

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 09 June 2025 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr K Salmon – Chairman

Cllr S Aitkenhead – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr P Broadhead, Cllr J Beesley, Cllr M Dower, Cllr C Goodall,
Cllr S Mackrow, Cllr L Northover, Cllr T Trent, Cllr O Walters and
Cllr C Weight

Also in attendance: Cllr D d'Orton-Gibson, Cllr M Earl, Cllr R Herrett, Cllr M Howell and
Cllr J Martin

15. Apologies

There were no apologies received for this meeting.

16. Substitute Members

There were no substitute members on this occasion

17. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

Cllr S Aitkenhead advised for the purpose of transparency in relation to agenda item

18. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 May were confirmed as a correct record.

19. Action Sheet

The Chair provided a detailed update on the progress of outstanding actions:

- **Item 103A:** Following consultation with the previous Chair, it was agreed that the matter had been resolved and could be removed from the action sheet.
- **Item 106 – Carter’s Quay Development:** The Board had previously recommended that the Audit and Governance Committee initiate an investigation into the Carter’s Quay development. The Chair confirmed that the Committee had now formally requested the investigation, with a verbal update expected at their July meeting and a full report anticipated in August. Item to remain on until outcome known.

- **Items 115 & 116 – Cabinet Recommendations:** These were recommendations made by the Board that were not accepted by Cabinet. The items have remained on the action sheet pending the development of a new recommendation tracker. Democratic Services confirmed that the tracker will provide a more structured and transparent way to monitor the status of recommendations, including whether they were accepted, partially accepted, or rejected. The Board agreed to retain these items on the action sheet until the tracker is operational.
- **Blue Badge Issue:** There was some ambiguity regarding who was responsible for raising the issue with the Local Government Association (LGA). It was clarified that the portfolio holder had engaged with the LGA as part of a broader evidence-gathering initiative. The outcome of this was awaited.
- **Arts and Culture Recommendation:** The Board is awaiting a formal response from Cabinet. The Chair noted that this is expected shortly and the item will remain on the action sheet until a response is received.

20. 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 'A' to these minutes in the Minute Book. The work plan was introduced earlier in the meeting to allow for more focused discussion.

Scrutiny Request

The Board considered a proposal for a new scrutiny topic focused on operational efficiency within the Council. The proposal was structured around three key themes:

- Member-Officer Relationships, emphasising early member engagement.
- Accountability and Record-Keeping – in particular the absence of formal minutes from meetings between senior officers and Members,
- Respect for Local Geography and recognising the distinct identities of Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole.

The Board discussed the proposal at length. Key points raised included broad support for the proposal and recognition that the upcoming appointment of a new Chief Executive presented an opportunity to reset expectations and improve internal culture. It was suggested that the proposal should be split into two distinct areas for scrutiny: Member-Officer relationships and localised service delivery.

RESOLVED that:

1. **The item be added to the work plan.**
2. **A scoping exercise be undertaken to define key lines of inquiry.**

3. **Interested Members would collaborate outside of the formal meeting to develop the scope.**
4. **A potential working group be added to the work plan and established once resources allow.**

Work Plan Updates

- Budget Outturn Report - To be added to the July meeting agenda as a pre-Cabinet scrutiny item.
- Pay and Reward Report - The Board agreed that this should be considered and that due to the timing of the report's availability, the July meeting be rescheduled from 7 July to 15 July to allow for scrutiny.
- Working Group Findings – This item may be deferred to the August meeting, depending on agenda capacity.
- Parking Enforcement - Work is ongoing to scope this item and would be agreed.
- Performance and CRM System - It was proposed that these existing work plan items be addressed through Member briefing sessions.
- Business Improvement Districts (BIDs): It was suggested that rather than forming a working group, the Board receive a report on BID performance and engagement. It was proposed that this be an annual item scheduled in the lead up to budget setting
- Complaints Process: This issue, previously agreed by the Board, will be followed up by Cllr S Aikenhead. Information was being gathered and may bring forward a key line of inquiry in due course.

RESOLVED that the work plan be updated as outlined above.

21. Public Issues

There were no public issues on this occasion.

22. Bournemouth Air Festival

The Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book. The Board was advised that the report provides an update on the feasibility of providing an agreement with a potential operator for 2026 onwards in relation to the Bournemouth Air Festival along with an update on the position of potential for sponsorship for 2026 onwards.

