Notice of Overview and Scrutiny Board

Date: Monday, 20 October 2025 at 6.00 pm

Venue: HMS Phoebe, BCP Civic Centre, Bournemouth BH2 6DY

Membership:

Chairman:
Cllr K Salmon

Vice Chairman:
Cllr S Aitkenhead

Cllr J Beesley
Cllr P Canavan
Cllr L Dedman
Cllr C Goodall
Cllr S Mackrow
Cllr L Northover
Cllr Dr F Rice
Cllr T Trent
Cllr O Walters
Cllr C Weight
Cllr G Wright

NOTE: Membership subject to change pending appointment of councillors to committees at Council meeting on 14 October 2025.

All Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board are summoned to attend this meeting to consider the items of business set out on the agenda below.

The press and public are welcome to view the live stream of this meeting at the following link:

https://democracy.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=5960

If you would like any further information on the items to be considered at the meeting please contact: Claire Johnston 01202 123663 or email democratic.services@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

Press enquiries should be directed to the Press Office: Tel: 01202 454668 or email press.office@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

This notice and all the papers mentioned within it are available at democracy.bcpcouncil.gov.uk

AIDAN DUNN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

10 October 2025

DEBATE NOT HATE

Available online and on the Mod.gov app

Maintaining and promoting high standards of conduct

Declaring interests at meetings

Familiarise yourself with the Councillor Code of Conduct which can be found in Part 6 of the Council's Constitution.

Before the meeting, read the agenda and reports to see if the matters to be discussed at the meeting concern your interests

Does the matter directly relate to one of my Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) (set out in Table 1)?

- Yes: **I have a DPI and cannot take part without a dispensation**
- No: **Does the matter directly relate to the finances or wellbeing of one of my Other Registerable Interests (ORIs) (set out in Table 2)?**
  - Yes: **I have an ORI and must disclose it. I may speak as a member of the public but not discuss or vote and must leave the room**
  - No: **Does it directly relate to the finances or wellbeing of me, a relative or a close associate?**
    - Yes: **I have a NRI and must disclose it. I may speak as a member of the public but not discuss or vote and must leave the room**
    - No: **Does it affect the finances or wellbeing of me, a relative or a close associate or any of my ORIs?**
      - No: **I have no interest to disclose**
      - Yes: **Am I or they affected to a greater extent that most people? And would a reasonable person think my judgement is clouded?**
        - Yes: **I have an interest and must disclose it. I may speak as a member of the public but not discuss or vote and must leave the room**
        - No: **I have no interest to disclose**

What are the principles of bias and pre-determination and how do they affect my participation in the meeting?

Bias and predetermination are common law concepts. If they affect you, your participation in the meeting may call into question the decision arrived at on the item.

Bias Test	Predetermination Test
In all the circumstances, would it lead a fair minded and informed observer to conclude that there was a real possibility or a real danger that the decision maker was biased?	At the time of making the decision, did the decision maker have a closed mind?

If a councillor appears to be biased or to have predetermined their decision, they must NOT participate in the meeting.

For more information or advice please contact the Monitoring Officer

Selflessness

Councillors should act solely in terms of the public interest

Integrity

Councillors must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships

Objectivity

Councillors must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias

Accountability

Councillors are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this

Openness

Councillors should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing

Honesty & Integrity

Councillors should act with honesty and integrity and should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned

Leadership

Councillors should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs

AGENDA

Items to be considered while the meeting is open to the public

1.	**Apologies** To receive any apologies for absence from Councillors.	
2.	**Substitute Members** To receive information on any changes in the membership of the Committee. Note – When a member of a Committee is unable to attend a meeting of a Committee or Sub-Committee, the relevant Political Group Leader (or their nominated representative) may, by notice to the Monitoring Officer (or their nominated representative) prior to the meeting, appoint a substitute member from within the same Political Group. The contact details on the front of this agenda should be used for notifications.	
3.	**Declarations of Interests** Councillors are requested to declare any interests on items included in this agenda. Please refer to the workflow on the preceding page for guidance. Declarations received will be reported at the meeting.	
4.	**Confirmation of Minutes** To confirm and sign as a correct record the minutes of the meetings held on 22nd and 30th September 2025.	5 - 18
5.	**Recommendation Tracker** The recommendation tracker is included with the agenda for the Board to note.	19 - 30
6.	**Work Plan** The Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Board is asked to consider and identify work priorities for publication in a Work Plan.	31 - 40
7.	**Public Issues** To receive any public questions, statements or petitions submitted in accordance with the Constitution. Further information on the requirements for submitting these is available to view at the following link:- https://democracy.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeID=151&Info=1&bcr=1 The deadline for the submission of public questions is midday 3 clear working days before the meeting – Tuesday 14 October 2025 The deadline for the submission of a statement is midday the working day before the meeting – Friday 17 October 2025. The deadline for the submission of a petition is 10 working days before the	

meeting.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

8.	**Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update**	41 - 88

This report:

- Aims to ensure the council presents a legally balanced 2026/27 budget.
- Presents an update on the MTFP position of the council.
- Presents an update on the letters of the Leader of the Council and Director of Finance in writing to Government to seek assurance around the council's ability to continue to cashflow the significant and growing Dedicated Schools Grants deficit within the statutory framework.

Provides details of the council's responses to two government consultation documents namely the Local Government Fair Funding Review and Modernising and Improving the administration of council tax.

9.	**BCP Council Libraries – Draft Library Strategy**	89 - 130

This report updates Cabinet on the progress which has been made with the future library strategy following two previous reports in February and December 2024.
The report sets out the key drivers for the library strategy, detailing the suggested future focus of the library service, the priorities for investment, and the action plan required to ensure we can continue to deliver an efficient and comprehensive service for the future.
The work to underpin the strategy has given us a clearer understanding of where to target investment to bring improvements for our communities, increasing access, and modelling provision within clusters.
The vision is an ambitious one, focussed on delivering improvements and cementing the value of libraries within our communities.
Whilst there is undoubtedly a resource challenge, as there is in delivering all council services, the strategy remains an ambitious statement of intent. Working with partners, the community, and internal teams, we will develop our preparedness for funding opportunities and focus on greater collaboration to ensure libraries deliver in a time of financial stress and even greater societal challenge.
It is anticipated that following endorsement of the draft Library Strategy, any changes of provision to be proposed within the life of the strategy will undergo a second stage consultation process, as appropriate.

No other items of business can be considered unless the Chairman decides the matter is urgent for reasons that must be specified and recorded in the Minutes.

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 September 2025 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr K Salmon – Chairman

Present:	Cllr J Beesley, Cllr P Canavan, Cllr C Goodall, Cllr L Northover, Cllr T Trent, Cllr O Walters, Cllr G Wright and Cllr M Tarling (In place of Cllr S Mackrow)
Present virtually:	Cllr S Aitkenhead
Also in attendance:	Cllr R Herrett
Also in attendance virtually:	Cllr J Butt and Cllr K Rampton

33. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr S Mackrow and C Weight.

34. Substitute Members

Cllr M Tarling substituted for Cllr S Mackrow.

35. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

36. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2025 were approved as a core

37. Public Issues

There were no public issues submitted for this meeting

38. Commercial Operations

The Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations 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 report was brought to the Board following a request for a report of the operating practices for the Commercial Operations Service, the report provided an overview of the service and details in response to the specific items which were outlined by the Board in Key Lines of Enquiry document which has been provided from the Board in relation to this item. A number of key points were highlighted including:

- The Commercial Services Team delivered a surplus to the Council's core budget, supporting key services and enabling investment in leisure and heritage assets.
- Financial pressures, including energy costs and inflation, were challenges to maintaining cost-neutral operations.
- The Directorate consisted of five key service areas; Seafront, Leisure and Events, Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management, Car Parking and Commercial Operations and there was a workforce of 438 permanent and fixed-term staff, supported by over 500 casual staff and volunteers.

The Board discussed the item and raised a number of points including:

- **Beach Huts and Lodges** – These were an important asset for the Council and the maintenance of beach huts was funded through core budgets and a £800,000 allocation from the LUF grant from the MHCLG. There were no plans to sell beach lodges, though marketing and occupancy improvements were being pursued.
- **Cliff Stabilisation -** £4.5 million from the LUF grant was earmarked for East Cliff stabilisation works. A Cliff Management Strategy was being developed, supported by a working group and asset database. Concerns were raised regarding long-term infrastructure maintenance and the need for regular updates to Ward Councillors.
- **Pier Infrastructure -** Structural works were planned for Bournemouth Pier, with £9.5 million allocated. The works were expected to commence in March 2026, subject to tender outcomes and weather conditions. Boscombe Pier was reported to require future interventions due to general wear. Mudeford Pontoon had undergone recent refurbishment.
- **Growth Opportunities -** Development of the Film Office was reported to be progressing, with increased enquiries and economic benefits. A joined-up wedding offer across Council venues was being developed.
- **Hengistbury Head -** A request was made for greater engagement with town and parish councils, particularly in Christchurch.
- **Commercial Operations Structure -** Clarification was provided on the new Head of Commercial Operations post, which was confirmed as a strategic role without a dedicated team at present. Leisure, sport, and arts and culture development sat within the Leisure service area. Museums were confirmed to be outside the Directorate, but collaborative work was ongoing. The Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management team was included due to the cross-cutting issues with seafront services. However, the Residents Card was due to remain under the Investment and Development team.
- **Sand Management -** Sand clearance was prioritised based on access needs and seasonal conditions. The differences in sand build-up across the seafront were explained and the impact of storm events on operational workload was noted.
- **Financial** - The Board asked if there would be a more strategic approach in terms of maximising income from the seafront services. It was noted that

there were plans to increase revenue from different projects but in terms of other similar commercial operations in the area the percentages involved were fairly similar. **The Portfolio Holder undertook to report back to the Board on this issue.**

- **Community Infrastructure Levy** – Some of the areas in which this was being used was questioned and the Chief Operations Officer undertook to recirculate CIL guidance to all Councillors.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board note the detail provided within the report and add a review to the work plan for 6 months to ascertain the state of development at that point.

Voting: Nem. Con.

- The meeting adjourned at 7:03pm and resumed at 7:10pm -

39. Resident Card

The Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations 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 the Resident Card was a commitment to residents across the conurbation to support household incomes at a time when cost of living is increasing. The Council intended to introduce a scheme offering a free hour of parking in council-owned car parks, discounts at seaside kiosks and one swim per month at BCP Leisure centres, to support the wellbeing of local people. Additionally, work is underway with leisure partners and local businesses to build an offer which gives residents more for their money and supports the growth of the local economy. The scheme was intended to be accessed digitally and with a physical card and making it truly accessible for all from Spring 2026.

The report detailed the benefits to residents and the opportunity to phase in offers or services as the scheme matures. This approach also means the scheme remains flexible and adaptable in line with financial forecasts. Subject to Cabinet approval, the intention is that the offer outlined in this report will set out the requirements for a technology provider. This will form the basis of a detailed specification and contract terms to enable the Council to progress to call off a supplier by direct award. A number of issues were raised by the Board in the subsequent discussion including:

- **Equity and Accessibility -** Concerns were raised that the scheme disproportionately benefited drivers and excluded residents who did not have access to smartphones or parking apps. The lack of alternative payment methods, such as cash or card integration, was highlighted as a barrier for those with limited digital access. This was difficult to address due to the current parking infrastructure. The need for clear communication and confirmation of eligibility and usage was emphasised to avoid confusion and potential penalties.

- **Public Transport and Sustainable Travel -** Members questioned the absence of incentives for public transport users in light of the Council's commitment to reducing car dependency and promoting modal shift. The Board made suggestions to explore partnerships with bus operators and other sustainable travel providers such as Beryl Bikes in future phases of the scheme.
- **Exemptions and Affordability -** Concern was raised regarding the lack of detail regarding exemptions for low-income residents. It was proposed that families eligible for free school meals and other vulnerable groups be considered for free or reduced-cost access to the scheme and the Board stressed the importance of ensuring the scheme did not inadvertently exclude those most in need.
- **Geographic Coverage and Leisure Access -** It was noted that the leisure benefit was limited to BCP Leisure Centres, which were not located in Bournemouth, raising concerns about fairness and accessibility for residents in that area. The exclusion of BH Live facilities was questioned, and members requested that gym access also be given consideration.
- **Financial Transparency -** Members expressed concern over the lack of detailed financial modelling within the report. The absence of a value for money analysis and sensitivity testing was highlighted as a significant gap. It was requested that full financial details, including projected uptake scenarios and cost implications, be provided before any decision was made.
- **Political Process** – There were concerns raised that the final details and decisions were to be delegated to officers without any involvement from Councillors and it didn't feel this was a finished piece of work for Councillors to make a decision on. The Board suggested it needed further information in order to make a decision.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board do not support the recommendation as outlined in the report as the Board did not feel that the Cabinet report included sufficient financial details and details of the scheme offers to enable it to make an informed decision. The Board recommend to Cabinet that the report is deferred to allow details of the financial modelling that has been done to be added, including a cost/benefit analysis and a sensitivity analysis. Once this additional information is included in the report, it should then be brought back to the O&S Board before being taken to Cabinet for decision.

Voting: 8 in favour, 1 against, 0 abstentions

40. O&S Board Decision Tracker

The Overview and Scrutiny Specialist introduced the recommendation Tracker to the Board. This was a new tool to assist the Board in monitoring the recommendations it makes. It was welcomed by the Board and it was agreed that a programme for considering the outcome of recommendations made by the Board would be implemented.

41. Work Plan

The Chair of the O&S Board 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. The Overview and Scrutiny Board was asked to consider and identify work priorities for publication in a Work Plan.

The Board considered a recommendation from the Audit and Governance Committee to add an item to its work plan on the impact of the Carter's Quay development on local residents. Following discussions the Board agreed that it be added to the Plan and that the possibility of combining this with the expected Carter's Quay Cabinet report due in December be explored.

The Chair advised that a request had been made for a Councillor Call-for-action on the current situation in blue badge processing. Whilst all the requirements for this had not been met the Chair proposed that it should be added to the next available meeting of the Board

RESOLVED that the work Plan be confirmed including the two additional updates outlined above.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm

CHAIRMAN

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BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 September 2025 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr K Salmon – Chairman

Present:	Cllr J Beesley, Cllr P Canavan, Cllr L Dedman, Cllr C Goodall, Cllr S Mackrow, Cllr L Northover, Cllr Dr F Rice, Cllr T Trent, Cllr O Walters, Cllr C Weight and Cllr G Wright
Also in attendance:	Cllr A Chapmanlaw, Cllr K Rampton, Cllr B Nanovo, Cllr A Moriarty, Cllr D d'Orton-Gibson, Cllr L Williams, Cllr T Slade, Cllr A Keddie, Cllr D Martin and Cllr M Earl
Also in attendance virtually:	Cllr J Challinor, Cllr S Armstrong, Cllr S Carr-Brown, Cllr M Dower, Cllr O Brown, Cllr C Adams, Cllr J Butt, Cllr B Dove and Cllr D Farr

42. Apologies

Apologies were received from the Vice-Chair Cllr S Aitkenhead.

43. Substitute Members

Cllr J Martin substituted for Cllr S Aitkenhead.

44. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion. The Chair reminded all Councillors that the Interim monitoring officer had issued a dispensation for Councillors in relation to the Community Governance Review.

45. Public Issues

One Public Question and 2 public statements were received as follows in relation to agenda Item 6 – Community Governance Review – Final Recommendations:

Question from Mr B Lister

We already have 76 Councillors Representing 33 wards.

If All Those Represented Their Ward Constituents Properly With Funded Laptops, Constituency Meetings, CIL Funding & Generous Return For Part Time Work.

Town Councillors Would Get Exactly What??

Why DO We Need Them, How Many Would They Be?

WHAT would the Taxpayers Precept Charge Be In Years 2026 & 2027?

Response from Cllr O Walters as Chair of the Task and Finish Group:

To clarify, there are 76 councillors representing BCP Council, however, there are also a further 53 councillors representing the existing town and parish councils of Burton and Winkton, Hurn, Highcliffe & Walkford, Christchurch and Throop & Holdenhurst.
If the recommendations are approved there would be an additional 50 councillors created.
The vast majority of town and parish councils do not provide IT equipment and do not normally receive allowances.
Parish and town councils can play a vital role in supporting and representing local communities, individuals and events, act as statutory consultee on a number of regulatory matters and act as the first point of contact locally.
BCP Council will be required to agree a first year anticipated budget for the new councils which will be worked on over the coming months if the recommendations are approved. It will be for the new councils, once elected, to agree their actual budget for 2026 and for all future years.

Statement from Mr H Seccombe, Chair of the Boscombe and Pokesdown Community Forum:

Boscombe has spent 15 years building genuine community-led governance — a Forum, a Towns Fund Board managing £20million in grant funding, a Neighbourhood Plan with
community-distributed CIL, and transparent local decision-making.

Imposing a Bournemouth Town Council will dismantle all of this. Residents rejected the proposal not out of apathy, but because Boscombe already has trusted, functioning systems. To override that rejection — while denying Boscombe its own parish — suggests a pre-determined agenda, not genuine localism. This is not parity. Throop is permitted a parish; Boscombe is denied one.

The consultation process was flawed: many residents were unaware that rejecting a Boscombe parish could lead to forced inclusion in a larger one. This directly contradicts the aim of “strengthening local voices.” It risks silencing one of the strongest and undoing years of hard-won community progress. We urge councillors to reject the recommendation and support a separate Boscombe parish or leave Boscombe out altogether.

Statement from Mr H Seccombe in a personal capacity:

Southbourne is a proud, distinct, and community-minded area with its own forum, coastline,
independent shops, and a long record of civic participation. It has the identity and infrastructure to support a parish council — just as much as the already approved Throop.

To deny Southbourne a parish while imposing a larger Bournemouth Town Council is a serious democratic failure. It overrides local identity in favour of administrative convenience, and risks silencing the very voices parish councils are meant to strengthen. Residents were not clearly informed that rejecting a Southbourne parish could lead to forced inclusion in a wider Bournemouth council. This flaw undermines the legitimacy of the process and contradicts the principle of consent.

If this new model must go ahead, it must include space for genuinely local parishes like Southbourne — not just subsume them. At the very least, Southbourne should be permitted its own parish council or left out altogether.

46. Work Plan

The Chair advised that the report had been presented to the meeting the previous week and there were no further updates, as such it was proposed that the report be noted. A copy of the report had been circulated to each Member and a copy appears as Appendix 'A' to these minutes in the Minute Book.

RESOLVED that the work plan be noted.

Voting: Nem. Con.

47. Community Governance Review - Final Recommendations

The Chair of the Task and Finish Group 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 the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (Part 4) devolved power from the Secretary of State to principal councils to carry out community governance reviews and put in place or make changes to local community governance arrangements. The Council commenced a review following the Council decision in October 2024 at which the terms of reference and timetable were approved. The Task and Finish Group has considered the response to the consultation, taking into account all relevant factors, engaged with local ward councillors and existing parish councils before determining these recommendations.

Introduction and External Contributions

The Chair of the Task and Finish Group introduced the report and outlined the process undertaken. It was noted that the consultation had received 1,866 responses, representing approximately 0.5% of the BCP population. The proposals had been amended in response to feedback, including reductions in Councillor numbers and boundary adjustments.

The Board then received the following presentations and had the opportunity to ask questions:

- The Chief Executive of the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils, who outlined the role, powers, and funding mechanisms of local councils.
- The Vice President of the Association of Charter Trustee Towns, who submitted a written statement highlighting the importance of preserving civic traditions and the role of charter trustees.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45pm and resumed at 6:50pm

Contributions from Non-Board Councillors

The Chair invited non-Board Councillors address the meeting. Due to the number of non-Board Councillors who wished to speak each was given approximately two minutes to share their views. There were a number of issues raised, including:

- Concerns that the proposals were top-down and lacked grassroots support.
- Objections to the Bournemouth Town Council proposal, citing low consultation response rates and potential duplication of existing community structures.
- Support for the principle of localism and the potential for town councils to protect non-statutory services.
- Warnings about the political risks of proceeding without broader public support.

The following questions were raised and responded to:

- The confidentiality of the consultation results was questioned and it was clarified that the task and finish group was not subject to the same rules as Cabinet and therefore the specific procedure rule outlined did not apply, and that the draft results contained personal identifiers, justifying their restricted access.
- The estimated cost of elections for the proposed town councils and how long it would take to repay those. It was stated that the estimated costs were £36,700 for Broadstone, £412,900 for Poole, and £483,900 for Bournemouth, with an estimated £7.20 per property in the first year. BCP Council would fund the elections upfront and recover costs through council tax.
- In response to a question about where the idea for a Bournemouth Town Council originated. It was explained that it was part of the administration's 2023 election manifesto and followed statutory guidance for a Community Governance Review.

General Discussion and Clarifications

The following key issues were raised and discussed:

- The legal and procedural basis for the CGR process, including the role of the Task and Finish Group and the status of the consultation.
- The anticipated costs of elections for new councils and how these would be recovered.
- The limitations of charter trustees in delivering community services and civic functions.
- The potential for future community councils to be established through petition.
- It was proposed and seconded that the Board should not support the recommendation outlined in the report at 'C' which proposed the continuation

of the task and finish group to address amongst other things the transfer of ceremonial assets as these were the domain of the existing Charter Trustees. It was clarified that the only statutory service proposed for transfer to new town councils was allotments. The Task and Finish Group would be responsible for preparing budgets and identifying assets for transfer (including civic regalia), whilst BCP Council retained responsibility for setting the initial precept as the billing authority. The motion was not carried.

Discussion and Decisions by area:

Existing Parish and Town Councils (Sections A–E)

The continuation of the existing parish and town councils in Christchurch and Bournemouth was supported, with minor boundary amendments as proposed.

It was noted that some consultation responses appeared to misunderstand that these councils already existed. Some concerns were raised in terms of the number of Councillors, noting that some wards were uncontested and the proportion of Councillors to electors would be far higher in Christchurch than Bournemouth and Poole should Town Councils be established.

RESOLVED that the Board support that the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group relating to proposals for Burton and Winkton (A), Hurn (B), Highcliffe & Walkford (C) Christchurch Town (D) and Throop and Holdenhurst (E) be recommended to Council for approval without amendment.

Voting: 9 in favour, 0 against, 4 abstentions

Broadstone Town Council (Section F)

The proposal to create a new Town Council in Broadstone was outlined. It was acknowledged that the consultation response from Broadstone residents was mixed. However, the distinct identity of Broadstone and the clarity around the boundaries were provided as reasons for proceeding with a recommendation to create this Town Council. The Board asked questions and commented on a number of issues in discussion of this proposal. The Board members commented that Broadstone had always had somewhat of a unique identity within the Borough of Poole.

The rationale for establishing a separate Broadstone Town Council, rather than including it within a wider Poole Town Council, was based on the area's strong local identity and clearly defined boundaries. Despite a majority of consultation responses from Broadstone residents opposing the proposal, it was considered that the community would benefit from dedicated local representation. Concerns were raised about consistency in decision-making and the dismissal of similar community-led structures in other areas.

RESOLVED that the Board support that the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group relating to Broadstone (F) be recommended to Council for approval without amendment.

Voting: 7 in favour, 4 against, 2 abstentions

Community Councils in Bournemouth (Section G–I)

The proposals to establish community councils in Redhill and Northbourne, Boscombe and Pokesdown, and Southbourne were not supported by the Task and Finish Group. One of the reasons for this was the difficulty in defining clear boundaries for all of the proposed areas. The presence of existing community forums was also a factor.

It was noted that the consultation responses did not demonstrate sufficient support for any of the proposals and there was also a lack of people willing to stand as community councillors in these areas. The area for Redhill appeared to be too small to be viable and it was also noted that the community assets were used by a wider population. Whilst some consideration was given to redefining boundaries it was not felt that there were other areas which would naturally fall within this area. In Southbourne, whilst there was a strong community identity, where the boundaries for the wards and community council area should be were more difficult to define. Members noted that there were strong opinions from some areas of Bournemouth to identify with their local area.

RESOLVED that the Board support that the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group relating to Redhill and Northbourne (G), Boscombe and Pokesdown (H) and Southbourne (I) be recommended to Council for approval without amendment.

Voting: 9 in favour; 0 against; 4 abstentions

The meeting adjourned at 8:36pm and resumed at 8:44pm

Poole Town Council (Section J)

The Board was advised that the proposal to establish a Poole Town Council was supported by the Task and Finish Group. The Board discussed the proposal extensively and the views of Board members were mixed. Issues raised included:

- The limitations of the charter trustees in delivering civic functions and the inability of the Charter Trustees to organise even small events.
- The historical identity of Poole and the desire for local representation were cited as key reasons to progress a Town Council.
- Concerns were raised about the consultation results and the potential for future precept increases.
- Concerns were raised that the proposal ignored public opinion from the consultation and that there was no clear direction on what the Council would do or what services it would take on.
- The financial implications of establishing a new Council were discussed including the ability to raise funds for surveys which it was no longer possible for BCP Council to provide.
- Concerns were raised regarding predetermination in putting forward this proposal and also the potential future political implications.

RESOLVED that the Board support That the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group relating to Poole Town (J) be recommended to Council for approval without amendment.

Voting: 7 in favour, 2 against 4 abstentions

Cllr J Beesley and Cllr G Wright asked for their votes against the proposal to be recorded.

Cllr T Trent asked that his vote in favour of the proposal be recorded.

Bournemouth Town Council (Section K)

The proposal to establish a Bournemouth Town Council was supported by the Task and Finish Group. However, this was on the narrowest of margins with the Chair of the Group using his casting vote. There were a number of issues around ward boundaries that the Chair of the Task and Finish Group advised had been difficult to work out and asked Board members for any comments they may have on this. A wide-ranging debate was held, with a number of views expressed both in favour and against the proposals The Leader also responded to a number of issues raised in discussion. Issues raised included:

- That the consultation results—showing 76% opposition—were being disregarded, and that existing neighbourhood forums already provided effective local governance.
- That the whole process had been very much on a top down approach but none of the alternatives to the proposal appeared to be acceptable.
- There were lots of issues raised in the BCP area for what people wanted and a Bournemouth Town Council would be a vehicle to achieve this.
- The main budget issue for BCP Council was the SEND deficit and creating local councils would not have an impact on this
- It was noted that both Bournemouth MPs do not support a Town Council.
- It was noted that the average precept was around £89 across country but the new parish Council could choose not to take on any services and have a minimal precept.
- Supporters highlighted the need for local investment and democratic representation at a local level.
- Opponents raised concerns about the consultation results, the potential cost, and the impact on existing community structures.

RESOLVED that the Board support that the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group relating to Bournemouth Town (K) be recommended to Council for approval without amendment.

Voting: A recorded vote on this issue was requested and agreed:

Those voting in favour: Cllrs F Rice, L Dedman, C Weight, O Walters, T Trent, S Mackrow and C Goodall.

Those against: Cllr P Canavan, J Martin, L Northover, J Beesley and G Wright

Cllr K Salmon abstained

Implementation and Budget Setting

RESOLVED that the Board support that recommendations at 'B' and 'C' of the report be recommended to Council without amendment as follows:

(b) the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to make all necessary reorganisation of community governance orders to implement the changes agreed by Council;

(c) the Task and Finish Group continue to consider the transfer of civic and ceremonial assets, statutory services and precept requirements for year 1, for each new parish, on the basis of minimal transfer and precept, and a report be presented to full Council in due course.

Voting: 8 in favour; 1 against; 4 abstentions

Consultation Process

The Board discussed the consultation process and noted the following:

- The low response rate limited the ability to draw firm conclusions.
- The consultation was conducted in accordance with statutory guidance.
- Concerns were raised about the clarity and accessibility of the consultation materials.
- The Board agreed that the consultation process should be reviewed by the existing working group on public engagement.

48. Council Budget Monitoring 2025/26 at Quarter One

This 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 was circulated to Board members for information. No comments or questions were received on this in advance of the meeting and the report was noted.

