

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 July 2026 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr K Salmon – Chairman

Cllr S Aitkenhead – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr J Beesley, Cllr P Canavan, Cllr L Dedman, Cllr C Goodall,
Cllr S Mackrow, Cllr L Northover, Cllr T Trent, Cllr O Walters,
Cllr C Weight and Cllr D d'Orton-Gibson (In place of Cllr G Wright)

Present
Virtually: Cllr F Rice

Also in
attendance: Cllr K Wilson

22. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr G Wright

23. Substitute Members

Cllr D d'Orton-Gibson for Cllr G Wright

24. Declarations of Interests

Cllr D d'Orton-Gibson advised for transparency in relation to the Town Centre Progress agenda item that he was a member of the Bournemouth Development Company.

25. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June were approved as a correct record.

26. Recommendation Tracker

It was noted that there were no specific updates to report on the recommendation tracker and no comments were received from the Board.

27. Public Issues

There were no petitions or public statements. There were 3 public questions received and answered as follows. Mr Redman's question was read out on his behalf by Democratic Services, Mr McKinstry attended to read out both his questions. In the absence of a relevant portfolio holder the Chair of the Board responded to all questions.

Public Question in relation to agenda item 10 – Work Plan

From Mr Ian Redman

1. In connection with my request for scrutiny into the Council's Seafront Trading Operations, I would like to use the Eco Hub at Durley Chine as an example. The Eco Hub is a £2.4 million taxpayer-funded investment occupying a substantial seafront site in a prime trading location. In 2024, the Bournemouth Echo reported that the Eco Hub generated approximately £144,000 of revenue during its first year. Since opening, the operating model has changed from a vegetarian menu to what now appears primarily to be an ice cream kiosk. Could officers explain what commercial assessment has been undertaken, both before and since the Eco Hub opened, to maximise revenue, what actions have resulted from that assessment, and how success has been measured?

Response:

Thank you for your question, Mr Redman.

The Durley Environmental Hub opened in 2023 as a multi-functional facility providing public toilets, a catering kiosk, staff welfare facilities for the Council's Cleansing Team, and space for education and community use.

While the kiosk generates a trading surplus, we recognise that the wider site is not currently achieving its full commercial and operational potential. The educational and community elements have been constrained by a lack of sustainable funding, while aspects of the building's layout and design have limited the flexibility and attractiveness of some areas of the site.

The Council has kept the Hub's performance under review since opening. This has included assessing operational performance, visitor demand, income generation and future opportunities for the site. Market engagement with potential operators was undertaken during 2025, which as informed an open market tender for a new leisure, wellness and education-based offer, which is due to be launched shortly. The aim is to increase activity, improve public use of the site, and enhance commercial returns and social value.

More broadly, seafront commercial activities are managed through contractual arrangements, operational oversight, financial monitoring and regular performance reviews. Income and performance are tracked against agreed budgets and business cases, with benchmarking and market intelligence used to identify opportunities for improvement.

The Council remains focused on ensuring that seafront assets deliver both commercial value and a high-quality visitor experience. We acknowledge that there is further potential to unlock at the Durley Environmental Hub and are actively pursuing options to achieve this.

Public Questions in relation to agenda item 8 - Bournemouth Town Centre Progress

From Mr Alex McKinstry

2. Who is funding the eight months' worth of road improvements in Gervis Place (which commenced on 23 May 2026), and what is the overall cost of those works likely to be?

Response:

Thank you for your question Mr McKinstry. I have been advised that the cost of the ongoing Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) works in Gervis Place is £3.372m. Comprising of the following:

£2,820,000	= Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG)
£552,000	= Highways Maintenance Grant
£3,372,000	= Total

The works are fully funded from external capital grants from the Department for Transport (DfT) and shall address the significant subsidence issues affecting Gervis Place through a full-depth reconstruction of the carriageway, securing the long-term future of this important part of the town centre. Alongside these repairs, the council is investing in a range of improvements that will transform the area, including wider footways, new pedestrian crossings, and enhanced facilities for bus passengers. This includes 9 new bus shelters with real time information, CCTV and raised boarding kerbs for improved access. The result will be a safer, more accessible, and attractive environment for everyone visiting Bournemouth town centre.

3. On 17 December 2025, Cabinet approved a High Street Rental Auction area to be designated for Bournemouth Town Centre - the parameters of which would reach from Durley Chine Road in the west, to Wessex Way in the north, and to Wellington Road, St Swithun's Road South and part of Manor Road in the east. What sum of grant money was released by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to fund the creation of a "vacancy register" for this area - that is, a register of vacant commercial premises within the designated district - and how was the register compiled; was the work done in-house, or by external agents? If the latter, which agents were engaged and what work did they specifically undertake?

