

PLACE AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 9 JULY 2026

Present: Cllrs Ryan Hope (Chair), Andrew Starr (Vice-Chair), Piers Brown, Richard Crabb, Simon Gibson, David Northam, Roland Tarr and David Taylor

Present remotely: Cllrs Sherry Jespersen

Also present: Cllr Jon Andrews, Cllr Shane Bartlett and Cllr Belinda Bawden

Also present remotely: Cllr Alex Brenton and Cllr Jane Somper

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

Jan Britton (Executive Director - Economy and Environment), Antony Nash (Senior Democratic & Governance Services Officer), Jon Bird (Service Manager for Economic Development and Skills), Owen Clark (Strategic and Policy Team Manager) and Michael Westwood (Service Manager for Parking Services)

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

Jonathan Mair (Director - Assurance (Monitoring Officer)), Sue McGowan (Head of Dorset Travel) and David Rosselli (Transport & Parking Strategy Lead)

10. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting 4 June 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

11. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

12. Public Participation

Question from Nick Hurrell, Chair of WATAG

What is the timetable for Public Engagement with these two items?

WATAG represent passenger transport interests within the Bridport, Beaminster, Lyme Regis and surrounding areas, where both Public and Community Transport is particularly sparse. We would be delighted to meet with Council Representatives at the appropriate time to discuss passenger needs in this area. We are currently running a public survey to assess demand for an hourly service between Bridport and Dorchester (currently approximately every 2 hours) and would be happy to share the results with you at the appropriate time. Of course, an increase in bus services would likely reduce private car traffic and likely influence Dorset Council's future car parking strategy.

Response

Thank you for your question and for the valuable contribution of West Dorset TAG in representing transport users across West Dorset.

Taking the Bus and Community Transport report first, no decisions have yet been taken on any specific proposals to change how travel and transport might be reconfigured for the future. We recognise the importance of ongoing dialogue with stakeholder groups. Following Overview Committee's consideration of this report, officers would be pleased to meet with West Dorset TAG and other Transport Action Group representatives to discuss the emerging work, hear your views on local priorities and review the findings of your survey regarding the Bridport–Dorchester corridor. During the Full Business Case stage, we will engage informally with a range of internal and external stakeholders, including West Dorset TAG.

Formal public consultation is a different process. Plans for future further engagement and formal consultation are being developed as part of the Full Business Case and will be set out in more detail when Cabinet considers that report later this year. Any engagement on specific proposals would take place after Cabinet has considered the Full Business Case.

Regarding the Parking Review, after the Overview Committee meeting, during July and August we will hold online listening meetings, as a place where local voices will be heard. This will not be a formal consultation exercise, because we will have to wait until after the Oct 2026 Cabinet meeting before we have specific proposals to consult the public about. After the Oct Cabinet there will be a formal consultation exercise, as is our statutory requirement any time the Council proposes to amend any parking charges or arrangements.

Thank you for your continued interest and support in helping improve travel and transport services across Dorset

13. Questions from Councillors

No questions from councillors.

14. Public Bus and Community Transport Transformation Outline Business Case

The Committee considered the outline business case for a more integrated transport system across Dorset. Discussion focused on the long-term sustainability of the current transport model and the challenges created by rising demand, fragmented services and increasing financial pressures. Members recognised the importance of developing a transport system that was easier to access, more coordinated and better able to meet the needs of residents across Dorset.

A significant theme throughout the discussion was the impact of poor transport connectivity in rural areas. Members highlighted the difficulties many residents faced when accessing healthcare, education, employment, shopping and social activities. There was discussion about the decline in community transport services,

the challenges of recruiting volunteer drivers and the need to reduce social isolation, especially for older residents.

The Committee discussed the benefits of moving towards a more integrated approach that brought together public transport, community transport, special educational needs transport, adult social care transport and other transport services within a single system. Members generally supported the ambition of designing services around journeys and user needs rather than around separate service areas or budgets.

Funding was a recurring topic throughout the debate. Members recognised that Dorset continued to receive comparatively low levels of public transport funding and considered how a stronger, more ambitious strategy could help secure additional government investment. At the same time, discussion acknowledged the importance of balancing ambition with deliverability and ensuring that future proposals remained realistic and affordable.

Considerable discussion focused on the role of community transport, volunteer schemes and community-led solutions. The Committee recognised the valuable contribution these services made in rural communities and emphasised the need to support and strengthen local transport initiatives as part of any future integrated system.

Members also discussed the importance of transport hubs and connectivity. There was broad agreement that future transport planning should better connect different forms of travel, including railway stations, coach services, cycling routes and local bus networks. The Committee considered that successful integration depended on making journeys as seamless as possible between different modes of transport.

Discussion highlighted the potential benefits of improved transport for town centres, economic growth, tourism, employment and social inclusion. Members considered that improved public transport could help support local economies, increase access to services and reduce reliance on more expensive and fragmented transport arrangements.

The Committee also recognised the financial pressures associated with special educational needs and disability transport and considered the opportunity for a more integrated transport system to make better use of shared journeys and available vehicle capacity. The support for the paper was

Recommendations

The Place and Resources overview Committee supported recommendations (a) and (b) within the report and requested that the Full Business Case should include both options.

The recommendations were proposed by Cllr David Taylor, seconded by Cllr Simon Gibson and unanimously agreed.

