Dorset Council

SHAREHOLDER COMMITTEE FOR DORSET INNOVATION PARK LTD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2026

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

Apologies: None

Also present: Cllr Les Fry

Also present remotely: Cllr Ryan Holloway

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):
Jan Britton (Executive Director - Place), Nick Webster (Head of Growth and Regeneration), Colin Wood (Innovation Lead), Jen Cook (Lawyer - Contracts and Commercial), Caitlin Stone (Paralegal), Kevin Forshaw (Managing Director, Dorset Innovation Park Ltd), Alice McAlpine (Non-Executive Director, Dorset Innovation Park Ltd), Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic and Governance Officer)

Officers present remotely (for all or part of the meeting):
Sean Cremer (Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial)

27. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

28. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

29. **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements from members of the public or local organisations.

30. **Councillor Questions**

There were no questions from councillors.

31. **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan was noted.

32. **Dorset Council Officer update**

The shareholder committee received a report of the Head of Growth and Regeneration, which presented an update on the current position regarding the establishment of Dorset Innovation Park Ltd.

In presenting the report, the officer noted that progress continued towards the establishment of both a Services Contract – the services the company would be supplying the Council, and a Support Contract – the services that the Council would be supplying to the company to support the delivery of the company business plan. It was planned to bring the two documents to the next meeting of the shareholder committee. In addition, an update was provided regarding the commissioning of expert advice from hotel specialists, to understand the feasibility and viability of a hotel development to service the site and local visitor economy.

Councillors considered the issues covered by the report and during discussion, points were raised in the following areas:

- In response to a question, the Managing Director noted that as part of the company set up, regular meetings were held with Dorset Council officers, and data was being made available. Further processes needed to be completed for the company to take over a number of operations from June
- It was confirmed that although the company would manage property on site, property would be retained as council assets
- A discussion was held regarding travel surveys that had been undertaken in connection with access to the site. Further investigation would be required in terms of the long-term aspiration to improve provision of access to the site
- A separate discussion would take place with Wool Parish Council in respect of potential transport provision within the locality.

The report was NOTED.

33. Dorset Innovation Park Ltd Managing Director Update and Approval of Business Plan

The shareholder committee considered a report of the Managing Director, Dorset Innovation Park Ltd, which provided an update on the current situation at the Dorset Innovation Park Ltd and presented the 2026/27 annual business plan for approval.

The Managing Director provided a presentation at the meeting which included updates since the last meeting of the shareholder committee, an overview of activity contained within the business plan and an overview of required processes, and capital and revenue expenditure required in order to achieve the vision for and operation of the park.

A discussion was held and points were raised in the following areas:

- The Managing Director provided an overview of his previous experience which would be relevant to the plans for the Dorset Innovation Park

- Councillors welcomed opportunities to streamline processes in order to progress development of the park
- The agreement of a site master vision was key for effective working between the innovation park and the council
- A discussion was held regarding legal input and requirements. The Dorset Council Legal team had been working closely with officers and the company in terms of the set-up processes and would continue to be part of the transition meetings. In addition, the company was putting in place their external legal arrangements. There was confidence that the emerging model would prove effective
- There was a shared aspiration for the park to succeed and to achieve a turnaround of the financial position, and part of the transition was to ensure that all parties understood and agreed required timescales for objectives
- A point was raised that there needed to be more balanced information in reporting, to include information about any current issues with the site and tenants. There also needed to be recognition of risks, such as any financial risks, including in relation to future funding by the council
- In terms of the development of the master vision, there was a request that the income generation of the site be maximised
- The Managing Director provided an overview of support being provided to tenants, including support to start-up companies and an update could be provided at a future meeting
- It was noted that regular discussion was held with tenants in terms of addressing any issues
- The position with aged debt and debt recovery was raised and a request for an item to consider this at the next meeting of the shareholder committee
- A discussion was held regarding issues around capital required to develop the park
- Further consideration was required in terms of the local development order and issues around future development of the wider site.

It was proposed by R Biggs seconded by B Wilson

Decision

That the Shareholder Committee:

a) Approve the presented 2026/27 annual business plan for Dorset Innovation Park Ltd, and;
b) Note the progress made on company development and the transition of responsibilities to Dorset Innovation Park Ltd, and support the continued cooperation between the Council and the Company.

Reason for the decision

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.

34. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

35. **Exempt Business**

It was proposed by S Bartlett seconded by R Biggs

Decision

That the press and the public be excluded for the following item in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Reason for taking the item in private

Paragraph 1 – Information relating to any individual.

Dorset Innovation Park Ltd company representatives left the meeting at this point.

36. **Dorset Innovation Park Ltd Managing Director Update and Approval of Business Plan - Exempt Appendix**

There was one exempt appendix associated with agenda item 8 – Dorset Innovation Park Ltd Managing Director Update and Approval of Business Plan. However, the shareholder committee did not go into exempt business to discuss the appendix.

37. **Board Composition**

The shareholder committee considered an exempt report of the Head of Growth and Regeneration with regard to the board composition.

It was proposed by R Biggs seconded by S Clifford.

Decision

That the Shareholder Committee agree recommendations 2 and 3 as set out in the exempt report.

Reason for the decision

As set out in the exempt report.

Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.45 am

Chair

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