals are progressed to Cabinet.

4. The report

4.1 The Parking Review examined 82 council-operated car parks (including those covered by Harbour Revision Orders), alongside on-street provision, and covered demand, utilisation, pricing, enforcement, resident permits and asset performance. The evidence highlights recurring issues of seasonal volatility, spatial imbalance and under-resourced enforcement.

The proposed strategic approach adopts a town-by-town methodology, recognising that parking performs different functions in market towns, coastal resorts and employment centres. The review advises against a flat, county-wide tariff as this would exacerbate congestion in the most pressured locations. Instead, differentiated pricing, better planned parking periods and clearer signage are proposed to encourage more balanced use of the parking estate.

4.2 Some very positive initiatives are already underway that will help us to support the recommendations of the review, as follows.

(a) At the Park and Ride in Weymouth the service operates frequently from 5am to half past midnight every day. A group of five passengers can stay in town all day long for a set price of only £6.50; whereas the very popular Pavilion car park costs £15.80 to park for the whole day. Further, site improvements are underway, including new site signage, installation of more CCTV cameras, installation of an information wall explaining how the service works, improved lighting, fresh redecoration, a new Real Time Information display, a refreshed active travel map and information panel, plus enhanced site security to stop unauthorised access when the site is closed. Later in 2026/27 a bus shelter will be installed and extra CCTV cameras will cover that zone of the site. During all these improvements, the Park and Ride service will continue to operate.

(b) At Cabinet (9 June 2026) it was resolved that procurement will now begin to replace the software systems used for civil enforcement and parking permits. That will significantly improve efficiency (by replacing separate legacy IT systems with a single integrated system) and will help the staff to keep the streets clear of congestion, keep traffic flowing, reduce air pollution, and reduce dangerous parking (eg on double yellow lines).

(c) The Council's complement of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) is significantly below strength compared to similar local authorities. Recruitment will now increase, to gradually increase staff numbers.

(d) Our existing parking meter terminals work well. However, consideration is being given to upgrading the machine fronts to provide a better service for motorists, who will be enabled to enter their vehicle registration and pay for a virtual ticket. That will mean there will no longer be any need for paper printed tickets (which can become jammed or damp inside the machine). It will also allow advertisements on the interactive display, through which the council may inform drivers of local



events coming up. Finally, the interactive screen will display the tariffs, and as a result each time any charges change in future there will not be any need to replace the physical signs displaying the tariffs (thereby saving the council the cost of replacing the tariff signs). Examples of the new parking terminals are available for inspection by Members at today's meeting.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 The review considered (a) maintaining the current parking approach and (b) introducing uniform pricing across Dorset. Both options were discounted due to their inability to address congestion, unfairness and inefficiencies identified in the data.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 Parking operations must comply with the Traffic Management Act 2004, the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (RTRA 1984) and associated secondary legislation. While the power to set parking charges derives from the RTRA 1984, the Traffic Management Act 2004 provides the overarching framework for civil parking enforcement and imposes a duty on local authorities to secure the expeditious movement of traffic across their networks.

6.2 The authority's power to set charges for on-street and off-street parking under the RTRA 1984 is broad but must be exercised in a manner consistent with Section 122 RTRA 1984.

6.3 Section 122 RTRA 1984 imposes a general duty on local authorities to secure the "expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic" when exercising their functions under the Act. This duty requires that parking charges are aligned with traffic management objectives rather than revenue generation.

6.4 In carrying out this duty, the authority must have regard (so far as is practicable) to the matters set out in section 122(2), including:

- The desirability of securing and maintaining reasonable access to premises.
- The effect on the amenities of any locality affected.
- The importance of facilitating the passage of public service vehicles.
- National air quality strategies.
- Any other matters appearing relevant to the authority.

Case law has established that while surplus income may arise, the generation of revenue must not be the primary purpose of parking charges. A failure to demonstrate that these considerations have been properly taken into account could expose the authority to challenge on public law grounds.

6.5 Section 55 RTRA 1984 imposes specific obligations in respect of financial management. The authority is required to keep an account of income and expenditure relating to designated parking spaces. This includes income from parking charges and penalties together with expenditure on enforcement and administration.

6.6 When parking schemes generate a surplus, this must be applied in accordance with s55. In the first instance, the surplus should be applied to meeting the costs of the provision and maintenance of parking spaces. Where further off-street parking accommodation is considered unnecessary or undesirable, the surplus may also be used for:

- Meeting the costs of public passenger transport services.
- Funding highway or road improvement projects.



- Supporting environmental improvements.

Surplus funds must be applied only in accordance with these statutory purposes and cannot be diverted into general council expenditure.

6.7 Section 55 does not require car parking charges to be set at a cost recovery level. The Council should be mindful that a persistent or significant surplus may increase the risk of legal challenge.

6.8 The proposed review will provide a clear audit trail demonstrating how charges have been set in compliance with these statutory duties.

6.9 Councils can introduce differential charging, such as discounts for low/ zero emission vehicles, and higher charges for more polluting vehicles. Such measures must:

- Be reasonable, proportionate and not set at levels that appear punitive or arbitrary
- Be clearly linked to environmental objectives such as improving air quality
- Be supported by clear evidence and structured in a fair and transparent way
- Consider potential impacts on different groups, including equality implications

Charges may also vary by location or time where this supports traffic flow or congestion reduction.

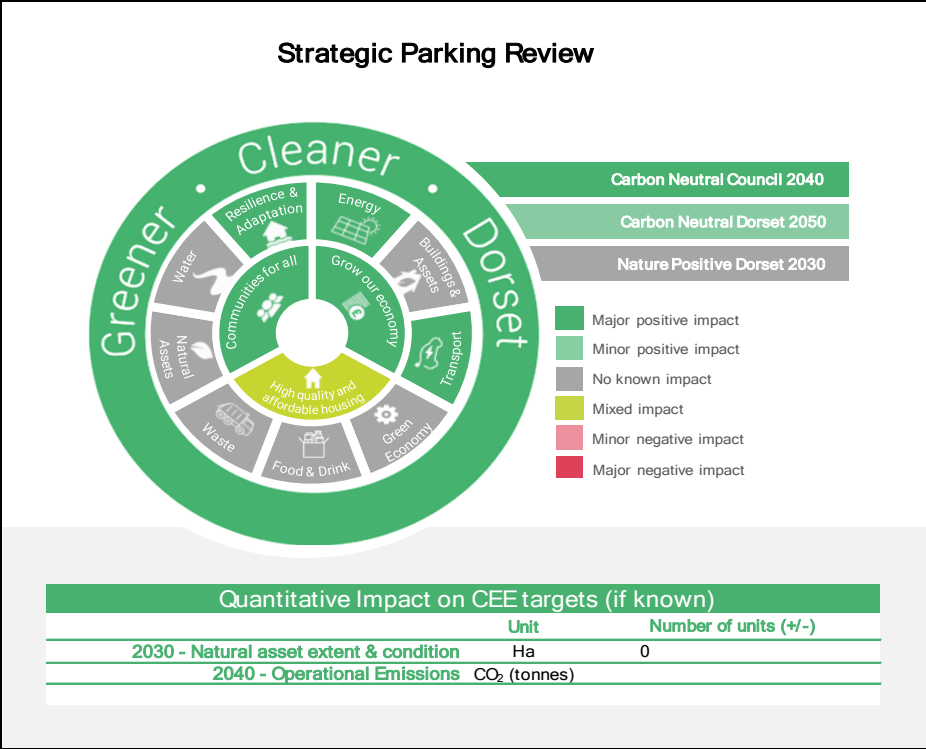
6.10 Overall, the proposed approach in this report is legally achievable if it is carefully designed, evidence-based, and clearly framed as a traffic and environmental management measure rather than a means of raising general revenue.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The proposals are intended to be financially sustainable, maintaining overall income while improving utilisation and compliance. Future decisions will be subject to detailed financial modelling and affordability assessments.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The strategic direction supports Dorset Council's climate and ecological commitments by reducing congestion, discouraging unnecessary circulation for parking and encouraging use of sustainable transport and cleaner vehicles.



Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	Positive impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	Major positive impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	Major positive impact
Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	Strongly supports it
High-quality and affordable housing	Neutral
Communities for all	Strongly supports it

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 Improved traffic flow, reduced congestion and better access to town centres can support public health, air quality, accessibility and community well-being, particularly for those with mobility needs.



10. Other implications

10.1 The parking strategy supports wider regeneration, economic vibrancy and public realm objectives by improving access to town centres and reducing the negative impacts of congestion.

10.2 In future some existing assets (i.e. car parks) may be identified for improvement, redevelopment or sale.

10.3 Some town centre public car parks have CCTV, and car parks are priority locations for preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. Key stakeholders include Dorset Council, Dorset Police, Dorset Community Safety Partnership. Car parks feature particularly regarding safety planning for the night-time economy, anti-social behaviour responses, and safer town centre initiatives during seasonal peaks. These factors will be taken into account in future developments.

11. Risk implications

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

Current Risk: Medium – reflecting public and Members' sensitivity to parking changes and operational complexity.

Residual Risk: Low to Medium – subject to phased delivery, community engagement and ongoing monitoring.

12. Equalities

12.1 In undertaking a review of parking charges, the authority must comply with its obligations under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (Section 149) and the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled persons (section 20). These duties are continuing, non-delegable and apply not only to the final decisions on parking charges but also to the process by which those decisions are developed and implemented.

12.2 Under the PSED, the authority must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between such persons

Having due regard requires the authority to be properly informed about the potential impacts of parking charge changes and consider how the proposals may disproportionately affect certain groups. The authority must identify opportunities to mitigate adverse impacts and promote accessibility. The equality considerations must be integrated at a formative stage of decision making and not a retrospective justification.

12.3 These duties are engaged not only in the substantive outcome of the parking charges review but also in how the review is undertaken. This includes ensuring that:

- all relevant demographic and usage data is collected and analysed.



- consultation processes are accessible and inclusive including engagement with disability groups and other affected stakeholders.
- equality impacts inform the design of charging options at an early stage.

