



Dorchester Town Council

Council Offices, 19 North Square, Dorchester, Dorset. DT1 1JF
Telephone: (01305) 266861

For information about this agenda contact Steve Newman
s.newman@dorchester-tc.gov.uk

17 September 2025

Agenda for the meeting of the **Policy Committee**, which will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER** at **THE MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, HIGH EAST STREET, DORCHESTER** on **MONDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2025** at **7.00pm**.

Steve Newman
Town Clerk

Public Attendance and Speaking at the Meeting

The Chairman has discretion to allow members of the public to speak at the meeting. If you wish to speak please **contact the Clerk by 9.00am on the morning of the meeting**. We ask speakers to confine their comments to the matter in hand and to be as brief as possible.

Member Code of Conduct: Declaration of Interests

Members are reminded that it is their responsibility to disclose interests where appropriate. A Member who declares any interest must leave the room. A Member who declares a registerable interest as a Council nominee to a partner organisation may first address the meeting as a member of the public.

Membership of the Committee

Councillors R. Biggs, S. Biles (Chair), J. Germodo, G. Jones, V. Lloyd-Jones (Vice-Chair), K. Reid, R. Ricardo, D. Taylor and The Mayor ex-officio.

Agenda

1. Apologies

2. Declaration of Interests

3. Minutes

To read, confirm and sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 July 2025 (adopted by Council on 28 July 2025). A copy of the Minutes can be found at www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk/The-Council/Committees/Policy-Committee

4. Financial Update – Page 3

To consider a report by the Responsible Finance Officer (enclosed).

5. Town Council Banking Arrangements – Page 5

To consider a report by the Town Clerk (enclosed).

6. Draft Corporate Plan – Climate Action – Page 7

To consider a report by the Town Clerk (enclosed).

7. Dorchester Business Awards – Page 9

To consider whether to again sponsor the Dorchester Business Awards (background information and email correspondence in respect of this year is enclosed – the awards have been rebranded as the Dorchester Business Awards and the sponsorship cost for 2025-26 is £345). The Council last year sponsored the Outstanding Customer Service category and the Mayor presented the awards.

8. A Fresh Start? Future Directions for Dorset’s Towns and Larger Parishes – Page 13

To consider a report by the Town Clerk (enclosed).

9. Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

To resolve “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”.

10. Future Direction – Page 16

To consider a report by the Town Clerk (enclosed).

11. Staffing Matter – Page 18

To consider a report by the Assistant Town Clerk (enclosed).

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL
POLICY COMMITTEE – 22 SEPTEMBER 2025
FINANCIAL UPDATE AT 31 AUGUST 2025

1. Financial Position

- Month 5 spend (Appendix 1) £22k Under:
 - £6k over on Sponsorship due to grant to Keep 106 (agreed by Policy Committee).
 - £6k over on Vehicle Maintenance due to tractor repairs and servicing.
 - £36k under on staff due to vacancies and lower than budgeted pay award.
 - All other under and overspends net £5k under
- Pay award of 3.2% increase (£10k lower than budgeted) implemented in August and back dated to April.

- **Cash Position**

Account	Balance as at 31/08/25	Balance as at 30/06/25	Movement	Interest
Lloyds	65,582	31,666	33,916	0%
NS&i	6,859	6,859	0	1.00%
CCLA				
Deposit	1,475,000	1,725,000	-250,000	4.34%
	1,547,441	1,763,525	-216,084	

- Second part of precept, £911,469.50, due by end of September.
- As reported in July, request to [Cash Access UK](#) to carry out review of community cash access needs submitted. Cash Access UK reported back to say Dorchester has sufficient banking provision based on their criteria.
- Debtors over 30 days at 31/08/25 = £1,620, 2 Debtors (30/06, £1,250, 1 Debtor).
- Payments list 1 July to 31 August 2025 on website. Supporting vouchers available from RFO
 - **RECOMMENDED** that the payments list, totalling £350,192.85 is approved.

