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CABINET

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2025

Present: Cllrs Nick Ireland (Chair), Richard Biggs (Vice-Chair), Jon Andrews, Shane Bartlett, Simon Clifford, Ryan Hope, Steve Robinson, Clare Sutton, Gill Taylor and Ben Wilson

Apologies: None

Also present: Cllr Peter Dickenson, Cllr Matt Bell, Cllr Neil Eysenck, Cllr Hannah Hobbs-Chell, Cllr Rob Hughes, Cllr Craig Monks, Cllr Kate Wheller, Cllr David Northam, Cllr Louie O'Leary, Cllr Jon Orrell, Cllr Cathy Lugg, Cllr Andrew Parry and Cllr Piers Brown

Also present remotely: Cllr Belinda Bawden, Cllr Laura Beddow, Cllr Ray Bryan, Cllr Beryl Ezzard, Cllr Simon Gibson, Cllr Paul Kimber, Cllr Val Potheary and Cllr David Tooke

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

Jan Britton (Executive Director - Place), Sean Cremer (Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), Jonathan Price (Executive Director of People - Adults and Housing), Andrew Billany (Corporate Director for Housing), Lisa Cotton (Corporate Director for Customer and Cultural Services), Sam Crowe (Director of Public Health), Paul Dempsey (Executive Director of People - Children), Catherine Howe (Chief Executive), Sam Poole (Interim Corporate Director for Commissioning & Improvement), Matthew Piles (Corporate Director - Strategic Director - Weymouth 2040), Jessica Maskrey (Head of Service – Assets & Property), Paul Scothern (Service Manager Capital Commissioning), Jack Wiltshire (Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering) and Carly Galloway (Service Manager Business Operations)

66. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

67. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to report.

68. Public Participation

There was one public statement and this was attached as Appendix A to the minutes.

69. Questions from Councillors

One question was received from Councillor M Parkes; this along with the response was set out in Appendix B to these minutes.

70. Forward Plan

The Cabinet Forward Plan for December was received and noted.

71. September 2025 (Period 6) financial management report 2025/26

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy presented the Period 6 Financial Management report, which provided a comprehensive overview of Dorset Council's financial position as of 30 September 2025. He confirmed that the projected overspend was £5.3 million and mainly due to the rising cost of adults and children's social care, plus delays in savings from the Our Future Council transformation programme. However, he emphasised that this was an improving picture.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy advised that the Highways budget underspend was primarily due to higher than anticipated car parking income. Members were informed that recruitment for community highways officers was actively underway, and this would strengthen local services.

Members also noted that the recent dip in homelessness performance was a temporary issue. Dorset Council continued to perform strongly overall against homelessness targets, and measures were in place to maintain and further improve outcomes.

It was proposed by Cllr S Clifford and seconded by Cllr B Wilson

Decision

- (a) That the Senior Leadership Team's forecast of the full year's outturn for the Council, made at the end of September 2025 including progress of the transformational and efficiency savings incorporated into the budget, be noted.
- (b) That the capital programme for 2025/26 be noted.
- (c) That the number and extent of contract exemptions be noted.
- (d) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director for People (Children) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills to award phase 2 of the valuing care programme with IMPOWER which increases total spend to £0.94m. (as set out in Appendix D of the report to Cabinet of 11 November 2025)

Reason for the decision

The Council was legally required to set a balanced budget every year and so must deliver services within the resources made available through the revenue and capital budgets for 2025/26. The report summarised the Council's forecast financial performance for the year at the end of September 2025.

72. Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and budget strategy

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy set out the framework for the 2026/27 budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The report also outlined the ongoing challenging work throughout the autumn to enable the budget to be finalised ahead of the Full Council meeting in February 2026. The Cabinet Member proposed the recommendation as set out in the report.

In seconding the recommendation Cllr B Wilson advised that given the ongoing uncertainty, this highlighted that the council must continue its transformation journey. As a whole organisation, this evolution was essential to ensure that services remain efficient, deliver value, and meet the needs of the community.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Strategy confirmed that no additional car parking charges were anticipated within the budget. He further noted that setting a balanced budget remained highly challenging and due to pressures, there was very little flexibility available to the council.

Decision

- (a) That the updated cost pressures set out in the Cabinet report of 11 November 2025 and the validation work that had been carried out on them, be noted.
- (b) That the assumptions being used in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) be agreed.
- (c) That the financial gap arising from (b) and (c) above be noted.
- (d) That Cabinet agrees the 2026/27 principles for budget setting outlined in section 13 of the report of 11 November 2025.
- (e) That the approach to closing the budget gap set out in the report of 11 November 2025 be noted, recognising that the work was in progress.
- (f) That Cabinet continues to lobby local MPs and work with peers to press the case for additional, multi-year funding.
- (g) That Cabinet Members work with officers to continue to identify and develop further efficiencies and savings.