12.4 Future parking proposals will be supported by Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that impacts on protected groups, including disabled people and lower-income households, are properly considered and mitigated.

12.5 Emissions-based discounting will be advantageous to electric vehicle drivers. If surcharges for high emission vehicles are also introduced, that could unfairly impact on low-income residents who lack the means to switch to a low or zero emission vehicle. Options will be considered to see if there is a way to soften the impact, subject to complying with legal advice.

13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1: Dorset Parking Review Report (WSP 17/3/2026) Executive Summary and Recommendations.

13.2 Appendix 2 (exempt): Screenshots from the Power BI interactive tool.

14. Background papers

14.1 The following background papers are relevant to this report:

Dorset Parking Review Report (WSP 17/3/2026) Executive Summary and Recommendations

Dorset Parking Review Report (WSP 17/3/2026, a 297-page technical report)

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 Cabinet Member for Place Services.

Appendix 1:

Dorset Council Parking Review

Executive Summary and Recommendations





Executive Summary

The parking review provides the first comprehensive, data-driven assessment of Dorset Council's parking operations covering 82 council-operated car parks and associated on-street parking across the county for the period April 2024 to August 2025. The review establishes a clear evidence base to support future policy, operational improvements, and strategic decisions.

In addition to the data analysis, the review has considered the legal framework that parking must operate under, and the recommendations have been developed with this framework in mind. Raising revenue is not an objective of civil parking enforcement; the objectives and any policies or strategies must be designed around the following points:

- Managing the traffic network to ensure expeditious movement of traffic, (including pedestrians and cyclists), as required under section 16 of the Traffic Management Act (TMA) 2004 (Network Management Duty)
- Improving road safety
- Improving the local environment and air quality
- Improving the quality, accessibility, and use of public transport
- Meeting the needs of people with disabilities, some of whom will be unable to use public transport and depend entirely on the use of a car
- Managing and reconciling the competing demands for kerb space

The review identifies opportunities to improve availability within Dorset Council's busiest car parks, supporting economic growth and helping communities to become better connected. By setting pricing structures and lengths of stay through a strategic approach that understands the interrelationship between each car park, and recognises the individual needs of local communities, Dorset Council can deliver a strategy that meets the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors.

Key Challenges

- Coastal car parks see a significant seasonal variation, generating pressure in the summer and significant spare capacity in the winter.
- There is strong spatial imbalance. Central car parks in towns such as Weymouth, Dorchester, Bridport, and Shaftesbury regularly exceed capacity, whereas peripheral car parks in those towns frequently remain underused.
- Traffic congestion, driver frustration, and poorer air quality are created in areas which have high demand for the most convenient car parks, although there is typically spare capacity in nearby car parks.
- Many people who frequently use the highest tier car parks feel that the pricing structure is unfair, while people in market towns are opposed to level parking charges, often feeling that driving to access their local communities is their only viable option. Levelling parking charges while maintaining income would result in a 10-hour tariff of £11, a significant increase from the current £4.20 in tier 1 and £6.30 in tier 2.

Key Observations

- Dorset Council has significantly fewer Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) than nearby authorities, potentially resulting in lower levels of parking compliance, in turn leading to higher levels of dangerous parking.



- The Dorset Council resident's permit provides exceptional value for money for people who often park in off-street car parks. However, take up is low.
- Better utilisation of car parks will support plans for regeneration and needs to be considered as part of ongoing urban enhancement work. Beyond car parking, improving access to local businesses is likely to support economic growth.
- Public transport and car parking provision are intrinsically linked. A better bus and community transport offer brings the opportunity to rethink parking charges.

Recommendations

Emissions based discounting

Dorset Council's Plan 2024-2029 is clear on the need to respond to the climate and nature crisis. To promote greener vehicles and improve air quality in towns, the Council should consider implementing emissions-based parking discounts for low/ zero emission vehicles and could possibly consider surcharging for high emission vehicles. To introduce emissions-based discounting, £250k of parking machine upgrades would be required but car park tariff display signs would not need to be updated, and could be removed altogether, because the tariffs would be displayed in real time on the screens of the upgraded parking machines, which would save the Council approximately £125k every time tariffs were to change in future years.

Demand redistribution

Pricing structures and maximum lengths of stay should be adjusted to level overall demand on a town-by-town basis. Less-used car parks should be promoted through digital signage, and improved signage.

Optimise use of underutilised sites

Alternative winter uses should be considered for sites with low seasonal demand. Underutilised sites should be considered for repurposing or sale.

Modernising enforcement

Dorset Council should expand its Civil Enforcement Officer capacity. This needs to include an increase to the baseline number of permanent staff alongside exploring options to further increase the team in periods of high demand.

There is also a need to implement updated technology-led enforcement systems that work in conjunction with other parking systems.

Public engagement

Comprehensive public engagement should be planned to explain proposed changes and implementation of a revised parking strategy.

Resident discounts

The most cost-effective way for residents who regularly park in Dorset Council's car parks is to purchase a resident's permit.

There is the opportunity to implement pay-as-you-go resident discounts, although cost certainty on income would be low. Dorset Council does not have sufficient usage data to accurately determine the split between residents and visitors using their car parks. Should Dorset Council wish to provide discounts on pay-as-you-go prices, a number of options are available. One way could be to apply



discounts through an app-based system, with people registering to verify their residency and the app then offering discounted rates.

Few councils apply resident parking discounts directly at the parking machine. Councils who have implemented this approach have used a variety of strategies including issuing physical resident's cards/permits. Providing a resident discount option at the machine can make the transaction process more cumbersome for the customer. If Dorset Council chooses to implement emissions-based discounting, the machine upgrades will include a vehicle registration keypad. The most straightforward method to introduce resident car parking discounts (using the parking machine) would be for the resident to select a resident tariff at the machine when they enter their registration number.

Any solution that is implemented needs to be designed in a way to make it as simple as possible for the customer while still ensuring that it is robust enough to deter fraudulent misuse.

Residents' on-street parking zones

Dorset has several residents' parking zones across the larger towns. The schemes have been developed in isolation under the guidance of an outdated policy, and they no longer fulfil the requirements of the residents. The policy requires review, lower limits of permits per property and reductions in non-residents parking in the busier locations should be considered.

Park and Ride sites

Dorset Council currently has two park and ride sites, Weymouth Park and Ride and Corfe Castle Purbeck Park. Both of these operate well below capacity.

Research has shown that for a park and ride location to be successful it requires parking in the destination centre to be limited and suitably priced, sustainable transport links (bus, bike, walk) to be reliable and convenient, and sites should be well signed, advertised and safe. Steps should be taken to ensure all these factors are improved.

Conclusions

The Dorset Parking Review demonstrates that Dorset Council's parking system is characterised by seasonal volatility, spatial imbalance, and demand on a small number of high performing sites.

While overall utilisation is moderate, peak season congestion in coastal and town centre locations places considerable operational strain on the car park estate, in contrast with persistent underuse of peripheral car parks particularly in market towns and during the winter season.

Current enforcement capacity is insufficient to ensure compliance, leading to low PCN issuance compared to neighbouring authorities and potential inconsistent user behaviour.

Climate and decarbonisation commitments require Dorset Council to reshape how parking supports mode shift, EV adoption, and reduced congestion. Parking charges should be linked to improvements in bus services at a town level to help encourage use of public transport. A level tariff across all car parks would take away the opportunity to encourage parking in larger less central car parks and increase congestion and the hunting for spaces in the busiest highest demand locations.

Overall, the evidence underscores the need for a more balanced and modernised parking operation that supports residents, visitors, businesses, and the Council's long term strategic objectives.



Short term Recommendations (6 Months)

Increase the size of the enforcement team to improve highway safety, reduce congestion and to improve compliance in car parks. The size should take into consideration seasonal fluctuations and upcoming new legislation relating to moving traffic offences and pavement parking.

Invest in a modern technological solution to ensure the efficient running of the team for both enforcement and appeals. Give customers a better, smoother experience when using permits, paying for parking or dealing with PCNs. Ensure that solutions are compatible with future plans for single council accounts and residents' parking offers.

Medium term recommendations (1 year)

Explore the possibility of developing an offer to allow residents to have reduced parking costs with a lower resident's tariff. Ensure that the process is simple to operate and available to all users.

Implement a tiered tariff approach at a town level. Use demand, capacity, opportunity to use sustainable transport options, bus improvements, and congestion levels to drive the pricing structure. This could include the introduction of emissions-based discounting.

Improvements to communication of changes and parking opportunities through review of way finder signs, public comms, and car park level advertising particularly of permit offers.

Longer Term recommendations (1 year+)

Development of park and ride sites to help improve congestion and pollution levels in the areas they cover. This will also help with peak parking demand in these key areas allowing more central car parks to be redeveloped or utilised by different users. This is dependent on improvement to sustainable transport links in Weymouth and a suitable bus and walking route from Purbeck Park.

Review the resident on-street parking policy to help manage demand and better control parking by visitors. This will involve amendment to existing traffic regulations and the introduction of new ones in some areas.

Review underutilised sites for potential redevelopment or sale. Explore options for sites with low out of season use and potential winter closure to save on maintenance and wear. This will require further research to help understand how these sites are currently used and how other changes may affect them.

