

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

19 January 2026

Present: The Mayor (Councillor A. Canning) and Councillors R. Biggs, S. Biles (Chair), G. Jones, V. Lloyd-Jones, K. Reid and R. Ricardo.

In Attendance

Councillors W. Gibbons, F. Hogwood, S. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger, D. Leaper and M. Rennie.

Apologies: Councillors J. Germodo and D. Taylor.

36. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 17 November 2025, adopted by Council on 24 November 2025, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

37. Declaration of Interests

Councillor W. Gibbons declared a non pecuniary interest in respect of Minute No 43, Dorchester Literary Festival.

Councillor R. Biggs left the meeting during consideration of Minute No 41, Dorset Council – Dorchester Assets.

38. Finance Update

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

Resolved

- (1) That the payments list, totalling £304,067.85 be approved.
- (2) That the remainder of the report be noted.

39. Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget 2026-27

The Committee considered a report of the Finance Officer covering the draft budget for the Policy Committee, the overall Revenue Budget, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and levels of Reserves.

The Finance Officer responded to Members detailed questions.

Recommended

That the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget 2026-27, as set out in the Appendices 1 to 4 of these Minutes, be adopted, to include: -

- A Council Tax Band D charge of £218.83, an increase of £4.29 (2%)
- A precept of £1,913,842, an increase of 4.9%

40. **Calendar of Meetings 2026-27**

The Town Clerk presented a draft calendar of meetings for 2026-27.

The Committee discussed the format of the informal Annual Town Meeting and agreed that it should continue in the same format as it had been previously.

Recommended

- (1) That the Calendar of Meetings 2026-27, as set out in Appendix 5 to these Minutes, be agreed.
- (2) That an informal Annual Town Meeting be held in the Corn Exchange on Friday 8 May 2026 commencing at 11.00am.

41. **Dorset Council – Dorchester Assets**

Members had before them a list of assets held by Dorset Council within the DT1 area. Dorset Council had excluded some of its assets from the list for confidentiality reasons. The Committee considered the list with a view to identifying any assets that might be suitable for community transfer. It was noted that inclusion on the list did not necessarily make the asset available for transfer.

Resolved

That the Dorset Council asset list be noted.

42. **Wessex Water – Watermark Dorchester**

The Committee received a report by the Development Assistant on progress with becoming a Wessex Water Watermark town. It was noted that it was likely that Wessex Water would announce that Dorchester had achieved Watermark status at the Informal Annual Town Meeting to be held in May.

The Development Assistant responded to Members detailed questions.

Resolved

That the progress made towards becoming a Watermark town be noted.

43. Dorchester Literary Festival – 17 – 24 October 2026

The Committee gave consideration to sponsoring the eleventh annual Dorchester Literary Festival. It was noted that other sponsors included Dorchester BID, Thomas Hardy Society and the Duchy of Cornwall.

Members felt that the event should be supported and that the Council be a 'Headline Sponsor' at a cost of £550. It was felt that the Town Clerk should agree the event that the Council was sponsoring to ensure it aligned with the Council's general philosophy.

It was noted that the Festival Organisers would be invited to a future meeting of Council to brief Members on the Festival.

Members felt that, apart from for the Mayor, the complimentary tickets allocated as a part of the sponsorship package should not be taken so they could be released for general sale.

Resolved

That the Council become an 'Headline Event Sponsor' of the Dorchester 2026 Dorchester Literary Festival at a cost of £550.

44. Appointments Panel

The Town Clerk reported that Councillors W. Gibbons and F. Hogwood had withdrawn their applications to be members of the Appointments Panel and it was

Recommended

That Councillors S. Biles, L. Fry, S. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger and V. Lloyd-Jones be appointed to the Appointments Panel.

Chair.....

