

Dorchester Town Council

Management Committee

13th July 2026

Present: Councillors A. Canning, P. Farmer, L. Fry, J. Hewitt, S. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger, D. Leaper (Chair), R. Potter and M. Rennie.

Apologies: Councillors W. Gibbons, R. Major and D. Taylor.

In attendance:

Councillors R. Biggs, S. Biles and F. Hogwood.

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

1. Declaration of Interests

None.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 5th May 2026, adopted by Council on 19th May 2026, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. Outdoor Services – Update Report – Summer 2026

The Assistant Town Clerk (Outdoor Services) presented the update report on the work of the Outdoor Services team. The dry weather continued to be challenging for the service. The refurbishment of the Poundbury Cemetery buildings was nearing completion and the repair/replacement of the Riverside Reserve boardwalk would be undertaken in August. Cllr Jones enquired whether surveyors had assessed the other stretches of the cemetery wall at Fordington Cemetery and the Assistant Town Clerk confirmed that the wall had been inspected and a long-term monitoring regime would be beneficial. Cllr Biles raised the issue of disposable barbecues and the risk of fire and suggested that signs be put up in the Council's open spaces to warn the public.

Resolved:

That the Outdoor Services update report be noted.

4. Review Of Council Grant Scheme

Cllr Rennie suggested that it might be useful to have some harmonisation between the council grant scheme and the Car Boot Grant Scheme, and she also suggested that the council should check that grant recipients have all the necessary policies and procedures in

place (e.g. safeguarding). It was agreed that Full Council be requested to nominate up to four members to form the review working group.

Resolved:

That the Committee:

- a) establishes a working group of up to four members to review the community grant scheme and make recommendations back to a future meeting of Management Committee;
- b) agrees the scope of the review as proposed in paragraph 7 of this report.
- c) requests Full Council to nominate up to four members to join the working group.

5. Response To Dorset Council's Consultation on Dog-Related Public Space Protection Order

The Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate) outlined the consultation and the concerns raised by members following their own discussions with the community. Members considered that the restrictions in the current Order were appropriate and sufficient and no further changes should be requested.

Resolved:

That the Committee responds to Dorset Council's consultation on the Dog-related Public Space Protection Order for 2027 onwards by expressing its support for retaining the current restrictions on open spaces and outdoor facilities in Dorchester.

6. Use Of Body-Worn Cameras At Borough Gardens

The Assistant Town Clerk (Outdoor Services) outlined the issues that had prompted this report and explained the current provisions for Garden staff security. Members were not in favour of introducing body cameras due to the onerous legal obligations for the operators. Cllr Rennie suggested that there could be a doubling of staff and key times to avoid lone working, particularly for Park Keepers in the evenings. The Assistant Town Clerk explained that the problem of staff experiencing anti-social behaviour was likely to be limited to the summer months. Cllr Biles suggested that signage should be put up in the Gardens explaining that the Council expected its staff to be treated with respect. The provision of conflict resolution training for staff was welcomed.

Resolved:

That the Committee:

- a) accepts the steps already taken along with additional conflict management training are sufficient and no body-worn video cameras will be introduced;
- b) requests the introduction of new signage in Borough Gardens urging the public to respect council staff;
- c) requests that a report be brought back to the Committee in September to review progress in addressing the areas of concern.

7. **The Great Field Play Area Water Feature - Future Options**

The Assistant Town Clerk (Outdoor Services) outlined the problems that prompted the request for the removal of the water feature. Members were supportive of the proposed changes and urged consultation with the Access Group with regard to the provision of accessible play equipment.

Resolved:

That the Council pursues **Option 3** by removing the existing and instructing officers to draw up new plans for replacement with new inclusive play equipment for approval by Management Committee. This element to be funded using the Play Equipment Reserve. This would remove the risk associated with the current water feature and also meet a social need that has previously been identified.

8. **Graffiti Issues in Dorchester**

Cllr Kent-Ledger explained that she had initiated consideration of this problem at the last meeting of the Committee and welcomed the proposal to put information on the website to help the public report graffiti. Cllr Biles stated that members and staff may benefit from training on how to interpret graffiti and identify inappropriate content. Cllr Biggs mentioned that litter bins were often a target for graffiti and that Dorset Council was considering a capital bid for the wholesale replacement of public bins. Cllr Rennie mentioned the project in Weymouth for artists to decorate utility cabinets. Cllr Fry was concerned that graffiti was not being removed by agencies and public bodies as it did not meet their criteria but that local residents had a pride in their town and should not tolerate any graffiti.

Resolved:

That the Committee:

- a) helps to combat unwanted (particularly offensive or malicious) graffiti, by setting out information on reporting methods on the council website and via social media and encourages both its staff and the public to report cases of graffiti;
- b) instructs officers to report to the September meeting with a further report on options for improving the state of the public realm.

9. **Mobile Phone Connectivity in Borough Gardens**

The Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate) outlined the reasoning for withdrawing council support for the provision of public WiFi in Borough Gardens and the potential for the Council to work with Dorset Council to seek improvements to mobile connectivity.

Resolved:

That the Council no longer pursues the provision of free public WiFi in Borough Gardens and that the Town Council works with Dorset Council to bring forward options for reliable mobile connectivity.

10. **Grant Applications**

The Committee considered various requests for financial assistance and it was

Resolved:

- (a) That no grant be awarded to the Winterborne Valley First School PTA towards the cost of play equipment.
- (b) That no grant be awarded to Women of Dorset towards the cost of developing and performing *Unearthed*.
- (c) That a grant of £450 be awarded to the ASCape towards the cost of 3 gymnastic sessions for children with special educational needs.
- (d) That no grant be awarded to the Thomas Hardy Society towards the cost of the annual conference.

11. **Minutes of Property Site Visit**

Cllr Rennie noted that a vision for the market had been developed and could be presented to Full Council at some point. The Town Clerk emphasised the need for a clear long-term strategy.

Resolved:

That the minutes be noted.

12. **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 5538 to 5544 be confirmed and the Register of Memorials be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Chair.....