# CABINET

| Report subject | **BCP Growth Plan** |
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| Meeting date | 22nd July 2026 |
| Status | Public Report |
| Executive summary | This Local Growth Plan (2026-36) sets out the shared ambition of BCP Council and the Business Growth Board who have been engaged in its development. It includes a shared aim and the associated priorities and interventions required to build a strong economy, with thriving people in a vibrant and connected place for our residents, businesses and visitors.<br><br>The plan outlines a vision for growth across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, supported by defined priorities and action plans. It strengthens readiness for devolution by demonstrating ambition, governance and the ability to deliver outcomes.<br><br>As devolution progresses, the Growth Plan will guide investment, shape partnerships and ensure BCP is well placed to maximise emerging opportunities. Delivering this ambition will require strong collaboration and sustained investment between local government, the private sector, investors, education and training providers, community and voluntary organisations, and our residents.<br>This Growth Plan is therefore both a commitment and an invitation: a commitment to fostering the conditions for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and an invitation for partners to collaborate with us to realise this shared ambition.<br>BCP Business Growth Board will help to articulate and drive forward the local economic priorities and the growth agenda for Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole, through endorsing, co-ordinating and performance managing the new BCP Local Growth Plan. |
| **Recommendations** | **It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet recommends to council that;**<br><br>**a) The BCP Local Growth Plan be adopted.**<br>**b) The expected Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership capital and revenue funding be allocated to support delivery of the BCP Growth Plan priorities.**<br>**c) The Director of Investment & Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Destination,** |

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| | **Leisure and Commercial Operations be delegated authority to work alongside the BCP Business Growth Board and partners to support delivery of the Local Growth Plan interventions.** |
| Reason for recommendations | The BCP Local Growth Plan will support the delivery of our Corporate Strategy Ambitions:<br>Our place and environment - Vibrant places where people and nature flourish, with a thriving economy in a healthy, natural environment.<br>Our people and communities - Everyone leads a fulfilled life, maximising opportunity for all.<br>The BCP Local Growth Plan also underpins the Council's vision: "Where people, nature, coast and towns come together in sustainable, safe and healthy communities to prosper and promote a sense of place." |

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| Portfolio Holder(s): | Councillor Rich Herrett, Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations.<br>Councillor Millie Earl, Leader of the Council |
| Corporate Director | Glynn Barton, Chief Operations Officer |
| Report Authors | Amy Orchard – Economic Development Officer, Inward Investment<br>Ruth Spencer – Head of Smart Place & Economic Development |
| Wards | Council-wide |
| Classification | ***For Recommendation*** |

## Background

1. The BCP Growth Plan provided in appendix 1, is a 10-year strategic plan which is being developed at a time when the Government is giving more powers to local areas through devolution. To benefit from this, places like Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole need to show they are ready, well organised, and have a strong economic vision.

2. The BCP Growth Plan helps do this by setting out clear priorities for how the area should grow and how this will be delivered. It will guide investment, support partnerships, and ensure Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole is well placed to take advantage of new opportunities.

3. Whilst the BCP Growth Plans defines the ambition of Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole, it interlinks existing strategic priorities such as the Housing Strategy (2021-2027), the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2025) and the Draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) (2026-2041).

4. The emerging BCP Local Plan will allocate land for housing, employment, and infrastructure to support that growth and work will begin later in 2026 on a Spatial Development Strategy to align this across the wider proposed devolved area.

5. The BCP Local Growth Plan compliments the Local Plan and the Spatial Development Strategy. Together they ensure that strategic ambitions, local planning policy and economic priorities align to support sustainable and coherent growth.

6. The BCP Growth Plan also aligns with the UK Government's Modern Industrial Strategy that sets out a priority mission to deliver strong, secure and sustainable economic growth to boost living standards.

7. The BCP Growth Plan sets the scene for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole's economy and place with both opportunity and constraints:

   a) A large student population.
   b) Low graduate retention
   c) Significant 60+ and ageing population
   d) Since 1991, the population grew by 23%, however the 50 to 64 age group expanded at double this rate.
   e) The workforce has marginally less workers than the highest levels of qualifications than regional and national averages.
   f) Wide disparities in deprivation – small pockets of severe town centre related deprivation adjacent to affluent areas.
   g) Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole have a significant and persistent productivity gap with the national average (approximately £7,000 behind by 2023)
   h) 88% of the workforce in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole are also residents.
   i) 98% of residents work with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, Dorset, Hampshire, Southampton and Wiltshire.
   j) House prices to earnings ratio is significantly above the level in the South West and England.
   k) Economic activity rates have been overall improving despite a dip in 2024.
   l) Health related economic inactivity has been worsening dramatically since 2013.
   m) Only two sectors are specialised and high growth: Human Health & Social Care work and Accommodation & Food Service.
   n) Financial Services and Insurance is highly specialised but has struggled to grow over the past 10 years.
   o) Quantity of vacated floorspace to occupied floor space has been unstable.