The meeting ended at 10.02 pm

CHAIRMAN

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Agenda Item 5

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

UPDATED: [10.10. 2025]

Minute number	Item	Recommendation made *items remain for monitoring until implementation is complete or committee agree to remove.	Recommended to *name of receiving body/ Officer, and date received	Outcome *accepted/ partially accepted/ rejected/ unknown.	Implementation updates
Recommendations from Board meeting – 13 May 2024					
9	**A shared vision for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole 2024-28 Strategy and Delivery Plan**	RESOLVED that the Board support the recommendations to Cabinet, subject to the suggested amendments from the Board: (a) The delivery plan be approved (b) The measures for monitoring progress and ensuring accountability for delivery be agreed. Note – minor amendments to the measures contained in the report were suggested by the O&S Board and captured in the full minutes of the meeting.	Cabinet - 22 May 2024	Recommendations **accepted.**	The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the amendments suggested at O&S Board had been incorporated into the revised version of the Strategy and Delivery Plan supplied for decision by Cabinet. (Update by O&S Specialist, 28/4/25)
Recommendations from Board meeting – 16 July 2024 – No recommendations made at this meeting.					
Recommendations from Board meeting – 27 August 2024 – No recommendations made at this meeting.					
Recommendations from Board meeting – 23 September 2024 – No recommendations made at this meeting.					
Recommendations from Board meeting – 1 October 2024 – No recommendations made at this meeting.					
Recommendations from Board meeting – 21 October 2024					

60	**Blue Badge Service Update Report**	The Board resolved that: The Portfolio Holder/Leader and the Chief Executive be asked to write to the Department for Transport to raise the concerns outlined by the O&S Board and that the Portfolio Holder take the issue forward with local MPs and the Local Government Association to encourage local authorities to raise these issues with the Department for Transport and request that central government gives local authorities the freedom to set fees which cover the cost of administering the system and that the system should be simplified in terms of renewal processes.	Portfolio Holder/ Leader/ Chief Executive	Recommendations partially accepted by the Portfolio Holder	The Portfolio Holder confirmed that they had written to the Department for Transport and provided the response received to the O&S Board at its meeting on 12 May. It was unknown if this had been raised directly with the LGA and at the O&S Board meeting on 12 May the Portfolio Holder undertook to follow up on this.
Recommendations from Board meeting – 18 November 2024					
69	**O&S Budget Working Groups – findings and recommendations**	Recommended to Cabinet 1. That the principle of an inflationary increase across all parking charges be endorsed for the 2025/26 budget. 2. That it requests Officers to take into account the suggestion that an assessment be made on using a proportion of surplus income to accelerate the parking charging machine replacement programme prioritising the best value machines in order to reduce future costs (subject to the necessary procurement processes). 3. That Officers be requested to explore options to reduce costs for the Council and make the process easier for the public to pay for car parking, in particular an option to be able to pay in advance/on Council website.	Cabinet – 10 December 2024	Partially accepted	Responses provided to the Cabinet meeting on 5 February ://ced-pri-cms-02.ced.local/documents/s55921/Appendix%203a%20-%20Portfolio%20Holder%20Responses%20to%20Budget%20Scrutiny.pdf

		1. That it requests that Officers evaluate the retention and recruitment of Civil Enforcement Officers to ensure a robust and resilient workforce to provide an appropriate level of resource and promote safe and appropriate parking. 2. That Officers be requested to ensure adequate resourcing of parking enforcement to reduce inappropriate parking around schools.	Cabinet – 10 December 2024	Accepted	Response from Portfolio Hodler received at the O&S Board meeting on 3 February 2025 : http://ced-pri-cms-02.ced.local/documents/s55808/responses%20from%20Cabinet.pdf
		The O&S Board recommend to Cabinet: 1. That any Resident Card offering is made fully accessible to all those who are not digitally enabled. 2. That there should be an application process for the card with a small financial contribution for the cost of processing and that the card should be a valuable offer that residents are willing to pay a small cost for, so that it can be sustainable in terms of administrative costs. 3. That any charge levied for the card should be the same regardless of the format and that consideration should be given to concessions for disadvantaged groups.	Cabinet – 10 December 2024	Recommendations partially accepted	Responses provided to the Cabinet meeting on 5 February ://ced-pri-cms-02.ced.local/documents/s55921/Appendix%203a%20-%20Portfolio%20Holder%20Responses%20to%20Budget%20Scrutiny.pdf Response from Portfolio Hodler received at the O&S Board meeting on 3 February 2025 : http://ced-pri-cms-02.ced.local/documents/s55808/responses%20from%20Cabinet.pdf Note: the residents card offer did not progress as part of the budget
Recommendations from Board meeting – 9 December 2024					
78	**Pay and Reward Progress Update**	RESOLVED that Cabinet be recommended to approve option 2 of the proposed process flowchart (Appendix 1 of the report) and the commencement of collective consultation under s188 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (‘TULRCA’), which is a statutory obligation where an employer is proposing to dismiss 20 or more employees.	Cabinet - 10 December 2024	Recommendation accepted	Negotiations with the pay and reward progress have continued and a new offer had been made to the unions. A ballot was now taking place with the recognised trade unions and an outcome was expected by the end of June 2025. This report was brought to O&S Board and Cabinet

79	**Housing Delivery Council Newbuild Housing and Acquisition Strategy (CNHAS) update and Harbour Sail acquisition**	RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board recommend that Cabinet support the recommendations as set out in the Cabinet report: [Housing Delivery Council Newbuild Housing and Acquisition Strategy CNHAS update and Harbour Sail a.pdf]	Cabinet - 10 December 2024	Recommendation accepted	The recommendation from Cabinet has not been put before Council because the purchase of Harbour Sail has not proceeded. This was due to timing of the purchase which affected the ability to use the grant for the purchase (which without this grant the scheme was no longer financially viable) and that title restrictions could not be altered to allow flexibility of tenure that was required. The grant has been reallocated to other property acquisitions.
81	**BCP Council Libraries – Update on Library Strategy Development**	RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board recommend that Cabinet support the recommendations as set out in the Cabinet report: [BCP Council Libraries Update on Library Strategy Development.pdf]	Cabinet - 10 December 2024	Recommendation accepted	The Library strategy is expected to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Cabinet in August and September 2025
Recommendations from Board meeting – 6 January 2025					

90	**Devolution**	Recommended to the Leader that: a: The Leader arranges an emergency Full Council Meeting at the earliest opportunity to enable a vote of ALL of the available options b: An evidence-based piece of work be undertaken on the pros and cons of a devolution arrangement with both the Solent deal AND Wessex deal, including exploring a public referendum for BCP residents.	Leader of the Council	Partially accepted	Full Council meeting was arranged for 15 January 2025. The Council meeting considered the options of both the Solent deal and the Wessex deal, further information was brought to the Council meeting and Council voted to participate in the priority programme and to move forward wit the Wessex proposal.
Recommendations from Board meeting – 13 January 2025 – No recommendations made at this meeting					
Recommendations from Board meeting – 3 February 2025					
106	**Council Budget Monitoring 2024/25 at Quarter 3**	RESOLVED that the O&S Board recommend to the Audit and Governance Committee that it instigate an investigation on the Carters Quay development.	Audit and Governance Committee 27 February 2025	Recommendation Accepted	Update provided to the A&G Committee at its meeting on 29 May. Chief Executive agreed that a report of the governance and process could be produced for the 24 July. It was also agreed to circulate by email the updated provided by the Director, Investment and Development together with the advice previously provided by the Monitoring Officer. Carters Quay - Update.pdf A further report will be take to Cabinet
Recommendations from Board meeting – 4 March 2025					
115	**Community Governance Review – Draft Recommendations**	RESOLVED: that the O&S Board Recommend to Cabinet that the draft recommendations of the Task and Finish Group relating to proposals for Burton and Winkton (A), Hurn (B), Highcliffe & Walkford (C) and Christchurch Town (D) be recommended to Council, for approval for publication and consultation, without amendment.	Cabinet date – 5 March 2025	Recommendations Accepted	Consultation progressed with these proposals. The Consultation closed 22 June 2025. The Working group are processing the outcome of the consultation and a report will be brought back to the October Cabinet meeting.

		RESOLVED: That the O&S Board recommend to Cabinet that the draft recommendations of the Task and Finish Group relating to Broadstone (F) and Poole Town (J) be recommended to Council, for approval for publication and consultation, without amendment.		Recommendations Accepted	
		RESOLVED that the Board recommend to Cabinet that that the recommendation for Bournemouth (K) not be forwarded to Council.		Recommendation Rejected	Cabinet felt that it was important to consult on all areas including (k) Bournemouth Town and therefore supported the recommendations as set out by the task and finish group and did not support recommendation 3 as submitted by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.
		RESOLVED that the Board recommend to Cabinet that the draft recommendations of the Task and Finish Group relating to Southbourne (I)) be recommended to Council, for approval for publication and consultation, without amendment.		Recommendations Accepted	
		RESOLVED that the O&S Board recommend to Cabinet that the draft recommendations of the Task and Finish Group relating to Boscombe and Pokesdown (H) be recommended to Council, for approval for publication and consultation, without amendment.		Recommendations Accepted	
		RESOVLED that the O&S Board recommend to Cabinet that the draft recommendations of the Task and Finish Group relating to Throop and Holdenhurst (E) be recommended to Council, for approval for publication and consultation, without amendment.		Recommendations Accepted	

		RESOLVED that the O&S Board recommend to Cabinet that the draft recommendations of the Task and Finish Group relating to Redhill and Northbourne (G) be recommended to Council, for approval for publication and consultation, without amendment		Recommendations Accepted	
116	**Bournemouth Development Company LLP Business Plan**	RESOLVED that the O&S Board recommend to Cabinet that a decision to extend the Winter Gardens site 'Option Execution Date' is deferred by Cabinet until the new BDC Partnerships Business Plan has been approved by Cabinet.	Cabinet – 5 March 2025	Recommendation rejected	The Cabinet did amend a recommendation as follows: Agrees the principle of an extension of the Winter Gardens site "Option Execution Date", with details to be agreed to be delegated to the Chief Operations Officer acting in consultation with the Leader of the Council, or until Cabinet have had the opportunity to review a revised partnership business plan including the site development plan for the revised Winter Gardens scheme." It was not able to agree a deferment of this decision as this would stop progress on the Winter Gardens development.
117	**Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**	RESOLVED That the Board recommended to Cabinet: 1. That the spending priorities for Strategic CIL as set out in Option 2 of the paper over the period 2024/25 to 2029/30 be agreed provided CIL income is as forecast; and 2. That the report be updated annually for Cabinet and Council.	Cabinet – 5 March 2025	Recommendations accepted	Accepted by Cabinet and spending priorities agreed for 2024/25 to 2029/30 for CIL.
Recommendations from Board meeting – 12 May 2025					
11.	**Blue Badge Update**	The Chair requested that the matter also be raised with the Local Government Association particularly regarding the cost of administering the Blue Badge scheme and the limitations of the current data system	Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Customer, Communication and Culture		Update on this issue awaited – no deadline date

12.	**Arts and Culture Funding**	Recommended to Cabinet: 1. That the O&S Board recognise the value of the NPOs funded by BCP to Health and well-being youth and the local economy and urge Cabinet to protect the funding BCP currently provides. 2. That Cabinet endorse the work that's been done with schools by the NPOs and recommends that Cabinet take action to encourage all schools to take part. 3. To explore whether it would be a benefit for a Councillor to be appointed as a member of the Board on any or all of the NPO organisations, and 4. That it ensures that the arts by sea festival goes ahead next year.	Cabinet – 13 May 2025	Recommendations Accepted	1: The cultural funding remains in the MTFP so there is no change in that position as of the moment. 2: The Portfolio Holder is working with the Cultural Hub to encourage this. 3: The Portfolio Holder has spoken to the NPO and they respectfully suggested that this would not be helpful. The Portfolio Holder agreed with this especially as they would likely be a PH and the Portfolio Holder already had very close links with all of them. 4: We are planning for ABTS next year and awaiting funding news from ACE.
Recommendations from Board meeting – [9 June 2025]					
22.	**Bournemouth Air Festival**	The Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed with the recommendation that Cabinet agrees to Option 4 as set out in the report, which acknowledges the ongoing process for new events to come forward and stops any further work on an Air Festival for 2026 onwards.	Cabinet – 18 June 2025	Recommendation Accepted	Recommendation accepted and confirmed that further work on the Air Festival for 2026 had been discontinued.
23.	**Bournemouth Developemnt Company - Winter Gardens Project**	1. The Overview and Scrutiny Board supported the following recommendations to Cabinet: (c) Cabinet approves the BDC Partnership Business Plan for 2025 – 2030. (c) Cabinet confirms the extension of the Site Option Execution Date to September 2028, allowing Muse as the Private Sector Partner in	Cabinet – 18 June 2025	Recommendation Accepted	The development plans are due to come forward for consideration in December 2025 and it was proposed by the Leader that these would go to full Council.

		the BDC to fund the first stage of work on the new Winter Gardens scheme, resulting in a new Site Development Plan. (c) Cabinet approves proceeding on the understanding that public parking will not be included in a new scheme design. 2. The Overview and Scrutiny Board welcomed the development of the Town Centre Vision for Bournemouth and requested to scrutinise the regeneration visions for the 3 Towns in the BCP Area as these are redeveloped.			
		3. The Overview and Scrutiny Board welcomed the development of the Town Centre Vision for Bournemouth and requested to scrutinise the regeneration visions for the 3 Towns in the BCP Area as these are redeveloped.		Recommendation Accepted – update provided	We are developing the narrative across the three towns identifying key strengths and uniqueness to build upon the vision set out in the Corporate Strategy : vibrant places, where healthy people and nature flourish, with a thriving economy in a healthy natural environment. To support this we've made good progress by the establishment of a Citizen's Panel and the Growth Board. The Citizen's Panel comprises of residents with a focus on the town centre which is helping to provide insight into how residents feel and engage within the space. The Growth Board is a newly established steering group which is comprised of representatives from key sectors within the BCP conurbation including Business Improvement District, education, manufacturing, Starts up and the volunteering sector. These perspectives are helping to shape our vision for BCP as a place which can thrive, for residents to feel civic pride and a destination for visitors to enjoy. The conversation at the O&S focussed on how Winter Gardens fits into the wider context of the Town Centre and committee members asked for that to form part of any proposals from BDC. There is an existing Town Centre Vision which forms part of the Local Plan, and the intention is for BDC to review this to support a future planning application, ensuring it reflects the nature of the development proposals in the absence of a formal planning policy framework.

24.	**Leisure Services Presentation and Discussion**	The Overview and Scrutiny Board recommended that Cabinet be urged to put in place an "Access to Leisure" scheme across the whole BCP area as soon as possible, recognising that people in Poole have lost this facility and with particular emphasis on ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities	Cabinet – 18 June 2025	Recommendation Accepted – update from Portfolio Holder Provider	The Portfolio holder has asked that officers explore options around a renewed access to leisure facility and bring forward options, including but not limited to; how that would be managed, financial implications, and meeting the recommendation as requested by the Overview and scrutiny board.
Recommendations from Board meeting – [15 July 2025]()					
31.	**Enhancement to Pay and Reward Offer**	The Overview and Scrutiny Board supported the following recommendations to Council within the Cabinet report: 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 2025endorsed 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.	Cabinet – 16 July	Recommendations Accepted	Agreed by Council on 22 July 2025. Work underway to achieve implementation for December 2025.
32.	**Scrutiny of Budget Related Cabinet reports – MTFP update report**	The Overview and Scrutiny Board endorsed the work of Members and Officers around SEND as set out in recommendation C of the report as follows: In respect of the SEND deficit, note the update and acknowledges the action taken by the Leader and the Director of Finance	Cabinet - 16 July	Recommendations Accepted	
Recommendations from Board meeting - 22 September 2025					
39.	**Residents Card**	RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board do not support the recommendation as outlined in the report as the Board did not feel that the Cabinet report included sufficient financial details and details of the scheme offers to enable it to make an informed	Cabinet – 1 October	Recomemndation no accepted	Updates were made to the report and the recommendation prior to consideration by Cabinet

		decision. The Board recommend to Cabinet that the report is deferred to allow details of the financial modelling that has been done to be added, including a cost/benefit analysis and a sensitivity analysis. Once this additional information is included in the report, it should then be brought back to the O&S Board before being taken to Cabinet for decision.			
Recommendations from Board meeting – 30 September 2025					
47.	**Community Governance Review – Final Recommendations**	All Recommendations as set out within the Cabinet report were supported by the Board: (a) the Task and Finish Group community governance review final recommendations, as set out in paragraphs 49, 62, 74, 92, 104, 117, 128, 140, 152, 166 and 181 of this report be approved; (b) the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to make all necessary reorganisation of community governance orders to implement the changes agreed by Council; (c) the Task and Finish Group continue to consider the transfer of civic and ceremonial assets, statutory services and precept requirements for year 1, for each new parish, on the basis of minimal transfer and precept, and a report be presented to full Council in due course.	Cabinet – 1 October		The recommendations of Cabinet are due to be referred to Council on 14 October.

OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Minute number	Item	Action* *Items remain until action completed.	Benefit	Outcome (where recommendations are made to other bodies)
Actions from Board meeting – 12 May 2025				
10.	**BCP Complaints Policy**	RESOLVED that the Board further examine the role of councillors in the complaints process, particularly in relation to ward issues and casework.	To ensure the effectiveness of both the Councils complaints process and work of Ward Councillors	Work underway - Cllr S Aitkenhead as rapporteur
~~**11.**~~	~~**Blue Badge Update**~~	~~That an update be provided to the Board in approximately 12 months- time. (This will probably be in the format of an informal update circulated outside of the meeting)~~	~~To monitor and receive assurance that the current situation has not changed.~~	~~To be added to the Boards work plan – Update now scheduled for November~~
Actions from Board meeting – 15 July 2025				
29.	**Work Plan**	Consultation Framework Working Group to be reopened 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.	Additional meetings to be set up as soon as possible – meetings underway.
Actions from Board meeting – 22 September 2025				
38.	**Commercial Operations**	Portfolio Holder to provide an update on the current situation in 6 months-time with a view to scheduling further scrutiny when appropriate.	To monitor and receive updates on this area of the Council	

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Report subject	**Work Plan**
Meeting date	20 October 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	The Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Board is asked to consider and identify work priorities for publication in a Work Plan.
Recommendations	**It is RECOMMENDED that:** **the Overview and Scrutiny Board review, update and confirm the Work Plan.**
Reason for recommendations	The Council's Constitution requires all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to set out proposed work in a Work Plan which will be published with each agenda.
Portfolio Holder(s):	N/A – Overview and Scrutiny is a non-executive function
Corporate Director	Aidan Dunn, Chief Executive
Report Authors	Lindsay Marshall, Overview and Scrutiny Specialist
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Work Plan updates

1. This report provides the latest version of the Committee's Work Plan at Appendix A and guidance on how to populate and review the Work Plan in line with the Council's Constitution. For the purposes of this report, all references to Overview and Scrutiny Committees shall also apply to the Overview and Scrutiny Board unless otherwise stated.
2. Items added to the Work Plan since the last publication are highlighted as 'NEW'. Councillors are asked to consider and confirm the latest Work Plan. Note: that due to the meeting schedule the Work Plan is published prior to the preceding meeting, any updates will be noted at the meeting if needed.
3. The most recent Cabinet Forward Plan can be viewed on the council's website. This link is included in each O&S Work Plan report for councillors to view and refer to when considering whether any items of pre-decision scrutiny will join the O&S Committee Work Plan.

Resources to support O&S Work

4. The Constitution requires that O&S committees take account of the resources available to support proposals for O&S work. Advice on maximising the resource available to O&S Committees is set out in the O&S Work Planning Guidance document referenced below.

Work programming guidance and tools

5. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees Terms of Reference document provides detail on the principles of scrutiny at BCP Council, the membership, functions and remit of each O&S committee and the variety of working methods available.
6. The O&S Work Planning Guidance document provides detail on all aspects of work planning including how to determine requests for scrutiny in line with the Council's constitution.
7. The O&S Framework for scrutiny topic selection was drawn up by O&S councillors in conjunction with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. The framework provides detail on the criteria for proactive, reactive and pre-decision scrutiny topics, and guidance on how these can be selected to contribute to value-added scrutiny outcomes.
8. The 'Request for consideration of an issue by Overview and Scrutiny' form is an example form to be used by councillors and residents when making a new suggestion for a scrutiny topic. Word copies of the form are available from Democratic Services upon request by using the contact details on this agenda.

Options Appraisal

9. The O&S Committee is asked to review, update and confirm its Work Plan, taking account of the supporting documents provided and including the determination of any new requests for scrutiny. This will ensure member ownership of the Work Plan and that reports can be prepared in a timely way.
10. If updates to the Work Plan are not confirmed there may be an impact on timeliness of reports and other scrutiny activity.

Summary of financial implications

11. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Summary of legal implications

12. There are no legal implications arising from this report. The Council's Constitution requires that all O&S bodies set out proposed work in a Work Plan which will be published with each agenda. The recommendation proposed in this report will fulfil this requirement.

Summary of human resources implications

13. There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

Summary of sustainability impact

14. There are no sustainability resources implications arising from this report.

Summary of public health implications

15. There are no public health implications arising from this report.

Summary of equality implications

16. There are no equality implications arising from this report. Any councillor and any member of the public may make suggestions for overview and scrutiny work. Further detail on this process is included within O&S Procedure Rules at Part 4 of the Council's Constitution.

Summary of risk assessment

17. There is a risk of challenge to the Council if the Constitutional requirement to establish and publish a Work Plan is not met.

Background papers

- Overview and Scrutiny Committees Terms of Reference
- O&S Work Planning Guidance document
- O&S Framework for scrutiny topic selection
- 'Request for consideration of an issue by Overview and Scrutiny'

Further detail on these background papers is contained within the body of this report.

Appendices

Appendix A - Current O&S Work Plan

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BCP Council Overview and Scrutiny Board – Work Plan. Updated 09.10.2025

Guidance notes:

- 2/3 items per committee meeting is the recommended maximum for effective scrutiny.
- The O&S Board will approach work through a lens of **RESIDENT IMPACT AND EXPERIENCE**
- Items requiring further scoping are identified and should be scoped using the Key Lines of Enquiry tool.

	Subject and purpose	How will the scrutiny be done?	Lead Officer/Portfolio Holder	Additional Information
Meeting Date: 20 October 2025				
1.	**NEW - Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update Report** To consider the updated MTFP including progress towards delivering a balanced 2026/27 budget.	Pre-Decision Scrutiny of a Cabinet Report	PH – Finance Chief Finance Officer	Item identified from Budget timeframe
2.	**BCP Libraries Strategy** To consider a Cabinet report which presents the key elements of the new draft Library Strategy ahead of a second stage consultation process.	Pre-Decision Scrutiny of a Cabinet Report	PH – PH - Customer Communication and Culture Director of Customer and Property	Item identified from Cabinet FP – Moved from 1 October Cabinet
Meeting Date: 17 November 2025				
1.	**Carters Quay** To scrutinise the Cabinet report which provides an update to Councillors on the current situation	Pre-Decision Scrutiny of a Cabinet Report	PH – Housing and Regulatory Services	Item added to the Cabinet FP - June 2025. Originally scheduled for October - moved to November (TBC0

Key: Pre-Decision Scrutriny Pro-active Scrutiny

	Subject and purpose	How will the scrutiny be done?	Lead Officer/Portfolio Holder	Additional Information
2.	**Blue Badge Update** For the O&S Board to consider an update on the current situation with the processing of Blue Badges and potential future actions	Committee Report	PH – Customer, Communication and Culture Director of Customer and Property	The Board agreed to add this as an item to the work plan following a request for an (unvalidated) Councillor call-for-Action
3,	**Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report** For the Board to consider the annual report for the BCP Overview and Scrutiny Function which details O&S work over the past year.	Committee Report	Scrutiny Specialist and O&S Committee Chairs	
Meeting Date: 8 December 2025				
1.	**Parking Enforcement Around School** For the O&S Board to consider how illegal parking can be addressed around schools. To potentially include input from schools and parking enforcement team.	Enquiry session Scrutiny Rapporteur - Cllr A Chapmanlaw	PH – Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations PH – Childre, Young People, Education and Skills	Initial enquiries will be made through a scrutiny rapporteur to lead to an enquiry session with different parties. Date TBC dependent upon outcome of Rapporteur enquiries
2.	**Crime and Disorder Scrutiny of Community Safety Partnership** The Overview and Scrutiny Board is the statutory body for crime and disorder scrutiny and will consider the annual report of the community safety partnership.	Annual Report	PH – Housing and Regulatory Director of Housing and Communities	

Key: Pre-Decision Scrutriny Pro-active Scrutiny

	Subject and purpose	How will the scrutiny be done?	Lead Officer/Portfolio Holder	Additional Information
3.	**Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget Update and Budget monitoring Cabinet Reports** To consider the updated MTFP including progress towards delivering a balanced 2026/27 budget.	Pre-decision Scrutiny of Cabinet reports	PH – Finance Chief Financial Officer	O&S Board preciously agreed to receive MTFP update reports
4.	**Bournemouth Development Company: Winter Gardens Site Development Plan** To consider a report which presents a new site development plan for Cabinet approval.	Pre-Decision Scrutiny of a Cabinet Report	PH – Leader Chief Operations Officer / Director of Investment and Development	Item agreed to be added from the Cabinet Forward Plan by the Board at its September meeting.
Meeting Date: 5 January 2026				
	No currently scheduled reports – items to be determined			
Meeting Date: 2 February 2026				
	Budget 2026/27 and Medium Term Financial Plan	Pre-decision Scrutiny of a Cabinet/Council report	PH – Finance Chief Finance Officer	Annual Budget report
Items for scrutiny (Meeting dates and/or methods to be determined)				
	Carter's Quay Development To consider the impact of the Carter's Quay Development on residents living in the locality of the site.	TBC	TBC	Item agreed by the Board at its September 2025 meeting – following referral from the Audit and Governance Committee

Key: Pre-Decision Scrutriny Pro-active Scrutiny

	Subject and purpose	How will the scrutiny be done?	Lead Officer/Portfolio Holder	Additional Information
	Accounting for Social Value in decision making	Committee Report	TBC	Item requires further scoping - KLOE document
	Working more collectively across BCP geographical areas / Locality Governance – This item is interdependent with the progressing Community Governance Review and will be revisited once this is completed.	TBC	TBC	This requires further scoping – KLOE document
	Culture of the Council To consider a number of different elements regarding the culture of the Council including member/officer relations, accountability and record keeping and recognition of different geographic localities.	TBC	TBC	Scrutiny Request received and agreed by the Board - June 2025
	Business Improvement Districts To consider issues raised by the business improvement districts operating within BCP.	Report/presentation to the O&S Board (TBC)	Leader of the Council	This was requested June 2025 as there was an existing item for issues arising from the preceding briefing from the BIDs which hadn't been progressed
	Investment and Development Directorate - Regeneration Programme This report provides a bi-annual update on the progress of the Council's regeneration programme.	Pre-Decision Scrutiny of a Cabinet Report	PH - Leader of the Council Director Investment and Development	Tracking Cabinet report – moved from July meeting to September, now expected at December Cabinet

Key: Pre-Decision Scrutriny Pro-active Scrutiny

	Subject and purpose	How will the scrutiny be done?	Lead Officer/Portfolio Holder	Additional Information
Working Groups and items addressed through alternative scrutiny methods				
	Public Consultations Framework Development – This group has completed its work into the consultation framework and will report its findings back to the Board inline with the timetabling of the draft framework.	Working Group	Director of Marketing, Communications and Policy PH – Customer, Communications and Culture	The Board established this working group at its meeting on 18 November The Group is continuing its work to look into recent consultations.
	Member involvement in the Complaints Process To investigate how this links with members ward work in specific issues.	Scrutiny Rapporteur – Cllr S Aitkenhead	PH - Customer, Communications and Culture	
	Briefing Sessions			
	Dates for O&S Board Briefing Sessions for 2025/26:		**Potential Topics for Briefing Sessions**	
	• **Monday 24 November** • **Monday 9 March**		• **Regeneration and BDC** • **Performance of the Council**	

Key: Pre-Decision Scrutriny Pro-active Scrutiny

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CABINET

Report subject	**Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update**
Meeting date	29 October 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	This report: • Aims to ensure the council presents a legally balanced 2026/27 budget. • Presents an update on the MTFP position of the council. • Presents an update on the letters of the Leader of the Council and Director of Finance in writing to Government to seek assurance around the council's ability to continue to cashflow the significant and growing Dedicated Schools Grants deficit within the statutory framework. • Provides details of the council's responses to two government consultation documents namely the Local Government Fair Funding Review and Modernising and Improving the administration of council tax.
Recommendations	**It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:** **a) Acknowledges the ongoing progress being made to address the funding gap for 2026/27.** **b) Endorses the latest position regarding the developing 2026/27 Budget and MTFP position.** **c) Notes the update on the conversation with government around the impact that the DSG deficit is having on the financial sustainability of the council.** **d) Continue to express concern to government at the existential challenge to the Councils ability to set a legally balanced budget for 2026/27 posed by having the lack of cash to fund the special educational needs and disability service (SEND).**
Reason for recommendations	To comply with accounting codes of practice and best practice which requires councils to have a rolling multi-year medium term financial plan.

