

Shareholder Committee for Dorset Innovation Park Ltd

4 November 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

Report Author: Nick Webster, Head of Growth and Regeneration

Email: nicholas.webster@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Brief Summary:

This report presents an update on the current position regarding the council's support for 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:

Following the full hand over of Innovation Park responsibilities to Dorset Innovation Park Ltd (the Company) earlier this year, progress continues to be made on the working relationship between the Council and the Company. There continues to be considerable alignment of work and resources to support the work of the Company on the Park and in supporting the defence, security and manufacturing sectors across Dorset.

1. Report

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the current position in relation to the Dorset Council support provided to Dorset Innovation Park Ltd (DIP Ltd) and an update on wider progress on strategic actions in relation to economic growth that align with the Innovation Park.
- 1.2 Hand over of full responsibility for Park operations occurred on 20th July and although the Company are now fully responsible for the management and operation of the Park there remains a close working relationship with the Council on all operational and strategic matters.
- 1.3 It is worth reflecting that the past twelve months have seen a transition between Council and Company operations and that the Company's first officer resource (the Managing Director) commenced employment only a year ago and the important commercial property resource was secured only six months ago.
- 1.4 The Council continue to provide support as laid out in the Services Contract and, through the Economic Growth service, provide a coordination of activity both at strategic and operational level.

Finance

- 1.5 The Company and Council have prepared a separate paper updating the financial position of the Park and the Company.
- 1.6 Outside of that report, it is worth noting that the Company have made considerable progress in regularising lease agreements, addressing the service charge position, and securing due income.

Commercial Interest

- 1.7 The Company has negotiated a sale of land within the Park to an existing tenant in the defence sector. The Cabinet Member for Property & Assets and Economic Growth has signed an executive decision selling 3.8 acres of land on a long leasehold basis. This sale is now progressing to exchange of contracts with completion conditioned on securing of a planning permission.
- 1.8 The Company has also agreed heads of terms on another potential land purchase, this time to a new prospective tenant who also operate in the defence sector. Progression beyond heads of terms is conditional on securing of commercial contracts.

- 1.9 Officers and the Company continue to engage with Yeovil College over their ambition to invest in the site following their successful Defence Technical Excellence College award.

Defence sector and investment

- 1.10 Relationships continue to be built between the Council, the Company and the local defence industrial base. Dorset has been included in the successful Local Innovation Partnership Fund (LIPF) programme led by Plymouth university.
- 1.11 Focused on developing a national cluster for Defence Autonomy in the South West, the £20m programme is with UK Research and Investment for final sign off and, will include additional research availability for Dorset businesses, specialist personnel based in DIP, and access to a capital fund.
- 1.12 Following conversations with industry partners Dorset will be requesting support from the LIPF programme for a Multi Domain Command and Control facility that will enable autonomous system testing across air, sea and land. Work has already been commissioned to create an autonomous systems air corridor between Portland, Lulworth and DIP.
- 1.13 Of the back of these same conversations Officers and the Company are preparing a Dorset Defence Investment Prospectus. To be used as an investment tool targeting government investment and private sector businesses, the Prospectus coordinates all current investment in the sector and identifies a series of future investments that would strengthen our competitive advantage.
- 1.14 Officers are coordinating with local businesses on the launch of this prospectus and are hopeful that an appropriate Council delegation will be present at launch.

Defence BattleLab

- 1.15 The Company have received a request from the MOD investigating the potential to increase their personnel presence within the building. It is considered that an increased MOD presence and use of the Defence BattleLab is a positive step forward from a strategic and visibility perspective. There will be lease and commercial negotiations with the MOD if this interest coalesces which would be commercially confidential.

Council Plan Target Measures and Job Creation

- 1.16 Shareholders will be aware of a Council Plan target measure relating to the Innovation Park - "A new delivery company for the Dorset Innovation Park will be launched in 2025 creating 300 jobs by 2029". Officers undertook a benchmarking exercise in 2025 and establish that there were circa 820 full time equivalent (fte) positions in businesses on the Innovation Park.
- 1.17 The Company undertook a monitoring exercise in summer 2026 and established that there were circa 945 fte positions in businesses on the Innovation Park, an increase of 125 jobs. Officers and the Company are establishing where the increase has happened and whether the roles are in new businesses coming to site or in existing companies expanding their workforce.
- 1.18 The current trajectory in terms of jobs numbers would result in the 300 jobs target being met by the target date of 2029. Shareholders will be aware that job numbers could be subject to a reduction should businesses move off site.

Winfrith Nuclear Site and Nuclear Restoration Services planning application

- 1.19 An update was given at the last Shareholders Committee on the Nuclear Restoration Services planning application, to which the Economic Growth service submitted a representation. This application is still in the determination period.
- 1.20 Further work is being undertaken to understand the potential opportunity for clean energy production at the Winfrith Nuclear Licensed Site and conversations are ongoing with NRS and the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency, in addition to discussions with private sector partners.

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. Where projects referenced in the report require a formal decision to proceed or to agree

any council involvement, advice from legal colleagues will be sought at an early stage to inform Green Papers or decision reports.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no specific financial implications or decisions arising from this report. Where projects referenced in the report require a formal decision to proceed or to agree any council involvement, advice from financial colleagues will be sought at an early stage to inform Green Papers or decision reports.

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. Where projects referenced in the report require a formal decision to proceed or to agree any council involvement, an equalities impact assessment will be undertaken at an early stage to inform Green Papers or decision reports.

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)