- (h) That Cabinet endorse the next steps and timetable leading up to the 2026/27 budget which will be presented to full Council on 10 February 2026.

Reason for the decision

Local councils were legally obligated to set a balanced annual budget, meaning that planned expenditure must be matched by sustainable income sources. This excludes reliance on one-off or short-term funding that cannot be maintained over time.

The report of 11 November 2025 was presented to Cabinet to provide an update on the projected budget gap for 2026/27 and the subsequent years covered by the MTFP. It also outlined progress made to date on identified actions and savings, including the forecasted financial performance for 2025/26 against the approved budget.

73. **Highways Capital Programme Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Place Services introduced a report outlining a proposed multi-year funding strategy for highways investment from 2026 to 2030. The strategy included a £15.5 million boost for roads and cycleways, alongside an opportunity to secure £1.5 million from the new National Structures Fund for urgent repairs to the A30 Shaftesbury bridge. Moving to a multi-year approach would enable smarter planning, more efficient road maintenance, and improved resilience to climate challenges.

The Cabinet Member then proposed the recommendations and these were seconded by Cllr S Bartlett.

In response to a question, the Cabinet Member for Place Services confirmed that the Local Transport Plan and the integrated Asset Management Plan would be used to ensure that maintenance was carried out in the areas where it was required.

Decision

- (a) That £1.5M of funding from the Department for Transport's new Structures Fund, be sought for essential concrete repairs and structural maintenance for the A30 Shaftesbury Bridge.
- (b) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director for Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services, to approve funding allocation to the A30 Shaftesbury Bridge scheme from the Department for Transport Highways Maintenance Block allocation if the project is not eligible for the Structures Fund or maintenance is needed before the Structures Fund is allocated.
- (c) That Cabinet approves the spend within the forward plan (as set out in Appendix A of the Cabinet report of 11 November 2025) for Department for Transport and other externally funded highway improvement and structural maintenance work over £500k, and delegates the making of any contract

award for schemes within Appendix A to the Cabinet Member for Place Services in consultation with the Executive Director for Place.

- (d) That Cabinet endorse the overall highway structural maintenance programme as agreed and in accordance with the Officer Scheme of Delegation, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Services, and confirm that approval of expenditure for individual schemes below £500k within that programme be made under the existing Officer Scheme of Delegation for Dorset Council.

Reason for the decision

To align the Department for Transport's multi-year funding with the local objectives of the Dorset Council Plan 2024 to 2029.

To support more effective long term asset management and gain additional Department for Transport investment for Dorset's highway network. Improving resilience, connectivity and road safety would strongly contribute to the Council's priorities of growing our economy, communities for all and responding to the climate and nature crisis.

74. **Weymouth 2040: - Renewable Energy Partnership**

The Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development introduced a report outlining a proposed strategic partnership between Source Galileo and Dorset Council. This collaboration aimed to deliver an innovative and transformational approach to accelerating the development of onshore renewable and clean energy projects on council-owned land and property. The proposed project would make a significant contribution to the Council's clean energy ambitions as set out within the council plan, climate and economy strategies.

In response to questions relating to the future of a county farm in the Chickerell area, the Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development clarified that the land was of moderate to poor quality. The farm was not being sold; its lease had expired, and this was an opportunity to repurpose this land.

In response to a question regarding biodiversity and green infrastructure, the Legal and Democratic Services Director and Monitoring Officer reminded members that these were planning considerations. Cabinet did not have a role to play in determining any future planning application.

In response to further questions, members were advised that as part of the farm strategy work, all farm assets had been assessed in line with the priorities that were laid out within the strategy. This included supporting entrance into agriculture and farming opportunities. This site was not particularly well suited as a starter farm or a progression farm opportunity and as such disposal or re-purposing was considered the best way forward.

It was proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr C Sutton

Decision

That authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development and Corporate Director Finance & Commercial (s151 Officer) interim to:

- (i) Progress the Solar PV opportunity at Higher South Buckland Farm.
- (ii) Work with SSEN to secure a grid connection to enable future deployment with the next 24 months.
- (iii) Enter a strategic partnership with Source Galileo to advance the project.

The project supported Dorset Council's net zero goals and offered early delivery potential, directly contributing to the intersecting clean energy and Weymouth regeneration ambitions of the Council Plan and our climate and economy strategies.