	To provide Cabinet with the latest high-level overview of the 2026/27 Budget and 3-year medium-term financial plan. To provide an update on the letters submitted to MHCLG in July 2025 regarding the difficulties presented by the accumulating DSG deficit.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr. Mike Cox, Portfolio Holder for Finance
Corporate Director	Aidan Dunn, Chief Executive
Report Authors	Adam Richens, Director of Finance adam.richens@bcpcouncil.gov.uk
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. Cabinet on the 13 May 2025 received an MTFP Update reports which set out the framework in support of the delivery of the 2026/27 budget including the proposed.
    a) Budget planning process.
    b) Budget timeline.
    c) Financial strategy underpinned by scenario planning exercise that guides the level of activity that might be needed.

2. As a reminder the February 2025 council approved budget for 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) has the following key features.
    a) A balanced MTFP over the 3-year period to 31 March 2028 based on conventional local government financial management processes and revenue sources.
    b) A 4.99% council tax increase for 2025/26 with a financial planning assumption of the same increase in each of the following years consistent with the projections from the Office Budget Responsibility.
    c) Assumed delivery of £9.6m in annual savings, efficiencies, and additional resources to balance the 2025/26 budget as itemised and supported with individual delivery plans. This was a significant reduction from the £38m assumed in support of the 2024/25 Budget.
    d) A target of £19m in capital receipts from the disposal of assets to fund the council's ongoing transformation projects over the 2-year period 2024/25 and 2025/26.
    e) An ongoing request to government to honour their pledge to provide full compensation in respect of their Employers National Insurance increases on staff directly employed by the Council. Since the budget was published analysis by the

Local Government Association suggests that over 60% of council tax increases nationally will be consumed by the rise in employers' National Insurance through direct or indirect effects.

f) Management of numerous financial risks. Principle amongst these is the existential threat to the financial viability and sustainability of the Council caused by the accumulated deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The 2025/26 budget assumed additional temporary borrowing through the Council's Treasury Management powers to fund the excess Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) High Needs revenue expenditure above the grant made available by government via the DSG. This shortfall was budgeted to be £57.5m in 2025/26 with the consequential impact that the cumulative DSG deficit would be increased from £108m on 31 March 2025 to a predicted £165.5m on 31 March 2026. This Treasury Management mechanism is only being made available as a temporary solution on the pretext that the government have committed to returning the SEND system to financial sustainability during 2025.

3. In addition, on the 16 July 2025 Cabinet received a further MTFP Update report which not only presented an update on the progress being made towards setting a legally balanced budget for 2026/27 but also included details of

   - the correspondence of the Leader of the Council and Director of Finance who had written to Government to seek assurance around the council's ability to continue to cashflow the significant and growing Dedicated Schools Grants deficit within the statutory framework.
   - Details of two consultations documents issued on the 20 June 2025 namely the Local Government Fair Funding Review and Modernising and Improving the administration of council tax.

Government Consultation Documents:

Fair Funding Review 2.0

4. On 20 June 2025 the Deputy Prime Minister Rt Hon Angela Rayner released a consultation document on government plans for a new local government funding formula based on factors such a population and poverty aimed at allocating more resources to deprived areas and in doing so directing more resources towards the North of the country. The consultation pledges protections to limit sudden drops in grant income and to maintain support for rural and coastal areas with high costs.

5. This consultation document was discussed as part of the 16 July 2025 Cabinet report with details of the 46 questions to be answered by the 15 August deadline included as an appendix.

6. **Appendix A** to this report now provides details of the Councils final response to the Fair Funding Review 2.0 consultation document.

7. One of the governments principles objectives of the fair funding review is to simplify the funding landscape by reducing the number of specific grants as well as the number of bid for grants. In support of this objective the indication is that the following grants will be rolled into the annual unringfenced Revenue Support Grant (RSG).

Figure1: Government Funding Reforms grants **likely** to be included in Revenue Support Grant

£4.416m 2025/26 Revenue Support Grant (RSG)

Grants to be rolled into (included) within future RSG settlements

£39.520m	Social Care Grant
£11.644m	Business Rates compensation for under indexing the annual multiplier
£7.655m	ASC Market Sustainability & Improvement Grant
£3.318m	Employers National Insurance Contributions Grant
£0.974m	Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant
£63.113m	**Total**

£67.527m 2025/26 Rebased RSG

8. In addition, the indication is that the following grants will remain as specific grants.

Figure 2: Grants that are **not** likely to be rolled into RSG

£23.379m	Public Health Grant
£16.579m	Local Authority Better Care Fund
£4.212m	Homelessness Prevention Grant
£1.046m	Children's Social Care Prevention Grant
£45.216m	**Total**

Modernising and improving the administration of council tax.

9. Also, on the 20 June 2025 the government released a consultation document exploring options to improve support towards council tax and improve the council tax collection, and enforcement processes to deliver a fairer and more efficient system for taxpayers and councils. They believe there are clear opportunities to modernise the administration of the council tax system and take the view that deliberate tax avoidance should not be tolerated.

10. Further details of this consultation were set out in the 16 July 2025 Cabinet report alongside details of the 36 questions to be answered by the 12 September 2025 deadline included as an appendix.

11. **Appendix B** to this report now provides details of the Councils final response to the Modernising and improving the administration of council tax consultation document.

2025 National Autumn Budget announcement

12. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that the Autumn budget will take place on the 26 November 2025 with the indication being that she will be looking to ensure there is sufficient money to fund public services whilst also stimulating growth and investment. This event will be almost a month later than last year when it took place on the 30 October 2024. Consequentially there is a concern that this will have an impact on the stated intent to have an earlier release of the annual provisional Local Government Finance Settlement than previous years. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have subsequently confirmed that the settlement is now

likely to be in line with normal timings and that they will seek to publish as much information as possible through a policy statement in late October early November.

Latest draft 2026/27 budget and MTFP position

13. The budget for 2026/27 and the MTFP should be seen in the context of a rolling, evolving process structured to enable the ongoing proactive management and prioritisation of the council's resources. As a sector local authorities have been grappling with sustained financial pressures since 2010. Recently councils have had to become more efficient in navigating the uncertainty and volatility caused by global macro-economic factors, the legacy and long-term consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, alongside those caused by the recent cost-of-living crisis, and changes in public policy.

14. In support of the process the May Cabinet MTFP Update report considered the level of uncertainty and therefore risk that will apply to the key assumptions underpinning the MTFP. In line with good practice these assumptions were then tested via a process of sensitivity analysis and several different models developed that highlight their impact. At the extremes they indicated there could be an improvement in the position or alternatively a deterioration which would lead to a funding gap of up to £44m for 2026/27. Ultimately as part of the financial strategy services were asked to produce savings plans based on cash limited budgets for 2026/27 which required them to develop £13.3m of proposals in support of the financial planning process.

15. As part of a dynamic, agile approach to financial management Portfolio Holders have been working with Corporate Directors, Service Directors, and Budget Holders to prepare these additional potential proposals for balancing the 2026/27 budget should they be required. These will be considered at the Cabinet and Corporate Management Board meeting before being brought forward should they be required.

16. Figure 1 below sets out the latest MTFP position to 2028. As a reminder to Cabinet, the table sets out changes in the revenue budgets on an annual basis, either positive numbers which represent additional costs to be met, or negative numbers which represent forecast cost reductions, savings or additional income. The variances are shown in the year in which they are expected to be first seen and are then assumed to recur on an ongoing basis in each of the following years. One-off changes will be seen as an entry in one year and will then be reversed out in a following year.

17. **Figure 1:** Latest updated MTFP position

Service Pressures (net of any specific grant changes)	Updated Budget 2025/26 £m	Oct 2025 MTFP Position 26/27 £m	27/28 £m	28/29 £m	Total £m
Wellbeing Directorate	176.0	11.1	7.7	8.1	**26.9**
Children's Directorate	110.3	6.0	6.0	6.0	**17.9**
Operations Directorate	37.7	0.6	3.0	3.1	**6.7**
- Operations Directorate: Waste & Extended Producer Responsibility	22.0	1.9	0.8	6.0	**8.6**
Resources Directorate	49.8	(0.0)	0.1	1.6	**1.6**
Service Pressures (net of any specific grant changes)	**395.8**	**19.5**	**17.5**	**24.8**	**61.8**
Savings, Efficiencies, Fees & Charges					
Wellbeing Directorate		(2.8)	(0.9)	(0.8)	**(4.5)**
Children's Directorate		(0.5)	0.0	0.0	**(0.5)**
Operations Directorate		(4.5)	(2.0)	(1.3)	**(7.8)**
Resources Directorate		(0.9)	(0.4)	(0.1)	**(1.5)**
Transformation		(3.5)	(5.6)	(0.7)	**(9.7)**
Savings, Efficiencies, Fees and Charges		**(12.2)**	**(8.9)**	**(2.9)**	**(24.0)**
Corporate Items - Cost Pressures	**16.7**	**10.4**	**4.2**	**6.1**	**20.7**
Funding - Changes	**(409.9)**	**(14.1)**	**(18.7)**	**(22.4)**	**(55.2)**
Debt interest due to accumulated SEND deficit	**8.1**	**1.8**	**1.9**	**1.2**	**4.9**
Annual – Net Funding Gap	**2.8**	**5.4**	**(4.0)**	**6.7**	**8.1**
Application of one-off business rates resources to MTFP	**(2.8)**	**2.8**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**2.8**
Annual – Net Funding Gap	**0.0**	**8.2**	**(4.0)**	**6.7**	**10.9**
Cumulative MTFP – Net Funding Gap		**8.2**	**4.1**	**10.9**	

Please note: The MTFP as presented does not provide for two specific known unknowns namely any potential impact of the governments funding reforms and future waste strategy.

18. The position as set out above continues to be underpinned by numerous key assumptions which have been informed by many factors such as government announcements, economic forecasts or targets, and professional judgements. The key assumptions currently being used in building the 2026/27 Budget and MTFP are summarised in Figure 2 below and explained in further detail in **Appendix C**.

19. **Figure 2:** Latest key assumptions

	2026/27	**2027/28**	**2028/29**
Council Tax (Includes 2% Social Care Precept)	4.99%	4.99%	4.99%
Pay Award	2.5%	2.0%	2.0%
Mininum Increase in Fees & Charges	2%	2%	2%
National Living Wage (NLW) *% Increase in the National Living Wage*	4.1%	2%	2%
	Dec-25	Dec-26	Dec-27
Bank of England - Base Rate *Current BoE Base Rate: March 2025 4.5%*	4.00%	3.50%	3.25%

Please note:
a) The increase in fees and charges should be regarded as a minimum increase to those not set by statute. The principle of full cost recovery may mean increases above these levels for example based on the specific cost profile of the service.

Financial Strategy to support maintaining a balance budget for 2026/27.

20. Overall, the funding gap for 2026/27 has increased since the July 2025 Cabinet MTFP update report. The main changes are as set out below.

Annual Pay Award

a) The February 2025 approved MTFP assumed annual pay awards from 2026/27 onwards of 2% in line with the governments inflationary target. In recognition that a 3.2% uplift has been agreed for 2025/26 and inflation currently remains stubbornly above 3%, the proposal is the move the financial planning assumption for 2026/27 to a 2.5% pay uplift.

b) In addition, as a reminder Full Council approved enhancements to the pay and reward offer at its meeting in July 2025. This included recognition that the annual potential incremental drift liability, which is a cost borne and managed by services and therefore not included in the MTFP position shown in Figure 1. has been increased from £1.5m per annum to £4m per annum. This cost will be subject to issues including turnover and performance.

National Living Wage (NLW) uplift

c) The latest MTFP position assumes that the National Living Wage will be increased by 4.1% in 2026/27 (from £12.21 per hour in 2025/26 to £12.71 in 2026/27). This is a further 2.1% increase over the inflation based 2% assumption included in the MTFP approved in February 2025. This forecast increase is based on the Low Pay Commission's estimate published in August 2025. The current estimate is that the impact of the 4.1% uplift in the NLW will be an extra £6m cost for commissioned care for adult services which is £3m more than the February 2025 estimate.

Debt Interest on accumulating SEND Deficit

d) The current estimate is that in 2026/27 the councils general fund will be required to cover in the region of £9.9m interest on the accumulating debt on the Dedicated Schools Grant as pertaining to the expenditure on Special Educational Needs and Disability. As set out below the deficit for 2025/26 is now forecast to be just under £10m more than the £57.5m deficit assumed as part of the original budget for the year. This higher deficit alongside interest rates which are now forecast not to fall as per the Bank of Interest base rate mean a significantly larger amount needs to be provided for.

Quarter One 2025/26 Budget Monitoring

e) As set out in a report to Cabinet on the 1 October 2025 the council is currently forecasting that it will overspend its 2025/26 approved budget by £3.7m. The report also set out a number of actions and mitigations that will now be implemented in an attempt to bring expenditure back within the parameters of the approved budget framework for 2025/26. Consequently, no adjustments have been made to the current developing draft budget for 2026/27 other than a couple of relatively minor assumed 2025/26 savings that are no longer deliverable due to the withdrawal of the BCP Local Plan and CIL Charging schedule.

Savings, efficiencies and additional income

f) A financial strategy in support of the 2026/27 budget process was agreed as part of the May 2025 Cabinet MTFP Update report. To ensure the council has considered and planned for all eventualities the intent was for services to produce savings plans based on cash limited budgets for 2026/27. Therefore, services were asked to develop savings proposals of circa £13.3m in support of the financial planning process. Working with their Portfolio Holders, Corporate Directors, Service Directors, and Budget Holders had initially until the 5 September 2025 to prepare these potential additional proposals for balancing the 2026/27 budget should they be required. To date Figure 1 includes £3.5m of these proposals with ongoing consideration of the necessary further proposals via the Bi-weekly Cabinet/Corporate Management Board meetings.

21. Work will now focus on further refining the MTFP as presented and as the current financial planning assumptions are tested further. Any changes will be reviewed alongside the potential for bringing forward additional proposals for balancing the 2026/27 budget.

22. In support of this further work, it is proposed to use resources already made available to ICT Programme and Project Management to increase business analysts on a fixed term basis. This will enable us to scope and shape crosscutting invest to save and

continuous improvement programmes. The closure report for the Transformation Investment Programme set out that the council had laid strong foundations but in areas such as data, technology and innovation there were further opportunities as the organisation matured. This approach aligns with our corporate ambitions and corporate digital strategy and will ensure we are well-positioned to deliver sustainable savings through a structured and evidence-led programme and support the Council's financial resilience.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Deficit - Update

23. The concern about the existential threat posed by the accumulating DSG deficit just continues to grow. As set out in the 1 October Quarter One budget monitoring report to Cabinet the in-year deficit is now likely to be £67.2m with the deficit now forecast to grow to an accumulated £180.5m on the 31 March 2026. This is just not sustainable; a national long-term solution is required.

24. As set out in the July MTFP Update report the Leader of the Council and the Director of Finance have separately written to Government to seek assurance around the council's ability to continue to cashflow this significant and growing Dedicated Schools Grants deficit within the statutory framework.

25. As an update senior officers of the council met with representatives of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on the 25 September 2025. The outcome was that MHCLG confirmed that government recognise the need for reform to the SEND system and are committed to the reform timetable however they recognise it will not be easy, and that they are not complacent about this. As part of the conversation, it was highlighted that government were considering what actively could be done in support of the council's position with an announcement most likely as part of the provisional local government finance settlement for 2026/27 due just before the Christmas recess. It is likely that any support will be in the context of a reflection as to whether the current statutory override is helping or hindering the position, a reflection that some local authorities do not have deficits, and a reflection as to whether there is a need to have incentives for local authorities to manage the system as effectively as possible. In addition, MHCLG confirmed that the legislation does not allow interest on the cost of borrowing to finance the DSG deficit to be charged anywhere other than the General Fund of councils and that it is highly unlikely that councils would be given any council tax flexibility to help support the High Needs Budget.

Financial Benchmarking

Unearmarked Reserves

26. Council generally holds two main forms of reserves. The focus of this benchmarking is on unearmarked reserves. Unearmarked reserves are set aside to help manage the risk to the council's financial standing in the event of extraordinary or otherwise unforeseen events and to mitigate the underlying operational risk associated with the operation of the council and the management of service expenditure, income, and the council's funding.

27. The latest analysis of the council's unearmarked reserves level as of 31 March 2025 in comparison with other Unitary Authorities is set out as **Appendix D1** and **D2**. They are shown on both an absolute (D1) and a net revenue expenditure (NRE) (D2) basis. The NRE basis is a common approach to factor in the different size of each of

the unitary authorities. It should be noted at the moment five unitary authorities have not yet reported their position.

28. As a reminder the council took proactive steps to improve its financial health and sustainability across both 2023/24 and 2024/25 by increasing unearmarked reserves to £27.3m which represents 7.91% on a net revenue expenditure basis. The minimum recommended level suggested by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) is 5%. This benchmarking demonstrates the steps taken have moved the council into the mid-range compared to other unitary councils.

29. As highlighted earlier in this report the total reserves (earmarked and unearmarked) are now insufficient to cover for the DSG deficit referenced earlier in this report.

Council Tax

30. BCP Council is highly geared toward Council Tax financing, and this is demonstrated with the analysis in **Appendix D3a** which compares the councils tax base (the number of properties a council can levy council tax on) compared to other unitary authorities and **Appendix D3b** which compares the amount generated in council tax revenue between local authorities.

31. Council tax increased in 2025/26 by 4.99%. This increase was broken down into a 2.99% increase in relation to general inflationary pressures and an additional 2% relating to the social care precept. It is government policy to fund cost pressure in local government principally through the ability to raise council tax, including the social care precept. Recognition should therefore be made of the need to ensure that every step is being taken to align the council's expenditure with the resources at its disposal.

32. The BCP Band D council tax for 2025/26 is £1,855.41. The equivalent of our nearest neighbour Dorset Council is over 13% higher at £2,101.05. This equates to approximately £37m per annum in additional resource BCP Council could be generating based on the BCP 2025/26 tax base (151,574.2) if it had Dorset Council's level of Council Tax. **Appendix D4** shows a comparison of 2025/26 council tax level to other unitary authorities. This demonstrates that the council tax for BCP Council continues to be below the unitary average. For 2025/26 it is 2.6% below the average which in resources terms is equivalent to £7.6m per annum.

Options Appraisal

33. Ultimately the budget process results in a consideration of alternative savings, efficiency, income generation and service rationalisation proposals. This may include consideration of alternative council tax strategies.

Summary of financial implications

34. Any financial implications of the report's recommendations are considered, alongside alternative options, elsewhere within this report.

Summary of legal implications

35. The council has a fiduciary duty to its taxpayers to be prudent in the administration of the funds on their behalf and an equal duty to consider the interests of the community which benefit from the services it provides.

36. It is the responsibility of councillors to ensure the council sets a balanced budget for the forthcoming year. In setting, such a budget councillors and officers of the council

have a legal requirement to ensure it is balanced in a manner which reflects the needs of both current and future taxpayers in discharging these responsibilities. In essence, this is a direct reference to ensure that Council sets a financially sustainable budget which is mindful of the long-term consequences of any short-term decisions.

37. As a billing authority, failure to set a legal budget by 11 March each year may lead to intervention from the Secretary of State under section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999. It should however be noted that the deadline is, in reality, 1 March each year to allow sufficient time for the council tax direct debit process to be adhered to.

Summary of human resources implications

38. There are no direct human resources implications associated with this report. However, the 2026/27 budget is likely to have a direct impact on the level of services delivered by the council, the mechanism by which those services are delivered and the associated staffing establishment.

Summary of sustainability impact

39. The 2025/26 approved budget protected the staffing resources associated with climate change and ecological emergency activity. In addition, as at the 31 March 2025 £0.962m was available in an earmarked reserve to support project activity.

Summary of public health implications

40. The Department of Health and Social Care public health grant allocations for 2025/26 is £23.379m for BCP Council which is an increase of 5.87% from the 2024/25 allocation. It has been agreed that £10.988m will be contributed towards shared contracted services with Dorset Council as part of the phased transition away from shared public health service.

41. In addition to the basic allocation, we have also received the following additional allocations.

    - £3.023m drug & alcohol treatment and recovery improvement grant (DATRIG)
    - £429.9k for the local stop smoking and support grant (LSSSASG)

Summary of equality implications

42. Officers are expected to deliver the services they are responsible for with due regard to the equality's implications. A full equalities impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the final February 2026 report to members as part of the annual budget process.

Summary of risk assessment

43. The risks inherent in the financial position of the council include the following issues set out in detail as part of the 11 February 2025 report to full council in relating to the 2025/26 budget and medium-term financial plan.

- Accumulating DSG Deficit.
- Cashflow Crisis
- New Pay and Grading Structure.

- Council Tax – Taxbase
- Financial Outturn 2024/25
- Legal Claims.
- Uncertainty.
- Pay Award
- Local Government Funding Reforms.
- Extended Producer Responsibility
- Loss or disruption to IT systems and Networks from a cyber-attack.
- Council Owned Companies and Joint Ventures.
- Intervention.
- Children's Services.
- Wellbeing Services.
- Housing: Temporary Accommodation including Bed and Breakfast
- Delivering savings, efficiencies, and additional income generation.
- Realisation of capital receipts to fund the council's transformation programme.
- Carters Quay.

44. These risks will continue to be monitored and were possible any appropriate mitigation strategies considered. At the time of writing this report particular developing financial risks which will continue to be closely monitored with any mitigations being explored include.
    - Ongoing concern about the existential challenge to the council financial sustainability caused by the accumulating DSG deficit.
    - uncertainty caused by global macroeconomic factors.
    - 2025/26 in-year financial performance with a £3.7m forecast overspend predicted for the year based on the Quarter One report to Cabinet on 1 October 2025.
    - current £8.2m funding gap for 2026/27 net of the current progress in developing the necessary savings strategies required to deliver a legally balanced budget.
    - governments agenda for the NHS and particularly Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and their consequential impact on council operations and funding arrangements.

Background papers

45. December 2024: Assessing the serious cashflow issue caused by ever-increasing demand and cost outstripping High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant government funding.
    https://democracy.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=285&MId=5906&Ver=4

46. February 2025: Budget 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan report.

https://democracy.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=284&MId=6294&Ver=4

47. May 2025: Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update report.

    https://democracy.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=285&MId=6062&Ver=4

48. July 2025: Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update report

    https://democracy.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=285&MId=6064&Ver=4

49. October 2025: Quarter One Budget Monitoring Report 2025/26

    https://democracy.bcpcouncil.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=285&MId=6066&Ver=4

Appendices

Appendix A:	Fair Funding 2.0: Consultation response
Appendix B:	Modernising and improving the administration of council tax: Consultation response
Appendix C:	Detailed MTFP Summary and key budget assumptions
Appendix D1:	Unearmarked reserves unitary authorities: Absolute levels.
Appendix D2:	Unearmarked reserves unitary authorities: net revenue expend
Appendix D3a:	Council Tax Taxbase levels 2025/26
Appendix D3b:	Council Tax Requirement 2025/26
Appendix D4:	Council Tax levels 2025/26

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Response ID ANON-QQAX-AANZ-5

Submitted to Fair Funding Review 2.0
Submitted on 2025-08-15 09:11:43

Contact Information

a What is your name?

Name:
Matthew Filmer

b In what capacity are you responding to this consultation? Type of respondent

Unitary authority

c In what capacity are you responding to this consultation? - Organisation

In what capacity are you responding to this consultation? - Organisation:
BCP Council

d In what capacity are you responding to this consultation? - Your position

In what capacity are you responding to this consultation? - Your position:
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g What is your address?

What is your address?:

Chapter 2: Determining local authority funding allocations

1 What are your views on the updated SFA resulting in zero allocations, and the use of mitigations to avoid zero allocations?

What are your views on the updated SFA resulting in zero allocations, and the use of mitigations to avoid zero allocations?:

Given that the sector is significantly overspending, then a zero allocation suggests either the formulae are not reflective of needs, or the total core spending power is way below the true needs of local government. Nevertheless, BCP Council agrees that mitigations be used to avoid zero allocations.

2 Do you agree with how the government proposes to determine the Council of the Isles of Scilly's Settlement Funding Assessment?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response.:

Chapter 3: Funding Simplification

3 Do you agree with the government's plans to simplify the grant landscape?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response.:

We welcome the simplification of grant funding. We agree that the government should be looking to reduce the number of specific grants. However, the needs related to these grants must be reflected in a fair settlement to avoid authorities losing funding and receiving settlement that is less than the needs they face in these areas.

Chapter 4: Measuring differences in demand for services

4 Do you agree with the formulae for individual services the government proposes to include?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

BCP Council agrees that the new RNF cover the main cost drivers. However, we have concerns about how the formulae have been calculated, which is reflected in our responses later in this consultation.

5 Do you agree with the areas of need the government proposes to no longer include in the assessment through the Foundation Formula?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

BCP Council agrees with the removal of legacy capital finance from the formulae. Through a sound treasury management strategy, we have refinanced to reduce the impact of legacy borrowing and do not believe this should be reflected in a council's assessed needs. BCP Council agrees that fixed costs can be removed, providing that the RNF adequately reflect the fixed costs of providing services.

6 Do you agree with the government's approach to calculating the control total shares for the relative needs formulae?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

BCP Council agrees that using expenditure is a reasonable approach to calculating control total shares.

Chapter 5: Measuring differences in the cost of delivering services

7 Do you agree with the Labour Cost Adjustment (LCA) and Rates Cost Adjustment (RCA) equations set out in this chapter?

Disagree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

BCP Council does not agree with how the Labour Cost Adjustment (LCA) has been calculated. The LCA is based on median wages as a proxy for the labour costs faced by the county. As median wages in Dorset are (£33,800) approximately 92% of the national average, and the LCA is heavily weighted in the ACA (67% of both the ASC and the Children and Young People's RNFs), BCP Council's assessed need have been markedly reduced. The operational cost of social care is not aligned to local median wages, so our assessed need is lower than the true cost of the fees we pay to our providers to support adults and children with social care needs. We would urge the government to use a more sophisticated approach to the labour cost adjustment based on industry sector wages – in particular health and social care sector in the ASC and Children and Young Peoples RNFs.

8 What are your views on the proposed approach to the Area Cost Adjustment (ACA)?

What are your views on the proposed approach to the Area Cost Adjustment?:

As with the previous question, we do not agree with the approach to calculating the LCA using local median wages as a proxy for the labour costs faced by BCP Council. However, the principle of including labour costs, rates, remoteness, and the approach to weighting are reasonable.

9 Do you agree or disagree with the inclusion of the Remoteness Adjustment?

Agree

Do you have any evidence to support or contradict the theory that rural areas face additional costs due to separation from major markets? :

BCP Council agrees with the Remoteness Adjustment.

Chapter 6: Measuring differences in locally available resources

10 Do you agree with the government's proposal to set a notional Council Tax level at the national average level, to achieve the objective of full equalisation?

Disagree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

BCP Council believes that a 100% equalisation is grossly unfair. BCP Council would strongly favour a partial equalisation – for example 85%. 100% equalisation means many authorities, including BCP Council, will see their overall settlements reduce significantly (assuming overall core spending power increases in line with the CSR), despite recognition of increased need. This is destabilising to the system, will risk the financial sustainability of affected authorities, and impact services provided to residents. To be removing funding for councils that are heavily overspending and rapidly running out of reserves is absurd, only intensifying the idea that these reforms represent a 'shifting of the deckchairs' rather than a fair and just solution to the system of

funding in local government. Alternatively, the council tax base should be adjusted to reflect council tax collection rates. The assumption that these are 100% does not reflect reality and means the resources deduction will be far greater than the amount of council tax that could realistically be collected at the notional rate. An assumed collection rate of 95% would balance reality with incentivising councils to maximise collection. BCP Council would urge that the government recognises that council tax is a local tax. Excessive equalisation undermines the connection between locally raised council tax, and locally funded services. Residents expect their council tax to be spent locally and recognition it is a local tax is required to maintain trust between residents and local authorities. If council tax equalisation is to be at 100%, based on a council's tax base, then councils should be given greater flexibility on setting council tax otherwise the argument that areas with a high base are more able to mitigate the loss of grant funding is completely undermined.
We would strongly recommend that all local authorities who are below the national average are given powers to catch up beyond any referendum limits set.

