BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 August 2026 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr K Salmon – Chair

Cllr S Aitkenhead – Vice-Chair

Present:	Cllr J Beesley, Cllr P Canavan, Cllr L Dedman, Cllr C Goodall, Cllr L Northover, Cllr T Trent and Cllr C Weight
Present virtually:	Cllr S Mackrow, Cllr G Wright
Also in attendance:	Cllr M Cox (virtual), Cllr M Earl

32. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr O Walters. It was noted that Cllr S Mackrow and Cllr G Wright were in attendance virtually.

33. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

34. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

35. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July were approved as a correct record.

36. Recommendation Tracker

It was noted that a number of updates on the recommendation tracker were due to be provided by Portfolio Holders as part of the next agenda item. There were no other comments received from the Board.

37. Feedback on Overview and Scrutiny Board Recommendations

The Leader of the Council apologised for an oversight which meant that feedback was unable to be provided at the meeting. She explained that she could arrange for feedback on the following recommendations to be provided publicly at the next Cabinet meeting and also circulated to Board members:

- Parking around Schools
- Parking pressures in High Season
- Local Plan Process
- Social Value Statement for BCP Council

Portfolio Holders could then attend the next Board meeting on 21 September 2026 to respond to any comments or questions.

The Chair indicated that the Board would request the attendance of relevant portfolio holders at the 21 September meeting to enable a discussion on the responses.

The Board received a written update on the Growth Plan which was noted without comment.

38. Public Issues

There were no public questions, statements or petitions received for this meeting.

39. Planning Performance Update

The Leader of the Council 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 provided an update on the ongoing work to improve the performance of BCP Council planning service with significant success achieved in the last year to reduce backlog and increase performance. The Leader highlighted a number of areas, including performance statistics, the reduction of agency staff, the implementation of the new MasterGov IT system, the significant reduction in the backlog of applications while maintaining performance on current applications (including 100% performance for major applications) and the work of the Strategic Applications Team in providing a proactive service through Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) to progress major schemes. The Leader also referred to the challenges faced in operating with three legacy Local Plans while the new Local Plan was being prepared. She thanked the Planning Service for their work in improving performance.

The Leader, the Director of Planning and Transport and the Head of Planning Operations responded to questions on the report. A number of issues were raised in the discussion, including:

- That the date in paragraph 20 of the report regarding older applications was a typographical error, it should read “position as of July 2026 all of the older applications have now been determined and we have no applications over 2 years old.” The Head of Planning Operations agreed to email the Board to confirm this correction.

- The reduction in the backlog of applications was welcomed and would help alleviate developers' frustrations at the delays. Officers advised that the backlog had been addressed through a collective management approach. It was noted that there were genuine reasons for delays including the need to develop clear processes to respond to new planning regulations and requirements. These processes were now in place.
- Officers were asked to clarify the position on home working. It was noted that while some home working continued, more staff now lived closer to the Council area and had an understanding of local context. There were also clear processes in place for site visits.
- Officers were asked why particular applications took so long to determine and how councillors could be informed. It was noted that each application was different and there were numerous issues which could arise and cause delay. Examples included Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), feedback from statutory consultees, dealing with complex legal agreements and the negotiation of amendments in an effort to deliver a positive outcome. Councillors were advised to contact the Development Management Managers or the Head of Planning Operations for a factual updates on particular applications.

The Chair commented on the longer term positive picture and thanked the planning team for their work in improving the service.

RESOLVED that the Board notes and endorses the measures underway to improve and transform the planning service.

Voting: Agreed with no dissent

40. Estates Management and Asset Disposal

The Chair advised that she had followed up on the lack of a written report for this item which the Board had requested to enable proactive scrutiny.

The Leader of the Council introduced the item and referred to the importance of understanding the variety of the Council's estate to gain a strategic oversight. She indicated support for Community Asset Transfers (CATs) and the virtual corporate landlord model. She advised the Board that she had written to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to highlight the impact on local communities of asset sales to fund the Council's Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) debt.

