

Proper Officer's Report
October 2026 Full Council Meeting

1. General Update

Since my last report to Full Council, the Council has continued to make good progress in establishing its systems and developing projects for the benefit of the community.

A number of projects that were previously at the investigation or planning stage have now progressed significantly. These include the Christmas lighting scheme, the residents' survey, the "Use Our Loo" initiative, the Friends of scheme and improvements to the allotment site. Work is also continuing on the Council's branding, website, community facilities and a number of projects within our parks and open spaces.

As the Council moves beyond its initial establishment period, there is now an increasing focus on turning the ideas and projects discussed by Members into practical initiatives. This is inevitably creating a considerable amount of work, particularly as many projects require liaison with BCP Council, external organisations, contractors or local businesses.

I would again like to thank Members for the time they continue to give to the Council and for their willingness to take responsibility for individual projects. The involvement of Members has enabled the Council to progress a wide range of initiatives while also allowing the Proper Officer to concentrate on the administration, governance and practical delivery required to support them.

2. General Administration

Routine administration continues alongside the Council's project work. This includes responding to residents, dealing with correspondence, preparing agendas and reports, recording and progressing Council decisions, managing the website and social media, maintaining financial records and liaising with BCP Council and other organisations.

Website

Work is continuing with the website provider regarding the development of a newsletter and a booking system, which may be used in connection with future community initiatives such as the proposed Busk Stop scheme.

3. Allotment Administration

The allotment site continues to receive regular inspections and administration, with the focus now moving towards implementing some of the improvements identified since the transfer of the site to Broadstone Town Council.

One of the issues raised by tenants during inspections was the distance that some plot holders have to carry water from the existing communal troughs.

Council has therefore agreed to purchase two additional water troughs at an approximate cost of £700 plus VAT. A pro-forma invoice has been requested and, once the purchase is completed, the Caretaker will install the troughs. Councillors will also form a working party to assist with the installation, with the Caretaker confirming when the work can be undertaken.

4. Allotments

I have now completed three monthly inspections of the Council's allotment site, with the Caretaker undertaking the September inspection. These regular inspections are proving valuable in monitoring the condition of the site, ensuring that tenants are maintaining their plots in accordance with the tenancy agreement and identifying any issues requiring attention.

The inspections have also provided a useful opportunity to speak directly with tenants and understand some of the practical issues they experience on the site. A number of tenants have made significant improvements to their plots following discussions regarding maintenance standards, and I will continue to monitor progress through the regular inspections.

The appointment of a dedicated Caretaker will also provide greater capacity to address maintenance issues identified during inspections and to undertake practical works around the site.

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.

5. Allotment Noticeboard

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

The Council has agreed that the existing noticeboard should be repaired and refurbished rather than replaced, where this is practical and cost-effective. The Caretaker has been asked to remove the noticeboard and deliver it for assessment and refurbishment to Cllr Elkins who has kindly offered to carry out the repair.

6. Allotment Tree Works

Following the inspection undertaken with a professional tree surgeon, the Council has awarded the tree works contract to Rempstone Tree Management. The necessary applications have been submitted and the Council is currently awaiting the required approvals. Subject to those approvals, the initial works are planned for early November.

The works will address a number of long-standing concerns, including dead trees and branches which are causing, or have the potential to cause, damage to allotment structures and other property.

It is important to note that a number of trees around the allotment site are outside the Council's ownership and are subject to restrictions. The Council will therefore continue to address those matters where it is able to do so, subject to the necessary permissions.

The expenditure on the allotment site is not funded through the Council's Precept. Expenditure is funded from income generated through allotment rents, meaning that money raised from allotment tenants is reinvested into the maintenance and improvement of the allotment site.

7. Allotment Noticeboard

Members previously agreed that the existing allotment noticeboard should be repaired and refurbished where this is practical and cost-effective, rather than replaced. The Caretaker has now been asked to remove the noticeboard and deliver it for assessment and repair to Cllr Elkins who has kindly offered to investigate and repair where possible.

