

SWANAGE TOWN COUNCIL

VEXATIOUS CORRESPONDENCE AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

The great majority of people who contact Swanage Town Council do so politely and with respect to Council employees. The Town Council welcomes feedback and encourages people who feel that they have grounds for complaint to contact the Council so that their concerns can be investigated in accordance with the Council's Complaints Procedure, which is designed to provide complainants with a thorough and fair means of redress.

There are, however, exceptional circumstances where behaviour can present a challenge to the wellbeing of staff or councillors, resulting in unacceptable stress. Furthermore, some correspondence will result in a disproportionate amount of resource being spent in response, preventing the Council from efficiently fulfilling its wider duties.

Swanage Town Council does not expect its staff or councillors to tolerate unreasonable behaviour from members of the public or other points of contact. The organisation has a direct duty of care to its employees and also a responsibility to any associated organisations and/or partners it works alongside.

This procedure is designed to address vexatious correspondence and complaints. It should assist the Council to manage inappropriately demanding or unreasonable behaviour from vexatious correspondents. Where the correspondence in question can be interpreted as a request or requests for information, this policy should be read in conjunction with the Information Commissioner's guidance on dealing with vexatious requests, issued in connection with s.14 (1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

It is important that the application of this policy does not prevent people from accessing services to which they have a statutory entitlement, and it is designed to ensure that the rights of service users are protected. However, Council resources are limited, and the Council has an obligation to ensure that these are used fairly and effectively. The Council must also ensure that the Clerk and Councillors receive a reasonable degree of protection from the stress that can be caused by vexatious correspondence and complaints.

This procedure is not designed to address violent or threatening behaviour which needs an urgent response.

1 Defining vexatious correspondence or complaints

Vexatious complaints and correspondence can be characterised in one or more of the following ways:

1.1 Behaviour which is **perceived as** obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious.

- 1.2 Displays an insistence on pursuing unmeritorious issues and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason.
- 1.3 Displays an insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints or issues in an unreasonable manner, **for example failing to focus on addressing the issue in a harmonious and pragmatic way.**
- 1.4 Forms part of a 'scatter gun' approach, with copies of letters being sent to several recipients on a regular basis, often including various council officers, the media, the MP, the Mayor, other Councillors and external regulators; and/or is part of a completely random approach, lacking any clear focus, or seeming to have been solely designed for the purpose of 'fishing' for information without any idea of what might be revealed.
- 1.5 Repeated and/or frequent requests for information, whether or not those requests are made under the access to information legislation.
- 1.6 Repeated use of social media to criticise Council members or officers could also be judged as vexatious conduct, as this could amount to cyber-bullying.

Guidance issued by the Information Commissioner recommends that four broad themes are considered when assessing whether a request for information is vexatious, and these factors may be more broadly applied to other correspondence:

1. the burden (on the public authority and its staff);
2. the motive (of the requester);
3. the value or serious purpose (of the request); and
4. any harassment or distress (of and to staff and councillors).

2 Procedure for determining whether correspondence is vexatious

- 2.1 If the Clerk or Councillors identify behaviour that they think exhibits the characteristics set out in Section 1, and which they believe may be vexatious, they should consult the Vexatious Correspondence sub-committee, consisting of the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor and two members of the Finance & Governance Committee. An officer who has not been dealing with the correspondence in question should act as minute taker.
- 2.2 If the sub-committee agrees with the assessment, they should prepare a brief statement of why the sub-committee considers the complaint or correspondence to be vexatious, including its effect upon the Clerk, Councillors and/or the Town Council as a corporate body. This should be accompanied by a list of correspondence over the last 6 months via email, telephone, letter and social media, including information about whom the correspondence was addressed to, how many people/organisations it was copied to on each occasion, and a one-line description of each piece of correspondence.

3 Handling correspondence and complaints that have been assessed as vexatious

- 3.1 The first step will be for the Mayor/Deputy Mayor to write to the correspondent advising them that their complaint and/or correspondence has been determined to be vexatious

and giving the reason for that decision. The letter should state that any future correspondence will be passed direct to the sub-committee who will consider whether it raises any substantive new issue(s) and whether or not it is also considered vexatious. The correspondent should be advised that if it is considered to be vexatious, any future correspondence will not receive a response, unless the Council is obliged to do so under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act or other legislative provision. They should be advised that the decision will be reviewed in six months from the date of the letter advising them that their complaint/correspondence has been determined to be vexatious. There is no route of appeal against the decision that a complaint or correspondence is vexatious.

- 3.2 Any future correspondence should be passed to the sub-committee for consideration. If they decide that it raises no genuinely new and substantive issues, and/or is considered to be otherwise vexatious, no response is required. If they consider it to be appropriate, they may acknowledge the first 2 or 3 pieces of correspondence, referring the correspondent to the letter advising them of the decision that their correspondence has been determined to be vexatious. After that, however, no response or acknowledgement should be sent.
- 3.3 If future correspondence does raise significant new issues, and does not meet the criteria for vexatious correspondence set out in Section 1 above, it should be responded to. It may be appropriate for the response to be routed via the Mayor/Deputy Mayor in order to prevent the renewal of 'scattergun' correspondence.

