

Dorchester Town Council

Management Committee

16th March 2026

Present: Councillors A. Canning, W. Gibbons, J. Hewitt, F. Kent-Ledger, D. Leaper (Chair), R. Potter and M. Rennie.

Apologies: Councillors P. Farmer, L. Fry, F. Hogwood, S. Jones and R. Major.

In attendance:

Councillors R. Biggs, S. Biles and K. Reid.

Officers: Tony Hurley (Assistant Town Clerk – Corporate) and Carl Dallison (Assistant Town Clerk – Outdoor Services).

41. **Declaration of Interests**

Councillors R. Potter declared an interest in respect of Minute No. 46 (d) and left the meeting for that item.

42. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 12th January 2026, adopted by Council on 26th January 2026, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

43. **Proposal for Town Centre Public Art.**

The committee received a report on a proposal from a member of the public for a statue to be located on South Street to celebrate 'Susie the Cat' and the town's Roman heritage. Members expressed their support for this project and thanks Mr James Honeychuck for all his hard work on this initiative.

Resolved:

That the Committee agrees to the Council taking ownership of the proposed cat statue within two years of installation by the donor at the proposed location in South Street.

44. **Outdoor Services – Update Report – Late Winter**

The committee received the update report from the Assistant Town Clerk (Outdoor Services). The planting of a row of Plane trees in Borough Gardens had been very well received by the public and work on the new Japanese Maple tree area was making good progress. At The Great Field, the drinking fountain was now working. Cllr Gibbons asked for a verbal update on remedial works on Holmead Walk prior to the

completion of the lease to the town council from the Duchy of Cornwall. The Assistant Town Clerk reported that he had met with an officer from the Duchy to review progress and that a follow-up meeting would be arranged soon to ensure completion of works to the satisfaction of the town council and thereby enable adoption of the site.

Members expressed their thanks to Borough Gardens staff for the on-going work on the shield bed.

Resolved:

That the Outdoor Services update report be noted.

45. Proposal for circus at The Great Field

The committee received the report from the Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate) regarding a request from Show Productions Ltd to hire space at The Great Field in August for its touring circus. Members were very supportive of this proposal and received reassurance from the Assistant Town Clerk (Outdoor Services) that the grass on the site should recover.

Resolved:

That the committee agrees to permitting the hiring of an area of The Great Field by Show Productions Ltd for its Circus Cortex in August 2026.

46. Grant Applications

The Committee considered various requests for financial assistance and it was

Resolved:

- (a) That no grant be awarded to the Daytime Band towards the cost of insurance and music stands
- (b) That no grant be awarded to St Marys Catholic First School towards the cost of a community greenhouse project.
- (c) That no grant be awarded the Talk About Trust towards the cost of a summer music programme at the Pavilion in the Park (PiP).
- (d) That a grant of £500 be awarded to the William Barnes Society for a grant of £500 towards the cost of specialist cleaning of the William Barnes statue.
- (e) That no grant be awarded to Dorchester Cricket Club towards the cost of a patio extension.

47. Minutes of Dorchester Arts board meeting on 19th February 2026

The minutes of the Dorchester Arts board meeting were considered by members and concerns were raised about aspects of the financial position of the organisation. Cllr Biggs suggested that Dorchester Arts could seek advice from the Dorset Business Mentors. It was suggested that the Municipal Buildings Monitoring Group discuss Dorchester Arts' business plan. Further information was requested from Dorchester Arts regarding its approach to safeguarding following the departure of the lead officer for this issue.

Resolved:

That the minutes be noted.

48. **Minutes of the Twinning & Cultural Activities Panel on 12th January 2026**

The minutes of the Panel meeting were considered by members.

Resolved:

That the minutes be noted.

49. **Cemetery Matters.**

(a) Exclusive Right of Burial and Interments and Burial of Ashes

The report which detailed the Grants of Exclusive Right of Burial for grave spaces and the number of interments and burials of ashes since the last meeting of the Committee had been circulated with the agenda.

Resolved:

That the report on the Grants of Exclusive Right of Burial and Interments and Burial of Ashes since the last meeting of the Committee be noted.

(b) Headstones and Inscriptions

The Committee received and noted applications for the design of headstones and inscriptions.

Resolved:

That the actions of the Town Clerk in approving designs numbered 5522 to 5526 be confirmed and the Register of Memorials be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

50. **Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960**

Resolved:

That in view of the fact that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the following matters the public and representatives of the press be excluded from this meeting during their discussion.

51. **Fordington Cemetery Wall - Land purchase**

The Assistant Town Clerk (Outdoor Services) presented a report on the current situation with regard to discussions with the Mill Street Housing Society relating to the acquisition of

land to enable the rebuilding of the collapsed section of cemetery wall at Fordington Cemetery.

The options for negotiations were outlined as were the aspirations of the Society with regards to off-site improvements to the public realm. Members also discussed the potential for acquiring additional land for future use.

The Assistant Town Clerk highlighted the on-going cost of temporary, safety scaffolding and the benefits of a swift resolution to the matter.

Resolved:

The Management Committee agrees to further negotiate on the final sum, this would form a recommendation to Policy Committee, on the basis of agreeing that the Chair and Vice Chair have the authority to approve the sum negotiated by the council's officers but not to exceed £31,000.

52. People Need Nature – Transfer for Grant to Volunteer Centre Dorchester

The committee received a report from the Assistant Town Clerk (Outdoor Services) regarding a request from People Need Nature (PNN) for the Town Council's grant for the management of wildflower area at Maumbury Rings and The Great Field in 2026-27 to be paid instead to the Volunteer Centre Dorset (VCD). This request had been made as PNN had dissolved and transferred its assets to VCD.

Members discussed the proposal and the fact that 2026-27 was the last year of the grant with the possibility of any future funding to be reviewed in March 2027. At the request of members, the Assistant Town Clerk (Outdoor Services) outlined options for the management of the wildflower areas. Members expressed concerns about the proposed governance arrangements for the grant.

Resolved:

That the Committee does not agree to the transfer of funding from People Need Nature to the Volunteer Centre Dorset for the year 2026-2027.

Chair.....