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Shareholder Committee for Dorset Innovation Park Ltd

Date: Monday, 23 March 2026
Time: **3.00 pm or on the rising of the Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd (meeting starting at 2.00pm)**
Venue: Meeting Room 1, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

Members (Quorum: 3)
Cllrs Nick Ireland (Chair), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chair), Shane Bartlett, Simon Clifford and Ben Wilson

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

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic & Governance Services Meeting Contact lindsey.watson@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. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interest as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their disclosure councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.

If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

3. 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
lindsey.watson@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
by 8.30am on 18 March 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.

4. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS

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 lindsey.watson@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk by 8.30am on 18 March 2026.

Dorset Council Constitution – Procedure Rule 13

5. DORSET INNOVATION PARK BOARD COMPOSITION 5 - 10

To consider a report of the Head of Growth and Regeneration.

6. 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.

7. EXEMPT BUSINESS

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

There are no exempt items scheduled for this meeting.

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Shareholder Committee for Dorset Innovation Park Ltd

23 March 2026

Dorset Innovation Park Board Composition

For Decision

Cabinet Member:
Cllr R Biggs, Property & Assets and Economic Growth

Local Councillor(s):
Cllr L Beddow, Cllr M Baker

Senior Leadership Team:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Nick Webster – Head of Growth and Regeneration
Email: nicholas.webster@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public

1. Executive summary

1.1 This report provides an update on the Dorset Innovation Park Ltd Board composition including a recommendation for the formal ratification of the Company Chair and appointment of a Non Executive Director.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Shareholders are recommended to:

1. Formally ratify the choice of Cecilia Bufton as the Dorset Innovation Park Ltd Chair for an initial period of 12 months.
2. Approve the re-appointment of Mark Ovens as a Non Executive Director of Dorset Innovation Park Ltd.

3. Reason for the recommendations

3.1 Dorset Innovation Park Ltd (the Company) has been established as an “arms length” company of Dorset Council to take on the management and operation of the Dorset Innovation Park (DIP). An external Board of Directors has been appointed to oversee the management of the Company. In February 2026 the Chair of the Company resigned his position and the Shareholder approved the commencement of an appointment process for a new Chair. That process has secured Cecilia Bufton as the new Chair of the Company and this appointment has been confirmed by the Leader of the Council. The Shareholder Committee are now asked to formally ratify this decision.

3.2 In addition, the Company Managing Director has requested that the Shareholder consider the reappointment of Mark Ovens to the Company Board as a Non Executive Director.

4. The report

4.1 Dorset Innovation Park Ltd (the Company) was incorporated in June 2025 and a Board comprising of a Chair, Managing Director and five non executive Directors (NED) was appointed in across the summer of 2025.

4.2 There have been a number of resignations from the Company Board, including the Board Chair, since the appointments were made and the current Board membership comprises of the Company Managing Director, Kevin Foreshaw, and three NED's, Alice McAlpine, Dr Grieg Paul, and Claire Pearce.

4.3 The Company Articles of Association stipulate that the Company should have between five and nine directors.

4.4 The 4th February 2026 Shareholder Committee approved the commencement of an appointment process for a new Board Chair. This process resulted in Cecilia Bufton agreeing to join the Company Board in the Chair position for an initial period of twelve months.

4.5 Cecilia's appointment to the role has been agreed by the Leader of the Council and is supported by the Company Managing Director. The appointment requires formal ratification from the Company Shareholder. The Company Articles of Association and the Shareholder agreement set out that the Shareholder has the authority to make this appointment.

4.6 Cecilia brings a wealth of previous public / private partnership experience to the role, including as Chair of the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership and Chair of Dorset Integrated Care Partnership.

4.7 Cecilia has previously worked for a range of businesses including multinationals and SMEs and across her successful career, she has held senior roles with responsibility for the strategic direction and financial performance of businesses in the UK and globally.

4.8 The Shareholder approved the Company Business Plan at the February 2026 Shareholder Committee. This Business Plan set out the priorities for the

Company including reducing the financial arrears incurred by the operation of the Innovation Park.

4.9 The Company Managing Director and Council officers consider that to deliver on this priority the Company needs relevant asset and estate management experience on the Company Board and the executive team.

4.10 A recent recruitment exercise has resulted in the appointment of an experienced property professional to the role of Asset and Property Manager within the executive team.

4.11 To generate similar experience on the Company Board, the Company Managing Director, has held conversations with former director of the Company, Mark Ovens, with a view to him rejoining the Company Board.

4.12 Mark brings considerable commercial property experience at executive board level working with investors, shareholders, joint venture partners and main board directors. He has experience at Managing Director level and of managing a property portfolio with a Gross Asset Value of £1bn and employing over 100 people.

4.13 Mark has recent knowledge of commercial developments and has worked on large scale commercial and science parks in Kent, Liverpool, Birmingham, and South Wales. He currently is retired and lives in Dorchester.

4.14 The Shareholder is requested to approve the re-appointment of Mark Ovens as a NED to the Company Board.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 None.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 Under the Company Articles of Association, Articles 19.1 states that “The board of Directors shall consist of a minimum of 5 Directors and a maximum of 9.” In addition the Articles include that the Shareholder has two distinct rights:

- Articles 19.2 allows the Shareholder the exclusive right to appoint and dismiss the Chair and Managing Director by ordinary resolution.
- Articles 19.3 allows the Shareholder to appoint directors by ordinary resolution.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The Dorset Innovation Park Business Plan 2026-2030 sets out a budget of £60,000 in 2026/27for Chair and NED renumeration and £40,000 for 2027/28 through to 2030/31. All renumeration to include expenses for the Chair and NED's will need to be contained within these budgets.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising from this report.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 N/A

10. Other implications

10.1 there are no other implications arising from this report.

11. Risk implications

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

Current Risk: Should the shareholders not formally ratify the decision to appoint Cecilia Bufton this may necessitate a further appointment process for a Board Chair which could take a number of weeks. This may impact the Board's ability to take decisions or operate effectively, with associated adverse impact on the delivery of the Company Business Plan and Company responsibilities under the Shareholder Agreement. Additionally without commercial property experience on the Board there is a risk that Board decisions are taken without consideration of all the relevant factors.

Residual Risk: Formal ratification of the Chair will enable the Board to take decisions and implement the Business Plan. Appointing a NED with relevant commercial property experience will facilitate more informed decision making.

12. Equalities

12.1 No impact.

13. Appendices

13.1 Not applicable

14. Background papers

14.1 Not applicable

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

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