

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1 APRIL 2026

Present

Chairman: Cllr P. Evans

Councillors: Cllr C. Aldridge, Cllr G. Caddy, Cllr S. Cockerell, Cllr M. Denney, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr D. Holland, Cllr P. May, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr A. Wood

Officers: A. Mullins (assistant town clerk), J. Wright (town clerk)

Guests: Cllr B. Bawden (Dorset Council ward member)

The Rev Fi Budden gave a prayer.

25/157/C Public Forum

B. Larcombe

B. Larcombe said he fully supported the council staff and recognised the work they did, but he didn't think they should receive the proposed employee benefits. He said he had negotiated for 30 years in the public sector and the only time benefits were included in pay packets was in times of austerity or pay freezes. He said the council staff had never had a pay freeze, but had received cost of living increases and incremental steps. He said the council did not have a retention problem, with many staff working for the council for more than a decade, and he didn't think there was a recruitment problem either. He said locally, the remuneration was appropriate and job roles were evaluated recently. He asked the council not to approve the benefits, particularly because of the climate of pay and conditions, as it was not appropriate. He said staff were getting the right pay for the work done, but it was not the size of the sum, it was the principle. He suggested the public, who were themselves facing difficulties, would take a dim view of things like gym memberships, a day off for birthdays and free parking. For the sake of public perception, he asked members not to vote for benefits. He said this was brought to the council on three previous occasions in the last 10 years and each time it was voted out. He asked who was pushing for this and why.

B. Bawden

B. Bawden asked whether the proposal for staff benefits was an April Fool's joke. She said the officer stated the staff benefits package was expected to be approved by Full Council on 1 April even though it was due to be considered by a meeting the following week. She said a committee of only five councillors at a meeting with only four councillors attending, had decided to spend £10,000 on staff benefits and was also seeking council approval for delegated decision-making on the rest of the budget for staff and family benefits. She asked if the town council had undertaken

consultation on their objectives, including £10,000 on staff benefits, because if so, she hadn't seen it. She asked councillors if they thought this was an appropriate use of public money at a time when over half the town suffered from multiple deprivation and further cost of living pressures were following due to global geo-political events and the town council's reputation, as witnessed by the concerns brought to the council, had already been under local and national scrutiny, or whether it was an April Fool's test of how far the staff could push the councillors to agree their demands. She asked why the staff felt they needed incentives to work, as surely they should be proud to work for Lyme Regis Town Council. She said she hoped this was a joke and councillors would reconsider this inappropriate proposal.

N. Ball

N. Ball said he was concerned about the state of the gardens as they were not looking as good as he would like them to. There was a lot of ground cover fabric, and there was no planting schedule, which he assumed was due to lack of staff in the gardens because they were doing other jobs around the town, so he felt the gardens were being left behind. He said there were lots of weeds in Jane Austen Gardens. He said the dog bag bins had not been filled up and he asked if the contents of the cemetery noticeboards had been changed. He had still not been given the costs for Party in the Park and asked for this information under Freedom of Information. He felt the conduct of officers was still questionable and they were having too much of a say and an opinion over elected members. He said correspondence had been received about there being too many letters from the public to read out in the public forum, but he thought the idea was to give the public a voice because some people couldn't attend meetings. He didn't agree with the proposal for health insurance for staff, days off for a birthday or staff Christmas parties, and he didn't know of any other public body that did this. He said there was no right for staff to demand these things and it was up to councillors to decide. He asked when the true figure would be released for refunds for outside seating as he didn't think the £100k set aside would be enough. He said we were in difficult times and everyone should be mindful of the situation.

K. Gollop

K. Gollop said there had been several meetings in the last few years to address the state of the town, particularly weeds and bins on the seafront. In September, he had counted 51 locked bins between the museum and the lifeboat station, 21 of which were below the Guildhall. He said nothing had been done about it, despite him complaining numerous times. He had never known the town to be in the state it was now. Other areas of concern included the island in Cobb Square and the Cart Road and he had heard visitors refer to the town as Bin City and Grime Regis. He said someone had to make a move with Dorset Council as he had not seen any of these issues discussed at a committee meeting in the last five years.