Reason for the decision

To advance the Higher South Buckland Farm, Solar PV by securing a grid connection and enter into an agreement through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Source Galileo to advance this renewable energy project. The County Farm presented a strategic opportunity for renewable energy deployment. Securing grid access and exclusivity would enable Dorset Council to move forward with a 50MW solar PV project. This supported the Council's net zero goals and offered a quicker win in the regeneration programme.

75. Weymouth 2040: A Regeneration Vision Rooted in Place and People - Levelling up fund

The Cabinet Member for Property, Assets and Economic Growth presented a report setting out the comprehensive and ambitious overview of the current regeneration initiative proposed for Weymouth. It aimed to inform Dorset Council's strategic decisions by consolidating advisory input on a hotel-led mixed-use development at Weymouth Peninsula, development on North Quay and the heart of Weymouth, cultural and visitor centre.

In response to questions the Cabinet Member for Property, Assets and Economic Growth confirmed that:

- If other opportunities arose, considered appropriate and funding was available, additional areas of development could be considered in the future.
- The current papers before members relate specifically to projects in Weymouth
- A proposed disposal strategy will be approved for North Quay site, based on a closed or selective tender process.
- A further paper would be considered by Cabinet in the future on a preferred developer or confirmation that the site would be included in the strategic partnership proposal.
- Confirmed that he had confidence in the brief which would offer high-quality design and community benefits.

It was proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr R Hope

Decision (unanimous)

Weymouth Peninsula Development Proposal

- (a) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development and Corporate Director Finance & Commercial (s151 Officer) interim to:
 - (i) Formally invite Hall & Woodhouse to submit a proposal for a long leasehold development on the Weymouth Peninsula.
 - (ii) Ensure the proposal aligns with the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan, including:
 - Provision of hospitality and leisure facilities.
 - Delivery of public realm enhancements that support placemaking and community benefit.
 - (iii) Report any recommended proposal to the Harbour Advisory Committee, Weymouth Harbour Consultative Group and Cabinet for approval.

North Quay, Development

- (b) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development and Corporate Director Finance & Commercial (s151 Officer) interim to:
 - (i) Approve the proposed disposal strategy for the North Quay site, based on a closed or selective tender process.
 - (ii) Finalise the tender framework, including developer selection criteria and disposal conditions.
 - (iii) Request a further report to Cabinet outlining the outcome of the process and recommending either a preferred developer or confirmation that the site will be included in the strategic partnership proposal.

Heart of Weymouth, Cultural and Visitor Centre, the Rectory, St Thomas Street

- (c) To approve the investment of £1.1 million from the Levelling Up Fund towards the acquisition of The Rectory freehold and that authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development and Corporate Director Finance & Commercial (s151 Officer) interim to approve and progress with the most appropriate to investment option, subject to:
 - (i) a council review of investment options.
 - (ii) the Weymouth Area Development Trust CIC confirming that it has secured capital funding; and
 - (iii) submission and satisfactory review of:
 - Architectural plans.
 - Cost plan and development cashflow.

- Full project programme.
- Evidence of positive pre-planning consultation.
- A viable business case to be produced by Weymouth Area Development Trust CIC (WADT) for long term community use, including operational plans, financial forecasts, market need, and a fundraising strategy.

The proposal must demonstrate financial viability, strategic alignment with Dorset Council's regeneration objectives, and WADT secured capital funding before Dorset Council commits its funding from its contribution as part of the Weymouth Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Regeneration Programme.

Reason for the decision

To progress key regeneration opportunities in Weymouth by inviting Hall & Woodhouse to formalise their interest in a long leasehold development at the Peninsula, and by enabling due diligence on proposals for North Quay and the Heart of Weymouth Cultural and Visitor Centre. These steps would ensure alignment with the Council's masterplan, tourism strategy, and Levelling Up Fund objectives, while safeguarding harbour interests and securing financial viability before any disposal or investment was confirmed.

76. **Weymouth 2040: Strategic Partnership**

Cabinet considered a report outlining proposals to establish a long-term Strategic Regeneration Partnership between Dorset Council and Willmott Dixon, in partnership with Milligan. The partnership aimed to accelerate the regeneration of Weymouth through a commercially led masterplan, feasibility studies on key Council-owned sites, and a strategic business plan to attract public and private investment.

Responding to questions, the Cabinet Member advised that to succeed it was important to acknowledge the potential benefits of leveraging external expertise to deliver sustainable regeneration and inward investment for Weymouth. The Leader of the Council emphasised that the Council was not a developer for this project, but it did have the responsibility to ensure the right people was in place to turn plans into action.

