

Dorchester Town Council

Policy Committee

11 May 2026

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

In Attendance

Mr P. Foster – In respect of Minute No. 59.

Councillors L. Fry, D. Leaper, R. Potter and M. Rennie.

Apologies: Councillors J. Germodo, K. Reid, R. Ricardo and D. Taylor.

57. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 23 March 2026, adopted by Council on 30 March 2026, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

58. Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were declared.

59. Finance Update

Mr P. Foster addressed the Committee in respect of Councillors needing .gov email addresses in the future. The RFO confirmed that this was not a mandatory requirement but recommended good practice and that consideration was being given to this matter.

Members considered a report by the Finance Officer which updated them on the financial position of the Council as at end of April 2026, the amount of earmarked reserves as at the end of March 2026, the annual review of the fixed asset register, the level of debt over 30 days and gave details of the payments list from 1 March 2026 to 30 April 2026.

The report also set out the outcome of the internal auditor's third and final audit held in April 2026. The recommendations of the internal auditor and officers responses to them were noted.

Additionally the report presented the 2025-26 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Annual Internal Audit Report, Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statements.

Members noted that in November 2023 the Council had reappointed Darkin Miller Ltd as the Council's Internal Auditor for a period of three years and that BDO LLP would continue as external auditor. The Committee was asked to confirm that the Council had no conflicts of interest with BDO LLP.

Resolved

- (1) That the payments list, totalling £504,193.19 be approved.
- (2) That the fixed asset register as at 31 March 2026 be noted.
- (3) That the report of the internal auditor and the officer response to it be noted.
- (4) That the 2025-26 Annual Internal Audit Report, as required by the AGAR is noted.

It is also

Recommended

- (5) That the Council approves the Annual Governance Statement for 2025-26.
- (6) That the Council approves the Accounting Statements for 2025-26.
- (7) That the Council confirms its satisfaction with the competence and independence of Darkin Miller Ltd and that Darkin Miller Ltd be appointed as the Council's Internal Auditor for the 2026-27 Council Year.
- (8) That the Council has no conflict of interest with BDO LLP.
- (9) That the Council notes that a procurement exercise will be carried out to appoint an internal auditor for the 2027-28 financial year due to the current internal auditor three year term ending in November 2026.

60. Community Sandbag Store

Further to Minute No 51 (1), the Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk on the possible provision of a Community Sandbag Store at Sandringham car park.

It was proposed that a badged metal lockable container of a size suitable for 50 to 100 sandbags be located at the southern end of Sandringham car park. The store to be unlocked and available for community use when weather alerts for heavy rain and flooding were received. This would enable the store to be open when needed out of office hours. Information about the opening of the store to be provided through the Council's social media channels and on the website. It was noted that the Council did not have sufficient staff to deliver sandbags so it would be for residents to arrange their own collection from the store.

Resolved

That a Community Sandbag Store, as proposed in the report, at an approximate cost of £800, be provided at Sandringham car park.

61. **No Vaping Policy**

In pursuance of Minute No 55, Members considered a report by the Town Clerk which attached a revised draft no vaping in the workplace policy.

Resolved

That the revised 'No Vaping in the Workplace' policy be agreed for immediate implementation.

62. **Management Committee Extracts**

The Committee had before it extracts from the Management Committee meeting held on 5 May 2026 which requested that the Policy Committee considered agreeing:-

- The release of £6,000 from the Play Equipment reserve for improvements to the Edward Road play area.
- The release of £5,000 from the Cemetery reserve for renovations to the Poundbury Cemetery building.
- The release of £5,600 from the Play Equipment reserve for refurbishment of the surfaces of the skatepark

The Committee had also been asked to consider funding works, from the Public Realm reserve, to refurbish and straighten the Town Pump and to re-install a water fountain, estimated at £50,000 plus VAT. The Dorchester Civic Society had developed the proposal with the support of the Dorchester Joint Heritage Committee. It was noted that an information board about the pump would be included within the project.

In respect of the improvements to the skatepark it was suggested that the project be widened to include a smartening up of the whole area and that, once that was complete a skatejam should be organised.

Resolved

- (1) That £6,000 be released from the Play Equipment reserve for improvements to the Edward Road play area.
- (2) That £5,000 be released from the Cemetery reserve for renovations to the Poundbury Cemetery building.
- (3) That £5,600 be released from the Play Equipment reserve for refurbishment of the surfaces of the skatepark.
- (4) That the project to refurbish and bring a water supply back to the Town Pump be supported and £50,000 be allocated from the Public Realm reserve.

63. **Town Clerk**

The Chair reported that this would be the last solo meeting of the Committee for the Town Clerk and took the opportunity to thank him for his guidance and support to the Policy Committee.

Resolved

That the Committee's thanks be recorded to the Town Clerk for his guidance and support to the Policy Committee.

64. **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.

65. **Dorset Council Property Assets, Dorchester**

The Committee considered a report by the Town Clerk on the public toilet assets in the town.

Resolved

That the Town Clerk have further discussions with officers at Dorset Council in regard to Trinity Street and Fairfield public toilets and report back to a future meeting of this Committee.

Chair.....