

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 July 2025 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr K Salmon – Chairman

Cllr S Aitkenhead – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr P Broadhead, Cllr J Beesley, Cllr L Dedman, Cllr M Dower,
Cllr C Goodall, Cllr S Mackrow, Cllr L Northover, Cllr Dr F Rice,
Cllr T Trent, Cllr O Walters and Cllr C Weight

Also in attendance: Cllr R Burton, Cllr M Earl, Cllr J Hanna and Cllr S Carr-Brown

25. Apologies

There were no apologies received

26. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

27. Declarations of Interests

The Chair and Cllr S Mackrow declared personal interests for transparency in relation to agenda item 8, Scrutiny of Budget related Cabinet Reports, due to a family member being in receipt of an EHCP and the issues around SEND funding.

28. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 August were approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- Clause 17: Add to the end of the paragraph in Agenda Item 9 – “Leisure services presentation as they were a representative on Sport Pool and as an operator of a non-profit club using it.”
- Clause 22: Add to the end of the opening paragraph – “The potential operator had withdrawn.”
- Clause 23: Final paragraph on page 12 should read – “Both BCP Council members present who are on the BDC board.”

The Chair updated the Board on actions from the previous meeting as follows:

- **Bournemouth Air Festival** – The Board supported Option 4, which was accepted by Cabinet.

- **Winter Gardens Project** – Recommendations were supported and accepted. The Board requested to scrutinise regeneration visions for the three towns. A Cabinet response is expected by 18 August.
- **Leisure Services** – The Board recommended the implementation of an access to leisure scheme across the BCP area, with emphasis on accessibility for people with disabilities. A Cabinet response is expected by 18 August.

29. Work Plan

The Chair 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. The Board was advised that:

- The working group on the consultation framework, marked as completed, had not yet reported back. It was proposed to reopen the working group to consider recent consultations (e.g., Community Governance Review and car parking consultation) as case studies. This would help strengthen the recommendations and the framework under development.
- The Board would be the lead scrutiny body for the Local Plan
- There would be a member briefing session on Monday 8 September on the CRM system.

RESOLVED that the working group on the public consultations framework be reopened to consider recent consultation exercises.

30. Public Issues

There were no public questions or petitions. One public statement was received from Mr Rich Sullivan, on behalf of Children's Services Manager, in relation to agenda item 7, Enhancement to Pay and Reward Offer as follows:

The Pay and Reward (P&R) process is causing significant concern among Children's Social Care staff. The process has been unclear and misleading—initially suggesting flexibility in pay based on experience, only to later enforce uniform pay. This has left experienced Managers, ATM's, IRO's and Social Workers feeling undervalued, facing pay cuts up to £6,000 due to significant reduction in LMS and lack of recognition. These changes threaten staff morale, recruitment, and retention, ultimately impacting the quality of care for vulnerable children and families. The team urges Cabinet to recall the 2020/2021 staffing crisis that led to an inadequate OFSTED rating. We are now rated "Good" and want to stay that way—but to do so, we must retain experienced staff through fair and competitive compensation. The council must not rely solely on goodwill without offering reciprocal support. We call for Current Pay to be maintained to reflect experience and tenure.

31. Enhancement to Pay and Reward Offer

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Resources and Governance 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. The Board was advised that BCP Council had been seeking to reach a collective agreement with its recognised trade unions since February 2023. An enhanced offer was proposed, and the trade unions have put this offer to their members which has now been accepted. Both unions have agreed to proceed to a collective agreement. This enhanced offer has an additional financial cost to the Council of £1.752 million. Negotiations with trade unions on a new Pay and Reward package which aligns pay and conditions across all colleagues had been taking place since the inception of BCP in April 2019. The report set out the progress made since Cabinet last considered the results of the November trade union ballot process and outlines next steps.

The Chair invited representatives of both trade unions to address the Committee to provide an outline of the unions' positions.