Nigel Hayes

Responsible Financial Officer

MANAGEMENT REPORT AT 31 AUGUST 2025

By Spend Type	Budget £000	Profile £000	Actual £000	-Under/Over £000
Staff	1,125	499	463	-36
Capital Financing/Debt	15	7	7	0
Other Payments	556	295	311	16
To Specific Reserves	344	344	344	0
Income	-216	-81	-83	-2
Net Budget	1,823	1,064	1,042	-22

By Service	Budget £000	Profile £000	Actual £000	-Under/Over £000
Allotments	-10	0	1	1
Parks & Open Spaces	179	106	105	-1
Cemeteries	-24	1	7	6
Corp. & Dem. Manage.	42	20	21	1
Cultural & Twinning	71	39	46	6
Municipal Buildings	355	332	332	0
Other Services	-12	23	18	-5
Office Team	582	261	247	-14
Outdoor Services	640	281	266	-15
Net Budget	1,823	1,064	1,042	-22

Earmarked Reserves	Balance 1 Apr 25 £	Contribution £	Reserve transfers	Income £	Expenditure £	Balance 30/06/25 £
Municipal Buildings	56,994.27	20,000.00			51,565.99	25,428.28
Front of House	31,642.81	239,000.00	-2,000.00		266,956.88	1,685.93
Vehicles & Equipment Replacement	113,473.22	22,000.00		400.00	45,171.22	90,702.00
Parks Premises	10,053.93	19,000.00			1,469.55	27,584.38
Cemeteries	36,931.25	10,000.00			19,459.91	27,471.34
Play Equipment Replacement	29,714.65	1,000.00			13,503.00	17,211.65
Great Field Reserve	11,000.00	2,500.00				13,500.00
Climate Emergency Reserve	30,948.70		57,067.60		14,104.49	73,911.81
Public Realm	440,310.47	5,000.00				445,310.47
Christmas Lights	4,420.45					4,420.45
Arts & Cultural Reserve	4,871.85			1,000.00	125.29	5,746.56
Apprenticeship Reserve	16,565.43					16,565.43
Planning Advice Reserve	18,498.62					18,498.62
Trees Reserve	13,663.30	20,000.00			5,266.70	28,396.60
Tennis Courts Refurb	10,800.00					10,800.00
Tourism Reserve	33,975.43				4,632.23	29,343.20
19 North Square	11,000.00					11,000.00
DTC Website & IT	1,230.00			1,431.37	1,285.00	1,376.37
Corporate Projects Reserve	714,958.39	5,082.00	2,000.00		8,021.00	714,019.39
Graves in Perpetuity	14,010.67					14,010.67
Total	1,605,063.44	343,582.00	57,067.60	2,831.37	431,561.26	1,576,983.15

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE – 22 SEPTEMBER 2025

BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

1. Following the closure of the Lloyds Dorchester branch a review of banking procedures has taken place.

2. **Main Banking Provider**

Since the closure of Lloyds Dorchester, cheques and cash have been paid in at the Post Office. The Post Office sends any cheques by post to Lloyds, this delays clearing times. As from the 31st December 2025 only cash can be paid in over the Post Office counter. From the 1st January 2026 any cheques would have to be posted direct to Lloyds, or taken to the nearest Lloyd branch, currently Weymouth, to be banked.

Switching bank accounts has been investigated, options on a switch to another high street, Dorchester based, bank are limited. Unity Trust was considered; however, the fees would have been more expensive than Lloyds and the same system for Post Office paying in would apply.

The Lloyds bank app offers a way around posting cheques, allowing cheques to be banked quickly and easily. This system has been trialed since late July with the RFO downloading the app to his personal mobile, accessed via face recognition, or chip and pin machine.

3. **Card Payments**

For some time, there has been a small demand for the council to accept card payments, mainly for allotment rents. Since 2020 tennis players have had the option to pay membership fees by card, via the Stripe payment system, but it is limited to tennis receipts. The demand for card payments is likely to crease significantly once the Council starts to operate the Markets directly from next April.

The RFO has investigated various options for a card machine. The best value is a 'Sum-Up Solo'. The initial cost is £79.00; there is no contract. Ongoing fees are 1.69% per transaction (compared to £0.80 per cheque paid in, no matter what the value).

The Sum-Up Solo does not need to be connected to a mobile phone, and it has its own sim card, allowing it to be used away from the office.

Following a discussion with the Internal Auditor, Financial Regulations do not need to be updated prior to the introduction of a card machine, but it should be considered at the next reviews of Financial Regulations (July 2026).

The Council will continue to accept cash (paid in at Post Office) and cheques (paid in via app by RFO).