It was proposed by Cllr R Biggs and seconded by Cllr N Ireland.

Decision (Unanimous)

Strategic Partnership - Willmott Dixon, in partnership with Milligan

That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Assets, Property and Economic Development and Corporate Director Finance & Commercial (Interim s151 Officer) to:

- Assess the potential added value of a long-term Strategic Regeneration Partnership with Willmott Dixon, in partnership with Milligan.

- (ii) Finalise the assessment of the use of the Pagabo Developer Led Framework and decide on whether to appoint Wilmott Dixon directly or run a further competition in accordance with the Framework terms.
- (iii) Award a contract to undertake the commercial masterplan, high level feasibility studies and strategic business plan for 6 key initial Council-owned development sites up to a value of £250k (plus VAT) with Willmott Dixon or other supplier, with an option to extend the contract for further development works if desired.
- (iv) Negotiate the fee structure for the Partnership and next stages; and
- (v) Implement the necessary governance arrangements to support the Partnership.

Reason for the decision

The decision allows the Council to clarify the partnership structure, fee model, and deliverables to determine whether this collaboration offers added value beyond existing plans and whether it aligns with the Council's governance and procurement frameworks. It also provided the Council with a commercial masterplan, high level feasibility studies and strategic business plan to start the process of unlocking public and private sector investment.

77. **Asset Disposals and Transfers**

The Cabinet Member for Property, Assets and Economic Growth presented a report on the disposal and transfer of surplus non-operational assets to support the Strategic Asset Management Plan. The programme aimed to generate £45.7m in capital receipts over a five-year period, reduce maintenance liabilities and enable reinvestment in priority assets.

The proposed disposals were detailed in the exempt appendix. The Leader of the Council encouraged members to contact the Head of Asset & Property with any queries regarding the items listed in that appendix.

In response to a question regarding tenancy properties, members were advised that where properties were tenanted, conversations would be held with the tenant to give them the opportunity to purchase. In those cases, they would be considered a special purchaser and would not be required to go through the competitive process. However, in accordance with the best value duty, they would be expected to pay the market value of the property.

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

Decision

- (a) That the proposed pipeline for asset disposals as a key mechanism to deliver the Strategic Asset Management Plan, generate capital receipts and support the delivery of the Council Plan, be approved.

- (b) That authority be delegated to approve disposals of individual assets identified on the disposals pipeline (as set out in Appendix A of the Cabinet report 11 November 2025) each with an estimated value exceeding £500,000 and method of disposal to the Executive Director for Place in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Property, Assets & Economic Growth and for Finance & Capital Strategy and the Section 151 Officer.

Reason for the decision

To reduce the Council's property portfolio to a sustainable level, generate capital receipts, and lower maintenance costs, while enabling reinvestment in core assets. Disposals and asset transfers would empower communities, support regeneration and housing delivery, and ensure more efficient use of resources in line with Dorset Council's priorities.

78. **Children's Services Capital Programme**

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills presented a report on the Children's Services Capital Programme, which outlined the current and future projects aimed at ensuring sufficient school places, improving suitability of school estates and expanding provision for children with Special Educational Needs (SEND). The report also looked to clarify the delegations which were used against the programme to ensure they were valid, consistent and with appropriate oversight of projects.

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr S Robinson

Decision

- (a) That the budget and funding allocations to projects within Appendix A of the report of 11 November 2025 (current Capital Programme), be approved.
- (b) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of People – Children's, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education & Skills and the Corporate Director Finance & Commercial/Chief Financial Officer & S151 Officer to agree funding allocation of up to £500,000 for any new project, provided those allocations were within the overall Capital Programme budget.
- (c) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Director of People – Children's and Cabinet Members for Children's Services, Education and Skills and Property & Assets and Economic Growth and the Corporate Director Finance & Commercial/Chief Financial Officer & S151 Officer to procure and award contracts, or release agreed funding to third parties delivering projects, for

any project within Cabinet approved Appendix A, of the report, provided the project cost was contained within the overall programme budget.

Reason for the decision

To draw together several previous delegations against individual Capital programme budgets to ensure consistency across programmes. To ensure appropriate oversight and authority was in place to allow projects to progress through from inception to delivery.

79. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items considered at the meeting.

80. **Exempt Business**

It was proposed by Cllr C Sutton and seconded by Cllr S Clifford

Decision

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

Reason for taking the item in private

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

The live streaming was concluded at this juncture.