A number of issues were discussed during consideration of this item including:

In discussion of this item, a number of issues were raised and responded to, including:

- Impact on Staff - Concern was expressed that some staff may be adversely affected by the changes. Officers acknowledged this and explained that while the overall package was designed to be fair and equitable, there were inevitably some individuals whose positions would be less favourable under the new structure.
- Appeals Process - The Board was informed that a formal appeals process had been agreed with the trade unions to address concerns about job descriptions and role matching. Although the process steps had been finalised, the exact timing of implementation was still under discussion.
- Recruitment and Retention Payments - It was noted that the widening of pay bands had affected the calculation of recruitment and retention payments particularly within Children's Services. Officers confirmed that this issue was being reviewed urgently to ensure that any risks related to equal pay claims were mitigated. The Council was working closely with legal advisors to address this matter at pace.
- Legal and Industrial Relations Risks - The risks of not proceeding with the enhanced offer were clearly outlined. These included potential equal pay claims, unfair dismissal claims, and the possibility of industrial action. Officers stressed that reaching a collective agreement was essential to avoid these outcomes and to provide stability.
- Recognition of Progress - The Board acknowledged the significant achievement in reaching a collective agreement with the unions. The complexity of aligning pay and conditions across a newly formed unitary

authority was recognised, and the efforts of both officers and union representatives were congratulated.

- Implementation Challenges - The scale of work required to implement the new arrangements was discussed. This included the need to establish job evaluation panels to review any contested role profiles and the concurrent implementation of a new payroll system. Officers assured the Board that appropriate resources were being allocated to manage these transitions effectively.
- Staff Engagement and Union Ballots - The results of staff engagement exercises and union ballots were shared. UNISON reported a strong turnout and high levels of support for the proposal. GMB noted that it had been more difficult to engage with school-based staff. The unions reiterated their commitment to supporting their members through the transition.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board endorse the following recommendations from Cabinet to Council**

- a) Agree the additional costs associated with enhancing the proposed Pay and Reward offer.
- b) Agree the additional savings proposals outlined in Appendix 1 to ensure the cost implications of the proposal remain consistent with the February 2025 endorsed Medium Term Financial Plan.
- c) Agrees the details of the enhanced offer shown in Appendix 4 and 5 that will form the basis of the signed collective agreement with our recognised trade unions.
- d) Approves the recommended implementation date of 1 December 2025.

The meeting adjourned between 7:59pm and 8.09pm

32. Scrutiny of Budget reports to Cabinet

The Chief Finance Officer presented the item, which consisted of 2 reports, Financial Outturn 2024/25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan Update, copies of which had been circulated to each Member and copies of which appear as Appendix 'C' and 'D' to these minutes in the Minute Book. The reports outlined the Council's financial performance over the past year, including a revenue surplus of £1.2 million, and set out the financial planning assumptions and risks for the years ahead. A number of key areas were raised in discussion of this item including:

- SEND Budget and High Needs Block - Concern was expressed about the continued under forecasting of SEND expenditure and the growing deficit in the High Needs Block. The national context of the issue along with the scale and complexity of it were noted by the Board. The Board endorsed the actions taken by officers, the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder and in addressing the SEND deficit. It was noted that the Children's Services O&S Committee continued to monitor the situation.

- Use of Reserves and Savings - The Financial Outturn report highlighted that the 2024/25 budget had been balanced using savings rather than reserves, marking a shift from previous years. Members welcomed this approach but noted the ongoing challenge of delivering savings in a high-cost environment.
- Resident Card Scheme - The Board noted the proposal to set aside £0.5 million in an earmarked reserve to manage potential risks associated with income from the new resident card pilot scheme.
- Poole Museums Capital Scheme - Concerns were raised about the forecasted overspend of £0.55 million and a £0.8 million shortfall in third-party contributions. The revised funding strategy would require an increase in prudential borrowing of £1.3 million.
- Business Rates Adjustment - In response to a question regarding the budget being balanced through savings the Chief Finance Officer explained that an in-year adjustment to business rates had provided a one-off resource that could be used to address short-term pressures.
- Council Tax Collection - The Board discussed the implications of collecting Council Tax over 12 months, with some concern expressed about the potential impact on household finances.
- Future Year Savings Programme - Members sought clarification on where future savings would be made and how realistic the assumptions were, particularly considering service demand pressures.
- Redhill Paddling Pool - A query was raised regarding the status of this facility in the 2025/26 budget refresh, with a request for clarification on whether it had been removed from the savings programme.
- Legal and Related Costs - A question was asked about whether provisions had been made in earmarked reserves for potential legal costs, particularly in light of possible risks.

Following discussion, it was agreed to note the content of the Financial Outturn and MTFP reports and:

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board endorses Recommendation C of the Medium-Term Financial Plan report, acknowledging the actions taken by officers, the Leader of the Council, and the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in addressing the SEND deficit.

The meeting ended at 8.14 pm

CHAIRMAN