

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 March 2025 at 7.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr S Bull – Vice-Chairman (In the Chair)

Present: Cllr C Adams, Cllr S Aitkenhead, Cllr M Andrews, Cllr S Armstrong, Cllr S Bartlett, Cllr J Beesley, Cllr D Brown, Cllr O Brown, Cllr R Burton, Cllr P Canavan, Cllr S Carr-Brown, Cllr A Chapmanlaw, Cllr B Chick, Cllr E Connolly, Cllr P Cooper, Cllr M Cox, Cllr D d'Orton-Gibson, Cllr M Dower, Cllr M Earl, Cllr J Edwards, Cllr G Farquhar, Cllr D A Flagg, Cllr M Gillett, Cllr C Goodall, Cllr A Hadley, Cllr E Harman, Cllr R Herrett, Cllr P Hilliard, Cllr B Hitchcock, Cllr M Howell, Cllr A Keddie, Cllr M Le Poidevin, Cllr S Mackrow, Cllr A Martin, Cllr D Martin, Cllr G Martin, Cllr J Martin, Cllr C Matthews, Cllr S McCormack, Cllr P Miles, Cllr S Moore, Cllr B Nanovo, Cllr L Northover, Cllr R Pattinson-West, Cllr M Phipps, Cllr K Rampton, Cllr Dr F Rice, Cllr J Richardson, Cllr V Ricketts, Cllr C Rigby, Cllr K Salmon, Cllr J Salmon, Cllr P Sidaway, Cllr P Slade, Cllr T Slade, Cllr V Slade, Cllr M Tarling, Cllr T Trent, Cllr O Walters, Cllr C Weight, Cllr L Williams, Cllr K Wilson and Cllr G Wright

85. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H Allen, J Bagwell, P Broadhead, J Butt, J Challinor, J Clements, L Dedman (Chairman), B Dove, D Farr, A Filer, J Hanna and A Moriarty

86. Declarations of Interests

Council was advised that the Monitoring Officer had granted all BCP Councillors a dispensation to enable all to participate in the debate and vote on the Community Governance Review.

Further to this Council were informed that the granting of this dispensation would be reported to the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

Councillor Vanessa Ricketts declared an interest in Minute No. 90 (Petition: Protect Christchurch Harbour) as Secretary to the Christchurch Harbour & Marine Society and following the presentation of the petition left the room for the discussion and voting thereon.

87. Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 25 February 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

88. Announcements and Introductions from the Chairman

The Vice-Chair advised Council that it was the last Council meeting prior to Jillian Kay, Director for Wellbeing leaving to take up her new role as Chief Executive of Southampton City Council and in relation to this wished Jillian all the best in her new role.

The Vice-Chair advised that since the last Council meeting he had attended an event at the Arts University for the opening ceremony of their air source heat pumps.

89. Public Issues

Public Questions

Public Question from Joanne Keeling

"Given that Sir Keir Starmer advocates scrapping NHS England for its unnecessary bureaucracy, why is BCP Council considering establishing parish councils, another tier of administration? Shouldn't we streamline local governance instead of adding layers that increase costs and complicate decision making? If current services are struggling, wouldn't strengthening the existing council be more efficient than forming new parish councils? There would be no need for extra layers if BCP operated more efficiently. While we call for reduced bureaucracy nationally, locally we propose expanding it. How do these contradictory policies align with an alleged cost conscious government? Please clarify."

Response by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl

Following a commitment by the Three Town's Alliance administration to empower our communities to make decisions on the issues that matter most in their areas and the lack of consultation on community governance throughout the Local Government Reorganisation process for Bournemouth and Poole residents, Council approved the commencement of a community governance review in October 2024.

Council this evening will be asked to consider the draft recommendations of the Task and Finish Group following the invitation of initial submissions and if approved, these will be subject to a 12-week consultation.

The responses will be considered in accordance with the agreed timetable and Council will be asked to consider any final recommendations in October 2025.

Parish and Town Councils are a legitimate tier of local government with over 10,000 councils in England. They can play a pivotal role in the provision of services at a local level reflecting the priorities in the area, as evidenced by the existing parish and town councils in Christchurch and in Bournemouth.

Public Question from Soo Chapman

Agenda Items 12 and 13 concern the well-being of children and young people. Young people should not have to fight for a habitable future nor should our children's life chances on a Grenfelling planet be ignored.

The single page illustrated document I wrote, East Dorset Friends of the Earth endorsed & Bournemouth Borough Council printed, was distributed by myself and my late husband on our 30th anniversary 24.7.2006 to all 12 Bournemouth libraries. Since then, no such document has appeared in libraries, doctors' surgeries nor anywhere to inform the public just what is happening to their world. Denialism is allowed to flourish and with it our chances of survival.

An escalating, dangerous 429 parts per million CO2 when Earth's safe level is 350ppm, shows the failure of all authorities to respect, warn and prepare subsequent generations for the Anthropocene.

How does BCP plan to redress this?

Response by the Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, Councillor Andy Hadley

Soo, thank you for your clear warnings.

The Council are actively working on awareness for children and young people. Our Educational Improvement Team is assisting schools in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole to address the Department for Education's '**sustainability leadership and climate action plans**' initiative, which involves all education settings nominating a sustainability lead and putting in place a climate action plan. This compliments the Council's Environmental Schools Award, an established scheme that helps schools improve their environmental performance across many areas, including energy, waste, biodiversity and travel. I have been asked into a local school to hear of the work of their Eco Leaders, and I would welcome more such visits.

The Council has also been taking practical measures to reduce emissions and raise awareness at schools with the 'School Streets' scheme aimed at restricting traffic and parking, initially outside four local schools during peak times. This resulted in an 11.5 per cent rise in parents and carers opting to leave their cars at home and either walk, cycle or scoot, and 92 per cent of respondents requesting the scheme be made permanent. Other schools are coming on-board.

