Dorset Council

SHAREHOLDER COMMITTEE FOR DORSET INNOVATION PARK LTD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 13 APRIL 2026

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

Apologies: None

Also present: Cllr Les Fry

Officers and others present (for all or part of the meeting):
Jan Britton (Executive Director - Regeneration, Infrastructure & Growth), Nick Webster (Head of Growth and Regeneration), Colin Wood (Innovation Lead), Grace Evans (Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), Kevin Forshaw (Managing Director, Dorset Innovation Park Ltd), Cecilia Bufton (Chair of the Board, Dorset Innovation Park Ltd) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic and Governance Officer)

Officers present remotely (for all or part of the meeting):
Sean Cremer (Director - Resources (Section 151 Officer))

WELCOME TO DORSET INNOVATION PARK LTD BOARD CHAIR

The Chair welcomed the recently appointed Chair of the Dorset Innovation Park Ltd Board, Cecilia Bufton, to her first meeting of the shareholder committee.

44. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 4 February and 23 March 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

45. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

46. Public Participation

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

47. Councillor Questions

There were no questions from councillors.

48. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan was noted.

49. **Dorset Council Update Report**

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

In presenting the report, the Head of Growth and Regeneration provided an update on the process to agree a Services Contract, which would put in place the final element of required governance between Dorset Council and the company, and noted that the council had commissioned master planning and feasibility work to investigate the potential for employment use on land to the west of the innovation park, which was currently owned and being decommissioned by the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency. In addition, it was reported that an application to the Local Innovation Partnership Fund, working with Plymouth City Council, had been successful and work was now underway on the full contents of the bid.

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

- Options for future uses of land to the west of the Innovation Park were being investigated, which would consider the longer-term decommissioning programme and environmental designations. In addition, land to the front of the site was being considered for future employment use
- A discussion was held in respect of Information Technology services that were to be provided to the company by Dorset Council and assurance provided on cyber security and data privacy issues
- In response to a question regarding the condition of the site and whether any site clearance was required on some plots, the Head of Service noted that the council continued to own the land and had undertaken some plot investigation work, with information to be passed to the company for any action as required. Work undertaken to date had not flagged any issues. The aim was to have plots ready for development
- Dorset Council and the company had a shared aspiration for a hotel development for the site
- In respect of the successful bid to the Local Innovation Partnership fund, further discussions would be held across the region. The Innovation Park was a significant component of the regional bid, with the aim that Dorset could play a more advanced role within national security capabilities. It was noted that the creation of the company had assisted in securing the bid for funding. A request was made for a briefing on the bid at an appropriate future meeting
- Work continued on securing further funding opportunities, including an opportunity to be involved in the establishment of a drone centre of excellence
- Clarification was sought on the figure for new job generation as provided in the report, which it was explained was related to the amount of employment land/buildings that could potentially be accommodated on site.

The report was NOTED.

50. **Dorset Innovation Park Ltd Managing Director's report**

The shareholder committee received a report of the Managing Director, Dorset Innovation Park, which provided an overview of the position in relation to work by the company to establish itself as an operational entity and on delivering the ambitions of the shareholder committee. The report also included an update on key parts of the Business Plan which had been approved at the last meeting.

In presenting the report, the Managing Director made particular reference to park improvements to be put in place, with finalised costings to be provided to a future meeting, discussions taking place with Bournemouth University in terms of establishing a satellite presence for the Secure Operation Centre of the Future at the park and a Defence roundtable event that had been held with a number of local companies, where there had been agreement on the need to focus on skills development.

Discussion was held in respect of the items covered by the report and points were raised in the following areas:

- A discussion took place regarding the ambition to include a hotel development as part of the site. There had been positive conversations with planning officers and it was recognised that this needed to be included in the Local Plan and to extend the local development order already in place for the rest of the Innovation Park
- Transport issues needed to be considered in terms of how people accessed the innovation park, which would include public transport options. The Executive Director, Place noted that Cabinet had commissioned work around public transport generally and that a further report would be considered at Cabinet later in the year
- In response to a question, discussions had been held with Dorset Police, who had a presence near to the Innovation Park, regarding the potential hotel development. Although the police were not part of plans currently, an open dialogue would be maintained on this matter
- Dorset Police would be involved in other areas including the undertaking of a security review to establish required security policies and procedures
- A discussion was held on the finances of the Innovation Park, both on a historic position and moving forward and it was agreed that a quarterly finance report would be brought to the shareholder committee with effect from the financial year beginning 1 April 2026. A request was made that elements of the aged-debt information provided in the exempt report, be included in the quarterly finance report moving forward

Discussion on the reserved matters would be held during the exempt business part of the meeting.

The report was NOTED.

51. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

52. **Exempt Business**

It was proposed by S Bartlett seconded by R Biggs

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 12A 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 livestream ended at this point.

53. **Dorset Innovation Park Ltd Managing Director's report - Exempt Appendix**

The shareholder committee considered issues arising in the reserved matters section of the report of the Managing Director, Dorset Innovation Park, with responses provided to questions and comments. Updates as appropriate, would be provided at future meetings.

54. **Dorset Council Aged Debt Report**

The shareholder committee received and considered a report of the Head of Growth and Regeneration, which provided an update on the current position with aged-debt and debt recovery associated with the park.

Responses were provided to questions raised and it was noted that appropriate information would be provided as part of a quarterly finance report moving forward.

The report was NOTED.

Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 3.16 pm

Chair

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