It is **RECOMMENDED** that:

The Council purchases a Sum-Up Solo card machine to allow card payments.

Nigel Hayes
RFO

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL
POLICY COMMITTEE – 22 SEPTEMBER 2025
DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2025-29

1. At the last meeting of the Policy Committee it was agreed that the wording in Council's draft Corporate Plan Strategic Aim relating to Climate Emergency be slightly modified.
2. The original wording is set out below:-

The Town Council has the following strategic aims:

To work with others and do all that it can to implement the vision for the future of the town, in particular focusing on:

- The need to rise to the challenge of climate change by ensuring the Council honours its climate change pledge and encourages the community to do all that it can do.

The Council will focus on this by:-

Climate Emergency

In seeking to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and working with partners and the community to reduce theirs:-

- To ensure that the Council honours its pledge taken in 2019 to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- We will work proactively with our partners, especially those that have taken on assets and responsibilities from the Council, to reduce their carbon footprints.
- We will support and encourage community groups to take practical steps either to deliver their own initiatives or to give them a voice to advocate changed behaviours to the wider population of residents, workers and visitors.
- The Council will consider nature recovery in all of its decision making.

3. Set out below is proposed modified wording for consideration: -

The Town Council has the following strategic aims:

To work with others and do all that it can to implement the vision for the future of the town, in particular focusing on:

- The need to rise to the challenge of climate change by ensuring the Council honours its climate change pledge.

The Council will focus on this by:-

Climate Action

In seeking to reduce the Council's reliance on fossil fuels and working with partners and volunteers from the community to reduce theirs: -

- To ensure that the Council honours its carbon reduction pledge taken in 2019.
- We will work proactively with our partners, especially those that have taken on assets and responsibilities from the Council, to reduce their carbon footprints.
- We will support community groups to take practical steps either to deliver their own initiatives or to give them a voice to advocate changed behaviours to the wider community
- The Council will consider nature recovery in all its decision making.

4. The Committee is asked to approve the revised wording for inclusion in the Corporate Plan and recommend the adoption of it to Council.

Steve Newman
Town Clerk

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL
POLICY COMMITTEE – 22 SEPTEMBER 2025
DORCHESTER BUSINESS AWARDS

Announcement- 2026 Dorchester Business Awards

Nigel Reeve<nigel@marketingwest.co.uk>
Steve Newman

Hello Steve

We are pleased to announce the details of our 2026 Dorchester Business Awards. The focus and aim of the awards remains promoting the range and quality of local business. We have made a number of upgrades to the awards over the last 24 months and hopefully these has helped local business in some small way.

The 2025-26 timetable is:

Friday, 8th August: The 2026 awards are announced via the awards website.

Monday, 18th August: Entries open and are promoted via a promotional video, with details of how to enter, entry tips and the first round of sponsors.

September to November: Regular awards promotions and updates.

Monday, 15th December: Entries close

Wednesday, 31st December: Entries sent to judges

Friday, 23rd January: Awards invites sent out including the shortlisted invites.

Thursday, 12th February: 12.00-14.45-The awards at the Dorchester Corn Exchange. As well as the usual awards and Winner's reception there are a number of additions ranging from winner's window stickers given out at the awards through to a new look awards programme with the option for sponsors ads to be included. The programme will also be available on line from Friday, 30th January.

Finally we are now placing the category sponsorships. The previous year's sponsors have the first option to renew until Friday, 5th September. **Previously Dorchester Town Council sponsored the Outstanding Customer Service Category. We've kept the cost to £345 plus VAT** so could you let me know no later than Friday, 5th September?

Best wishes

Nigel
www.marketingwest.co.uk

Background

We believe local businesses are the backbone of an area's economy, helping drive recovery and prosperity. They generate employment, they innovate, they open new markets and bring money into the local area.

Until recently there have been limited ways to promote the range and quality of these local businesses. Business awards have been county wide focusing on larger businesses with evening black tie events and high-priced tickets.

Dorchester and Poundbury Business Awards*

*Rebranding to Dorchester Business Awards this month

The Dorchester and Poundbury Business Awards are completely different. The idea emerged during the lockdown, when local businesses were being damaged by the economic effects of COVID.

To start with they are held at lunchtime rather than in the evening. Entry is free and businesses can enter as many categories as they want. The judging is independent with a panel of online judges, who don't know who the other judges are. They submit their votes online and the entries with the highest number of votes are the winners.