To raise awareness more widely, I presented the Climate Action Annual report to Cabinet earlier this month, and at the same time launched the Council's Emissions Dashboard that can be accessed by anyone from the Climate pages of the Council's website. This makes available our emissions data and shows our progress towards becoming carbon neutral, displaying roadmaps illustrating how this can be achieved, and case studies.

I agree that we need to do far more to counter the false narratives and apathy. The links that you frequently share are always valuable, most recently

- Predictions from the Medical Journal "The Lancet" about massive population health impacts of climate change,

<https://lancetcountdown.org/2024-report/>

- from the Society of Actuaries and Exeter University about the Global risks to food production, millions of deaths, and Trillions of annual GDP losses across the planet.

<https://actuaries.org.uk/document-library/thought-leadership/thought-leadership-campaigns/climate-papers/planetary-solvency-finding-our-balance-with-nature/>

- from Oxford University Press, which highlights the huge shift in human emissions needed to undo the damage of the last century of human activity, but which includes a glimmer of hope in that changes from the International Maritime Organisation to regulations on sulphur content in fuels used by global shipping have resulted in measurable impacts being recorded.
<https://academic.oup.com/oocc/article/3/1/kgad008/7335889>

In recent weeks, The Climate Team has been strengthened by two new officers, part of whose role will be to carry out community engagement on sustainability issues, including climate change awareness.

Public Question from Judith Adda

"As a long-time BCP taxpayer, I want to know about Bournemouth Live, the shadowy, outsourced, closed company running the massive, underutilised BIC.

Who's the CEO? How much does this immense Bournemouth asset contribute to our town and BCP's coffers? Time to reveal this now with BCP's contracting budgets.

This information appears nowhere in my latest Council Tax demand, nor is it public information on BCP's or BH Live websites.

It surely cost BCP £millions to build and BIC's far from paying its way today as expected, with the pitifully limited number of events it now hosts.

Unimpressed with many rebuffs I received when I offered my organisational business development skills, I can help develop significantly more revenue from this major Bournemouth asset, I believe is now *a white elephant-on-sea!*

I offer proven business leadership skills, knowledge, 'savvy', drive, determination to help improve this situation and respectfully ask for some answers".

Response by the Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations, Councillor Richard Herrett

Thankyou for your question,

BH Live are a separate organisation to BCP Council and run as a registered charity.

They currently hold the lease for the BIC, Pavilion and 3 of our BCP owned Bournemouth based leisure centres.

BH Live pay the council a service fee on an annual basis as part of this lease agreement which is within the Council's overall budget. Council officers have regular partnership meetings with BH Live in line with the

contractual arrangement which covers their service plan, budgets and performance.

BH Live have a board of trustees and submit their accounts to Companies house and the charity commission, along with a full report on an annual basis as with all registered charities.

The Trustees names, which include two BCP Councillors are publicly available on the charity commission website, along with annual reports, in which the senior management names including the Chief Executive are listed.

The Council do not appoint staff to, or recruit for BH Live , this is done through their own process, being an independent charity.

Public Statements

Public Statement from Susan Stockwell

I applaud this administration's foresight in providing residents and businesses with 20mph limits. Whatever the motivation, be it safer roads for everyone, healthier conditions for travelling actively, or something else I am grateful. I also applaud our opposition on BCP council, for contributing to alternatives to private vehicles, introducing Beryl Bikes and Scooters, manifesto commitments to public transport and a general offering of towns which are kinder to the environment. Each has had a part to play.

Frustration over traffic jams is a great leveller. We may disagree, often passionately, over how to tackle this. But better to care and disagree than nobody caring.

Recently, health evidence from ULEZ and Clean Air Zones, and accident figures for 20mph have become available. I urge you as decision makers to use this wisely.

Public Statement from Mark Elkins

The East Cliff and Springbourne Neighbourhood Forum application (ECSNF) in stark contrast to the East Cliff Neighbourhood Forum application (ECNF) is the only one that does not seek to split up East Cliff by including all the buildings and green space within East Cliff. It also includes all the beaches and cliffs whereas the ECNF fails to include these at all. In addition (ECSNF) includes the whole of Springbourne thus aiming to have a considerably greater impact on preserving heritage, designing out Crime, local employment opportunities, levelling up, enhancing tourism, business opportunities, retail trade, and avoidance of housing development cramming.

Public Statement from Paul Spector

This is a statement to express my support for the Twinning arrangement between Bournemouth and Netanya and my concern at the negative and divisive campaign to de-twin.

Twinning with Netanya helps connect people from one seaside town, with a strong tourist background, to another. It was initiated in 1995 and, since

then, through visits and exchanges, friendships have been forged, honest opinions exchanged, and best practices shared.

The ordinary citizens of Bournemouth and of Netanya share common aspirations - for peace and prosperity, for a quiet life. That is why we should support and encourage the twinning of the two towns.

The concept of “Love thy neighbour” is central to all three major monotheistic religions, and it’s time we started to work together, as a community, for the good of all our neighbours.

Public Statement from Alexander McKinstry

Last week's Audit and Governance Committee debate, regarding FuturePlaces, was deeply dissatisfying. I see nothing in the Constitution that requires a business case, or budget, to be submitted before appointing external investigators; the Standards Committee never does this. I was disappointed too at the failure to define the scope for an investigation, despite four public statements setting out key issues at the start of the meeting. As the investigation and its parameters have now been delegated to the monitoring officer and head of internal audit, I've emailed both officers details of principal concerns surrounding FuturePlaces: its accommodation, the streamlined recruitment process, who authorised the bonuses and on what grounds, and how the final settlement (£2,691,704) was determined. Lastly, I deplore the remarks about "needing to move on", uttered by one councillor mid-meeting: this belittles public concerns, and ignores the fact that audit is a retrospective exercise.

