

SHADOW BOURNEMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Report subject	Establishing the New Town Council
Meeting date	28 January 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	This report updates the Shadow Bournemouth Town Council on progress towards establishing Bournemouth Town Council ahead of its vesting date on 1 April 2026. Key milestones have been achieved, including the approval of the Reorganisation Order, confirmation of parish and ward boundaries, and commencement of recruitment for the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer. Several priority issues raised by councillors and stakeholders, such as asset transfers, allotment management, civic arrangements, election preparations, and neighbourhood forum transitions, are being addressed through a structured implementation plan. Statutory allotment sites within the new parish area will transfer to the Town Council, and historic and civic ceremonial assets will be formally transferred before 31 March 2026. Workstreams covering governance, finance, assets, staffing, elections, and communications are underway, supported by an officer working group. A proposed election timetable for 7 May 2026 has been published to support prospective candidates. The report seeks nominations for an appointments panel of three to six shadow councillors, with delegated authority to complete the recruitment and appointment of the Town Clerk to avoid delay.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: (a) the Shadow Council nominate between three and six Shadow Council members to serve on the Appointments Panel to shortlist, interview and appoint a Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer for Bournemouth Town Council; (b) the appointments panel be delegated authority to undertake all necessary activities in the recruitment process and to appoint the preferred candidate.
Reason for recommendations	It is important to recruit and appoint a Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer as soon as possible. The recommendations seek to delegate authority to the appointments panel to appoint the preferred candidate to avoid unnecessary delays.

Corporate Director	Aidan Dunn, Chief Executive
Report Authors	Richard Jones, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Wards	Not applicable
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. Members will be aware that Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, at its meeting held on 14 October 2025, approved the establishment of Bournemouth Town Council. At the subsequent Council meeting held on 9 December 2025, the commencement of the recruitment process was authorised and the anticipated precept amounts approved for the first year of the Town Council. A Reorganisation Order was subsequently made on 23 December 2025.
2. The Order stated the establishment date, warding arrangements, the number of councillors and election dates. In addition, the Order made provision for transitional arrangements for the period until the elections in May 2026 (including securing the role of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor), the anticipated precept amount and further stated that supplementary Orders would be made to deal with the transfer of assets.

Key Issues

3. Councillors, Charter Trustees of Bournemouth and other parties have raised a several key issues over recent months regarding the establishment of the new Town Council. Although not an exhaustive list of issues, these have included the recruitment of the Town Clerk, the transfer of allotment sites, the desire to enter into a Service Level Agreement for the provision of allotments services and civic support, the transfer of historic and ceremonial property held by the Charter Trustees (including the armorial bearings), elections timetables, impact on neighbourhood forums and the anticipated precepts for 2026/27.
4. Some of these issues have been debated formally and decisions reached, however, the remainder are included on a project plan and being addressed on a priority basis. For instance, it was critically important to finalise the formal Reorganisation Orders which were dependent upon the definitive parish and ward boundaries being plotted accurately and provided to relevant government departments and agencies. Other priority activities included the remodelling of council tax data to calculate the Tax Base, updating electoral registration data and warding arrangements in preparation for the elections.
5. It was also time-critical to commence the recruitment process for the Town Clerk. This is dealt with further in this report.

Transfer of Land and Property Assets

6. The Council resolved on 9 October 2025 to limit the transfer of land and property to include only the allotment sites falling within the respective parish boundary which are

required by legislation to be transferred. The table below includes the allotment sites which must therefore be transferred to Bournemouth Town Council.

Site	Managed or Self-Managed	Receiving Council
Merrivale Avenue, East Southbourne & Tuckton	Managed	Bournemouth
Elizabeth Gardens, East Cliff & Springbourne	Managed	Bournemouth
Southill Gardens, Moordown	Managed	Bournemouth
Bournemouth East, West Southbourne	Self-managed	Bournemouth
North Bournemouth, Wallisdown & Winton	Self-managed	Bournemouth
Brook Road, Kinson	Self-managed	Bournemouth

Transfer of Historic and Civic Ceremonial Assets

7. Since 1 April 2019, the Charter Trustees for Bournemouth have been custodians of the historic property and armorial bearings. "Historic property" is defined as including "any charter, insignia, plate, or other property which is of an historic and ceremonial nature".
8. Upon the establishment of the new town councils, the Charter Trustees will cease to exist and it is therefore critical that the historic property is secured through a formal transfer to the new councils in a Supplementary Order which will be completed before 31 March 2026. This will include a full inventory of the historic property.
9. Members will be aware that a full inventory of all historic and civic ceremonial assets already exists which has been maintained and reviewed by the Charter Trustees. The inventory includes a photograph (where available) and description of each item together with the current storage location. Appropriate insurance cover is to be sought on behalf of the Town Council.
10. The College of Arms is to be supplied with a copy of the Reorganisation Order establishing the Town Council and will be requested to draft a petition to secure the transfer of the Armorial Bearings from the Charter Trustees to Bournemouth Town Council. A further update will be provided as and when a more detailed timeline is known.