Even the cost of attending the awards ceremony is simply the cost to us.

The Dorchester and Poundbury Business Awards ran in 2021 and 2022 and it was clear from the start that there was a big demand from local businesses. To date the awards have received 378 entries/nominations, while over 80 local businesses leaders attended the lunchtime awards ceremony in April 2022.

The awards also have their own website: www.dandpbusinessawards.co.uk. To date the website has had (as of today) 1,303 viewings. The awards video updates and the recording of the 2022 awards ceremony have had over 400 viewings. That shows the demand for what we are trying to deliver.

Key Dates

Entries are now open and local businesses have until Monday, 30th January to enter or be nominated. The awards ceremony is at lunchtime on Thursday, 30th March 2023

Funding

The funding of the awards comes from category sponsorship. The concept of the awards has proved beneficial to local businesses throughout Dorset and we have received many testimonials (copies available) from local businesses saying how our local awards have helped and boosted their businesses.

We run similar awards in Sherborne and in Bridport and in both cases the town councils have backed the awards and become one of the awards category sponsors. Having this support in each of these areas has been a great help in the success of the awards in that area.

Our category sponsorship rate is £475 plus VAT, but, as with Sherborne and Bridport, this is reduced to £325 plus VAT for local councils.

Sponsors Benefits

1. The sponsor chooses a category to sponsor (subject to availability).
2. We publicise their category and sponsorship on our social media (approx. 3.5k followers across the three main platforms).
3. The sponsor's logo is put on the awards website with a link to their website.
4. Their logo is placed close to the streamed awards on the awards website to maximise profile (www.dandpbusinessawards.co.uk).
5. We produce a short video of the sponsor wishing all entrants success, which is played at the beginning of the awards ceremony.
6. Sponsors receive two VIP places for the awards ceremony. They announce, then present their category winner before presenting their award.
7. Sponsors can bring up to two roller banners to the awards ceremony.
8. The awards have a clear table policy, but sponsors can supply promotional materials to be handed out at the end of the awards.
9. The sponsor's logo will be in the ceremony programme.
10. The sponsor's logo will be on the screens around the venue and at the start of the streaming. Also, the logo will be on the welcome backdrop as the ceremony guests arrive.
11. The sponsor's name on the winner's framed certificate.
12. The sponsor will be photos presenting their award which will go on the awards website.

Available Categories (as of 8th November 2022)

New Business of the Year
Best Place to Work
Cafe, Pub, Casual Dining
Excellence in Customer Service

Examples of Feedback

"The Dorchester Business Awards are a significant marker of our local post-Covid recovery, a really encouraging and optimistic event that I was honoured to be part of."

Lord Fellowes of West Stafford

"The Business Awards are the best thing to happen in Dorset for many years. It is so rewarding to see how businesses across the County recognise their value and have responded by entering the various categories. Onwards and upwards!"

Barry White, Retired Solicitor, Poundbury

"We entered the Dorchester and Poundbury Awards thinking nothing ventured nothing gained. It was so nice to see businesses networking together during the awards. Not only did we win our category, but the overall best business as well! We could not believe it, We would like to say to all the businesses out there enter as you have a lot to gain!"

Neil Strudwick, Goldcrest Jewellers, Dorchester

"There is a perfect balance struck between the ceremony and the sense of occasion. There's a formula that produces a uniquely accessible, friendly format. I was inundated with messages from friends of friend, distant family and past colleagues who had seen the coverage. There remains today a clear spike in our website traffic."

James Heart, Purple Office

Nigel Reeve
8th November 2022.

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY COMMITTEE – 22 SEPTEMBER 2025

A FRESH START?

