

## Request for consideration of an issue by Overview and Scrutiny

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### **Guidance on the use of this form:**

This form is for use by councillors and members of the public who want to request that an item joins an Overview and Scrutiny agenda. Any issue may be suggested, provided it affects the BCP area or the inhabitants of the area in some way. Scrutiny of the issue can only be requested once in a 12 month period.

The form may also be used for the reporting of a referral item to Overview and Scrutiny by another body of the council, such as Cabinet or Council.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee receiving the request will make an assessment of the issue using the detail provided in this form and determine whether to add it to its forward plan of work.

They may take a variety of steps to progress the issue, including requesting more information on it from officers of the council, asking for a member of the overview and scrutiny committee to 'champion' the issue and report back, or establishing a small working group of councillors to look at the issue in more detail.

If the Committee does not agree to progress the issue it will set out reasons for this and they will be provided to the person submitting this form.

More information can be found at Part 4.C of the BCP Council Constitution  
<https://democracy.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeID=151&Info=1&bcr=1>

Please complete all sections as fully as possible

### **1. Issue requested for scrutiny**

Scrutiny of works and issues leading to the structural damage and closure of Charminster Library and the implications for the rest of the BCP library estate.

## **2. Desired outcome resulting from Overview and Scrutiny engagement, including the value to be added to the Council, the BCP area or its inhabitants.**

To understand what led to this situation, learn lessons and avoid it happening again. If necessary, make further recommendations to cabinet.

Given the sudden, unplanned closure of the library there is an urgent need to address the issues that have led us to this point, to ensure that the library can be reopened and a vital community service can resume.

In terms of value, a rapporteur led approach would provide additional, member led resource to explore options to learn lessons and secure the future of Charminster Library and the further BCP library estate.

## **3. Background to the issue.**

In December 2025, part of the ceiling of Charminster Library collapsed, leading to temporary closure of the building for safety reasons.

Further investigations, including structural assessments have led to Charminster Library being closed “for the foreseeable future”.

As more information has become available, it has raised questions around:

- Delays in repairing known faults leading to significant further deterioration of the building.
- The presence of unassessed risks, including asbestos and 36 heavy iron radiator units located in the ceiling void, with dire safety implications for library staff and users.
- How essential repairs to the library estate can be funded, to prevent further degradation of the buildings, increased cost of repair and ensure continuity of service.
- The implications on integrity of the wider library estate.

I note that the O&S Board has previously taken a keen interest in the library service, and particularly in the risks to the library estate due to the lack of funding available to maintain and repair library buildings.

In October 2025 the Board made a specific recommendation to Cabinet that consideration should be given to obtaining funding, through asset disposal, to address the known maintenance and repair needs of public-facing buildings.

This recommendation was made following the Board’s examination of the Library Strategy, and in particular the schedule of maintenance and repair works that

had been identified across the library estate, totalling £1.8M.

In this schedule it was noted that Charminster Library in particular was in urgent need of significant investment

**4. Proposed method of scrutiny - (for example, a committee report or a working group investigation)**

I would welcome a rapporteur approach, reporting into the Board following a period of investigation and research. Given restrictions on both committee time and scrutiny support from officers, I would like to volunteer to help conduct the investigation.

**5. Key dates and anticipated timescale for the scrutiny work**

This is an urgent topic, as the long term closure of the library was announced suddenly in March 2026 and residents are left without a library service. It is therefore proposed that the rapporteur work should begin immediately.

In order to balance the need for sufficient time for the investigation, but also to ensure that progress is made in a timely manner, it is proposed that the rapporteur's report to the Board is timetabled for September 2026.

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