

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 March 2026 at 7.00 pm and reconvened on
12 May 2026 at 6.47pm

Present:-

Cllr L Dedman – Chairman

Cllr S Bull – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr S Aitkenhead (12 May), Cllr H Allen (12 May), Cllr M Andrews,
Cllr S Armstrong, Cllr S Bartlett, Cllr J Beesley, Cllr D Brown,
Cllr O Brown (24 March), Cllr R Burton, Cllr J J Butt, Cllr P Canavan,
Cllr S Carr-Brown, Cllr J Challinor (24 March), Cllr A Chapmanlaw,
Cllr B Chick, Cllr J Clements (12 May), Cllr E Connolly (12 May),
Cllr P Cooper, Cllr M Cox, Cllr D d'Orton-Gibson, Cllr B Dove (24
March), Cllr M Dower, Cllr M Earl, Cllr G Farquhar, Cllr D Farr,
Cllr D A Flagg, Cllr M Gillett, Cllr C Goodall, Cllr A Hadley,
Cllr J Hanna (12 May), Cllr R Herrett, Cllr P Hilliard, Cllr B Hitchcock,
Cllr M Howell, Cllr A Keddie, Cllr M Le Poidevin (24 March),
Cllr D Logan (24 March), Cllr S Mackrow, Cllr A Martin (24 March),
Cllr D Martin (24 March), Cllr G Martin, Cllr J Martin,
Cllr S McCormack, Cllr P Miles, Cllr S Moore, Cllr A-M Moriarty,
Cllr B Nanovo, Cllr L Northover, Cllr E Pankhurst, Cllr R Pattinson-
West (12 May), Cllr K Rampton, Cllr Dr F Rice (12 May),
Cllr J Richardson, Cllr V Ricketts (12 May), Cllr C Rigby,
Cllr K Salmon, Cllr J Salmon, Cllr P Sidaway (24 March), Cllr P Slade,
Cllr T Sladeb (12 May), Cllr M Tarling (12 May), Cllr T Trent,
Cllr O Walters, Cllr C Weight, Cllr L Williams (24 March) and
Cllr G Wright

97. Apologies

24 March 2026

Apologies for absence were received from: -

Councillor Sue Aitkenhead	Councillor Rachel Pattinson-West
Councillor Hazel Allen	Councillor Margaret Phipps
Councillor Julie Bagwell	Councillor Karen Rampton
Councillor Eleanor Connolly	Councillor Felicity Rice
Councillor Joe Clements	Councillor Vanessa Ricketts
Councillor Jackie Edwards	Councillor Toby Slade
Councillor Anne Filer	Councillor Vikki Slade
Councillor Jeff Hanna	Councillor Michael Tarling
Councillor Mark Howell	Councillor Kieron Wilson
Councillor Chris Matthews	

12 May 2026

Apologies for absence were received from: -

Councillor Julie Bagwell	Councillor Andy Martin
Councillor Olivia Brown	Councillor David Martin
Councillor John Challinor	Councillor Chris Matthews

Councillor Bobbie Dove
Councillor Jackie Edwards
Councillor Anne Filer
Councillor Dawn Logan
Councillor Marion Le Poidevin

Councillor Margaret Phipps
Councillor Peter Sidaway
Councillor Vikki Slade
Councillor Lawrence Williams
Councillor Kieron Wilson

98. Declarations of Interests

The Chief Executive reminded members that dispensations had been granted to all BCP Councillors in respect of those items relating to SEND to ensure that all Councillors were freely able to fully participate in the debate on these matters and vote.

Councillor Andy Martin declared an interest as a Director of BH Live and remained present for the discussion and voting thereon.

Councillor Dawn Logan declared a pecuniary interest in relation to Minute No. 111 (Motion to Full Council: Regulating Short-Term Lets to Protect Housing, Communities and the Visitor Economy in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole) and advised that she would leave the room for the discussion and voting thereon, however as this item was dealt with at the reconvened meeting which Councillor Logan had submitted apologies for this was not necessary.

Councillor Bernadette Nanovo declared an interest in Minute No. 111 (Notices of Motion – Regulating Short-Term Lets to Protect Housing, Communities and the Visitor Economy in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole) and left the room for the discussion and voting thereon.

99. Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 10 February 2026 and the budget meeting held on 24 February 2026 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion in the budget meeting minutes of the Standards matter raised by Councillor Judes Butt.

100. Announcements and Introductions from the Chairman

The Chairman advised the Council that Councillor Gillian Martin had recently joined the Reform group and welcomed her to that group.

The Chairman advised the Council, with sadness, of the recent death of former Bournemouth Borough Councillor Carol Ainge. Councillor Millie Earl paid tribute to Carol Ainge's strong work ethic and community focus, following which Councillor Alasdair Keddie spoke of the inspiration she had been as a ward councillor. Members then stood in silent tribute.

101. Public Issues

Public Questions

Public Question from Joel Troy-Barnes

As a resident of Southcote Road, I am regularly exposed to street-based drug use including open crack consumption, prostitution, and associated violence outside my home, often continuing until the early hours of the morning, it seems to be progressively more violent over the last 2 months requiring nearly nightly calls to relevant services.

I would like to ask the Council: is this a known and documented issue in the Southcote road area, and if so, what multi-agency response is currently in place? Specifically, what measures are being taken to ensure the safety of residents living in directly affected streets, and has any consideration been given to increased visible presence or patrolling during the hours when these activities are most concentrated, particularly between midnight and 4am? This situation feels quite lawless after the hours of 8pm and only seems to be getting worse.

Response read by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regulatory Services, Councillor Kieron Wilson

I can confirm that our Public Protection team are aware of your concerns. Our anti-social behaviour team are working closely with Dorset Police on the issues you have mentioned. Recent action includes increased use of CCTV monitoring, additional police patrols to both deter ASB and kerb crawling, and tackle drug use and supply, and work with local residents and landlords to increase the reporting of concerns. We would encourage all residents to report any anti-social behaviour to our team or via the police online platform, so that we can work together to tackle issues.

Public Question from Katherine Avery (Read by the Chief Executive)

I would very much like the Council to consider the impact that short - term lets is having on the tourism industry. I have been running a bed and breakfast in Bournemouth for the last 12 years and this is having a big impact on business for B&B's and hotels in the ward.

B&B's and hotels are fully compliant, we pay thousands every year to ensure the safety of all of our guests in our establishments, as well as paying business rates to BCP Council.

What does need considering are the short-term lets on Booking agents and the student halls selling rooms. Many of which are 10 metres from local B&B's.

What is the Council going to strategize in the future to prevent the sudden influx of short-term lets in the BCP ward to prevent the smaller establishments closing? Will there be more regulations in place?

Response by the Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations and Car Parking, Councillor Richard Herrett

Thankyou for your question,

The rise of Air BnB and other short term lets, are another example of where technology and changes in supply, have outstripped legislation and where local authorities need support from central government to deal with the consequences.

Currently the councils ability to enforce against short terms lets is limited in planning terms, as changes to national planning laws are required to do so. The current classification C3 makes no differentiation about how a home is used. There is a national registration scheme promised that is yet to come forward, and it is unclear as to whether local authorities will be resourced in addition to this to operate the register and how it might respond to those failing to register, and the consequences of that.