81. **Asset Disposals and Transfers - Exempt Appendix**

The exempt appendix associated with the report "Asset Disposals and Transfers" was not discussed in exempt business. The report was considered in open business as set out in no. 77 of these minutes

82. **Children's Services Capital Programme - Exempt Appendix**

The exempt appendix associated with the report "Children's Services Capital Programme" was not discussed in exempt business. The report was considered in open business set out in no 78 of these minutes.

83. **Dorset Care Record**

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care presented the exempt report and its recommendation. This was seconded by Cllr J Andrews.

Decision

That the recommendations set out in the exempt report be approved

Reason for the decision

To enable Dorset Council to continue its strategic role in the Dorset Records Programme ensuring continuity of service and provision.

Appendix A - Public Participation

Appendix B - Councillor Question

Duration of meeting: 6.30 - 8.18 pm

Chair

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Cabinet – 11 November 2025

Statements from the Public

Statement from Phil Say, Director of Weymouth Pavilion

My name is Phil Say and I'm a Director of Weymouth Pavilion CIC. My statement refers to agenda item 11 – Weymouth 2040 and a proposal for a pub/restaurant with rooms to be cited on the Weymouth peninsula between the Pavilion and the Roundhouse B&B.

I struggle to believe that in these times of poor financial security, with the threat of rising taxes and business costs, Dorset Council are considering the proposal of a new 'Pub with rooms' adjacent to Weymouth Harbour. The pub will not only compete directly with existing hotels, guesthouses and pubs but will also have a severe financial impact to Weymouth Pavilion. The Pavilion cannot compete with the buying power of a large chain, yet still will be forced to match or beat their prices to not lose custom. The suggested location of the structure, adjacent to the theatre load in facility, will result in noise complaints and a possible restriction of operations. The loading in and out of equipment takes place at unsociable times and large vehicles arrive and depart at all times of the day and night.

It was my understanding that the redevelopment of the peninsula would take place as a whole, with an overall plan for the site, but this proposal of a 'pub with rooms' would suggest that the site is now to be offered piecemeal. This proposal suggests to me desperation to accept any offer made, with complete disregard to a coherent plan or existing businesses.

The 'gap' between the Pavilion and Devonshire Buildings was intentional to negate any disturbances from the operation of an entertainment venue. I believe that this 'gap' is also protected to maintain the view of the Georgian Seafront from the Nothe as mentioned in the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan and various other documents over the past few decades.

The artists drawing shows the new construction to be on the old railway lines, restricting access to the recently constructed fish landing stage and facilities and would also hinder access for deliveries and emergency access to the rear of the Pavilion.

I fail to visualise exactly where a 14,355 sq ft building would fit adjacent to the Pavilion, let alone its own dedicated parking area.

In summary, while I support the regeneration of the peninsula, I cannot back this single proposal of a 'pub with rooms' – I think that it is the wrong thing in the wrong place.

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Cabinet – 11 November 2025 Councillor Questions

Question from Cllr M Parkes

Residents in Stapehill Road remain concerned to the amount of vehicles not adhering to the 30mph speed limit. A recent consultation carried out by the Town Council concluded that there was not enough support from residents of the town to reduce the limit to 20mph however Cllr Lugg and I recognise that the percentage of residents in the road that supported the reduction was greater.

It is our belief that enforcement of the existing speed limit would be far more appropriate and request that the council use CIL money to install ANPR cameras to enforce the speed limit as has been done in other areas within Dorset.

Response from Cllr Jon Andrews [comms version]

Dorset Council will consider the use of average speed cameras at the Cabinet meeting in December. We can also raise the request for enforcement on Stapehill Road with the Dorset Road Safety Partnership.

In the meantime, installing a Speed Indicator Device (SID) could be a more practical way to improve compliance. SIDs are widely used across Dorset and are proven to be effective in reducing speeds. Dorset Council already runs a community SID programme with Ferndown Town Council, who can request a device for this location and provide the necessary support. Our officers would be happy to assist the Town Council with this.

Response from Cllr Jon Andrews [version from service]

Dorset Council will be considering the principle of using average speed cameras in Dorset at December's Cabinet Meeting. We can also raise a request for camera enforcement on Stapehill Road with the Dorset Road Safety Partnership.

In the meantime, a more appropriate way to improve speed limit compliance on Stapehill Road might be to install a Speed Indicator Device (SID) at this location. These devices are used across Dorset in partnership with our communities and have a proven track record of successfully lowering drivers' speeds to meet set speed limits. Dorset Council has already set up a community SID programme with Ferndown Town Council, and they have the option to request a SID in this area, and commit their resource to it, if they wish to. Officers would be happy to help Ferndown Town Council with this request.