4 Reviewing the decision

- 4.1 Six months after the correspondent has been advised that their complaint and/or correspondence is vexatious, they can request a review. If such a request is received, the sub-committee should meet to consider whether there has been any improvement in the vexatious behaviour over that time. The Mayor/Deputy Mayor should write to the correspondent advising them of the outcome of the review. If the behaviour has improved, future correspondence can be treated in the normal way. If there has not been a significant improvement, the correspondence will continue to be treated as vexatious with the correspondent being able to request a review after a further six month period.

5 Further advice and guidance

- 5.1 Defining complaints and/or correspondence as vexatious is a very serious step and will only be undertaken as a last resort. For that reason, it is essential that the decision to treat correspondence or complaints as vexatious is evidence-based and reviewed regularly.

For further information:

Information Commissioner's Office:

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/foi-eir-and-access-to-information/freedom-of-information-and-environmental-information-regulations/section-14-dealing-with-vexatious-requests/>

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman:

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/information-for-organisations-we-investigate/councils/guidance-notes/guidance-on-managing-unreasonable-complainant-behaviour>

5.2 Any concerns about a particular correspondent should be discussed with the Mayor/Deputy Mayor in the first instance.

6 Document change history

Date	Changes made
2 nd February 2024	Template policy amended for Swanage Town Council.
20 th March 2024	Draft Policy presented to Finance & Governance Committee for recommendation to adopt.
	Policy adopted by Full Council.
	Policy review date (initially 6 monthly)

Budget Monitoring Report - Income & Expenditure Account

Quarter ending 30th June 2024

Summary

At the end of the 1st quarter the Council's revenue account is showing a negative variance of £21.6k against budget.

Service	Q1			Annual	
	Net Expenditure	Budgeted Net Expenditure	Variance Year to Date	Budgeted Net Expenditure	Forecast Out-turn
Car Parks	(197,996)	(193,356)	(4,640)	(521,795)	(524,491)
Co-op	(6,097)	(6,375)	278	(24,500)	(24,222)
Boat Park	(9,133)	(49,215)	40,082	(45,750)	(5,668)
Public Conveniences	37,492	34,568	2,924	168,295	171,220
Burl Chine Chalets	0	0	0	(155)	(155)
Cemeteries	(8,423)	(7,819)	(604)	(20,405)	(21,010)
Parks and Operations	158,187	158,754	(567)	693,890	692,692
King George's Field Management Acc't	(3,743)	(37)	(3,706)	0	(3,705)
CCTV	2,436	2,450	(14)	4,550	4,536
Beach Gardens	(1,925)	1,268	(3,193)	13,865	10,672
Downs/Misc Grounds/PAG	(1,523)	(1,750)	227	40,930	41,157
Beaches/Foreshore	28,491	34,681	(6,190)	80,650	85,709
Beach Chalets/Bungalows	(158,745)	(149,291)	(9,454)	(119,890)	(129,344)
Publicity/Tourism	57,302	58,495	(1,193)	271,945	270,752
Allotments	(3,923)	(3,890)	(33)	(6,825)	(6,858)
General Buildings (inc. Caravan park)	(14,305)	(14,988)	683	(73,455)	(72,774)
Central services to the public:	218,277	144,254	74,023	480,735	554,758
DRM	9,177	8,200	977	86,190	87,167
Corp Management	473	880	(407)	40,115	39,708
Net Cost of Services	106,022	16,829	89,193	1,068,390	1,170,144
Non-Service Expenditure					
Community Infrastructure Levy	(71,896)	0	(71,896)	0	(71,896)
Grants/Donations - to EMR	0	0	0	(3,000)	(3,000)
Precept on Dorset Council	(439,375)	(439,375)	0	(878,750)	(878,750)
Interest payable and similar charges	901	1,138	(237)	4,600	4,363
Interest and investment income	(72,880)	(65,250)	(7,630)	(240,000)	(247,630)
Net Operating expenditure	(477,228)	(486,658)	9,430	(48,760)	(26,769)
Other Movements on the General Fund					
Appropriation to Reserves	79,526	0	79,526	80,000	159,526
Appropriation from Reserves	(67,289)	0	(67,289)	(24,500)	(91,789)
Financing Capital Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
(Surplus)/Deficit for the Period	(464,991)	(486,658)	21,667	6,740	40,968

Car Parks

Car parking realised a net surplus of £198k for the period against a budgeted surplus of £193k, a positive variance of £5k.