With use of private student accommodation falling as international numbers recede due to hostile immigration policies, and local ones stay closer to home due to rising costs, it is unsurprising that operators of student accommodation are seeking to sweat their assets aswell.

What I often hear is that hotel and B&B operators would like a level playing field.

The council can enforce on ASB, noise complaints and other issues where appropriate, that mainly relate to the behaviour of people, but currently does not have the facility within planning laws to take action against the premises on the grounds of existence. There will only be more regulations in place if the government provide the powers.

Public Statements

Public Statement from Sarah Cooper (Read by the Chief Executive)

I urge you to support this motion because for families like mine, SEND policy is not theoretical it determines whether our children receive the support they need.

I am the parent of two autistic children who attend specialist schools. Our journey through the SEND system has been long and difficult. The reason my children now have the support they need is because EHCP's provide legally enforceable rights. Without those rights, I genuinely don't know where they would be today.

If I hadn't been able to challenge decisions and appeal, my children wouldn't be in the safe, supportive school they attend now. My son's mental health declined significantly when their needs weren't met and destroyed them.

Being able to challenge decisions is not about conflict. It is about making sure vulnerable children do not fall through the gaps.

Reform must strengthen support — not remove the legal protections families rely on

Public Statement from Paul McAughtry (Read by Gerri McAughtry)

The underlying pressures in the SEND system need to be addressed. The current legal framework under the Children and Families Act 2014 and Equality Act 2010 provides important legal safeguards for families that must be preserved. Reforms should prioritise early identification in schools, specialist workforce development and individual needs-led support not weakening existing legal protections. The core challenge is not structural design but insufficient specialist capacity; inadequate national funding and lack of specialist provision outside mainstream. The Government needs to implement the recommendations of its own Neurodivergence Task & Finish Group Report published in February 2026.

Public Statement from Gerri McAughtry

If children with SEN needs lose access to legal rights and specialist support, those needs will escalate in already overstretched mainstream classrooms. Teachers will be under greater pressure to manage SEN needs without adequate funds or support. This inevitably will reduce teaching time and learning quality for all pupils. Supporting this motion does not oppose reform; rather, it asks that reform improves the system by addressing specialist workforce capacity and sustainable SEN funding, without removing the legal safeguards that protect vulnerable, disabled children and their families. This will support teachers, councils and schools to deliver education effectively for everyone.

Public Statement from Mark Elkins

The hotel industry within East Cliff and Springbourne has been put under severe strain with too many new hotels within Bournemouth approved by the Planning Committee leading to over capacity in tourist accommodation in recent decades. This has caused many existing hotels to cease trading and this in turn is wasteful from an environmental standpoint with emissions from the building of new hotels and in some cases demolition of existing hotels. Short term holiday lets such as Airbnb only make this scenario worse causing further over capacity

Public Statement from Philip Stanley Watts (Read by the Chief Executive)

As a father of a daughter at university I feel the BCP council need to get together with partners the health authority and university to warn of the risks of meningitis in the light of the outbreak in Kent.

Public Statement from Rosie Radwell (Read by the Chief Executive)

The BH Area Hospitality Association supports stronger regulation of short-term lets, as the current system creates an uneven playing field. Anyone can establish an Airbnb-style property without meeting the compliance standards required of hotels and guest houses, placing legitimate operators at a clear disadvantage. At the same time, tourism demand is weak, with many properties operating at unsustainable occupancy levels, particularly outside peak months.

There is also an oversupply of hotel accommodation alongside a severe housing shortage. A practical solution is to allow smaller hotels to convert

into residential units with streamlined planning approval, helping meet local housing needs while stabilising the sector.

Immediate action is essential: enforce compliance, restrict unregulated short-term let platforms, and create a council-led rental portal to ensure standards and accountability. Prolonged consultation must now give way to decisive intervention to protect businesses, communities, and housing supply.

The council need to control with their own platform.

Public Statement from Rachel Filmer (Read by the Chief Executive)

Having campaigned locally and nationally on SEND, the concerns in this motion are wholly reflective of the risk of these reforms. They would disproportionately impact on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, and those with the most complex needs. Failing children has profound consequences, not just for families and schools but for public services. Removing rights would exacerbate the crisis in social care and other public services. The legal rights of disabled children must not be negotiable. I urge all councillors to support this motion and defend the rights of vulnerable disabled children in BCP.

102. Audit and Governance Committee 26 February 2026 - Minute No. 103 - Financial Regulations - Annual evolution for the financial year 2026/27

The Vice Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee presented the report on Financial Regulations – Annual evolution for the financial year 2026/27 and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED that Council adopt the Financial Regulations as shown in Appendix A and as approved by the Audit and Governance Committee. The operation go live date to be 1 April 2026.

Voting: Unanimous

103. Cabinet 4 March 2026 - Minute No. 141 - Children's Services Capital Strategy Report 2026-2029

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Education and Skills, presented the report on the Children's Services Capital Strategy 2026-2029 and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED that Council agreed the capital programme as set out in the report, including the budget allocations set against the capital funding available for the period 2026/27.

Voting: Unanimous

104. Cabinet 4 March 2026 - Minute No. 143 - Asset Disposals

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report on Asset Disposals and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

Councillor John Challinor proposed an amendment to recommendation (b) to remove the reference to Penn Hill Car Park so that recommendation (b) read as follows: -

- (b) approve the disposal on an open market basis of; 12-14 Commercial Road and Queensmead Care Home on such terms to be approved by the Director of Finance, acting in his capacity as Corporate Property Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.**

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Gavin Wright.

Council comprehensively debated the proposed amendment, including the underutilisation of the car park and the potential impact on nearby shops.

Concern was also raised regarding the lack of ward councillor representation at the meeting, and it was noted in response that the working group was made up of cross-party representation.

Following debate on the amendment it was put to the vote whereby the amendment fell with voting:

For:19, Against:35, Abstentions:1

The substantive motion as originally proposed was then debated and following a request to vote separately on the individual sites was voted on as set out below.

RESOLVED that Council: -

- (a) noted the confidential minutes and the recommendations of the Cross-Party Strategic Asset Disposal Working Group meeting held on the 12 February 2026; and**
- (b) approved the disposal on an open market basis of;**
- (1) 12-14 Commercial Road,**
- (2) Queensmead Care Home and**
- (3) Penn Hill Car Park**
- on such terms to be approved by the Director of Finance, acting in his capacity as Corporate Property Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.**

Voting: (a) and (b) 1 and 2: Unanimous

(b) 3: For:35, Against:15, Abstentions:3

105. Cabinet 4 March 2026 - Minute No. 152 - Our Place and Environment: Local Transport Consolidated Funding Programme 2026/27

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, presented the report on Our Place and Environment: Local Transport Consolidated Funding Programme 2026/27 and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) Council approved the 2026/27 Local Transport Consolidated Fund programme as set out in Appendix A and delegates**

delivery to the Director of Planning and Transport in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy and Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure & Commercial Operations;

Voting: For:45, Against:3, Abstentions:6

NOTE- resolution (b) was a resolved matter by the Cabinet

Meeting adjourned at 8.37pm

Meeting reconvened at 8.56pm

Councillors Judes Butt, Mike Cox, Michelle Dower and Lawrence Williams left the meeting at 8.37pm

106. Cabinet 4 March 2026 - Minute No. 153 - Our Place and Environment: Active Travel Funding 2026/27

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, presented the report on Our Place and Environment: Active Travel Funding 2026/27 and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

Councillor Gavin Wright proposed the following amendment:

The deletion of the current row 3 of Paragraph 10 on page 177 of the agenda relating to Poole Park to Broadstone Way Route Phase 1 and replace with: Improvement to the cycle route between Border Drive to Forlands Road in Turlin Moor, Hamworthy to improve walking and cycling from Policeman's Lane to Poole Quay without the need to use Blandford Road. Subject to the proposed replacement being within the current proposed budget allocation of that row of £250,000.