Create an integrated, live 5+ year car parking strategy that aligns parking policy with:

- Town centre regeneration plans.
- Public transport improvements.
- Active travel objectives.
- Net zero and environmental commitments.
- Economic resilience and tourism impacts.
- Local Transport Plan.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Place and Resources Overview Committee 9 July 2026

Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan For Recommendation to Cabinet

Cabinet Member:

Cllr R Biggs, Property & Assets and Economic Growth

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton - Executive Director, Regeneration, Infrastructure and Growth

Report author and job title:

Jon Bird, Service Manager, Economic Development and Skills

Email: jon.bird@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Local Government Act 2000

Report status: Public

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

- 1.1 “Local Visitor Economy Partnership” (LVEP) is a designation created by VisitEngland. Being part of an LVEP gives Dorset access to VisitEngland support including data, expertise, and marketing opportunities.
- 1.2 Dorset Council Cabinet approved the creation of Dorset LVEP with Dorset Council as Accountable Body in July 2024, and Dorset LVEP achieved accreditation with VisitEngland in May 2025.
- 1.3 A condition of all LVEPs is the creation of a Destination Management Plan (DMP).
- 1.4 The Dorset LVEP DMP 2026-2035 sets out a plan to create a year-round destination: addressing seasonality, enhancing visitor spend, improving perceptions of Dorset, strengthening accessibility, embedding sustainability, and enabling sector-wide collaboration.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 That Place and Resources Overview Committee recommend the endorsement of the Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan 2026-2035 to Cabinet

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

3.1 The Visitor Economy affects tourists, businesses, jobs, the cultural and heritage offer, transport and infrastructure. The Destination Management Plan, developed by businesses, stakeholders, and cultural partners, provides a roadmap for a more resilient, sustainable, and competitive visitor economy that benefits all parts of Dorset year-round.

DRAFT

4. Dorset LVEP Destination Management Plan

- 4.1 The Dorset DMP sets out a 10-year strategy to establish Dorset as a welcoming, vibrant, year-round visitor destination.
- 4.2 Developed through extensive consultation with businesses, stakeholders and cultural partners, the plan responds to key challenges including strong seasonality, rising operating costs, limited national awareness, and pressure on local infrastructure.
- 4.3 Dorset's visitor economy is a major economic driver, attracting over 22 million visitors annually and generating £1.66bn in direct spend, yet 36% of domestic overnight trips occur in July and August, demonstrating the need to spread demand more evenly across the year.
- 4.4 The DMP focuses on addressing seasonality, enhancing visitor spend, improving perceptions of Dorset, strengthening accessibility, embedding sustainability, and enabling sector-wide collaboration.
- 4.5 Growth opportunities centre on two high-potential year-round markets identified by recent government funded market segmentation research: the Nature & Culture segment and the Active & Mindful segment. By prioritising these audiences, Dorset can leverage its outstanding natural landscapes, rich heritage, cultural offer and variety of outdoor experiences.
- 4.6 Key actions include developing off-peak product, targeted marketing, experience mapping, and building cultural programming in quieter months. Improving data quality, empowering local businesses, and increasing Dorset's national profile are critical to unlocking long-term economic, environmental and community benefits.
- 4.7 Delivery of the DMP will rely on coordinated partnership across the industry, facilitated by the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).
- 4.8 This plan provides the roadmap for a more resilient, sustainable and competitive visitor economy that benefits all parts of Dorset throughout the year.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 The only alternatives to a Destination Management Plan with broad stakeholder support are having a more narrowly focussed Plan involving fewer participants or not having a Plan at all. The value of any plan would be reduced if it was not broadly supported, and it would also likely not meet VisitEngland's LVEP requirements, potentially leading to Dorset losing its LVEP accreditation, and therefore losing access to government-funded support. Having no plan would result in the same outcomes

6. Legal considerations

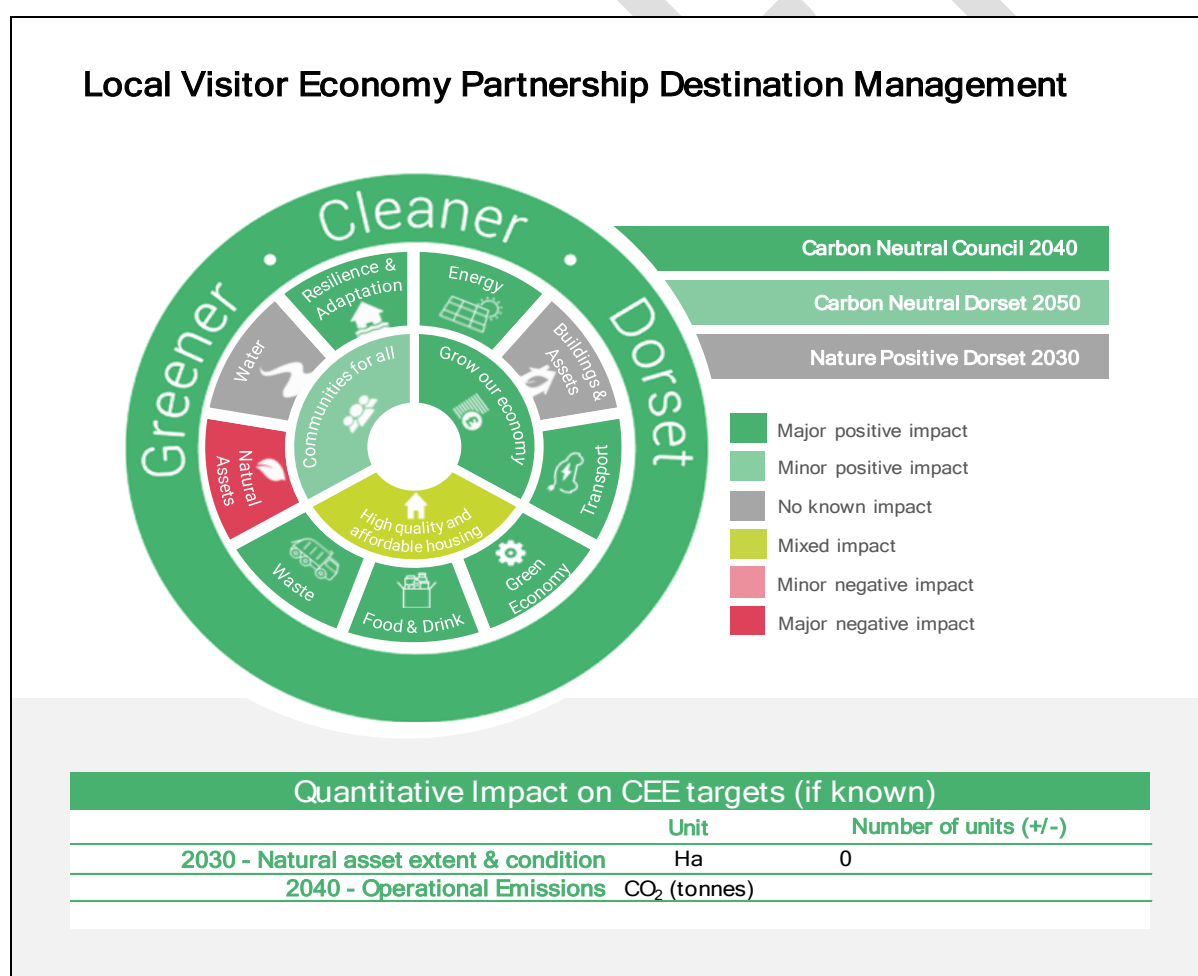
6.1 The Destination Management Plan is non-statutory and creates no legally binding obligations on any parties.

7. Financial implications

7.1 No additional Dorset Council resources are needed for the Plan. While no government funding has been offered to the LVEP, Dorset has already benefitted from non-financial support from VisitEngland due to it having an established LVEP. Having a satisfactory Destination Management Plan in place is a requisite of all LVEPs.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The visitor economy has a significant impact on Carbon emissions and the environment. Focus area five of the Plan is all about sustainability and regenerative tourism. This aligns with Dorset Council's ambitions in the natural environment, climate, and ecology strategy. The Climate wheel shows generally positive impacts and no negative impacts:



9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 The Plan places particular focus on the *Nature & Culture* and *Active & Mindful* market segments, both of which encourage access to greenspace and exercise, which is known to be beneficial for physical and mental health.

10. Risk implications

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

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

11. Equalities

11.1 An EQIA screening was conducted as part of approval for the LVEP. “accessibility and welcome” is Focus Area 4 of the Plan, which will have positive implications for people with disabilities and mobility challenges. Improvements may also benefit Dorset residents.

12. Appendices

12.1 Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan 2026-2035

12.2 Accessible Table of Climate Impacts and Table of Recommendations.

13. Background papers

13.1 [Decisions for issue Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership - Dorset Council](#)

13.2 [2024 Dorset Market Segmentation SPF Research Report FINAL 51bbd205-30f5-4f1f-8ee5-2dcc2a6a224.pdf](#)

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)

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Place and Resources Overview Committee

9 July 2026

Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan

Accessible Table of Climate Impacts and Table of Recommendations

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

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

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Grow our economy	strongly supports it
High-quality and affordable housing	neutral
Communities for all	minor positive impact

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
consider opportunities to generate renewable energy on the land	Visitor Economy venues are encouraged to consider sustainable energy improvements including renewable energy generation where appropriate
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
Use the opportunity to bring land into positive management	Visitor Economy venues are encouraged to consider bringing land into positive management where relevant
Use the opportunity to increase biodiversity	Visitor Economy venues are encouraged to consider providing conditions conducive to increasing biodiversity where appropriate
Use the opportunity to connect existing habitats using wildlife corridors	Visitor Economy venues are encouraged to consider providing conditions conducive to connecting existing habitats using wildlife corridors where appropriate
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

Dorset

Destination Management Plan
2026 - 2035

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Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership – creating a year-round destination

The Dorset Destination Management Plan (DMP) sets out a 10-year strategy to establish Dorset as a welcoming, vibrant, year-round visitor destination.

Developed through extensive consultation with businesses, stakeholders and cultural partners, the plan responds to key challenges including strong seasonality, rising operating costs, limited national awareness, and pressure on local infrastructure.

Dorset's visitor economy is a major economic driver, **attracting over 22 million visitors annually and generating £1.66bn in direct spend**, yet 36% of domestic overnight trips occur in July and August, demonstrating the need to spread demand more evenly across the year.

The **DMP focuses on addressing seasonality**, enhancing visitor spend, improving perceptions of Dorset, strengthening accessibility, embedding sustainability, and enabling sector-wide collaboration.