Public Statement from Philip Gatrell

COUNCIL’S PERFORMANCE INDICATORS IN 150 PERMITTED WORDS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN

- ***Complaints Processed:***

2019-20	43
‘20-21	40
‘21-22	73
‘22-23	77
‘23-24	90
‘24-25 to 28.1.25.	85
Total	<u>408</u>

- ***Complaints Upheld after 137 Cases Fully Investigated:***

2019-20	5	(42%)
‘20-21	9	(69%)
‘21-22	22	(65%)
‘22-23	26	(68%)
‘23-24	32	(81%)
‘24-25 to 28.1.25.	17	(74%)
Total Upheld	<u>111</u>	

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

- ***Information Time Limit Compliance Response Rates compared with Commissioner's Target 90%:***

2022-23	88%
'23-24	82%

- ***Further Information Release Rates following Internal Reviews and Complaints to Commissioner:***

2022-23	48%
'23-24	54%

- ***Information Requester Tribunal Appeals to date:***

1 - Concluded at hearing **22nd January 2025**. Published judgment imminent.

LOCAL AUDIT AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT 2014

- ***Local Government Elector's Section 27 Objection accepted concerning 2023-24 Section 28 "Unlawful Item of Account":***

Senior Officer's "Compensation for Loss of Office" **£37,500**. Detailed by public issue at Audit and Governance meeting **27th January 2025**. External Auditor's 2014 Act remediation to follow.

90. **Petition: Protect Christchurch Harbour**

Consideration was given to a petition calling for BCP Council to produce and adopt a Christchurch Harbour Protection Policy.

The petition organiser, Vanessa Ricketts, Secretary to the Christchurch Harbour Marine Society provided background relating to the submitted petition.

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy spoke on the petition highlighting the work which has taken place and emphasising the pressures on the harbour.

Members spoke in support of the petition, thanking the petition organiser for bringing the petition to Council and Councillor Michael Tarling moved the following recommendation:

That the petition be referred to the next available Environment and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting for consideration.

This motion was seconded by Councillor Andy Hadley.

Members spoke in support of recommendation.

RESOLVED that the petition be referred to the next available Environment and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting for consideration.

Voting: Agreed with no dissent

Councillor Vanessa Ricketts left the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting on the item after presenting the petition as a member of the public and in her role as Secretary to the Christchurch Harbour Marine Society.

91. Audit and Governance Committee 27 February 2025 - Minute No. 78 - Financial Regulations - Annual evolution for the financial year 2025/26

The Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, Councillor Marcus Andrews presented the report on the Financial Regulations – Annual evolution for the financial year 2025/26 and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED that the Financial Regulations as shown in Appendix A with the minor amendments reported and approved by the Committee be adopted with an operational ‘go live’ date of 1 April 2025.

In agreeing the above recommendation, Council noted that it may be necessary, at the discretion of the Procurement and Contract Management Team (PCM), to operationally implement some of the changes from 24 February 2025, which was the date new legislative requirements ‘go live’.

Voting: Agreed with no dissent

92. Cabinet 5 March 2025 - Minute No. 125 - Community Governance Review - Draft Recommendations

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl presented the report on the Community Governance Review – Draft Recommendations and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

Councillor Kate Salmon proposed the following amendment to the recommendation to read: -

“The Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group draft recommendations, as set out in the schedules within the attached report excluding appendix K be approved for publication and consultation with interested parties.

That Appendix K be replaced with a new recommendation to leave those parts of Bournemouth not otherwise referred to within the report unparished.

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Joe Salmon.

Comprehensive discussion took place on the amendment with a number of members expressing concern with regards to the removal of ‘K’ prior to the public consultation.

Voting: For:14, Against:47, Abstentions:2

The proposed amendment fell with the voting set out as above.

Councillor Patrick Canavan proposed an amendment to the motion with the following additions to read: -

‘The Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group draft recommendations , as set out in the schedules within the attached report be approved for publication and consultation with interested parties subject to the amalgamation of Appendices G,H, I & K thus forming a single Town Council for Bournemouth and that the Head of Democratic Services be delegated to make any consequential adjustments to ward boundaries and electoral distribution.’

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Eleanor Connolly.

Members discussed the amendment and a number expressed concern with regards to the size of town council that would potentially be created with the amalgamation of areas.

Voting: For:10, Against:44, Abstentions:8

The proposed amendment fell with voting set out as above.

Councillors Paul Slade and Vikki Slade left the meeting at 8.43pm prior to the vote on the above amendment.

With both amendments having fallen, discussion then took place on the original recommendations as set out on the agenda.

Members spoke both in support and against the recommendations and proposed consultation with some members highlighting the benefits of town and parish councils and other members expressing concern with regards to the potential additional tier of local government.

RESOLVED that: -

the Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group draft recommendations, as set out in the schedules within the attached report be approved for publication and consultation with interested parties.