This was seconded by Councillor David d'Orton-Gibson following which the meeting was adjourned briefly for officers to consider the amendment.

Meeting adjourned at 9.01pm

Meeting reconvened at 9.06pm

Council comprehensively discussed the amendment following which it was put to the vote and fell with voting as set out below:

Voting: For:8, Against:39, Abstentions:4

Council subsequently debated the substantive motion as presented, during which thanks were expressed to officers for securing the funding, further to this assurance was requested that should schemes not progress that the report be brought back to Council for further consideration.

RESOLVED that Council delegates the investment of the £2.96m of 2026/27 active travel funding to the Service Director for Planning & Transport in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy.

Voting: For:45, Against:3, Abstentions:6

107. Cabinet 4 March 2026 - Minute No. 154 - Our Place and Environment: Local Area Bus Grant (LABG) 2026/27

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, presented the report on Our Place and Environment: Local Area Bus Grant (LABG) 2026/27 and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) Council accepts the £5.64m Local Authority Bus Grant funding for 2026/27 from the Department for Transport; and**
- (b) Council delegates delivery of the Local Authority Bus Grant funded Bus Service Improvement Plan programme set out in Appendix 2 of this report to the Service Director for Planning and Transport in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Mitigation, Energy and Environment.**

Voting: Unanimous

108. Cabinet 4 March 2026 - Minute No. 155 - Our Place and Environment: BCP Council Lane Rental Scheme

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Response, Environment and Energy, presented the report on Our Place and Environment: BCP Council Lane Rental Scheme and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

RESOLVED that Council: -

- (a) approved the submission of an application to the Secretary of State for Transport to establish and operate a Lane Rental Scheme across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole; and**
- (b) subject to Secretary of State approval, delegate the establishment and operation of a BCP Lane Rental scheme to the Service Director for Planning and Transport in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Mitigation, Energy and Environment.**

Voting: Unanimous

Councillors John Challinor and Matthew Gillet left the meeting at 9.44pm

Councillor Gavin Wright left the meeting at 9.46pm

The Chairman advised the Council that it would now consider the additional recommendation arising from the Audit and Governance Committee held on the 19 March 2026, as circulated in the supplementary pack which, was to be brought before Council as an urgent item in accordance with the Constitution.

109. Audit and Governance Committee 19 March 2026 - Minute No. 119 - Two Riversmeet Studios

The Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations, presented the report on the Two Riversmeet Studios and outlined the recommendations as set out on the agenda.

Council comprehensively discussed the item with members seeking assurances in respect of the robustness of the business case.

RESOLVED that Council approved authorised borrowing of the Council to accommodate the £1.8m financing for the extension at Two Riversmeet Leisure Centre proposal.

Voting: For:31, Against:9, Abstentions:8

110. Calendar of Meetings for 2026/27 and 2027/28

The Chairman of Council 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.

Council was asked to consider and approve the schedule of meetings for the 2026/27 and 2027/28 municipal years.

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee addressed the Council highlighting to members that due to the nature of the Licensing Sub-Committee that there will be frequent occasions when additional meetings are required.

RESOLVED that Council: -

- (a) reaffirmed the schedule of meetings for the 2026/27 municipal year as previously agreed on the 6 May 2025 as attached at Appendix 1, picking up any in-year amendments; and**
- (b) approved the schedule of meetings for the 2027/28 municipal year as attached at Appendix 2**

Voting: Unanimous

Councillor Cameron Adams left the meeting at 10.06pm

Councillors Peter Sidaway and Paul Slade left the meeting at 10.07pm

111. Notices of Motions in accordance with Procedure Rule 10

Council was advised that three motions had been received on this occasion.

Protecting Enforceable SEND Support

The following motion was submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 10 of the Meeting Procedure Rules and was moved by Councillor Joe Salmon and seconded by Councillor Kate Salmon.

Council notes:

1. That Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) currently provide the primary legal mechanism through which children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can secure enforceable support.
2. That the Government's proposed SEND reforms set out in the White Paper Every Child Achieving and Thriving introduce Individual Support Plans (ISPs) as the primary planning mechanism for many children, while linking EHCPs more closely to nationally defined Specialist Provision Packages.
3. That ISP-based provision does not provide the same legally enforceable entitlement where support is not delivered.
4. That the proposed reforms would increase the role of schools in funding and delivering SEND support.
5. That national commentary and emerging legal challenge have raised concern that aspects of the proposed reforms may weaken existing legal rights and routes to challenge unmet need.
6. That Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council faces significant financial pressures within its High Needs SEND budget.
7. That there is concern nationally that SEND reform designed to manage system costs may weaken enforceable protections for children.
8. That rising SEND costs nationally are widely linked to increasing reliance on private and independent provision, alongside shortages of publicly provided specialist places and services.
9. That adopted, kinship and care-experienced children often experience developmental trauma which affects their educational engagement and support needs.
10. That recent changes to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF) have reduced access to therapeutic support for adopted and special guardianship families.
11. That leading SEND legal practitioners, including Michael Charles of Sinclairs Law, have warned of a potential shift of decision-making power away from families within emerging SEND reforms.
12. That national SEND charities and professional bodies have welcomed the ambition of reform while calling for safeguards to ensure access to statutory support is not narrowed.

Council believes:

1. That SEND reform should improve support without weakening families' ability to secure provision through enforceable rights.
2. That expanding access to support should not come at the expense of enforceable entitlement or meaningful rights of challenge.
3. That support must be driven by need rather than affordability.

4. That trauma-informed approaches are essential to supporting adopted, kinship and care-experienced children.
5. That SEND reform should be aligned with wider support systems, including access to therapeutic provision.
6. That addressing the financial sustainability of the SEND system should focus on strengthening publicly available provision and specialist capacity, rather than reducing children's access to statutory support.

Council resolves to:

1. **Respond to the Government's SEND consultation in a way that supports reform only where it:**
 - retains EHCPs as the primary route to legally enforceable support
 - does not reduce access to EHCPs
 - does not shift responsibility for securing provision from the local authority to schools
 - does not allow financial pressures to limit children's legal entitlement
 - does not weaken routes for families to challenge unmet need
2. **Publicly state this position as part of its consultation response.**
3. **Confirm that any local SEND reform undertaken in connection with financial sustainability will not restrict access to statutory support.**
4. **Advocate for SEND reform that:**
 - recognises the needs of adopted, kinship and care-experienced children
 - incorporates trauma-informed approaches
 - supports the delivery of trauma-informed practice within schools
5. **Seek assurance from Government that SEND reform will be aligned with continued access to therapeutic support for adopted and special guardianship families.**
6. **Write to Local Members of Parliament asking them to support this position.**

Comprehensive discussion took place on the motion and wider issues relating to SEND.