15. **Parking Review and Strategy**

The Committee considered Dorset Council's comprehensive, data-led review of parking across Dorset. Discussion focused on how improved data collection and technology could support better management of parking assets, improve the customer experience and strengthen the contribution parking made towards wider transport, economic and environmental objectives. Members welcomed the detailed analysis of parking usage and recognised the value of using evidence gathered from payment systems to better understand demand patterns, parking behaviour and car park performance across Dorset. The Committee supported the principle of using data to inform future decisions rather than relying solely on anecdotal evidence.

The proposed upgrade of parking machines received broad support. Discussion focused on the benefits of improved technology, including greater flexibility for users, improved data collection, digital payment options and the potential to simplify parking arrangements for residents and visitors. The Committee also considered how future systems could create opportunities for more innovative charging models and improved customer convenience.

A significant theme within the discussion was the role of parking in supporting town centres and local economies. Members considered how parking could be used to encourage longer visits, increase spending within local businesses and strengthen the vitality of Dorset's market towns and coastal communities. The importance of ensuring that parking remained accessible and affordable for local residents was emphasised throughout.

The Committee discussed ways to improve the experience of using Dorset's car parks. Topics included clearer signage, better wayfinding, directing visitors towards appropriate parking locations, improving the condition of car parks and making long-stay options easier to identify. Members considered these improvements particularly important in supporting tourism and reducing congestion in town centres.

A lengthy discussion took place regarding proposals to introduce parking incentives linked to vehicle emissions. Concerns were raised that such an approach could disproportionately affect residents on lower incomes who may not have the means to purchase lower-emission vehicles. Members discussed alternative ways of supporting climate objectives, including encouraging local travel, supporting public transport and reducing unnecessary vehicle journeys.

The Committee also explored opportunities to use technology to support more flexible parking arrangements, including aspirations towards pay-on-exit style systems and more integrated digital services. Members viewed these developments as potentially beneficial to residents, visitors and local businesses.

Further discussion considered resident parking permits, affordability, payment options, reinforcement of parking enforcement, alternative uses for car parks during quieter periods and opportunities for wider income generation from parking assets.

Recommendations

There was a proposal by Cllr Brown, seconded by Cllr Gibson that the emission-based charging is excluded from the parking strategy and planned actions at the current time and was carried with 7 votes for and 1 against.

The following recommendations from the Place and Resources Overview Committee were summarised by the Chair, proposed by Cllr Taylor and seconded by Cllr Crabb and unanimously agreed.

1. The proposal for emissions-based parking charges or discounts be removed from the actions and future strategic direction of the Parking Review and that alternative approaches be considered at this time.
2. The upgrade of parking technology be supported to provide the intelligence and functionality needed to develop resident-focused parking discounts and schemes.
3. Resident parking permits should become more accessible, including exploring opportunities to make permits easier and more affordable to pay for through instalment arrangements and future system improvements.
4. The Council should continue to explore pay-on-exit style parking arrangements and other technology solutions that make parking more flexible and convenient for customers.
5. Improved signage and digital information should be introduced to make it easier to identify available parking, long-stay car parks and alternative parking locations, helping to reduce congestion and improve the visitor experience.
6. Opportunities should be explored to make better use of car parks during quieter periods, including community uses and alternative income-generating activities.
7. Investment should continue in improving the condition, appearance and maintenance of Dorset's car parks so that they provided a positive first impression for residents and visitors.

16. Endorsement of Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan

The Committee considered the Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan and welcomed the collaborative approach that had been taken to develop it. Members noted that the plan had been produced through engagement with a wide range of partners and stakeholders from across Dorset's tourism, business and community sectors. The discussion recognised the importance of tourism to Dorset's economy and the role it played in supporting employment, businesses and local communities. Members welcomed the strategic focus on increasing visitor spend, extending the tourism season and improving the overall visitor experience across Dorset.

A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the importance of ensuring that tourism benefits were spread across the whole county. Members highlighted the need to better promote inland Dorset, including its market towns, countryside, heritage assets, cultural attractions, walking routes, wildlife sites and natural landscapes. It was felt that Dorset's tourism offer extended far beyond its coastline and that future promotion should better reflect the diversity of experiences available throughout the county.

Members discussed the challenges facing market towns and the importance of linking tourism activity with broader work to support town centres and local economic development. The Committee recognised the contribution market towns made to the visitor economy and the need to support them as attractive destinations. Members recognised growing public interest in sustainable tourism, ecotourism and environmentally responsible travel. There was support for ensuring that sustainability remained a strong feature within future action plans and that Dorset's environmental strengths were promoted more actively.

The Committee considered opportunities to grow tourism outside the traditional summer season and highlighted the role that events, culture, heritage, nature-based activities and improved all-weather attractions could play in increasing year-round visitor activity and supporting local businesses beyond peak tourism periods. Discussion identified the importance of supporting small businesses and micro-businesses, particularly in rural areas, and recognised the challenges these businesses often faced in accessing resources, support and marketing opportunities.

The Committee agreed that whilst the Destination Management Plan provided a strong strategic framework, much of the future success of the initiative would depend on the development and delivery of a detailed action plan

Recommendation

The Place and Resources Overview Committee recommend that Cabinet adopts the Dorset local Visitor Economy Partnership Destination Management Plan (DLVEPDM), and consider the following additional recommendations;

That:

- (a) additional funding be added to the 2027/2028 budget to meet the aspirations within the plan
- (b) the local offerings be recognised in the wording of the DLVEPDM action plan.

17. Place and Resources Overview Committee Work Programme

The Place and Resources Overview Committee work programme was reviewed and an additional item around the Market Town strategy was suggested to be scoped.

18. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

19. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.01 am - 1.07 pm

Chairman

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