Following the work undertaken and discussions that have taken place, it was recommended to cease any further work on delivery of an Air Festival whilst recognising the process in place for new events to come forward in the future. It was noted that since the publication of the report the potential. In discussion of this item a number of issues were raised and responded to including:

- Economic Impact - Members debated the value of the Air Festival to the local economy, including the impact this had on the tourism

sector and the potential loss that this would lead to if the Air festival did not continue. The cost impact upon the Council was also considered given the Council's current financial situation

- Costing Methodology - There was disagreement over whether staff recharges should be considered in analysing the net cost of the event. The Portfolio Holder maintained that they should, while others argued this overstated the true cost and would not be included when considering other issues as these staff would still be employed regardless of the event.
- Martyn's Law - Officers explained that forthcoming legislation would introduce stricter security requirements at public events and significantly increase the cost and complexity of hosting large events. This had been factored into the options and recommendation.
- Alternative Event Models - Suggestions were made for lower-cost or scaled-down versions of the event, such as standalone Red Arrows displays/fly-pasts or community-led initiatives with reduced infrastructure requirements. The Board was advised that should a realistic proposal be put forward these could still be considered but at the moment there was nothing on the table
- Private Sector Involvement - Members questioned why local businesses and BIDs had not stepped forward to fund or manage the event, given the benefits they receive. As was mentioned previously it was a significant cost to host the event, and the BIDs and local businesses were already dealing with pressures in the current financial climate.
- Council Priorities and Resource Allocation - The debate highlighted differing views on the Council's role in supporting tourism and events, with some Members arguing that the Air Festival should remain a core priority, while others emphasised the need to focus on statutory services. Whilst it was clear that the air show brought money into the local area it was noted that there was significant budget pressures and this had not been accounted for within the Council's MTFP.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board agree with the recommendation to Cabinet to agree to Option 4, which acknowledges the ongoing process for new events to come forward and stops any further work on an Air Festival for 2026 onwards.

Voting: 9 in favour; 2 against

Cllrs J Beesley and P Broadhead asked for their votes against the proposal to be recorded.

Cllr P Broadhead left the meeting following this item.

23. Bournemouth Development Company - Winter Gardens project

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 'C' to

these Minutes in the Minute Book. The Board was advised that Bournemouth Development Company (BDC) was a joint venture between Muse and BCP Council, established to unlock housing supply and attract private sector investment into the conurbation. It was explained that regeneration of Bournemouth Town Centre was a key priority to revitalise the retail and housing offer for residents and reimagine underutilised sites. The Winter Gardens site has been identified, for many years, as a priority regeneration project to deliver corporate strategic objectives. This report seeks approval for the new BDC Partnership Business Plan which is required to set out the agreed priorities and confirm how sites will be taken forward through the Bournemouth Development Company. This will confirm the extension to the Site Option Execution Date for Winter Gardens to September 2028, which was approved in principle by Cabinet in March, subject to the production of a new Partnership Business Plan. The paper sets out the next steps for the Winter Gardens project to deliver circa 500 homes through the redevelopment of the existing surface car park and acquired land. In the discussion of this item a number of issues were raised including:

- Financial Risk and Implications – It was clarified that no immediate financial outlay would be required from the Council as a result of the proposed extension. However, it was acknowledged that if the revised scheme were not to proceed, historical costs incurred by the BDC could become crystallised as liabilities, thereby reducing the Council’s share of any future profits from the partnership. The importance of monitoring this risk was emphasised.
- Governance and Oversight of BDC – Concerns were raised by Members regarding the level of transparency and Member engagement in the governance of BDC. It was noted that the BDC operates as a long-standing joint venture between the Council and Muse Developments, with oversight provided through a formal board structure. The need for improved Member understanding of the partnership’s operations and decision-making processes was highlighted.
- Strategic Importance of the Winter Gardens Site – The site was described as a key opportunity for housing-led regeneration in Bournemouth town centre. It was stated that the revised development approach would prioritise the delivery of affordable and accessible housing. The removal of a previously proposed public car park from the scheme was said to have improved the financial viability of the project.
- Homes England Funding – It was confirmed that discussions with Homes England were ongoing, and that a new funding programme was expected to be announced in the near future. The timing of the revised SDP was said to be aligned with this opportunity, with the aim of securing external funding to support the delivery of the scheme.
- Call for a Broader Regeneration Vision – Several Members, including ward councillors, expressed the view that a more comprehensive regeneration strategy for Bournemouth town centre should be developed. It was suggested that this vision should extend beyond

individual development sites and include a cohesive plan for economic, cultural, and community revitalisation.

- **Member Education and Engagement** – It was proposed that a dedicated Member briefing session be arranged to improve understanding of regeneration processes and the role of BDC. This was seen as a means of enhancing Member engagement and ensuring informed scrutiny of future proposals.