Voting: For:42, Against:19, Abstentions:1

The meeting adjourned at 9.27pm and reconvened at 9.45pm

Councillors Brian Hitchcock, David Martin, Chris Matthews, Pete Miles, Bernadette Nanovo, Karen Rampton, and Vanessa Ricketts left the meeting at 9.27pm

93. Cabinet 5 March 2025 - Minute No. 128 - Our Place and Environment: Local Transport Plan (LTP) Capital Programme 2025/26

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, Councillor Andy Hadley presented the report on Our Place and Environment: Local Transport Plan (LTP) Capital Programme 2025/26 and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED that Council: -

- (a) approved the 2025/26 Local Transport Plan Capital Programme as set out in Appendix A and delegated the delivery to the Director of Planning and Transport in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy and Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure & Commercial Operations;**
- (b) delegated the delivery of the Active Travel Fund 5 grant to the Director of Planning and Transport in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy and Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure & Commercial Operations; and**
- (c) approved the indicative 2026/27 and 2027/28 Highways Maintenance Programmes as set out in Appendix B.**

Voting: For:44, Against:5, Abstentions:5

94. Cabinet 5 March 2025 - Minute No. 129 - Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl presented the report on Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) Council agreed the spending priorities for Strategic CIL set out in Option 2 over the period 2024/25 to 2029/30 provided CIL income is as forecast; and**
- (b) An annual update on this report be brought to Cabinet and Council.**

Voting: For: 52, Against: 2, Abstentions: 0

95. Cabinet 5 March 2025 - Minute No. 130 - Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, Councillor Andy Hadley presented the report on Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

The Vice Chair advised that there had been a request to take the recommendations separately and as such recommendations (a) and (b) would be taken together and (c) would be taken separately.

Some members expressed concern with regards to the review and potential withdrawal of the bus subsidy budget.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) Council approved acceptance of the £5.722m Bus Service Improvement Plan funding for 2025/26 from the Department for Transport;**

- (b) Council delegated delivery of the BSIP programme, developed in conjunction with the Enhanced Partnership Board, to the Service Director for Planning and Transport in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Mitigation, Energy and Environment; and
- (c) Council agreed a full review of all subsidised local bus service contracts ahead of the planned commencement of the withdrawal of the Bus Subsidy budget starting in 2026/27

Voting: (a) and (b) Agreed with no dissent
(c) For:47, Against:2, Abstentions:5

Councillor Clare Weight left the meeting at 22.36pm

96. Cabinet 5 March 2025 - Minute No. 133 - Children's Services Capital Strategy 2025/26-2027/28

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Richard Burton presented the report on the Children's Services Capital Strategy 2025/26-2027/28 and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED that Council agreed the capital programme as set out in the report, including the budget allocations set against the capital funding available for the period 2025/26 – 2026/27.

Voting: Agreed with no dissent

Councillor Paul Hilliard left the meeting at 22.40pm

97. Notices of Motions in accordance with Procedure Rule 10

Council was advised that one motion had been received on this occasion.

Rebirth of Youth Services

The following motion was submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 9 of the Meeting Procedure Rules and was moved by Councillor Peter Cooper and seconded by Councillor Patrick Canavan.

This Council Notes That

1. The Government announced in November 2024 the development of a National Youth Strategy to give young people the opportunity to co-produce the strategy to support services, facilities and opportunities they need outside the school gates to benefit their lives and future.
2. Local Authority spending on youth provision has reduced by 73% since 2010 which equates to £1 billion less being spent on young people each year.
3. A distinction should be made between youth work as a professional relationship-based approach that empowers young people, and simply working with young people, which may not centre their needs, voices, or long-term development.

This Council Believes That:

1. A strong, strategically funded youth service is essential for the well-being, safety, and future opportunities of young people in BCP.
2. Youth voice must be embedded across all decision-making structures to ensure policies reflect the lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of young people.
3. A clear distinction between youth work and working with young people must be understood and upheld in policy and practice, ensuring that youth work is valued as a professional, developmental process.

This Council Resolves To:

- (a) Publicise the Government's national survey which asks young people to respond by 9 April 2025.
- (b) Develop a BCP strategic plan for the rebirth of youth services, ensuring that youth work is recognised, funded, and properly resourced.
- (c) Establish a Youth Futures Hub, in line with the Government's strategy, to directly engage young people in shaping local policies and decisions, ensuring meaningful representation at all levels of governance.
- (d) To ask the Children's Overview & Scrutiny Committee to conduct a review of existing current youth provision, identifying gaps and opportunities for investment in professional youth work, detached youth work, and community-based youth services.

Councillor Joe Salmon proposed an amendment to the motion with the following additions to read: -

1. Add to "This Council Notes That":

New Point 4:

"Despite the change in government, funding levels for local authorities remain well below pre 2010 levels, making it challenging for councils to fully fund services for young people."

2. Add to "This Council Believes That":

New Point 4:

"The council is not adequately funded by central government to deliver the services young people deserve, and further local tax increases would place an unsustainable burden on residents while failing to meet the need."

3. New Point 5:

"Given that the recent budget process saw no viable proposals to reprioritise funding towards children's services, additional central government investment is the only way to secure meaningful improvements."

4. Add to "This Council Resolves To":

New Point e):

"To instruct the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing, urging the Government to provide the funding required to meet the needs of young people in our area."

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Sara Armstrong.

The proposer and seconder of the original motion advised that they accepted an amendment. Council agreement was sought to confirm the amendment as the substantive motion which was subsequently carried without dissent.

Councillor Richard Burton proposed an amendment to the motion with an amendment to recommendation (b) to read: -

Develop a BCP strategic plan for the rebirth of youth services, ensuring that youth work is recognised, funded, and properly resourced. When the Government National strategy is published and resources clarified.

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Sandra Moore.

The proposer and seconder of the original motion advised that they accepted an amendment. Council agreement was sought to confirm the amendment as the substantive motion which was subsequently carried without dissent.

Comprehensive discussion took place on the motion with members speaking in support of the motion and of the importance of youth services.

This Council Resolves To:

- (a) Publicise the Government's national survey which asks young people to respond by 9 April 2025.**
- (b) Develop a BCP strategic plan for the rebirth of youth services, ensuring that youth work is recognised, funded, and properly resourced. When the Government National strategy is published and resources clarified.**
- (c) Establish a Youth Futures Hub, in line with the Government's strategy, to directly engage young people in shaping local policies and decisions, ensuring meaningful representation at all levels of governance.**
- (d) To ask the Children's Overview & Scrutiny Committee to conduct a review of existing current youth provision, identifying gaps and opportunities for investment in professional youth work, detached youth work, and community-based youth services.**

Voting: Agreed with no dissent

Councillors Sharon Carr-Brown, Brian Chick, David Flagg, Gillian Martin, Simon McCormack, Lisa Northover and Rachel Pattinson-West

98. Questions from Councillors

Question from Councillor Mark Howell

Does the Council have in place robust policies that prohibit the deliberate deletion of e-mails by officers and technical measures that maintain the integrity of data within officer email accounts so that emails cannot disappear.