Growth opportunities centre on two high-potential year-round markets: the Nature & Culture segment and the Active & Mindful segment. By prioritising these audiences, **Dorset can leverage its outstanding natural landscapes, rich heritage, cultural offer and variety of outdoor experiences.**

Key actions include developing off-peak product, targeted marketing, experience mapping, and building cultural programming in quieter months. Improving data quality, empowering local businesses, and increasing Dorset's national profile are critical to unlocking long-term economic, environmental and community benefits.

Delivery of the DMP will rely on coordinated partnership across the industry, facilitated by the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).

This plan provides the roadmap for a more resilient, sustainable and competitive visitor economy that benefits all parts of Dorset throughout the year.

This strategy has been funded by UK Government via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund





**Vision for a vibrant,
sustainable year-round
visitor economy**





About Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership

In 2025 Visit Dorset and Dorset Council were awarded Local Visitor Economy Partnership status (LVEP) for the county of Dorset, covering the Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council geographies.

A requirement of the newly formed LVEP was to create a Destination Management Plan (DMP) for the county of Dorset.

Destination Management Plan Methodology

In 2025 Dorset Tourism Association (the LVEP advisory board) commissioned a Destination Management Plan for Dorset. Businesses and stakeholders across the county were consulted on their ambitions for the LVEP and the visitor economy through a series of online business and stakeholder surveys, and in-person workshops held in four locations across Dorset.

This DMP has considered the strategic context of the visitor economy, a review of current performance in the sector, product audit, market trends, competitor analysis and business and stakeholder needs to ascertain the key opportunities and challenges for the visitor economy.

This is the first Destination Management Plan covering the whole County of Dorset.

About Dorset LVEP

Visit Dorset, part of Dorset Council, is the accountable body for the LVEP.

Established as a result of the De Bois Review into Destination Management, LVEPs are officially recognised by VisitEngland as the lead organisation for the development of the visitor economy in England and typically represent counties or core cities.

The Dorset Tourism Association CIC (DTA) covers the whole of Dorset and has representation from the Portfolio Holders for tourism from each local authority and representation of every constituent sector of the visitor economy.

As part of the LVEP development process the DTA has taken on the role of LVEP advisory board. The DTA in partnership with Visit Dorset will oversee the delivery of the DMP and encourage stakeholders to adopt the plan.

About Visit Dorset

Visit Dorset is the official destination management organisation (DMO) for Dorset, responsible for promoting the county as a high-quality visitor destination and supporting the growth of its visitor economy. It works in partnership with over 500 tourism businesses, local and regional stakeholders to deliver marketing campaigns, develop tourism products, and improve the visitor experience.

Visit Dorset's activity includes destination marketing and managing the official www.visit-Dorset.com website and social media channels, industry collaboration, business support, and using data and insights to drive sustainable tourism growth. It aims to increase visitor spend, extend the tourism season, and ensure Dorset remains competitive and attractive.

Visit Dorset is the accountable body for the Dorset LVEP and in this role, leads on destination development, aligning local priorities with national tourism goals, and acting as a key voice for Dorset at a national level.

Dorset's Visitor Economy

Home of the iconic Jurassic Coast - Discover Dorset, a land of epic coastline, rolling hills, and timeless charm. Dorset is your gateway to unforgettable experiences!

Dorset has a strong visitor offer with over 22 million visitors, award-winning products and globally important landscapes.

This snapshot of the Dorset visitor economy highlights the importance of the visitor economy to the county and the quality of the offer to a domestic UK and global audience.*

- Home of the UK's only natural **UNESCO World Heritage site**, the **Jurassic Coast** celebrates its 25th Anniversary of World Heritage Status in 2026. It is globally renowned for its near-continuous geological record spanning 185 million years of Earth's history and extends from Old Harry Rocks near Poole to Exmouth.
- **Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole** are home to award-winning sandy beaches, Europe's largest natural harbour, three universities, international language schools, Arts and Conference centres.
- **Dorset National Landscape** covers just over 40% of the county, stretching from Lyme Regis to Poole Harbour and inland to Blandford Forum. This beautiful and thriving landscape is actively protected and regenerated so that everyone can enjoy it and feel connected to it.
- **Purbeck** Heaths is the UK's first "super" National Nature Reserve. Purbeck's key attractions include Swanage Railway, Corfe Castle and internationally recognisable landmarks such as Durdle Door, Lulworth Cove and Old Harry Rocks.
- **Weymouth** has an award-winning beach, adjacent to the unique Chesil Beach and **Portland** cruise port serving international cruise lines.
- **Dorchester** is a thriving county town known for its Hardy connections, Dorset Museum and Art Gallery and the unique Poundbury development.
- North Dorset with its market towns of **Sherborne, Shaftesbury** and **Gillingham** are the hidden gems of the county. Encompassing the Cranborne Chase National Landscape and International Dark Sky Reserve.
- West Dorset including **Bridport** and **Lyme Regis** are famous for fossil hunting and popular as film and TV locations.

The impact of the visitor economy is equally impressive. 22.8 million visitors came to Dorset in 2024 generating £1.66bn in spend in the local economy and creating 22,693 full-time equivalent jobs.

- Staying visitors (domestic and international) make up 12% of visits but **42% of all spend**.
- **International visits** account for just 2% of all visits but **generate £209m spend** (12.5%) and tend to be focussed on the Jurassic Coast.
- It is estimated that there are 29,997 actual jobs related to tourism – equivalent to 22,963 full time jobs or **8% of all Dorset employment**.
- There is significant seasonal variation in overnight visitors with **36% of all domestic overnight trips taking place in July and August**.
- Business events is a key sector for Bournemouth but represents just 3% of domestic and 6% of international visits for the whole county



22.8 million
visitors

£1,663m direct
visitor spend



Staying visitors
12.3% of visits and
42.5% of spend

22,693
FTE jobs



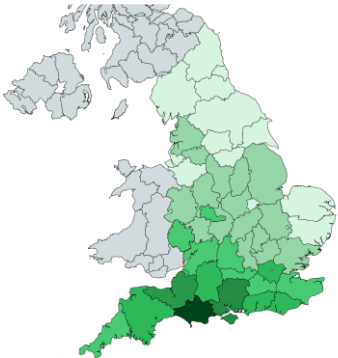
Dorset's Visitor Economy

Understanding our visitors

In 2022 detailed visitor research was undertaken for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. This research was then repeated for Dorset in 2024. There was also a consumer survey conducted in 2023 of Visit Dorset's customers. This insight enables us to understand what visitors like about Dorset and how it compares to other areas.

75% of past visitors to Dorset would visit again and 39% of adults living in the South and Midlands have visited Dorset for a day visit or holiday

The map below shows the location of Visit Dorset consumers across England in 2023



Key perceptions of Dorset:

- 51% place of **natural beauty**
- 49% beautiful **beaches**
- 37% can get close to **nature**
- 31% fun, **relaxed** vibe
- 29% significant **cultural** interest

Top Barriers to visiting Dorset

- 38% too far to travel
- 23% **don't know enough** about area
- 18% Unpredictable weather
- 17% too expensive
- 11% prioritise other places

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Net Promoter Score

Both sets of visitor research identified the current market segments and key growth opportunities. Dorset currently attracts five market segments, but the two that showed the greatest potential for **year-round growth** in Dorset were:

Active and Mindful

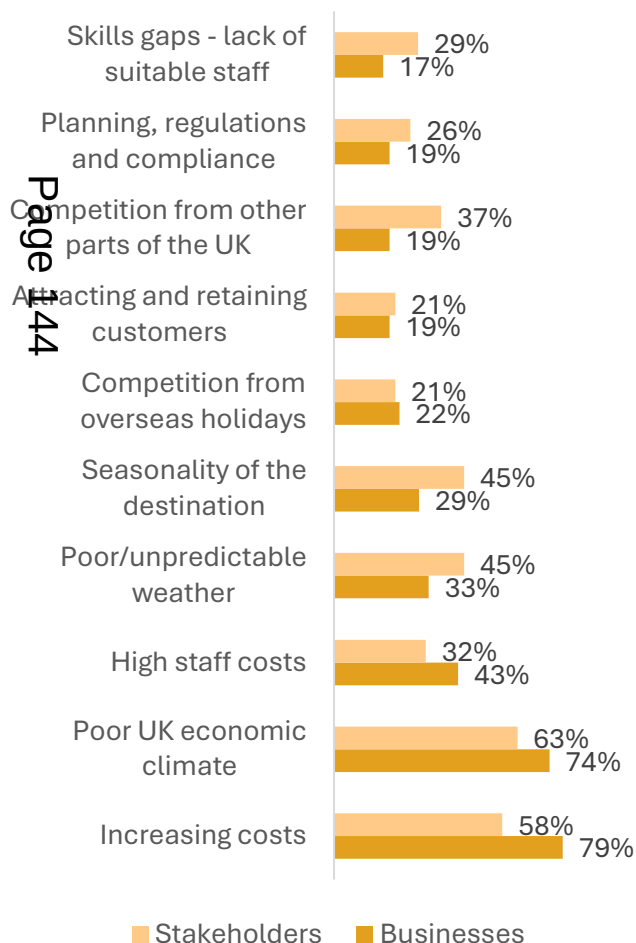
This group are physically active, like a challenge and enjoy new experiences. They like a combination of physical, mental and social stimulation as well as opportunities to relax. They tend to be younger (55% under 35), working, with children and higher than average household income. They are more likely to live in urban areas.

Nature and Culture

These are nature lovers with a practical approach to life. They like to explore beauty spots, arts, culture and heritage treasures. Holidays are driven by the destination and activities available. They do lots of research in advance of booking, tend to be older, and are more likely than average to be retired.



Key challenges facing the visitor economy in Dorset



Business performance in Dorset

Business confidence is relatively strong - two-thirds (66%) are very or somewhat confident about the next year of trading.

Seasonality is a key issue with almost a third (30%) of businesses stating that they take more than 50% of their income in July and August.

The majority of Dorset tourism businesses are open year round (80%), January and February are the key months businesses tend not to be open.