Property Management and Mayoralty Support

11. There are no recommendations to transfer the ownership or responsibility for any other land or buildings to Bournemouth Town Council. The council will of course need to operate from premises and to meet in local venues. Officers will be exploring interim options in this regard, potentially with the new Town Clerk following the recruitment process.
12. Members will recall that for continuity purposes, the budget provision for the Town Council included continued use of shared space for the storage of historic and ceremonial assets (including a strongroom) and the use of the Mayor's Parlour at the Civic Centre by the Town Council post-implementation if that is their desire.

13. Other public facilities and community halls could be used for formal meetings for the Town Council and these options will be explored further ahead of vesting day. It is anticipated that an interim committee structure, schedule of meetings and venues will be brought to a future meeting of the Shadow Council for consideration.

Operating Arrangements of Allotments and Civic Support for Year 1

14. It is crucial that as with all new Councils risks are managed and mitigations put in place to minimise likelihood and impact. To this end, it is common practice to put in place arrangements, such as service level agreements to ease the transition period and to allow the new council to focus on putting in place appropriate policies and procedures. This approach will provide continuity of service from 1 April 2026 without any obvious detriment to service delivery. This approach was adopted in 2019 when Christchurch Town Council and Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council were established, and in 2021 for the establishment of Throop and Holdenhurst Parish Council.
15. A service level agreement will be brought to a future meeting of the Shadow Council for both the management of the allotments and civic chauffeuring and mace-bearing support.

Organisational Establishment

16. Work is progressing for the other organisational and governance arrangements. Where possible national models will be drafted and brought to a future Shadow Council meeting for adoption. This approach is again common practice and will allow the Town Council to operate initial and provide time to undertake a review when appropriate.
17. These models are likely to include standing orders, financial regulations, scheme of delegation, codes of conduct, etc.

Implementation Workstreams

18. The implementation of the three new councils is a complex project and work must focus on activities on a priority basis. As stated above, to date this has included the approval of reorganisation orders, calculation of council tax bases, drawing of definitive GIS maps, electoral registration changes, the modelling of anticipated budget requirements and the commencement of the recruitment process for the Town Clerks. Listed below are a series of workstreams identifying associated actions. Many of the actions will require completion prior to 1 April 2026, others will be for the new councils to implement. An officer working group is being established to ensure the required tasks are completed before 1 April.
19. The list is not exhaustive and has been presented in this format for ease of reference for Members.

Legal & Governance

Draft Reorganisation Orders; Submit Orders to Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE); Notify Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC); Application to College of Arms; Draft Standing Orders; Draft Financial Regulations; Model Code of Conduct; Draft Scheme of Delegation; Draft committee structure and schedule

Finance & Taxation

Calculate Tax Base; Set anticipated budget and precept requirements; Establish bank accounts; Arrange external audit provision; Procure Insurance provision; Determine cost of operating allotments; Creation of ledgers

Assets & Property

Identify & Transfer Assets; Determine extent of allotment sites to be transferred; Finalise asset registers; Valuation of assets update; Confirm insurance cover for transferred assets

Staffing & Operations

Appoint Interim or Permanent Staff; Interim payroll services; Secure interim office accommodation and meeting venues; Procure IT Equipment, telephony and software; Set up email and website domains; Launch websites and social media channels; Clarify and provide advice on transition from Neighbourhood Forums to Town Council; Draft service level agreements; Data migration of key operational information

Elections & Democratic Services

Election date; Define warding arrangements and polling stations; Update registers to reflect new boundaries and wards; Publish Notice of Election; Prepare induction packs and training for new councillors; Set date for first Annual Town Council meetings

Mapping & Data

Finalise definitive GIS boundary mapping; Update LLPG (Local Land and Property Gazetteer); Notify Ordnance Survey (provide Shape Files); Update Council Tax System for new parishes; Identify other systems requiring updates (planning, highways, licensing, etc)

Communications & Engagement

Development communication plan; Promote governance arrangements with residents; Organise community welcome events;

Registrations and Notifications

Register with HMRC; Register with Information Commissioners Officer (ICO); Register VAT office (if applicable); Register with Pensions Regulator (if applicable); Notify / remind local MP's, Departments, Local Partners and other Stakeholders

Election Timetable

20. Following several requests, the ward maps are now available on the Council's democracy web pages and will shortly be published as interactive maps within the online mapping system. There has been further interest in the election timetable and to assist anyone interested in standing as a councillor on the Town Council, a copy of the proposed election timetable has been reproduced below. Further details for prospective candidates will be published in due course.