APPENDIX 1

	2024/25	2025/26	2025/26	2026/27
	Actual	Budget	6 Months	Budget
CORPORATE & DEMOCRATIC	£	£	£	£
Members Allowance	24,059	24,440	12,433	25,539
Members Training & Travel	470	500	23	250
Civic & Ceremonial Expenses	4,567	1,500	1,521	1,750
Mayoral Expenses	8,521	13,369	8,555	13,637
Town Crier	600	600	300	600
New Town Crier Expenses	4,598	0	0	0
Elections Reserve	13,459	0		3,000
Entertaining & Gifts	3,725	428	5	437
Youth Council & Democracy Day	1,034	1,000	252	750
Office Team	233,498	257,365	127,344	284,858
Met by Precept on Taxpayer	294,531	299,203	150,433	330,821
OTHER SERVICES				
Tourism Development	7,962	8,160	3,202	8,323
Sawmills rent	8,600	8,600	4,300	11,875
To Public Realm Reserve	5,000	5,000	5,000	0
To Arts & Cultural Reserve - DBC	0	0		0
Dorchester Heritage Joint Committee	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Citizens Advice	8,793	9,246	9,116	9,481
Dorchester Youth & Community Centre	21,200	28,000	14,000	28,000
Keep 106				15,000
Dorchester Ballet Club	10,894	0	0	
Apprenticeships	11,019	0	0	0
Videographer	1,335	2,000	0	2,000
Footfall Counter		3,400	2,120	3,400
Debt Charges	16,104	15,457	7,000	14,809
Staff - Tourism/Community/Assistant	120,546	160,780	79,554	154,608
Total Expenditure	214,454	243,643	127,291	250,496
Treasury Interest	-101,408	-65,000	-36,502	-60,000
Sawmills rent recharged	-4,300	-4,300	0	-5,938
Market Income	-25,698	-26,000	0	-18,309
Total Income	-131,406	-95,300	-36,502	-84,247
Met by Precept on Taxpayer	83,047	148,343	90,789	166,249

Appendix 1 Continued	2024/25	2025/26	2025/26	2026/27
	Actual	Budget	6 Months	Budget
OFFICES TEAM	£	£	£	£
Salaries	304,175	356,773	167,557	378,578
Employers National Insurance	30,222	45,266	20,639	47,787
Employers LGPS Pension	67,869	78,490	37,083	79,501
Training Courses	7,642	9,000	7,717	10,000
Travel & Subsistence	1,708	3,000	1,310	2,000
New Town Clerk Appointment				3,500
Subscriptions (Professional Bodies)	3,272	3,800	3,481	4,000
Cleaning Materials	346	500	191	500
Rates	5,614	5,614	5,614	5,614
Electricity	3,930	4,500	1,636	4,500
Gas	-227		0	0
Water	543	600	246	600
Repairs, Maintenance & Equipment	3,522	3,400	389	5,400
Financial Services inc Audit, Bank & Sage	7,637	9,020	6,729	9,200
Employment Law and H & S	3,907	4,000	4,014	4,020
Legal & Professional Fees, Advertising	40	500	0	500
Insurance	34,908	40,000	26,505	42,000
Stationery & Equipment	1,161	1,200	891	1,200
Newsletter	5,658	5,415	2,123	6,000
IT, Printing & Copying	13,768	12,000	1,196	12,000
New Website		0	0	0
Mobile Phones	920	600	110	600
Photocopier Charges	501	0	0	0
Postage	848	600	777	890
Total Expenditure	497,965	584,278	288,210	618,391
Recharge to Dorchester Markets Panel	-1,688	-1,800	0	-1,688
Net Expenditure recharged to Services	496,277	582,478	288,210	616,703

Recharged to				
Corporate & Democratic Management	233,498	257,365	127,344	284,858
Allotments	12,357	16,307	8,069	18,112
Development	120,546	160,780	79,554	154,608
Cemeteries	43,672	50,477	24,976	52,296
Parks & Open Spaces	53,697	60,117	29,746	65,272
Municipal Buildings	16,774	19,252	9,526	20,256
Cultural Activity & Twinning	15,732	18,181	8,996	21,300
	496,276	582,479	288,210	616,703

