Shareholder Committee for Dorset Innovation Park Ltd

4 February 2026

Dorset Council Update Report

For Review and Consultation

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

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

Executive Director:
J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

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Report Status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Brief Summary:
This report presents an update on the current position regarding the establishment of Dorset Innovation Park Ltd.

Recommendation:
Shareholders are asked to note the progress made and support the continued cooperation between the Council and the Dorset Innovation Park Ltd.

Reason for Recommendation:
Progress continues to be sustained enabling the company to focus on developing a Business Plan and delivering a high-quality innovation park for the benefit of the council, its tenants and wider economic prosperity.

1. **Report**

1.1 This report provides an overview of the current position in relation to the establishment of Dorset Innovation Park Ltd (DIP Ltd) and an update on Dorset Council activity required to support the company formation and wider progress across the Innovation Park.

1.2 The Council and DIP Ltd have agreed the Shareholder Agreement, the contract between Dorset Council as the shareholder and the company, and are in the process of arranging signature. This defines their rights, obligations and the management and governance of the Company.

1.3 Council officers and DIP Ltd continue to work towards the establishment of both a Services Contract – the services the company will be supplying the Council, and a Support Contract – the services the council will be supplying to the company to support the delivery of the company business plan. A final version of these documents will be presented to the April Shareholder Committee.

1.4 Council officers and DIP Ltd employees have established procedures to help manage the transition between the Council's current management of the Innovation Park to the future under DIP Ltd management. Officers and employees are in contact on a daily basis and hold weekly working group meetings to discuss and agree the operational approach to ongoing Park management.

1.5 To provide ongoing capacity within the company and to support the wider defence sector in Dorset, one of the company's key target sectors, the council have recruited a new Defence and Innovation Lead officer, and the company are in the process of recruiting a Property and Assets Manager.

1.6 The council Defence and Innovation role will focus on support to the Dorset based defence sector, raising its profile regionally and nationally, will work with key partners such as the South West Regional Defence and Security Cluster, and DIP Ltd, and provide one to one account management of the major defence firms within the county. The role will work directly alongside DIP Ltd and closely with the Managing Director and his team.

1.7 The relationship between council officers and the Park will evolve once the Company has taken over responsibility for the Park management and operation. Officers will no longer be responsible for the day to day management of the site but instead will perform a role in ensuring the Park is aligned and embedded into the council's wider economic priorities of supporting the Defence sector, promoting Clean Energy opportunities, and securing economic growth.

1.8 Other relationships between the Company/Park and council officers will become more formalised within the Services Contract to be agreed between the Company and council, and potentially through the use of

Service Level Agreements for the provision of specific services, for example legal conveyancing.

1.9 In December, the council, in its planning authority capacity, approved a Local Development Order application at the Innovation Park for a 78,000 sqft development to extend an existing tenants presence on site. The Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth has approved the sale of circa 3 acres on the Park to the tenant to facilitate the development.

1.10 In December Cabinet approved the purchase of land neighbouring the Innovation Park which will help develop the long-term strategic role of the Park as the centre of the defence industry in Dorset. The additional 6.1 hectares will enable the Council to maintain a controlled supply of employment land, supporting the delivery of the company Business Plan, Council Plan and Economic Growth Strategy.

1.11 In an aligned project, officers have commissioned expert advice from hotel specialists at Colliers International real estate services to understand the feasibility / viability of a hotel development that could service both the Innovation Park and the local visitor economy.

1.12 Colliers initial study has concluded that the operation of a hotel at DIP would be operationally profitable. Phase two of this study is investigating potential ownership and investment structure options and whether there is sufficient profitability in the hotel operation to finance its construction. A final report from Colliers is due back in early January 2026 and officers will provide a verbal update at the Shareholders Committee.

2. Alternative Options Considered

2.1 Not applicable

3. Legal Implications

3.1 No decisions are requested from this report, consequently there are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

5. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

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

6. Well-being and Health Implications

6.1 N/A

7. Other Implications

7.1 There are no other implications arising from this report.

8. Risk Assessment

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

9. Equalities Impact Assessment

9.1 No decisions are requested from this report. As such, an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

10. Appendices

N/A

11. Background Papers

N/A

12. Report Sign Off

12.1 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)