

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting held on 08 December 2025 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr K Salmon – Chairman

Cllr S Aitkenhead – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr J Beesley, Cllr P Canavan, Cllr L Dedman, Cllr C Goodall,
Cllr S Mackrow, Cllr L Northover, Cllr Dr F Rice (online), Cllr T Trent,
Cllr O Walters and Cllr C Weight

Also in attendance: Cllr M Cox (online), Cllr M Earl and Cllr V Ricketts

70. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr G Wright.

71. Substitute Members

Cllr T Slade substituted for Cllr G Wright

72. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

The monitoring Officer had issued a general dispensation to all Councillors for consideration of the Community Governance Review report.

73. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November were approved as a correct record.

74. Information Considered Between Meetings

The Board noted that the third quarter budget monitoring report had been circulated to the Board since the last meeting.

75. Recommendation Tracker

The Board noted the recommendation tracker and was advised that the outstanding actions were being followed up.

76. Work Plan

The Chair of the Board presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix '?' to

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

Parking Strategy – Key Lines of Inquiry – this item was proposed following a Council motion referral. Cllr P Canavan presented the draft key lines of inquiry document. It was clarified that Section 2d regarding assessment of vacant and underused council-owned land was for car parking. **Action:** That the item be added to the work programme and that an interim update on the development be requested based on the key lines of inquiry.

Parking Enforcement Around Schools - The Chair noted that Cllr Chapmanlaw as the rapporteur was unable to attend. However, the Scrutiny Specialist provided an update to the Board to advise that background research had identified examples of good practice in some schools and proactive ward councillors. It was proposed to convene a session with successful schools, ward councillors, and officers to share best practice. Members supported the approach and suggested St Michael's School and Livingstone Road Primary Federation as examples. **Action:** A full update to be provided at the January meeting and a dedicated session to be scheduled in March onwards.

Local Plan Briefing – A session was being proposed for January. Members requested coverage of vacant sites, undeveloped permissions, housing targets, and affordable housing. It was suggested that information be provided on comparisons with those councils achieving higher affordable housing delivery. **Action:** Briefing session to be scheduled for 19 January 2026. Note: Since moved to 26 January.

Budget Scrutiny Meeting – 2 February 2026 - The Board noted the proposed approach to focus on resident impact and invite corporate directors alongside portfolio holders.

Winter Gardens Cabinet Report – The Board noted that the Cabinet report had been delayed to February, which created a clash with the budget O&S Board meeting. The Board preferred not to consider an additional item at the Budget O&S Board meeting. **Action:** That the report receive an update with the information available on this at the time of the January meeting as part of the regeneration item.

Work Programming Workshops – The Board was advised that workshops would be arranged in February to develop the annual work plan. Members were encouraged to submit scrutiny topics using the request form.

77. Public Issues

There were no public issues for this meeting.

78. Community Governance Review - Consequential and Supplementary Provisions

The Chair of the Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group 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 report presented the consequential and supplementary provisions required to implement the establishment of new town councils for Broadstone, Poole, and Bournemouth, following the Council's decision of 14 October 2025.

It outlined the arrangements necessary to ensure that the new councils were legally compliant and operationally effective from 1 April 2026. Key recommendations included the formation of Shadow Councils from 1 January 2026 to oversee the recruitment of qualified clerks and address pre-implementation matters, and the agreement of anticipated precept amounts for each council, enabling sound financial planning. The report detailed the limited transfer of assets, statutory requirements for allotments, and the continuation of certain services under Service Level Agreements to ensure continuity and mitigate risk. The Board was advised that the measures were designed to provide a robust framework for the successful transition to new local governance arrangements and to support effective service delivery from inception. The Board noted an amendment to the report to show that the Whitecliff and Parkstone allotments were managed rather than self-managed. Councillor Ricketts, as an experienced town clerk, shared her knowledge on a number of practical requirements for establishing town councils. A number of issues were raised in discussion of this item including:

