

Minutes of the **SPECIAL MEETING** of the Council held
at the Town Hall, Swanage on **MONDAY, 12th JANUARY**
2026 at **7.00 p.m.**

PRESENT:- Councillor M. Bonfield (Mayor) – Chairman.

Councillor J. Bishop
Councillor P. Burridge
Councillor M. Coward
Councillor J. Dorrington
Councillor T. Foster
Councillor J. Lejeune
Councillor C. Moreton
Councillor G. Suttle
Councillor C. Sutton
Councillor C. Tomes
Councillor S. Vile

Also in attendance:-

Dr M. Ayres – Town Clerk/RFO
Mr C. Milmer – Visitor Services & Business Development Manager
Ms G. Percival – Assets & Compliance Manager
Miss A. Spencer – Finance Manager

In addition to Members of the Council and officers, one member of the local press attended the Meeting.

154. **Apologies**

There were no apologies to report.

155. **Declarations of Interest**

Members were invited to declare their interests and consider any requests for Grants of Dispensations in accordance with Section 9 and Appendix B of the Council's Code of Conduct.

Agenda Item No. 4 (a) – Councillor Bonfield declared a non-pecuniary interest in the scale of charges under the Code of Conduct by reason of being employed as a taxi driver and hiring a grid space in the boat park.

Agenda Item No. 4 (a) – Councillor Tomes declared a non-pecuniary interest in the scale of charges under the Code of Conduct by reason of close family members being private beach hut site licensees.

Consideration was given to applications received from two newly elected Town Councillors, for a Grant of Dispensation until May 2029 in respect of setting the Council Tax Precept. It was explained that the dispensation was being sought as Councillors may have a disclosable pecuniary interest under the Code of Conduct by reason of being residents of properties in Swanage, and if that was determined to be the case the dispensation would be required to enable them to participate in any decisions made regarding this matter. It was noted that this dispensation had been previously granted to nine other Councillors resident in Swanage.

It was proposed by Councillor Vile, seconded by Councillor Sutton and
RESOLVED:-

That a dispensation be granted to Councillors Bishop and Burridge to participate in the setting of the Town Council's precept, such dispensation to be valid until May 2029.

156. **Minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee, 17th December 2025**

Proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Foster and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the Minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee Meeting held on 17th December 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed.

Consideration was given to the following recommendation contained in the Minutes:-

6) IT Policy – Draft for Consideration

It was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Moreton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the Town Council adopts the draft IT Policy.

It was noted that all other recommendations would be dealt with under Minute No's 157, 158 and 159.

157. **Estimates 2026/27**

(a) **Scale of Fees and Charges**

Further to the recommendation made by the Finance & Governance Committee at its meeting held on 17th December 2025, contained in Minute No. 5 (a) i, Members considered the Scale of Fees & Charges for the 2026/27 financial year, Appendix G to the Budget Report 2026/27. Given councillor declarations under Minute No. 155 above, these were considered in three instalments.

It was proposed by Councillor Lejeune seconded by Councillor Coward and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Scale of Fees and Charges for 2026/27, excluding the fees for Taxi Permits, Boat Park Fees and Private Site Licence fees, be approved and adopted.

Further to his declaration of interest the Chairman left the meeting. As Deputy Chairman, Councillor Tomes assumed the chair.

It was proposed by Councillor Sutton seconded by Councillor Dorrington and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Scale of Fees and Charges for 2026/27, in respect of the annual taxi permits and boat park charges be approved and adopted.

Councillor Bonfield re-entered the meeting and assumed the chair.

Further to his declaration of interest Councillor Tomes left the meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Foster seconded by Councillor Burridge and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Scale of Fees and Charges for 2026/27, in
respect of the Private Sites licence fee be approved and
adopted.

Councillor Tomes re-entered the meeting.

(b) **Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Precept**

The Town Clerk introduced the Budget Report 2026/27, stating that it was the culmination of the work of task and finish groups, committee meetings and a councillor workshop that had been held over the last four months. Attention was drawn to the council's proposed contributions to third parties contained within the draft budget, giving budget approval for the continuation of funding for the crossing patrol at Swanage Primary School, an increase in grant funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau and continuation of an annual grant of £5,250 per annum to the Swanage & Herston Football Club until resolution of an ongoing rent review with Vodafone.