During the debate, concerns were raised that the motion pre-empted the consultation process.

The motion was then put to the vote and fell, with voting as set out below.

RESOLVED that the motion fell.

Voting: For:10, Against:27, Abstentions:7

Councillor Oliver Walters proposed that in accordance with the Constitution Procedure Rule 14.16 that given the late hour the meeting be adjourned.

Upon being put to the vote this was subsequently agreed and Council was advised that the rest of the business would be adjourned to a future date following the pre-election period and prior to the Annual Meeting.

Prior to the Chairman closing the meeting the Chief Executive drew members attention to an urgent decision which he had recently made as follows:

Acceptance of Local Transport Consolidation Fund Settlement 2026/27 to 2029/30.

In relation to this the Chief Executive advised that full details of the urgent decision had been published and were available to view on the Council's website.

Meeting adjourned at 10.41pm on 24 March 2026

Meeting reconvened at 6.47pm on 12 May 2026

Reconvened Council Meeting – 12 May 2026

Notices of Motions in accordance with Procedure Rule 10

Council was reminded that three motions had been submitted to the 24 March 2026 Council meeting, one of which was dealt with at the meeting prior to the adjournment which therefore meant there were two motions to deal with at this reconvened meeting as set out on the agenda.

Motion to Full Council: Bio Diversity Loss

The following motion was submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 10 of the Meeting Procedure Rules and was moved by Councillor Joe Salmon and seconded by Councillor Kate Salmon

This Council notes:

1. That January 2026 the UK Government has published the national security assessment Global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security, which concludes with high confidence that ecosystem degradation already threatens UK security and prosperity and is likely to intensify to 2050 and beyond.
2. That the report identifies cascading risks including food and water insecurity, flooding and extreme weather, pandemic risk, supply chain disruption, economic instability, migration pressures, and social instability.
3. That the report explicitly states that nature is a foundation of national security and that the loss of ecosystems threatens the systems that provide food, clean water, climate stability, and economic resilience.
4. That the UK imports a substantial proportion of its food and is not currently self-sufficient, leaving communities exposed to global shocks, price spikes and supply disruption.

5. That many of these risks are already visible in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole through flooding, overheating, loss of green space, biodiversity decline, rising food insecurity, and pressure on local infrastructure and public services.

This Council believes:

1. That the Government's own national security assessment represents a material and urgent change in the risk environment for local authorities.
2. That biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation are not abstract environmental concerns but emerging threats to community safety, economic stability, public health, and food security.
3. That protecting and restoring nature must be treated as essential resilience infrastructure, on a par with flood defences, housing, transport and public health planning.
4. That failure to act now will increase long-term financial pressures on local government through higher costs linked to flooding, overheating, food insecurity, health inequality, and emergency response.

This Council resolves to:

A. Direct action by the Leader and Cabinet

1. That the Leader of the Council instructs Cabinet to undertake an urgent cross-portfolio review of the adequacy of existing Council strategies in light of the national security risks identified, including:
 - Development Plan Documents and planning policy
 - Flood and coastal risk management
 - The Local Transport Plan and air quality strategy
 - Public health and food resilience planning
 - Biodiversity, green infrastructure and nature recovery strategies
 - Climate adaptation and overheating risk
 - Community resilience and civil contingencies
2. That Cabinet instructs officers to prepare a consolidated risk and resilience report identifying:
 - Key local vulnerabilities
 - Strategic gaps in current policy
 - Practical actions to strengthen long-term resilience
 - Implications for future investment priorities
3. That this review explicitly considers whether biodiversity and ecosystem decline should be recognised as a core strategic risk category alongside climate change, financial pressures and demographic change.

B. Strengthen democratic scrutiny

1. Request that the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees examine:
 - The local impacts of ecosystem decline
 - Risks to food security, public health and infrastructure
 - The adequacy of current mitigation and adaptation measures and provide recommendations to Cabinet.

C. Strengthen corporate risk governance

1. That the Audit and Governance Committee is requested to consider how ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss should be incorporated into the Council's corporate risk management framework and long-term resilience planning.

D. Reporting back to Full Council

1. That Cabinet reports back to Full Council within six months with:
 - A clear assessment of local exposure to ecosystem-related risks
 - Proposed changes to policy, strategy or investment priorities
 - Any implications for the Key Policy Framework or Budgetary Framework

E. A clear challenge to Government

1. That the Leader writes on behalf of the Council to:
 - The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
 - The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
 - The Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
 - All Members of Parliament representing Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

setting out the Council's concern that the national security implications of biodiversity loss require urgent national leadership and requesting:

 - (a) Clear national guidance for local authorities on incorporating ecosystem risk into planning, resilience and infrastructure decision-making;
 - (b) Long-term, ring-fenced funding for climate adaptation, nature restoration and community resilience, rather than short-term competitive bidding pots;
 - (c) A national strategy for food system resilience that recognises the UK's dependence on imports and the growing risks posed by global ecological instability;

- (d) Stronger national planning policy direction enabling councils to prioritise long-term environmental resilience over short-term speculative development pressures;
- (e) Cross-government recognition that biodiversity protection is not solely an environmental issue but a matter of economic security, public health and national resilience.

Councillor Millie Earl proposed an amendment to the motion which was seconded by Councillor David Brown with the deletions and insertions as set out below:-

This Council resolves to:

A. Direct action by the Leader and Cabinet

1. ~~That the Leader of the Council instructs Cabinet to undertake~~ **Request that Cabinet consider undertaking** an urgent cross-portfolio review of the adequacy of existing Council strategies in light of the national security risks identified, including:
 - *Development Plan Documents and planning policy*
 - *Flood and coastal risk management*
 - *The Local Transport Plan and air quality strategy*
 - *Public health and food resilience planning*
 - *Biodiversity, green infrastructure and nature recovery strategies*
 - *Climate adaptation and overheating risk*
 - *Community resilience and civil contingencies*
2. That Cabinet ~~instructs~~ **considers instructing** officers to prepare a consolidated risk and resilience report identifying:
 - *Key local vulnerabilities*
 - *Strategic gaps in current policy*
 - *Practical actions to strengthen long-term resilience*
 - *Implications for future investment priorities*
3. ~~That this review explicitly considers~~ **That when considering any review, cabinet shall consider** whether biodiversity and ecosystem decline should be recognised as a core strategic risk category alongside climate change, financial pressures and demographic change.

B. Strengthen democratic scrutiny

1. *Request that the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees examine:*
 - *The local impacts of ecosystem decline*
 - *Risks to food security, public health and infrastructure*
 - *The adequacy of current mitigation and adaptation measures*
 - *and provide recommendations to Cabinet.*

C. Strengthen corporate risk governance

1. That the Audit and Governance Committee is requested to consider how ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss should be incorporated into the Council's corporate risk management framework and long-term resilience planning.

