

Minutes of the **FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**
held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY**
12th NOVEMBER 2025 at 11.00 a.m.

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

Councillor T. Foster
Councillor C. Moreton
Councillor C. Sutton
Councillor C. Tomes
Councillor S. Vile

Also in attendance: -

Councillor J. Bishop (from 11.45 a.m.)

Dr M. Ayres	Town Clerk
Mr C. Milmer	Visitor Services and Business Development Manager
Ms G. Percival	Assets and Compliance Manager
Miss A. Spencer	Finance Manager
Mr C. Squires	Project Delivery Officer

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for his inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillor Suttle.

2. **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.

There were no declarations to record on this occasion.

3. **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CAPITAL
PROJECTS SUB-COMMITTEE HELD 15TH SEPTEMBER 2025 AND
CONSIDER ANY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Consideration was given to the following recommendation made by the Capital Projects Sub-Committee to the Finance & Governance Committee. It was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Foster, and AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: -

**7. Bridge Inspection – King George V Playing Field & Queen Elizabeth II
(Forres) Field**

That a contract be entered into with Suttle Projects Ltd to undertake condition assessments of the two bridges from Main Beach car park onto the King George V Playing Field plus a condition report on the Victoria Ave – Forres bridge for the sum of £998.50, noting that the balance of the budget allocation of £4,001.50 would no longer be required for this purpose in the current financial year.

4. **INTERNAL AUDIT 2025/26**

(a) Strategic Audit Plan 2025/26

Consideration was given to the Strategic Audit Plan 2025/26 submitted by the Council's Internal Auditor. It was noted that all core testing was covered, plus additional testing on high value income streams that was Swanage Town Council specific. It was further noted that, following discussion with the Town Clerk and Finance Manager, additional testing of the Boat Park and leases had also been included. It was recorded that 11.22 days had been programmed for the audit visits.

It was reported that the Internal Auditor would attend the committee meeting scheduled for February 2026. It was further noted that this was the last year of the current contract, and a tender process would be undertaken in Spring 2026. Members were asked to consider any additional testing in 2025/26 and the possibility of risk assessing the Council's IT Systems was raised. It was noted that this would not fall within the IA remit, although consideration could be given to an alternative review process to provide surety. Consideration was also given to Member training. It was proposed by Councillor Moreton, seconded by Councillor Sutton and **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That the Strategic Audit Plan 2025/26 be agreed and that a training session with regards to cyber security be arranged for Members.

(b) Internal Audit Report 2025/26 - Visit 1 of 6

The first interim Internal Audit Report of the 2025/26 financial year prepared by Darkin-Miller – Chartered Accountants was submitted for consideration.

The following areas had been reviewed during the audit visit:-

- Proper Bookkeeping
- Risk Management (minute review) - work in progress
- Exemption
- Transparency
- Public Rights
- Publication
- Boat Park

Members noted that 2 high and 8 medium priority recommendations had been made by the auditor, all relating to the Boat Park. The management response and implementation dates were noted.

It was noted that recommendation numbers 18.1, 18.4 and 18.5 were shown as to be considered by this committee. However, it was agreed that a report should be submitted to the Tourism and Local Economy Committee in March 2026 for its consideration. It was **AGREED:**

That the first Internal Audit Report for the 2025/26 financial year be accepted and that, in accordance with recommendation number 18.10, the charge for a Residents' launch fee be revised.

5. **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

(a) Income and Expenditure Account Q2 2025/26

Consideration was given to a report setting out the Council's financial position at the end of the first half of the financial year and forecast year-end position.

It was noted that at the end of Q2, net expenditure was £119k under budget, this having three main contributing factors: higher than anticipated income from Main

Beach car parking and investments, and lower than anticipated expenditure on employee costs.

The smaller projects being undertaken by the Council were detailed in Appendix A to the report. It was reported that TLE1: Payment Terminal Installation at the boat park was now unlikely to be carried forward. It was requested that the budget of £5,000 be reallocated for a storage facility at the boat park (£1,500) and repairs to the jetty (£2,700). It was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the budget of £5,000 for TLE1: Payment Terminal Installation be reallocated to provide a storage facility at the boat park and fund repairs to the jetty.

The possibility of including details of FOI requests in future reports, including the number and cost to the Council, was raised. It was noted that it was planned that a new page would be created on the Council's website on which all FOI requests received, and responses given, would be published.