A member clarified that most of the areas K. Gollop had referred to were the responsibility of Dorset Council (DC) and that the town council had been talking to DC about the bin store in Broad Street car park but was struggling to get anywhere.

A. Ball (read out by an officer)

A. Ball said there had been no assertion that officers were responsible for any overcharging. He said the role of council officers was to advise elected members on relevant legislation, policy, and correct practice, without influence and they were professional advisers, not decision-makers. He said decisions rested with councillors, who were ultimately accountable for those outcomes, but he noted a number of current senior officers had been in varying roles since charges were questioned. He said concerns raised were about attributing responsibility and the manner in which the issue was handled. He suggested the tone, approach and level of professionalism in some interactions had not met expected standards. He believed some councillors were unaware that the statement by a council spokesperson had been released and he asked if it had been shared with or approved by members before publication. If not, this underlined the importance of clear lines between officer advice and actions and councillor disengagement. He asked if this was an isolated issue or whether there may be other instances where assumptions had been made about what was permissible. He said this demonstrated the need for reassurance that governance processes, legal interpretations, and delegated powers were being applied consistently and correctly. He said local authorities anticipated scrutiny and constructive criticism was part of healthy democratic accountability. He suggested public feedback was not a challenge to roles or responsibilities, but a concern about how those roles had been exercised. He highlighted the important distinction between those who provided professional advice and those who made the final decisions. As the potential refunds would amount of hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money, he questioned whether the criticism could be considered 'inappropriate'. He said a high degree of public scrutiny was to be expected where significant sums affecting the town's finances were concerned and that media interest was a good indication of the seriousness of a situation.

25/158/C Dorset Council Matters

Dorset Council (DC) ward member Cllr B. Bawden gave the following updates:

- She had discussed with DC the volume of bins and the possibility of having the same bins as West Bay, which held a larger volume of waste, were less unsightly and seagull proof. However, the vehicles needed to empty them were expensive and too big for the roads in Lyme Regis. She said she hoped there would be constructive discussion between DC and the town council about who owned and managed what.
- South West Water had submitted planning applications for Holmbush and Charmouth Road car parks as part of the work related to the Turning the Tide programme, although the latter had been withdrawn. She asked if there was the possibility of the park and ride site or Strawberry Fields being used, as DC was worried about the loss of parking spaces.

Members asked questions about double yellow lines on Sidmouth Road, the need for DC officers to visit Lyme Regis more regularly to see the issues for themselves, and a taxi rank.

25/159/C Questions from Councillors

There were none.

25/160/C Apologies for Absence

Cllr S. Larcombe – work commitments
Cllr N. Hampton-Rumbold – work commitments
Cllr C. Reynolds – illness

25/161/C Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr M. Ellis highlighted the pecuniary interests already stated at committee meetings.

Cllr G. Stammers declared a pecuniary interest in the A35 signs for the park and ride.

25/162/C Dispensations

There were none.

25/163/C To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 11 February 2026

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 11 February 2026 were **ADOPTED**.

25/164/C To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the extraordinary Full Council meeting held on 11 March 2026

Proposed by Cllr M. Denney and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, the minutes of the extraordinary Full Council meeting held on 11 March 2026 were **ADOPTED**.

25/165/C Matters arising from the minutes of Full Council meeting held on 11 February 2026 and the extraordinary Full Council meeting held on 11 March 2026

Members noted the report.

25/166/C Update Report

Members noted the report.

25/167/C Mayor's Announcements

Members noted the report.

25/168/C Planning Committee

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr P. May, it was **RESOLVED** to note the cancellation of the meetings on 17 February 2026 and 10 March 2026 and to note

the comments made on planning applications under the chairman vice-chairman's delegated authority.

25/169/C Environment Committee

Proposed by Cllr S. Cockerell and seconded by Cllr A. Wood, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2026, and adopt the recommendations, as follows:

25/64/ENV – Bathing Water Quality Meeting Minutes

RESOLVED: that officers write to Allan Burrows and Sarah Sharpe at South West Water to ask for an update on their progress of the Turning the Tide works in Lyme Regis, as well as another letter asking for them to engage with officers to minimise impact on the town.