1. Earlier in the year the Dorset Association of Town and Parish Councils (DAPTC) received a report, undertaken in a personal capacity by two academics, which presented the policy-related results of a low-key, informal research project exploring the status and prospects of towns and larger parishes in Dorset since the 2019 reorganisation of local government. Its focus is the potential for towns and parishes to play an expanded role, and the urgent need for a more effective working relationship between them and Dorset Council.
2. The full report has been sent to Members separately. The report has been considered by the DAPTC Larger Councils Committee and has been shared with senior officers and political leadership at Dorset Council. The DAPTC Chief Executive's presenter notes which have also been sent separately, give a good narrative to the report, including a timeline and 'ask' of local councils. This 'ask' in regard to its second question was subsequently developed and the revised scenario options are attached as an appendix to this report.
3. It is worth noting that the Fresh Start report reflects on the Community Governance Review undertaken before the May 2024 elections and offers some thoughts to be considered if there was to be another county wide review prior to the 2029 elections. Since the report was produced Dorset Council has started consulting on its draft Local Plan and those large development sites proposed in the Plan are likely to be an additional, more immediate, driver for reviews.
4. Dorset Council's transformation programme 'Our Future Council' recognises the need for community driven and place based provision as part of the answer to its strategic ambitions. The Fresh Start report has been recognised as a key input of the Community Partnerships element of this programme. Any partnership / place based working proposals would have to be scrutinised carefully. Past experience with the old Dorchester Area Community Partnership was that it struggled to get significant buy in from a large number of the parishes and virtually all of the work associated with the partnership fell to the Town Council, even though it represented less than half of the total population of that partnership.
5. In regard to the 'Statement of Reasonable Expectations' this was considered and supported at the last meetings of the Policy Committee and Full Council.
6. In respect of asset and service transfer, this Council's main focus over the past few years has been on returning the market operation to the Town Council. This work has gone well, and the Council will be operating and managing the markets from next April.
7. Looking to the future, this Council has always aspired to provide services which benefit its residents. However, any devolution of service needs to be undertaken in a planned and timely way, engagement with Dorset Council at the earliest stage is vital particularly for financial and resource planning.

8. DAPTC is in the early stages of working on a list of services which might be suitable for devolution, partnership working etc, this has yet to be discussed with Dorset Council, but this 'menu' driven approach would seem to be a good way forward and would ease some of the concerns set out in 7. above.

9. More immediately, early input into emerging Dorset Council strategies is important. As a part of Dorset Council's Economic Growth Strategy there is a new focussed approach on key opportunities that Dorset Council feel will contribute to the growth of the county. One of those key focusses is 'Market Towns' and Dorset Council has expressed a desire to 'work in partnership with Town and Parish Councils to celebrate their uniqueness, and support what works well in their areas for their businesses and communities.' To this end Dorset Council are developing a framework (due to be completed mid October) to support local councils to produce their own local Market Town Masterplan. These Masterplans should:-

- Be community-led and inclusive
- Reflect local priorities and strengths
- Align with the Local Plan and Transport Plan
- Be evidence-based, realistic, and achievable
- Serve as a foundation for funding bids and strategic investment

10. Members are asked to note the Fresh Start report and give some consideration as to their appetite for increased partnership / devolution working with Dorset Council by giving an indication as to which scenario, of the three scenarios shown in the Appendix, is most aligned with this Council's aspirations.

11. Separate to the wider and longer-term discussions about devolution and partnership working, Members may also wish to consider putting the Town Council forward as a willing early volunteer in the Dorset Council Market Towns initiative.

Steve Newman
Town Clerk



Which of these scenarios is your council closest to?

Your council circumstances may change – a response now isn't binding and just helps Dorset Council understand the likely demand on their teams managing any future devolution framework. In the response to our request, we will ask you to add any clarifying statements as to why you picked the scenario for your council.

Scenario 1: Proactive Partnership – “Ready to Lead Locally”

Position:

The council expresses a strong interest in taking on more responsibilities and assets from Dorset Council, particularly in areas where local delivery could improve responsiveness and community engagement.

Message to Dorset Council:

“We are ready to explore and pilot local delivery of services where it benefits our community. Let's work together to shape a practical and sustainable model of double devolution.”

Scenario 2: Cautious Collaboration – “Interested, But Need Clarity”

Position:

The council is open to the idea of double devolution but requires more information, support, and assurances before committing to any transfer of responsibilities.

Message to Dorset Council:

“We see potential in double devolution but need more clarity and support to assess what's right for our community. Let's explore this together before making commitments.”

Scenario 3: Strategic Standback – “Not the Right Fit for Us (Now)”

Position:

The council does not currently wish to take on additional responsibilities, either due to limited capacity, financial concerns, or a belief that Dorset Council is better placed to deliver certain services.

Message to Dorset Council:

“We value strong local services but do not believe double devolution is the right path for us at this time. We remain committed to partnership and dialogue.”