During the item both BCP Council members on the BDC Board addressed the Committee and provided information on the operation of the BDC and with regards to the specific Winter Gardens development. Issues were raised concerning member involvement accountability and transparency of the Governance Structure.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The Overview and Scrutiny Board supported the following recommendations to Cabinet:**
 - (a) Cabinet approves the BDC Partnership Business Plan for 2025 – 2030.**
 - (b) Cabinet confirms the extension of the Site Option Execution Date to September 2028, allowing Muse as the Private Sector Partner in the BDC to fund the first stage of work on the new Winter Gardens scheme, resulting in a new Site Development Plan.**
 - (c) Cabinet approves proceeding on the understanding that public parking will not be included in a new scheme design.**
- 2. The Overview and Scrutiny Board would welcome the development of the Town Centre Vision for Bournemouth and requested to scrutinise the regeneration visions for the 3 Towns in the BCP Area as these are redeveloped.**
- 3. The Overview and Scrutiny Board requested that a briefing session on the BDC and regeneration be added to the Board’s Work Plan**

Voting: Unanimous

The meeting adjourned from 8:35pm and resumed at 8:40pm

Cllr J Beesley and Cllr L Northover left the meeting following this item.

24. Leisure Services Presentation and Discussion

The Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations introduced the item, a copy of the presentation had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix ‘C’ to these minutes in the Minute Book. The presentation, delivered by Dan Stone, Leisure Development & Partnership Manager, provided a comprehensive overview of leisure services across BCP. It detailed the operational models, usage

statistics, and capital investments for a wide range of facilities, including leisure centres, golf courses, tennis courts, and recreational venues. BCP Leisure operated several centres in-house, such as Ashdown, Poole Dolphin, Rossmore, Two Riversmeet, and Kings Park, with data presented on fitness and swim memberships, annual footfall, and investments. BH Live Active managed Littledown, Pelhams, and Stokewood under a 10-year external contract, with Littledown alone attracting over 1.5 million visitors annually. Other facilities, including The Junction and The Club at Meyrick Park, were managed under long-term external contracts. The presentation also covered golf courses, with Queens Park managed in-house and others like Solent Meads and Iford under external contracts. Tennis facilities were a mix of in-house and externally managed sites, with Branksome Park and Poole Park showing significant usage. Additionally, there were 48 other recreational facilities, including bowls clubs, watersports centres, and community clubs. Finally, the BIC and Pavilion venues, managed externally, hosted hundreds of events annually, drawing large audiences and contributing significantly to the region's cultural and economic activity. In the discussion of this item a number of issues were raised including:

- Underutilised Tennis Sites – Members were informed that interest was regularly expressed in underused tennis and sports sites. However, it was emphasised that any proposals for use must be subject to procurement rules and legal frameworks.
- Harmonisation – A question was raised regarding whether a unified management model was being considered for all leisure centres. It was clarified that while harmonisation was a long-term aspiration, the diversity of existing contracts means that only certain facilities would be in scope for such a review. An options appraisal was expected to be brought back to the Board in due course. It was noted that market research was carried out for the existing tiered pricing scheme before it was introduced for BCP Leisure
- Operator Stability and Risk – The Portfolio Holder referenced recent examples of leisure operators collapsing in other parts of the country, resulting in sudden closures. It was noted that the presence of three stable and responsible operators in the BCP area, BH Live, YMCA, and the Council's in-house team, was considered a strength and an asset to the community. It was noted that there were a number of facilities with external contracts due for renewal.
- Collaboration with Schools – A suggestion was made to better use underutilised sports facilities in schools. It was noted that many schools had facilities which were not currently available for community use. Officers expressed interest in exploring this further, particularly in light of school funding pressures and the potential for mutually beneficial arrangements.
- Community Events and Engagement – A proposal was raised to consider reviving community-wide events such as a “Festival of Sport,” providing access to free or low-cost activities. Officers indicated that such an initiative would require coordination with the Council's events team and would be dependent on funding availability but agreed to explore the idea further.

- Access to Leisure - Support was expressed for reinstating an “Access to Leisure” scheme, particularly to support residents on low incomes and those with disabilities. It was noted that a similar scheme had previously existed in Poole but had been discontinued.
- Facility Maintenance – Concerns were raised regarding the long-term maintenance of sports pitches, particularly where community clubs had contributed financially over time. For example, the Hockey Pitch at Ashdown, where the surface was nearing the end of its life. Officers confirmed that a review of outdoor facilities was underway to consider commercial viability and community needs.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board recommended that Cabinet be urged to put in place an “Access to Leisure” scheme across the whole BCP area as soon as possible, recognising that people in Poole have lost this facility and with particular emphasis on ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities.

Agreed Nem. Con.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm

CHAIRMAN