Businesses are “committed to growing and investing in their business” (60%) while 25% say they are “maintaining the current level of performance”, just 6% are “Establishing a new business” and 11% are either “planning to downsize” or “planning to sell/retire in next 3 years”

Key challenges (see chart) are increasing costs and the poor UK economic climate. Weather, staff costs and seasonality also get a high response from businesses and stakeholders.

Policy context

The Destination Management Plan takes into account a number of relevant local, regional and national policy and plans that will impact on the Dorset LVEP.

Dorset LVEP works across two local authority boundaries, Dorset Council and BCP Council.

Dorset Council Plan 2024-2029 and Dorset's Economic Growth Strategy 2025 to 2040 include a focus on growing the visitor economy with an aim to increase total visitor-related spend in Dorset by 5% by 2029.

This will be achieved through encouraging more off-peak visits, increasing spend per visitor and spreading the benefits of tourism across the county to ensure tourism provides year-round economic activity.

BCP: Working together to deliver a great destination 2023-2027 prioritises building a year-round economy. It also set the ambition for the industry to take a

lead role in destination management, which has now been realised through the BCP Destination Management Board.

At a regional and national level there is a focus on:

- **Increasing visitor spend** and reducing reliance on day visits, as well as spreading the benefits of tourism to all areas of the country.
- Tourism being more **accessible**.
- A shift towards a more **responsible** visitor economy and realising the **social and environmental benefits** of tourism.
- A more **strategic** and **collaborative** approach.

These are also points featured in local policies.

Destination SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Quality product, nationally and international recognised
- Outstanding natural landscape (UNESCO World Heritage, National Landscapes,
- Well-known brands and icons (e.g. Jurassic Coast, Bournemouth, Weymouth, Gold Hill, Cerne Abbas Giant, Pliosaur, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra)
- Proximity to London, Bristol and West Midlands
- Strong business confidence and engagement
- Wide range of sustainable tourism products
- Unique access to full range of watersports – via harbours, coast and rivers
- Growing cruise market (Portland)
- Good mix of accommodation, venues and attractions
- Strong cultural offer (Hardy, Blyton, Arts by the Sea, Inside Out, BSO, Lighthouse, Dorset Museum & Art Gallery, Tank Museum, Camp Bestival, BIC events)

Opportunities

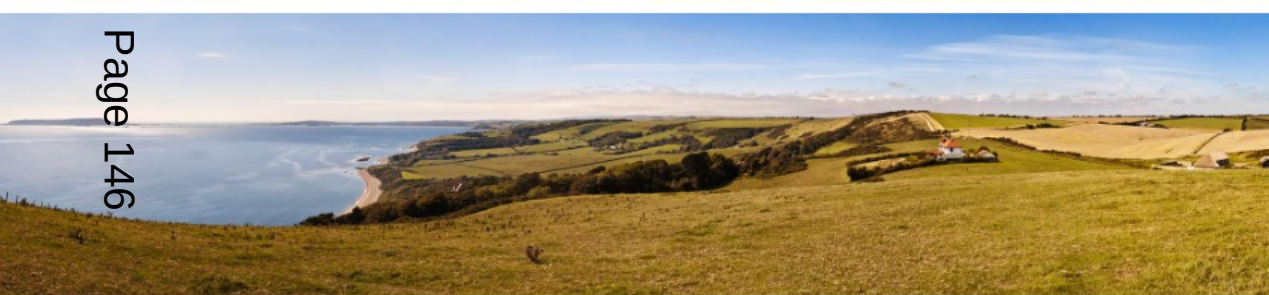
- Priority growth market segments – Nature and Culture, Active and Mindful are aligned to consumer trends and a wide range of products and experiences that are available across Dorset
- Dorset Council identified tourism as high level priority for growth
- Joined up approach across Dorset and BCP Councils
- Wessex Partnership to form a strategic authority strengthening collaboration across the region and should unlock new funding and opportunities for growth
- Government focus on regional dispersal and increasing attention on seaside towns
- Dorset has achieved LVEP status which enables access to support from VisitEngland and engagement with DCMS to raise the profile of the county.
- Strong cultural programme across the county
- Weymouth & Portland regeneration
- Investment in MEMO Portland project will unlock new markets and large-scale interest
- Portland well positioned to benefit from Cruise growth in Northern Europe itineraries

Weaknesses

- Low awareness of Dorset among non-visitors
- Diversity and range of product make it challenging to articulate key strength
- Industry believe there is no one stand out “attraction”
- Limited resources for Destination Management
- Investment in tourism (public and private) is lower than competitor locations
- Impact of the reduction in funding for Local Authorities - BCP Council no longer have a tourism function and increased pressure on support for Cultural services and venues
- Reliant on volunteer support from industry to realise benefits of LVEP
- Relatively low level of new business development
- Lots of small and micro businesses to coordinate
- Limited direct access routes from International markets (Bournemouth Airport and the Port of Poole are predominantly outbound traffic)
- Public transport within the county can be limited especially in North and West Dorset

Threats

- Economic climate driving later bookings, limited spend and competitive market
- Competition from international destinations, and reduced investment in domestic marketing, strong competition from city-based UK breaks
- Competitor investment in Tourism is higher than Dorset (e.g. Destination North East, Visit West, Yorkshire, Tees Valley)
- Climate change and rapidly evolving coastline impacting on Dorset experience – especially if trying to grow shoulder and off-peak visits
- Geo-political situation causing fluctuating costs and demand
- Increasing operating costs for businesses making small independent businesses less viable
- No agreed date for Mayoral Strategic Authority that includes Dorset
- Resource needed for coordination and mobilisation of industry engagement
- Government focus on and investment in the North



The ambition

Dorset is known as a welcoming and vibrant **year-round destination** which offers quality experiences

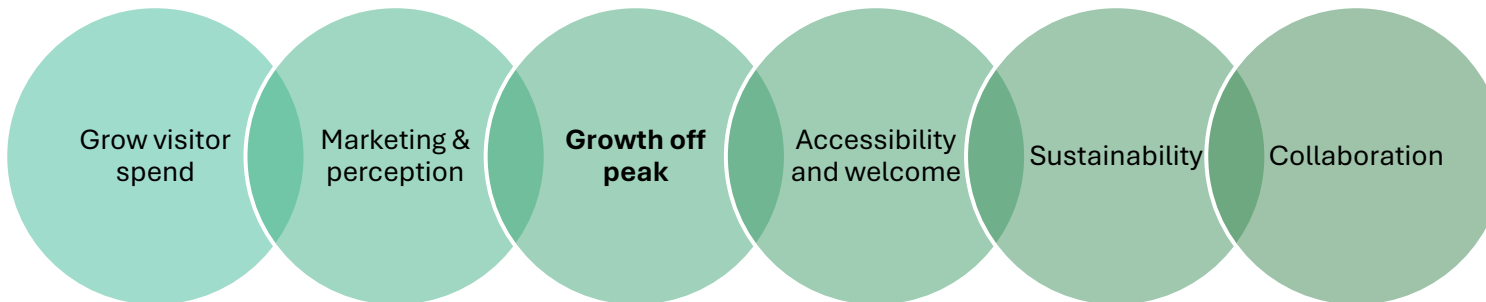
Priorities

- Welcoming visitors to all parts of Dorset all year round
- Increase the spend per visitor encouraging visitors to stay longer, buy local and return
- Improve awareness and perceptions of Dorset - known as the key destination for natural landscapes, heritage, rural and coastal breaks, a culturally vibrant, sustainable and accessible place

Working collaboratively to deliver exceptional visitor experiences and advocate for the sector at regional and national level

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Areas of focus



Dorset is known as a welcoming and vibrant **year-round destination** which offers quality experiences

The key ambition for this destination management plan is that **Dorset becomes a year-round visitor destination**.

Throughout the consultation process for this DMP, businesses and stakeholders **repeatedly stated that the key focus of this strategy must be to tackle seasonality** and support the industry to encourage visitors to come all year round, to all parts of the county and increase the spend of visitors by encouraging them to stay longer, support local suppliers and come back to Dorset.

The county already has a **reputation for being a quality destination** – with high number of entrants into the Dorset Tourism Awards, and many businesses with TripAdvisor Travellers Choice Awards and a high number of top 10% winners. Weymouth and Bournemouth Beaches are consistently ranked amongst the best in the World. Dorset has also had three winners in VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2025 and two winners in VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2024.

Visitor research showed that Dorset is known as a friendly place, where visitors feel welcome.

Dorset has a strong cultural offer creating **a vibrant place** for people to visit, live, work and invest.

The destination management plan aims to cement Dorset's position as a welcoming, vibrant and quality destination but drive growth in shoulder and off-peak period so that visitors can have that experience all year round.



How will this be achieved?

Dorset is known as a welcoming and vibrant year-round destination which offers quality experiences

In order to achieve the ambition of this destination management plan over the next 10 years, key priorities have been identified alongside specific areas of action that the Dorset LVEP can support.

These priorities and areas of action have been informed through data and consultation, and it is that data that will help provide an understanding of how the ambition can be realised.

In the next section of this report each area of focus will be explored to show why it matters and how it can support the ambition and priorities of the DMP. Presenting a roadmap to realising the ambition of the DMP.





Areas of focus

Focus area 1

Delivering a year-round destination

Growth off-peak

Addressing seasonality to encourage more visitors to come in the shoulder and off-peak period and supporting more business to create experiences that can be enjoyed and viable all year round is the key priority of the DMP.

Priority:

Welcoming visitors to all parts of Dorset all year round

Why?

- There is huge seasonal variation in overnight visitors with 36% of all domestic overnight trips taking place in July and August.
- The recent VisitBritain report “Economic Value of tourism in the United Kingdom” highlighted Dorset as the 5th most seasonal county for international visits.
- Almost a third (30%) of businesses state that they take more than 50% of their income in July and August.

Where to focus?

In order to reduce the seasonality of visits to Dorset the LVEP will need to work with partners and businesses to tackle key issues of awareness, product offer and experience. Using data to guide and shape decisions.

1. Improving data to inform decisions

The Dorset Economic Impact data shows January - April are the quietest months in terms of overnight visitors to the county, then May, June and October, November perform similarly with c. 6-7% of visits.