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Employee Costs	14,798	14,367	430	57,470	57,900
Expenditure	49,631	52,011	(2,380)	202,545	202,165
Income	(262,425)	(259,735)	(2,690)	(781,810)	(784,556)
Net Expenditure	(197,996)	(193,356)	(4,640)	(521,795)	(524,491)

As shown in the summary above, income has exceeded budget during the 1st quarter by £2.6k. However, this includes £3.5k of income from the recharge of electricity for the EVCPs, which essentially offsets expenditure. It had been anticipated at budget setting that the Podpoint EVCPs would have been replaced by the Mer chargers. The installation has been delayed and the current arrangement for the supply and recharge of electricity will be ongoing until such a time as the new chargers are installed.

For the second consecutive year, after 10 years of static charges, the tariffs in the long stay car parks were increased, combined with a change in the tariff structure in the long stay car parks to accommodate larger vehicles. An increase of £77k in the budgets for car parking revenue was set above that from the budget set for the prior year.

Table 1: Long Stay Car Parks Net Revenue and Usage (data from ASLAN/Flowbird Web Office/JustPark)

	Main Beach & King Georges		North Beach		Broad Road		Total	
2022/23								
April	6,316	£23,290	337	£1,197	6,400	£21,003	13,053	£45,490
May	6,903	£27,227	558	£1,826	6,744	£23,855	14,205	£52,908
June	8,778	£34,509	880	£3,077	8,145	£28,186	17,803	£65,773
Q1 Total	21,997	£85,026	1,775	£6,100	21,289	£73,044	45,061	£164,170
2023/24								
April	6,303	£24,190	480	£1,574	7,173	£25,268	13,956	£51,032
May	8,427	£34,469	857	£3,116	7,876	£28,490	17,160	£66,075
June	9,149	£39,703	938	£3,534	8,650	£30,748	18,737	£73,984
Q1 Total	23,879	£98,362	2,275	£8,224	23,699	£84,505	49,853	£191,091
2024/23								
April	5,496	£22,005	227	£757	6,024	£22,305	11,747	£45,067
May	7,886	£41,430	752	£2,824	8,375	£34,543	17,013	£78,797
June	9,674	£43,441	881	£3,420	8,698	£35,520	19,253	£82,381
Q1 Total	23,056	£106,877	1,860	£7,001	23,097	£92,367	48,013	£206,245

As can be seen in table 1 above, overall visitor numbers in the 1st quarter were lower than in 2023/24. However, revenue is £15k higher, due to the increases in charges/ changes in tariff structure. There are no reportable variances, although Broad Road is £3k above budget year to date, with Mermond and North Beach both £2k below budget, other car parks are as per budget at the end of the quarter.

Expenditure is largely as per budget in the 1st quarter, with the only variances being electricity (as detailed earlier) and Market expenditure. £2k was allocated for a storage facility at the market. However, this may not be required due to alternative facilities being sourced, but the budget remains available.

Projecting forward to year-end, a surplus of £524k is anticipated against a budgeted surplus of £521k a variance of £3k.

Boat Park & Fishers' Huts

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Employee Costs	6,644	5,490	1,154	15,630	16,784
Expenditure	44,891	5,549	39,342	16,235	55,577
Income	(60,668)	(60,254)	(414)	(77,615)	(78,029)
Net Expenditure	(9,133)	(49,215)	40,082	(45,750)	(5,668)

Income for the boat park has largely been as per budget for the 1st quarter.

Expenditure is over budget at the end of the quarter, £39k in total, with the variance relating solely to the jetty repairs, Appendix A ref AD1 refers.

The year-end forecast shows an outturn of a surplus of £5k against a budgeted surplus of £45k, a negative variance of £40k.

Public Conveniences

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Expenditure	39,917	37,243	2,674	179,970	182,645
Income	(2,425)	(2,675)	250	(11,675)	(11,425)
Net Expenditure	37,492	34,568	2,924	168,295	171,220

Expenditure is £2.6k overspent year to date and this relates to demand driven utility costs.

Cemeteries

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Expenditure	1,454	1,371	82	15,035	15,117
Income	(9,877)	(9,190)	(687)	(35,440)	(36,127)
Net Expenditure	(8,423)	(7,819)	(605)	(20,405)	(21,010)

Income and expenditure are largely as per budget year to date, with no significant variances to report.

A budget of £7k was initially provided for repairs to the wall at Northbrook cemetery. This is anticipated to be under budget by £3k. The Assets and Compliance Manager has requested that this underspend be reallocated under a virement to the Festive Lights budget (under Parks & Operations) due to anticipated overspends with a requirement to replace and repair lights throughout the Town. Appendix A ref: 2 refers.

Parks & Operations

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Employee Costs	139,745	142,789	(3,043)	586,575	583,532
Expenditure	53,462	50,515	2,947	220,290	220,731
Income	(35,021)	(34,550)	(471)	(112,975)	(111,571)
Net Expenditure	158,187	158,754	(567)	693,890	692,692

At the end of the 1st quarter the Parks & Operations department is on budget in total. Income is £4k under budget for property rents at the hardstanding. This is due to a delay in the start of leases for two concessions.

