

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

22 September 2025

Present: Councillors R. Biggs, S. Biles (Chair), J. Germodo, V. Lloyd-Jones, K. Reid and D. Taylor.

In Attendance

Councillors J. Hewitt, F. Hogwood, R. Potter and M. Rennie.

Apologies: The Mayor (Councillor A. Canning) and Councillors G. Jones and R. Ricardo.

14. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21 July 2025, adopted by Council on 28 July 2025, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

15. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

16. Finance Update

Members considered a report by the Finance Officer which updated them on the financial position of the Council as at end of August 2025, the amount of earmarked reserves as at the end of August 2025, the level of debt over 30 days and gave details of the payments list from 1 July 2025 to 31 August 2025.

It was noted that Cash Access UK had carried out a review of community cash needs for Dorchester and had confirmed that there was, presently, sufficient banking provision in the town based on its criteria.

Resolved

- (1) That the payments list, totalling £350,192.85 be approved.
- (2) That the remainder of the report be noted.

17. Banking Arrangements

Members considered a report by the Finance Officer on a review of the Council's banking arrangements following the closure of Lloyds Bank. The outcome of the review was to continue to bank with Lloyds Bank. The Committee felt that this was acceptable but that a Council mobile should be purchased for use with the banking app. Members also felt that the demand for card payments was to continue to increase especially when the Council starts to operate the Markets directly from April 2026.

Resolved

- (1) That the Council continue to bank with Lloyds Bank.
- (2) That a Sum-Up Solo card machine be purchased to enable the Council to take card payments.
- (3) That an official Council mobile be purchased solely for banking use via the Lloyds Bank official app.

18. Draft Corporate Plan 2025 – 29

The Committee received a report by the Town Clerk which proposed revised wording for the climate emergency strategic action within the Council's draft Corporate Plan.

Recommended

- (1) That the revised wording for the climate strategic action within the Corporate Plan be agreed.
- (2) That the draft Corporate Plan 2025-29, as a whole, be agreed.

19. Dorchester Business Awards

The Committee considered whether to sponsor the Dorchester Business awards 2026. Members expressed a preference to sponsor the 'excellence in customer service' category.

Resolved

That the 2026 Dorchester Business Awards be sponsored in the sum of £345.

20. DAPTC Report - A Fresh Start?

Members had before them a report by the Town Clerk on a report which had been received by the DAPTC, which had been undertaken in a personal capacity by two academics, which presented its policy related results of an informal research project exploring the status of and prospects of towns and larger parishes in Dorset since the 2019 reorganisation of local government in Dorset.

The Committee noted that Dorset Council's 'Our Future Councils' transformation programme also recognised the need for community driven and placed based provision as part of the answer to its strategic ambitions.

DAPTC was in the early stages of working on a list of services which might be suitable for devolution or partnership working. This had yet to be agreed with Dorset Council.

Members also noted that Dorset Council had identified Market Towns as a key focus within its Economic Growth Strategy and had expressed a desire to work in partnership with local

councils to celebrate their uniqueness and support what worked well in their areas for their businesses and communities. To this end Dorset Council was developing a framework, to be completed mid October, to support local councils to produce their own Market Town Master Plan.

Recommended

(1) That the Fresh Start report be noted and DAPTC be informed that, in regard to devolution, this Council does see potential but would need more clarity before making any decisions (scenario 2).

(2) That the Town Clerk inform Dorset Council that it would be a willing early volunteer in the Dorset Council Market Towns initiative.

21. **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 press representatives be excluded from this meeting during their discussion.

22. **Future Direction**

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk on the Council's possible future direction.

Resolved

(1) That, a Local Plan Working Group / Future Direction Working Group be established, the membership of which to be agreed at Full Council but likely to include Chair / Vice of the Committees, plus two others.

(2) That the Town Clerk open discussion with Charminster and Stinsford Parish Councils and the Working Group to discuss implications arising from the draft Local Plan.

23. **Staffing Matter**

Members considered a report by the Town Clerk and it was

Resolved

That the Head Gardener post be graded SCP11 to SCP15 and the present postholder be moved to SCP15 with effect from 1 September 2025.

Chair.....