However, occupancy data provided by a selection of key businesses across the county shows us this data may contain inaccuracies that are misleading. Whilst there is no doubt that Dorset is a seasonal economy, variations within the county are likely to be much more nuanced than the data implies.

Once the LVEP has a greater understanding of where the potential for growth exists both in terms of months of the year, parts of the county and days of the week an action plan can be developed to target markets with a high propensity to travel at those times.

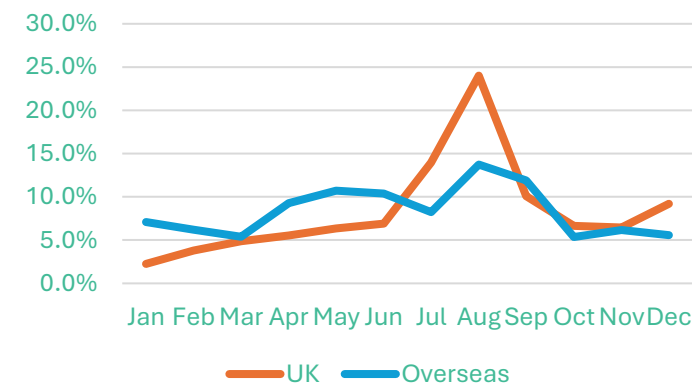
Recommended actions:

Work with businesses to develop a more accurate understanding of visits and seasonality. Monitor annually to track progress

2. Experience mapping

Whilst a more in-depth understanding of the data is gathered the focus could be on understanding the current and potential product offer for the shoulder and off-peak period. Being realistic about what visitors can expect to experience and how to ensure that visitors that do come in the shoulder and off-peak period have the best possible experience.

Seasonality of overnight stays (2024)



Focus area 1

Delivering a year-round destination

Growth off-peak

2. Experience mapping cont.

Working with businesses, initially those that have expressed interest in developing their year-round availability, Dorset can facilitate product development by providing insight on the growth markets and their interests and encouraging businesses to work together to create packages and cross-promote their products to visitors.

In addition, Dorset stakeholders can utilise the information gathered to adapt their current marketing activities to reflect the current product available.

Recommended actions:

Review current product offer in off-peak

Hold regular networking and workshops across the county to share insights and facilitate networking to develop new products.

3. Raising awareness

The visitor research undertaken in 2022 and 2024 identified the two key visitor segments for growth across the county as “Nature and Culture” and “Active and Mindful”. Both of these segments are aligned to the product available and have potential for all year-round visits.

Focussing marketing efforts on these two segments and encouraging businesses that are open all year round to do the same will grow reach and awareness with these segments.

The new **Culture strategy** for the county highlights the importance of growing the economic impact of Culture and encouraging more cultural visitors to the county. Working in partnership with the Cultural sector, Dorset can increase the profile of the heritage and cultural offer and develop new products and experiences that appeal to the Nature and Culture segment.

Recommended actions:

Prioritise existing or new marketing activity on Nature and Culture and Active and Mindful segments. Encourage businesses open year-round to do the same.

Work with Cultural sector to build events, festivals, heritage and cultural programme in shoulder and off-peak period including an innovative cultural and arts offer that will appeal to a wide range of ages and interests beyond traditional cultural programming.

Nature and Culture

These are nature lovers with a practical approach to life. They like to explore scenic landscapes, heritage, arts and cultural attractions and events. They state weather matters less because they like learning, culture and nature. Specifically, 27% would visit off-peak. Market size is 7 million in Dorset drive-time regions.

- 65% Visit parks and gardens
- 56% Visiting Museums and Art Galleries
- 55% Visiting Historic or Heritage sites
- 54% Hiking or Walking
- 52% Visit street markets
- Accommodation is not important its just a base to explore the destination
- 27% have children so are looking for family activities

Active and Mindful

This group are physically active, like a challenge and new experiences. Many of their favourite activities can be enjoyed in Dorset in the shoulder and off-peak period and 15% would visit off-peak. Market size is 6.4 million in Dorset drive-time regions.

- Running (37%), walking (35%), cycling (26%) and swimming (34%) are popular
- 46% enjoy cooking and 44% prioritise healthy eating
- 47% visit parks and gardens
- 35% prioritise self-improvement
- 32% Visiting museums and art galleries
- Attracted to accommodation and activity providers who support environment initiatives
- Over half this segment have children

Focus area 1

Delivering a year-round destination

Growth off-peak

4. Additional opportunities:

Other key markets that travel all year round are Business & Conference visitors, Groups and Travel trade and increasingly cruise visits. These three sectors are important in varying degrees across the county depending on the product and facilities available, but working collaboratively and enabling those stakeholders and businesses to take advantage of the support the LVEP can access will be key to delivering growth.

Business & Conference visitors

represent 6% of International visits and 3% of Domestic visits to the county, but with key facilities in Bournemouth and Poole in particular it is a market that could be expanded to deliver year-round growth.

The growing trend for “Bleisure” and Association travel presents opportunities to showcase attractions and towns across the county for days out around the business visit.

Research conducted by BVA BRDC in 2022 identified the key opportunities as:

promote accessibility of the location, engage with planners, and broaden awareness of the offer.

Groups and travel trade – partners across Dorset have been working together over the last few years to represent Dorset at domestic and international group and travel trade events focused on growing leisure coach groups and tour operator engagement.

Supporting those businesses and enabling access to the opportunities made available to the LVEP will be key to delivering growth in this market.

Cruise – Portland has seen significant cruise growth in recent years achieving almost 100,000 passengers and more than 60 calls in 2025. Predominantly German, USA and UK visitors with an average spend of £100 per day, cruise tourism is a high-value sector that operates year-round and offers an opportunity to give international markets at taste of Dorset and encourage them to return to the county for a longer holiday.

Recommended actions:

Enable businesses and stakeholders to realise the full benefits of LVEP status and encourage engagement with VisitEngland for support.

Identify “lead” contacts / volunteers for Business Events, Travel trade and Cruise for the LVEP to maximise opportunities made available through the LVEP within resource constraints.

Explore opportunities to work in partnership to build dedicated content on Visit Dorset website for these markets to support growth of these key sectors.



Focus area 2

Delivering a year-round destination

Growth in visitor spend

Add value by encouraging visitors to spend more, spend differently and support local

Priority:

Increase the spend per visitor encouraging visitors to stay longer, buy local and return

Why?

Dorset Council and Visit Dorset have an objective to increase visitor spend by 5% by 2029

68% of stakeholders and 49% of Businesses said growing visitor spend was one of their top three priorities for the Destination Management Plan

Where to focus?

Growing spend from all visitors is a top priority for the DMP, gaining maximum economic benefit with minimal environmental impact. Adjusting the mix of tourists can also deliver growth in spend.

Key areas of focus could include:

- **Encouraging day visitors to stay overnight**
- **Encouraging existing overnight visitors to stay longer**
- **Encouraging visitors to spend differently** prioritising local businesses and supporting the local economy. Highlighting local markets, featuring local businesses in communications and considering initiatives that enable visitors to easily recognise Dorset products.
- **Supporting local producers** (especially food and drink) to meet visitor businesses and collaborate so that more local businesses stock local products.

- **Attracting more international visitors** – international visitors stay longer than domestic visitors and on average spend £6.45 more per person per day than a domestic overnight visitor and £16.79 more per day than a day visitor. Key markets for growth are Netherlands, Germany and other near European countries alongside long-haul English speaking countries.

Delivering growth off-peak will also contribute to a growth in visitor spend.

Recommended actions:

Review marketing activity to encourage overnight stays and buy local messaging

Facilitate networking events between local producers and visitor economy businesses

Utilise VisitEngland opportunities to grow international markets aligned to Dorset product



Focus area 3

Delivering a year-round destination

Marketing and Perceptions

Raise awareness of the Dorset visitor offer to target audiences and build brand awareness of key themes whilst maintaining existing visitor markets

Priority:

Improve awareness and perceptions of Dorset - known as the key destination for natural landscapes, heritage, rural and coastal peaks, a culturally vibrant, sustainable and accessible place

Why?

Almost half of all respondents to the DMP surveys and workshops (47%) said one of their top 3 priorities was “Investment in destination marketing”

Visitor research identified that 47% of non-visitors would consider a visit to Dorset. However, 23% of non-visitors said a key barrier to visiting was “I don’t know enough about the area” this rose to 29% of non-visitors to Bournemouth.

Where to focus?

Dorset has an enviable position of having a wide range of high-quality visitor experiences and products. However, this can make it more difficult to achieve a clear brand position for Dorset.

During the consultation the key strengths of the county visitor offer were identified as:

- **Natural landscapes**
- **Heritage and Culture**
- **Food and drink**

With the key USP for **new visitors** (especially international visitors) being **the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site**. Using this hook to attract new visitors to the county and then encouraging visitors to explore all areas of the county is key.

Consumer marketing

Develop a clear brand narrative for the overall visitor offer for the whole of Dorset as a vibrant place for outstanding natural landscapes, culture and heritage.

Focus targeted marketing messages with key audiences to increase awareness of the Dorset visitor offer year-round.

Consider creating a brand toolkit that can be shared with businesses to ensure Dorset is promoted in a consistent style and tone of voice.

Proactively seek and maximise opportunities to gain free media exposure with press visits, influencers and media aligned to the priority growth segments.

Undertake research to understand the perceptions of Dorset as a year-round destination and test the strength of Dorset’s associations with the key themes compared to competitor locations.

Review communications within the county to **encourage visitors to explore ALL parts of Dorset**, especially the north and west of the county. Work with Town Councils and provide tools and copy to enable businesses to spread the word.

Recommended actions:

Develop a brand toolkit with clear brand narrative for each audience and share with businesses to increase reach and awareness

Proactively search for media opportunities that align to key growth markets and year-round objectives

Undertake perception research to inform marketing communications

Review communications within Dorset to encourage regional dispersal of visitors

Focus area 4

Delivering a year-round destination

Accessibility and welcome

Inspiring growth across Dorset through local exemplar businesses

Priority:

Improve awareness and perceptions of Dorset - known as the key destination for natural landscapes, heritage, rural and coastal breaks, a culturally vibrant, sustainable and accessible place

Why?