Overall expenditure is generally within budget year to date, with the only significant variances being costs for utilities installation at the Hardstanding, which will be recharged, and expenditure incurred for repairs to a cabstar with this vehicle due to be replaced during Q2. Additional costs for repairs to the seafront lighting may be incurred in Q2, and as reported above, a virement of £3k has been made from cemeteries to accommodate this additional expenditure.

Beach Gardens

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Employee Costs	12,276	11,250	1,026	27,050	28,076
Expenditure	9,907	13,333	(3,425)	44,685	41,260
Income	(24,109)	(23,315)	(794)	(57,870)	(58,664)
Net Expenditure	(1,925)	1,268	(3,193)	13,865	10,672

This department has realised a positive variance of £3k at the end of the 1st quarter. Income is generally as per budget, with small variances only.

A budget of £3k was initially agreed for the installation of an awning at the Kiosk. Following quotes, an uplift of £1.27k was requested and approved, with a vire of this amount from Parks & Gardens Appendix A ref 10 refers.

A deficit of £10.6k is now forecast against a budgeted deficit of £13.8k.

The Downs

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Expenditure	1,717	1,353	364	53,340	53,704
Income	(3,240)	(3,103)	(138)	(12,410)	(12,548)
Net Expenditure	(1,523)	(1,750)	227	40,930	41,157

There has been little activity in this area year to date, with small variances over several budget headings being seen.

The full year budget includes £47k for repairing works to the footpaths in Prince Albert Gardens. The original budget of £40k was increased by £7k, with a vire from Parks & Gardens, Appendix A ref 3 refers.

Beaches & Foreshore

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Employee Costs	13,731	16,075	(2,344)	46,015	43,671
Expenditure	42,993	50,589	(7,596)	80,905	73,309
Income	(28,233)	(31,983)	3,750	(46,270)	(31,271)
Net Expenditure	28,491	34,681	(6,190)	80,650	85,709

At the end of the 1st quarter a positive variance of £6.1k has been seen in this department.

Income year to date is £3.7k under budget, due to the delayed commencement of the new concessions. A budget of £15k was applied in anticipation of a beach refreshment concession following a tender. However, following the setting of the budgets this concession did not come to fruition. A £15k variance is therefore anticipated for revenue in this department for the full year.

Expenditure is under budget with a £7.5k variance relating to seaweed removal and repairs & maintenance costs, £4.7k and £2.4k respectively. Changes were made to the treatment of seaweed post budget setting, with a trial of pushing the seaweed back rather than disposal and as such the variances may increase during the next quarter. Although under budget year to date, the r&m budget may be expensed at the end of the season.

Overall, a revised year-end outturn of a net deficit of £85k against a budget of £80k is being projected at the end of the quarter, with the negative variance for income being partially offset by the positive expenditure variance.

Beach Huts

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Expenditure	13,593	15,159	(1,565)	53,360	51,795
Income	(172,338)	(164,450)	(7,888)	(173,250)	(181,138)
Net Expenditure	(158,745)	(149,291)	(9,454)	(119,890)	(129,344)

Beach hut income is above budget at the end of the quarter by £7.8k. This relates to the Shore Road Beach Huts.

Expenditure is generally as per budget with only minor variances. Overall year-end projections have been revised to a surplus of £129k against a budgeted surplus of £119k.

Publicity & Tourism

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Employee Costs	55,986	56,695	(709)	220,400	219,691
Expenditure	15,775	15,890	(115)	83,355	83,240
Income	(14,459)	(14,090)	(369)	(31,810)	(32,179)
Net Expenditure	57,302	58,495	(1,193)	271,945	270,752

At the end of the 1st quarter a positive variance of £1.1k has been realised. Income and expenditure are generally as per budget with only minor variances.

Allotments

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Expenditure	598	710	(112)	2,575	2,463
Income	(4,521)	(4,600)	79	(9,400)	(9,321)
Net Expenditure	(3,923)	(3,890)	(33)	(6,825)	(6,858)

To date allotments have performed largely as per budget, with very little activity to report.

General Buildings/Misc Areas (incl roads)

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Expenditure	1,821	2,450	(629)	4,500	3,871
Income	(16,126)	(17,438)	1,312	(77,955)	(76,645)
Net Expenditure	(14,305)	(14,988)	683	(73,455)	(72,774)

Year to date a £0.6k variance has been realised. The variance in income noted as being due to no rent having been received year to date for the old Taxi Office, pending a new lease agreement with Swanage Railway.