11 Do you agree with the government's proposal to fully include the impact of mandatory discounts and exemptions in the measure of taxbase?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

BCP Council agrees with the proposal to fully include these discounts. As local authorises have no influence or control over them, it is correct they are included within the measure of tax base.

12 Do you agree with the government's proposal to use statistical methods to proxy for the impact of Working Age Local Council Tax Support in the measure of taxbase?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

Given the vast differences in schemes across the country, BCP Council agrees that a proxy is the preferred method.

13 What are your views on the proposed statistical approach to proxy for the impact of Working Age Local Council Tax Support?

What are your views on the proposed statistical approach to proxy for the impact of Working Age Local Council Tax Support?:

BCP Council are working through the implication of this.

14 Do you agree with the government's proposal to assume that authorities make no use of their discretionary discount and premium schemes in the measure of taxbase?

No view

What are your views on the proposed statistical approach to proxy for the impact of Working Age Local Council Tax Support?:

BCP Council are working through the implication of this.

15 Do you agree with the government's proposal to apply a uniform Council Tax collection rate assumption to all authorities?

Neither agree nor disagree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

BCP Council agree with a uniform collection rate but it is unrealistic to assume 100% collection and means that council's such as BCP Council will lose even more from the resources deduction than can realistically be collected. It would be simpler and fairer to apply the national average of 95%, in the same way that the national average has been proposed for Council Tax level.

16 Do you agree with the government's proposal to split or allocate the resource adjustment in multi-tier areas according to the average share in council tax receipts in multi-tier areas?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

This approach is reasonable

Chapter 7: Running the Business Rates Retention System

17 Noting a potential trade-off of an increased levy charged on business rate growth for some local authorities, do you agree that the level of Safety Net protection should increase for 2026-27?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

Chapter 8: The New Homes Bonus

18 Do you agree with the government's proposal to end the New Homes Bonus in the Local Government Finance Settlement from 2026-27 and return the funding currently allocated to the Bonus to the core Settlement, distributed via the updated Settlement Funding Assessment?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

BCP Council agrees with the principal of allocating NHB within the settlement. However, as with other grants rolled into the settlement, this is predicated on the SFA being correct.

19 What measures could the government use to incentivise local authorities to specifically support affordable and sub-market housing?

What measures could the government use to incentivise local authorities to specifically support affordable and sub-market housing?:

Not implement 100% council tax equalisation.

Chapter 9: Transitional arrangements and keeping allocations up-to-date

20 Are there any further flexibilities that you think could support local decision-making during the transitional period?

Are there any further flexibilities that you think could support local decision-making during the transitional period?:

Given the government is committed to simplifying the grant landscape consideration could be given to the un-ringfencing of ring-fenced grants.

21 What are the safeguards that would need to go alongside any additional flexibilities?

What are the safeguards that would need to go alongside any additional flexibilities?:

N/A

22 Do you agree or disagree that we should move local authorities to their updated allocations over the three-year multi-year Settlement?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including the impact this measure could have on local authorities' financial sustainability and service provision. :

BCP Council agrees with moving authorities over a transition period.

23 Do you agree or disagree that we should use a funding floor to protect as many local authorities' income as possible, at flat cash in each year of the Settlement?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including on: (i) the level of protection or income baseline, considerate of the trade-off with allocating funding according to the updated assessment of need and resources; and (ii) the possible impacts on local authorities' financial sustainability and service provision.:

24 Do you agree or disagree with including projections on residential population?

Agree

25 Do you agree or disagree with including projections on Council Tax level?

Disagree

26 Do you agree or disagree with including projections on Council Tax base?

Agree

27 If you agree, what is your preferred method of projecting residential population, Council Tax level and Council Tax base? Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response and any views on technical delivery.

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response and any views on technical delivery. If you agree, what is your preferred method of projecting residential population, Council Tax level and Council Tax base?:

N/A

Chapter 10: Devolution, local government reorganisation and wider reform

28 Do you agree with the approach proposed to determining allocations for areas which reorganise into a single unitary authority along existing geographic boundaries?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

29 Do you agree that, where areas are reorganising into multiple new unitary authorities, they should agree a proposal for the division of existing funding locally based on any guidance set out by central government?

Neither agree nor disagree

Please provide any supporting information, including any further information areas would find helpful in guidance. :

BCP Council does not have a strong view on the proposal to allow existing LA areas that are splitting into more than one authority to determine their own allocations. However, any future funding formula should be fair and consistent, with new areas having their own formal needs assessment. Please provide any supporting information, including any further information areas would find helpful in guidance.

30 Do you agree that the government should work to reduce unnecessary or disproportionate burden created by statutory duties?

Agree

If you agree, what specific areas of statutory duties impose significant burden without significant value for residents? Please provide any examples of changes you would like to see to statutory duties, being as specific as possible. :

BCP Council would agree that the government should work to reduce unnecessary or disproportionate burden created by statutory duties.
• Reduced range of statutory functions undertaken by Qualified Social Workers
• Funding statutory Special Educational Needs Team and Educational Psychologists from Dedicated Schools Grant
• Introduce means tested charging for home to school transport
• Children's services commissioning: capping profit margins for providers of children's homes, national consistency in approach to placement fees, introduction of post-16 regulations and regionalised commissioning
• Charging for use of Household Waste Recycling Centres
• Charging for concessionary fares and issuing bus passes
• Enforcement for Pavement (footway) parking

Chapter 11: Sales, fees and charges reform

31 Do you agree with the proposed framework outlined at paragraph 11.2.3 for assessing whether a fee should be changed?

Neither agree nor disagree

Please provide any additional information, for example any additional criteria which would strengthen the above assessment framework, and any data which would be used to assess against additional criteria. :

BCP Council would urge the government to increase flexibility for raising fees and charges. BCP Council understand that there are certain constraints and the framework the government has set out seems reasonable. However, BCP Council would want the review to prioritise increasing flexibility and trusting local authorities to set the right fee levels that recognise effects on demand, businesses and financial sustainability, to ease the financial strain on local government. Local authorities are best placed to know how to balance the need to maintain fee values and the original policy intent of the fee whilst minimising cost of living impacts for service users, so emphasis should be on devolving decision to local authorities as much as possible.

32 The government invites views from respondents on how best to balance the need to maintain fee values and the original policy intent of the fee whilst minimising cost of living impacts for service users.

The government invites views from respondents on how best to balance the need to maintain fee values and the original policy intent of the fee whilst minimising cost of living impacts for service users.:

BCP Council would support any move to increase flexibility for raising fees and charges and would urge the government to progress with any review that prioritises increasing flexibility and trusting local authorities to set the right fee levels that recognise effects on demand, businesses and financial sustainability, to ease the financial strain on local government. Local authorities are best placed to know how to balance the need to maintain fee values and the original policy intent of the fee whilst minimising cost of living impacts for service users, so emphasis should be on devolving decision to local authorities as much as possible – for example, by allowing means testing of Home to School Transport and Concessionary Fares.

33 Do you agree that the measures above provide an effective balance between protecting charge payers from excessive increases, while providing authorities with greater control over local revenue raising?

Agree

Please provide a rationale or your response. We are also interested in any further mechanisms which could be applied to fees that are updated or devolved, that will help strike a balance between those objectives.:

BCP Council believes the measures are reasonable.. We are also interested in any further mechanisms which could be applied to fees that are updated or devolved, that will help strike a balance between those objectives.

34 Do you agree that we should take action to update fees before exploring options to devolve certain fees to local government in the longer term?

Neither agree nor disagree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

BCP Council does not have a strong view but would again stress the need to move towards a more flexible system.

Chapter 12: Design of relative needs formulae

35 Do you agree or disagree that these are the right Relative Needs Indicators? Are there any other Relative Needs Indicators we should consider? Note that we will not be able to add additional indicators for a 2026-27 update.

Agree

Are there any other Relative Needs Indicators we should consider? Note that we will not be able to add additional indicators for a 2026-27 update.:

Note that we will not be able to add additional indicators for a 2026-27 update

36 Do you agree or disagree with including population projections in the ASC formula, when published, that have been rebased using Census 2021 data?

Agree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

We agree with the principle that adjustments should be based on up-to-date information about the population, and that the size and demographics of the population are relevant to the share of funding a local authority receives. We agree with using Census 2021 data for this purpose.

37 Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to include a Low-Income Adjustment (LIA) for the older adults component of the ASC RNF model?

Neither agree nor disagree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response.:

Theoretically, a low-income adjustment to recognise the ability of the population to contribute to their own care is reasonable, and it is recognised that this was first introduced in the 2011 to 2012 LGFS2. However, it is of concern that the government notes 'that the statistical evidence for this relationship is weak' with regards to the use of benefits data. On balance, it may be better to exclude such a measure given that the wealth of the population is already considered within the ACA for adult social care in relation to PIP, DLA and Attendance Allowance, as well as home ownership, all of which may correlate with the capacity for charging and collection. It is also noted that this would have minimal effect on the overall outcome of the allocations (paragraph 12.1.27 of section 2 https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-fair-funding-review-20) hence it would be genuinely within the spirit of simplification to remove this adjustment. Therefore, we disagree with the inclusion of the LIA within the ASC RNF model.

38 Do you agree or disagree that the overall ASC RNF should combine the two component allocation shares using weights derived from the national ASC net current expenditure data on younger and older adults (in this case 2023 to 2024)?

Agree

If you disagree, what other weightings would you use? Please provide details for why you would use these weights and what data it would be based on? :

Agree that the overall ASC RNF should combine the two component allocation shares using the 2023-24 net current expenditure on younger and older adults, a split which should be regularly updated to avoid a drastic shift as this will trigger by updating from 2013-14 data. However, we feel strongly that the disproportionate cost of supporting the very old population (i.e. over 85s) has not been taken account of in the ASC RNF. For BCP Council, we have the largest number of over 85s in the country, Dorset has one of the oldest populations in the UK and the corresponding rate of dementia and other chronic health conditions inevitably has a drastic impact on the cost of care to meet the statutory Care Act duties, and yet our assessed need for ASC has dropped by 3.4%. A suggested addition to the formula would be the incorporation of average population age as a factor. Whilst this is somewhat incorporated in both the older adult and younger adult RNF calculations by the adjustments for over 80 years of age (an increase) and for the age group 16-24 (a decrease) it does not reflect that having a consistently older population impacts on the complexity of both population splits, particularly the amount of family support available for the older working age population and the complexity of care required for a generally older population.

39 Do you agree that ethnicity should be removed as a variable in the CYPS formula?

Agree

Please explain your reasoning.:

40 Do you agree overall that the new CYPS formula represents an accurate assessment of need for children and family services?

Agree

Please share any reflections or suggested changes. :

The key indicators of spend for BCP Council are deprivation

41 Do you believe that the components of daytime population inflow should be weighted to reflect their relative impact on demand for services?

Neither agree nor disagree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

The components of daytime population inflow should be weighted to reflect their impact on service demand; however, further details on the proposed system of weighting are needed to make informed comments on this.

42 Do you agree with/have any comments on the design of the Foundation Formula?

Neither agree nor disagree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

It is noted that deprivation is now included as a factor in the foundation formula, which is consistent with the government's targeting of deprivation. The removal of specific formulae related to flood defence and coastal protection is also detrimental to councils such as BCP Council and we would prefer these cost drivers to be captured in some way in the new Foundation RNF.
The recently closed Defra consultation on the future funding of flood defences clarified (via an online forum during the consultation run by Defra) that routine maintenance funding is not under review as part of that consultation, as it is considered the responsibility of MHCLG rather than Defra. However, in this MHCLG consultation the funding also seems to be ducking the issue.
Local Authority funding for Flood Defence and Coast Protection from MHCLG is not currently ringfenced and is often reallocated by Chief Finance Officers (Section 151 Officers) to other non-FCERM Local Authority priorities given service pressures. The significant reduction in Revenue Support Grant for Local Authorities in recent years has thus left them unable to maintain FCERM assets adequately.
In practice, this shortfall means that routine maintenance of flood defences and coast protection assets is not occurring, shortens asset lifespans and increases carbon emissions due to more frequent refurbishments. The overall effect is that national investment in constructing these assets in the first place is not maximised, leading to the need to replace assets sooner than would be expected. It is well established that every £1 spent on maintenance of FCERM assets generates £7 of savings on new flood and coastal erosion defences (see Section 9 of Coastal_Change_Report_final_4Jun24.pdf).
We therefore believe that including the costs for Flood Defence and Coast Protection within the overall Foundation Formula, rather than calculating on a Relative Needs basis that takes account of not only the population at risk but also the type, extent and number of FCERM assets in an area, risks massively underfunding this area of Local Authority service delivery.
The routine maintenance of key Local Authority FCERM infrastructure is vital to both protecting existing communities but also supporting the housebuilding and growth agenda of Government by enabling development in areas that would otherwise become at risk of flooding or erosion due to assets failing as a result of lack of maintenance.
In addition to the maintenance issues, it should also be noted that historical payments provided to Upper Tier authorities after their nomination as 'Lead Local Flood Authorities' under the Flood & Waters Management Act 2010, have also been un-ringfenced. This again means that the significant pressures on public finances have caused a reduction in resource in these authorities. These issues are long understood, as detailed in the government report 'Surface Water Management – An Action Plan 2018' (surface-water-management-action-plan-july-2018.pdf) where 'building Local Authority capacity' is a key deliverable. Funding must be ringfenced to enable that growth in LLFAs.

43 Do you agree with/have any comments on the design of the Fire and Rescue Formula?

No view

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

N/A

44 Do you agree with/have any comments on the design of the formula for Highways Maintenance?

Disagree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response. :

BCP is an urban authority with a port. This results in a greater than average proportion of HGVs through buses and freight which have a proportionally greater impact on the carriageway . It is suggested that Million Standard Axles (MSA) is considered instead of AADT to reflect this difference.
The current and proposed approach is seen as less favourable to urban authorities which we flag here along with a recognised alternative used by DfT and highway engineers in other contexts.

45 Do you agree with/have any comments on the design of the formula for Home-to-School-Transport?

Neither agree nor disagree

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response.:

While the addition of a specific Home to School Transport RNF is welcome, BCP Council does not agree with its calculation. The 20-mile capping risks underfunding authorities like BCP Council where long distance travel is often necessity rather than choice, with around 10% of journeys over 20 miles. These longer journeys are often our most expensive, supporting Alternative Provision and Education Otherwise than at School. BCP Council would prefer a tiered weighting system that reflects the cost of longer journeys, rather than excluding them from the calculation. The straight road formula discounts BCP Council's rural roads and appears quite reductive for a big county. It doesn't reflect the reality of our transport networks and Dorset has limited direct routes, especially to special schools. BCP Council would prefer to use actual road distances or a weighted proxy that accounts for rurality/travel time. Bcp Council does not know how the figure of SEND travel costing 6.6 times more than mainstream travel was arrived at, nor whether it accounts for regional variation. If BCP Council includes public transport (freedom passes) in its costs, the difference is greater than 6.6. This will understate the complexity of provision especially for children who need medical support on transport. There should be consideration of rurality, need for solos, personal assistants or nurses, specialist vehicles, and longer travel times.

Chapter 13: Equalities impacts

46 Do you have any views on the potential impacts of the proposals in this consultation on persons who share a protected characteristic?

Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response.:

Response ID ANON-96YF-W2K4-P

Submitted to Modernising and improving the administration of council tax
Submitted on 2025-09-11 10:16:38

Ministerial foreword

Summary of the government's proposed approach

Chapter 1. Introduction

Chapter 2. Background

Personal details

1 What's your full name?

Type your first and last name:
Adam Richens

2 What type of respondent or organisation are you replying on behalf of?

Please pick one response:
Local authority

If you answered 'other' please provide details. :

3 If you are responding on behalf of a local authority please tell us which one

Please use this space to respond:
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council

Chapter 3. Modernising council tax billing

Changes to council tax billing

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

In what capacity are you responding to the consultation?

Local authority

Consultation question for local authorities/interested groups/voluntary organisations/other bodies

1 What impacts, if any, do you think moving to 12-month billing will have on local authority's cash flow and ability to pay precepting authorities?

please explain below :

This will impact on cash flow and ability to pay, as councils will receive payments later in the financial year, or into the next financial year. As per the New Burden doctrine councils should be compensated for the financial consequences (cash-flow consequences) of this change. Consideration will need to be given to precepts, and this may impact on their ability to budget appropriately.

Consultation question for members of the public

2 The government intends to change the default bill instalments from 10 months to 12 months. Do you agree with this approach?

Please pick one response:
No

Please explain your reason:

The existing statutory requirement is to allow 10 instalments. This allows councils the ability to amend instalments, extend arrangements and still obtain payment within the same financial year. To have a statutory requirement of 12 months will impede payment within the same financial year and would mean any extension/amendments would in all likelihood have to be addressed in the following financial year. There is a direct cash-flow implication of this change which will ultimately cost the council more in debt servicing costs.

3 If the government were to move to 12-month instalments by default, do you agree taxpayers should be able to request to pay in 10-monthly instalments ?

Yes

Please explain further:

Councils will have a substantial number of taxpayers who already pay over 10 months and would like to retain this, giving them freedom of choice. Consideration needs to be given to avoid continual changes by a taxpayer between 10 and 12 instalments and the impact this will have on council's and their budgeting.

Making council tax more transparent

Call for evidence questions for members of the public

4 Do you feel you have a good understanding of how council tax revenue is used by your local authority?

Please pick one response:
Yes

Please explain your reason:

It is used to fund the services provided to taxpayers and residents, as well as providing funding for police and fire authorities as well as any parishes. As a unitary authority it principally funds education and social care. A consistent income stream is essential to allow councils to budget appropriately and avoid funding issues or additional bank charges.

5a Do you agree further information should be provided on how council tax is spent?

Please pick one response:
No

Please explain further:

Details of the council's expenditure is provided on documentation we supply to taxpayers and on our website. If more information was a statutory requirement this might be bureaucratic and incur additional financial expenditure. It would also be dependent on external auditors and raise undue time constraints.

5b If you answered yes to the previous question, how should this information be presented?

Please explain further:

N/A

6a Do you feel you have a good understanding of the support offered by your council and how to claim this?

Please pick one response:

6b How might this be improved?

Please explain further:

N/A

7 What further information, if any, do you think would be helpful to see on this support? How should this be presented?

Please explain further:

Details of discounts, reductions and the Council Tax Support scheme are provided with bills and published on our website. Enhanced promotion and accessibility might increase the uptake and reduce financial burdens on taxpayers.

Modernising council tax disregards

Severe mental impairment

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

Local authority

Consultation question for local authorities/interested groups/voluntary organisation /other bodies

8 What are your views on whether the proposed definition is consistent with the existing eligibility for the disregard?

Please explain further:

Providing any title of the discount is representative of the actual discount, the council has no views on its title.

Consultation question for members of the public

9 Do you agree with the proposed new name and definition of the disregard, as set out above?

Please pick one response:
Yes

Please explain your reason:
Taxpayers can reduce their bill through reductions or discounts, and these are usually termed based on the discount. The term Severe Mental Impairment may be outdated, but as with other discounts, it is based on specific criteria. The terminology of a discount shouldn't be a barrier to the uptake.

Severe mental impairment

CALL FOR EVIDENCE QUESTIONS

In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

Local authority

Call for evidence questions for local authorities/interested groups/voluntary organisations/other bodies

10 Are you aware of any households facing barriers when accessing the severely mentally impaired disregard ? Please describe.

Please describe below :

The council is not aware of any specific barriers to claiming the SMI discount/exemption.

Call for evidence questions for members of the public

11 Have you, or your family members, experienced any barriers to claiming this support? Please describe.

Please describe below :

N/A

12 What, if anything, do you think could put someone off applying for this support?

Please describe below :

They may not consider they suffer from a Severe Mental Impairment, which is why clear qualifying criteria is published, to provide clarity.

13 What do you think the government could do to improve access and accessibility to this disregard?

Please describe below :

Maybe better clarity for medical professionals to assist their consideration of the medical condition, to ensure it is considered to be severe, rather than mildly impeding for example.

14a What are your views on a government provided (but not prescribed) form that councils and taxpayers could use to improve consistency of claiming the disregard in England?

Please describe below :

Councils should be afforded the ability to adapt their application forms and use their experience of previously completed forms, feedback from taxpayers and resolution of previous misinterpretations.

14b How should the government incentivise councils to use such a form?

Please explain your reason:

N/A

Apprentices

Carers/care workers

Call for evidence questions for members of the public

15 What are your views on the disregards set out for carers and apprentices?

Please describe below :

The earnings threshold of an apprentice (£195 per week) and a carer (£44 per week) should be revised or reconsidered periodically. The current value for an apprentice hasn't been revised since 2006 and may be impossible to attain. Councils may be committed to ensuring a living wage is paid. As £195 per week for a 35-hour week is £5.57 an hour, compared to a living wage of £12.60 per hour, councils attract the criticism for outdated or unrealistic values, regardless of whose responsibility it is.

16 Do you believe the current eligibility criteria for apprentices and/or carers is appropriate?

Please explain your reason:

Yes, with the exception of the earnings thresholds.

17a Are you or any one in your households/family in receipt of any of these disregards?

Please pick one response:
No

17b If you answered yes to the previous question, please specify which disregard and share your experience of this.

Please describe below :

N/A

Other forms of council tax support

Call for evidence questions for members of the public

18 Are there any other disregards which should be considered in respect of certain cohorts who do not fall within the current disregards?

Please describe below :

To provide a discount or disregard on additional cohorts may prove problematic. Not every role provided by an employer can be pigeonholed into a specific category and if the government include one and not another, they will attract criticism rather than praise for inclusion.

19a Do you or anyone in your household fit into one of the categories of people not covered by the current council tax disregards or exemptions?

Please pick one response:
No

19b If you answered yes to the previous question, please tell us what would be the impact of any new forms of support on your household.

Please describe below :

N/A

Chapter 4. Barriers to improved efficiency

Communicating council tax information

Call for evidence questions for members of the public

20 What do you think about how information is currently provided by councils?

Please describe below :

The requirement to publish information in a local newspaper is outdated and impractical as publishers move to a digital output. Being published in a local newspaper relies on a taxpayer incurring additional expenditure to purchase and is irrelevant or unobserved by landlords and second homeowners who are not in the local area. Digital output is an accessible means to obtain information and is easily found using basic searches.

21 What council tax information do you think could be shared by councils digitally? Please provide suggestions.

Please provide suggestions :

Digital billing, whilst retaining a paper option for those digitally excluded, would reflect a more modern access method. It might enable cost savings and compliment the governments digital aspirations.

22 In relation to any suggestions provided in question 21, how could councils ensure this was accessible to all residents?

Please describe below :

By enabling a range of methods of communication, it would remain accessible to all. An emphasis from the government on digital enablement may encourage taxpayers to move away from paper onto a digital format.

Challenging council tax bands

Call for evidence questions for members of the public

23a What are your views on the current process for challenging a council tax band?

Please describe below :

The council is not involved in the process for challenging a Council Tax band as this is the responsibility of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). The council is concerned by the responsiveness and efficiency of the VOA. Anything that reduces the Valuation Office Agency's workload would improve their responsiveness to banding dwellings, which will enable councils to bill faster and possibly secure payment quicker.

23b What changes, if any, should the government consider to the council tax band challenge process?

Please describe below :

Limiting the number of challenges available, which will avoid repeated challenges by the same individual when they have not changed address.
A reconsideration of the Council Tax bands so they are not based on 30 year old figures.

Chapter 5. Collection and enforcement of council tax

Enforcement of council tax

Consultation question for members of the public

24 The government is interested in changing regulations on when councils can request a full bill, or seek liability orders, to a more appropriate and proportionate timeframe.How long after a reminder notice, should full liability apply?

Not Answered

Please explain your reason:

Councils are required to follow a complicated recovery process, which is subject to continual analysis by some members of the community. Councils can revert to instalments, rather than the full balance, if appropriate, following engagement by the taxpayer. Any delay in the recovery process will result in cash-flow issues for a council and a failure to obtain payment within the financial year. Any amendment to the recovery process will result in additional challenges from some members of the community. Consistency is key, with the ability for councils to be flexible in their approach to revert to instalments

Call for evidence questions for members of the public

25 Are there any further steps councils should take before being able to charge for a full-year's bill? For example, offering alternative payment plans, providing further reminder notices or undertaking welfare checks?

Please share further thoughts below :

Our experience has shown that alternative payment plans, additional reminders and extended instalments are all offered to taxpayers. The issue remains where a taxpayer fails to engage with the council. Access to the HMRC records will improve collection and will improve engagement by taxpayers who wish to avoid this recovery process. Additional undertakings such as welfare visits or credit reference agency checks will result in financial and resource pressure on councils and delay the recovery process.

26 What other ways do you think councils can support individuals when they miss a council tax payment?

Please share views below.:

Encouragement is already provided to taxpayers to engage with the council. A discretionary soft reminder might be considered appropriate, to try and obtain engagement. This would come at additional cost to the council though.

CALL FOR EVIDENCE QUESTIONS

In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

Local authority

Call for evidence questions for local authorities/interested groups/voluntary organisations/other bodies

27 Do you think there are any barriers to councils being able to support taxpayers as suggested in question 25 and 26? What are these barriers?

Please pick one response:
Yes

Please share further thoughts on your response below:

The inability to access HMRC records means councils are reliant on a taxpayer to engage with the council and divulge that information voluntarily. This information is not usually voluntarily given, resulting in less appealing recovery actions being taken, which may cause more distress. A change in legislation to alter the liable party to be the owner of a property would remove all the issues council's encounter with obtaining payment and remove the stress placed on financially disadvantaged residents. Owners of properties are available from the Land Registry and avoids absconders and subsequent funding pressures for a council.

Liability orders

Consultation questions for members of the public

28 Do you agree that the government should introduce a cap on the reasonable costs that a court can award for a council's costs for an application for a liability order?

No

29 What do you think this cap should be set at?

Not Answered

Please explain your reason:

A cap should not be introduced, as the costs incurred by each council are different.

30 Should the cap apply when seeking a liability order on second or empty homes?

Not Answered

Please explain your answer:

N/A

Powers to enforce council tax

Call for evidence questions for members of the public

31 Do you believe the current enforcement is proportionate in the context of council tax collection?

Yes

Please explain your answer:

Enforcement agent referrals are sometimes the only viable remedy when the liable party's circumstances are unknown. Any inappropriateness is usually due to the lack of engagement by the liable party or their financial/employment circumstances. Access to HMRC's data would enable attachment to earnings and improve collections, whilst at the same time improving engagement and reducing any inappropriate remedy.

32 What are your views on ways enforcement could better reflect the needs of those in financial or other hardship?

Please describe below :

Increased signposting to welfare groups or extended repayment plans, both of which will impact council finances and resources. Inadequate funding of Council Tax Support schemes increases the number of financially vulnerable people. This raises the potential for collection methods to be challenged. Altering Council Tax to be the responsibility of the owner would remove inappropriate recovery methods.

33 Do you have any suggestions on alternative or additional measures to ensure council tax is paid?

Yes

Please provide suggestions :

Council Tax to be the responsibility of the owner, rather than any occupant.
Alternatively, enabling councils to have access to HMRC records so an attachment to earnings may be attained.

Broader collection powers

Call for evidence questions for members of the public

34 What are your views on the current methods available to councils to collect council tax?

Please describe below :

They are appropriate, even committal, providing it is used as a remedy to address those that won't pay.

35 How else do you think council tax could be efficiently and fairly collected?

Please provide suggestions :

By providing access to HMRC records, it would avoid protracted correspondence, improve engagement from the taxpayer and result in payment being obtained in the financial year, thus assisting councils financially. It may also enable councils reduce their recovery action and thus reduce resources which may enable Council Tax to be kept to a minimum. Altering the liable party to be the owner would result in Council Tax being applied fairly and efficiently and enable an efficient recovery process.

Question for members of the public

36 Do you have any views on anything else related to council tax administration which has not been covered in this consultation and call for evidence? If so, please provide them here

Please provide suggestions :

If Council Tax is to be modernised, consideration needs to be given to the number and value of the bands. Wales and Scotland have had their Council Tax bands revalued and redesigned, but there's no mention of this occurring in England.