The accessible Tourism market is worth £14.6bn in the UK and improving the accessibility and inclusivity of the visitor economy is a national and regional priority.

26% of stakeholders and 20% of businesses in Dorset stated it was a key priority.

Accessible visitors travel all year round so growth in this market can support the ambition to grow year-round demand.

Where to focus?

Businesses and stakeholders identified key areas of support needed to improve their accessibility and inclusivity:

- Accreditation and legal compliance
- Funding or financial incentives to invest
- Inspiration and best practice from other businesses

In addition, the consultation highlighted a need to support businesses to understand what is the minimum standard and inspire them to see what it means to be truly accessible and inclusive as well as understand the market potential to providing accessible facilities.

The **Dorset National Landscape** (DNL) has invested nearly £500,000 in improving access with further funding secured for more activity.

The **Coast For All** project aims to position Dorset as the UK's most inclusive blue space, ensuring beaches and coastal environments are fully accessible to visitors and residents

with a wide range of access needs, enabling them to fully participate in beach and water-based activities.

The LVEP should work in partnership with initiatives like DNL and Coast For All to help realise product development and promote accessibility improvements to visitors.

Recommended actions:

Use local “exemplars” to showcase and inspire businesses to invest

Signpost businesses to support available via the LVEP

Utilise VisitEngland expertise and support through the LVEP to understand Dorset's current position and key areas to improve

Encourage investment in accessibility improvements and work in partnership with initiatives like DNL and Coast For All to enable product development and support with promotion to visitors.



Credit: Marsham Court Hotel

Focus area 5

Delivering a year-round destination

Sustainability and regenerative tourism

Tourism can be a force for good in Dorset

Priority:

Improve awareness and perceptions of Dorset - known as the key destination for natural landscapes, heritage, rural and coastal peaks, a culturally vibrant, sustainable and accessible place

Why?

65% of businesses in Dorset said improving Sustainability was very important and 59% are actively progressing their approach to sustainable or regenerative tourism.

Improving the environmental, social and community benefits of tourism is a key national priority.

32% of consumers claim they look for sustainable accommodation

Where to focus?

Businesses in Dorset have made great progress improving their sustainability over the last few years, but as the industry moves towards aspirations of more regenerative tourism, the key areas of support businesses and stakeholders in Dorset would like are:

- Inspiration and best practice from other businesses (76%)
- Funding or financial incentives to invest (69%)

Just 15% of businesses said sustainability was fully embedded in their businesses so there is still a lot of work to be done.

Recommended actions:

Use local “exemplars” to showcase and inspire businesses to invest

Signpost businesses to support available via the LVEP

Utilise VisitEngland expertise and support through the LVEP

What is regenerative tourism?

Going beyond minimising impacts of tourism, tourism should leave places better than they were before actively improving places, communities, and ecosystems.



Regenerative tourism helps businesses to build resilience, integrate sustainability and support long-term economic, community and environmental benefits.

Delivering a year-round destination

Collaboration

In order to deliver change Dorset LVEP must work collaboratively within and across the sector

Priority:

Working collaboratively to deliver exceptional visitor experiences and advocate for the sector at regional and national level

Why?

Dorset LVEP is a partnership of businesses, stakeholders and organisations involved in the visitor economy. Resources are limited but collaboration creates a shared ownership of the DMP and enables the LVEP to access a wide range of skills in the sector to deliver change.

Businesses and stakeholders highlighted collaboration as key to delivering change.

Where to focus?

The Dorset LVEP have a clear leadership role in the county, but with resources limited the sector needs to work in partnership to deliver the ambitions of the DMP.

Gaining support for change

Visit Dorset working in partnership to deliver the LVEP have access to a wide range of expertise in the advisory board and supporting groups and associations. With representatives from each sector of the industry the LVEP can ensure that the industry is kept informed and involved in the delivery and development of the DMP.

Regular engagement events and workshops to inform priorities for action and gain support for deliverables will be key to realising the DMP, alongside a committed board and working groups focussed on key areas.

Advocating for Dorset

A third of businesses and stakeholders prioritised a greater focus on advocating for Dorset's visitor economy at a regional and national level.

Achieving LVEP status creates an opportunity for the County to raise its profile with VisitEngland and DCMS at a national level but also highlight the importance of the visitor economy at a regional level. Dorset is also a key partner in the Great South West Tourism Partnership. However, these partnerships place greater demands on the Visit Dorset team to attend and engage with events, conferences and meetings.

In order to realise the full benefits of the LVEP and raise Dorset's profile there is a need to create a network of "Ambassadors" who can represent the county at key events, conferences and meetings.

Working in partnership

The LVEP will work in partnership with other organisations to ensure that the Visitor Economy is represented on issues such as skills development, transport infrastructure, innovation and inward investment.

Recommended actions:

Regular engagement events to inform and engage the sector in the delivery and development of the DMP.

Create a network of "Ambassadors" who can represent Dorset at key events and are well informed about the industry's priorities, challenges and performance.

Work in partnership with other sectors and specialists to influence investment in skills, transport and economic development.

How will we monitor progress and change?

In order to understand whether the ambition of this plan has been met, the LVEP must monitor progress. **Action plans should be developed in three-year cycles with progress reviewed annually.**

Measuring change in the visitor economy is not without its challenges though, national data is often slow to be published and can be inaccurate at county level and below. It does however provide a consistent benchmark of performance and the ability to track trends. The table below identifies ways in which key performance indicators can be measured, this is not intended as an exhaustive list as research techniques are continually improving. Therefore, an additional recommendation of this DMP must be that there is continued investment in data and improving the quality of the data.

What to measure	How
Seasonality	National surveys (GBTS, GBDVS, IPS) Accommodation occupancy and Visits to attractions
Visitor spend	Cambridge economic impact research, national surveys, visitor surveys (in-situ and / or online), VE card spend data
Length of stay	Cambridge economic impact research, national surveys, Business survey
Dispersal of visits	Visitor survey (in-situ and / or online), footfall
Accommodation occupancy	Business survey, T-Stats, software providers (e.g. Amadeus)
Perception and awareness	Visitor survey (in-situ and/or online), National omnibus survey
Marketing impact	Campaign performance, website stats, perception research, visitor numbers
Type of visitor	Segmentation research, business surveys

Budgets permitting, utilising more than one method for each measure helps provide a more robust view of performance and reduce the inaccuracies of national data where sample size at county level is often relatively small.





Delivery of this DMP requires partnership working

This Destination Management Plan has been created to identify the role and priorities of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). Although the LVEP is coordinated through Visit Dorset it is responsibility of the whole tourism sector in Dorset to contribute to the delivery of the DMP. The Dorset Tourism Association CIC acting as the advisory board for the LVEP will oversee progress on delivery of the ambitions of the DMP across all parts of Dorset.

Key performance indicators

Delivery of the DMP will be measured by the following KPIs

- Change in seasonal spread of visits – reduction in the dependence on summer visits by 10%
- 5% growth in visitor spend by 2029
- Growth in visitor numbers to North & West Dorset

Next steps

The DMP will be published and shared with the industry then workshop(s) and engagement events will take place across the county to inform an Action Plan for the first 3 years of delivery.

Action plans will be set for a three-year period with progress monitored annually via the LVEP advisory board.

With thanks to our supporters and contributors

Visit Dorset – lead for Dorset LVEP, Dorset Council's Tourism Team

Dorset Tourism Association - Advisory board for the Dorset LVEP

Local Authorities

- Dorset Council (accountable body for the LVEP)
- BCP Council

Town Councils and BIDs

Sector organisations

- Arts Development Company, Dorset
- Best of Dorset Attractions
- BH Area Hospitality Association
- Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Destination Management Board
- Dorset Food and Drink
- Dorset Museum Group
- Dorset National Landscape
- National Trust

The consultation involved online responses from 124 business and 45 stakeholders.

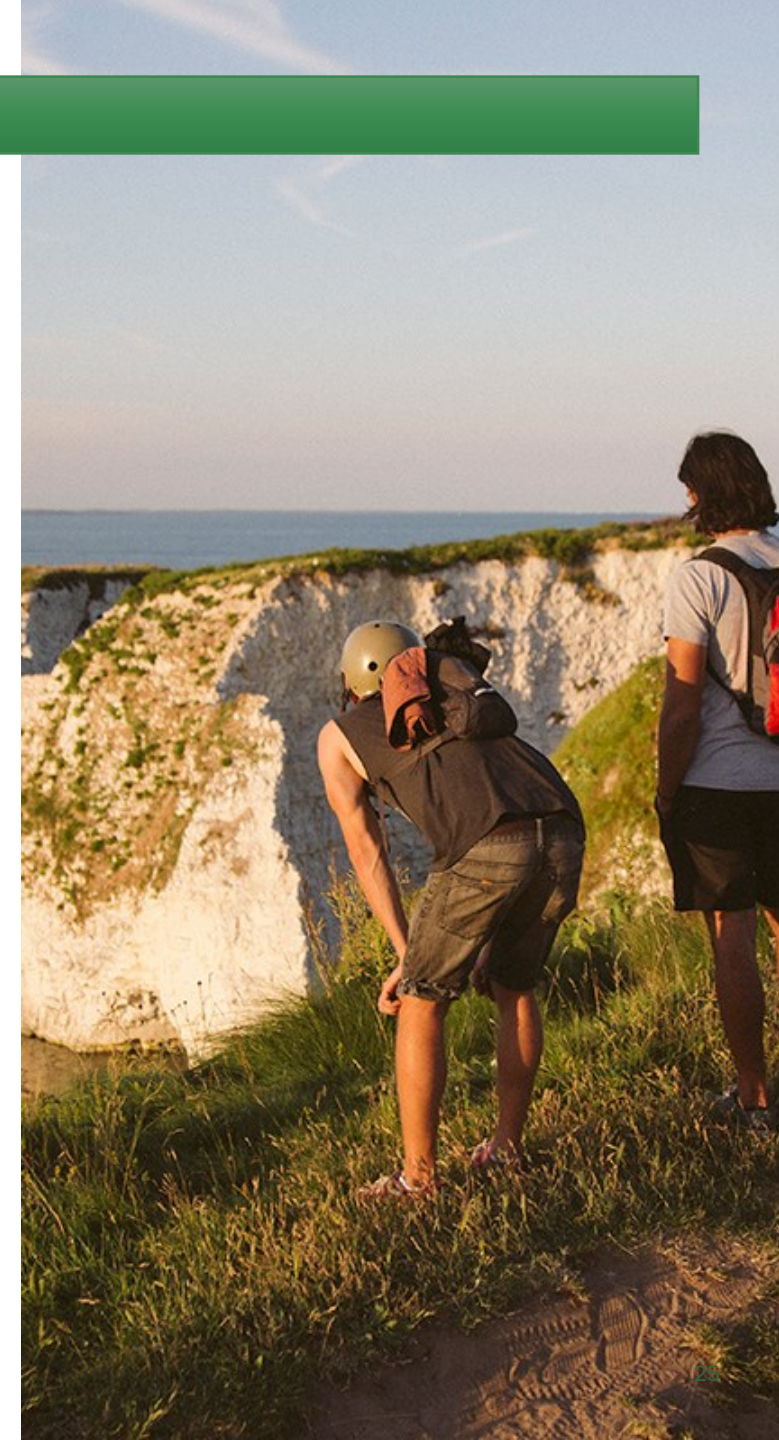
Four workshops were then delivered across Dorset in November 2025. These were attended by 83 businesses, stakeholders and interested parties.