D. Reporting back to Full Council

1. That Cabinet reports back to Full Council within six months ~~with:~~
 - ~~A clear assessment of local exposure to ecosystem-related risks~~
 - ~~Proposed changes to policy, strategy or investment priorities~~
 - ~~Any implications for the Key Policy Framework or Budgetary Framework~~ following consideration of the above.

~~E. A clear challenge to Government~~

1. ~~That the Leader writes on behalf of the Council to:~~
 - ~~The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs~~
 - ~~The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government~~
 - ~~The Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero~~
 - ~~All Members of Parliament representing Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole~~~~setting out the Council's concern that the national security implications of biodiversity loss require urgent national leadership and requesting:~~
 - (a) ~~Clear national guidance for local authorities on incorporating ecosystem risk into planning, resilience and infrastructure decision-making;~~
 - (b) ~~Long-term, ring-fenced funding for climate adaptation, nature restoration and community resilience, rather than short-term competitive bidding pots;~~
 - (c) ~~A national strategy for food system resilience that recognises the UK's dependence on imports and the growing risks posed by global ecological instability;~~
 - (d) ~~Stronger national planning policy direction enabling councils to prioritise long-term environmental resilience over short-term speculative development pressures;~~
 - (e) ~~Cross-government recognition that biodiversity protection is not solely an environmental issue but a matter of economic security, public health and national resilience.~~

Comprehensive debate took place on the proposed amendment to the motion following which it was put to the vote and carried with voting:

For:40, Against:14, Abstentions:6

The substantive motion was subsequently debated as amended and it was resolved as follows: -

This Council resolves to:

A. Direct action by the Leader and Cabinet

- 1. Request that Cabinet consider undertaking an urgent cross-portfolio review of the adequacy of existing Council strategies in light of the national security risks identified, including:**
 - Development Plan Documents and planning policy
 - Flood and coastal risk management
 - The Local Transport Plan and air quality strategy
 - Public health and food resilience planning
 - Biodiversity, green infrastructure and nature recovery strategies
 - Climate adaptation and overheating risk
 - Community resilience and civil contingencies
- 2. That Cabinet considers instructing officers to prepare a consolidated risk and resilience report identifying:**
 - Key local vulnerabilities
 - Strategic gaps in current policy
 - Practical actions to strengthen long-term resilience
 - Implications for future investment priorities
- 3. That when considering any review, cabinet shall consider whether biodiversity and ecosystem decline should be recognised as a core strategic risk category alongside climate change, financial pressures and demographic change.**

B. Strengthen democratic scrutiny

- 1. Request that the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees examine:**
 - The local impacts of ecosystem decline
 - Risks to food security, public health and infrastructure
 - The adequacy of current mitigation and adaptation measures
 - and provide recommendations to Cabinet.

C. Strengthen corporate risk governance

- 1. That the Audit and Governance Committee is requested to consider how ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss should be incorporated into the Council's corporate risk management framework and long-term resilience planning.**

D. Reporting back to Full Council

- 1. That Cabinet reports back to Full Council within six months following consideration of the above.**

Voting: For:46, Against:11, Abstentions:3

Motion to Full Council: Regulating Short-Term Lets to Protect Housing, Communities and the Visitor Economy in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

The following motion was submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 10 of the Meeting Procedure Rules and was moved by Councillor Sara Armstrong and seconded by Councillor Richard Herrett.

This Council Notes:

- The rapid growth of short-term lets across the BCP area, including platforms such as Airbnb, which account for over 2,272 active listings in Bournemouth and more than 2,328 across the wider BCP area as of late 2025.
- Tourism is essential to the BCP economy, contributing over £1.3 billion annually and supporting thousands of jobs.
- The area continues to face acute housing pressures, with rising rents, high house prices, and a 20% increase in homelessness applications since 2021, demonstrating the need to protect long-term housing supply.
- The Government has committed to a national registration scheme and a new Use Class C5 for short-term lets, but these powers are not yet in force.

This Council Believes:

- Immediate action is required to respond to the community, housing and economic impacts of short-term lets.
- Short-term lets, including those advertised on platforms such as Airbnb, must be better managed to protect residential neighbourhoods, housing availability, and the sustainability of the regulated hospitality sector.
- That short term lets, if appropriately regulated can make a positive contribution to the local tourism economy.
- That short term lets should not be a means to circumvent either the council tax, or business rates system.
- Collaboration across the tourism industry, rental market, town councils, neighbourhood forums and local communities is essential to finding balanced and workable solutions.

This Council Resolves To:

- 1. Examine how existing powers could be used to allow immediate enforcement.**
 - **Using environmental health, planning enforcement, anti-social behaviour tools and licensing where applicable, the Council will examine how to strengthen monitoring and enforcement against nuisance, anti-social behaviour, and statutory breaches linked to short-term lets, including those advertised via Airbnb and similar platforms.**

- Then using those powers where appropriate to better manage the impact of short-term lettings.
2. **Enhance Local Understanding and Data**
 - Improve the Council's ability to identify and map short-term lets using publicly available data from platforms such as Airbnb, to support evidence-based decision-making.
 - Work with stakeholders in the hospitality sector and rental market to gather insights on local impacts, pressures and opportunities.
 3. **Support communities impacted by short term lets**
 - Work with communities to identify areas experiencing high concentrations of short-term lets and prioritise targeted enforcement if available.
 - Ensure and promote clear reporting routes for residents affected by nuisance or unmanaged short-term letting.
 4. **Prepare for Forthcoming National Regulation**
 - Begin internal preparations for delivering the national short-term let registration scheme once activated.
 - Investigate whether properties exceeding 90 nights create a material change of use.
 - Write to Ministers and local MPs urging the early introduction of Use Class C5 into the national planning framework to strengthen local control and further request that BCP Council be considered for inclusion in any government-led pilot -schemes.
 - Invite MPs, sector partners and ministers to a roundtable to discuss the local impact of short-term lets and create solutions.
 - As part of overall work on short term lets as through the motion, gather data that would support an Article 4 direction in the future.
 5. **Promote Responsible Hosting and Sustainable Tourism**
 - Encourage best-practice standards for short-term let hosts, including clear guest guidance, effective waste management, complaint handling and environmentally responsible operation.
 - Work with the hospitality sector, rental market partners and business improvement districts to ensure fair competition and support a sustainable year-round visitor economy.
 - Recognise that properly regulated short-term lets can support tourism without undermining residential areas or the hospitality sector.

- **Ensure the Council uses all existing legal and regulatory powers available to support the balanced and sustainable use of homes.**
- **Ask the Leader to write to the Minister for Local Government requesting to be part of a trial for the local registration, management and regulation of short-term lettings, with appropriate funding mechanisms.**
- **Ask that the Leader to invite MP's, stakeholders and the appropriate government minister to a round table discussion, so that government can understand the issue in more depth and how that is affecting residents and businesses in the BCP area and identify solutions.**

In presenting the motion Councillor Armstrong advised that an amendment had been proposed by Councillor Patrick Canavan with the deletions and insertions as set out below, which both herself as the proposer and seconder of the motion were content with.