The removal of the single person discount would result in Council Tax being either being reduced for everyone else or more local services provided/funded. It would also remove the ability to commit error or fraud and reduce resources applied to monitor this discount. If, following a risk assessment, it was shown to impact pensioners adversely, a new discount could be applied to anyone over the age of 70 years. A link to HMRC or the Pension Service would facilitate the automated application of this discount.

Apply a banding change following the completion of improvements or reductions, rather than upon the sale of a property.

Chapter 6. Public Sector Equality Duty

37 Do you have any views on whether any of the proposed changes in the consultation will have any disproportionate impacts on any particular groups with protected characteristics compared to others?

Please describe below :

N/A

Chapter 7. Next steps

List of consultation questions

About this consultation

Personal data

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Key Assumptions

Service Pressures, Corporate Cost Pressures & Additional Resources, Savings, and Efficiencies

Service Pressures (net of any specific grant changes)	Revised Budget 2025/26 £m	Fairer Funding Adjustment	Updated Budget 2025/26 £m	Oct 2025 MTFP Position 26/27 £m	27/28 £m	28/29 £m	Total £m
Wellbeing Directorate	138.1	37.9	176.0	11.1	7.7	8.1	**26.9**
Children's Directorate	100.0	10.3	110.3	6.0	6.0	6.0	**17.9**
Operations Directorate	37.7	0.0	37.7	0.6	3.0	3.1	**6.7**
- Operations Directorate: Waste & Extended Producer Responsibility	22.0	0.0	22.0	1.9	0.8	6.0	**8.6**
Resources Directorate	49.8	0.0	49.8	(0.0)	0.1	1.6	**1.6**
Service Pressures (net of any specific grant changes)	347.6	48.2	395.8	19.5	17.5	24.8	61.8
Savings, Efficiencies, Fees & Charges							
Wellbeing Directorate				(2.8)	(0.9)	(0.8)	**(4.5)**
Children's Directorate				(0.5)	0.0	0.0	**(0.5)**
Operations Directorate				(4.5)	(2.0)	(1.3)	**(7.8)**
Resources Directorate				(0.9)	(0.4)	(0.1)	**(1.5)**
Transformation				(3.5)	(5.6)	(0.7)	**(9.7)**
Savings, Efficiencies, Fees and Charges				(12.2)	(8.9)	(2.9)	(24.0)
Corporate Items - Cost Pressures							
Transformation Base Revenue Cost	0.0		0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	**0.0**
Debt Capital Repayment - Minimum Revenue Provision	8.7		8.7	0.4	0.4	0.4	**1.2**
Debt Interest on Borrowings	1.3		1.3	0.8	0.3	0.9	**2.0**
Treasury Management Income	(0.7)		(0.7)	0.0	0.0	0.0	**0.0**
Pension - Back funding	3.7		3.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	**0.0**
Provision for the Pay Award	(0.3)		(0.3)	5.3	4.2	4.3	**13.8**
Pay and Grading Project	0.4		0.4	5.3	(1.0)	(0.2)	**4.1**
Pay and Grading Project - Implementation cost	2.2		2.2	(1.8)	(0.4)	0.0	**(2.2)**
Benefits	(1.3)		(1.3)	0.0	0.0	0.0	**0.0**
Investment Properties Income	(4.7)		(4.7)	0.0	0.0	0.0	**0.0**
Miscellaneous including levies	(3.0)		(3.0)	0.4	0.7	0.7	**1.8**
Contingency	2.5		2.5	(0.0)	(0.0)	0.0	**(0.1)**
Corporate Items - Cost Pressures	8.7	0.0	16.7	10.4	4.2	6.1	20.7
Funding - Changes	(361.7)	(48.2)	(409.9)	(14.1)	(18.7)	(22.4)	(55.2)
Debt interest due to accumulated SEND deficit	8.1	0.0	8.1	1.8	1.9	1.2	4.9
Annual – Net Funding Gap	2.8	0.0	2.8	5.4	(4.0)	6.7	8.1
Application of one-off business rates resources to MTFP	(2.8)		(2.8)	2.8	0.0	0.0	2.8
Annual – Net Funding Gap	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.2	(4.0)	6.7	10.9
Cumulative MTFP – Net Funding Gap				8.2	4.1	10.9	

Please note: The MTFP as presented does not provide for two specific known unknowns namely any potential impact of the governments funding reforms and future waste strategy.

Appendix C

The developing 2026/27 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) as presented is based on numerous key assumptions that although they have been informed by many factors such as government announcements, economic forecasts, and trend analysis, are also based on professional judgement. These can be listed as follows.

1. Wellbeing

Service Pressures £11.1m for 2026/27 (6.3% increase over the 2025/26 budget as adjusted for the government fair funding review) for demand and inflationary increases.

Adult Social Care and Commissioning

The MTFP makes provision for an additional gross £27m investment in adult social care services over the 3-year period to March 2029 (£11m in 2026/27). Grant support towards these pressures has been assumed at the level of £2m in 2026/27 and £2m of growth each year afterwards. The pressures, which exclude the impact of the pay award on the services staff, arise from a combination of:

1) Assumptions around inflationary pressures within the care market. These pressures relate mainly to increases for providers in staffing costs where a significant driver is the consequential impact of changes in the national living wage (NLW) with this estimated at £15.8m over the 3 years.

2) It is worth noting that ringfenced grants (market sustainability and Improvement fund and the social care support grant) currently built into the adult service are being rolled into the non-ringfenced revenue support grant (RSG) in the government's fair funding review process from 2026/27. The full extent of these changes remains unknown but currently assumed for specific government funding supporting Adult Social Care is growth of £6m over the MTFP horizon, spread evenly throughout the years: £2m in 2026/27 and subsequent years.

3) Demographic growth for all client groups is provided for at £11.5m over the 3-year period.

The NLW remains a key driver for the cost of care services affecting 70% of the cost of providing home care and 65% for residential fees. The Low Pay Commission suggested NLW hourly rate is to grow to £12.71 from April 2026, which translates into a 4.1% increase. The cost of care in the MTFP has been taken forward from this base.

The remaining 30%-35% of the cost of providing care is driven by other cost of living factors assumed to increase in 2026/27 by £1m and by a further £1.2m and £1.4m in 2027/28 and 2028/29, respectively.

The Health Secretary has announced plans to improve care workers pay along with the introduction of a new sector-wide negotiation body to lead on pay conditions between employers, trade unions and employees. These changes are to come into force in 2028 with £500m of new funding from government for the sector. The current MTFP does not yet factor in these changes.

Housing & Public Protection

The Housing & Public Protection service continues to face challenges across the 3-year MTFP, with £0.5m of growth included in 2026/27 and recurring pressures forecast through to 2028/29. These pressures reflect the ongoing impact of inflation on housing related support and community safety contracts, alongside the need to meet statutory obligations and maintain essential services.

The future funding position for key grants such as the homelessness prevention grant (HPG) and the rough sleeping prevention and recovery grant (RSPARG) remains uncertain. There are ongoing discussions at a national level regarding the potential consolidation of elements of these grants into the RSG. Until the outcome of these proposals is confirmed, the full financial impact on the housing service is unclear.

2. Children's Services

Service Pressures of £6.0m for 2026/27 (5.4% increase over the 2025/26 budget as adjusted for the government fair funding review) for demand and inflationary increases)

The MTFP makes provision for an additional gross £17.9m investment in children's services over the 3-year period to March 2029 (after additional specific grants). This pressure, which excludes the impact of future pay awards on the services staff, is a combination of:

1) Care:

a. The service has seen a rise in the numbers and average cost of children in care since the budget was set for 2025/26 with resources released from other budgets and reserves in mitigation. There continues to be increasing complexity of children needing placements with a limited supply of good quality places nationally and providers have been able to increase their fees beyond our expectations.

b. The requirement for providers of supported accommodation for looked after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17 to be Ofsted registered and inspected has also led to an increase in placement fees as higher costs are passed on.

c. Local social care market purchasing has been reliant on framework contracts which previously worked well in managing placement costs, however in recent years this has significantly deteriorated. This change has impacted on the cost of placements, and a range of market options is being explored.

d. The NLW is a key driver for the cost of care services and the increase by 4% is expected to impact the cost of care in the coming year.

2) School Transport for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND):

SEND transport costs are directly linked with the increasing number of education, health, and care plans (EHCPs) and the pressure that continues in the high needs block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG). The growth allowed of £2m annually is before considering the impact of the transformation project planned to deliver savings.

3) Grants

The social care grant provided since 2020/21 is assumed to continue along with all other children's social care funding throughout the 3 years of the plan.

3. Operations

Service Pressures of £2.5m for 2026/27 representing an increase of 4.2% on the 2025/26 budget (largely driven by inflationary increases, changes to service provision, and the increased costs associated with the extended producer responsibility scheme that came into effect in April 2025.)

The MTFP provides for additional investment over the 3-year period to March 2029 of £15.3m across operations services. It should be noted that £8.6m of the total £15.3m pressure is related to the increased costs associated with the extended producer responsibility scheme.

The figures are still being carefully worked through as more information is received with a specialist consultant appointed to work on the accuracy of these assumptions.

The on-going pressures over the 3 years are a combination of:

1) Inflationary pressures for waste disposal and recycling services linked to contracts and market movements.
2) Fuel inflation has been allowed for along with reprofiled and additional prudential borrowing repayments in line with the Fleet Replacement Strategy to ensure that the rolling capital programme for fleet vehicles is maintained.
3) Inflationary pressures allowed for within sustainable transport for concessionary fares increases following the recent rebase to reflect the current trend of journeys undertaken.
4) Additional energy and inflationary pressures within utilities and street lighting.
5) Other inflationary increases added to contracts across Operations including cleaning, RNLI, seafront, intelligent traffic systems and abandoned & untaxed vehicles.

4. Resources

There are no net service pressures identified for 2026/27.

The Resources directorate continues to face a range of financial pressures across the 3-year MTFP, most notably £1.5m in 2028/29 due to increased Microsoft licenses costs.

Other pressures span multiple service areas and reflect the impact of inflation on contracts, member's allowances, and income challenges in areas such as marketing.

The directorate remains focused on managing these pressures through service efficiencies, ensuring continued support for corporate functions and statutory responsibilities.

5. Pay Award

Local government agreed pay awards for 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 were 2%, 2%, 2.75% and 1.75%, respectively. The National Employers organisation took a different approach in agreeing the pay awards for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25.

For 2022/23 a flat rate increase of £1.925 on every spinal column point was agreed. For 2023/24 agreement with the Trade Unions was reached on a flat rate increase of £1,925 on every grade up to SCP43 and 3.88% above this level. For 2024/25 the agreement was based on a flat rate increase of £1,290 on every grade up to SCP43 and a 2.5% increase above this level. This equates to approximately an average increase of 4% which was 0.5% below the budgeted amount for 2024/25.

Every 1% variation is estimated to require a £2m provision in the general fund once allowance is made for recharges (for example to capital) and external contributions (such as adjusted fees & charges etc.)

For 2025/26 the budget has been drawn based on a 2.8% provision for the pay award in 2025/26. This was in line with the 2.8% proposed 2025 pay award for public sector workers announced by the government in December 2024. The February 2025 MTFP then made provision for annual pay awards of 2% from 2026/27 onwards.

On the 23 July 2025 the National Employers Organisation agreed a 3.2% pay award for the financial year 2025/26. This, alongside the fact that inflation currently remains stubbornly above both 3% and the government's 2% inflationary target, has meant that the pay award provision for 2026/27 has now been increased to 2.5%.

In addition, as part of the savings and efficiencies proposals underpinning the 2023/24 budget, provision was made for only 95% of each service's employee establishment to allow for the impact of turnover and other matters on the actual cost of the service. Previously the assumption varied between services, of between 95% and 98%. Monitoring of the 95% assumption is ongoing however the indications are some areas, particularly small teams with low turnover, find it difficult to achieve this target. In addition, services continue to be expected to manage the impact of any incremental drift in their services pay base.

6. New Pay and Grading Structure

A key requirement following the establishment of BCP Council was to create a single new pay and grading structure. In setting a 2025/26 Budget a single pay and grading structure supported by standard terms and conditions applied across all posts was not in place. Potential risks associated with this position increased the longer it took to achieve this outcome however officers were committed to achieving a single pay and grading and terms and conditions outcome.

The position was resolved when Council on 16 July 2025 agreed to the enhanced Pay and Reward offer post a further ballot of trade union members and agreement to move towards a collective agreement. The report set out the intent to increase the permanent pay bill of the authority by £4.545m (2.44% increase on the pay base) which was a further £1.752m above the amount included in the 2025/26 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan as agreed by Council in February 2025. These calculations related to the individual appointments and salaries of colleagues as they were known as of 21 April 2025 and related to filled paid permanent posts and excluded any provision for vacant posts, casual employees, apprentices, agency staff or as a result of any future re-mapping outcomes. The report also emphasised that the annual incremental drift exposure of the council, which the financial planning assumption continues to be that it will be managed by services, has increased from £1.5m to £4m per annum due to the additional head room within grades from the revised structure. The report included and Council approved a list of savings proposals to cover the further additional £1.752m cost.

7. Pension Fund

BCP Council is a member of the Dorset Local Government Pension Scheme administered by Dorset Council. The funds actuary Barnett Waddingham is required to revalue the fund every three years (tri-annual revaluation) to determine both the value of its assets and liabilities and the contributions rates for each employer in the fund.

The fund was last revalued as of April 2022, and the impact was agreed with the pension fund actuary in November 2022. The March 2022 position for BCP Council was a funding deficit of £53.2m with a resulting funding level of 95.9% as outlined below, compared to a funding deficit of £86.6m on 31 March 2019 relating to a funding level of 91.9%.

Figure 1: BCP Pension Fund – funding levels

Local Authority	31 March 2016 Funding Level	31 March 2019 Funding level	31 March 2022 Funding Level
Bournemouth Council	79%		
Christchurch Council	88%		
Dorset Council	80%		
Poole	86%		
BCP Council	**82%**	**92%**	**96%**

BCP Council contribution rates are as set out below. In respect of the 2022 revaluation, the increase on the ongoing rate was offset by the reduction in the back-funding element. Key variables that impacted on the valuation were the impact on liabilities of CPI inflation, salary increases and the assumed discount rate, and the level of investment returns on the assets of the fund.

Figure 2: BCP Pension Fund contributions agreed with the actuary:

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Ongoing *Primary Rate*	15.6%	16.2%	16.8%	17.4%	19%	19%	19%
Backfunding *Secondary Rate*	£9.43m	£5.89m	£6.10m	£6.32m	£3.97m	£4.13m	£4.29m

Looking at the 2025 valuation, the actuary has previously emphasised their objective of endeavouring to achieve a level of stability in contribution rates. That said the council has an obligation to ensure that any payments are robust and the underlying assumptions challenged as appropriate. The results of the 2025 valuation are anticipated to be announced in November 2025.

In comparing pay rates with those of other employers, it is important that everyone recognises that the council has a total contribution rate of more than 22%. Many private sector companies will be making only a 3% minimum pension fund contribution.

8. Inflationary Costs

Inflation is only provided for in service directorate budgets where it can be demonstrated that it will be needed due to either market or contract conditions. Inflation as of September each year is applied or factored into several 2026/27 contractual uplifts as measured by the (CPI) Consumer Price Index.

CPI Inflation as of August 2025 was 3.8% (July 3.8%).

The government's inflation target remains at 2% on an annual basis.

9. Treasury Management – Interest Cost

The MTFP assumes an additional £3m pressure on the treasury management function related to the increasing need to borrow. Of the additional pressure, £1.8m is in relation to the accumulated SEND deficit forecast to be over £180m by March 2026. In total the Council will be servicing debt in relation to the deficit of £9.9m per annum by 2026/27.

The Council also needs to borrow cash to manage it overall cash position with decreasing level of balances available to invest. The Council continues to employ an internal borrowing policy which has avoided taking out additional external long-term debt and the associated high interest rates payable however this is becoming harder to maintain as interest rates are not falling as quickly as expected. The likelihood is temporary borrowing which has maintained the cash position for a number of years will be switched to longer term borrowing to allow greater security of cash on a daily basis.

10. Previous government specific grants as related to Adult and Children's Social Care transferred to non-ringfenced RSG from 2026/27 - Assumed £2.3m additional funding for social care funding in 2026/27 (£6.9 over 3-year period of the MTFP)

Trends analysis shows that the government have made additional grant funding for social care available in every year since 2015/16.

The Social Care Grant was introduced in 2020/21 and ringfenced to support social care for adults and children and now includes the Independent Living Fund. The allocation to BCP Council in 2025/26 amounted to £39.6m and locally split between Adult Social Care: £29.3m and Children Social Care: £10.3m. the current MTFP assumes growth of this allocation within the RSG over the MTFP timeframe.

The Local Authority Better Care Grant, comprising former Improved Better Care Grant and Adult Social Discharge Grant, allocated to BCP Council Adult Social Care is assumed to remain frozen in 2026/27 at the level £16.6m.

The increase for the Better Care Fund of £0.4 million in 2026/27 is yet to be confirmed by NHS Dorset ICB. Work is being undertaken by both partners within Better Care Fund to establish envelope for this pool in 2026/27 and estimate NHS minimum contribution to local authority commissioned care.

The Market Sustainability Fund initial allocation for 2025/26 was £7.7m. The Adult services MTFP does not include any changes to this allocation, as the grant is being rolled into the RSG with the impact uncertain.

Children Services specific grants

The consolidated Children and Families Grant allocation to BCP in 2025/26 amounted to £2.6m. No increase is yet announced for 2026/27 and future years.

The newly introduced Children Social Care Prevention Grant allocated £1m to BCP in 2025/26. Currently it is unknown if 2026/27 will see an increase of this grant, hence no growth assumed for 2026/27.

11. One-Off Resources

As part of the normal annual budget process the council is required to review the brought forward and forecast position on each of its collection funds (business rates and council tax) and make provision for the forecast year end surplus or deficit as part of the following years budget.

Based on a 2023 fundamental review undertaken in respect of the business rates collection fund a forecast surplus was treated as an exceptional one-off resource rather than as just as part of the standard budget setting arrangements for 2024/25.

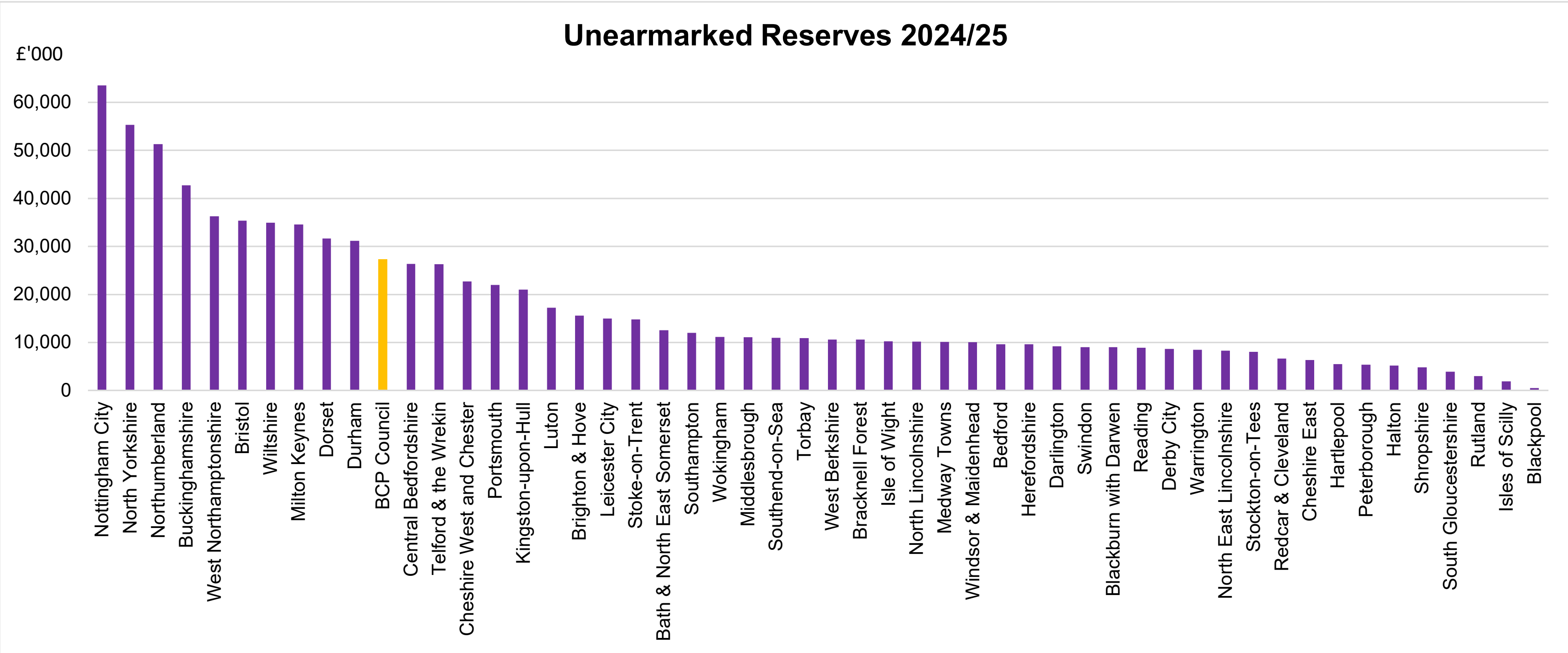
A schedule of how these resources is being applied is set out in figure 3 below. In summary it continues to be applied to the delivery of outcomes in support of the financial sustainability of the council and enabling the phasing of savings over defined time periods.

Figure 3: Application of one-off business resources

	Latest Application £000s	Profiled Application of Resources 2024/25 £000s	2025/26 £000s	2026/27 £000s	2027/28 £000s
Resources Available - Business Rates Collection Fund (Surplus)	(25,281)				
Application of Resources					
a) Resources set aside to support regeneration ambitions					
Includes resources to fund the staff transferred by BCP FuturePlaces Ltd over a 4-year period.	4,000	959	1,041	1,000	1,000
b) Russell Cotes Museum *(separate 7 February 2024 Cabinet report)*					
£2m One-off dowry payment + £250k one-off maintenance dowry payment.	2,250		2,250		
£626k Base budget removed from 1 April 2024 but do not become self sufficient until 1 October 2025.	939	626	313		
£50k Base budget for corporate maintenance removed from 1 April 2024 therefore £75k provision 1/10/25.	75	50	25		
c) Climate Change and Ecological Emergency					
Resources to top up the project budget, via an Earmarked Reserve, to £1m.	452	452			
d) Children's Services - Improvement Expenditure					
One-off investment in the Children's Services, Building Stronger Foundations Programme, December Cabinet.	522	522			
e) Bournemouth Air Festival					
£200k One-off funding for 2024/25 only.	200	200			
Further one-off contingency to underwrite the 2024/25 event (£54k of £100k used)	54	54			
f) Poole Events					
Application of unused Air Festival contingency - in light of ABID decision	46		46		
g) Christmas Events					
£200k One-off funding for 2024/25 only.	200	200			
h) Pay and Reward					
One-off implementation costs for 2024/25.	269	269			
One-off implementation costs for 2025/26 and 2026/27	1,082		1,061	21	
Additional costs following 2025 ballot in 2025/26	1,115		1,115		
i) Transitional implementation of specified savings proposals					
Resources to enable specific savings proposals to be implemented over a transitional period.	1,805	1,705	100		
j) Poole Civic Centre					
Holding costs for 2025/26 only	228		228		
k) Contingency					
Resources set aside in support of the potential for optimism bias in the £38m of 2024/25 proposed savings.	5,654	5,654			
l) Miscellaneous					
ICT Investment Plan expenditure which cannot be capitalised	215		215		
Redhill Paddling Pool consumables support - one year extension to secure sponsorship	10		10		
m) Resources to support the balancing of the 2024/25 Budget & MTFP					
Based on Q2 2024/25 Budget Monitoring reduced flexibility to carry forward contingency resources into future years	6,165	3,375	2,790		
Balance Carried Forward	25,281	14,066	9,194	1,021	1,000

Appendix C

Appendix D1 - Unitary authorities absolute unearmarked reserves as at 31 March 2025



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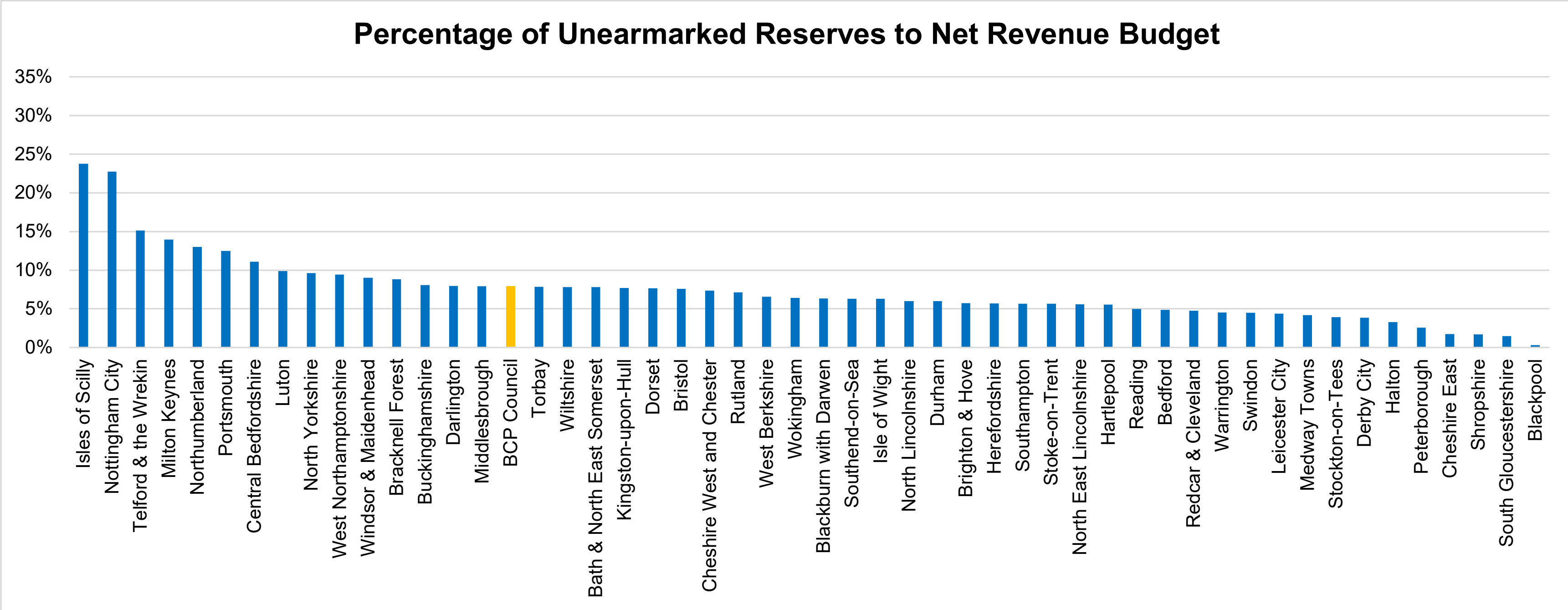
Appendix D2 - Unitary authorities percentage of unearmarked reserves to net revenue budget as at 31 March 2025



