

Proper Officer's Report

August Full Council Meeting – 10th August 2026

1. General Update

As Members will be aware, Broadstone Town Council (BTC) continues to make excellent progress on a number of projects despite being a newly established authority. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Councillors for the considerable amount of time and effort they continue to dedicate to the Council. Your willingness to take the lead on projects and initiatives has enabled the Council to progress work that would otherwise have been difficult to achieve within my current part-time hours.

As we continue to establish BTC, I look forward to supporting Members as we develop new projects and initiatives together. The enthusiasm and willingness of Councillors to get involved has been one of the Council's greatest strengths during its first few months. By combining Members' local knowledge, ideas and vision with officer support and governance advice throughout each project, I am confident we can continue to deliver excellent outcomes for the residents of Broadstone.

Once again, thank you all for your continued support and commitment to BTC.

2. General Administration

Alongside the specific projects detailed within this report, routine officer duties continue to be undertaken, including responding to resident enquiries, supporting Members, administering the Council's website and social media channels, preparing agendas and reports, progressing committee decisions, liaising with partner organisations and managing the Council's day-to-day administration.

Website

Members will be aware that the TC's website was originally created by BCP Council prior to BTC inception. Whilst ownership of the website hosting has now transferred to the Council's IT provider, the website itself has continued to rely on the content management system previously used by BCP Council.

Unfortunately, this system has proved cumbersome to administer and makes even relatively simple updates unnecessarily time-consuming. It also limits our ability to develop the website into a modern site that reflects BTC own identity and meets our future communication needs.

To address this, I requested that our IT provider migrate the website to a standard WordPress hosting platform. WordPress is widely used across the sector and will provide a flexible and user-friendly system, enabling the TC to keep the website up to date more efficiently whilst developing a website that is unique to BTC.

The migration has presented a number of unforeseen technical challenges and, as a result, has taken longer than originally anticipated. However, good progress is being made, and it is hoped that the migration will be completed, allowing work to commence on developing and updating the website, by the beginning of Aug '26.

3. Allotment Administration

Following the transfer of the allotments to BTC, I am currently issuing each tenant with a personalised covering letter together with a copy of the new (BTC) Allotment Tenancy Agreement. A stamped addressed envelope has also been included to enable tenants to return the signed agreement as easily as possible. Although email would ordinarily be the most efficient method of distribution, a number of the email addresses transferred to the TC have proved to be invalid, with messages being returned as undeliverable. In addition, as the agreement must be signed and returned, I was conscious that not all tenants have access to a printer or the facilities to print documents at home. For these reasons, issuing paper copies to all tenants was considered the fairest and most inclusive approach.

To minimise postage costs, I have been hand-delivering the document packs to tenants whilst undertaking my routine allotment inspections. Had every pack been posted, the Council would have incurred postage costs of just under £150. During my first visit I was able to hand deliver ten packs within approximately thirty minutes, representing a significant saving to the Council.

An additional benefit of delivering the packs in person has been the opportunity to speak directly with tenants. Many commented that they had never previously met or spoken with a representative of a Council whilst on the allotment site. They welcomed the opportunity to discuss the role of the TC, the purpose of the monthly inspections and how issues can be reported in future.

These conversations have also provided valuable feedback which will help inform future improvements to the site. The two most common issues raised were:

- There are currently only three communal water troughs serving the entire allotment site. Depending on the location of a tenant's plot, this can require carrying heavy watering cans over a considerable distance, particularly during periods of hot weather.

- Over many years, some plot holders have raised or lowered the level of their plots. As a result, access routes between certain plots have become uneven, creating potential trip hazards and raising health and safety concerns for some tenants.

Both matters will be investigated further and reported back to Council.

4. Groundsman / Caretaker Recruitment

Following Full Council's approval to recruit a self-employed Groundsman/Caretaker, I am pleased to report that the vacancy was formally advertised on 28th July 2026.

The advertisement has been placed on Indeed, together with a post on the Council's social media channels. I have also asked Cllr Elkins to display a recruitment poster in one of the noticeboards, and I will also be placing a copy on the allotment noticeboard to maximise local awareness.

The recruitment campaign has made a positive start, with one individual already making an enquiry regarding the position. Applications will continue to be accepted until the closing date, after which I will assess all applications and, subject to there being a suitable candidate, appoint a contractor under the delegated authority previously granted by Full Council.

5. Councillor Training

All Members have now been registered with the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) online training portal and have access to the wide range of training opportunities available.

I would encourage all Councillors to browse the training programme and let me know if there were any courses they would like to attend. Please do not book courses directly with DAPTC, as doing so will result in the invoice being issued directly to you rather than to the TC. I will happily arrange all bookings on Members' behalf.

DAPTC have also kindly offered to provide a free introductory training session covering the fundamentals of being a Town Councillor. This would be an excellent opportunity for all Members, particularly as we continue to establish the Council.

I would therefore be grateful if Members could advise me of their availability during September and October, following which I will liaise with DAPTC to arrange a suitable date.

Following a discussion with the Planning, Highways and Licensing Committee, I will also be contacting BCP Council to arrange a planning training session for Members. This session will provide an overview of the planning process together with an update on the emerging BCP Local Plan.

6. Allotments

I have now completed three monthly inspections of the Council's allotment site, with the most recent inspection taking place during the week commencing 20th July 2026.

These inspections continue to prove worthwhile, with several tenants carrying out significant improvements to their plots following discussions regarding maintenance standards.

Unfortunately, one tenant recently surrendered their plot due to ill health. I am pleased to report that the plot was re-let almost immediately to the next person on the waiting list. Despite taking possession during the recent heatwave, the new tenant has already made excellent progress in clearing and cultivating the site.

During the week commencing 27th July 2026, I met with a local tree surgeon to undertake a comprehensive inspection of the trees across the allotment site. This visit allowed me to highlight existing concerns whilst also benefiting from their professional expertise in identifying any additional issues.

A few matters requiring attention were identified, including several dead trees and a number of low-hanging branches that have either caused, or have the potential to cause, damage to tenants' sheds and greenhouses. I have requested a quotation for all recommended works, which will be presented to the F&G Committee.

As part of the same quotation, I have also requested that vegetation within the allotment car park is cut back to the fence line. This work would reclaim a number of parking spaces that have gradually been lost to overgrowth. This work would include the removal of a small trees which have grown at an angle over the parking area. This tree presents a particular issue for taller vehicles, where rear parking sensors do not detect the overhanging branches, resulting in the trunk striking the roofs of vehicles and causing damage.

7. Allotment Noticeboard

The allotment noticeboard is showing signs of age and would benefit from some general repairs and refurbishment.

Recommendation: That members approve the repair and refurbishment of the allotment noticeboard, where this is considered practical and cost-effective, rather than replacing it.