8. The BCP Growth Plan aim is for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole to become a better connected, sustainable, productive and inclusive economy, supporting good jobs, skilled people, homes for all and a quality of life shared across communities by 2036. It also supports the Council's overall vision to create safe, healthy and sustainable communities where people and places thrive.

9. Getting this right will mean:

   a) More and better jobs, underpinned by improved skills, progression opportunities and higher wages, enabling residents to access quality employment across priority sectors and places.

b) Increased inward investment, including public and private funding, business investment and strategic partnerships, supporting innovation, business growth and the delivery of priority programmes and projects.
c) Higher productivity and economic output, reflected in sustained growth in Gross Value Added (GVA) through a more competitive, innovative and resilient local economy.
d) Improved quality of life across communities, with growth contributing to improved health and wellbeing; reduced deprivation and the narrower disparities in levels of deprivation recorded across areas of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole; and increased economic activity.

10. It focuses on four key themes:
    a) A strong economy – helping businesses grow and create good jobs.
    b) Thriving people – making sure residents have the skills, support and health they need to work.
    c) A vibrant place – ensuring our towns are attractive, with good housing and facilities.
    d) Connected places – improving transport, digital links and infrastructure.

11. A BCP Business Growth Board was set up in 2025 to focus on addressing the key challenges and opportunities impacting the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole economy and this remit included co-ordinating the creation of the BCP Growth Plan and metrics to measure its success; increase in jobs, regional GVA and Inward investment (public & private sector).
    They have been vital in ensuring that the Growth Plan translates both the national and emerging regional industrial strategy priorities into a delivery plan that works for the local economy, focusing on the areas key sectors, skills, and strengths.
12. The Business Growth Board includes representatives from; Universities, BCP Council, Tourism & Hospitality, Port of Poole & Poole Harbour, Advanced Manufacturing and Defence, Digital & Technologies, Business Improvement Districts, Voluntary Sector, Cultural Sector, Dorset Chamber of Commerce & Professional and Business Services, Financial Services, Retail, Health & Life Sciences, Key development sites , Federation of Small Business & Professional and Business Services, Skills sector, Nighttime Economy & Events, Clean Energy Industries, Creative Industries and Bournemouth Airport.
13. The BCP Growth Plan has been shaped through extensive stakeholder engagement working closely with local partners, including businesses, education providers and community organisations through nine Business Growth Board led sector workshops to understand what the current ambition/strategy for growth and investment priorities were. This was followed by visioning surveys, two online themes & priorities workshops and fifteen feedback sessions to discuss the interventions with stakeholders.
14. The result of the engagement is a clear set of robust interventions to support businesses and attract investment, help people gain skills and find work, deliver more homes, improve our towns, improve transport, energy and digital connections.
15. The success will be measured against the metrics agreed by the BCP Business Growth Board: Increase in jobs, regional GVA and Inward investment (public &

private sector). Success would also see improved wellbeing, reduced deprivation, talent attraction and retention increased footfall and a reduction vacancy rate on our high streets.

16. The Business Growth Board will lead on delivering this work with the support of BCP Council to set the priorities, coordinate investments and track the progress. This joined-up approach will help ensure the plan is delivered effectively and makes a real difference and will help ensure that growth is fair, sustainable and felt by everyone across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

17. On 29 October Cabinet ratified the decision to transfer and accept Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership funds and agreed to ringfence these funds for the benefit of the community. It is expected that £866,951.68 revenue, £2,498,208 capital and £1,275,000 capital loan repayments from the closure of the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership will be received shortly by BCP Council (Interest continues to be applied until the payment is made to BCP. The figures here include interest up to 31st March 2025).

18. The key outcomes and proposed interventions of the Growth Plan are in line with the Dissolution Agreement (set out in Legal Implications) therefore it is recommended that the funding is allocated to support delivery of the BCP Growth Plan interventions.

19. The Business Growth Board are keen to ensure growth is sustainable and agreed to register to hosts screenings of the People's Emergency Briefing to their staff.

20. To ensure growth is fair and felt by everyone across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole we are keen to host public engagement sessions where residents can drop in at accessible venues such as libraries and discuss the Growth Plan and what the interventions and actions mean to them.

**Options Appraisal**

21. Adopt the BCP Growth Plan to provide an understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, and the ambition of the Council and its partners to shape growth that is resilient, inclusive and place-based. BCP Local Growth Plan will influence a Wessex Local Growth Plan as the interventions included have been measured on their impact, deliverability and strategic fit; and provide a clear rationale that can support future funding bids, partnership working and devolution discussions.