This Council Notes:

- *The rapid growth of short-term lets across the BCP area, including platforms such as Airbnb, which account for **over 2,272 active listings in Bournemouth** and **more than 2,328 across the wider BCP area** as of late 2025.*
- *Tourism is essential to the BCP economy, contributing **over £1.3 billion annually** and supporting thousands of jobs.*
- *The area continues to face acute housing pressures, with rising rents, high house prices, and a **20% increase in homelessness applications since 2021**, demonstrating the need to protect long-term housing supply.*
- *The Government has committed to a national registration scheme ~~and a new Use Class C5~~ but not yet to a new Use Class C5 for short-term lets, ~~but these~~ so these powers are not yet in force.*

This Council Believes:

- *Immediate action is required to respond to the community, housing and economic impacts of short-term lets.*
- *Short-term lets, including those advertised on platforms such as Airbnb, must be better managed to protect residential neighbourhoods, housing availability, and the sustainability of the regulated hospitality sector.*
- *That short term lets, if appropriately regulated can make a positive contribution to the local tourism economy.*
- *That short term lets should not be a means to circumvent either the council tax, or business rates system.*
- *Collaboration across the tourism industry, rental market, town councils, neighbourhood forums and local communities is essential to finding balanced and workable solutions.*

This Council Resolves To:

1. **Examine how existing powers could be used to allow immediate enforcement.**
 - **Using environmental health, planning enforcement, anti-social behaviour tools and licensing where applicable, the Council will examine how to strengthen monitoring and enforcement against nuisance, anti-social behaviour, and statutory breaches linked to short-term lets, including those advertised via Airbnb and similar platforms.**
 - **Then using those powers where appropriate to better manage the impact of short-term lettings.**
2. **Enhance Local Understanding and Data**
 - **Improve the Council's ability to identify and map short-term lets using publicly available data, ~~from platforms such as Airbnb, to support evidence-based decision-making~~ insights and lived experience from stakeholders in the hospitality and rental market to better understand local impacts, pressures and opportunities.**
 - ~~**Work with stakeholders in the hospitality sector and rental market to gather insights on local impacts, pressures and opportunities.**~~
3. **Support communities impacted by short term lets**
 - **Work with communities to identify areas experiencing high concentrations of short-term lets and prioritise targeted enforcement if available.**
 - **Ensure and promote clear reporting routes for residents affected by nuisance or unmanaged short-term letting.**
4. **Prepare for Forthcoming National Regulation**
 - **Begin internal preparations for delivering the national short-term let registration scheme once activated.**
 - **Investigate whether properties exceeding 90 nights create a material change of use.**
 - **Write to Ministers and local MPs urging the early introduction of Use Class C5 into the national planning framework to strengthen local control and further request that BCP Council be considered for inclusion in any government-led pilot -schemes regarding the management and regulation of short term lets, with appropriate funding mechanisms.**
 - **As part of overall work on short term lets as through the motion, gather data that would support an Article 4 direction in the future.**
 - **Encourage best-practice standards for short-term lets and to use the development of a new Local Plan to establish**

policies that will strengthen monitoring and enforcement of short-term lets advertised on Airbnb and similar platforms

5. Promote Responsible Hosting and Sustainable Tourism

- *Encourage best-practice standards for short-term let hosts, including clear guest guidance, effective waste management, complaint handling and environmentally responsible operation.*
- *Work with the hospitality sector, rental market partners and business improvement districts to ensure fair competition and support a sustainable year-round visitor economy.*
- *Recognise that properly regulated short-term lets can support tourism without undermining residential areas or the hospitality sector.*
- *Ensure the Council uses all existing legal and regulatory powers available to support the balanced and sustainable use of homes.*
- *Ask that the Leader to invite MP's, stakeholders and the appropriate government minister to a round table discussion, so that government can understand the issue in more depth and how that is affecting residents and businesses in the BCP area and identify solutions.*

Council consent was subsequently sought and agreed to confirm that the amended motion be therefore taken as the substantive.

The substantive motion was debated as amended and resolved as follows:-

This Council Resolves To:

- 1. Examine how existing powers could be used to allow immediate enforcement.**
 - **Using environmental health, planning enforcement, anti-social behaviour tools and licensing where applicable, the Council will examine how to strengthen monitoring and enforcement against nuisance, anti-social behaviour, and statutory breaches linked to short-term lets, including those advertised via Airbnb and similar platforms.**
 - **Then using those powers where appropriate to better manage the impact of short-term lettings.**
- 2. Enhance Local Understanding and Data**
 - **Improve the Council's ability to identify and map short-term lets using publicly available data, insights and lived experience from stakeholders in the hospitality and rental market to better understand local impacts, pressures and opportunities.**
- 3. Support communities impacted by short term lets**

- Work with communities to identify areas experiencing high concentrations of short-term lets and prioritise targeted enforcement if available.
 - Ensure and promote clear reporting routes for residents affected by nuisance or unmanaged short-term letting.
4. **Prepare for Forthcoming National Regulation**
- Begin internal preparations for delivering the national short-term let registration scheme once activated.
 - Investigate whether properties exceeding 90 nights create a material change of use.
 - Write to Ministers and local MPs urging the early introduction of Use Class C5 into the national planning framework to strengthen local control and further request that BCP Council be considered for inclusion in any government-led pilot -schemes regarding the management and regulation of short term lets, with appropriate funding mechanisms
 - As part of overall work on short term lets as through the motion, gather data that would support an Article 4 direction in the future.
 - Encourage best-practice standards for short-term lets and to use the development of a new Local Plan to establish policies that will strengthen monitoring and enforcement of short-term lets advertised on Airbnb and similar platforms
5. **Promote Responsible Hosting and Sustainable Tourism**
- Encourage best-practice standards for short-term let hosts, including clear guest guidance, effective waste management, complaint handling and environmentally responsible operation.
 - Work with the hospitality sector, rental market partners and business improvement districts to ensure fair competition and support a sustainable year-round visitor economy.
 - Recognise that properly regulated short-term lets can support tourism without undermining residential areas or the hospitality sector.
 - Ensure the Council uses all existing legal and regulatory powers available to support the balanced and sustainable use of homes.
 - Ask that the Leader to invite MP's, stakeholders and the appropriate government minister to a round table discussion, so that government can understand the issue in more depth and how that is affecting residents and businesses in the BCP area and identify solutions.

Voting: Unanimous

112. Questions from Councillors

Question from Councillor Patrick Canavan

Can the Leader confirm whether BCP Council will be making a formal response to the current consultation on the proposals from the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service?

Could she also confirm that this response will include highlighting concerns about the impact on frontline fire cover, the modelling used to justify the proposed reductions and the potential impact on areas of open heathland and on communities like Hamworthy? Will BCP Council also encourage the Fire Authority to consider alternative proposals that avoid station closures?

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Millie Earl

Thank you for your question and for raising these concerns.

BCP Council has given a response to the current consultation on the proposals from the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service. This has been drafted by officers from services including communities, emergency planning and environment to reflect operational matters relating to the proposed changes.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Patrick Canavan

Could I just request from the Leader that that is circulated please.

Question from Councillor Joe Salmon

As you will recall, Full Council originally considered a motion which set out a strong local role in supporting schools and developing a conurbation-wide approach to reducing the harms associated with smartphone use.