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Resources and Governance, Councillor Jeff Hanna

Technical measures have been implemented to maintain the integrity of data within Officer and Member official mailboxes, ensuring that emails cannot disappear. This includes archiving all Council emails, which makes them available for five years, regardless of whether they have been deleted from an individual's mailbox or if the individual leaves the organisation.

Supplementary question from Councillor Mark Howell

Just to say, so that you agree that it shouldn't be possible for emails to disappear and not be locatable.

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Resources and Governance, Councillor Jeff Hanna

I don't think it's a matter of opinion I think it is a matter of fact, that that is the way that the system works that it archives the information and makes it available for access from throughout the council systems. It doesn't allow them to disappear forever.

Question from Councillor Philip Broadhead (at the Chairs discretion the question was read out by Councillor John Beesley in Councillor Broadheads absence)

While remote working has its place and can sometimes help to balance work and family life, there's equally a growing body of evidence that for many roles, productivity is greatest when people work from the office. This is especially important in many Council roles, particularly those involving interactions with our residents.

Lib Dem-run Somerset Council recently admitted that they have five staff members based overseas including, inexplicably, two working in social care.

Can the Cabinet Member confirm if BCP has any staff members working from overseas? Additionally, can you confirm what rough percentage of staff are not based in the office full time? Finally, can you confirm how many staff are not required to come into the office or equivalent place of work at all (and are therefore fully home-based)?

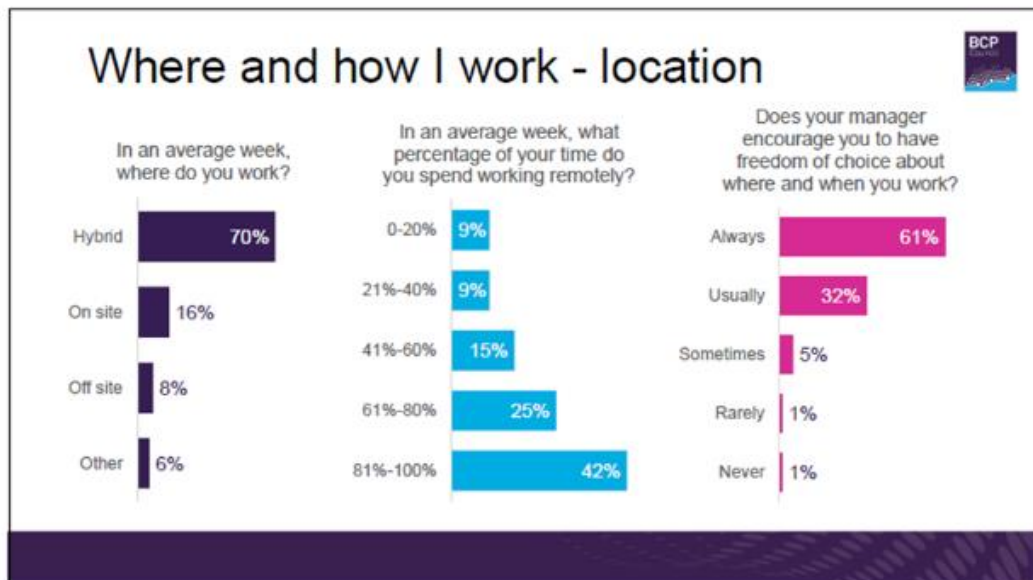
Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Resources and Governance, Councillor Jeff Hanna

Our records show that there aren't any BCP Council colleagues with a non-UK address. We do know that both colleagues and councillors may carry out work from time to time whilst abroad and this can be as little as accessing e mails whilst on holiday. We have, however, received a sporadic number of requests from colleagues wishing to work abroad temporarily which was particularly heightened around the time of COVID and I believe that some requests have been agreed subject to certain conditions, only on a temporary basis for specific personal reasons.

Our 2023 staff engagement survey had 2,504 responses which is a 52% response rate. We know that the majority of those responding are in office/desk based roles. Of those who responded 70% said that they worked in a hybrid way with a range of colleagues working remotely for different proportions of time.

None of our colleagues (unless agreed through a reasonable adjustment resulting from a disability) are considered as fully home based. All colleagues are required to attend one of the Council sites as required to either meet with their manager/teams as needed.

This data set will be updated shortly as in April we will release our full 2025 engagement survey where we will seek the same information.



Question from Councillor Tony Trent

“ Last year, following some concerns expressed by local people and organisations, Poole Charter Trustees, and certain Charter Trustees in particular, put a lot of time and effort to make sure the Town adequately marked the 80th Anniversary of D-Day – in which Poole played an important part as one of the three big embarkation ports. Thankfully Christchurch Town Council was able to share the National guidelines for this anniversary, which I believe did not reach BCP, and we were able to mark

the event in a proper way. We were told last Autumn that following the opinion of a Kings Counsel, who looked into the rights and roles of Charter Trustees, such matters are not within the remit of Charter Trustees to organize or finance events that are not directly linked to the Town's Mayoralty, and we are told these remembrance events are the responsibility of BCP rather than the Charter Trusts.

With that in mind, and following representations made to individual Charter Trustees and the Mayor of Poole from key organisations, what are the plans in place by BCP, involving the constituent towns, to mark the 80th Anniversary of VE Day in May, and VJ Day in August. These are two important and significant events, and probably the last landmark anniversary for which there will be those who went through it as adults and participants, will be around to celebrate the ending of these historic wars.

