

ENVIRONMENT AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 9TH JULY, 2025

Present: Councillor Chris Rigby in the Chair

Cllr D d'Orton-Gibson (Vice-Chair), Cllr S Mackrow (In place of Cllr J Clements), Cllr O Walters (In place of Cllr M Gillett), Cllr C Goodall, Cllr J Martin, Cllr V Ricketts and Cllr G Wright

12 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Jo Clements, Cllr Jackie Edwards and Cllr Matthew Gillett.

13 Substitute Members

Cllr Sandra Mackrow substituted for Cllr Jo Clements and Cllr Oliver Walters substituted for Cllr Matthew Gillett.

14 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

15 Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2025, were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

16 Public Issues

There were no public issues received.

17 Local Area Energy Plan

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

This report presented the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP). It was produced to provide a roadmap and informed action plan that enabled the Council, working with partners and other organisations, to address its Climate and Ecological Emergency commitments and achieve the stated aim of carbon neutrality by 2045.

The Committee considered the plan and made the following comments:

- The Committee was advised that hydrogen is not recommended for domestic heating due to cost, infrastructure leakage, and safety concerns. It was confirmed that hydrogen would be reserved for sectors such as marine and heavy transport.
- In response to a query raised regarding hydrogen trials, the committee was advised that several projects had been cancelled, and national guidance now discourages its use for heating.
- The Committee was advised that the energy plan had modelled scenarios both with and without the Comfort incinerator. Officers advised that heat networks would rely on geothermal and heat pump technologies, and the incinerator's removal would not significantly affect the overall strategy.

- In response to a query raised regarding constraints at Hatch Pond depot due to limited electric waste vehicle usage, the Committee was advised that upgrades were now in place to enable full-day operations and that additional space and fire safety measures would be required to accommodate future fleet expansion.
- Officers advised that while capital costs for achieving net zero were significant, long-term savings and comparable system costs were expected.
- In response to a query raised regarding funding sources, the Committee was advised that grants, prudential borrowing, and partner contributions would be explored. It was noted that the balanced pathway scenario offered similar costs to a 'do nothing' approach when factoring in future energy savings and avoided climate impacts.
- In response to a query raised regarding retrofitting heat pumps, the Committee was advised that a fabric-first approach would be prioritised to improve thermal efficiency before installation.
- In response to a query raised regarding the cultural impact of school travel, the Committee was advised that broader behavioural change would need to address emissions not captured in the plan.
- The Committee was advised that updated housing targets had been factored into the modelling, including scenarios based on 3,000 new homes per year.
- The Committee was advised that assumptions from the Local Transport Plan and Council motions had been incorporated into the scenarios.
- In response to a query raised regarding public transport infrastructure, the Committee was advised that further engagement with operators and stakeholders would be required.
- The Committee was advised that residual emissions would be offset through local greenhouse gas removal initiatives, including nature-based solutions.
- The Committee was advised that offshore wind was excluded from the plan due to its classification as nationally significant infrastructure.
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It is RECOMMENDED that:

- 1) The recommendation as outlined in the report be approved by Cabinet.**

Voting: unanimous

- 2) Cabinet add as an external stakeholder, the community to be represented in all stakeholder engagement, including any panels, meetings or focus groups.**

Voting: unanimous

18 Email and Document Storage Retention – Impact Analysis on Costs and Environmental Factors & Recommendations

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Resources and Governance and the Service Director for IT & Programmes presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

This report evaluated the then-current email and document storage, carbon, and cost footprints of BCP Council's use of Microsoft 365.

The primary reason for bringing the report had been to address the scrutiny request to "establish the current data use and retention policies of the council, and whether there was scope for reduction of the environmental and financial impact of those policies."

The report outlined three options for consideration: reducing how much data the Council retained in its compliance libraries, transitioning to alternative cloud or on-premises solutions, and completing activity to profile users to enable potential re-mapping to lower-cost licence types.

The Committee discussed the report and responses to queries were provided, including:

- The Committee was advised that email signatures and image-heavy communications contribute significantly to data storage and energy usage, and that Microsoft Teams offers a more efficient alternative for collaboration.
- In response to a query raised regarding the environmental impact of Microsoft 365, the Committee was advised that the average footprint equates to approximately 190g CO₂ per user per month, roughly equivalent to driving half a mile in a car.
- The Committee was advised that Microsoft 365 is a more cost-effective and resilient solution compared to on-premises infrastructure, particularly in terms of remote access, data recovery, and energy efficiency.
- In response to a query raised regarding AI usage, the Committee was advised that increased AI adoption may offset any gains made through reduced email storage and confirmed that governance and monitoring mechanisms are being established to track environmental impacts.
- The Committee was advised that Microsoft licences can be tailored to individual usage levels, and that licence optimisation is being progressed through the Data and Innovation Programme.
- In response to a query raised regarding dormant accounts and data retention, the Committee was advised that accounts are reviewed regularly and deleted following a grace period, with managers given access to retrieve any necessary data. Deleted data is retained for up to five years in a preservation hold library, depending on the last edit date.
- The Committee was advised that Teams chat history is stored within the Exchange mailbox and subject to the same retention policies as email data.
- The Committee was advised that over 500 digital champions are embedded across the organisation to support the adoption of Microsoft 365 tools and promote efficient digital working practices.
- The Committee was advised that the carbon footprint data used in the report is available via Power BI and has been shared with the Sustainability Team for future monitoring and reporting.
- Officers agreed that the online dashboard would be shared with the Committee.

ACTION

It is RECOMMENDED to cabinet that:

as per Option (B), the Committee supports the continuation of activity already underway, as part of the Councils Data and Innovation Programme, to re-assess and profile Microsoft 365 end-user licensing requirements, moving colleagues to lower-costs licenses where appropriate.