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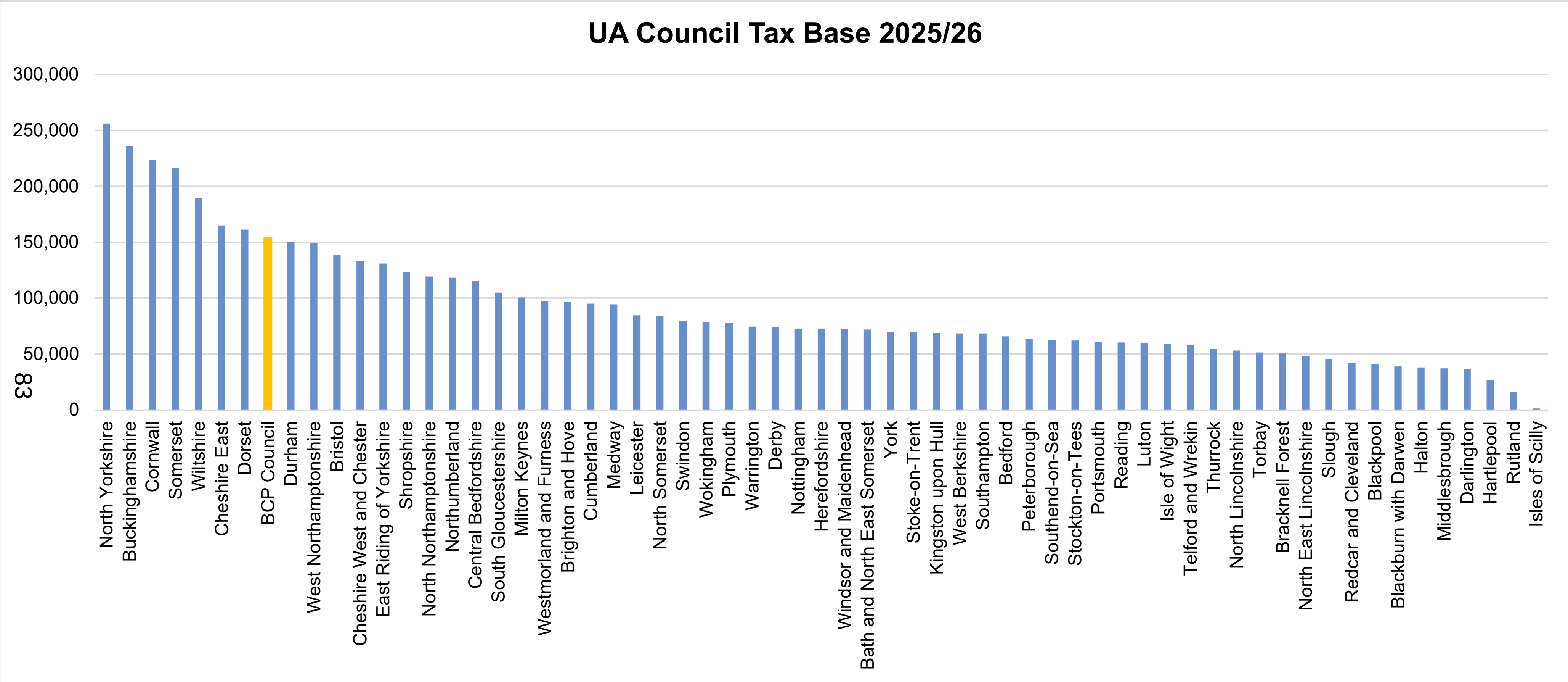
UA Council Tax Base 2025/26
300,000
250,000
200,000
150,000
100,000
50,000
0
North Yorkshire
Buckinghamshire
Cornwall
Somerset
Wiltshire
Cheshire East
Dorset
BCP Council
Durham
West Northamptonshire
Bristol
Cheshire West and Chester
East Riding of Yorkshire
Shropshire
North Northamptonshire
Northumberland
Central Bedfordshire
South Gloucestershire
Milton Keynes
Westmorland and Furness
Brighton and Hove
Cumberland
Medway
Leicester
North Somerset
Swindon
Wokingham
Plymouth
Warrington
Derby
Nottingham
Herefordshire
Windsor and Maidenhead
Bath and North East Somerset
York
Stoke-on-Trent
Kingston upon Hull
West Berkshire
Southampton
Bedford
Peterborough
Southend-on-Sea
Stockton-on-Tees
Portsmouth
Reading
Luton
Isle of Wight
Telford and Wrekin
Thurrock
North Lincolnshire
Torbay
Bracknell Forest
North East Lincolnshire
Slough
Redcar and Cleveland
Blackpool
Blackburn with Darwen
Halton
Middlesbrough
Darlington
Hartlepool
Rutland
Isles of Scilly

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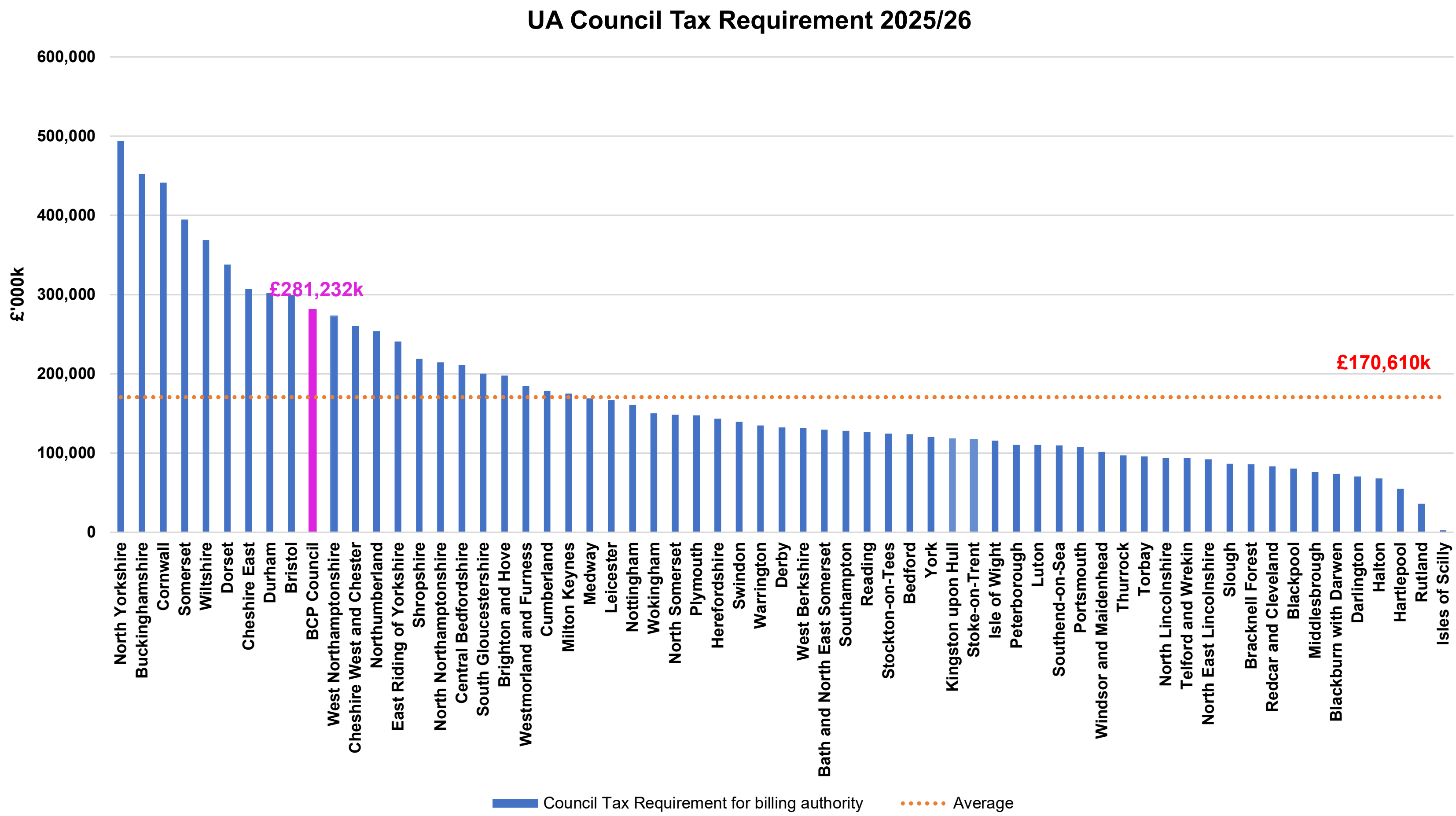

Appendix D3b: Council Tax Requirement

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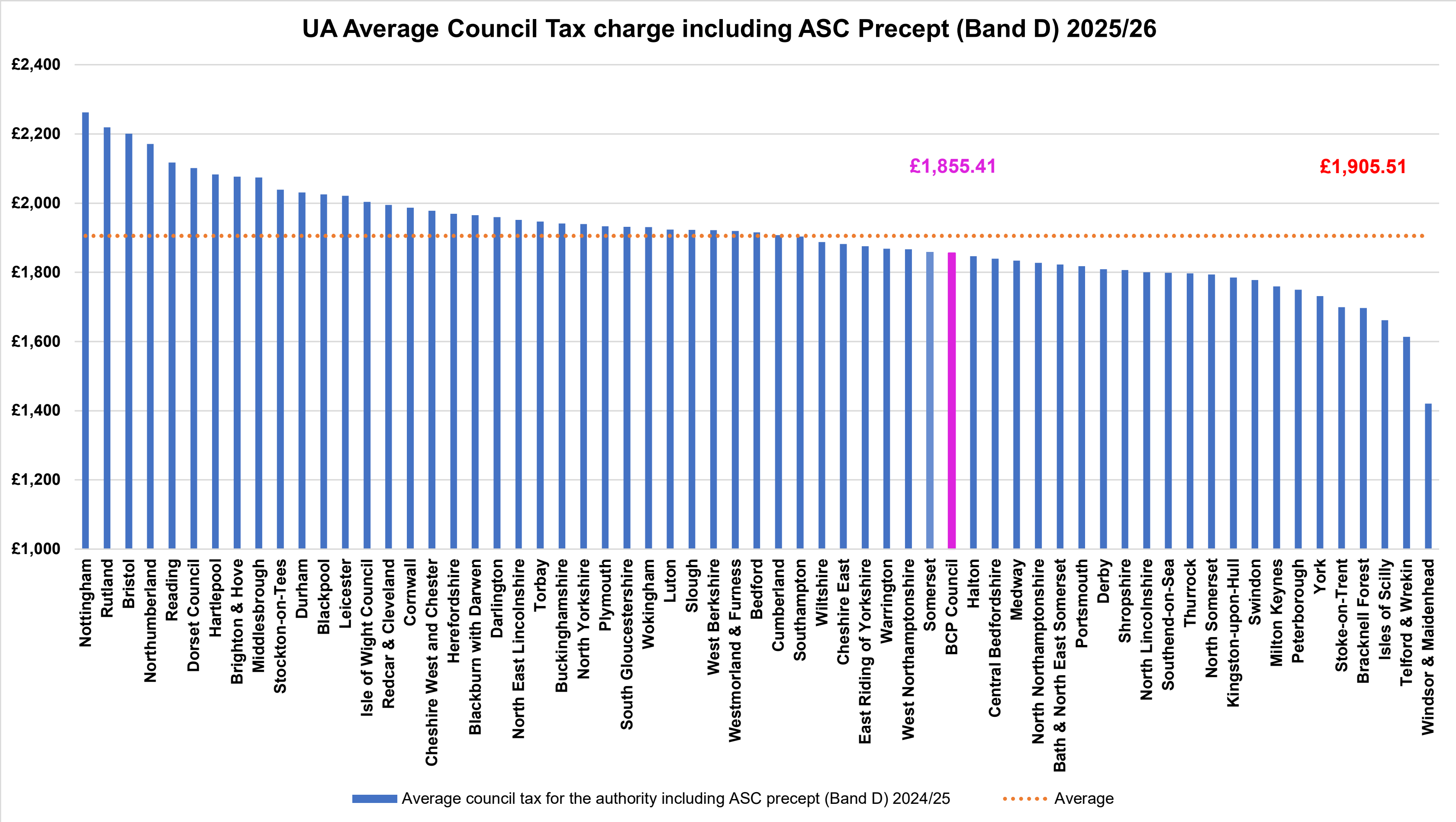

Appendix D4: Council Tax Levels

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Report subject	**BCP Council Libraries – Draft Library Strategy**
Meeting date	29 October 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	This report updates Cabinet on the progress which has been made with the future library strategy following two previous reports in February and December 2024. The report sets out the key drivers for the library strategy, detailing the suggested future focus of the library service, the priorities for investment, and the action plan required to ensure we can continue to deliver an efficient and comprehensive service for the future. The work to underpin the strategy has given us a clearer understanding of where to target investment to bring improvements for our communities, increasing access, and modelling provision within clusters. The vision is an ambitious one, focussed on delivering improvements and cementing the value of libraries within our communities. Whilst there is undoubtedly a resource challenge, as there is in delivering all council services, the strategy remains an ambitious statement of intent. Working with partners, the community, and internal teams, we will develop our preparedness for funding opportunities and focus on greater collaboration to ensure libraries deliver in a time of financial stress and even greater societal challenge. It is anticipated that following endorsement of the draft Library Strategy, any changes of provision to be proposed within the life of the strategy will undergo a second stage consultation process, as appropriate.
Recommendations	**It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet** (A) Endorse the draft Library Strategy as an ambitious plan to ensure our libraries remain at the heart of our communities and open to all. (B) Supports the implementation of Open Access technology in 4 libraries to aid the ability for them to be in use when otherwise they would be closed.

	(C) Support the clustering of libraries within 4 geographical areas. (D) Endorse the approach to work up plans for the remodelling of Hamworthy, Rossmore, Southbourne and Charminster libraries as community hubs to enable wider use and understand the options for Winton Library. (E) Endorse the development of options appraisals in relation to Creekmoor and Parkstone libraries, in time, as required. (F) Support the continued creation of Friends' Groups and volunteer roles in supporting the library offer. (G) Endorse the high-level action plan which will be developed to support strategy delivery. (H) Support consultation needs on a project-by-project basis over the life of the strategy. (I) Delegate authority to the Director of Customer and Property in conjunction with the Portfolio Holders for Culture and Communities, in relation to decisions arising from the strategy and action plan (J) Recognise the key role that arts, culture, creative health and public health can play in the future flourishing of our libraries and support ongoing work with Arts Council England to explore NPO status over the lifetime of the Strategy.
Reason for recommendations	The purpose of this report is to present the draft BCP Library Strategy.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr Andy Martin, Portfolio Holder Culture, Communications and Customer
Corporate Director	Glynn Barton, Chief Operating Officer
Report Authors	Matti Raudsepp, Director for Customer & Property Lynda Anderson, Head of Customer & Libraries
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. On 7 February 2024, Cabinet approved a process to inform BCP's first Library Strategy which aims to create a sustainable future for the service.
2. Public consultation commenced on 7 May 2024, to gain views of the community. Five separate surveys were made available seeking the views of Adults; Children aged from birth to school year 4; and Young People aged between school year 5 and 13. In addition, we surveyed the users of the Home Library Service and created an Easy Read questionnaire for those with learning disabilities.
3. The Portfolio Holder for Customer, Communications and Culture also sought the views of the main Political Groups representing the BCP area.
4. The results of these consultations together with a comprehensive needs analysis for the BCP area were presented to Cabinet on 10 December 2024.
5. An agreement was made to return to Cabinet following further deeper analysis, to present the draft of the new library strategy for BCP Council.

Core Purpose of libraries

6. Those who responded to the consultation recognise the importance of libraries for the community regardless of whether they use them personally.
7. Our elected members of all political groups have talked passionately about the value of libraries and the need to retain library services recognising them as vibrant places where people can borrow resources, access information, take part in an activity or event, meet and interact with other people or simply feel safe and warm.

Priorities of our Libraries

8. The draft library strategy sets out 3 primary objectives which underpin the core service priorities of the library service. Having a clear purpose helps us to be clear about where our resources should be targeted.
9. These are as follows:
    - **Promote literacy, reading and study**
        - Promoting reading for pleasure

    - Supporting children to become excited about reading to develop imagination, vocabulary and learning
    - Supporting literacy for all
    - Developing/identifying dedicated spaces for study

- **Providing access to technology and digital learning to support communities in their everyday lives.**
    - Enable communities to access information and digital services
    - Enable communities to develop new skills to manage online

- **Enable the support of healthy and creative communities**
    - Enable access and create opportunities for the community to participate in a variety of events and activities including arts and cultural experiences
    - Enable creative skills development and enabling talent to flourish
    - Enable and support opportunities for children and adults to connect with others, reducing health, social, economic inequality

10. Many of these objectives are already embedded within the service and will continue to be supported using the service budget.
11. Libraries are integral community spaces that are open to all and provide a host of valuable services to the BCP community.
12. However, the key to delivering these objectives will be to create stronger partnerships with internal departments, outside organisations and community groups to support development and bring capacity in specific areas.

BCP's Cultural Development Team

13. Libraries provide an incredibly useful network through which BCP Council can deliver or facilitate a wide range of arts, culture and heritage activities, reaching a broad spectrum of the population and engaging a wide and diverse audience.
14. The Council's Cultural Development Team work to ensure delivery of the Cultural Strategy across the conurbation and act as connectors between the existing cultural organisations and the audiences in BCP.
15. The Cultural Development Team can facilitate cultural activity across the Library Service, ensuring quality cultural experiences and opportunities reach residents and visitors who might not be able to access them through other means.

Public Health

16. Libraries play a significant role in promoting public health and wellbeing, offering resources and support that contribute to healthier communities and reducing inequalities.
    - **Reduced Loneliness**: Libraries provide community spaces where people can connect, participate in activities, and feel a sense of belonging, crucial for mental wellbeing.
    - **Improved Mental Health**: Libraries offer a safe and supportive environment that helps alleviate stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges.

- **Increased Health Literacy**: Accessing reliable health information empowers individuals to make informed health and wellbeing decisions.
- **Support for Self-Management**: resources, support groups, information and signposting that help individuals manage their health conditions.
- **Community Hubs and Social Connection**: Libraries host events, workshops, and activities that foster social connections and bring people together.

17. Promoting better health outcomes, libraries help reduce the burden on care systems and save money.
18. The strategy will encourage greater use of public health colleagues to use the library network to expand all these opportunities.
19. Together with colleagues in Skills and Learning, Communities and Public Health and the Events team, we aim to do more for the community through joined up working, contributing to our libraries operating as bustling places.

Key elements of the draft strategy

20. In addition to the above 3 service priorities, the underlying aim of the library strategy is to sustain and modernise the library offer to ensure we continue to deliver comprehensive and efficient library services for future generations.
21. By far the biggest challenge in this is managing the costs of our buildings. There is a known immediate investment need of £1.8m in repair and maintenance issues across the library estate. (Appendix 1).
22. This figure represents what is known to our surveying teams and is the bare minimum required to rectify current high priority building related issues. Failure to address these will lead to further deterioration and may lead to the necessary closure of sites, until repairs funding can be sourced.
23. Existing revenue budgets within the service or in Facilities Management are not sufficient to tackle the issue without additional investment.
24. Libraries were not prioritised for CIL funding allocation in the last review although historically, there has been some success in accessing Neighbourhood CIL funding via ward Councilors.
25. Going forwards, being in a state of readiness to bid for and secure external funding will be paramount in delivering the library strategy, unless internal options come forward in future years.

Model of delivery

26. In developing the draft strategy, we have considered with Cabinet members the options for managing costs and other pressures within the revenue budget to achieve continuous improvement.
27. We are keen to retain in-house delivery of our library services and have not pursued options to outsource library delivery or pursue community led libraries. We do, however, recognise that libraries deliver more with community involvement and we need to enable more opportunities for interested groups to participate.

Usage of our libraries

28. Library usage data and responses to the consultation has given us good information and a better understanding of how the public use our library service.

29. Appendix 2, details the following information at branch level for the year 2024/5:

- Number of visitors
- Number of items issued/loaned
- Catchment area in terms of number of wards users come from
- Number of active users
- Average number of active borrowers per month
- % of users who only use the named library
- % of users who have used an alternative library in addition to the named library

30. Using the different indicators, we have been able to group library branches in relation to their use.

31. The Town Centre libraries are most used, and Springbourne, West Howe and Ensbury Park, the least used. Opening hours will impact this.

32. Canford Cliffs, Creekmoor, Ensbury Park, Hamworthy, Springbourne and West Howe all attract users from one ward area only, as opposed to Broadstone, Charminster, Tuckton, and the 3 Town Centre libraries which attract users from 4 or 5 wards.

33. Poole libraries, except for Rossmore, Broadstone and Poole, are all concentrated in the lower half of the usage table attracting very localised use.

34. The information around the number of users who only use 1 library instead of visiting multiple libraries is also included in the Appendix, to help us understand user habits.

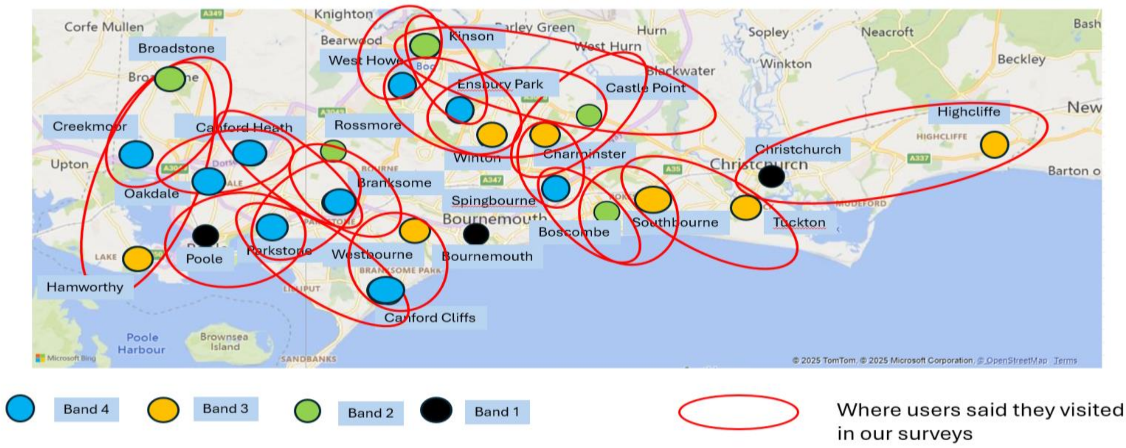
Current opening hours and accessibility of our libraries

35. Currently libraries are not distributed neatly across the conurbation. We have what we have inherited from the legacy authorities.

36. Libraries are grouped into bands which determine opening hours, staff numbers and what can be offered, which is also dependent on the space available.

37. The map below shows the location of our libraries, their current band and where those responding to our consultation told us they visit in addition to their main library.

Current banding with patterns of use



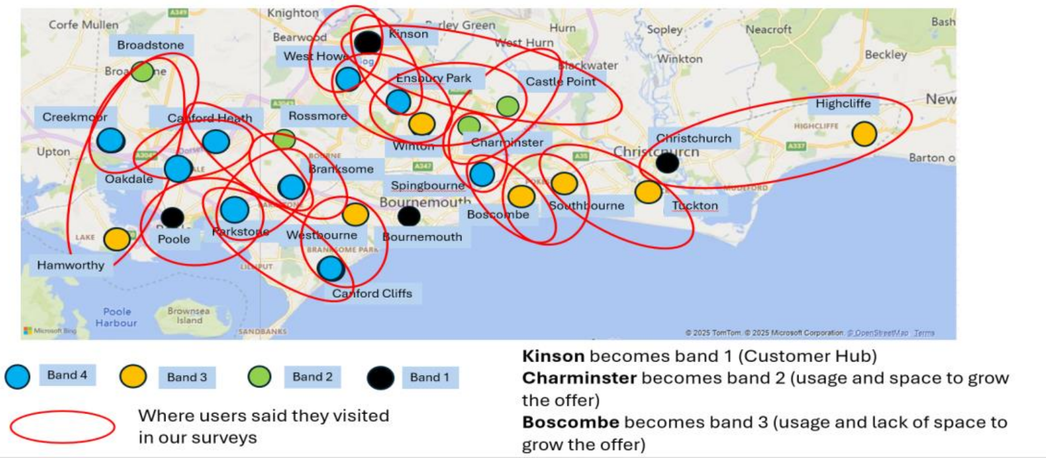
38. The banding was agreed some years ago, and over time there has been some change in use. If we examine current usage Charminster is attracting users in similar quantities to band 2 users, despite being a current band 3, and Boscombe is attracting users in numbers equivalent to band 3 libraries as opposed to its current band 2.

39. Highcliffe and Hamworthy are attracting users in numbers like band 4 libraries, despite being open as band 3 libraries. However, both Highcliffe and Hamworthy have a higher concentration of users who only access this library, according to the consultation results, and therefore they have more local geographical importance.

40. Kinson is operating as a Band 1 library as it is a Customer Hub for BCP Homes, although the current opening hours are not as high as the libraries in the 3 Towns.

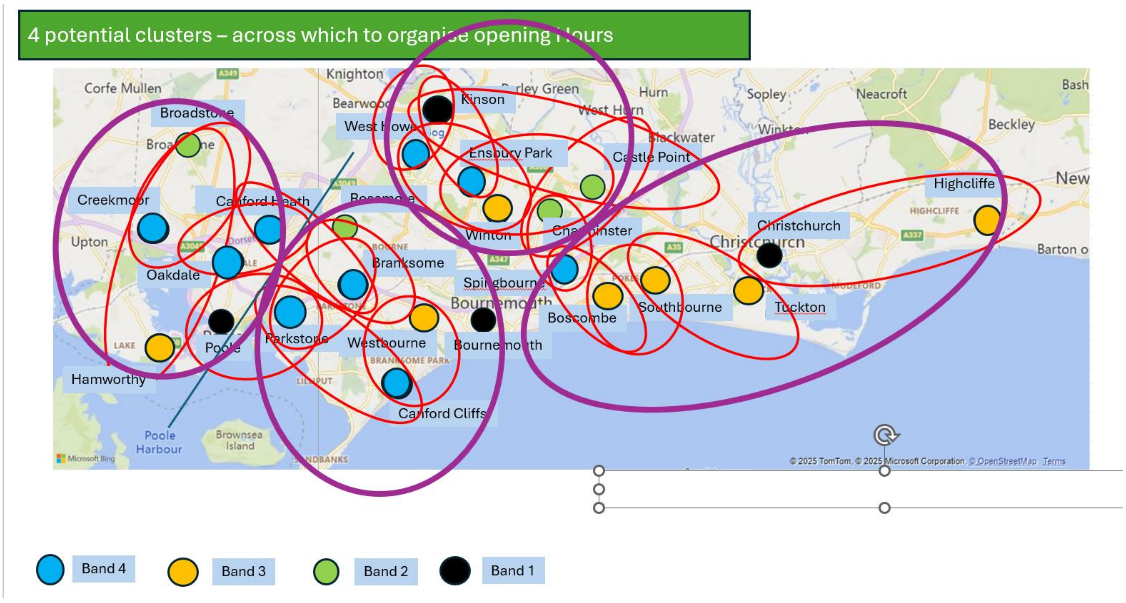
41. If we adjust the map to uplift Charminster to a band 2 library, reduce Boscombe to a band 3 library, and show Kinson as a band 1 library, the map looks as follows:

Banding adjusted for current usage with patterns of use



42. Looking at the mapped usage habits of those who responded to our surveys, it is possible to define 4 clusters based on how our libraries are used across the conurbation.

43. Each cluster is made up of 6 libraries.



44. Each cluster has a band 1 library open for between 45.5 and 53 hours a week across six open days.

45. Each cluster has at least 1 band 2 library (open between 27 and 29.5 hours per week) apart from the Christchurch clusters which have more band 3 libraries open between 27 and 25.5 hours a week.

46. There are band 4 libraries open in each cluster, but a higher percentage of these are in the Poole area. Libraries in band 4 typically open for 21 or 22 hours each, opening at 10am and closing for lunch.

47. We have compared opening hours with both Dorset and Hampshire libraries. Both Council areas group opening hours in a similar way to BCP libraries, except for band 4 libraries. In both Hampshire and Dorset, opening in this group consists of either two full days or 4 half days per week, as opposed to BCP's current offer of 3 full days and 1 half days or 2 full days and 3 half days.

48. We have looked at various scenarios of how we might re-band libraries and amend opening hours within the clusters without significantly reducing staffed opening hours further. However, this makes very little difference to the bottom-line cost and therefore there is no plan to make changes to opening hours linked specifically to bands.

49. We will, however, take forward an action to consider whether we can improve the total number of opening hours across each cluster by reducing instances where more than 1 library in the group is closed at the same time.

Libraries as Community Hubs

50. We were asked to consider how libraries can be used as community hubs, to accommodate other purposes in the library space, to increase the benefit of the assets to the community and potentially offset costs elsewhere.

51. Libraries have already achieved efficiency for the council by bringing services into them, most notably when we created Customer Hubs in Poole and Christchurch.

This enabled the civic centres in those locations to close whilst retaining customer facing support.

52. Kinson Library also operates as a hub providing customer access to BCP Homes residents. There is work currently underway to remodel the space above the library to enable staff outside of Housing to work from and meet with customers as they need.

53. Running parallel to the library strategy development, there is a wider project looking at the Council's estates and accommodation to pinpoint how the occupation of our buildings might be rationalised.

54. This work recognises that community hubs differ from customer hubs in their offering, and collectively we have identified 4 libraries which have potential space to improve the existing offer, as and when finances become available.