Response:

- The total amount claimed from MHCLG for the Vacancy Register was £8,450
- The work was done by an external consultant, BAS Consultancy Ltd who was fully briefed by council officers in advance of the work

- The consultant produced the vacancy register with a combination of field work and desk research
 - The vacancy register includes a photo of the property in question, the address, floorspace, tenancy status, earliest known vacancy date, market status, landlord information (if known), agent details (if being marketed), condition (if known), title number, description of premises, rateable value, planning history (where known) and a score of potential HSRA eligibility
 - The work was delivered as a written report and spreadsheet summary
4. If I have understood the MHCLG guidance correctly, a condition of the vacancy register grant-funding was that the work had to be complete by 31 March 2026. Is the vacancy register for Bournemouth Town Centre complete, therefore; and if so, how many premises have been identified that potentially satisfy the "vacancy condition" set down in Section 193 of The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023? If the register is not complete, is there a deadline and will the MHCLG grant be reimbursed?

Response:

- The HSRA vacancy register was completed in late November 2025
- 28 properties were identified as likely to satisfy the vacancy condition subject to further verification

28. Information Considered Between Meetings

The Board noted the Quarter 4 Performance Report.

It was observed that several areas identified within exception reports were already scheduled within the Board's work programme. Particular reference was made to Homes England and Community Asset Transfers, both of which were due to be considered through future scrutiny activity.

29. Safer BCP (Community Safety Partnership) Domestic Abuse Strategies

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regulatory Services presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book. The Board was advised that these three strategies form the Council's strategic framework to preventing and respond to domestic abuse across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) in partnership with statutory and voluntary sector agencies. Whilst it is not a requirement to have a Perpetrator Strategy or an overarching Preventing Domestic Abuse Strategy, the Community Safety Partnership have developed these complimentary strategies to focus on preventative, early intervention work and ensure that a holistic approach is taken to addressing domestic abuse and perpetrating behaviours in BCP. All three strategies have been developed through significant public consultation and development,

including lived experience groups, Councillor task and finish group and wider stakeholder engagement. The commissioning plan that accompanied the strategies would inform the commissioning of domestic abuse services in BCP. The Board discussed a number of issues in the subsequent discussion on this item including:

Adjournment 7:11 – 7:21

Accessibility and Use of Terminology - Questions were raised regarding references to a "gendered lens" and "intersectionality". Officers explained that the terms referred to the way in which characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and other protected characteristics could combine to create additional barriers to accessing support services. Members welcomed the explanation but requested that terminology used within publicly available documents be expressed more clearly to aid understanding.

Partnership Working with Dorset Police - Concern was raised that the role of Dorset Police and wider partnership arrangements were not sufficiently visible within the strategies. Officers advised that extensive partnership working already existed through mechanisms including Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), Domestic Abuse Strategic Groups, Safeguarding arrangements, Domestic abuse commissioned services. It was confirmed that Dorset Police participated in strategic and operational governance arrangements and that close working relationships existed in relation to safeguarding and support for high-risk victims. Several Members nevertheless considered that the strategies should more clearly demonstrate these arrangements and explain the role of partner agencies.

Suicide Preventions – The Board queried how domestic abuse work aligned with wider suicide prevention activity. It was reported that domestic abuse had been identified as a significant risk factor within suicide prevention work and that domestic abuse representation was included within wider suicide prevention partnerships and strategic groups.

Members were reassured that the work was not being undertaken in isolation and formed part of a wider public health approach.

Commissioning and In-House Delivery - Clarification was sought regarding the extent to which services would be delivered directly by the Council. Officers advised that specialist domestic abuse support was required under legislation and best practice guidance to be delivered by specialist providers. Whilst some functions remained in-house, including strategic coordination and certain housing-related support roles, accommodation and community-based services would continue to be procured from specialist organisations. It was explained that specialist providers offered established expertise, governance arrangements and operational capacity which would be difficult and resource-intensive to replicate internally.

Measuring Success and Outcomes - Members emphasised the importance of demonstrating outcomes and effectiveness. Officers advised that a Domestic Abuse Strategic Group would develop a performance

framework and key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Members requested regular scrutiny updates to ensure progress could be monitored over the life of the strategies.

Use of Acronyms and Accessibility - The extensive use of specialist acronyms, including MARAC, MASH and IDVA, without accompanying explanations was highlighted. Officers accepted the point and undertook to review the documentation prior to Cabinet consideration to ensure terminology was more accessible to readers. Members also suggested that explanatory graphics or diagrams be developed to illustrate governance arrangements, agency responsibilities and pathways into support.

Public Awareness and Communications - Discussion took place regarding the visibility of support services and routes to assistance. Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that information was available through a variety of channels and not solely via the Council's website. Officers advised that information was widely available through websites, printed materials and partner organisations and that new domestic abuse leaflets had been distributed through community locations. The potential role of councillors in distributing information locally was also discussed.