The Interim Chief Financial Officer and Corporate Property Officer, the Director of Customer and Property and the Estates Manager gave a joint presentation, 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. Officers provided further details regarding the following key areas of focus in the presentation: governance and accountability, disposal progress and effectiveness, CAT process and performance, and data gaps, risks and decisions.

The Leader, Deputy Leader and Officers responded to questions on the presentation. A number of issues were raised in the discussion, including:

- In response to a query about Council involvement in governance once a CAT was delivered, the Board was assured that there were robust processes in place to assess the application and business case and that the Council as landlord retained certain rights post transfer. It was noted that resources to undertake this work were limited.
- There were concerns that no wider corporate condition survey programme was funded or active, leaving a gap in data and knowledge when it came to understanding the condition of the estate and making decisions on asset disposal. The Board was assured that the high-priority repair work was knowledge based. There was a recognised lack of resources to facilitate a more proactive approach.
- Issues were raised around the length of time taken to dispose of assets and missed opportunities for CATs. There was a need to improve timescales which it was acknowledged took longer than planned sometimes for a variety of reasons. While the Council encouraged community use of assets it also had a duty to apply the appropriate tests when assessing suitability.
- Regarding the current budget allocation for repairs and maintenance it was noted that for the Facilities Maintenance (FM) element of this FM was forecasting an overspend.
- In terms of how much of the SEND debt would realistically be funded by asset disposal and how long this would take, it was confirmed that there was a shortfall of £17million based on current estimates of capital receipts which would need by met by 2028 to avoid the need to borrow. Officers were confident as far as possible that this could be achieved and a number of steps were being taken, including a review of corporate asset data and options for unconditional sales and auctions.
- Board members still wanted to receive the data and information requested as part of their Key Lines of Enquiry, including an up to date list of capital receipts received and those expected, with realistic valuations and timescales. The Board was advised that this could be circulated but members were asked to note the commercial sensitivities of this information.
- It was confirmed that capital receipts could be used for repairs and maintenance of a capital nature. Although there was a finite deadline for the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts (FUCR), in practice the Government continued to roll this over on an annual basis.
- It was noted that the CAT process had been formally initiated from 2023 onwards.

During the discussion the Leader agreed to follow up on concerns expressed about written reports not being provided when requested by the O&S Board and the impact this had on the Board’s ability to scrutinise effectively and manage its busy programme of work within limited resources. The Leader agreed to raise these issues with the Chief Executive and make Cabinet members and senior officers aware and to ensure that where there were reasons for delay these were clearly communicated in a timely manner.

Board Members discussed making a recommendation to Cabinet to reflect their concerns at the lack of a wider corporate condition survey programme and the risks associated with this. Members noted that the current lack of resources necessitated a more reactive/pragmatic approach to be adopted but there was no evidence to show whether or not this was cost effective in longer term. The recommendation gained majority support although one member was concerned that the proposal itself wasn't the best use of resource.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

That Cabinet be advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Board considers that the condition of our estate needs to be known in order to ensure we have the data to inform asset disposals and maintenance needs and to plan maintenance in the most cost-effective way. This Board recommends that Cabinet support officers to find a way to complete this work as a matter of urgency.

Voting: For – 8, Against – 0, Abstain – 1

RESOLVED that the Board adds the following request to its Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) document under the Data and Information requests section: "Any available data on assets being considered for disposal but not yet approved, including anticipated capital receipts and associated timescales"

Voting: For – 8, Against – 0, Abstain – 1

41. Work Plan

The Chair referred to the Board's work plan, 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 Board agreed to make the following updates to the work plan:

- Seafront Operations Update – item to be scheduled for the Board meeting on 4 January 2026
- Rescheduled briefing session for Homes England now on 5 October 2026.

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The meeting ended at 8.20 pm

CHAIR