

HARBOURS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2026

Present: Cllrs Rob Hughes (Chair), Sarah Williams (Vice-Chair), Peter Dickenson and David Northam

Independent Members Present: Mark Roberts, Mark Saxby and Richard Tinsley

Apologies: Cllr Sally Holland, Cllr Gary Suttle and Lee Hardy

Also present: Cllr Jack Jeanes

Others present: Tim Day and James Hannon

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

Lara Altree (Senior Lawyer - Regulatory), Ed Carter (Harbours Manager & Weymouth Harbour Master), Claire Connolly (Harbours Business Manager), Kevin Evans (Senior Accountant (Place)), Joshua Kennedy (Democratic and Governance Officer), Matthew Penny (Service Manager - Flood & Coastal Erosion) and James Radcliffe (Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbour Master)

16. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed and signed.

17. Declarations of Interest

Mark Roberts declared that he held a mooring at West Bay.

18. Public Participation

There were no public questions.

19. Chair's Report

The Chair delivered a verbal update to the Committee. It was reported that over the summer period the Chair had attended the Seafood Festival and the artisan markets in Weymouth and advised that both events had been successful, well organised and well attended. Members noted the positive feedback regarding the events and their contribution to activity within the harbour.

20. Harbour Consultative Group Minutes

The Weymouth Harbour Consultative Group (WHCG) minutes of the meeting held on 19 August, were presented by the WHCG Chair.

21. Designated Person Report

The Designated Person delivered an annual update to the committee. It was explained that four areas of best practice had been identified and two observations were identified for management consideration. It was confirmed that after the latest audit Bridport harbour was fully compliant with the code. The next audit would be carried out in Weymouth in 2027, followed by Lyme Regis in 2028.

One member commented on the high standard of training that had recently been provided to the committee.

22. Harbour Master Updates

The Harbour Master presented an update on operations at Bridport and Lyme Regis Harbours.

At Bridport Harbour, season ticket sales appeared lower than in previous years, although this was attributed to changes in the charging structure. Single launch numbers were also slightly lower, reflecting revised charging arrangements. Despite this, shop sales had exceeded the totals achieved during the previous year.

At Lyme Regis Harbour, season ticket sales had similarly reduced when compared with previous years. However, single launch activity had increased and shop sales had again exceeded previous annual totals. Current mooring occupancy levels remained healthy.

Members were advised that the prolonged period of good weather had supported steady harbour usage throughout the season at both locations.

An update was provided on staffing. Several staffing changes had taken place since the previous meeting and the Harbour Master thanked the outgoing members of staff for their service. All vacant harbour positions had now been successfully filled and staff had completed, or were undertaking, the necessary training programmes.

An update was provided on anti-social behaviour issues. Harbour staff continued to work closely with Dorset Police to address incidents and CCTV cameras had been installed in areas where problems had been identified.

Members also noted the introduction of a mobile fuel service at Bridport Harbour, which enabled petrol and diesel to be supplied directly to customers around the harbour.

In relation to dredging, officers were working with the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management team to secure a dredger for works planned in March.

At Lyme Regis Harbour, a different approach to dredging was being explored. This would involve the use of mini excavators and dumpers to remove material from the

pontoon area and return it to the adjacent beach. The works were intended to be carried out in early 2027.

The Committee further noted that representatives from both harbours had attended the Melplash Show.

Officers provided the following responses to members questions:

- It was confirmed that all risk assessments were up to date following the installation of the fuel pontoon.
- Following the potential Improvement Notice issued in August, harbour staff would look into whether this could apply to the other two harbours and act accordingly.
- Scheduled works had been delayed due to difficult accessibility and the option of replacing it was also being explored.
- It was planned that the kiosk would be open year round.

The Harbour Manager presented an update on Weymouth Harbour operations. The harbour had experienced a busy summer season, with marina occupancy and demand remaining steady throughout the period. Income from visiting vessels was reported to be higher than forecast, with particularly busy weeks balancing quieter periods. Permit revenue from the slipway had also increased. Bridge lifts, vessel movements and harbour transits had all increased, indicating healthy levels of activity. Non-resident fishing vessel visits had reduced, largely due to changes of a single user taking up a permanent berth in Weymouth.

Members received an update on events and visitors. The Seafood Festival had returned to the harbourside and had been well received by both residents and visitors, generating strong footfall. Plans were also being discussed for an RNLI event to be held the following summer.

The Committee was informed that 64 incidents had been recorded since the previous update. The majority had been low-risk, localised incidents. The harbour had secured its first successful prosecution since the introduction of the General Directions, relating to a speeding offence. A second prosecution had been adjourned until 2027 as a direct consequence of court case backlogs.

Anti-social behaviour continued to be an area of focus, particularly incidents involving individuals jumping from harbour structures and swimming within the harbour. Several minor pollution incidents involving oil and fuel had been investigated. None of these incidents had met the threshold requiring formal notification.

An update on maintenance and infrastructure projects was provided. Replacement railings had been completed ahead of the Seafood Festival. Resurfacing works to the cargo stage had not been undertaken during the summer due to the risk of disruption to events and would now take place during the winter period. The replacement of the Stone Pier railings had also been completed.

It was explained that the recent survey of the sand jetty had found the structure to be fit for continued use. However, a number of wooden pilings had been identified for replacement. While these did not form part of the main structure, they were considered important for the protection of vessels using the facility.

