

LOWER CENTRAL GARDENS TRUST BOARD

MONDAY, 23RD MARCH, 2026

Present: Councillor Matthew Gillett in the Chair

Councillors Cllr J Martin (Vice-Chair), Cllr B Nanovo
and Cllr L Williams

78 Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

79 Declarations of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

80 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2026 were confirmed as an accurate record.

81 Lower Central Gardens Trust Board Spring Meeting

The Director of Environment presented the Spring Update Report, providing service updates to demonstrate the Council's ongoing commitment to maintaining the Lower Central Gardens for the recreation and enjoyment of the public, in accordance with the Charity Scheme.

The Board received an update on the proposed appointment process for Co-Opted Members to the Trust Board. It was noted that the Trust Board was seeking to recruit between three and four Co-Opted Members, and that a draft advertisement and role description had been prepared. Members discussed the recruitment process and noted that interviews would be undertaken by Trust Board Members, with recommendations made to Cabinet acting as Trustee.

RESOLVED that the Board approve the advertisement and commencement of recruitment of new Co-Opted Trust Board Members.

The Head of Leisure and Events provided a verbal update on the 2026/27 events programme. The Board was advised that the programme largely reflected existing events and that no new large-scale events were proposed. An update was also provided on work being undertaken to promote increased community use of the bandstand, including targeted engagement with community groups and improved promotion of booking opportunities.

The Board received an update on the Arts & Makers Market following the conclusion of the trial operator arrangement. Members were advised that an existing artist had submitted a proposal to operate the market on a one-year trial basis for the 2026 season. The Board supported a return to a community-led approach for the operation of the market.

RESOLVED that the Board approve the proposed approach for the operation of the Arts & Makers Market for the 2026 season.

The Strategic Lead for Greenspaces and Conservation provided an overview of the Council's adopted Urban Forest Strategy and Dorset Nature Recovery Strategy and outlined how these aligned with the objectives of the Trust. Members discussed the balance between environmental sustainability, biodiversity and the ongoing use of the Gardens.

RESOLVED that the Board approve the formation of a subgroup to develop site plans for the Gardens in support of the delivery of adopted Council strategies.

An update was also provided on grounds maintenance activity, including post-event reinstatement works following the removal of the ice rink. Members were advised that decompaction, seeding and fertilisation works had been undertaken, and that recovery of the grass was progressing well.

82 Future Meeting Dates and Work

The Board discussed future meeting dates and the items of work to be brought forward. Members noted that this meeting had been brought forward from May in order to receive an update report at an earlier stage.

The Board discussed the need for a further meeting to consider progress on the recruitment of Co-Opted Members, the events programme and other emerging matters. It was noted that an additional meeting between May and January would be considered if updates were required before the meeting scheduled for January 2027.

Members also requested that future updates include progress on matters previously raised, including lighting, safety and cleanliness within the Gardens, and officers confirmed that updates would be brought back when appropriate.

Future meeting dates would be confirmed outside of the meeting in consultation with Democratic Services.

Duration of the meeting: 10.00 - 10.58 am

Chairman at the meeting on
Monday, 23 March 2026