That original motion was subsequently amended by yourself and significantly narrowed before being passed without dissent.

Over a year has now passed since Council agreed the amended motion. However, there has been no visible progress reported to Members on:

- Correspondence to Government
- Engagement with schools
- Discussion at Headteachers' Breakfast
- Input from the Youth Parliament
- Any movement towards a consistent local policy

In practical terms, the situation in our schools appears unchanged. Mobile phone use continues to be widespread and the harms we collectively recognised at the time of debate remain present.

Given this lack of progress, it is reasonable to ask whether the decision to water down the original motion reflected a reluctance or inability on the part of the administration to meaningfully engage with this issue.

I would therefore welcome a written update setting out:

- What concrete actions have been taken to implement the motion as passed

- What outcomes have resulted from those actions
- What engagement has taken place with schools and young people
- Whether any work is underway towards a consistent local approach and what the timescale of this work is

Full Council resolutions should translate into real-world action. Where they do not, it is important that Members and the public understand why they have been failed in this way.

I look forward to your response.

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Education and Skills, Councillor Richard Burton

Thank you for your question, Cllr Salmon

I prepared this answer for the adjourned council meeting. Since then, there have been some further developments, and I will add these to the end of my answer.

Time was allocated to the topic of smart phone use in the Head Teacher Briefing on 17th October. At this our Director of Public Health presented, as did a representative supporting smartphone free childhood. Slides were also shared with all Head Teachers in the weekly Education Bulletin following that briefing.

Furthermore, the leader of the council wrote to all Head Teachers in the autumn term regarding the review of their policies in line with their school or trust review timescales. The letter was carefully timed to be at the best time to make the biggest difference.

The DfE updated their guidance to schools on 19th February. This has been shared with schools so that they can ensure that their policies are in line with this guidance, which indicates that all schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default.

Quoting from the document, it says that: “This publication provides guidance to individual schools and trusts on how to implement a policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones throughout the school day, including during lessons, the time between lessons, breaktimes and lunchtime.”

It also says “All schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default; anything other than this should be by exception only.”

Lisa Linscott, the Director of Education and Skills, and I are attending the BCP Youth Forum on the 15th of April 2026 to gain their feedback on this issue. This will be key to understanding any next steps to be taken. We will then take this back to our Head Teachers to agree those next steps.

In the meantime, ongoing national research evidence on this complex issue is continuing to be noted so that we can ensure that any action we take is commensurate with national evidence and guidance.

In your question you state that mobile phone use continues to be widespread within schools. I would like to know where you are getting that data from. I have visited many schools, of all sorts in that time. I haven't

once seen any evidence of mobile phone usage within schools. No head teacher has raised this as an issue with me.

I did amend the motion to make it achievable and for it to receive wide support. Remember that most of our schools are academies. We cannot, nor should not instruct them on their policies. We can advise and help but the decisions are theirs. Council resolutions must be attainable to translate into achievable real-world action. We let members of the public down if we promise outcomes that are not achievable or beyond our control. In this case we also risk our relationship with schools which is vital.

As I said, since I prepared this answer, I attended the Youth Forum and listened to their discussions. I would highlight that the members of the forum had a real understanding of the issues and I was really impressed with the quality of discussion. The discussions included considerations of safety, educational use, social impact, and policy consistency across schools.

There were lots of Concerns about smartphone misuse: Many expressed negative experiences with smartphones in schools, such as inappropriate recordings and misuse, They generally liked the idea of restrictions or bans especially for younger students but acknowledged the need for phones for safety reasons. They gave examples of educational and practical benefits: Like smartphones supporting accessing coursework, bus tickets, medication tracking, and school communication apps, which make them valuable tools despite potential distractions and misuse. They talked about Challenges with alternative solutions: They said that suggestions like using “brick phones” are hindered by modern app incompatibility and financial burdens, (having to own two phones) limiting their effectiveness for safety and health needs. They also discussed social implications and policy consistency: They said that smartphones help maintain friendships and support networks outside school, especially for those struggling socially, but inconsistent school policies cause confusion. They did say that clear, consistent conurbation-wide policies and engagement with parents and students would be helpful.

I have fuller notes about the discussions that I would be happy to share with you, if they would be of interest.

One more point that you might be interested in is that I also visited the general manager of Morebuss to discuss some ward issues but used the opportunity to discuss the app related discount. The discount was offered after previous discussions with Cllr Vikki Slade. At the time they were experiencing problems with the previous card-based payment system but could offer this discount easily using the app. Morebus are now reassessing this in light of the new legislation and are planning to fix and reintroduce the loadable card system that should enable them to offer school student discount by another way.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Joe Salmon

Can you send me that in writing by email, and if you do and I reply to you by email could you then subsequently consider replying to me again by email rather than me having to ask another councillor question to get a

response, as this isn't probably the most effective use of the councillor questions slot in full council.

Question from Councillor Simon Bull

The benefits of using AI could have a great impact on how the council operates. Care and consideration should be taken at each step as this fairly untested technology is adopted, there are challenges and concerns. Can some reassurance be given that known issues with using AI which include along with others; oversimplification, over generalization, the flattening of cultural perspectives, the potential for reinforcing bias, and systemic racism will be addressed as the use of AI is implemented within the council?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Resources and Governance, Councillor Jeff Hanna

I would like to thank Cllr Bull for raising the issue.

At BCP Council, we are very clear that artificial intelligence must be used carefully, ethically and responsibly, and that it must support, not replace, human judgement, particularly where decisions affect residents.

For that reason, we are not adopting AI in an uncontrolled or experimental way. We have put in place a formal AI governance and risk management framework, which requires any type of proposed use of AI to be first assessed for desirability, viability and feasibility, including ethical, equality and bias considerations, before it can proceed.

In relation to the risks highlighted:

- Oversimplification and over-generalisation

AI tools are not permitted to make automated decisions on behalf of the council. Human oversight is a core requirement, and professional judgement always remains accountable. AI is used to assist staff, not to replace decision-making.

- Bias, discrimination and systemic racism

All AI use cases must consider the risk of bias explicitly. This includes requirements for transparency, testing, and where appropriate the completion of Equality Impact Assessments before deployment. The governance framework is designed to identify and mitigate algorithmic bias and unintended harm, rather than assume technology is neutral.

- Flattening of cultural perspectives and loss of context

AI outputs must always be reviewed and contextualised by staff. In sensitive areas such as social care, housing or SEND, guidance makes clear that AI must align with principles of dignity, respect, choice and control, and must not undermine person-centred practice.

In addition, BCP Council has established clear rules on which AI tools can be used, with strong controls around data protection, security and transparency. At present, Microsoft Copilot is the only approved generative AI tool for council use, because it ensures council data remains secure and is not used to train external models.

We are also putting in place corporate oversight through an AI Governance Board, which provides strategic assurance, scrutiny and accountability over all AI activity across the council, including monitoring impact and responding to issues if they arise.

Finally, this is not a static position. AI technology is evolving quickly, and so is the council's governance. Our approach is deliberately principles-based rather than tool-based, allowing us to adapt while maintaining clear ethical boundaries, transparency and public trust.

