

PLACE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 22 JANUARY 2026

Present: Cllrs Nocturin Lacey-Clarke (Chair), Ray Bryan (Vice-Chair), Alex Brenton, Barrie Cooper, Alex Fuhrmann, Jack Jeanes, Craig Monks, Louie O'Leary and David Tooke

Also present: Cllr Derek Beer, Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Simon Clifford, Cllr Nick Ireland, Cllr Ben Wilson, Cllr Shane Bartlett, Cllr Ryan Hope, Cllr Andy Skeats and Cllr Gary Suttle

Also present remotely: Cllr Belinda Bawden, Cllr Laura Beddow, Cllr Barry Goringe, Cllr Jill Haynes, Cllr Sherry Jespersen, Cllr David Morgan, Cllr Andrew Parry, Cllr Val Potheary, Cllr Chris Tomes, Cllr Clare Sutton, Cllr Beryl Ezzard and Cllr Cathy Lugg

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

Jan Britton (Executive Director - Regeneration, Infrastructure & Growth), Jonathan Mair (Director - Assurance (Monitoring Officer)), Lisa Cotton (Interim Executive Director - Whole Council Modernisation and Customer Delivery), Sean Cremer (Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer)), Steven Ford (Assistant Chief Executive), Jack Wiltshire (Corporate Director for Highways and Engineering), Nina Coakley (Head of Transformation and Design) and Sian Hedger (Deputy s151 Officer)

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

Gemma Clinton (Corporate Director for Waste, Recycling and Resource Recovery) and Hannah Brown (Service Manager (Finance))

53. Minutes

The minutes for the meeting on 11 December were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

54. Declarations of interest

There were no Declarations of interest

55. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

56. Questions from Councillors

57. Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan Strategy Report

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director, Section 151 Officer for their paper and the additional information that had been pulled together in line with the key lines of enquiry from the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

The Corporate Director, Section 151 Officer introduced the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan Strategy Report and the wider context that has effected the assumptions that underpin the report. The Cabinet member for finance set out the frustrations with the settlement around fair funding and the issues of rurality and an aging population that create pressures in Dorset. There was clarification around how the funding for the local authority is gathered from Council Tax, Business Rates and Grants.

The Corporate Director, Section 151 Officer provided a summary presentation provided additional information and covered

1. Progress against 2025/26 savings & consideration of impact on 2026/27 proposals.
2. 3-year trends of budget prediction
3. Reserves position over time

There was reassurance provided around Our Future Council savings and the activities undertaken during 2025/26 and the savings applied to the 2026/27.

There was discussion on Fees and charges which covered sources of fee-based income such as car parking charges, recycling fees and composting, Moors Valley fees. The conversation also covered the feasibility of the expected revenue projections provided and the balance of fees and revenue generation on service provision.

There was discussion on the vacancy coefficient and posts deleted to realise savings in 2025/26 and 2026/27. Officer vacancies being removed from structures was discussed and additional context provided around a national shortage of qualified planners and the process taken when removing roles from the organisation.

SEND transport was investigated and the discussion covered the changes made over the last couple of years and the approach undertaken. There was clarification sought around the predictions made and how the figures were generated.

A discussion on Household recycling centres and the savings generated from the introduction of the booking system at the 4 sites. The impact of neighbouring counties introducing similar systems and the potential impact of that on the Household Recycling centre demand.

The impact of changes to streetlighting and the procurement of more energy efficient street lighting and the budget considerations in terms of the cost of energy were covered and assurance provided.

The changes to leisure, culture and the arts grant allocation and the impact of that on the provision of services was discussed.

The allocation of costs and pressures in specific areas of the budget and the revenues or savings being shown in another and the merits of changing those to align

Corporate and legal budget discussion

The out of hours service provision was discussed with focus on the pressures from contract changes that have increased the operating costs of out of hours services

There was discussion around the savings to be generated through early digital contact reducing the amount of debt written off.

There was a discussion around changes to the organisational comms approach and the increase in budget provision.

Recommendations

The Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee recommended the budget to cabinet with the following consideration;

That Cabinet address the fees and charges income target from car parking and make the necessary budget adjustments to reflect a realistic saving target given the commitment to freeze parking charges in order to balance the budget.

58. Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The committee reviewed the work programme.

59. Executive Arrangements Forward Plans

The Committee reviewed the Executive forward plans.

60. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

61. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 5.30 - 8.12 pm

Chairman

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