

Minutes of the Meeting of the **FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held at the Town Hall, Swanage on **WEDNESDAY, 22nd JULY 2026** at 2.15 p.m.

PRESENT:- Councillor C Tomes (Town Mayor) – Chairman

Councillor J Bishop
Councillor M Bonfield
Councillor T Foster
Councillor C Moreton
Councillor C Sutton
Councillor S Vile

Also in attendance: -

Dr M. Ayres	Town Clerk
Miss A. Spencer	Finance Manager

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.

No declarations were made on this occasion.

3. **INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES 2026-27**

Members considered a briefing note setting out the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the SAPPP Practitioners' Guide in regard to internal audit services. It was noted that the council's current contract with Darkin-Miller Accountants LLP was for a 3-year period with the option to extend for 2 years, and that the 2025/26 audit was the end of the initial 3-year period. Following a brief discussion, during which general satisfaction was expressed with the internal audit service, it was proposed by Councillor Vile, seconded by Councillor Sutton and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

To confirm the appointment of Darkin-Miller Accountants LLP as the Council's Internal Auditor for the 2026/27 and 2027/28 financial years, invoking the 2 year contract extension.

Consideration was given to a draft Strategic Audit Plan for the 2026/27 financial year. The audit plan included all core testing requirements plus car parking income as standard. Members engaged in a discussion around any additional service areas to be included in the audit plan. It was noted that TIC Cash Income, Beach Gardens and the Market had not been reviewed for a number of years. It was proposed by Councillor Moreton, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

To approve the draft Strategic Audit Plan with TIC Income, Beach Gardens and the Market included for additional testing.

4. **FINANCIAL REPORTS – Q1 2026/27**

a) **Income & Expenditure – Budget Monitoring Report**

Consideration was given to a report setting out the principal sources of the Town Council's income and expenditure for the first quarter of the 2026/27 financial year. It was noted that the overall position was generally positive with net expenditure £14.6k under budget. The significant variances were reported and a virement of £2k from the Beaches and Foreshore budget to the Publicity and Tourism budget was noted to fund the purchase of a replacement noticeboard (having been incorrectly reported as £2.5k under Minute No. 7) of the Tourism & Local Economy Committee Meeting held on 15th July 2026).

Additional approved expenditure of £4.75k for a pickleball court at Beach Gardens, £11k to fund emergency repairs to drains at Prospect Green, £7.5k for railings on the parade, £6.5k for tractor repairs and £16k for catenary wiring for the festive lights was also reported.

The council's reserves and investment position were reviewed and it was noted that, with the exception of the CCLA property fund and DMADF term deposits, all other funds were accessible with a short notice period.

The grant that the council currently pays to Swanage Town & Herston Football Club was discussed. It was reported that the council had previously stated that the full grant of £5,250 would be payable up until the resolution of the rent review with Vodafone (as the grant is the same amount as the rent). It was noted that a decrease in the rent of the telecoms site at Day's Park would take effect from the signing of the new lease, which was anticipated imminently. It was, therefore, proposed by Councillor Bonfield, seconded by Councillor Foster and RESOLVED

UNANIMOUSLY:

To pay a grant to Swanage & Herston Football Club of £1,312.50 for the period April to June 2026 and inform the Football Club that this would be the final grant payment to be made at this rate. Future grant payments would match the agreed rent review amount.

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

b) **Capital Programme Monitoring Report**

Consideration was given to the Capital Programme Monitoring Report for the first quarter of 2026/27, and it was noted that two projects had been brought forward from 2025/26.

The contents of the report were noted, including acknowledgement that the installation of an air source heat pump at the TIC at a total cost of £18,000 had been agreed as an additional project, subject to securing grant funding of 50% from Low Carbon Dorset (see Minute No. 5) of the Environment & Green Spaces Committee meeting held on 24th June 2026). It was agreed that if the application is successful, then this project will be added to the capital programme.

5. **DORSET COUNCIL**

a) **To Consider Statement of Reasonable Expectations**

Members considered the Statement of Reasonable Expectations which had been composed by Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils to set out some guidelines to support positive partnership working between Dorset Council and parish and town councils. The importance to local residents of a constructive working relationship existing between the two tiers of local government was

highlighted. It was proposed by Councillor Foster, seconded by Councillor Vile and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

To confirm the Town Council's support for the
Statement of Reasonable Expectations.

b) **To Receive Update re: Neighbourhood Governance and Community
Conversations Engagement Event**

It was reported that the Town Clerk and the Deputy Mayor had attended the first of two Community Conversations events arranged by Dorset Council on 17th July at Morden village hall. A wide range of stakeholders from across the public and voluntary sectors in Purbeck and adjoining parishes had attended the meeting and contributed to discussions on subjects including the future of local decision making, the potential for devolution of services and opportunities for improved partnership working. The output from this meeting would form the focus of the agenda for the second meeting, to be held on 11th September.

6. **INITIAL DISCUSSION REGARDING ARRANGEMENTS TO IMPROVE
ACCESSIBILITY OF COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Members discussed the potential for improvements to the accessibility of Town Council meetings, including remote access. It was noted that the Council had committed to improve access to its meetings in the Good Governance section of its Corporate Plan 2026-30. It was proposed by the Town Mayor, seconded by Councillor Bonfield and
RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

That the matter of providing better access to council
meetings be referred to the Communications
Working Party for consideration in order to report
back to this Committee in November.

7. **ITEMS OF INFORMATION AND MATTERS FOR FORTHCOMING AGENDA**

The following were listed as matters for forthcoming agendas.

- Update on creation of FOI webpage – noted as a work in progress.
- Digital transformation-managers are currently putting forward proposals.
- Member training – Code of Conduct training is due to be provided by Dorset Council.
- Review of Social Media Policy – ongoing.
- Newsletter – it was noted that the publication had been delayed due to staff absence.

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next scheduled meeting was noted as 11th November 2026.

The meeting concluded at 3.15 p.m.