Officers provided the following responses to members questions:

- A meeting was being arranged to discuss ways of continuing and improving on events held in the harbour in the future and members could attend these if they wished.
- It was intended that data for incidents in Bridport and Lyme Regis would be brought to the committee, however it was considered best to do this annually, in order to get a larger and more useful data set.
- The increase in slipway usage was largely due to water sports in general, rather than specifically jet skis.
- Highways had confirmed that the sump underneath the Town Bridge was in operational condition.
- The artisan markets generated income, which went directly to the harbour.
- Users of the marina were not able to live on-board permanently and harbour staff conducted regular patrols to monitor this and would communicate with anyone who may be in excess of the 30 allowed nights aboard their vessel.
- The harbour team would explore the viability of offering an educational course as a measure before prosecution, where offences warranted it.

The committee noted the updates from all three harbours.

23. Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Engineering Update

The Service Manager for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) presented the engineering update for the harbours. At Bridport Harbour, dredging works were scheduled to take place during the following year. Harbour inspections had been completed, with only boat-based inspections remaining outstanding. Members were advised that Harbour Wall Works A and B were programmed for delivery during autumn and winter 2026.

At Lyme Regis Harbour, preparations for dredging works planned for the following year were progressing, with the necessary documentation being developed. Inspections had been completed, with the exception of boat-based inspection work, and officers were satisfied with the overall condition of the harbour assets. The void repairs to the Cobb had been completed in June and the next phase of the repairs would eastern side of Victoria Pier and structural investigations of the Southern Arm. An update was also provided on the Lyme Regis Environmental Improvement Scheme Phase 5. All parties continued to be engaged in a collaborative process and work was underway to progress the documentation required to release grant funding.

At Weymouth Harbour, inspections and repair works to Wall 2 were ongoing. Members received an update on the Weymouth Risk Management Scheme Phase 1 and were advised that revised funding guidance had been released. Work

continued on the development of the business case, with preparation of the Full Business Case expected to commence in summer 2027.

It was noted that works to Harbour Walls F and G remained on programme and were expected to conclude by October 2026. In relation to Harbour Wall E, localised deterioration had been identified within the sheet pile compound area. A survey of Wall E was being undertaken and, following completion of the survey, a detailed design and replacement scheme would be commissioned.

The Service Manager for FCERM provided the following responses to members questions:

- The Weymouth Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management Scheme Phase 1 had been delayed by at least 12 months, however the construction element of the project was still on target.
- Funding had been approved for the pre-construction works for the Lyme Regis Cobb, which would be funded through local levy, however this wouldn't contribute to funding of the construction phase.

The committee noted the FCERM updates.

24. Harbours Budget Monitoring Report 2026-27

The Harbours Business Manager presented the budget monitoring report and advised that the overall financial position across the harbours remained healthy.

At Bridport Harbour, the budget position continued to benefit from savings generated by the vacant mechanic post. Members were advised that additional costs had arisen in relation to replacing quayside davits; however, these had been partially offset by a successful fisheries grant funding bid. Income was currently forecast to be below budget. This is partially due to some areas where there has been limited historic data available to make accurate budget predictions

At Lyme Regis Harbour, the budget remained on course to achieve a balanced year-end position. Savings had been realised through lower seasonal staffing costs. Fuel expenditure was currently higher than budgeted, while income from licences remained below target. Members were advised that the availability of more reliable data in future years would support the development of more accurate budgets and forecasts.

It was noted that the forecast surplus for Weymouth Harbour had increased. Marina berthing income was currently below budget, with a shortfall of approximately 1.6%. Visitor berthing income was also lower than anticipated; however, this had been offset by strong performance in other visitor-related income streams. Slipway income continued to perform well, while additional income had been generated through new and existing storage facilities, parking charges and fuel sales. Parking income was reported to be exceeding budget expectations.

Members were advised that expenditure at Weymouth Harbour was forecast to be above budget. This was primarily due to increased staffing costs, higher insurance premiums and parking-related expenditure being revised to reflect the previous year's actual costs. Officers were reviewing areas of higher expenditure and taking action where possible to minimise costs. Despite these financial pressures, Weymouth Harbour remained in a stable financial position.

The committee noted the budget monitoring figures for all three harbours.

25. Proposed Procurement of Dredging Services for Bridport

The Harbours Manager presented the report on proposed procurement of dredging services for Bridport harbour. Members were advised that, to provide greater certainty, continuity and value for money, it was proposed that a five-year dredging contract be procured. The Committee was informed that the cumulative value of the contract over the proposed five-year period would exceed the threshold for a key decision and would therefore require approval by Cabinet.

In response to questions from the committee, the Harbours Manager explained that advice had been sought from Legal and Democratic Officers on the precise wording of the recommendation and also that there were financial safeguards in place to protect the councils investment and monitor the work undertaken by the successful contractor.

It was proposed by Cllr Williams and seconded by Cllr Dickenson.

Decision: That the Harbours Advisory Committee recommend that Cabinet:

- Approves the procurement of a five-year contract for annual maintenance dredging at Bridport (West Bay) Harbour from 2027 to 2031;
- Approves, as a contingency, the procurement of a single-year contract for the 2027 dredging campaign if it is not practicable to complete the preferred five-year procurement within the required timeframe; and
- Delegates authority to the Executive Director for Economy & Environment, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Place Services, to take all necessary steps to procure and award the contract(s) in accordance with the above approvals.

26. Forward Plan

The Harbours Manager presented the forward plan. He noted that a report on the General Directions for Bridport and Lyme Regis would likely be presented at the December meeting.

In response to questions, it was explained that the removal of pilotage from Bridport was intended to be combined into a single order and be dealt with all at once. He also clarified that a workshop was being setup for members in November and could include a presentation on the Marine Safety Management System updates.

The committee noted the forward plan.

27. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

28. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.25 am

Chairman

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