22. Do not adopt the BCP Growth Plan and allow the current Economic Development Strategy (2022 – 2026) to end without a replacement plan. There would no clear, agreed framework guiding our economic priorities. Many national and regional funding streams (e.g. UK Shared Prosperity Fund replacement programmes, Levelling Up-type funds, investment partnerships) require clear strategic justification and evidence of pipeline projects aligned to growth objectives. Without a plan, BCP risks being less competitive in funding bids and missing out on external investment opportunities. It will become harder to align our economic development with the corporate priorities, any local plan objectives, and regeneration programmes.

**Summary of financial implications**

23. The delivery of any of the interventions included within the BCP Local Growth Plan will require its own individual options appraisals, their own business plans, along with securing funding for their delivery.
    Any proposed contribution from the council would be subject to BCP Council financial regulations.

**Summary of legal implications**

24. The Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (DLEP) funding resulting from the closure of the DLEP was agreed to be accepted at 29 October Cabinet alongside the agreement to ringfence funds for the benefit of the community and to delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations to allocate funding in consultation with the BCP Growth Board. Since 29 October 2025 Cabinet, a Dissolution Agreement has been drawn up and agreed by Officers and sets out the purpose of the dissolution payment, the dissolution payment and the use of the dissolution payment. It is awaiting signature of the Leader of Dorset Council as the Accountable Body and Leader of BCP Council, and the fund transfer will take place.

25. The Dissolution Agreement states it, 'must be applied solely for the benefit of the Community and in a manner consistent with the Company's [Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership] asset-lock obligations under the CIC Regulations 2005.' The definition of 'Community' in the Dissolution Agreement is, 'the people and enterprises within the administrative areas of Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council who are intended to benefit from activities that drive economic and employment growth, improve productivity and skills, and foster innovation and sustainable infrastructure consistent with the Company's stated objectives.'

**Summary of human resources implications**

26. The Economic Development team is the only resource available to monitor, support delivery and establish initiatives to attract existing and new developers or work with key industries, culture and investors to facilitate, implement and deliver the growth-enabling projects of the BCP Local Growth Plan. Funding is only in place until March 2027 however the Growth Plan extends beyond this to 2036 so there is a risk that without an Economic Development Officer, Inward Investment and an Economic Development Officer, Growth the BCP Growth Plan will not be delivered.

**Summary of sustainability impact**

27. With the Growth Plan aim for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole to become a better-connected, sustainable, productive and inclusive economy, supporting good jobs, skilled people, homes for all and a quality of life shared across communities by 2036.

28. Following the Local Area Energy Plan there is a golden thread of sustainability running through all themes with low-carbon energy, sustainable transport, green skills, environmentally conscious development interventions delivering cleaner growth, better-connected places, skilled people, and a more resilient, sustainable local economy.

**Summary of public health implications**

29. The ambition of the BCP Growth Plan has a clear intent to deliver inclusive growth that improves opportunity, wellbeing and quality of life for residents. The plan rightly recognises the links between economic participation, skills, inclusion and health, including the relationship between poor health and economic inactivity.

30. The Growth Plan recognises that a successful and growing economy needs a workforce that is skilled, motivated and in good health with agile skills and learning system that responds to the needs of employers and growth sectors while also providing support to residents to move towards employment.
Interventions support the Get Dorset & BCP Working Plan and the Dorset Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) both provide a strong shared evidence base, highlighting both the structural skills challenges facing the area and the opportunities to align people, provision and growth sectors more effectively.

**Summary of equality implications**

31. (a) Through a Equality Impact Assessment we will have established a broad and cross cutting ideas for investment priorities to include within the Growth Plan which will enable BCP Council and BCP Growth Board to seek investment from both public and private sector to improve the lives of residents to include Increased jobs (skills, jobs and better paid jobs), productivity, quality of life, happiness, well-being and reduced deprivation.

**Summary of risk assessment**

32. Delivery risk: The Local Growth Plan sets out an ambition and shared narrative of priority projects that will support growth. Some of these priority projects are currently unfunded so delivery will depend on partners working collaboratively to identify and win external funding and deliver projects together that will support the delivery of the agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set by the Growth Board.

33. Delivery risk: As emphasised under the HR implications, funding is only in place until March 2027 however the Growth Plan extends beyond this to 2036 so there is a risk that without an Economic Development Officer, Inward Investment and an Economic Development Officer, Growth to support the BCP Business Growth Board, the BCP Growth Plan will not be delivered.

**Background papers**

None

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 - BCP Growth Plan

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment BCP Growth Plan

Appendix 3 – Strategies reviewed as part of the BCP Growth Plan process.

Appendix 4 – Stakeholder engagement as part of the BCP Growth Plan process