It was noted that a preliminary budget report had been received and reviewed by the Finance & Governance Committee on 17th December 2025, and its recommendations had been incorporated into the final budget report. These primarily related to movements on reserves, specifically an increased appropriation from the general reserve to the Green Seafront Scheme reserve and an allocation of funding for the scheme from the Asset Management Plan Reserve in 2028/29.

It was reported that the tax base for 2026/27 had increased by 4.72% from 2025/26 as a result of both the second homes premium and new housing development. The degree of uncertainty that underlies the tax base calculation in the medium to long term was highlighted. The proposed budget included a precept of £1,159,000 for 2026/27, an increase of £74,000 on the current year. It was noted that this would result in an increase of 2.01% / £3.79 on a Band D property.

Members considered the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2026/27, the financial projections for the next three financial years and the level of precept to levy for 2026/27, given the need to maintain an adequate level of reserves. Further to the recommendations made by the Finance & Governance Committee at its meeting held on 17th December 2025, contained within Minute Nos 5 (a) ii, iii and iv, it was proposed by Councillor Coward, seconded by Councillor Bishop and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Council approves and adopts the Budget Report 2026/27, incorporating estimates for revenue and capital expenditure and contributions to reserves, with the precept to be levied at £1,159,000 for the 2026/27 financial year, equivalent to a Band D bill of £192.64, an increase of 2.01% / £3.79 on the current year's charge.

158. **Reserves Policy**

The Finance Manager presented the revised Reserves Policy and drew attention to the principal changes made to the document since last year, being the merger of two reserves that had been held for King Georges Field and the introduction of a Grants Reserve.

Further to the recommendation contained in Minute No. 5 (b) of the Finance & Governance Committee Meeting held on 17th December 2025, it was proposed by Councillor Sutton seconded by Councillor Foster and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the revised Reserves Policy be approved and adopted.

159. **Treasury Management and Investment Strategy Statement 2026/27**

Further to the recommendation contained in Minute No. 5 (c) of the Finance & Governance Committee Meeting held on 17th December 2025, Members considered the contents of the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy Statement 2026/27. It was proposed by Councillor Bishop seconded by Councillor Dorrington and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy Statement 2026/27 be approved and adopted.

160. **Items of Information and Matters for Forthcoming Agendas**

In light of the likely inclusion of an item on the agenda for the next Council meeting to be held on 26th January 2026 concerning the publication of the Dorset Coast Forum Engagement Report regarding Shore Road Options, and given the probable high level of public interest in the matter, the Town Clerk asked Members if they would like to consider moving the meeting to an alternative venue to accommodate a larger attendance. Given recent concerns regarding the personal safety of Members and Officers, Members' preferred option was that the meeting should be held at the Town Hall as scheduled.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Coward and AGREED:-

That, under Standing Order No. 1 c), in the public interest, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted under agenda item 8 for reasons of legal and commercial confidentiality.

161. **Boundary Wall at Marsh Way/Victoria Terrace**

(a) **Consideration of next steps following receipt of legal advice**

Further to Minute No. 90 (b) of the Council Meeting held on 15th September 2025 and Minute No. 151 (b) of the Council Meeting held on 15th December 2025, Members considered a briefing note outlining counsel's opinion regarding liability for maintenance of the boundary wall. In light of the advice received it was agreed that officers should meet with the property owner to continue negotiations. It was proposed by Councillor Lejeune seconded by Councillor Foster and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That the Council's solicitor be instructed to compose a letter summarising the legal advice received to be shared with the adjoining property owner to inform ongoing negotiations.

(b) **Procurement of specialist advice from structural engineer**

Further to Minute No. 151 (b) of the Council Meeting held on 15th December 2025, Members considered quotes for structural engineering services, assessed by Crickmay Stark Architects. It was noted that two quotes had been received and that under Financial Regulation 11.1 b., the procurement of specialist services is exempt from the requirement to

obtain three quotes. Members reiterated the Council's position that any agreement to engage these professional services would not represent an admission of liability for undertaking the repair works, which was the subject of ongoing discussions with the adjoining property owner.

Following a discussion, during which consideration was given to the different methodologies that could be deployed to assess the foundations to the wall, it was proposed by Councillor Sutton seconded by Councillor Vile and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:-

That Dencher Consulting Engineers be appointed to provide structural engineering services, up to a maximum of £4,500.

The meeting closed at 7.35 p.m.