Voting: unanimous

19 Cliff and Coastal Erosion Management across the BCP coast

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Since the late 19th century, coastal defences had been built along the shoreline at the base of the cliff to prevent coastal erosion. However, while the introduction and evolution of these defences had been very successful in stopping coastal erosion caused by marine action, they had not been successful in preventing cliff instability landwards of the coastal defences.

Consequently, borough engineers between the 1950s and 1990s undertook extensive cliff stabilisation works and carried out ongoing maintenance of a variety of engineering measures. From the 1990s onwards, however, due to a loss of knowledge and experience as engineers left the local authorities and were not replaced—combined with a reduction in funding—the

approach to cliff stabilisation became much more reactive, responding to events rather than proactively intervening or maintaining the systems installed during the 1950s–1990s.

In recognition of the challenges posed by cliff instability, from 2022 the South West Flood & Coastal team led the development of a new BCP Cliff Management Strategy (CMS). This aimed to provide a single, consistent, and integrated approach to managing each section of cliff along the BCP coast, ensuring that decisions made by various service areas within BCP Council were based on a common understanding of the risks posed by future cliff erosion and instability arising from a range of factors, including the impacts of climate change.

The CMS had been scheduled for completion by March 2026, and the paper provided details on its intended outputs. After March 2026, funding would have been required to support the ongoing maintenance of the new systems and processes established by the CMS. Additionally, further funding would have been needed for the maintenance of various cliff management systems across the BCP coast and, in certain areas, the construction of new cliff stabilisation works where cliff slips and falls continued to occur—such as at West Cliff.

The Committee discussed the report and responses to queries were provided, including:

- The Committee was advised that historical gaps in cliff maintenance may have contributed to recent landslips, alongside extreme weather events. Officers confirmed that engineering knowledge is being rebuilt internally to support long-term resilience.
- In response to a query raised regarding the estimated £41 million revenue requirement, the Committee was advised that this figure includes reactive works and maintenance but does not fully account for future climate impacts or population growth.
- The Committee was advised that approximately 6,000 properties are at risk over the next 100 years, with a combined estimated value of £1.5 billion.
- The Committee was advised that sand drain clearance has begun in priority areas, with inspections ongoing. A full clearance programme is not yet funded, but work is being prioritised through the Cliff Management Working Group.
- In response to a query raised regarding private landowner responsibilities, the Committee was advised that education and communication are key. A householder guide is being developed to support awareness and planning decisions.
- The Committee was advised that 1.4 miles of cliff frontage is privately owned, and that access for works requires permission from landowners.
- The Committee was advised that communications to residents aim to raise awareness without causing alarm, and that BCP's coastal protection schemes reduce risk and support mortgage viability.
- The Committee was advised that national shoreline management plans ensure joined-up decision-making across neighbouring authorities to avoid negative downstream impacts.
- In response to a query raised regarding ongoing resident engagement, the Committee was advised that digital resources and a dedicated website are being used to maintain awareness.
- In response to a query raised regarding the Cliff Lift, the Committee was advised that assessments are ongoing and that estimated repair costs of £5–6 million are currently unfunded.
- The Committee discussed the value of the cliffs as a natural and economic asset and suggested installing information boards to highlight biodiversity, history, and coastal protection efforts. Officers agreed to explore funding options.
- The Committee requested a future briefing on the Lift Management Strategy, which officers advised is scheduled for completion by March 2026.

The Committee noted the report.

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The Chair presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee was asked to consider and identify work priorities for publication in a Work Plan.

There were four scrutiny items considered by the Committee, detailed below:

Van Life Scrutiny Request – The Committee agreed to split the scrutiny into two sessions. The first session, scheduled for September, will focus on evidence gathering regarding the needs of those who live or travel in vans. The second session, provisionally scheduled for November, will consider the impact on residents and how BCP Council can respond.

The Committee confirmed the following six key lines of enquiry:

1. What are the needs of those who choose to live in vans locally?
2. What are the needs of those who culturally live or travel in vans eg. Gypsy Roman Traveller communities?
3. What are the needs of those who end up living in vans or other vehicles due to circumstances i.e. homelessness?
4. What are the needs of those who travel to BCP in their vans?
5. What is the impact to residents in particularly densely populated parking spots?
6. How can BCP Council provide for all of the above, particularly noting the rise of people choosing or otherwise to live in vehicles?

Evidence relating to KLOE 1–4 will be gathered in a scrutiny meeting in September with invitation of representatives of Kushti Bok and other local van dwellers known to councillors.

Evidence relating to KLOE 5 will be gathered in a scrutiny meeting provisionally arranged for November, with invitees to be determined. The Chair will seek further input from Committee members to support preparations in relation to this KLOE.

The Committee will reflect on actions to support KLOE 6 after KLOE 1–5 have been covered.

Plant-Based Food Options – The Committee agreed to retain this item on the September agenda, noting that monitoring of kiosk and outlet changes over the summer would provide timely context for discussion.

Pedestrian Crossing Timings – The Committee was advised that Councillors Rice and Chapmanlaw had been designated as rapporteurs for this item and would provide updates at future meetings.

Weed Spraying Chemicals – The Committee agreed to receive a winter briefing on the impact of chemical usage during the current season, with a view to determining whether a public meeting discussion would be appropriate.

RESOLVED that the Van Life scrutiny be scheduled for September and November, with the six key lines of enquiry agreed and noted. The Committee approved the items on the Work Plan and delegated responsibility for programming and reactive scrutiny to the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Duration of the meeting: 6.00 - 9.06 pm

Chairman at the meeting on
Wednesday, 9 July 2025