Markets	2026/27 Budget
	£
Salaries	32,367
Employers National Insurance	3,355
Employers LGPS Pension	6,797
Training	1,000
Mobile Phone	336
Repairs & Maintenance	20,000
Electricity	6,200
Water	1,600
Toilet Costs (2/7 Share)	2,400
Subscriptions	1,084
Recharge Dorset Council	15,634
Recharge DTC	1,688
Total Expenditure	92,461
Market Fees	-54,243
Car Boot	-23,732
Cornhill Traders	-12,987
Rents - Corn Market and Café	-22,100
Fairfield Car Park	-56,226
Total Income	-169,288
Surplus	-76,827
Distribution of Surplus	
Sunday Market Reserve	21,359
Dorset Council (65%)	36,054
Dorchester Town Council (35%)	19,414
Markets Balance	76,827
	0

APPENDIX 2

REVENUE BUDGET 2026/27	2024/25	2025/26	2025/26	2026/27
	Actual	Budget	6 Month	Budget
	£	£	£	£
Parks & Open Spaces	731,485	807,390	422,698	841,050
Allotments	19,877	28,477	20,140	31,333
Municipal Buildings	393,005	382,508	349,319	277,744
Cemeteries	69,859	67,899	48,504	163,627
Markets				0
Cultural & Twinning Activities	77,242	89,029	65,981	103,015
Corporate & Democratic Markets	294,531	299,203	150,433	330,821
Other Services	83,047	148,343	90,789	166,249
Operational Budget	1,669,047	1,822,850	1,147,865	1,913,839
Precept	1,726,115	1,822,939	1,822,939	1,913,842
Transfer to General Reserves	57,068	89	675,074	3

Subjective Analysis of Revenue

Employees	955,230	1,069,658	1,146,335
External Payments	585,052	610,536	802,979
Transfers to Earmarked	340,600	343,582	331,500
Capital Financing Costs	16,104	15,457	14,809
Income	-227,939	-216,385	-372,785
Transfer from Earmarked	0	0	0
Operational Budget	1,669,047	1,822,848	0
			1,922,839

General Reserve

Opening Balance at 1 April	177,314	100,000	100,000
Transfer from Ops Budget	57,068	91	3
To Corporate Projects Reserve	77,314	0	0
Closing Balance at 31 March	157,068	100,091	100,003

Earmarked Reserves

Opening Balance at 1 April	1,488,384	1,157,365	1,576,504
Transfer from Revenue	452,614	343,582	334,500
Other Income & Transfers	416,532	0	0
Expenditure from Reserves	752,466	512,422	825,020
Closing Balance 31 March	1,605,063	988,525	1,085,984

All Reserves held at year end	1,762,131	1,088,616	1,185,987
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Tax Base	8,091.30	8,497.10	8,745.90
Band D Charge	210.33	214.536600	218.8273320
O/s PWLB Debt at 31 March	42,000	28,000	14,000

APPENDIX 3

Medium Term Financial Strategy	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
	Actual	Budget	Budget	Forecast	Forecast
Revenue Budget	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Employees	955	1,070	1,146	1,169	1,193
External Payments	585	611	803	819	835
Transfers to Earmarked	341	344	332	353	360
Capital Financing Costs	16	15	15	15	16
Income	-228	-216	-373	-380	-388
Operational Budget	1,669	1,823	1,923	1,977	2,016
Precept	1,702	1,823	1,914	1,952	1,991
Transfer to General Reserves	33	0	-9	-24	-25
General Reserve					
Opening Balance at 1 April	132	133	100	100	100
Transfer from/to Operational Budget	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Corporate Projects Reserve	32	33	0	0	0
Closing Balance at 31 March	100	100	100	100	100
Earmarked Reserves					
Opening Balance at 1 April	1,488	1,605	1,577	1,086	1,139
Transfers/Payments in to Reserves	869	447	335	353	360
Payments/Transfers out from Reserves	752	476	825	400	200
Closing Balance 31 March	1,605	1,577	1,086	1,039	1,299
All Reserves held at year end	1,705	1,677	1,186	1,139	1,399
Corporate Project Unallocated at Year End	755	755	505	255	255
Outstanding Debt at Year End	£k	56	42	28	14
Council Tax	£k	210	215	219	223
Tax Base		8,091	8,497	8,746	8,746