I want to draw particular attention to the second of these events, VJ Day, as it was a Poole Councillor, who sadly died in Civic Office, who served in the Far East, and was a key part of the campaign to remember those who served in the Far East, and not just those who served in Europe. He was instrumental in the campaign that led ultimately to the Burma Star Memorial in Poole Park.

I appreciate that there are issues with funding anything extra through BCP Council, with the enormous pressures on its finances from statutory services, but I believe that we should make sure that we mark this important anniversary year in a manner which befits its significance. To help this situation, knowing that the two Charter Trusts cannot step in without it being declared ultra vires, could we look into the possibilities that some of the unspent Ward Improvement Fund monies from around BCP could be used as and where required to ensure we mark these important anniversaries properly?"

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations, Councillor Richard Herrett

BCP Council are arranging a Beacon Lighting outside the Civic Centre for VE day on 8 May. We are aware that Christchurch Town Council are putting an event on at Christchurch Quay.

We have had discussions with voluntary groups to understand if any of the community are planning any events across other areas for either anniversary and we will support organisers should any applications come in.

The government have issued street party guidance to councils, and we have had approximately 20 applications from communities across BCP. Due to the lead time that deadline has already passed.

The respective civic mayor's will be advised of events being held by community groups, organisations and residents within their areas.

If any formal commemorative events are held by local branches of the Royal British Legion, the Mayor will be represented accordingly.

BCP Council received an invitation to attend a VE Day commemorative event in Cherbourg and the current Mayor and Sheriff of Poole will be attending in their dual-hatted capacity.

There may be opportunities for prospective town and parish councils to hold commemorative events, specific to their communities in the future.

As the local authority, the BCP wide event, will be held at the BCP civic centre, for which invites will be going out to the appropriate people in due course.

Supplementary question from Councillor Tony Trent

Is there anything specifically for VE day planned for Poole as it is quite a significant part as it is the British Legion in Poole have been some of the most vocal people in it, and also VJ day especially as Poole has got the Burma memorial.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations, Councillor Richard Herrett

Due to the restraints around the Charter Trustees and the Local Authority if you would like to organise an event in Poole you are welcome to do so but we are not in a position to fund that at this point, but the events team remain ever supportive and I am sure will be helpful.

Question from Councillor Sara Armstrong

"Can the leader of the Council provide an update on the position concerning the East Cliff and Springbourne Neighbourhood Plan following the threat of an application for judicial review made by Andrew Emery (an ex-employee of BCP council) at a cabinet meeting on 10th December last year. Can she also clarify why two BCP consultation flyers for a Neighbourhood Plan area, devoted only to the East Cliff area were placed on a lamp post on Manor Road, this month as part of the council's consultation process, without an accompanying flyer relating to the much more representative and inclusive East Cliff and Springbourne application?"

Residents are clearly confused about these two competing applications, and promoting just one of these applications is adding to that confusion and exclusion."

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl

The East Cliff & Springbourne Neighbourhood Forum and Area Designation Consultation closes on 7 April 2025. The Council will consider the representations received and a report will be brought to Cabinet later this year.

In respect to the question about flyers, in addition to publishing the proposed designations for both East Cliff and East Cliff & Springbourne on the council's website, the local planning authority can choose other methods of bringing the consultations to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the proposed neighbourhood areas. Posters have been displayed in approximately 28 public locations carefully chosen across both areas to highlight that there are two consultations, and directing people to view the application documents and complete the survey via the dedicated Haveyoursay webpage. In terms of Manor Road, East Cliff & Springbourne posters were put up in two locations in Manor Road (junction

with East Overcliff Drive) and at the junction with Grove Road. East Cliff posters were put up in Manor Road (junction with Derby Road).

Question from Councillor Toby Slade

Desmond Tutu said "There comes a time when we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in."

Effective communication is fundamental to the success of any organisation, whether in the private or public sector. Clear, timely, and responsive communication creates trust, ensures accountability, and improves outcomes for residents. However, communication within this authority is falling short and I am not the first to raise this. On many occasions, my emails and communications to Officers and Directors have gone unanswered, and I know from speaking to residents that they have, and do, experience the same. At a recent Children's Overview & Scrutiny meeting, I learned that poor communication was the number one complaint from families engaging with council services.

Why is communication across this council—at all levels—so poor?

What is being done to address this failing?

Residents, councillors, and businesses deserve clear, timely, and responsive engagement from their local authority, and something needs to change.

Will this authority commit to a review and practical and tangible actions to improve communication across the authority?

I take this opportunity to acknowledge Democratic Services collectively their responsiveness sets an example that should be followed across the organisation.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Customer, Communications and Culture, Councillor Andy Martin

Thank you for your question, Cllr Slade, the interesting cultural reference and your perspective on the importance of communication.

After spending the last 40 years in regional news and magazine publishing and the past 14 also in the national and international military strategic communications environment I completely agree with you about the critical nature of communication.

However, I do not accept your premise that communication within the BCP Council is poor.

Personally, I cannot recall any time where I have not had a response from an officer, senior or otherwise on anything I have raised in the past 2 and a half years since being elected.

Officers have been instructed and reminded to engage with ward members whenever issues are raised affecting a specific ward issue - I have always found them to be helpful and responsive.

Cllrs can also use the cldr.enquiry email if they are not getting as fast a response as they wish.

I have used this on occasion and always had a good and timely response, usually within 48 hours.

BCP Council is of course a big and complex organisation. Some enquiries contain questions that go across multiple service areas or require the input of several officers.

This can cause delay and complexity and sometimes uncertainty as to who is collating a response.

