

Shareholder Committee for Dorset Innovation Park Ltd

13 April 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 council support for the establishment of Dorset Innovation Park Ltd and the operation of the Dorset Innovation Park.

Recommendation:

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

Reason for Recommendation:

Progress continues to be sustained both on the establishment and strengthening of the Dorset Innovation Park Company and on aligned projects that will benefit the operation of the Innovation Park, the Council, the Park tenants and wider economic prosperity across Dorset.

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 Council officers and DIP Ltd employees continue to operate in close cooperation and the transition process from the Council to the Company is managed by a Transition Group chaired by the Executive Director for Place.
- 1.3 The Council and DIP Ltd are in the final stages of agreeing the Services Contract between Dorset Council and the company. This contract sets out the services the Company will be supplying to the Council, and the support the Council will be providing the Company to assist the delivery of their business plan.
- 1.4 It has been agreed that the Council will provide support to the Company for Information Technology services for the Company Executive team and Board, and for Property and Legal services relating to the sale of land or lease of land or buildings.
- 1.5 It has also been agreed that the Company will provide a range of services to the Council, in summary, at the time of this report, these are:
 1. Management of BattleLab offices and workshop.
 2. Management of Stakeholder relations, including with the Ministry of Defence and academia.
 3. Site promotion and marketing.
 4. Site development and plot preparation, including drafting business cases to draw down finance made available for capital spending as allocated to Dorset Innovation Park under the Business Plan.
 5. Onboarding new tenants to secure lettings/sales.
 6. Generating and managing an events programme in support of the innovation ecosystem and job creation above.
 7. Managing test and evaluation services/infrastructure on site, including access to physical and digital capabilities.
- 1.6 These services must be delivered within the agreed Business Plan budget and any additional Capital funding awarded by the Council to fund specific projects, and the Company must ensure the park operates efficiently and

legally while meeting Dorset Council's key outcomes and performance indicators.

- 1.7 With the signature of this Contract all the relevant governance documentation for the Company, and its relationship with the Council, will be in place. Signature also facilitates the transfer of funds from the Council to the Company for the services outlined in the Contract. It is envisaged that the contract will be signed by the date of the Shareholder Committee meeting and a verbal update will be given at that time.
- 1.8 To assist in the development and sale of plots within the Innovation Park the Council commissioned work to undertake site investigations, plot access arrangements, and a site wide sustainable drainage strategy. This study focused on the main development plots within the central area of the Park. Detailed cost and design work is being commissioned to inform a report requesting approval of capital funds against this activity.
- 1.9 The Council have concluded the purchase of 6.1 hectares of land neighbouring the existing Innovation Park. Acquisition of this land will diversify the land offer available at the Innovation Park and open up new market interest.
- 1.10 The developable area, at approximately 2.5 hectares, is substantially larger than the development plots currently available within the Innovation Park. There is a shortage of sites locally, and regionally, of this size and the acquisition represents an opportunity to accommodate new, larger businesses to the site, alongside the organic growth of existing occupants.
- 1.11 It is estimated the site could generate around 200 new jobs, strengthening Dorset's economic resilience and improving local well-being.
- 1.12 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 as part of this newly acquired land that could service both the Innovation Park and the local visitor economy.
- 1.13 Colliers initial study has concluded that the operation of a hotel at DIP would be operationally profitable. Phase two of this study is investigating a range of potential ownership and investment structure options to determine the potential financial return and risk to the council. Further consideration is required of the detailed business case and the financial risks and implications of such an investment.

- 1.14 The council has commissioned masterplanning and feasibility work to investigate the potential for employment use of the land to the immediate west of the Innovation Park, which is currently owned and being decommissioned by the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency (NDA).
- 1.15 This work is investigating the suitability of the site to accommodate clean energy and employment uses recognising the significant decontamination and remediation process to be concluded, and the need to protect existing landscape protection designations in the vicinity.
- 1.16 The process for adoption of this masterplan is being investigated and will form the basis of further conversations with local and national stakeholders and potential to be a material planning consideration.
- 1.17 Officers from the council and the Company are working jointly with Plymouth City Council on a Local Innovation Partnerships Fund application. This application seeks to establish a genuine multi-domain (land, sea and air) Global Autonomy Cluster where autonomous systems move from R&D to real world deployment at pace and scale. The Innovation Park, BattleLab, and the Lulworth Ranges all feature as significant component parts of this regional bid, and are an example of how Dorset can play a more advanced role within national security capabilities.

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)