The Board expressed support for the strategies and commissioning plan and welcomed the extensive work undertaken by officers and partners and it was,

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet be advised that the O&S Board supported the recommendation as outlined in the report to approve:

- **The overarching Safer BCP Prevention of Domestic Abuse Strategy 2026-31**
- **The Safe Accommodation Strategy 2026-31**
- **The Perpetrator Strategy 2026-31**
- **The accompanying Safe Accommodation & Community Services Commissioning Plan**

Voting: Unanimous

The meeting adjourned at 7.11pm and resumed at 7.21pm.

30. Bournemouth Town Centre Progress

The Director for Investment and Development gave a presentation to the Board, a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book. The update provided information on a number of different issues regarding the Town Centre to the Board but it was noted that it was still expected that a future session would be held with input from the local MP as well as representatives from the citizen's panel which worked on the

creation of the Town Centre Action Plan. A number of key areas were discussed by the Board including:

Governance Arrangements - An update was provided on governance arrangements established to coordinate town centre activity.

Members were advised that a Town Centre Compact had been created to bring together the Council, Business Improvement Districts, Dorset Police, businesses and other stakeholders. The purpose of the arrangement was described as improving communication, developing shared priorities and ensuring greater coordination across multiple initiatives affecting the town centre.

Members were advised that a considerable number of separate strategies, action plans and policy documents had been produced over many years in relation to Bournemouth town centre. It was noted that approximately 40 separate strategies and plans existed, each containing its own vision and priorities. As a result, work was being undertaken to bring together these various initiatives into a more coherent and coordinated approach.

Questions were raised regarding future reporting arrangements. It was confirmed that an overarching update on the emerging Place Strategy and guiding principles would be presented to Cabinet and that further action planning would continue to develop.

Citizens Action Panel - An update was provided on the Citizens Panel established with support from the Bournemouth Town Centre MP and the Leader of the Council.

The panel consisted of residents selected through a public expression-of-interest process designed to reflect the local demographic.

Through a programme of workshops and engagement activity, the panel had developed an action plan focusing on eight themes:

- Community Engagement and Civic Pride
- Regeneration and Placemaking
- Retail, Business and Economic Growth
- Culture, Events and Year-Round Activation
- Safety and Security
- Movement and Accessibility
- Wellbeing, Public Realm and Environment
- Engagement, governance and Accountability

The Board heard that both short-term actions and longer-term aspirations had been identified. Particular value was attributed to the role of residents in shaping priorities and championing future projects.

Discussion took place regarding the participation of children and young people. It was confirmed that young people had been represented on the panel and that further opportunities for youth involvement were being explored.

High Street Rental Auctions - The Board received an update on implementation of High Street Rental Auction powers.

Councillors were advised that Bournemouth had become an early adopter authority and had formally designated an area for use of the scheme.

A vacancy register had identified 28 eligible properties, although six had subsequently been brought back into use before enforcement action had

been required. The process by which property owners could be engaged before formal powers were exercised was outlined to the Board

Discussion took place regarding vacant properties, landlord incentives, funding mechanisms and the practical challenges associated with bringing properties back into occupation.

The Board welcomed the progress made but emphasised the need for continued focus on delivery.

Inward Investment and Town Centre Regeneration - An update was provided on work to encourage investment and occupancy within Bournemouth town centre. The Board was advised that positive engagement was taking place with investors, developers and property owners.

Reference was made to:

- Residential conversion schemes
- Reuse of vacant retail floor space
- High street renewal initiatives
- Business attraction activity
- Marketing and promotional campaigns

Councillors highlighted examples from other towns and cities where innovative regeneration approaches had revitalised town centres and encouraged officers to examine successful national examples.

Communications and Perception of the Town Centre

Considerable discussion took place regarding public perception of Bournemouth town centre. The importance of ensuring that inaccurate or misleading narratives about the town centre were challenged and balanced by factual information and positive messaging was discussed.

The significance of visible improvements, public confidence and coordinated communications was emphasised.

Board members reiterated their wish to undertake a full Town Centre Inquiry Session involving key stakeholders, including the local Member of Parliament and the Leader of the Council. It was noted that arrangements for this session were still being developed. The Board requested that the presentation slides and supporting documents including the Believing in Bournemouth document from the Town Centre BID, the Coastal Region Built for Growth and the Bournemouth Town Centre Action Plan, be circulated to Board Members. Following further discussion it was:

RECOMMENDED that officers, working with the Citizens Action Panel, be requested to develop fully-costed project proposals capable of being presented to Bournemouth Town Council for consideration and potential funding.

Voting: Unanimous

31. Work Plan

The Chair presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in

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

Seafront Commercial Operations

The Board considered a public scrutiny request regarding seafront commercial operations. Members noted concerns regarding the commercial performance, accountability and operation of a range of council-owned assets and facilities across the seafront.

It was recognised that the Board had previously considered wider commercial operations and had expressed a desire to revisit the subject.

Members considered that scrutiny of seafront commercial activity would be timely and beneficial.

RESOLVED: That a review of Seafront Commercial Operations be added to the Board's Work Programme.

Voting: Unanimous

The meeting ended at 9.01 pm

CHAIRMAN