Your question seems to be based on your experience as a new member and on some unspecified generic comments from residents.

I offer my own example from last Thursday around a long running planning problem in Highcliffe and Walkford.

The ongoing communications from the planning officer prompted this response from a large group of residents.

“Thank you again for all your amazing work. We really appreciate this.”

We have a highly skilled communications team who manage our corporate and community comms with great professionalism.

I can also tell you personally that working across a number of newspapers and websites currently and in the past, they rank very highly.

I would be very happy to provide you with a detailed data analytics breakdown of their press and social media activity in the past few months.

On the Children’s reference yes it was around communication and updating as to where assessments were.

We have seen an improvement in that element.

The main issue has been more recently is around EHCP provision, not communication.

More generally....

Thousands of residents and stakeholders are successfully communicated and interacted with every week.

In terms of customer, our contact centre telephony which is used more widely than corporate customer services alone is 2,660 daily - but that is just phone calls not emails or direct calls to officers.

The customer experience in terms of service and comms is constantly under review. A really good example is Blue Badge, where we are down to 6 weeks.

We are currently drafting a customer charter as part of the Customer and Digital Strategy.

Trust, truth, openness, and transparency in communication are also critical and I mention that in the context of the administration that ran this council from October 2020-May 2023.

Finally, I have my own cultural reference from the legendary CNN anchor Larry King who said.

“I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I’m going to learn, I must do it by listening.”

So, in that spirit and the vast nature of communications, I will be sure to share your observations and will be very happy to meet with you to discuss particular concerns, examples and ideas.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Toby Slade

The question has been answered but would you afford me the time to show you the three emails to Directors that haven’t been replied to and at least four from officers that haven’t been replied to in probably the last two weeks?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Customer, Communications and Culture, Councillor Andy Martin

I am happy to meet and go through those with you.

Councillors Matthew Gillet, Crispin Goodall and Gavin Wright left the meeting at 11.38pm

Question from Councillor Joe Salmon

Given that the most important group to get cycling—and to reduce car usage on the school run—is children travelling to school, why is the council not doing more to support this by working directly with schools to identify key routes for bike buses and prioritising cycling improvements along these routes?

The council has access to school admissions data, road traffic collision statistics, and tools like the Propensity to Cycle Tool. Could this data not be used— in collaboration with schools—to determine the best and safest routes for children to cycle? If bureaucratic barriers such as GDPR concerns are preventing this, what solutions could be explored to overcome them?

A more joined-up approach, where the council works with schools and parent groups to plan infrastructure improvements in tandem with identified routes, would provide targeted support for children cycling to school. Why isn’t the council adopting this approach instead of building new cycle lanes seemingly at random. The council must do better on this urgent issue where progress is happening far too slowly.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations, Councillor Richard Herrett

The Council is already working with most of our 98 schools to identify and break down the barriers that prevent school children and their parents from walking, scooting and cycling to school. Just this month the council coordinated an engagement session at Christchurch Junior School to listen to the views of children, parents and residents that live in the vicinity of the schools in that area. Coincidentally this school has a volunteer-led Bike Bus.

The council has a long track record of working with schools to identify infrastructure to help enable active travel to and from them, including the

installation of crossing facilities, removal of physical barriers, and path improvements as well as funding facilities within the schools themselves to securely store scooters and bicycles. More recently the council has also been rolling out a successful programme of School Streets which encourages and enables more children to walk, scoot and cycle to school.

The council has a STEPS programme which teaches school children at the kerbside how to walk to and from school more safely. The council also provides Bikeability training so that children can learn to ride a bike competently on the roads, and through our Bike It programme has even provided refurbished bicycles to school children that due to personal circumstances could not afford one.

Regarding the analysis of data. The Sustainable Travel Team work with the schools to postcode plot where pupils are travelling from, in order to help plan routes to schools identifying where improvements are needed. This data is used to help inform where resource is best placed to increase sustainable travel to schools. Officers also make frequent use of road collision data and the Propensity to Cycle Tool to help focus our limited funding where it is likely to have the biggest positive impact.

The council is building cycle lanes along routes that connect homes to places of education and work and has been praised recently by schools in the vicinity of new infrastructure. Many of these schools have upgraded facilities on site to accommodate more bicycles and scooters and this has been reinforced by our Bike It officers (from Sustrans) going into the schools to get the children excited about cycling and scooting, and to encourage increased use of the new, safer facilities.

I don't disagree that we could and need to do more but am assured that the resource available is being put to best use and that when any funding opportunities arise the officers are well placed to seize them in order to deliver more. Officers have advised that they are more than happy to engage with Cllr Salmon regarding any supplementary queries.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Joe Salmon

Maybe I have been barking up the wrong tree as I have not been coming to you but what I really want is that data then, because I have got groups who would like to talk about setting up bike buses and all of that and they are not sure of what routes, times all of that. If that data exists brilliant, lets talk, lets make that happen.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations, Councillor Richard Herrett

I can't answer that as a technical question but the officers certainly will be glad to.

Councillors Marion Le Poidevin, Sandra Mackrow and Judy Richardson left the meeting at 11.40pm

Question from Councillor Kate Salmon

At our last meeting on 25 February and in response to a public question, Councillor Herrett advised the chamber that the offering across council-run

catering outlets on the seafront this year would include an increase in plant-based products. Could he please provide some more specific information about this:

- How many menu items across council-run outlets were plant-based in 2024-25, and what proportion of the total offering did this represent?
- How many will be plant-based in 2025-26, and what proportion of the total offering will this represent?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations, Councillor Richard Herrett

The Seafront catering outlets represent the largest of our catering offering and approximately 20% of this menu is plant-based across our two main catering outlets.

We are still looking to increase this, although we are limited by supplier and procurement considerations so I cannot confirm a final percentage for the coming year yet, where the core business is obviously done through the summer months.