Central Services

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Employee Costs	84,662	86,878	(2,215)	347,510	345,295
Expenditure	142,780	60,626	82,153	150,525	236,678
Income	(9,165)	(3,250)	(5,915)	(17,300)	(23,215)
Net Expenditure	218,277	144,254	74,023	480,735	558,758

The variance in income relates to a recharge of legal fees, offsetting a certain amount of expenditure.

Expenditure is significantly over budget, £84k. £70k of this expenditure relates to the deferred Town Hall repairs originally budgeted for in 2023/24, Appendix A ref BF1 refers. £67k of this expenditure is to be funded from an earmarked reserve. Legal and professional fees are significantly above budget £14k, with £4k of this approved by Council on 29th April 2024 (Minute No. 224) for VAT advice for the redevelopment of the football club. Significant additional legal and professional fees have been incurred for the leases for the new concessions on the hardstanding and other matters, which will be recharged. Employee costs are under budget, although not significantly, with one post recruited to during the 1st quarter and all posts now appointed.

Corporate Management & Democratic Services

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Expenditure	9,650	9,080	570	126,305	126,875
Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Expenditure	9,650	9,080	570	126,305	126,875

These two departments are largely as per budget at the end of the 1st quarter.

King George's Management Account

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Projected Outturn Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Expenditure	1,682	2,463	(781)	9,100	8,319
Income	(5,424)	(2,500)	(2,924)	(9,100)	(12,024)
Net Expenditure	(3,743)	(37)	(3,706)	0	(3,705)

In 2023/24, following a review of the Council's charitable Trusts, a management agreement was entered into between the Trust and the Council, with activity for King Georges' field being separated out from the general Parks & Operations departmental activity.

Income from overflow car parking is £3.7k above budget year to date. This is the first year that the overflow car park has had a separate cashless parking code from Main Beach, giving a better allocation of revenue to this new cost centre. Any surplus at year end will be transferred to an earmarked reserve.

Employee Costs

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Car Parks	12,794	12,887	(94)	51,550	51,456
Market-CSA	2,004	1,480	524	5,920	6,444
Boat Park Attendant/CSA	6,644	5,490	1,154	15,630	16,784
Parks & Operations	139,745	142,789	(3,043)	586,575	583,532
Beach Gardens	12,522	11,760	762	31,615	32,377
Beaches - Cleaner	1,209	4,315	(3,106)	14,400	11,294
Beaches – Seafront Advisor	12,276	11,250	1,026	27,050	28,076
Tourism	55,986	56,695	(709)	220,400	219,691
Central Services	84,662	86,878	(2,215)	347,510	345,295
Total	327,842	333,544	(5,702)	1,300,650	1,294,948

At the end of the 1st quarter a positive variance of £5.7k was realised. In respect of the 2024/25 local government pay award, a provision of 4% has been made based upon an average of the employers' offer a flat rate of £1,200, 3%-5%.

Difficulties in recruiting seasonal employees has once again led to the redeployment of permanent employees to cover the post of beach warden/seafront advisor. Seasonal employees are generally recruited on a flexible basis, and this could lead to positive variances during the remainder of the season.

Interest & Investment Income

	Q1			Annual	
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Budget	Forecast Outturn - Q1
	£	£	£	£	£
Net Expenditure	(72,880)	(65,250)	(7,630)	(240,000)	(247,630)

The Council's investment portfolio at 30 June 2024:

Investment Portfolio	31.03.24 Balance £	Net Movement £	30.06.24 Balance £	30.06.24 Income Return %
Banks and building societies (unsecured)	83,812	-34,877	48,935	
Money Market Funds	750,000	0	750,000	
UK Govt/DMADF	1,200,000	400,000	1,600,000	
Total Internal Investments	2,033,812	365,123	2,398,935	5.10%
Investments in Pooled Funds (Fair value):				
Property	2,873,245	-14,186	2,859,059	
Multi-Asset	440,863	-6,524	434,339	
Bonds	866,343	-9,075	857,268	
Total External Funds	4,180,451	-29,785	4,150,666	5.08%
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	6,214,263	335,338	6,549,601	5.09%

Short-Term Investments

In total the Council's short-term investment portfolio increased by £365k during the course of Q1, with the first tranche of the precept being received in April. Investment activity has been limited to the placing of funds in the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility (DMADF) as short term interest rates continue to be slightly higher than the returns on long-term investments, at an average of 5.10% in the council's portfolio.

Strategic Investments

The Council has continued to hold the units held in CCLA Property Fund, Ninety-One Diversified Income Fund and M&G Strategic Corporate Bond Fund. Income has remained high, averaging 5.08% for these funds. However, there remains unrealised capital losses for two of the council's investments

of £208k, albeit with an unrealised capital gain overall of £150k. A breakdown of the investments is shown in Appendix B.

It is highly likely that variances will occur from budget with fluctuations to interest rates from those assumed at budget setting, and the reprofiling of the capital programme. The variance of £7,630 seen at the end of Q1 was transferred to the Treasury Risk Management Reserve as per policy.

Revenue Account - General Overview

At the end of the 1st quarter of the council's financial year, net expenditure is £21.6k over budget

The main contributor to this variance is the additional works approved for the repairs to the jetty, with £40k costs attributed to this project. Although costs of £70k have been incurred on the repairs to the Town Hall, this was financed from Earmarked reserves, with the project initially programmed for 23/24.

A schedule of significant expenditure is provided in Appendix A. £133k was approved for this financial year. A further £67k has been brought forward from 2023/24, with funds placed in an earmarked reserve at the end of 2023/24 to finance these works, although the actual expenditure exceeded this sum by £3.2k. Additionally, a further £40k of expenditure has been identified as being required during the 1st quarter of the financial year and has been approved providing a supplementary budget.

Presently, a deficit on the general fund of £40.9k is forecast at year-end, against a budgeted deficit of £6.7k, a variance of £34k. Additional expenditure may be required during the course of the next quarter, whereby virements will be called upon in the first instance when looking for approval for such items. Additional income may also be forthcoming with the resolution of longstanding discussions over access rights for drainage on a new housing development.

Reserves and Balances held 30th June 2024

A summary of the reserves and balances held at 30th June 2024 is given below:

	Balance 31/03/2024 £	Movement in Year £	Balance 30/06/2024 £
General Fund	873,555	464,991	1,338,546
Earmarked Reserves	2,821,915	12,238	2,834,153
Capital Receipts Reserve	2,118,147	(4,662)	2,113,485
Total	5,813,617	472,567	6,286,184

Detailed movements on the General Fund are shown on page 1 of the Q1 Budget Report.

Earmarked Reserves

The Council holds the following earmarked reserves:

	Actual 31/03/2024 £	Transfer to/(from) reserve £	Balance 30/06/2024 £
Beach Huts Reserve	85,000	0	85,000
Environmental Projects Reserve	42,000	0	42,000
Community Infrastructure Levy	260,881	71,897	332,778
De Moulham Back Roads	25,180	0	25,180
Insurance & Contingency Reserve	19,000	0	19,000
Treasury Risk Management Reserve	122,002	7,630	129,632
Car Park Machines	44,248	0	44,248
Play Equipment-General Areas	31,406	0	31,406
Vehicle & Plant Replacement	25,000	0	25,000
Football Club Facilities	3,120	0	3,120
Tennis Courts Refurbishment	22,378	0	22,378
King Georges Play Area & Skate Park	67,097	0	67,097
Public Conveniences	130,000	0	130,000
IT Equipment Reserves	28,164	0	28,164
Seafront Stabilisation & Enhancement Scheme	1,394,557	0	1,394,557
Community Sea Defence Project	450,000	0	450,000
C fwd Unspent committed expenditure	67,289	(67,289)	-
King George's Field Management Account	4,593	0	4,593
Total	2,821,915	12,238	2,834,153

Significant One Off Revenue Expenditure/Minor Works - 2024/25

<u>Ref:</u>	<u>Service Area</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual Expenditure to date</u>	<u>Works programmed</u>	<u>Status Update</u>
	Projects for 2024/25					
1	Public Conveniences	Heritage - Remedial & damp alleviation works	22,000	-	October	
2	Cemeteries	Northbrook - Wall repairs, north east elevation	4,000	-	July	Ongoing – Original budget of £7k-£3k vire to Festive Lights
3	PAG	Prince Albert Gardens - Pathway repairs	47,000	-	September	Minute 4 F&G 17th June 2024 - £7k vire from ref 10
4	TIC	Garden Improvements	5,000	-	October	
5	TIC	Flooring and internal reconfiguration	12,000	-	January	
6	Car Parks	North Beach Car Park partial resurface	15,000	-	October	Project to be reviewed
7	Spa	Ground monitoring - 7 months	9,800	4,200	Monthly	
8	DRM	Website improvements	8,000	-	October	
9	Central Services	Server Replacement	5,500	-	July	
10	Parks & Gardens	Electricity-Parks & Gardens	1,730	-	January	Project deferred. Budget - £7k vire to Ref 3. £1270 vire to Beach Gardens
			130,030	4,200		

Projects brought forward from 2023/24

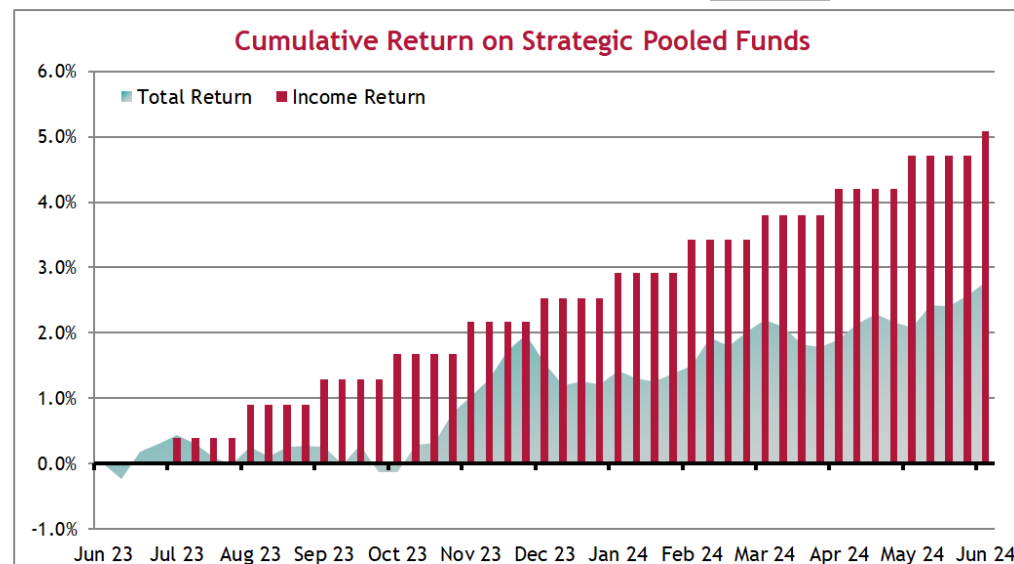
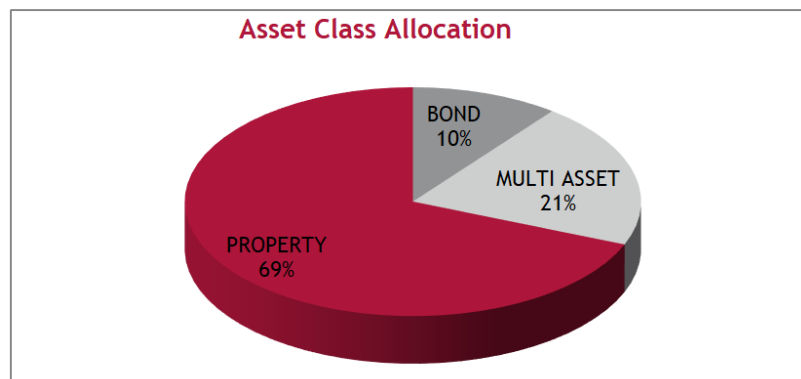
BF1	Central Services	Town Hall & Annexe external redecoration	67,289	70,584	Q1	Budgeted for 2023/24- Works delayed. Carried out in 24/25 Completed
BF2	Multiple Service Areas	LED Lighting various areas	18,200	-	Q2	Additional budget approved Monthly meeting 18th December 2023 Minute 156 c) 50% grant funding
			85,489	70,584		

Additional projects for 2024/25

AD1	Boat Park	Jetty Repairs	42,668	40,641	Q1	Agreed: Minute 228 (d) Council meeting 29th April 2024 - Complete
			42,668	40,641		

Strategic Pooled Fund Portfolio – 30/06/2024

STRATEGIC POOLED FUND PORTFOLIO				SWANAGE			From:	30/06/2023	To:	30/06/2024
FUND NAME	ASSET CLASS	No of Units Held in Period	Current Value £	Capital Growth £	Dividends Earned £	Holding Period (yrs)	Capital Return	Income Return	Total Return	Volatility
CCLA - LAMIT PROPERTY FUND	PROPERTY	1,053,526	2,859,059	-126,739	153,114	1.0	-4.24%	5.13%	0.88%	1.0%
M&G STRATEGIC CORPORATE BOND FUND	BOND	494,241	434,339	28,518	20,862	1.0	7.03%	5.14%	12.17%	7.6%
NINETY ONE (INVESTEC) DIVERSIFIED INCOME FUND	MULTI ASSET	955,126	857,268	361	41,967	1.0	0.04%	4.90%	4.94%	3.9%
GRAND TOTAL			4,150,666	-97,860	215,943	1.0	-2.30%	5.08%	2.78%	1.6%
Unrealised capital gain since purchase:				148,166	Annualised income return:		5.08%	Average Bank Rate: 5.23%		