All of the above has been shared with and discussed by the Council's Digital Working Group, which meets regularly, and which all members of the Council are welcome to attend. The next meeting of the group is on Wednesday of next week, and it will include presentations on the Council's use of AI.

In responding, may I express appreciation to our IT staff, not least the Director, for the care and thoughtfulness they have applied to what is by no means a straightforward issue.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Simon Bull

While we are trialling AI will residents be given the option to opt out of having it used in their individual cases?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Resources and Governance, Councillor Jeff Hanna

I am happy to answer the question as well as I can, but I am not aware that that has been built into the system, I am not sure that it would be straightforward to build that into the system given the types of AI use that are being introduced, and I am not quite sure of the need for that.

Question from Councillor Sara Armstrong

This week I learnt about the ongoing situation of another young resident in my ward who has been waiting several months for a secondary specialist school place.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice, local authorities have a legal duty to secure the provision set out in an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and to ensure that every child receives a suitable education. Luke has been out of school now for almost 4 months and it's only been in the last week that alternative provision has been provided.

Can the PH explain what steps the council is taking to address the shortage of SEND school places, particularly for children with high SEND needs who are unable to attend mainstream settings or a satellite provision, what timely support is being provided to children who are currently out of school, and how the rights of these children and their families are being upheld when statutory duties are not being met?

Whilst I appreciate that a new SEND school will be opening at the Parkfield School site - what about those children who are still out of school and have been for several months and cannot wait till August 2027?

I'd also like a response regarding the ongoing absence of specialist holiday provision for children and young people with an EHCP who have specific needs that are not being met and are therefore missing out on the benefits and opportunities available to other children holiday provision can provide?

Many SEND children cannot attend group activities, noise is a huge trigger for them so the SEND local offer offers them no provision in the holidays as it cannot cater for their needs.

A more bespoke package is required, and several parents have asked me and the PH in the past about this. They have been told no package exists and that BCP cannot provide funding for this. There are free breakfast clubs and wraparound care in mainstream schools but why are the SEND children with more complex needs being forgotten about?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Education and Skills, Councillor Richard Burton

Thank you, Councillor Armstrong, for raising this matter.

I want to begin by being clear that the council takes its statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice extremely seriously. We recognise the significant impact on children and families when suitable education is not in place, and we do not consider it acceptable for children to be without education for extended periods.

SEND sufficiency and specialist places

The core challenge we face is a longstanding national shortage of specialist SEND provision, particularly for children with high and complex needs. That context does not remove our responsibility locally, and addressing this is one of my key priorities as Portfolio Holder.

The council is actively **building SEND sufficiency**, including:

- Expanding specialist provision locally
- Increasing capacity within existing special schools and specialist units
- Developing new specialist school places, including the planned school at the Parkfield site

This work is being taken forward through our **SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan**, which has a clear focus on reducing the number of children waiting for places and minimising time out of education.

However, I fully recognise that new schools alone do not help children who are out of education **now**, and we are not asking families to simply wait until 2027.

Support for children currently out of school

Where a child cannot attend school, the council has a legal duty under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to secure suitable education.

Alongside our longer-term sufficiency work, we are strengthening our **interim arrangements**, including:

- More timely identification of children who are out of school
- Putting alternative or bespoke provision in place more quickly
- Reviewing provision where it is not meeting the child's needs

We accept that this has not always happened as consistently or as quickly as families expect, and improving this is a priority area within our improvement programme.

Communication with families

I also want to acknowledge that communication with families who are waiting for placements must improve.

As Portfolio Holder, I have been clear that families should not feel left in uncertainty. Work is underway to:

- Improve the clarity and frequency of updates to families
- Ensure parents understand what support is in place while they are waiting
- Strengthen escalation routes where provision is delayed or not working

This is about being honest, transparent and supportive during what is often a very difficult time for families.

Holiday provision and short breaks

Turning to holiday provision, it is important to say that many children and young people with SEND do currently access holiday activities, including through our Holiday Activities and Food programme.

However, I fully recognise that group-based provision does not meet the needs of all children, particularly those with more complex or sensory needs.

That is why, as part of our SEND and AP Improvement Plan, we have a specific focus on the development of our Short Breaks offer. This work is intended to:

- Broaden the range of support available to families
- Improve access to more flexible and bespoke provision
- Ensure holiday and short-break support better reflects the diversity of SEND needs

This is about strengthening the system so that families are not left without suitable options.

Closing

In closing, I want to be clear that I do not underestimate the seriousness of the issues raised.

We know there are children and families experiencing unacceptable waits, and we are taking action to:

- Increase specialist capacity
- Improve interim education arrangements
- Strengthen communication with families
- Develop more inclusive and responsive short-break provision

This work is ongoing, and I will continue to provide oversight and challenge to ensure progress is made.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Sara Armstrong

Than you for that answer, I just want to draw attention as well to the number of families that are going through complaints processes at the moment, and are having to use the complaints process to advocate for the needs of their children, and that many families are just simply not in a position to afford to get legal advice, again to support them through that process. So my final point also is please can I have a written response in terms of what you have just said so that I can share that with the young person and their family.

Question from Councillor Simon Bull

Plant Based: Recommendations from the Environment and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the Plant-based and reduced meat and dairy diets: draft position statement and action plan were presented at Cabinet on 26th November 2025. A number of the recommendations included implementation dates in February this year. These actions include: Meetings on Council premises to provide at least one vegan option for all food and drink types, Re-tendered food contracts to include plant-based options, Promotional and retail guidance on plant-based diets developed and shared, and Publish online text to promote the benefits of plant-based diets. As it is now March, I ask what progress has been made on this?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations, Councillor Richard Herrett

Thanks, Cllr Bull, for your question

Our teams have been working in this area and as it is now May, we have even more to report.

To take you through the actions. Of the 11 items that came from the recommendation, the following are in response, I have not listed each item but tried to summarise the point in the answer.

- 1- Formal catered meetings on council premises had been providing this option in most circumstances already, but definitively since February 2026.
- 2- The first occurrence is expected in the autumn, material has already been shared and will be shared again, we are not in control of the curriculum.
- 3- Commercial services are already meeting the 25% target across food outlets, I believe at 36% in general, there are some minor individual exceptions being worked through. Menus in the future will

be labelled as plant based and meat free rather than Vegetarian or Vegan.

- 4- Procurement are writing plant-based options into future contracts.
- 5- including re-tendered contracts.
- 6- Promotional material has been written and shared.
- 7- A scoping exercise has been completed, would be happy to share.
- 8- A survey has been completed with 500 respondents which is around 10% of staff. Awaiting a decision.
- 9- 20 champions have signed up, inaugural meeting is next month.
- 10-Our web pages have been updated to promote the benefits of plant based diets, the link is in the notes, but I'm not reading it out.

<https://www.bcpccouncil.gov.uk/environment/protecting-the-environment/sustainability-and-carbon-reduction/how-you-can-help-tackle-climate-change>

There is an annual review scheduled in August.

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

The Chief Executive advised Council that he had taken one urgent decision in relation to an adjudication matter following a confidential report which was received by Cabinet on 26 March 2026 and which all Group Leaders had been briefed.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

CHAIRMAN