25/66/ENV – Bee Friendly Lyme Regis

RESOLVED: that the council recognises the importance of bees to local ecology, endorse and support the Bee Friendly Lyme Regis project, and promote its activities through council communication channels.

25/170/C Human Resources Committee

Proposed by Cllr G. Caddy and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2026, and adopt the recommendations, as follows:

25/54/HR – Employee Benefits

Members discussed whether employee benefits should be introduced, given the concerns expressed in the public forum. It was pointed out the project had been proposed for several years previously, but not taken forward as an objective until 2026-27, with a budget of £10k.

It was proposed by Cllr G. Stammers that the Human Resources Committee further discusses employee benefits.

This motion was not seconded.

It was noted that at this point, members were being asked to consider a recommendation from the committee to approve a health cash plan for employees, only, and that any further benefits would be discussed at the next committee meeting. This was reflected in the recommendation from the committee.

Members were encouraged to attend the next committee meeting if they wanted to debate the issue.

Cllr G. Stammers withdrew her earlier proposal.

RESOLVED: to approve taking out a health cash plan for employees and to delegate authority to officers to determine the appropriate level of cover, within the approved budget, and to ask officers to bring options for other employee benefits back to this committee following consultation with employees.

25/56/HR – Town Clerk’s Annual Appraisal

RESOLVED: to note the town clerk’s annual appraisal summary

25/57/HR – Deputy Town Clerk, Spinal Column Point Progression

RESOLVED: to note the deputy town clerk’s annual appraisal summary.

25/58/HR – Assistant Town Clerk, Spinal Column Point Progression

RESOLVED: to note the support services manager’s annual appraisal summary and approve her progression to spinal column point 32 on 1 April 2026.

25/59/HR – Finance Manager, Performance Appraisal Summary

RESOLVED: to note the finance manager’s annual appraisal summary and approve her progression to spinal column point 32 on 1 April 2026.

25/60/HR – Operations Manager, Performance Appraisal Summary

RESOLVED: to note the operations manager’s annual appraisal summary and approve his progression to spinal column point 32 on 1 April 2026.

25/61/HR – Spinal Point Column Progression and Pay Arrangements for Other Employees for 2026-27

RESOLVED: to note the spinal column point progression for post holders 217, 104, 106, 109, 205, 204, and 211.

25/171/C Strategy and Finance Committee

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2026, and adopt the recommendations, as follows:

25/59/SF – Request from Cobb Traders – Parking Concessions, Free Parking Days and Autumn/Winter Parking Scheme

RESOLVED: not to make any changes to the current parking permits.

RESOLVED: to offer an additional free parking day in town Woodmead car park only on Sunday 13 December to support the Big Christmas Weekend in Lyme Regis.

RESOLVED: to defer the decision to offer a discounted autumn/winter parking charge of £2 per day in town council-owned car parks to a future meeting of the

Strategy and Finance Committee and for officers to provide further data on car parking income and variations, and comparisons to other towns in order to make an informed decision.

25/63/SF – List of Payments

RESOLVED: to approve the schedule of payments in January and February 2026 for the sums of £217,790.10 and £348,865.07, respectively.

25/172/C Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee

Proposed by Cllr P. Evans and seconded by Cllr D. Holland, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2026, and adopt the recommendations, as follows:

25/75/TCP – Free Parking Days

RESOLVED: to change one of the non-charging days in Lyme Regis car parks from 5 December (Small Business Saturday), to 12 December (Big Christmas Weekend).

25/76/TCP – Honoured Citizens' Award

RESOLVED: that the Honoured Citizens' Award be reinstated and that it be linked to national events or special occasions, as well as to introduce a Mayor's Certificate of Recognition to be awarded annually at the end of the mayor's term with up to 12 certificates awarded, at the mayor's discretion.

25/77/TCP – Youth Council

RESOLVED: that officers pursue a Youth Council independently of Woodroffe School by recruiting through schools, youth clubs, scout groups, the town magazine and social media, and review the progress as interest develops.

25/173/C Town Management and Highways Committee

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr P. May, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2026, and adopt the recommendations, as follows:

25/61/TMH – Cadet Hut Demolition

RESOLVED: to agree, in principle, to proceed with demolishing the unsafe cadet hut, to appoint Bagwells Ltd to carry out this work, and to authorise officers to obtain quotations for resecuring the boundary fence and installing suitable secure storage for the external works team's vehicles and equipment.

25/62/TMH – No Dogs on the Beach Signs

RESOLVED: to improve the clarity and visibility of the current 'dogs on the beach' signage, ask officers to seek quotes for new signs, and to agree the final locations for the signs in consultation with Cllr M. Ellis and Cllr A. Wood.

25/174/C Selection of Mayor-Elect and Deputy Mayor-Elect

Officers confirmed there had been one nomination for the office of mayor, for Cllr P. Evans. No other nominations were made at the meeting.

Proposed by Cllr D. Holland and seconded by Cllr A. Wood, members **RESOLVED** that Cllr P. Evans is the mayor-elect for the 2026-27 council year.

Officers confirmed there had been one nomination for the office of deputy mayor, for Cllr M. Ellis. A further nomination for Cllr A. Wood was made at the meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr D. Holland that Cllr M. Ellis is the deputy mayor for the 2026-27 council year.

This motion was not seconded.

Proposed by Cllr G. Caddy and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, members **RESOLVED** that Cllr A. Wood is the deputy mayor-elect for the 2026-27 council year.

25/175/C Calendar of Meetings

Proposed by Cllr A. Wood and seconded by Cllr M. Denney, members **RESOLVED** to approve the calendar of meetings for the 2026-27 council year.

25/176/C Review of Financial Regulations

It was suggested paragraph 9.7 be amended from 'In the absence of a member of the finance team, a manager should be present' to 'must be present'.

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, members **RESOLVED** to approve the proposed financial regulations, with an amendment to paragraph 9.7 to read 'In the absence of a member of the finance team, a manager must be present'.

25/177/C Corporate Plan 2026-31

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr A. Wood, members **RESOLVED** to approve the text for the draft Corporate Plan 2026-31.

Cllr M. Ellis left the meeting at 8.08pm.

25/178/C Cleaning Contracts

Proposed by Cllr P. Evans and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, members **RESOLVED** that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business as it included confidential matters relating to relating to the financial or business affairs

of any particular person within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 8 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Section 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985), as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

25/179/C Flexible retirement request

Proposed by Cllr P. Evans and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, members **RESOLVED** that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business as it included confidential matters relating to relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 8 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Section 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985), as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

25/180/C Outside Seating Progress Report

Proposed by Cllr P. Evans and seconded by Cllr C. Aldridge, members **RESOLVED** that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business as it included confidential matters relating to relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 8 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Section 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985), as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

Cllr M. Ellis returned to the meeting at 8.09pm.

25/181/C Exempt Business

a) Cleaning Contracts

The town clerk said there had been no progress on the possible transfer of toilets from DC to the town council since September 2025, which would have an impact on the cleaning contract. He said DC didn't even have a timetable to agree the process to bring the matter to a conclusion. As such, officers were suggesting letting a one-year cleaning contract from 4 May 2026 to 31 April 2027, to include the public toilets and council buildings.

The town clerk said if there was still no progress with DC in the next few weeks, he would come back to the council to consider whether to continue the discussions.

Proposed by Cllr M. Denney and seconded by Cllr P. May, members **RESOLVED** to authorise officers to commence a tendering exercise to appoint a contractor for one year from 4 May 2026 to clean the town council's toilets and offices and that members delegate the award of the contract to the town clerk in consultation with the mayor and the chairman of Strategy and Finance Committee.

b) Flexible retirement request

It was noted members no longer needed to consider the request as the postholder had been appointed to a different role within the organisation.

c) Outside Seating Progress Report

Members noted the report.

The meeting closed at 8.39pm.