8. Benches

Following discussion regarding the future management of benches within the parish, work is continuing to establish which benches are owned by Broadstone Town Council and which are the responsibility of BCP Council. The intention is to identify benches requiring refurbishment or replacement and develop a longer-term plan for their management.

A Memorial Bench Policy is also to be developed and presented to the Finance and Governance Committee for consideration.

9. Christmas Lights

Following consideration of the Christmas Lights feasibility work, arrangements are now progressing for the 2026 Christmas lighting enhancement scheme.

The Proper Officer has been authorised to place an order for lights for the two trees at the eastern end of the Broadway, lights for the Money Puzzle tree, and ten artificial Christmas trees with matching lights to be positioned along the Broadway.

The project will provide Christmas lighting for the Broadway this year whilst allowing the Council to consider further enhancements, including street-lighting motifs, in future years.

10. Community Centre

Initial discussions have taken place with BCP Council regarding the potential transfer of the Community Centre as a Community Asset Transfer. This remains an exploratory exercise only.

Initial discussions have established that the current building is subject to an existing lease and that there are a number of matters which would need to be considered, including responsibility for the building, the condition of the roof and chimney, the requirement for a building survey and valuation, and the criteria that would need to be met for any future Community Asset Transfer application. BCP Council has indicated that a lease arrangement may be considered rather than a freehold transfer. Further information is awaited and discussions will continue.

11. Community Orchard

Work is continuing to investigate the possibility of establishing a Community Orchard at either Pocket Park or Springdale Park. I am liaising with BCP Council regarding the potential locations, whilst Cllr Maxey is continuing to investigate possible grant opportunities.

12. Council Branding

Work is continuing on the development of Broadstone Town Council's new branding. Following further discussion, Cllr Sidaway will redraw the proposed logo incorporating the agreed changes. Cllr Elkins will then review the design to ensure that it is suitable for use across different Council assets, including the potential for the logo to be carved onto benches and other physical assets.

Once the branding has been finalised and adopted, it will provide a consistent identity across the Council's website, documents, signage, social media and physical assets.

13. 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.

Following a discussion with the Planning, Highways and Licensing Committee, I have been in contact with 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.

14. Friends of Scheme

The Friends of Agreement and Pledge have been approved, and an article is being prepared for the Council's website and Facebook page encouraging residents and community groups to consider establishing a "Friends of" group. The scheme will provide participating groups with the benefit of being able to use the Town Council's insurance cover, subject to the scheme's terms and conditions.

15. Groundsman / Caretaker Recruitment

I am pleased to report that a Caretaker has now been appointed. Tim Lee, of T Lee Landscaping, has been appointed to undertake the role on behalf of Broadstone Town Council.

Tim will undertake a range of maintenance and practical tasks on behalf of the Council, including work at the allotment site. His appointment will provide the Council with greater capacity to respond to maintenance issues and progress practical improvement works.

The arrangement will be reviewed following six months and twelve months, in accordance with the arrangements agreed by Full Council.

16. Residents' Survey

The residents' survey has now been completed and the Council agreed to publish the survey report. The report has been made available on the Council's website, with links provided through social media, and a copy has also been placed in the Council's library folder.

The survey results will help inform future Council projects and priorities. Further consideration will be given by the Finance and Governance Committee regarding an earmarked reserve and by the Community Services Committee regarding potential projects arising from the survey. A review of the survey and consideration of whether to undertake a further survey is scheduled for February 2028.

17. Use Our Loo Scheme

The Council has approved the Service Level Agreement for businesses wishing to participate in the "Use Our Loo" scheme and has agreed to allocate £2,500 from general reserves to an earmarked reserve for the initiative.

The scheme aims to provide members of the public with access to toilet facilities within participating businesses, providing a wider range of facilities across the Broadway and surrounding area rather than reopening the former public toilet block. Work is continuing to finalise the list of participating premises and the accompanying location map and directory.

