

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

23 March 2026

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

In Attendance

Julie Booker, Dorset Climate Action Network
Councillors P. Farmer, J. Hewitt, S. Jones, F. Kent-Ledger, D. Leaper, R. Potter and M. Rennie.

Apologies: Councillors R. Ricardo and D. Taylor.

45. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 19 January 2026, adopted by Council on 26 January, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

46. **Declaration of Interests**

No declarations of interest were declared.

47. **Dorset Climate Action Network (DCAN) – Environment and Climate National Emergency Network**

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk and a presentation from Julie Booker (DCAN) seeking support to partner with the Council to host a documentary entitled 'The People's Briefing', which would be followed by a Q and A, it was hoped that as many Councillors as possible and the local MP would attend.

The documentary built on the recent briefing given by ten leading experts to an audience of more than 1,200 politicians and leaders from business, culture, faith, sport and the media.

In response to a question the DCAN representative hoped to be working with schools to show the documentary.

It was also reported that the Coat of Hopes had recently passed through Dorchester on its walking pilgrimage through the UK. This initiative would benefit from greater publicity.

Resolved

That the Council partners with DCAN to facilitate a community screening of the documentary in the Corn Exchange with a debate afterwards managed by local National Emergency Briefing Campaign supporters.

48. **Dorchester Markets – Policy, Fees, Rules and Signage**

Members had before them a report by the Markets Officer which set out a proposed Markets Council Policy Statement, fees and charges and a set of rules for market stall holders.

Members agreed the documents but wished to include some further clarification in regard to the meaning of 'illegal' markets.

The Committee also considered a paper which set out the proposed replacement signage for Fairfield Market which was agreed subject to the sign proposed to be attached to the public toilets being located elsewhere.

Members thanked the Market's Officer, and all those involved, for all their work in transferring the market operation to the Town Council.

Recommended

(1) That, subject to the comments above, the Dorchester Market Policy Statement and Market Rules, as set out in the report, be approved.

(2) That the 2026-27 fees and charges for the Markets be:-

Cornhill Daily Market

- Pitch fee £20.00 per 3mt

Fairfield

- Pitch Fee £25.00 per 3mt
- Table fee £12.00 per table
- Lockups £40

Car Boot

- Cars £8.00
- Vans / Commercial £15.00

(3) That the signage, as set out in the report, with the exception of the sign proposed to be attached to the public toilets being located in a more suitable location, be agreed.

49. **Finance Update**

Members considered a report by the Finance Officer which updated them on the financial position of the Council as at end of February 2026, the amount of earmarked reserves as at the end of February 2026, the level of debt over 30 days and gave details of the payments list from 1 January 2026 to 28 February 2026. The report also included the outcome of the Internal Auditor's second of three internal audits.

Resolved

- (1) That the payments list, totalling £315,265.31 be approved.
- (2) That the internal audit report and officer response is noted.
- (3) That the remainder of the report be noted.

50. Town Hall Urgent Works

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk which set out the urgent work required to the guttering arrangement of the Town Hall. The additional high level maintenance work, undertaken whilst scaffolding was in place, was also noted.

The total cost of the works was £36,717 plus scaffolding costs of £12,250. It was noted that an insurance claim had been made with the aim of recovering the cost of the emergency guttering works.

Members agreed to fund the works, and the forthcoming clock tower works, from the Corporate Projects Reserve.

Resolved

- (1) That the urgent action taken to appoint a contractor and undertake the works set out in the report and the report of Crickmay Stark Architects be agreed.
- (2) That the cost of these works, and the forthcoming clock tower works, be funded from the Corporate Projects Reserve.

51. Community Resilience Plan - Flooding

Members considered a report by the Town Clerk which offered the Committee an opportunity to review the Council's adopted Community Resilience Plan in relation to flooding in light of the surface flooding that happened in the town during the early part of the year.

The Committee felt that the town should be equipped with a sandbag store and proposed that this be sited at Sandringham car park. Members also wished to delete the reference to schools in the risk assessment, publicise flooding issues more widely in a variety of different formats, hold the proposed community event later this year rather than next and contact the Environment Agency in respect of completing the works it had previously proposed to prevent flooding in the King's Road area.

Resolved

- (1) That the Town Clerk investigate the possibility of the Council providing a community sandbag store at Sandringham car park, with a report back to the next meeting.

- (2) That the risk assessment in respect of flooding be amended as set out above.
- (3) That the Environment Agency be requested to undertake its project to prevent flooding at King's Road as soon as possible.

52. **Town Centre Working Group**

The Committee had before it the notes of the meeting of the Town Centre Working Group held on 13 March 2026.

Members reported that the frontage to the old M&S building looked very dilapidated and the bins along West Walks needed replacement.

Resolved

That the notes of the meeting be received.

53. **Allocation of Free Parking Days**

The Committee received a report by the Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate) setting out a proposal for the allocation of free parking days in 2026. It was noted that Dorchester BID would prefer that Saturday 14 November was a free parking day rather than the proposed Sunday 31 May (Thomas Hardy Victorian Fair) due to the run up to Christmas being better for businesses.

Resolved

That Dorset Council be requested to allocate the following 2026 free parking days:-

- Sunday 31st May – Thomas Hardy Victorian Fair
- Sunday 8th November – Remembrance Sunday
- Saturday 21st November – Christmas shopping
- Saturday 28th November - Christmas shopping
- Thursday 10th December - Christmas shopping

(In addition, the car parks would be free to use on 5th December for Small Business Saturday.)

54. **Data Retention Policy**

The Committee gave consideration to a proposed draft Data Retention Policy for the Council.

Resolved

That the proposed Data Retention Policy be agreed.

55. **No Vaping Policy**

Members considered a draft vaping in the workplace policy. Clarification was requested in regard to exceptions to the policy.

Resolved

That the proposed 'Vaping in the Workplace' policy be considered again at the next meeting of the Committee following receipt of clarification in respect of exceptions to the policy.

56. **Management Committee Extract – Fordington Cemetery Wall – Land Purchase**

The Committee had before it an extract from the Management Committee meeting held on 16 March 2026 which had agreed to further negotiate on the final sum for the land purchase which would form a recommendation to this Committee, on the basis of agreeing that the Town Clerk, following consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Management Committee, have the authority to approve the sum negotiated by the officers but not to exceed £31,000.

The cost of the land purchase to be funded from the Cemetery Reserve.

Resolved

- (1) That the Town Clerk, following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Management Committee be authorised to agree a final sum up to a maximum of £31,000 to purchase the land from Mill Street Housing Society which was required to enable the rebuild of the collapsed Fordington Cemetery wall.
- (2) That the cost of the land purchase be funded form the Cemetery Reserve.

Chair.....