APPENDIX 4

RESERVES	Cttee	Balance	Paid In	Spend	Balance	Paid In	Spend	Balance	Reason for holding Reserve	
		Mar 25	25/26	25/26	Mar 26	26/27	26/27	Mar 27		
Earmarked Reserves		£	£	£	£	£	£	£		
Infrastructure & Equipment										
Cemeteries	Man	36,931	10,000	27,209	19,722	95,000	90,000	24,722	Cemetery Wall	
	Man	56,994	20,000	51,566	25,428	80,000	80,000	25,428	Clock tower and other building works	
MB Repairs & Maintenance										
MB Front of House works	Man	31,643	259,000	290,643	0	0	0	0		
Parks Premises	Man	10,054	19,000	1,470	27,584	12,000	0	39,584	Buildings/infrastructure refurb.	
Play Equipment	Man	29,715	1,000	13,503	17,212	30,000	30,000	17,212	Equipment replacement	
Great Field Reserve	Man	11,000	2,500	0	13,500	2,500	0	16,000		
Tree Reserve	Man	13,663	20,000	6,547	27,116	6,000	12,000	21,116	Tree Works	
Tennis Courts Reserve	Man	10,800	2,000	0	12,800	0	0	12,800	Tennis Courts Repairs	
19 North Square Refurb	Pol	11,000	0	0	11,000	0	11,000	0		
Public Realm	Pol	440,310	5,000	5,000	440,310	0	280,000	160,310	Infrastructure refurb	
Vehicles & Equipment	Man	113,473	22,400	45,171	90,702	22,000	50,000	62,702	Fleet & equipment replacement	
Cultural										
Arts & Culture	Man	4,872	1,000	125	5,747	0	0	5,747		
Christmas Lights	Man	4,420	0	0	4,420	9,000	12,000	1,420	Replace lights	
DTC Website & IT	Man	1,230	1,431	2,661	0	0	0	0	£3k DTC Website, £4,651.87 IT	
Tourist Information	Pol	33,975	0	10,000	23,975	0	5,000	18,975	TIC Replacement Projects	
Miscellaneous Reserves										
Corporate Projects	Pol	714,958	27,082	8,021	734,019	75,000	250,000	559,019	Own or partner capital projects	
Elections Reserve	Pol					3,000	0	3,000	Cost of Elections	
Apprenticeship Reserve	Pol	16,565	0	0	16,565	0	0	16,565		
Planning Advice Reserve	Pol	18,499	0	0	18,499	0	5,000	13,499	20mph Project	
Climate Emergency Reserve	Pol	30,949	57,068	14,104	73,913	0	0	73,913	Own or partner Climate projects	
Graves In Perpetuity	Man	14,011	0	20	13,991	0	20	13,971	Maint. and flowers on 6 graves	

Total Earmarked Reserves	1,605,062	447,481	476,039	1,576,504	334,500	825,020	1,085,984	
General Reserve	Pol	157,068	0	57,068	100,000	0	0	100,000 General Emergency Fund
Total Reserves		1,762,130	447,481	533,107	1,676,504	334,500	825,020	1,185,984

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2026-27

APPENDIX 5

	2026								2027				
	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
COUNCIL	18 MM 19 (Tu)		27		28		30		25		29		24 MM 25 (Tu)
POLICY	11		20		21		23		18		22 MS@ 1830		17
MANAGEMENT	5 (Tu)		13		14		16		11		15		10
PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT	-	1	6	3	7	5	2	7	5 (Tue)	1	1	5	4 (Tue)
MARKETS JOINT PANEL		3 (Wed) 1430		5 (Wed) 1730		7 (Wed) 1430		2 (Wed) 1730		3 (Wed) 1430		7 (Wed) 1730	
HERITAGE JOINT			21 (Tu) 1730			13 (Tu) 1730			19 (Tu) 1730			13 (Tu) 1730	
SITE VISITS		2 (Tu) 0930			1 (Tu) 0930								
CIVIC EVENTS	8- IATM @1100 19 - ATM 31 (Sun) THW @1330						Remem Sunday 8						25 ATM
BANK HOLIDAYS	4,25			31				25, 28	1		26, 29	30	3,31

MM Mayor Making MS Mayoral Selection Committee THW Thomas Hardy Wreath laying

ATM Formal Annual Town Meeting IATM Informal Annual Town Meeting

Meetings will ordinarily take place at 1900 in the Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings.