

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2026

Present

Chairman: Cllr P. May

Councillors: Cllr S. Cockerell, Cllr P. Evans, Cllr S. Larcombe, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr A. Wood

Officers: N. Cleal (finance manager), A. Mullins (assistant town clerk), J. Wright (town clerk)

25/38/SF Public Forum

N. Ball

N. Ball pointed out to members the council had incurred a fine from HMRC, as outlined in the list of payments. He also pointed out a payment had been made to R. Wellman for Strawberry Field but he believed this was for the park and ride field. He asked for a breakdown of the costs associated with Party in the Park because there were not many people at the event.

Cllr G. Stammers arrived at the meeting at 7.02pm.

N. Ball raised concerns about the cost of the LymeLiving magazine. He said although he enjoyed it, it had good content and was printed well, the postage costs were £7,100, plus wages, printing costs and photography. He had calculated that these costs meant the magazine cost £12.50 per copy or £15 if posted out, an amount you would expect to pay for a hardback book in a bookshop. He asked for his name to be taken off the mailing list because he felt embarrassed to receive it. He said there were still copies left over for recycling at the end of the month. He asked when the council was going to spend money more wisely, as this worried him, especially as the council might have some unbudgeted expenditure which it needed to be prepared for.

25/39/SF Apologies for Absence

Cllr G. Caddy – holiday
Cllr M. Denney – illness
Cllr M. Ellis
Cllr N. Hampton-Rumbold
Cllr D. Holland – prior commitment

25/40/SF Minutes

Proposed by Cllr S. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr P. Evans, the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2025 were **ADOPTED**.

25/41/SF Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

25/42/SF Dispensations

There were none.

25/43/SF Matters arising from the minutes of the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on 15 October 2025

Budget and Precept 2026-27 and Five-Year Financial Plan 2026-31

The town clerk said the report on income-generating ideas would be taken to the Full Council on 11 February 2026.

As the charging hours at Monmouth Beach and Cabanya car parks were to be extended until 9pm all year round, a member asked if there would be enforcement officers policing this.

The town clerk said enforcement officers worked until 9pm, particularly in the summer period, providing a combined 94 hours of enforcement per week.

25/44/SF Update Report

Beach replenishment

The town clerk said Dorset Council (DC) still intended to carry out the beach work in March 2026 following the recent storms which had taken away a large amount of sand. He said the project was now referred to as beach recycling, rather than replenishment, as it involved relocating beach material which had naturally shifted in the local area.

25/45/SF Strategy and Finance Committee – Objectives

A member asked why the review of financial regulations had been deferred several times.

The town clerk said the document required a much more significant review than normal due to new legislation and a new guide produced by the National Association of Local Councils, but officers were working on this.

25/46/SF Internal Audit Report, Visit One 2025-26

Members discussed the auditor Darkin-Miller's appointment period, which was a three-year contract, with the option to extend a further two years.

The finance manager said the initial three years had almost expired so a report would be brought to this committee to allow members to consider whether to extend the contract for a further two.

The town clerk said it was considered good practice to periodically change the internal auditor, but it was also beneficial to have an auditor that knows the business. He said

it would be members' decision whether to remain with Darkin-Miller or to change auditor.

Proposed by Cllr S. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr P. Evans, members agreed to **RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL** to note the internal auditor's report for visit one of 2025-26 and approve the management responses.

25/47/SF Budget Performance, 1 April – 31 December 2025

A member asked for more information about the gardens handrails project and asked if there were alternative materials to steel.

The town clerk said it was felt steel was the best product for this use and it offered better longevity. It was anticipated 2026-27 would be the final year of the phased project.

A member asked for more information about the overspend on the magazine, as raised in the public forum.

The assistant town clerk said the expenditure included the salary of the communications officer, who worked on many other projects, such as the Gateway Card, business and community briefings, and social media. The actual production costs were much lower. It was also noted the postage costs were high because for the first three months, a copy had been posted to every property in Lyme Regis, but this had now been scaled back, and there were issues for the first two months with the distribution companies, which meant costs increased. She added that following quotes being obtained, a local photographer had been commissioned to take photographs of events, which often took place during evenings and weekends when staff were not available.

25/48/SF Investments and Cash Holdings

The finance manager said the council's investments would be reviewed again at the start of the next financial year.

25/49/SF List of Payments

As mentioned in the public forum, it was noted the fine from HMRC was the first time it had happened.

The finance manager said the list of payments contained some errors so it would need to be re-presented to the Full Council on 11 February 2026.

25/50/SF Debtors

Proposed by Cllr P. May and seconded by Cllr S. Larcombe, 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.

25/51/SF Exempt Business

a) Debtors' Report

Members were concerned about the debt relating to the accreted land, noting that the situation had been ongoing for two years. They were supportive of the suggestion to take the debtor to court, if required.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm.