

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
CABINET

Minutes of the Meeting held on 04 February 2026 at 10.15 am

Present:-

Cllr M Earl – Chairman

Cllr M Cox – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr D Brown, Cllr R Burton, Cllr A Hadley, Cllr J Hanna, Cllr R Herrett, Cllr A Martin, Cllr S Moore and Cllr K Wilson

Also in attendance: Cllr J Beesley, Cllr P Canavan (Chair of the Health and Adults Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee), Cllr S Carr-Brown (Chair of the Childrens Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee) and Cllr G Farquhar

113. Declarations of Interests

Councillor Richard Herrett declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 125 (Christchurch Business Improvement District) and left the room for the discussion and voting thereon.

114. Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the 14 January 2026 were confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to Minute No. 110 being amended to include Councillor Hadley's concerns regarding ensuring that we make the most of the investment recently made in sustainability on the site to ensure that this is tied into the building management and is beneficial use of the investment.

115. Public Issues

Public Question from Alex McKinstry on Agenda Item 6 (Council Budget Monitoring 2025/26 at Quarter Three)

I note Recommendation (B) in the Quarter 3 budget monitoring report - "Encourage senior officers, budget holders, and portfolio holders to take all reasonable steps to reduce the forecast overspending the final quarter of the financial year" - and I was wondering therefore why the administration has created a brand new lead member role, "Lead Member for Performance", which I assume involves paying out a special responsibility allowance of £12,200 a year? Why has this role been created now, given the exhortations of retrenchment contained in the Cabinet papers? If you could summarise what this role actually entails - and which portfolio-holders the lead member will be working with, predominantly - that too would be useful, as there has been no press release concerning this role (as of 29 January, the date of submitting this question), and there is no related job description showing on the BCP Council website.

Response by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl

Thank you for your question. You are absolutely right to highlight the recommendation in the Quarter 3 budget monitoring report about the need for continued financial discipline in the final quarter of the year. The administration takes that responsibility very seriously, which is precisely why the new Lead Member for Performance role has been created at this moment.

Councillor Dawn Logan was elected last year in the Talbot & Branksome Woods by-election, beating both Reform and the Conservatives—demonstrating once again that only the Liberal Democrats can beat them in this area. Dawn brings with her a wealth of relevant professional experience, including five years working as a consultant for Newton, a firm currently undertaking improvement work with the local health system. Those skills—particularly around data analysis, performance improvement and system change—are extremely valuable, and we are determined that they should not go to waste.

The Lead Member for Performance role has therefore been created to support the Cabinet and senior leadership team in driving better outcomes for residents. The focus is on using data intelligently, improving our performance culture, and ensuring that the council is delivering services efficiently and effectively. This work directly supports the financial challenge set out in the Q3 report: improving performance and improving value for money go hand in hand.

Since her election, Dawn has been working hard to get to know the council in depth. She has already been engaging with scrutiny chairs, directors, and Cabinet members to champion a more data-led approach to decision making. Importantly, this role does not replace or duplicate the scrutiny function—far from it. Instead, it strengthens the organisation's ability to understand performance issues early, act on them, and support both Cabinet and scrutiny with better information.

The Lead Member for Performance will work across portfolios, but particularly closely with those services where performance data plays a critical role in ensuring good outcomes—for example adult social care and children's services. In practice, that means providing Cabinet with additional insight and capacity at a time when the council must be more rigorous than ever in how it manages performance and financial pressure.

We are confident that this small investment will pay dividends for the council and for the residents who rely on our services every day.

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

In 2026 is it acceptable for the Senior Citizens of Mudeford, its residents, Parents with young children be forced to take 2 buses to attend their local Doctors Surgery and Hospital for appointments or treatment? This is because:

Since 2023 when our fully comprehensive half hourly all-inclusive service was unexpectedly and drastically cut and replaced with a new once hourly loop service route which does not fulfil the medical needs or practical needs

and is not beneficial to the residents who live here and isolated Mudeford from its neighbouring communities.

Is this the treatment our residents and elderly Mudeford citizens deserve? Thank you for your question, statement, and the supporting information that you provided me with.

We have worked hard and been successful in protecting most of the bus services that the council have been subsidising.

The X1/X2 is not a Council subsidised service, and in common with the other “X” routes is intended as a longer distance bus, in this case travelling between Lymington and Bournemouth.

The route of the X1/X2 bus is in the control of the bus company. The change arose because of the collapse of Yellow Buses, and the routes they served. Shortly after the change in 2023, the MoreBus General Manager highlighted that they saw increased use, with more passengers from the Somerford Area, and that calling at Sainsburys was proving popular with Highcliffe residents.

Mudeford still has service via the 1c, and although you highlight it as an hourly service, because it goes in a loop, it is half hourly at Christchurch and Somerford Sainsburys, but twice hourly on a less even basis at the other stops.

It takes you to Sainsburys, to Christchurch and to Central Bournemouth, I appreciate that means a change for the Hospital and other destinations, but the Mudeford area is still well served compared to many other areas of the conurbation.

The Council have been working to improve punctuality of this service by reviewing the location of parking bays through Purewell.

The bus company are keen to increase the frequency of their services where buses are well used, and to consider further adjustments to routes, and we continue to work in partnership with them to serve citizens of Mudeford and across BCP as best we can..

Public Statement from Janet Dale on Agenda Item 9 (Our People and Communities: Subsidised Bus Services Review)

In 2023 our fully comprehensive half hourly all-inclusive X1/X2 bus service was unexpectedly, drastically cut and replaced with a new, re-routed, once hourly loop service to and from Bournemouth. This service excludes the medical facilities and does not fulfil the medical or practical needs of residents. The service is not beneficial to the residents who live here because it has isolated Mudeford from its neighbouring communities. This change has caused extreme difficulties in making and keeping any appointments due to the hourly only service & reliance on connecting buses and longer travelling times.

Is this the treatment our residents and elderly citizens really deserve? Reinstating the X1/X2, protecting it as a socially necessary route through Mudeford would be beneficial for everyone, inclusive, non-segregating, and non-isolating.

Public Statement from David Redgewell on Agenda Item 9 (Our People and Communities: Subsidised Bus Services Review)

We welcome the Bus Service Improvement Plan, particularly the commitment by Go South Coast.

However, under Bus service act no 2England BCP council has a duty to protect services to work hospital Schools and colleges and key interchanges.

Department for Transport funding must be spent on bus services and infrastructure. BCP Council has been allocated £7,863,381 in revenue support (2026–2029) and £12,439,362 for infrastructure (2026–2030). This should support bus stations, CCTV, shelters, real-time information, safety officers, and night buses.

We want supported services protected through an Enhanced Bus Partnership, ensuring no communities are left without buses. Urgent improvement is also needed to the poor RailAir 737 link to Bournemouth Airport, alongside better links to Poole Harbour.

116. Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Cabinet was advised that one recommendation had been received from the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on items not otherwise indicated on the Cabinet agenda.

The Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Sharon Carr-Brown presented the recommendations from the Committee as set out below, copies of which had been circulated to Members of the Cabinet and published on the Councils website prior to the meeting.

Recommendations from the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 January 2026

Invest to Save Budgets in the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (Children's Services O&S Committee agenda item 8).

The Committee agreed to make Cabinet aware that the Committee:

- a.) *Note the current High Needs Block (HNB) position and the impact and cost avoidance of the initiatives implemented to date including the increased supply of specialist places, the early years inclusion model (Dingley's Promise) and the positive impact of the Portage Service.*
- b.) *Endorse the invest-to-save programme and the establishment of the High Needs Block Deficit Recovery Plan Board, including its role in approving a benefits-measurement framework to evidence cost avoidance and prevent double-counting across initiatives.*
- c.) *Support the progression of the following priority initiatives:*
 - *Digitalisation of High Needs funding processes (integrated with the SCM upgrade)*
 - *Synergy Case Management (SCM) upgrade to go-live (target May–June 2026)*

- *Pre-EHCP targeted funding model (subject to affordability and governance)*

(Unanimous Decision)

Family Hubs Working Group final report (Children's Services O&S Committee agenda item 9).

The Committee endorsed the Working Group's findings and submits the following recommendations to Cabinet:

4. *Notes the scrutiny that has been undertaken on Family Hubs and the working group's finding of the strong staff commitment to community engagement.*
5. *Endorses continued support for Family Hubs, with future priorities to include investment in staff capacity, professional development and enhanced tools to evidence impact.*

(Unanimous Decision)

The Leader thanked Councillor Carr-Brown and the Committee for bringing their recommendations to Cabinet and further to this the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, Councillor Richard Burton advised that he would attend a future meeting of the Committee to formally respond to the recommendations.

117. Council Budget Monitoring 2025/26 at Quarter Three

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 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Cabinet was advised that the report provided the quarter three 2025/26 projected financial outturn information for the general fund, capital programme, housing revenue account (HRA) and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

In relation to this Cabinet was informed that the quarter three position is a projected overspend for the general fund of £4.6m (compared with £4.2m at quarter two) largely due to increased demand for adult and children social care with some offset from the central contingency and budgets in the Resources directorate.

RESOLVED that Cabinet: -

- noted the budget monitoring position for quarter three 2025/26;**
- encourage Senior Officers, budget holders, and Portfolio Holders to take all reasonable steps to reduce the forecast overspend in the final quarter of the financial year; and**
- approve the capital virement as set out in Appendix C1 at paragraph 2.**

Voting: Unanimous

Portfolio Holder: Finance

Reason

To comply with accounting codes of practice and best practice which requires councils to regularly monitor the annual budget position and take any action to support the sustainability of the council's financial position.

To comply with the council's financial regulation concerning approval for budget virements.

118. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget setting 2026-27

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regulatory Services 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.

Cabinet was informed that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a separate account within the council's budgets that ring-fences the income and expenditure associated with council housing.

In relation to this Cabinet was advised that the report set out the proposals regarding increases to rents, service charges and other charges to tenants and leaseholders, and that arrangements for these increases were separate to arrangements for increasing fees elsewhere in the council and are set out in law and regulation.

Further to this Cabinet was informed that the report also set out plans for expenditure on services to residents, repairs and improvements to homes and the provision of new homes taking into account new legal and regulatory requirements, and that it demonstrated how council housing and spending within the HRA supports the council's corporate strategy and objectives.

In addition thanks and praise were expressed to the Officers and Portfolio Holder in respect of the recent inspection whereby BCP Homes had received the highest grade possible for housing standards and service for housing provision.

RECOMMENDED that: -

- (a) The revenue budget for 2026/27 and provisionally for 2027/28 to 2028/29 are set using the following principles:**
 - (i) That dwelling rents are increased by 4.8 per cent (Consumer Price Index for September 2025 + 1 per cent) from 6 April 2026 in line with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Policy statement on rents for social housing.**
 - (ii) That garage, garage bases and parking plot rental charges are increased by 4.8 percent from 6 April 2026 and 11 per cent in parts of Poole so that charges continue to align.**
 - (iii) That leasehold services are charged to leaseholders in line with actual costs incurred.**
 - (iv) That shared ownership dwelling rents are increased in line with lease terms.**

- (v) **That the changes to service charges are agreed as set out in appendix 2.**
- (vi) **That HRA reserves are set at £4.8 million.**
- (b) **That the Income and Expenditure budget for 2026/7 and provisionally for 2027/28 to 2028/29 as set out in Appendix 3 is agreed.**
- (c) **That capital budgets for 2026/27 and provisionally for 2027/28 to 2028/29 are set using the following principles.**
 - (i) **That the major project capital programme as set out in Appendix 4 is noted.**
 - (ii) **That £0.5 million for the acquisition of individual properties (Acquire and Repair) and other annual capital budgets are agreed.**
 - (iii) **That the planned maintenance programme as set out in Appendix 5 is agreed.**

Voting: Unanimous

Portfolio Holder: Housing and Regulatory Services

Reason

HRA rents and other charges along with the HRA Capital Programme are subject to review and require Cabinet and Council approval for rents and charges to be levied.

119. Revised Local Validation Checklist

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.

Cabinet was advised that the report set out the background to local validation lists including what they are, the necessity for every local planning authority to have one and the importance of it being regularly reviewed, kept up to date and tailored to current local planning policy.

In relation to this Cabinet was informed that the national requirements for the content of a planning application were prescribed by legislation and are limited to a small number of documents and other supporting information which is mandatory. For this reason, legislation also enables local planning authorities to go further and supplement the national requirements with their own local requirements in the form of a 'local validation list' (sometimes referred to as a 'local validation checklist').

In relation to this Cabinet was advised that once a local validation list had been adopted and published that it was legally binding; an applicant is then obliged to submit the information set out in the local validation list when the application is first submitted and if they do not, the council can refuse to validate the application until that information is provided.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) **The Local Validation Checklist be adopted; and**
- (b) **Minor variations to the Validation Checklist are delegated to the Director of Planning and Transport in consultation with the Head of Planning Operations and Head of Strategic Planning.**

Voting: Unanimous

Portfolio Holder: Leader of the Council

Reason

- (1) To put in place an up to date and enforceable local validation checklist to provide certainty for applicants and officers in the submission and processing of applications.
- (2) To enable adaptations to the local validation checklist in light of changes in legislation/ policy and to remedy any unforeseen circumstances found during the operation of the checklist.

120. Our people and communities: Subsidised Bus Services Review

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy 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.

Cabinet was advised that during 2025/26 financial year the council would spend over £1.59m supporting subsidised bus services from a combination of council derived revenue budget and external grants, and that by 2027/28 the cost was forecast to exceed £2.0m.

In relation to this Cabinet was informed that continuing to fund the subsidised network in its current form was not sustainable.

Cabinet was advised that the report presented recommended changes to the network informed by a performance review including public consultation, and that the recommendation had been developed in partnership with morebus (main enhanced bus partnership operator).

Cabinet was informed that whilst undertaking the review the council had engaged with the Department for Transport (DfT) Bus Reform Team throughout to ensure that the recommended revised subsidised network was eligible to be funded from the recently announced £2,621,127 Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG) 2026/27 revenue allocation.

Further to this Cabinet was advised that a report setting out the full planned investment of both the revenue and capital LABG allocations shall be presented to Cabinet in March 2026.

It is RECOMMENDED that: -

- (a) **Cabinet recommends to Council the phased withdrawal of the council bus subsidy budget commencing May 2026 resulting in the service changes set out in Appendix 4; and**

(b) Cabinet recommends to Council the use of Local Authority Bus Grant to fund the revised subsidised bus network as set out in Appendix 4.

Voting: Unanimous

Portfolio Holder: Climate Response, Environment and Energy

Reason

The subsidy of local bus services is non-statutory, although Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) have a duty to assess the transport needs of their area and the impact of bus services being withdrawn, on the elderly, disabled, and people with mobility problems. There is a statutory duty for the council to provide transport services to schools to meet the requirements of the Education Act 1996.

The council has undertaken a comprehensive review of subsidised bus services, including a public consultation, and worked in partnership with the local bus operator to develop the proposed revised subsidised bus network that minimises the impact on passengers/residents as follows:

Evening and Weekend routes: with minimal adjustments these services to be operated commercially.

Weekday routes: the majority either retained without adjustment, enhanced, or retained with minimal adjustment to make them commercial.

Subsidised School Service Route 40 recommended to be discontinued at end of the 2025/26 academic year due to high cost per passenger journey, few and reducing numbers of passengers and there is an alternative commercial service covering most of the route indicating that the service is not essential.

Subsidised School Service Route 425 recommended to be discontinued at end of 2026/27 academic year due to high cost per passenger journey and there are suitable alternative commercial services that cover most of the route. Reason for retaining this for a year longer than Route 40 is that the alternative journey is less direct with a need to change bus. Extending the service allows parents time to plan for change.

Subsidised School Service Routes 81 is recommended to be combined with the 46 service to reduce the level of subsidy required.

Routes 744 and 448 subsidies to be retained in their existing form due to them being considered good value for money.

121. School Admissions Arrangements 2027/28

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Education and Skills presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Cabinet was advised that BCP Council was responsible for administering admission arrangements for its community and voluntary controlled schools, and that there was a legal requirement to determine the arrangements annually as described in the School Admissions Code 2021 and associated legislation.

Further to this Cabinet was informed that the local authority must also formulate and publish a scheme to coordinate the admission arrangements for all publicly funded schools within their area for the 2027/28 academic year.

Cabinet was advised that in relation to this a public consultation on the proposed 2027/28 admission arrangements was held from 10 November 2025 until 22 December 2026, and that the proposed change was a reduction to the Published Admission Number at Burton CE Primary School to reflect the broader trend of fewer families seeking school places in the area due to falling birth rates.

The Chair of the Childrens Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Sharon Carr-Brown addressed the Cabinet advising that the Committee had received the report for information purposes, and that the committee had reviewed and supported the report.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) Cabinet consider any comments from the consultation and from Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee concerning the Schools Admissions Arrangements 2027/2028 for community and maintained schools; and**
- (b) Cabinet support the determination of the arrangements as set out in Appendix 1 and 2 of this report.**

Voting: Unanimous

Portfolio Holder: Children, Young People, Education and Skills

Reason

BCP Council is legally required to determine admission arrangements for the 2027/28 academic year for all maintained schools for which it is an admission authority and to agree coordinated admission arrangements for all admission authorities in the area. Arrangements must be determined by BCP Council by 28 February 2026.

122. Early Years and Mainstream Schools Funding 2026/27

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Education and Skills presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'E' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Cabinet was informed that the paper outlined the proposed 2026/27 local mainstream schools funding formula based on recommendations from the Schools Forum.

In relation to this Cabinet was advised that the formula was highly regulated by the Department for Education (DfE), with funding provided by the £293m

schools block of the ring-fenced dedicated schools grant (DSG), and that the proposed local mainstream formula is to replicate the national funding formula (NFF) with minor amendments as recommended by Schools Forum on 19 January 2026 to reflect that it is not affordable in full.

Further to this Cabinet was informed that the early years single funding formula (EYSFF) is being considered by Schools Forum on 16 February 2026 to allow time for a full consultation process with providers.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet recommends to Council: -

- (a) That the decision for the early years single funding formula (EYSFF) is delegated to the corporate director for children's services in consultation with the portfolio holder for children, young people, education and skills; and**
- (b) The mainstream schools funding formula detailed in Appendix 2.**

Voting: Unanimous

Portfolio Holder: Children, Young People, Education and Skills

Reason

The recommendations reflect the mainstream schools formula recommended by the Schools Forum in January 2026 and the timetable for the early years consultation requested by providers.

123. Hawkwood Road Phase 2 update

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regulatory Services presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'F' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Cabinet was advised that the report provided an update on Hawkwood Road, which was a priority project for the Boscombe Towns Fund, and that in February 2025 Council, resolved to approve the funding strategy for a mixed-use residential-led scheme with a clinical facility in collaboration with the NHS (Option 1).

Cabinet was informed that the Cabinet recommendation to Council included an obligation to have a contract in place with the NHS prior to award of the build works contract for the main construction, and that despite a Memorandum of Understanding between the NHS and BCP Council being signed in December 2024 and best endeavours, a final contract had not been entered into with the NHS.

In relation to this Cabinet was advised that to maintain delivery, this report sought authority to proceed to award the build contract for the main construction to ensure that the grant milestones for the Towns Fund programme and Homes England are satisfied and thereby safeguard the total grant of £17.3m.

Cabinet was informed that this will allow for continued discussions with the NHS and ensure that the significant social and physical regeneration to the ward of Boscombe West and the local need is not lost.

Further to this Cabinet was informed that there was a continued commitment to have a health provision at Hawkwood Road, but in the event the NHS cannot proceed, that the report sought authority to market the property as general commercial use as the preferred alternative strategy now due to funding timelines being unachievable for a new residential scheme which would require planning.

Cabinet was advised that the 100% residential scheme (Option 2 in the previous Cabinet report) would require a new design and planning application and tender, which is likely to result in higher pricing and therefore is not deliverable within the immediate need to start on site in 2026/2027 and deliver by 2028/2029.

Councillor Patrick Canavan addressed the Cabinet stressing that this was a critical point of the project and urging Cabinet to strengthen the recommendations.

It is RECOMMENDED Cabinet recommends to Council that: -

- (a) Approval to proceed with Option 1 to enter the build contract for 68 homes and commercial floorspace, prior to executing an Agreement to Lease for the ground floor of Block A, to secure the total combined grant of £17.3m and redevelopment of the Hawkwood Road site within the external funder's timescales;**
- (b) Authority to market the non-residential property as general commercial, if the NHS is unable to commit funding for the ground floor of Block A and noting the full residential scheme is no longer deliverable; and**
- (c) Authority to proceed to sale or long leasehold of the ground floor commercial asset to ensure a funding strategy is secured to offset the cost of building.**

Voting: Unanimous

Portfolio Holder: Housing and Regulatory Services

Reason

To enter the build contract in line with the current active tender and grant funding milestones prior to the lease of the ground floor being signed. This will enable the Council to achieve the funding deadlines set by MHCLG and Homes England and ensures the project remains deliverable.

124. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs such interest in disclosing the information.

125. Christchurch Business Improvement District

Exempt Information – Category 5 (Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings).

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 'G' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Cabinet was advised that the Christchurch Business Improvement District's (BID) first 5-year term will finish in October 2026, and that the BID is currently preparing for a new ballot on 2nd July 2026 for a second term.

In relation to this Cabinet was informed that this report sought Cabinet approval to allow Christchurch BID to go to ballot for a second term.

Councillor Richard Herrett declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item and left the room for the discussion and voting thereon.

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

Cabinet was advised that no urgent decisions had been taken requiring publication in accordance with the Constitution since the last meeting of the Cabinet.

127. Cabinet Forward Plan

The Leader advised that the latest Cabinet Forward Plan had been published on the Council's website.

The meeting ended at 11.50 am

CHAIRMAN