55. Charminster, Hamworthy, Southbourne and Rossmore libraries are all large enough to support wider community activity. Both Rossmore library and Hamworthy library have café space which could be brought back into commercial/third party use, providing an additional facility for the community.

56. Seeking funding and developing partnerships to reimagine spaces within these buildings will be a core part of the strategy particularly contributing to our creative and cultural development and public health ambitions.

57. Winton Library may potentially be able to expand its space into a largely unused area behind the library, but the feasibility of this is yet to be determined.

Open access technology

58. A key commitment within the 4 buildings in Charminster, Southbourne, Rossmore and Hamworthy is the introduction of open access technology to enable these buildings to be open when otherwise they would be closed.

59. The introduction of open access technology will form the first phase of works within the identified libraries after which, remodelling of space to support greater community use, will follow.

60. Open Access Technology is not a new concept and one which is widely used across the country. A summary of what this means is contained in Appendix 3.

61. Following an expression of interest to the Arts Council for funding to implement this technology, BCP libraries was invited to submit a bid. We have subsequently submitted this, but it is unknown at this time whether it will be successful. An update should be available towards the end of this financial year.

62. The concept would enable libraries to be open 6 days a week, probably between the hours of 8am and 8pm. The capital cost is expected to be in the region of £474,749, made up of £387,750 grant and £86,999 BCP funding.

63. The adoption of open-access technology will extend the opening hours offer for existing users but also increase accessibility for those who can't currently access libraries during the hours that we are open.

64. Open access will require an ongoing revenue commitment of an estimated £57,600.

65. A key priority within the strategy will be to pursue the introduction of open access technology and work towards agreeing options for each site in determining how to remodel the space to support more activity.

Other Options considered for changes to the model of delivery

66. **Reducing the number of sites** where library services can be run from has been considered as an option.

67. Closing any of our less-used libraries, subject to an appropriate impact assessment and mitigation, would generate in the region £65,000 per annum in revenue savings and over a period potentially turn off building-related costs. This gain is seen as minor compared to the value libraries bring to the community.

68. **Relocating** a library from the current building to a different building is an option which remains on the table for any building which has high value repairing needs or where there is a wider reason for considering relocation.

69. Whilst there is no identified funding for the buildings which have the highest value investment needs there is always the risk that these may need to close without much notice, should deterioration force this.

70. Creekmoor (£233k) and Parkstone (£87k) are two sites which may need options reviews developed at some point. Creekmoor Library is attached to Northmead House and the future use of this building is currently not known. Parkstone library is contained within a building which has space on upper levels which cannot be utilised because of its layout and access.

71. Options for both libraries will need to be considered over the life of the strategy.

72. **Merging library provisions** where two or more libraries are close together and serve the same communities may also provide a solution to cost management whilst acting as a catalyst to improve the offer to the area.

73. Given the difficulty around space in Parkstone library, the repair costs and proximity to Branksome library (which also has limited space and no public accessible toilets), these two could be considered for merger/relocation subject to a potentially suitable site being found.

74. Exploring options as part of the strategy will be included within the action plan.

Increasing staffed opening hours

75. Given the financial constraint the Council is working with, there is no scope for increasing staffed library hours within the budget available.

76. We have therefore looked at how we may bring some capacity to enable libraries to do more for communities in other ways.

Friends Groups

77. Our existing Friends' Groups work hard to promote the libraries they support, often raising money to provide small items to enhance the library setting or service. Small items of furniture are often funded alongside supporting initiatives for larger projects such as the Canford Cliffs extension or Ensbury Park garden room.

78. Growing the number of Friends Groups will be one of the strategy's core objectives and a new framework to support this is ready to be put in place.

Volunteers

79. In addition, we have reviewed the roles Volunteers can undertake to support library priorities to enhance and support the role of paid staff.

80. Role Profiles have been developed for this purpose and libraries will be encouraged to use these for delivery of activities and events.

Satisfaction with our libraries

81. Although satisfaction levels amongst those who responded to our consultation surveys are generally high, there are a couple of areas where satisfaction dropped.

82. Respondents told us that an improved range of stock and an improved refreshment offer would encourage people to use our libraries more.

83. Additional study desks also came up reasonably consistently across branches as an improvement area.

84. The lack of toilet facilities in some libraries was a cause of dissatisfaction in some libraries, notably Canford Cliffs, Ensbury Park and Highcliffe.

85. Lack of baby change facilities were a source of dissatisfaction at Highcliffe and West Howe.

86. Children would appreciate cozy seating options including chairs, sofa, bean bags and cushions within dedicated spaces. They echoed some of the comments in the adult survey around the provision of study desks with computers and printers.

87. Staff also made suggestions which focused primarily on improving furniture, noticeboards or blinds, with many libraries requesting carpet cleaning or replacement as well as decoration.

88. We will take these ideas through to our action plan to consider over the course of the strategy.

89. A project has already started to review what stock we have in our libraries, what borrows and does not borrow, with a view to re-organising and reinvigorating branch space, library by library.

90. It will be a long-term project, but it is hoped that we can improve displays over time and where it is possible, create some space to enable the provision of study desks and other items, or for more activities/events.

Action Plan

91. A high-level action plan has been produced (appendix 4) to capture the essence of the work to be done over the life of the strategy. It will be developed once the strategy is agreed and refreshed as a live document over the life of the strategy.

92. Whilst delivering improvement without identified funding creates a level of uncertainty about what is achievable, we have a wealth of information and a clear list of priorities to work through which has put us in a much stronger position.

93. We will seek the help of the commercial operations teams, and the economic development teams to advise and guide us through options for the libraries we want to remodel and consult those communities further.

Financial Context

94. The Council's financial challenges are not unique, and it is becoming increasingly common for councils across the country to be considering how their library services can play their part in addressing those challenges.

95. Cabinet's clear commitment to retaining all our libraries and the passion expressed by all political groups will be needed to foster the collaboration which will be required to access funding and bring projects to life.

96. The work undertaken on this strategy gives us a clearer understanding of the challenges we have within the library estate and the areas we can focus on to improve the experience for users.

97. Examining the budget spent on libraries in 2024/5 gives us an insight into why our expenses occur. There is a direct correlation between the number of buildings we use to deliver library services and the costs which come from this.

98. 49.5% of the service budget is spent on staffing costs, with a further 20.4% spent on servicing the Bournemouth Library PFI arrangement. 16.2% are connected to buildings leaving 8.9% on service costs (£557,871.46).

99. Typically, libraries have only 2 or 3 members of paid staff per branch, to meet current opening hours commitments (except for the main Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole libraries, which are larger and open for longer). Most staff are employed part-time, with opening hours no longer supporting full-time work for many.

100. The spending detail in 2024/5 is attached in Appendix 5.

Timeline

101. The draft strategy to accompany this paper is attached at Appendix 6.

102. Ordinarily, we would move to a second stage consultation on the strategy itself but as it does not propose any negative change to the service, it is suggested that subject to comment made during the committee process, the strategy is adopted, with the commitment that project-based consultation will follow to progress the various strands where change is being considered.

103. This would include any proposed change to any location of a library.

Summary of financial implications

104. Financial implications connected to the outcomes of the library strategy are yet to be fully understood and will need to be presented as options are developed over the next 5 years.

105. The open access project requires £86,999 match funding to secure an additional £387,750 of Arts Council funding, should our application be successful. This would be made up of existing budgets and 'in kind' costs.

106. The ongoing revenue commitment connected with Open Access will cost an estimated £57,600 which will need to be absorbed into the existing budget.

107. Libraries will be unable to deliver any in-year savings connected with the development of the wider Community Hubs saving workstream anticipated in the MTFP. £133k is earmarked for savings in 2025/26 and a further £399k is expected in 2026/27.

108. External funding streams for larger projects could come from national bodies such as the Arts Council and National Lottery fund. Smaller amounts could be secured from local businesses seeking to support community projects, or from sponsorship and donations.

109. We will seek the expertise of the economic development team to consider what interest there may be for income generation from the use of our space.

Summary of legal implications

110. Local Authority Library Services are a statutory obligation disseminating from the Public Libraries & Museums Act, 1964. The key duty for all libraries is to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient library service for all those who live, work or study in the area'.

111. What constitutes a 'comprehensive and efficient library service' is not defined by the DCMS, as it is expected that service is driven by local need and developed in consultation with local communities.

112. This strategy is not taking away or reducing services from our residents and therefore there are not likely to be any legal concerns at the current time.

Summary of human resources implications

113. The introduction of Open Access technology will require managers to be on duty outside of normal work hours to deal with any issues which might arise.

114. The introduction of 'standby' payments will be required.

Summary of sustainability impact

115. The sustainability of the library service offer, especially in relation to our library buildings is a key element in delivering this draft strategy.

116. An upgrade of the mechanical and electrical systems is a recurring issue for 18 libraries requiring an investment estimated of £908,000. This £908,000 is part of the total £1.8m required to manage current building failure.

117. We have had some success in applying for Salix grants to fund works of this nature in the past, servicing the repayments from reduction in energy costs achieved because of the upgrades. This funding source is however no longer available.

118. Public Sector Decarbonisation grant requires the removal of gas installations with preference for air source heat pumps. These are more costly to run and have a shorter life than gas boilers and are not therefore an affordable solution for us currently.

119. The ability to address these issues is therefore currently unknown.

Summary of public health implications

120. Health and Wellbeing is a core universal offer of libraries and many of our current stakeholders are from organisations targeting interactions and activities designed to support the wellbeing of the public.

121. Through the strategy we aim to work with public health and community team colleagues to identify how we can deliver more targeted activities and events aimed at reducing health, social and economic inequality, utilising joint working initiatives with other organisations.

Summary of equality implications

122. Equality Impact Screening has been undertaken. The strategy does not recommend any change which would have a negative impact on library users, or which would require a full Equality Impact Report and Action plan.

123. Equality impact requirements will be considered for any future project connected with the strategy, as those projects commence.

Summary of risk assessment

124. The risk in developing a library strategy is that any changes result in the council failing to meet its statutory obligations.

125. Statutory obligations are set out in the Public Libraries and Museum Act, 1964, as well as the Equalities Act 2010 including the Public Sector Equalities Duty, Best Value Duty 2011 guidance, Localism Act 2011 and the Human Rights Act, 1998.

126. Given there is no significant change affecting current delivery negatively, any risk around noncompliance with statutory duty are mitigated.

127. The ongoing risk is in the condition of library buildings and the potential that any branch may need to close at short notice, should the condition deteriorate and pose a H&S risk.

128. We will work with our FM colleagues to firm up what is needed in these buildings and seek funding to support future works.

Background papers

Report to cabinet – 7 02 24 – p489-518

Report to cabinet – 10 12 24 – p 439-498

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary of Major Works required in Libraries
Appendix 2 – Usage and Usage Patterns in Libraries
Appendix 3 – Open Access in Libraries
Appendix 4 – High Level Action Plan
Appendix 5 – Financial Spend in Libraries 24/5
Appendix 6 – Draft Library Strategy

Appendix 1:

Appendix 1:
Summary of major works required on BCP's library portfolio

Building Description	Summary	Build Cost	Electrical	Mechanical	Total
Highcliffe Library	Roof void inspection needed, controls and reboiler required. Decking needs replacing	8,000.00	0.00	30,000.00	**38,000.00**
Castlepoint Library	No boiler controls, problematic lighting cannot be repaired	0.00	20,000.00	15,000.00	**35,000.00**
Boscombe Library	Controls needed boilers nearing end of life	0.00	0.00	15,000.00	**15,000.00**
Charminster Library	Parapet walls need rebuilding, major window issues, additional structural issues and repairs needed EICR due boards will need changing, Full boiler and plantroom upgrade,	325,000.00	15,000.00	70,000.00	**410,000.00**
West Howe Library	Full boiler and plantroom upgrade, window issues with ventilation	40,000.00	0.00	60,000.00	**100,000.00**
Ensbury Park Library	Nothing	0.00	0.00	0.00	**0.00**
Southbourne Library	EICR is due and this will require changes to consumer units, Full boiler and plantroom upgrade,	79,500.00	10,000.00	70,000.00	**159,500.00**
Springbourne Library	Flat roof and parapet repairs, window issues. Full boiler and plantroom upgrade	77,500.00	0.00	35,000.00	**112,500.00**
Tuckton Library	Fire compartmentation. Full boiler and plantroom upgrade	18,800.00	0.00	45,000.00	**63,800.00**
Westbourne Library	Minor inspection items for roof, EICR consumer units, full boiler and plantroom upgrade	2,100.00	6,000.00	70,000.00	**78,100.00**
Winton Library	Windows, fire doors, localised roof repairs	75,100.00	0.00	0.00	**75,100.00**
Broadstone Library	Limited work needed. Drainage clearance some single glazing	700.00	0.00	0.00	**700.00**
Canford Heath Library	Some mains upgrade required, lighting mostly old non-LED, mostly single glazed windows, roof good condition for year, Full boiler and plantroom upgrade	0.00	20,000.00	35,000.00	**55,000.00**
Oakdale Library	Some localised roof repairs and repointing required Full mains upgrade overdue, lighting some led some non-LED	15,000.00	30,000.00	0.00	**45,000.00**
Branksome Library	Leased Building with some BCP responsibility. Lighting extremely poor	0.00	10,000.00	0.00	**10,000.00**
Rossmore Community Library and Learning Centre	Some lighting changed, replaced when old fail, budget required to replace remaining 50%, some issues with leaking glazing (monitor)	0.00	12,000.00	0.00	**12,000.00**
Hamworthy Community Library	New boilers and pumps	0.00	0.00	20,000.00	**20,000.00**
Creekmoor Library	Large plantroom upgrade to include air handling toilets in dire need of refurbishment, rooflight leaking, partial mains upgrade and LED lighting needed	38,000.00	15,000.00	180,000.00	**233,000.00**
Canford Cliffs Library and Offices	Roof in very poor condition, old lighting non-LED partial mains upgrade and some LED upgrade	180,000.00	10,000.00	0.00	**190,000.00**
Parkstone Library	Roof needs inspection previous issues, Full boiler and plantroom upgrade, mains upgrade and some lighting	6,500.00	10,000.00	70,000.00	**86,500.00**
Kinson Hub	New lighting required currently investigating funding streams	0.00	35,000.00	0.00	**35,000.00**
	Totals	**£866,200.00**	**£193,000.00**	**£715,000.00**	**£1,774,200.00**

1. Our in-house team have pulled together a schedule of costs relating to each of our libraries to show what is known about most urgent repairing needs (would be high priority to do now if the money was available).
2. The figures bring together what is known in terms of the building fabric, the mechanical costs and the electrical costs.
3. They do not specify any decoration or recarpeting needs or anything that is unanticipated as being needed in the next two years (red).

Appendix 2:

Appendix 2: Usage and Usage patterns across libraries

	2024/5 visitors	2024/5 issues	Total across both 2024/5	No of wards the catchment area pulls from as 1st or 2nd choice libraries	Active Borrowers 2024/5	Average Active Borrowers per month	% of users who only use this library	Most used alternative	Where users also go	
Christchurch	160960	85621	246581	6	4230	1333	22.4%	Tuckton (23%)	Highcliffe (18%)	Bournemouth (13%)
Poole	103807	69310	173117	5	4363	1203	8.7%	Parkstone (24%)	Bournemouth (20%)	Branksome (16%)
Bournemouth	135000	71517	206517	5	4968	1244	29.0%	Westbourne (38%)	Boscombe (23%)	Castlepoint (22%)
Kinson	56426	54617	111043	3	2725	791	8.7%	Castlepoint (36%)	Bournemouth (32%)	Winton (22%)
Broadstone	61420	61483	122903	4	2880	1030	27.8%	Poole (29%)	Creekmoor (20%)	Canford Heath (16%)
Castlepoint	49494	42109	91603	3	2650	706	4.4%	Bournemouth (51%)	Charminster (41%)	Winton (26%)
Charminster	35191	49769	84960	4	2415	729	12.0%	Castlepoint (46%)	Bournemouth (38%)	Winton (26%)
Rossmore	55013	27900	82913	2	1181	332	7.3%	Poole (46%)	Branksome (38%)	Bournemouth (25%)
Westbourne	41182	35345	76527	3	2127	644	8.9%	Bournemouth (56%)	Poole (20%)	Canford Cliffs (19%)
Southbourne	39484	34697	74181	3	2148	582	11.1%	Boscombe (41%)	Christchurch (38%)	Bournemouth (33%)
Winton	37580	32116	69696	3	1999	531	9.7%	Bournemouth (47%)	Castlepoint (39%)	Charminster (30%)
Tuckton	33077	30277	63354	4	1561	466	19.6%	Christchurch (40%)	Southbourne (27%)	Bournemouth (16%)
Boscombe	42523	26154	68677	3	1883	460	13.0%	Bournemouth (62%)	Southbourne (47%)	Springbourne (22%)
Parkstone	26016	25151	51167	2	1204	383	12.2%	Poole (56%)	Branksome & Canford Cliffs (24%)	Bournemouth (14%)
Highcliffe	19798	27174	46972	2	1054	412	27.0%	Christchurch (54%)	Bournemouth (10%)	Tuckton/Outside of BCP (7%)
Branksome	24893	21109	46002	2	1124	320	10.0%	Poole (57%)	Bournemouth (30%)	Parkstone (28%)
Canford Heath	23678	20760	44438	2	1121	318	14.6%	Poole (39%)	Broadstone (22%)	Oakdale (17%)
Canford Cliffs	22615	18014	40629	1	887	278	9.0%	Poole (43%)	Bournemouth (27%)	Parkstone (21%)
Hamworthy	20765	16938	37703	1	921	255	21.7%	Poole (51%)	Broadstone (12%)	Oakdale/Outside of BCP (11%)
Oakdale	20141	16718	36859	2	899	254	6.8%	Poole (61%)	Canford Heath (41%)	Broadstone (22%)
Creekmoor	19213	15650	34863	1	760	220	8.3%	Broadstone (43%)	Poole (39%)	Hamworthy (16%)
West Howe	16873	5847	22720	1	381	86	7.0%	Kinson (72%)	Bournemouth (44%)	Boscombe/Ensbury Park/Winton (22%)
Springbourne	14958	7635	22593	1	513	125	3.7%	Boscombe (57%)	Bournemouth (48%)	Charminster (43%)
Ensbury Park	8944	9150	18094	1	511	147	16.7%	Kinson (49%)	Bournemouth (36%)	Castlepoint & Winton (33%)

Appendix 3:

Open Access in Libraries

'Open access' in libraries is not a new concept. Nationally many library services now incorporate this into their service offer, primarily to enable access to library spaces when otherwise they would be closed. It has the advantage of libraries being open beyond the hours they can be staffed.

Individual users typically sign up for open access and undertake an induction to ensure terms and condition of use can be explained and understood, and other information is made clear around fire safety, health & safety, etc.

Other trusted partners can be signed up who subsequently take on the responsibility for use if they are for instance hosting groups, or inviting non-library subscribed users into the space.

Hours are often 8am – 8pm but others have done differently eg: opening at 7am or closing at 10pm.

There are various pieces of technology which need to be designed into the changes needed to any chosen library.

Typically, this will include:

- **Door opening technology** which can be activated within set times to enable a user to enter. Implementing the technology requires close working with a building maintenance surveyor, and it may be new doors or amendments to existing doors will be required.
- **Technology to control heat, light & ventilation** during the unstaffed hours.
- **People Counters** to understand number using the space for Fire Regulations.
- **Speakers/Tannoy/PA system** for announcement to be made (warning of closure times etc).
- **CCTV** to monitor activity and facilitate any action required. We are advised you need lots of cameras to pick up 'all angles.
- **Alarm functionality,** both intruder and fire, which work with the new way of operating.
- **Hired meeting rooms** may need Digi pads (or QR codes) adding to prevent misuse and availability for paying users.

Processes will need to:

- Consider how buildings are 'swept' and securely closed for the night.
- What impact there might be on the OOH teams if doors do not shut properly, or the technology 'traps' people inside.
- Create appropriate risk assessments.
- Sign up and induction processes.

- Any lease arrangements in buildings not directly owned/managed by BCP
- Consider where users will have access to and what areas they should not have access to. This may need partition walls or door entry access adding (workrooms, kitchens etc)
- Cleaning will be needed which may increase revenue costs.
- Discussions with Neighbourhood Policing Teams, ASB Team, Town Rangers, CSAS etc

Experience of other Library Services tells us:

- Any project will touch several teams in addition to libraries and will need a project manager.
- Main access doors need to be in good condition to prevent issues, especially out of hours.
- Do a pilot and refine project detail before committing to large numbers of libraries simultaneously.
- ASB is rarely an issue. Users must sign up and abide by the Terms and Conditions. Access can be disabled on the access card quickly and easily. Age restrictions apply.

Funding

The Library Improvement Fund made available by the Arts Council has been used to manage projects such as this.

Match Funding is not a pre-requisite for bidding but there is a strong message from the Arts Council that bids will be viewed more favourably where it exists.

Any bid can incorporate Project Manager costs – for 4 libraries a project length of 2 years is to be anticipated.

Library Improvement Fund – Capital funding

Expressions of interest open on 6/5/25 and close on 30/5/25.

Arts Council will then invite applications from a selection.

If selected, full application process opens on 24/6/25 and closes on 1/8/25

Decisions announced by end March 2026.

Activities can start from 1/4/26 but cannot start any later than 1/7/26.

Activities must complete by end March 2029.

Appendix 4:

Library Strategy - Top Level Action Plan		
Building Related Activity		
1	**Managing the cost of repair need across the library estate to avoid short or long term closure due to disrepair**	
1.1	**Prepare and understand the detailed requirements needed in our most at risk buildings in order to seek appropriate funding and discuss options**	
	1.1.1	Charminster Library
	1.1.2	Canford Cliffs Library
	1.1.3	Creekmoor Library
	1.1.4	Southbourne Library
	1.1.5	Springbourne Library
	1.1.6	West Howe Library
1.2	**Consider options to relocate the library offer where this would bring improvement or is required due to the wider asset management review**	
	1.3.1	Parkstone Library
	1.3.2	Branksome Library
	1.3.3	Creekmoor Library
1.3	**Develop ideas with the community for an enhanced library offer in Libraries which have potenatial space to do more**	
	1.4.1	Hamworthy Library
	1.4.2	Rossmore Library
	1.4.4	Charminster Library
	1.4.5	Southbourne Library
	1.4.6	Winton Library

Library Strategy - Top Level Action Plan

Accessibility Related Activity

2	**Consider options to improve the facilities available in current Library Branches**	
2.1	**Consider the Feasibility, impact on space and cost of incorporating toilet facilities within libraries to inform options**	
	2.1.1	Tuckton Library
	2.1.2	Parkstone Library
	2.1.3	Highcliffe Library (and baby change)
	2.1.4	Branksome Library
	2.1.5	Canford Cliffs Library
	2.1.6	Oakdale Library
	2.1.7	West Howe (baby change)
	2.1.8	Ensbury Park Library
3	**Work up the detail and costs related to open access in libraries**	
3.1	3.1.1	Identify and cost physical building changes required
	3.1.2	Procure door access system, CCTV, Tannoy, People Counters and other systems
	3.1.3	Put in place a registration process, undertake risk assessment etc,liaise with insurance etc
	3.1.4	Determine Out of Hours arrangements for ensuring buildings empty
	3.1.5	Seek funding
4	**Consider if opening hours across a cluster can be better organised to avoid clashes of closure times**	
4.1	4.1.1	Desktop review of current provision through a clustered lens
	4.1.2	Engage with ward councillors

Library Strategy - Top Level Action Plan

Management Team Actions

5	**Service Priorities - building capacity for improved service outcomes**	
5.1	**Grow the partnership with Friends Groups**	
	3.1.1.	Launch the new framework to support the set up of indendent Friends Groups
	3.1.2	Manage enquiries
	3.1.3	Managers to support as needed
5.2	**Increase the number of volunteer opportunities across libraries to support activities and events and facilitate staff to do more in libraries**	
	3.2.1	Launch the Role Profiles through publicity on the web/social media etc
	3.2.2	Consider how to create the capacity to support the onboarding and ongoing management of volunteers
	3.3.3	Consider how to fund and administer DBS checks for specific roles.
5.3	**Enable front line staff to have some time to undertake personal development and refresh library spaces**	
	3.3.1	Introduce up to 4 closure days per year for staff training, stock management and space reorganisation
5.4	**Enable managers to focus on improvement projects through paced project delivery**	
	3.4.1	Work at a branch level to deliver improvements using consultation and staff feedback (study desks, teen spaces, children's nooks, replace furniture etc)
	3.4.2	Work with the Insurance Team to get the cover which support the new library model
	3.4.3	Seek funding
	3.4.4	Support staff to actively review and weed stock
	3.4.5	Review stock purchasing and management
5.5	**Create opportunities for localised funding from the community**	
	3.5.1	Put in place a process to enable donations to be made for specific projects
	3.5.2	Seek funding from businesses who fund community activity

Library Strategy - Top Level Action Plan

Management Team Actions

6	**Promote literacy, reading and study**	
6.1	6.1.1	Libraries in all bands to deliver support for reading groups for all
	6.1.2	Libraries in all bands to take part in the Summer Reading Challenge
	6.1.3	Libraries in all bands to host at least two activity session in the summer connected with the Reading Challenge
	6.1.4	Libraries in all bands to promote Bookstart
	6.1.5	Band 1 and 2 libraries to support Bookstart storytime sessions between November and March annually
	6.1.6	Literacy Officers and Library Assistants to attend Assemblies in Schools
	6.1.7	Libraries in all bands to support class visits from schools throughout the year
	6.1.8	Promoting reading for pleasure
	6.1.9	Develop dedicated spaces for study
	6.1.10	Partner with the education team and Children Services to promote libraries as spaces for Young People
7	**Enable the support of healthy and creative communities**	
7.1	7.1.1	Libraries in all bands to deliver at least one social group per week (Knit & Natter, Coffee Morning etc)
	7.1.2	Libraries in all bands to deliver at least 1 games group per week (intergenerational)
	7.1.3	All libraries to support the Universal Offers calendar throughout the year - Arts & Culture
	7.1.4	All libraries to support a wriggle and rhyme session per week
	7.1.5	All libraries to support at least one activity during the Christmas and Easter Holidays for Children
	7.1.6	All libraries to offer Duke of Edinburgh and other Volunteering activities
	7.1.7	Band 1 and 2 libraries to support work experience placements
	7.1.8	Band 1 and 2 libraries to support code club for Young People
	7.1.9	Enabing creative skills development through interest led arts and crafts sessions
	7.1.10	Enable and support opportunities for children and adults to connect with others reducing health social and economic inequality
	7.1.11	Band 1 libraries to hold Living Knowledge Network exhibitions and activities connected with culture
	7.1.12	Bournemouth library to host quarterly music events
	7.1.13	Partner with the BCP Events team and cultural hub to bring activity and events to libraries
	7.1.14	Partner with Public Health to bring appropriate activity and events to libraries which help reduce health, social and economic inequality
8	**Providing access to technology and digital learning to support communities in their every day lives**	
8.1	**Invest in the I.T infrastructure**	
	8.1.1	Introduce Wi-Fi Printing for customers
	8.1.2	Review what devices woud support staff to facilitate public enquiries and requests for assistance.
	8.1.3	Consider the availability of power points and cabling to support study within libraries
8.2	**Improve the digital training offer to support the digital transformation of the Council and enable digital literacy within the community**	
	8.2.1	Partner with training providers to deliver ICT training for the public within libraries with suitable space.
	8.2.2	Expand tech buddy volunteering across all libraries
	8.2.3	Consider the gifting or loaning of redundant ICT to marginalised groups
	8.2.4	Work with our home library service provider and tech buddies to enable where wanted, digital literacy for those users
	8.2.5	Support the digital strategy folowing its discovery phase by enabling libraries to be places where digital champions can support the public