As I also stated in that answer- we need to make our vegan options tempting tasty, to increase sales in this area. For me a far better measure of success, but also much harder to achieve, in taking people with us.

Looking at how we introduce those options in a sustainable way to ensure we remain commercially competitive without over burdening a menu is more complex than most would think. I continue to challenge the catering team to find , and trial vegan alternatives.

I for one would love to see a vegan soft serve ice cream as an option, I know it is out there on the market and is genuinely indistinguishable from the 'real' thing

This singular item though does demonstrate the challenges around plant based provision , it includes a large amount of coconut oil, and is more expensive to buy in. But also offers some efficiency in machine maintenance, but the improvements of not using dairy, but also as ultra processed food is a product some consumers are now seeking to avoid. Making sure it doesn't compromise commerciality, as well as satisfying procurement rules, and supplier constraints also presents a challenge.

There are also internal offerings across some of our leisure sites. Queens Park Golf Course has 23% of its daily menu plant based and Upton Country Park offers 20%.

As with all of the catering sites, as noted we need to balance our menu offering with demand and officers will use sales and consumer data to do this to inform any menu changes.

We continue to monitor this and engage with our suppliers to meet new demand and to understand current trends and availability of plant-based products.

Question from Councillor Patrick Canavan

Given the rejection by the Planning Inspector of the BCP Local Plan what steps are now being taken to address the need to build more homes and to meet the requirements of the changes in planning legislation being proposed by the current Government?

Response from the Lead Member Strategic Planning and Local Plan Delivery, Councillor Margaret Phipps

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material consideration in the Council's decisions on planning applications now and this includes how the Council's housing land supply position is calculated.

In respect to the Planning Inspectors' letter following the part 1 hearings in January 2025, a report will be brought to Cabinet on the revised timetable for production of a new Local Plan. As the Local Plan's submission was a decision of Council, that report will also need to come to Council for decision.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Patrick Canavan

The Government announced today a further £2 billion to build social and affordable housing to help deliver the goal of 1.5 million homes. So will the plan that Councillor Phipps has just mentioned actually set out the detailed plan of how BCP intend to meet that goal?

Response from the Lead Member Strategic Planning and Local Plan Delivery, Councillor Margaret Phipps

I am not 100% sure of what the report will set out, it certainly will set out a timetable as to how we are going to produce a new local plan and obviously that will be part of what we will be doing within the local plan. Whether that specific item will be in the report I would have to find out for you, but certainly the timetable of how we will produce a plan because we absolutely need one and will have to reflect the new national planning policy framework and all other statutory guidelines that we have.

Question from Councillor Joe Salmon

Given the repeated issues with data integrity across council consultations, why does the council continue to use methods open to abuse, with no meaningful safeguards to ensure responses are genuine? Not only can multiple online submissions be made using multiple email addresses, but there are also no checks preventing individuals from collecting and submitting large numbers of paper consultation forms. Why haven't stronger measures—such as optional verification via Council Tax details or council service accounts or the open electoral register—been introduced to ensure consultation results are meaningful, reliable, and genuinely reflective of residents' views?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Customer, Communications and Culture, Councillor Andy Martin

Thank you for your question Cllr Salmon.

I understand you were briefed on these issues last week but I am happy to go over them again.

It is important to recognise that a public consultation is not a vote or referendum, but an opportunity to gather a range of insights, views, and feedback on proposals before any decisions are made.

BCP Council consultations are successful at doing this. Thorough analysis of all the views is undertaken and presented in an accessible way for us to digest and understand as part of the council's decision-making process.

I am unclear about your reference to repeated issues with data integrity.

There has been one incident in recent consultations, where the consultation team have highlighted that multiple responses could have been received from individuals.

This was because they were alerted to a social media post, that was encouraging people how to complete the survey multiple times.

This isn't a usual occurrence, but the team have looked into what can be done to prevent this happening again.

We are piloting using different software for our online surveys, which asks respondents to create an account and verify email addresses.

Most respondents to consultations choose to reply online rather than paper, our paper surveys are available in libraries.

The Research and Consultation Manager has engaged with IT to explore options for conducting online surveys that integrate with relevant data sets and the council's CRM system user identity management solution.

While this capability is not yet in place, we are actively evaluating solutions as part of our engagement platform re-tender and future phases of the Customer Engagement programme.

It is worth remembering, consultations tend to provide the views of residents and stakeholders who have an interest or who are motivated by the topic being consulted on.

To get insight into all residents' views about a particular proposal, the council can conduct sample survey research either on its own or as part of a consultation.

The findings from sample surveys can be used with a certain degree of confidence to represent the views of the wider population – should every resident have taken part in the survey.

Some recent examples of this have included our budget consultation 25/26, library strategy and Local Transport Plan.

You will be aware that there are issues around using the data from the open electoral register.

I am happy to meet with you to talk over your issues.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Joe Salmon

Just to be clear with the current ongoing 20mph consultation, is there any way with how it is being conducted now that we can verify any of those responses are genuine beyond going they have put in an email address that was unique and had not been submitted before?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Customer, Communications and Culture, Councillor Andy Martin

I don't know the answer to that but I will take it under advisement and I'll come back to you.

99. Urgent Decisions taken by the Chief Executive in accordance with the Constitution

Council was advised that no urgent decisions had been taken by the Chief Executive in accordance with the Constitution since the last meeting of the Council.

Prior to the closing of the meeting the Chief Executive advised that Philip Gatrell had contacted him during the meeting to advise that the title of his submitted question had been omitted from his question, and the list of questions circulated to member. In regard to this the Chief Executive advised that the title of his question was 'Council's Performance Indicators in 150 permitted words' and advised that this would be included in the minutes.

The meeting ended at 11.52 pm

CHAIRMAN