With thanks to the businesses that hosted the workshops: The Grosvenor, Shaftesbury, The Kings Arms, Dorchester, Marsham Court Hotel, Bournemouth and Highlands End, Eype, Bridport.

This strategy was funded by the UK Government via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund



**Funded by
UK Government**





This strategy was funded by the UK Government via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund



Supported by:



Place and Resources Overview Committee Draft Work Programme

September 2026 TBC

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
Household collection of plastic film and flexible packaging	To set out the legal requirements, operational, financial and environmental considerations associated with the statutory requirement to collect plastic film and flexible packaging from April 2027, and to seek approval to proceed with implementation.	Lisa Mounty, Service Development Manager Jon Andrews, Place Services	
Dog Related Public Spaces Protection Order	The results of the public consultation and the draft Dog Related Public Spaces Protection Order will be shared with the committee before consideration at Cabinet.	Janet Moore, Service Manager Environmental Protection Matt Bell, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention & Communities	

19 November 2026

Report Title	Aims and Objectives	Lead Officers / Members	Other Information
RoWIP - Rights of Way Improvement Plan	Following the full public consultation of this document, the committee will have the opportunity to comment on draft RoWIP.	Russell Goff, Greenspace Manager Jon Andrews, Place Services	Pre-consultation discussion, may return to Place and Resources Overview in July post consultation ahead of final decision by Cabinet
Community Conversation feedback	Following the community conversation work with town and parish councils the findings will be shared along with next steps.	Nel Stoneham- Delivery Lead, Community. Matt Bell, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention & Communities	

Informal work of the committee:

Date	Topic	Format	Councillors	Lead Officers	Other Information
19 May 2026	Dog Related Public Spaces Protection Order	Briefing	All committee invited	Janet Moore, Service Manager Environmental Protection	Pre consultation conversation,
18 June 2026	RoWIP - Rights of Way Improvement Plan	Briefing	All committee invited	Russell Goff, Greenspace Manager	Pre consultation conversation

The Cabinet Forward Plan - July to October 2026 **(Publication date – 23 JUNE 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."

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

Cabinet Members and Portfolios 2026/27

Nick Ireland	Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding
Richard Biggs	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets
Jon Andrews	Place Services
Shane Bartlett	Planning
Simon Clifford	Resources & Finance
Matt Bell	Public Health, Prevention & Communities
Steve Robinson	Adult Social Care & Health
Clare Sutton	Children, Families & Education
Gill Taylor	Housing & Homelessness
Ben Wilson	Transformation, Customer & Workforce

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

July

End of year performance report Key Decision - No Public Access - Open Dorset Council Annual report on 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, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding	<i>Liz Crocker, Head of Strategy</i> <i>liz.crocker@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Chris Heighway, Performance and Analytics Team Manager</i> <i>chris.leighway@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Chief Executive</i>
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, Chickerell 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 - Economy and Environment (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
Crisis and Resilience Fund Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Following the authorisation of the Crisis and Resilience fund “day 1” offer in March Cabinet, this paper seeks authorisation for the next iteration of support projects as part of the programme.	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>Executive Director - Modernisation and Customer Delivery (Lisa Cotton)</i>
Review of Financial Assessment and Care Contributions Policy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The policy was due to be reviewed and to update the policy in line with some legal challenges to the Care Act 2014 since its implementation. In doing so we have also amalgamated the Financial Assessment and Care Contributions policy and the Deferred Payment Agreement Policy and the two impact significantly on each other.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026	People and Health Overview Committee 6 Jul 2026	Cabinet Member for Resources and Finance, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health, Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding	<i>Nicola Fowler, Financial Assessments Team Manager nicola.fowler@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031 - First Review Key Decision - No Public Access - Open Item relating to the making (adoption) of the neighbourhood plan review following an independent examination of the plan.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning	<i>Ed Gerry, Community Planning Manager</i> ed.gerry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)</i>
Endorsement of Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan Key Decision - No Public Access - Open Dorset Council approval of the Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan, prepared in collaboration with Dorset's key visitor economy stakeholders.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026	Place and Resources Overview Committee 9 Jul 2026	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Growth & Strategic Assets	<i>Jon Bird, Service Manager for Economic Development and Skills</i> jon.bird@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)</i>
Dorset Council Local Plan Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open Progression of the Dorset Council Local Plan.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Cabinet Member for Planning	<i>Mike Garrity, Corporate Director for Planning</i> mike.garrity@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk , <i>Terry Sneller, Strategic Planning Manager</i> terry.sneller@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director - Economy and Environment (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
SEND Reform Plan Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open All Local Authorities were required to submit a Local SEND Reform Plan to the DfE by 19 June 2026. The plan is an important first step for local areas to set out how they will lay the foundations for SEND Reform, and design an approach tailored to their local context.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	<i>Jen Furnell, Corporate Director for Education and Learning</i> jen.furnell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>
Update from Shareholder Committee for Dorset Centre of Excellence on 15 June 2026 Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Fully exempt To consider an update report from the Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centr of Excellence.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	<i>Ross Bowell, Head of Service - Health, Education & SEND Commissioning</i> ross.bowell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>
Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Working Group - Final Report and Recommendations to Cabinet Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The EHCP Working group completed its inquiry and took a report to the People & Health	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education	<i>George Dare, Senior Democratic and Governance Officer Tel: 01305 224185</i> george.dare@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <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
Scrutiny Committee on the 16 April 2026. It was agreed to take forward the recommendations to Cabinet. The author of the EHCP report is Cllr T Coombs, as the Chair of the People & Health Scrutiny Committee.					
Procurement - Dorset highways Contractor Resource (Labour Top Up) Framework Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The procurement of the Highways Contractor Resource (Labour Top up) was approved by Cabinet as part of the Procurement Forward Plan Report considered at its meeting on 12 March 2024.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 28 Jul 2026		Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Neil Turner, Service Manager for Network Operations</i> <i>neil.turner@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Economy and Environment (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, Families & Education	<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>
September					

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
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 Resources and Finance	<i>Sean Cremer, Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i> sean.cremer@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, <i>Sian Hedger, Deputy s151 Officer</i> sian.hedger@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <i>Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)</i>
October 2026					
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 6 Oct 2026 People and Health Overview Committee 21 Sep 2026	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	<i>Andy Frost, Service Manager for Community Safety</i> andy.frost@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk <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 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, Families & Education	<i>Megan Cameron-Brown, Head of Quality Assurance and Partnerships megan.cameron-brown@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Children's Services (Paul Dempsey)</i>
Household collection of plastic film and flexible packaging Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open To set out the legal requirements, operational, financial and environmental considerations associated with the statutory requirement to collect plastic film and flexible packaging from April 2027, and to seek approval to proceed with implementation.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 6 Oct 2026		Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Louise Bryant, Service Development Manager louise.bryant@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Lisa Mounty, Service Development Manager lisa.mounty@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Economy and Environment (Jan Britton)</i>
Parking Review and Strategy Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Part exempt To consider the Parking Strategy for Dorset Council.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 6 Oct 2026	Place and Resources Overview Committee 9 Jul 2026	Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>David Rosselli, Transport & Parking Strategy Lead david.rosselli@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Jack Wiltshire, Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering jack.wiltshire@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director - Economy and Environment (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
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 TBC	Cabinet Member for Place Services	<i>Russell Goff, Senior Ranger</i> <i>russell.goff@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Economy and Environment (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 Resources and Finance	<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>
Crisis and Resilience Fund Key Decision - Yes Public Access - Open The policy to back up the Crisis and Resilience Fund Governance.	Decision Maker Cabinet	Decision Date 10 Nov 2026		Cabinet Member for Public Health, Prevention & Communities	<i>Laura Cornette, Business Partner - Communities and Partnerships</i> <i>Laura.cornette@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Executive Director - Modernisation and Customer Delivery (Lisa Cotton)</i>
December 2026					

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Other Committee(s) consulted and Date of meeting(s)	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Midyear 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, Communications, Performance & Safeguarding	<i>Liz Crocker, Head of Strategy</i> <i>liz.crocker@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk, Chris Heighway, Performance and Analytics Team Manager</i> <i>chris.heidway@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk</i> <i>Chief Executive</i>
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 Resources and Finance	<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>
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 Resources and Finance	<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>Executive Director, Corporate Development - Section 151 Officer</i>

Private/Exempt Items for Decision

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

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

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