Appendix 5

	Annual Spend 24/25												
Library	**Branch Salary Costs**	**Centralised Salary Costs (1/24th)**	**Stock (1/24th)**	**Centralised Service Costs (1/24th)**	**PFI Contract**	**Branch related Costs (rates, utilities etc)**	**Cleaning Contract Costs**	**FM Planned Maintenance**	**FM Responsive Maintenance**	**Cash Collection**	**Printers (Canon Contract)**	**Total Costs**	**Costs which might be realised if any branches were to close**
Boscombe	£76,182.83	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£45,148.24	£11,503.92	£4,471.50	£15,104.82	£540.00	£468.62	**£201,189.64**	**£153,419.93**
Bournemouth	£391,806.35	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11	£1,271,613.23	£28,254.59		£775.27		£1,080.00	£1,411.16	**£1,742,710.31**	**£423,327.37**
Branksome	£32,837.88	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£14,682.52	£5,046.84		£507.99	£270.00	£482.21	**£101,597.15**	**£53,827.44**
Broadstone	£116,652.83	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£29,673.54	£8,669.04		£77,194.73	£270.00	£546.69	**£280,776.54**	**£233,006.83**
Canford Cliffs	£40,652.21	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£17,436.62	£2,900.52		£6,606.25	£270.00	£403.60	**£116,038.91**	**£68,269.20**
Canford Heath	£28,723.29	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£21,728.37	£4,841.52		£4,408.05	£270.00	£488.74	**£108,229.68**	**£60,459.97**
Castlepoint	£124,694.36	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£37,245.89	£11,484.12	£1,458.14	£820.11	£540.00	£482.92	**£224,495.25**	**£176,725.54**
Charminster	£85,260.89	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£24,083.64	£9,602.76	£1,979.96	£8,235.03	£270.00	£571.21	**£177,773.20**	**£130,003.49**
Christchurch	£212,542.83	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£77,681.49	£28,488.48	£6,451.67	£42,435.78	£1,080.00	£899.42	**£417,349.38**	**£369,579.67**
Creekmoor	£49,250.74	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£30,930.51	£6,390.12	£2,238.88	£2,171.16	£270.00	£574.39	**£139,595.51**	**£91,825.80**
Ensbury Park	£48,182.18	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£4,779.65	£2,447.76	£855.36	£1,783.35	£270.00	£386.80	**£106,474.81**	**£58,705.10**
Hamworthy	£81,159.96	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£33,007.29	£21,618.36		£3,607.34	£270.00	£502.64	**£187,935.30**	**£140,165.59**
Highcliffe	£78,481.42	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£10,541.79	£3,107.88	£2,431.71	£3,403.74	£270.00	£559.08	**£146,565.33**	**£98,795.62**
Kinson	£183,553.80	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£76,002.86	£29,350.92	£7,901.01	£23,473.54	£1,080.00	£533.15	**£369,664.99**	**£321,895.28**
Oakdale	£39,190.55	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£25,834.81	£3,865.92		£4,383.30	£270.00	£434.03	**£121,748.32**	**£73,978.61**
Parkstone	£43,301.89	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£13,104.18	£2,900.52		£2,359.20	£270.00	£504.06	**£110,209.56**	**£62,439.85**
Poole	£324,232.23	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£141,551.02	£46,819.44	£11,691.36	£22,340.27	£270.00	£1,628.06	**£596,302.09**	**£548,532.38**
Southbourne	£78,156.53	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£15,291.64	£5,247.36	£1,033.19	£3,755.96	£270.00	£491.75	**£152,016.14**	**£104,246.43**
Rossmore	£90,229.24	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£55,547.41	£13,004.40		£2,232.19	£270.00	£442.72	**£209,495.67**	**£161,725.96**
Springbourne	£48,007.79	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£15,810.26	£4,599.60	£1,051.05	£5,435.53	£270.00	£427.52	**£123,371.46**	**£75,601.75**
Tuckton	£89,204.44	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£15,407.07	£4,462.08	£3,537.97	£3,619.69	£270.00	£451.07	**£164,722.03**	**£116,952.32**
West Howe	£18,455.82	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£27,370.64	£5,321.16	£923.75	£10,500.42	£270.00	£454.74	**£111,066.24**	**£63,296.53**
Westbourne	£129,201.54	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£27,202.01	£8,695.92	£1,706.14	£2,280.51	£540.00	£488.79	**£217,884.62**	**£170,114.91**
Winton	£88,689.39	£24,525.07	£10,434.53	£12,810.11		£17,673.57	£7,355.28	£2,740.01	£10,783.10	£270.00	£472.81	**£175,753.87**	**£127,984.16**
	£2,498,650.99	**£588,601.68**	**£250,428.72**	**£307,442.64**	**£1,271,613.23**	**£805,989.61**	**£247,723.92**	**£51,246.97**	**£257,442.06**	**£9,720.00**	**£14,106.18**	**£6,302,966.00**	

Appendix 6
Draft Library Strategy

Executive Summary

I am delighted to introduce Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole's first Library Strategy following Local Government organisation in 2019.

Having engaged in thorough and informative conversations with council colleagues from all groups and parties, with library staff and a range of stakeholders and partners and having listened to the views of library users and non-users through a comprehensive engagement programme, I am confident that this strategy will ensure the continuation of Library Services for current and future generations.

This is a strategy of ambition.

While around 40 libraries are shut each year in this country because of the financial pressures on local authorities, we do not want to see any closing in BCP. They are too valuable to all our communities.

In an age of financial stress and ever greater societal challenge, our libraries grow even more important, not less.

It is imperative they remain at the heart of our communities.

When so much of our public service is broken or has disappeared, libraries are the first line of defence and the last line of defence in and for our communities.

We want them to be warm spaces in the winter and cool places in the summer, where people can be alone and together at the same time.

In challenging financial times, we must be bold and confident about our ambitions, about the value of our libraries but that boldness and confidence must be shared and matched by our communities and organisations and indeed within BCP Council itself.

We need to talk about them more and ensure more visits for myriad reasons. It's not all about books and hasn't been for a long time.

We want self -service access to be pursued over the lifetime of the strategy.

We want our libraries to be partnerships of reading, arts, culture, community support and cohesion, creative health and health and wellbeing and an essential part of BCP's placemaking narrative.

We know community partners would welcome an even more collaborative approach, working together with the libraries and customer services teams to deliver services to clients in a flexible and efficient manner that caters to their needs.

And we know our community partners and other parts of BCP want to help us with our ambition to deliver more for everyone in our valuable library spaces. Library staff cannot do that alone.

Libraries play a unique role within our communities providing us with opportunities for learning, access to resources, safe and welcoming community spaces that contribute to health and wellbeing. They are about more than just books and literacy - they are spaces for people to meet, learn and exchange ideas.

We understand the passion our communities have for their libraries, and the satisfaction with and value of the services which are on offer. We know how public use of libraries have changed over time.

They are most widely used when young children are in a household, and again in later years. Expectations of libraries have also changed. Many don't have a need or desire to use libraries being able to access what they need on-line or through alternative provision.

This strategy aims to reflects the approach we plan to take over the next five years. We will continue to work with our communities, employees, volunteers and partners to ensure that we create a modern library service that is fit for purpose, whilst also continuing to explore the opportunities that innovative technology affords.

I am incredibly proud of BCP's Library Service and of all of those passionately dedicated to delivering it. By 2030

- We will have a library service where the model of delivery is formed around clusters informed by how the public have told us they access and use libraries.
- We will develop realistic options for improving efficiency and satisfaction with library provision by considering the location and facilities available at each site.
- We will create new community hubs in several of our libraries.
- We will ensure hours of opening across libraries are planned across a cluster of locations to maximise access for users and ensure uniformity based on demand
- We will promote working with Friend's Groups and test new ICT functionality to establish ways to offer out of hours use of library spaces.
- We will review and improve the digital offer in libraries to enable more streamlined and efficient access to devices, wi-fi, printing and payments.
- We will review the space within libraries to improve zoning and enable multi-use of the provision.
- We will develop ever closer and stronger partnerships with groups and organisations across BCP and within the council itself to ensure greater use of and access to areas of arts and culture, creative health, health and well-being and services that are lifeline to the vulnerable and those who lack the digital skills needed to access many digital by default services which are now in operation.
- We will build on the function of libraries as an important customer facing community spaces, ensuring that they are providing equitable services across the conurbation and reaching all pockets of need in tandem with the statutory services offered by BCP Council.
- We will work closely with Arts Council England to explore the possibility of becoming a National Portfolio Organisation with all the potential opportunities this can bring.

I am excited that we are continuing to develop a library service that will play a hugely significant role for more residents across all our communities. Achieving this ambition has never been more critical.

Councillor Andy Martin

Contents

Introduction and background

The Library Strategy sets out BCP Council's aspirations for the library service over the next 5 years. Its aim is to continue delivering highly valued services to our communities whilst having a clear focus on the investment needs primarily associated with our buildings, so that we can ensure the continued running of our library branches.

The current delivery of library services has been set within a context of continual change, not only because BCP was created from the amalgamation of services from 3 previous Council's, but because libraries have traditionally needed to diversify its offer, to 'justify' their existence in times of acute financial challenge across the Local Government sector.

What is clear is that libraries are a much-valued provision which go beyond the supply of books and other resources, to include a social value which contributes to increased health and wellbeing of various groups within our communities. For some groups, libraries are pivotal, whether this be in developing key reading and literacy skills from birth, facilitating people to access information and resources for study and lifelong learning, or safe places for older or vulnerable adults to mix with others and access information and advice.

Creating a library service which is **modern**, **efficient**, **comprehensive** and **sustainable** has never been more important.

Our resident engagement carried out in May and June 2024 tells us the library service is highly rated by those who responded to our surveys. Libraries are recognised as places where resources can be accessed, information and advice can be obtained, events and activities can be signed up for, and spaces used to keep warm, enable people to leave their home, or congregate and meet with others. Libraries are trusted spaces and the staff who work within them are regularly complimented, appreciated and valued.

There is however more we can do to tailor our service using the feedback we have received. We can modernise our service to meet ever increasing expectation in a digital world and in so doing create efficiency to future proof provision. We can also look at our model of delivery, to ensure it meets the habitual use from existing users and find opportunities to extend access to attract new user groups.

The Library Service is currently delivered from 24 different sites with a Home Library Service available to those who need it. The sites have been inherited from legacy Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole Councils, and except for the creation of two Customer Hubs (Poole and Christchurch Libraries), we have not explored opportunities to evolve provision following the change in Local Government arrangements.

The provision of 24 libraries, averages 6 libraries per 100,000 resident population and means it is towards the higher end of the spectrum in terms of number of libraries compared with its CIPFA nearest neighbours. We are proud to retain these libraries.

The libraries based in the Town Centres of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole are the most used libraries. The additional facilities and central locations in main shopping districts, tend to make them popular destinations and when we look at where users travel from to go to them, it is clear to see how valued the provisions are.

The other libraries are in community locations where there is varying demand. Evidence shows that many of these libraries draw users from a wider catchment area, with fewer libraries being solely relied on for access.

In designing our strategy, we have taken account of Government guidelines in determining our service. It is:

- Based on a comprehensive needs assessment
- Has been developed through consultation
- Robust in meeting our statutory obligations
- Over the life of the strategy, we will consult on options for any significant change, analyse the impact of any proposal and mitigate any significant factors

Purpose of the Library Service

Residents have told us what they think the priorities of the library service should be. Unsurprisingly, the primary purpose is to promote reading for pleasure, support children to develop reading and social skills, and to support literacy.

In addition, residents attend libraries so that they can borrow and browse books, attend an activity or event, undertake research, use computers, printers, scanners, photocopiers, or seek general information, advice and support.

Residents also recognise the value of libraries in offering a free comfortable space to go to, spending time away from home and to meet and interact with others.

The Library Service's primary objectives are therefore to:

Promote literacy, reading and study

- Promoting reading for pleasure
- Supporting children to become excited about reading to develop imagination, vocabulary and learning
- Supporting literacy for all
- Developing/identifying space for study

Enable the support of healthy and creative communities

- Enable access and create opportunities for the community to participate in a variety of events and activities including arts and cultural experiences
- Enable creative skills development and enabling talent to flourish
- Enable and support opportunities for children and adults to connect with others, reducing health, social, economic inequality

Providing access to technology and digital learning to support communities in their everyday lives.

- Enable communities to access information and digital services
- Enable communities to develop new skills to manage online

Basis of the strategy

This strategy has been built from the work undertaken to develop the Library Needs Assessment, a document that draws together statistical information about the BCP area and the makeup of our residents. It examines the demography and characteristics of our local population, economic activity, employment and earnings of our residents, and wider indicators captures as part of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (eg: education, skills and training, health, barriers to housing and services, crime, living environment etc). It also looks at library use and transport accessibility.

The strategy has also been informed by an extensive consultation which was undertaken in May 2024, canvasing the views of current library users and those with a specific interest in libraries, as well as a random sample survey across all wards in the area to also obtain the views on non-library users. Children and Young People also shared their views through surveys aimed at specific age groups as well as a survey tailored to those using the Home Library Service.

Discussions with Councillors and Staff have shaped the direction and ideas contained within the strategy.

Nationally, we have engaged with the Department of Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS) and examined national guidance and information published by Libraries Connected and partner organisations such as The Reading Agency, Association of senior Children's and Education librarians.

The main outcomes of our work, which underpin the new strategy are:

- An updated understanding of what our residents need and what they want from the library service
- A commitment to retain what works and yet deepen opportunities to improve health and wellbeing, and creative and cultural opportunities for our communities.
- An understanding of the investment needed to sustain an affordable, efficient network of libraries
- A commitment to partnership development and collaborative working with the community to bring capacity and join up our initiatives
- A focussed look at the library model organising delivery across 4 key clusters
- Improving technology to support digital options and the enablement of the community to operate in an increasingly digital world.

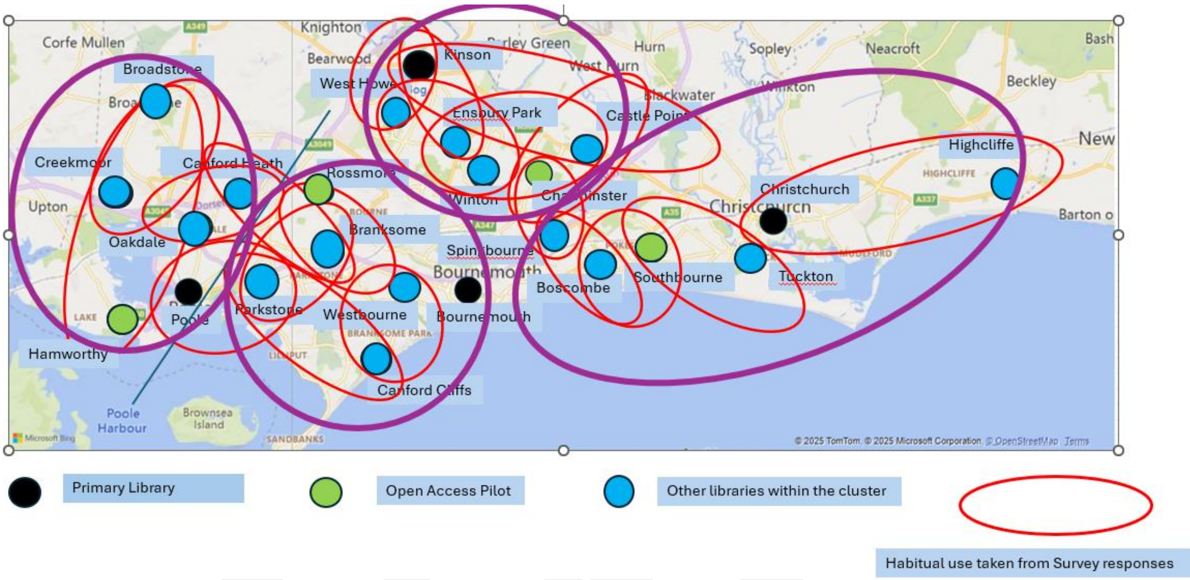
Future Model

The future model to be implemented as part of this strategy is based on grouping the management of Libraries into 4 Clusters. The clusters have been created using the information gleaned from the surveys, where respondents told us they visit as first, second and third choice locations. Each cluster has 6 libraries within it.

The clustering of library provision enables us to ensure there is one library open within the cluster six full days a week, and 1 library which we aim to make 'open access', which will allow registered library users to gain access between set (extended) hours when otherwise it would be closed.

The benefit of this is that library users and trusted partners can continue to use the library facility, increasing access over extended time periods and ensuring that as places libraries maximise their core value.

The four other libraries within each cluster will remain open. No change in opening hours is anticipated, however, over the life of the strategy, and once we have achieved ‘open access’, opening hours will be reviewed within each cluster. The aim of this will be to ensure standardisation of opening hours creating memorable schedules and ensuring a complimentary mix of hours across the group.



The proposed clusters are shown below. The blue highlighted are the libraries proposed for open access.

Cluster 1

Poole	6 full days	53 hours
Broadstone	3 full days, 2 half days	29.5 hours
Canford Heath	3 full days, 1 half day	21 hours
Hamworthy	3 full days, 1 half day	26 hours
Oakdale	3 full days, 1 half day	22 hours
Creekmoor	2 full days, 3 half days	21 hours

Cluster 2

Bournemouth	6 full days	53 hours

Westbourne	2 full days, 3 half days	27.5 hours
Rossmore	3 full days, 2 half days	29.5 hours
Parkstone	3 full days, 1 half day	22 hours
Branksome	2 full days, 3 half days	22 hours
Canford Cliffs	3 full days, 1 half day	21 hours

Cluster 3

Kinson	5 full days and 1 half day	45.5 hours
Castlepoint	3 full days, 2 half days	29.5 hours
Charminster	3 full days, 1 half day	27 hours
Winton	3 full days, 1 half day	27 hours
Ensbury Park	2 full days, 1 half day	18 hours
West Howe	2 full days, 2 half days	18 hours

Cluster 4

Christchurch	6 full days	53 hours
Tuckton	2 full days, 3 half days	25.5 hours
Southbourne	2 full days, 3 half days	26 hours
Boscombe	3 full days, 2 half days	30.5 hours
Highcliffe	2 full days, 3 half days	25.5 hours
Springbourne	2 full days, 2 half days	18 hours

Partnership working

Core to this strategy is the need for partners to come together to support the retention of our libraries. The financial position is difficult but with a strong plan to bring together joint ambition, we can realise a tremendous amount.

Libraries are integral community spaces that are open to all and provide a host of valuable services to the BCP community.

Organisations such as Citizens Advice are successfully located within several libraries across BCP and are aware that they are a lifeline to many of our clients, most notably those who are vulnerable and lack the digital skills needed to access many digital by default services which are now in operation.

The Library Strategy seeks to build on the function of libraries being important community spaces, ensuring that they are providing services across the conurbation and reaching all pockets of need in tandem with the statutory services offered by the Local Authority.

Evidence shows that the conditions of people's lives have the greatest impact on their health, and library spaces have an important role to play in reducing health inequalities through improving the wider detriments of health. The accessibility of social welfare advice via services such as Citizens Advice reduces strain on the Local Authority's statutory services, and the availability of advice and advocacy services allows libraries to offer effective support within community spaces.

The Library Strategy aims to strengthen the partnerships with other parts of BCP and external organisations to enhance the council's aims and ambitions and work together more closely and collaboratively. This will bring more people into our libraries for more reason

BCP's Cultural Development Team

Libraries provide an incredibly useful network through which BCP Council can deliver or facilitate a wide range of arts, culture and heritage activities, reaching a broad spectrum of the population and engaging a wide and diverse audience.

The Council's Cultural Development Team work to ensure delivery of the Cultural Strategy across the conurbation and act as connectors between the existing cultural organisations and the audiences in BCP.

The Cultural Development Team can facilitate cultural activity across the Library Service, ensuring quality cultural experiences and opportunities reach residents and visitors who might not be able to access them through other means.

Public Health BCP

Libraries play a significant role in promoting public health and wellbeing, offering resources and support that contribute to healthier communities and reducing inequalities.

• **Reduced Loneliness**: Libraries provide community spaces where people can connect, participate in activities, and feel a sense of belonging, crucial for mental wellbeing.

• **Improved Mental Health**: Libraries offer a safe and supportive environment that helps alleviate stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges.

• **Increased Health Literacy**: Accessing reliable health information empowers individuals to make informed health and wellbeing decisions.

• **Support for Self-Management**: resources, support groups, information and signposting that help individuals manage their health conditions.

• **Access to Technology and Digital Skills**: bridging the digital divide by offering access to computers and the internet.

• **Community Hubs and Social Connection**: Libraries host events, workshops, and activities that foster social connections and bring people together.

Promoting better health outcomes, libraries help reduce the burden on care systems and save money.

The strategy will encourage greater use of the library network to expand all these opportunities working in collaboration with the newly created Public Health BCP.

Cultural ambition

Working with the BCP Cultural Compact

Cultural Compacts were one of the key recommendations of the independent Cultural Cities Enquiry in 2019.

This proposed a new model of strategic place-based leadership to drive inclusive growth in cities through investment in culture. It defined culture as encompassing 'arts institutions, museums, libraries, the historic environment and cultural festivals, popular and grassroots culture' while also recognising that 'culture is a social expression that will take many different forms and is ever evolving.

There is the opportunity to work with the BCP Cultural Compact which acts as a connector and enabler across the BCP cultural community including many dozens of practitioners and groups.

The Compact's arts development officer is a huge advocate of art and artists in library spaces and working with the Cultural Compact would be a valuable way of partnering and delivering.

Artists say Dorset Libraries are very good at including artists through writing workshops and free performances for children.

This strategy aims to make programming more transparent to artists.

Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) Status.

NPO Libraries refers to libraries that have been designated as National Portfolio Organisations (NPO) by Arts Council England. This status signifies that they receive regular funding to deliver a range of cultural and creative activities within their communities.

The NPO programme aims to ensure that everyone has access to great cultural experiences and that creativity is valued and supported. It also aims to reach out to communities that might not have previously benefited from arts funding.

BCP Council already supports six NPO; Arts by the Sea Festival, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Lighthouse Poole, Activate, Pavilion Dance and (with Hampshire) the Red House Museum.

The work delivered by our NPO's underpins the importance of promoting creativity, learning, and community engagement. Through our NPOs we aim to join up our activity and in time, explore the option of pursuing NPO status for our libraries working with Arts Council England. ACE has expressed an initial interest in this.

Music and Heritage

Bournemouth Library has a particular focus on Music and Heritage.

Bournemouth Music Library is one of the biggest public music and dance collections in the south, offering sheet music, books, and recordings of pop, jazz, and classical music.

Choral and orchestral sets are available for loan, and whilst Library Assistants can help users, more capacity is needed to support the organisations and marketing of the items available. As part of the strategy, we will seek to gain volunteer capacity to support development of the catalogue.

The Heritage library in Bournemouth has a range of items about the local area and includes books, maps, directories, photographs, council records and more. A lot of this collection is for reference only and can't be taken away from the library.

In Poole the local history collection is housed by Poole Museum and there is little held within the Council for the Christchurch area.

BCP Council is currently developing a heritage strategy, and the library collections and archive storage will be considered as part of this wider review.

Digital Learning and tackling digital exclusion

Libraries are well known for offering digital access to our communities via free wifi access and public use PCs. Members of the public can access printing and scanning as well as a broad range of reading material through our online digital library.

We will modernise our printing offer to enable wi-fi print without the need to log on to a public PC. We will also consider, as resources allow the IT infrastructure within our libraries to support modern use, particularly for accessing information or study.

The Council's digital strategy (2025) aims to support an organisation wide focus on tackling digital exclusion and libraries are well placed to act as places to support development of this ambition.

Continuing to expand the number of 'tech' buddies in libraries to support communities to get online and feel comfortable and safe in doing so, remains a core commitment.

Challenges

All this ambition comes at a cost and in running our libraries we know that the major challenge for us lays in improving the condition of the library estate and investing in new the mechanical and electrical infrastructure to improve sustainability.

Across the library estate, £1.8m has been identified as being the investment needed to tackle some of the more pressing issues. Charminster and Southbourne as open access sites, will be priorities to invest in, and we will work towards putting together specifications to enable any potential bid for funding for these and other projects.

Running parallel to the library strategy development, there is a wider project looking at the Council's corporate estate to pinpoint how the occupation of our buildings might be rationalised to ensure efficiency and manage costs.

Whilst ensuring that we commit within the library strategy to retaining library services, there are some library buildings which need to be considered as part of this project owing to the link to wider assets.

Creekmoor library is attached to Northmead House, the future of which is under medium to long term consideration. The options around this will at some stage need to be understood, and the future location of the library may need to be consideration as part of that.

In addition, we have some library services which are in buildings which are underutilised but where options to use the space is limited by building configuration and access. The building Parkstone library is based in is not in a suitable condition to use for other services and considering an option to relocate the library close by should be an option we look at over the life of the strategy.

Public Toilets

The lack of availability of public toilets is an issue which is the cause of some dissatisfaction within libraries and currently this is not something we are funded to be able to change.

Some of our libraries are simply too small to accommodate a facility and we need to understand over the life of the strategy whether supporting a provision is practical.

We will look at the sites currently without a public toilet to consider the feasibility of putting one in, but this will need to be completed within the resourcing available. Where a facility can potentially be accommodated, funding would need to be available. Accessibility audits may help to inform any building related project, and we will seek to undertake these to consider options.

Delivery of the strategy

Delivery of the Library Strategy aims to create a library service which is **modern**, **efficient**, **comprehensive** and **sustainable**.

The key priorities under each of the key headings are captured below:

Creating a library service which is **modern**, **efficient**, **comprehensive** and **sustainable**

Modern:

- **Identify practical improvements to library spaces such as better zoning, additional study desks etc.**
- **Improve digital access for library users by implementing wi-fi printing and modernising the public access facilities.**
- **Review the device needs of staff to support digital engagement.**
- **Undertake access surveys across all libraries to inform access needs.**
- **Consider feasibility around inclusion of public toilets and improved baby change facilities.**
- **Improve soft furnishings to enhance spaces and create inviting spaces for literacy, reading and learning.**
- **Work with our insurers to support community access to library spaces.**

Efficient:

- Review options for the location of libraries which could be improved by local relocation.
- Implement open access as an initial pilot.
- Increase usage of the four identified open access locations by working with the community to enhance the local offer.
- Review physical stock to remove items which do not lend well, create space and refresh displays.
- Review opening hours following the introduction of open access technology to standardise hours and ensure accessibility is maximised across clusters.
- Introduce up to 4 closure days per year for library staff to undertake training, manage stock and reorganise spaces

Comprehensive:

- Continue to support a range of activities and events in libraries to deliver the national universal offers for culture and creativity, health & wellbeing, Information and digital, and reading.
- Develop stronger relationships with partners to enrich our commitment to literacy, reader development and study for children.
- Develop stronger relationships with the Events team and Cultural Hub to support libraries as places where the community can access arts and cultural events.
- Develop stronger relationships with the communities and public health team to support libraries as places where the community can access health and wellbeing provision

Sustainable:

- **Develop detailed specification for urgent works at our higher risk libraries to be prepared for funding options**
- **Continue to engage with the wider corporate asset review to understand options where the current library may be impacted by a wider review.**
- **Improve opportunities for volunteers to support library and community activity, including tech buddies.**
- **Increase the number of friends groups**
- **Put processes in place to support donations and seek funding through businesses which support community activity**

Summary of our proposals

As part of the development of the draft library strategy we have looked at a series of indicators at library level to understand their individual use and compiled a needs analysis to ensure we understand the wider demographic makeup and needs of the community.

We are proposing to retain all 24 libraries meaning that there is no immediate negative impact on our users. Furthermore, we are committed through the strategy to make some key investments, introducing open access technology to improve opening hours in 4 key locations.

The decision to invest in open access not only serves as a pilot which could lead to the introduction of similar technology in other libraries but safeguards the current staffing arrangements as we transition to the inclusion of this new option.

Importantly, open access is not intended to replace staffed hours but will increase access over and above what we could otherwise afford to do.

Funding is clearly an issue but in moving forwards with our strategy we are seeking to harness funding opportunities to deliver further improvements to library spaces. We will need to monitor the success of this carefully and consider in future years what further funding might be brought to the programme of works.

Through creating more detailed specifications, we are seeking to:

- Consider how to improve the range of services delivered from Charminster, Southbourne, Rossmore and Hamworthy libraries, especially linking to our health and wellbeing and cultural programme development.
- Understand the potential to include additional currently under-utilised space into Winton library.
- Create a state of readiness to seek funding for the various repairing needs within the library estate should any potential source of funding become available.

In addition, over time we will commission access audits of each of the libraries and consider the feasibility for accommodating public toilets.

At an operational level, we will:

- Continue to support the delivery of the national universal offers which span across a diverse and rich range of activities and events.
- Strengthen partnerships to support priority activity and grow opportunities for Volunteers and Friends groups to support the service.
- Consider how to reimagine library spaces through zoning, improvements in furnishings and study spaces, and rationalising physical spaces.