A news article explaining the scheme, including the comparison with the cost of reopening the former public toilet block, is currently being prepared.

18. New Community Initiatives

A number of new community initiatives are also now being explored following the September meetings. These include the proposed "Busk Stop" initiative, which would provide an opportunity for performers to perform at an agreed location. Permission is being sought from the landlord of Wallace Square before the scheme can progress. If permission is granted, appropriate signage will be developed and the licensing position will be confirmed with BCP Council.

The Council is also continuing to explore possible improvements to Pocket Park and Springdale Park, with further reports and information being developed for consideration by Members.

19. Finance and Grants

Routine financial administration continues, including processing payments, maintaining financial records and progressing approved expenditure.

Payments relating to grants awarded to the Broadstone Business Community and Chitter Chatter Group are now being progressed.

The allotment fees for 2027–28 have also been frozen, as outlined earlier in this report.

20. Looking Ahead

As BTC continues to establish itself, a significant amount of work is now moving from the initial set-up phase into the delivery of projects for residents. The coming months will therefore focus on completing current projects, ensuring that agreed policies and procedures are embedded, and continuing to develop longer-term plans for the parish.

The continued involvement of Members will remain important as the Council moves forward, particularly in relation to community engagement, parks and open spaces, the allotments, local facilities and projects identified through the residents' survey.

Training Requirements

Purpose of Report

To seek approval for the Council to fund appropriate training for Members, Officers and Volunteers undertaking activities on behalf of the Council, where such training is required to meet health and safety obligations and insurance requirements.

Background

The Council's insurance requirements state that appropriate training must be provided to individuals undertaking certain activities. Where the necessary training has not been undertaken, the Council may not be covered by its insurance in the event of an incident or claim.

A number of Council activities involve potential risks, and it is important that anyone undertaking these tasks has received suitable training before commencing the activity.

Examples include:

- **Working at Height:** Anyone required to use a ladder, even for a short duration or to access the first few rungs, must undertake appropriate Working at Height training. (Christmas Lights)
- **Safeguarding:** Anyone who may work with children or vulnerable adults must undertake appropriate Safeguarding training. (Parade, Market, Fun day)
- **First Aid:** Individuals undertaking activities where first aid provision is required should have appropriate First Aid training. (Any event)
- **Manual Handling:** Anyone required to lift, carry or move equipment as part of Council activities should receive suitable Manual Handling training. (Any event)

Providing this training will help ensure that Members, Officers and Volunteers are suitably prepared for their duties, reduce the risk of accidents and help protect the Council's insurance position.

Training Identified and Costs

The following training courses have been identified as being relevant to Council activities:

Training	Course Details	Cost
Working at Height	Online learning, approximately 2 hours	£32.50 + VAT per person
Safeguarding	Half-day online learning	£25.00 + VAT per person
First Aid at Work	Full-day, in-person course	£1,211.00 + VAT for up to 12 participants, with the trainer attending the Council; alternatively, £160.00 + VAT per person if attending an external course
Manual Handling (HSE)	Online learning, approximately 2 hours	£12.00 + VAT per person, reducing to £9.00 per person for groups of up to 9 participants

The above costs are indicative and will depend on the number of participants and the training provider's arrangements.

Financial Implications

The cost of training will depend on the number of participants requiring each course.

It is proposed that training costs are met by the Council, with courses arranged as and when required, rather than requiring individuals to fund their own training.

Where possible, group training will be arranged to achieve cost savings, particularly for First Aid at Work and Manual Handling.

Recommendation

1. Approve the Council funding appropriate training for Members, Officers and Volunteers undertaking activities on behalf of the Council, where such training is necessary for the task being undertaken.
2. Authorise the Proper Officer to arrange suitable training as required, taking account of the nature of the activity, insurance requirements, number of participants and available budget.
3. Agree that individuals must complete the relevant training before undertaking activities for which such training is required.