Further to consideration by the Environment and Green Spaces Committee, it was proposed by Councillor Vile, seconded by Councillor Tomes and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That officers should take forward a tender for the supply of water and sewage services.

The possibility of establishing an earmarked reserve (EMR) for grants, which would hold underspends on budgeted grant expenditure, was raised. It was noted that this would be brought to the next meeting of the Finance & Governance Committee, at which the Reserves Policy would be reviewed.

Councillor Bishop entered the meeting.

The Budget Report and commentary on the Council's financial activity was received and noted.

(b) Treasury Management Outturn Report H1 2025/26

Members considered a Treasury Outturn Report for the first half of the financial year and noted the content. An average return of 4.37% had been realised on the council's investments in the first half of the financial year. It was noted that interest rates were starting to fall, with a further rate cut expected in December.

The Treasury Management Outturn Report H1 2025/26 was received and noted.

(c) Capital Programme Monitoring Report

A Capital Programme Monitoring Report for the first half of 2025/26 was submitted for information. The Assets and Compliance Manager reported that progress had been made in several projects, and the contents of the report were noted.

6. CORPORATE PLAN 2026-2030 – TO AGREE CONTENT OF CONSULTATION MATERIAL AND FORMAT OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Members considered a briefing note setting out the Council's draft Corporate Plan 2026-30 together with a communications and engagement plan to support consultation on its content. The following amendments to the draft plan were suggested:

- To make clear that the end paragraphs of the Swanage Now and in the Future section are taken from the Swanage Local Plan ‘vision for the town’;
- Within the partnership working section, to note the working together with key Dorset Council officers in regard to highway matters and Visit Dorset in matters relating to tourism and the Visit Swanage website;
- To include the National Trust in the list of partner organisations.

The revision of the term ‘Sustainable Tourism’ in the current plan to ‘Regenerative Tourism’ in the draft plan was discussed, with the distinction between the two terms being outlined by the Project Delivery Officer. Discussion also arose regarding accessible tourism. It was noted that ‘Blue Spaces’ would be discussed at the Tourism and Local Economy Committee meeting later in the day and that consideration to the incorporation of wording about this in the draft Corporate Plan could be proposed at the Town Council meeting at which the recommendation relating to the Corporate Plan is considered.

It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Sutton and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That the draft Corporate Plan 2026/30, with the above amendments, be approved for consultation.

Members discussed the communications and engagement plan. The importance of reaching as many households as possible was noted, and it was felt that this could best be achieved by the delivery of a paper copy of the consultation survey. The engagement process adopted by Lyme Regis Town Council, which had identified a sample of households to partake in consultations, was highlighted as being worthy of future consideration. It was proposed by Councillor Vile, seconded by Councillor Moreton and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

TO RECOMMEND:

That the Communications and Engagement Plan be adopted, and that authority be delegated to officers to make decisions regarding its implementation.

7. **IT POLICY – DRAFT FOR CONSIDERATION**

Members considered a briefing note and draft IT Policy. It was noted that due to changes to the SAPP Practitioners’ Guide, it was now a requirement to adopt an IT Policy, relating to Assertion 10 of the AGAR.

It was noted that the Council’s Staff Handbook contains an Internet and Social Media Policy, however, this did not apply to Members. Following further discussion, it was noted that more time was required in order to fully review the draft Policy document. It was proposed by Councillor Tomes, seconded by Councillor Foster and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the draft IT Policy be reviewed and amended prior to it being presented for adoption at the next meeting of the Finance & Governance Committee to be held in December 2025.

8. **ITEMS OF INFORMATION AND MATTERS FOR FORTHCOMING AGENDAS**

- Review of Social Media Policy** – To be presented to a future meeting.
- Archives – Digital Preservation of Town Council records** – The Town Clerk informed Members of a request from Dorset History Centre to pilot a digital record preservation project with Swanage Town Council. It was noted that this

was subject to a successful funding bid, the outcome of which would be known in spring 2026. Members agreed with the importance of preserving digital records and endorsed the piloting of the scheme.

- (c) **Finance Workshop** – Members stated that they had previously found the finance workshops useful and would like to attend one before the Finance & Governance Committee meeting on 17th December where the draft estimates for 2026/27 would be discussed. It was agreed that a member workshop would be arranged and a date would be circulated in due course.

9. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next scheduled meeting was noted as 17th December 2025.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 p.m.