Election Timetable – 7 May 2026

Proceeding	Day/Time
Deadline for applications to be included in the register of electors to be used for nominations	Friday 6 February
Publication of Notice of Election	Monday 30 March
Delivery of nomination papers	By appointment, during office hours on any working day from Tuesday 31 March until deadline for delivery
Deadline for delivery of nomination papers	4pm on Thursday 9 April
Deadline for withdrawals of candidature	4pm on Thursday 9 April
Publication of Statement as to persons nominated	4pm on Friday 10 April
Deadline for applications to be included in the register of electors to be used for the election	Monday 20 April
Deadline for receiving new postal vote and postal proxy applications, and for changes to existing postal votes or proxy votes	5pm on Tuesday 21 April
Deadline for receiving new applications to vote by proxy (not postal proxy or emergency proxies)	5pm on Tuesday 28 April
Deadline for applications for a Voter Authority Certificate	5pm on Tuesday 28 April
Publication of Notice of poll and situation of polling stations	Tuesday 28 April
Deadline for the appointment of polling and counting agents	Wednesday 29 April
First day to re-issue ballot papers in response to requests to replace lost postal ballot papers	Thursday 30 April
Polling day	Thursday 7 May (Polling hours: 7am to 10pm)

Proceeding	Day/Time
Last day to issue replacement spoilt or lost postal ballot papers	5pm Thursday 7 May
Last day for new applications to vote by emergency proxy	5pm Thursday 7 May
Last day to make alterations to the register to correct a clerical error or to implement a court (registration appeal) decision	9pm Thursday 7 May
Last day for the receipt of return of election expenses	Thursday 4 June

Recruitment of Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer

21. Council on 9 December 2025 approved the commencement of the recruitment of the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officers for each of the respective Town Councils.
22. The remuneration was considered by the Cross-Party Task and Finish Group, benchmarked against the NJC scales and reflect the level of responsibility for this critical role. This formed the basis of the calculations of the anticipated budget requirements which were approved by Council.
23. The position of Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer has been advertised both locally and nationally with a closing date for applications of 26 January 2026.
24. It is important that a Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer is appointed as soon as practicably possible and Members are requested to nominate Shadow Councillors to serve on an appointments panel. The panel should comprise no fewer than three and, it is suggested, no more than six. To avoid unnecessary delays, it is further recommended that the panel is delegated authority to undertake all necessary activities in the recruitment process and to appoint the preferred candidate.
25. Once the nominated members are known, arrangements will be put in place to identify interview dates.

Next Steps

26. It will be necessary to schedule at least one, possibly two additional meetings of the Shadow Council before the end of March. It is not possible to provide dates at this stage but officers will liaise with the Chair and Vice-Chair on possible options and will seek to provide as much advance notice as possible.

Conclusion

27. The Shadow Council is asked to note the content of this report and to appoint members from its membership to serve on the appointments panel with delegated authority to appoint the preferred candidate.

Summary of financial implications

28. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

29. There will be a requirement for officers from various service areas to support the proposed Shadow Councils and the activities identified within the various workstreams.

Summary of legal implications

30. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (Part 4) devolved power from the Secretary of State to principal councils to carry out community governance reviews and put in place or make changes to local community governance arrangements. The Community Governance Review was undertaken in accordance with this Act.
31. Formal Community Governance Re-organisation Orders have been signed and sealed formally establishing the new parishes and councils.

Summary of human resources implications

32. There are no direct human resource implications arising from this report. The report is seeking to establish an appointments panel of members to conclude the recruitment of the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer.

Summary of sustainability impact

33. There are no direct sustainability impacts arising from this report.

Summary of public health implications

34. There are no direct public health impacts arising from this report.

Summary of equality implications

35. There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.

Summary of risk assessment

36. There is a risk that the actions required for 1 April 2026 may not be completed in time or that the appointments panel may fail to select and appoint a successful candidate. To mitigate these risks, the implementation plan will focus on priority activities, deferring, if necessary, actions that can be undertaken after 1 April 2026.
37. If the recruitment process fails to select a suitable candidate, it may be necessary to appoint an interim clerk on a short-term contract.

Background papers

Published works

Appendices

There are no appendices to this report.