- Precept level set – It was emphasised that the proposed budgets were minimal and designed to allow councils to function in their first year for a sufficient Council Tax precept amount. Concern was expressed that the proposed budgets were restrictive and could limit the councils' ability to act ambitiously in their first year. It was argued that the shadow councils should review the budgets before approval to ensure democratic involvement. Other Board members advised that they would not want to see any rise in the precept level set within the report.
- Recruitment of Clerks – The Board discussed the recruitment process for Town Clerks and in particular the time frame for this and the practicalities of securing someone suited to the position if the salary was not finalised.
- Statutory timeframe – In response to queries by the Board it was confirmed by officers that the statutory deadline for setting precepts was the 31 January. It was explained that if the budget setting was to be done by shadow Councils this would need to be completed by 14 January to allow sufficient time for this to be considered by a Council meeting. Concerns were raised about the complexity of establishing governance frameworks, policies, and financial plans within limited meeting schedules.

- Discretionary spending – It was highlighted that the proposed budgets allowed for discretionary spending of not insignificant amounts for all of the town councils in year one, with significantly more flexibility in year two once setup costs were removed.
- Staffing – The Board asked for further information on staff to support the civic function of the new town councils. It was noted that this would continue in a similar way to it did as present. The staff were employed by BCP Council and the Charter Trustees were currently recharged for staff costs and this would remain the same with the town councils.

The following motion was moved and seconded, “That the O&S Board recommend that the anticipated precept amounts for Broadstone Town Council, Poole Town Council and Bournemouth Town Council, as detailed in the table at paragraph 35 to this report, be referred to the shadow councils for consideration by 14 January 2026 and brought back to an extraordinary meeting of council for determination”

Following debate on the proposed motion to amend the recommendation outlined in the report at c, it was put to the vote and lost.

Voting: 5 in Favour, 7 against

The Chair thanked the members and officers for their input into the discussion and the Board agreed to note the report.

The meeting adjourned at 7.34 pm and resumed at 7:42pm.

79. Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update

The Portfolio Holder for finance 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 the purpose of the report was to comply with accounting codes of practice and best practice which requires councils to have a rolling multi-year medium term financial plan. The report provided the latest high-level overview of the 2026/27 Budget and 3-year medium-term financial plan including updates on the government’s proposals to return the SEND system to financial sustainability in 2025.

The report aimed to ensure the council presents a robust legally balanced 2026/27 budget and highlighted the significant amount of uncertainty caused by fluctuations in the predicted outcome of the government’s Fair Funding Formula review. It provided an update on the implications of the November local government finance policy statement and national budget. The report included updates in respect of the existential threat to the council’s financial sustainability caused by the accumulated and growing deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) as pertaining to the high needs block expenditure on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). A number of issues were raised in discussion of the item including:

- Fair Funding Formula - The Council faced a projected funding gap of £8.9 million for 2026/27, this was after identifying £12.2 million in savings. The position was worsened by uncertainty surrounding the Fair Funding Formula, which was expected to disadvantage councils like BCP. Members urged the Council to lobby local MPs for support on this issue
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) deficit – This remained the most significant risk for the Council. There was a £113 million deficit as of March 2025 which was expected to rise to £183 million by March 2026, and potentially exceed £300 million by 2028.
- Statutory override – The Board was advised that this would end in March 2028 when the government would assume responsibility for the day to day running of SEND costs. Concern was expressed that the historic deficits which the override had allowed councils to set aside remained unresolved, creating a risk of technical insolvency unless government support materialised.
- Pension Fund - Members raised concerns about the impact of pension fund assumptions on employer contributions. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the Council was challenging the actuarial assumptions and had engaged an independent actuary to ensure a fair outcome.

RESOLVED that the O&S Board advise Cabinet of its support for all recommendations as outlined in the Cabinet report.

Voting: For: 9; Against:1; Abstentions: 2

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

CHAIRMAN