Capital Programme – Monitoring Report 2024/25

Project Ref:	Project	2024/25 Budget	Forecast Outturn for the year	Actual Expenditure Year to Date	Status
		£	£	£	
Approved Projects-2024/25 Estimates					
1	Play Areas/Skate Park King Georges Skate Park	15,000	15,000	0	Ongoing
2	Station Approach Infrastructure Improvements	120,000	154,000	0	Ongoing
3	Downs Peveril Point Stabilisation Scheme	150,000	200,000	0	Ongoing
4	Spa & Seafront Green Seafront Stabilisation & Enhancement Scheme	120,000	120,000	0	Ongoing
5	Capital Grants Football Club redevelopment	70,000	70,000	0	Ongoing
6	Beach Gardens Installation of Astroturf on Courts 4 & 5	15,000	15,000	0	Ongoing
	Subtotal	490,000	574,000	0	
Projects brought forward from 2023/24					
BF1	Depot External Shelter	15,750	11,280	0	Ongoing- Works started
BF2	Environmental Installation of PV panels - Beach Gardens & Depot	128,000	46,620	4,622	Ongoing-Works started
BF3	Vehicles Electric Flatbed Truck	50,000	42,945	0	Ongoing
BF4	Car Parks EVCP Installation – For information only	0	0	0	Ongoing
	Expenditure B fwd Subtotal	193,750	100,845	4,622	
Approved Additional Projects 2024/25					
AD 1	Car Parks Pay & Display Machine Replacement	44,000	44,000	0	Ongoing
	Additional Projects Subtotal	44,000	44,000	0	
	Total Capital Expenditure	727,750	718,845	4,622	

Project Updates:

1: Play Areas/Skate Park: King Georges Equipment Replacement

Discussions continue with the Swanage Skatepark Community Project regarding the scheme and financing of the project. Due to the requirement for external funding the project date is uncertain, although the Group are currently aiming for a stage 1 installation in the spring of 2025. The Council continues to commit to the project and working with the community group.

Ongoing. Financing- Earmarked reserves (EMR).

2: Station Approach-Infrastructure improvements

A budget of £120k was allocated to this project for 2024/25. It was reported to the Council meeting on 24th June 2024 that the estimated costs for this project had increased to £154k. Council approved, Minute 50 (b), a budget of £154k subject to an appropriate contribution from the Co-operative Group (who lease the land on which a significant proportion of the works will need to take place). Once discussions have concluded with the Cooperative, it is anticipated that a contract will be awarded.
Ongoing. Financing -UCRR & Third Party Contributions.

3: Downs-Peveril Point Stabilisation Scheme

The Finance & Governance Committee considered an uplift in the budget of £95k on 1st November 2023. A budget of £200k was recommended to Council, which was approved on 11th December 2023, Minute 134, and to proceed to tender via contracts finder with the additional £105k to be funded from the CIL reserve. This project was deferred from 2023/24, with a £50k budget for that year moving to 2024/25. Discussions with Dorset Council are ongoing regarding the Project Management of this scheme. **Ongoing. Financing -UCRR/CIL**

4. Spa & Seafront- Green Seafront Stabilisation & Enhancement Scheme

At its meeting held on 29th January 2024, Minute 180, Council agreed to commission the development of a proposal for taking forward the Green Seafront Scheme as a joint project with Dorset Council, to be presented to a relevant Council or Committee meeting in spring 2024. It was acknowledged that Dorset Council would have additional access to resources and could offer more officer time and expertise to progress the project. Estimated project management fees are being presented to the July Council Meeting.

A cost analysis of the financial estimates provided by WSP, for both the enhanced and essential schemes, has been commissioned to provide more precise project costings, and a report will be provided to a future Council meeting.

Ongoing. Financing -EMR/UCRR

5: Capital Grants – Football Club - Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust

A budget of £70,000 was provided in 2023/24 for a grant to the Swanage & Purbeck Development Trust to progress the redevelopment of the Football Club facilities and total of £13,200 was drawn down. The project has developed and is now to be led by Swanage & Herston Football Club Ltd. At its meeting on 29th January 2024, Council approved an initial drawdown of £13,200, Minute 181 refers. At the Council Meeting held on 24th June 2024 it was agreed that a further £26,312 will be released subject to VAT advice. **Ongoing – Financing – UCRR**

6: Beach Gardens – Installation of AstroTurf on Courts 4 & 5

Discussions have been held with Swanage Tennis Club regarding the installation of astroTurf on courts 4 and 5 at Beach Gardens. This will be part-funded by the Tennis Club's infrastructure reserve. Final approval is subject to a review of the court maintenance contributions made by the Club. Installation is currently anticipated in the spring of 2025.

Ongoing. Financing -EMR

BF1: Depot-External Shelter

Quotes were received for these works, and contracts awarded as approved by Council on 29th January 2024, Minute 187 c). Works have commenced and are ongoing. **Ongoing. Financing -UCRR.**

BF2: Environmental- Carbon Neutral 2030 Implementation

Procurement of the design, supply and installation of the PV panels was undertaken via Contracts Finder in November 2023 and the contract was awarded to Dorset Energy Solutions. Low carbon Dorset confirmed a grant for 50% of the costs (including 50% funding of LED replacement lighting in some council buildings: see revenue account). It is expected that works will be completed by October 2024. **Ongoing. Financing -UCRR/Grant funding**

BF3. Vehicles-Electric Flatbed Truck

An order was placed in February 2024 for an electric Ford Transit Leader Single Chassis Cab 350. Delivery is expected in July/August 2024. **Ongoing: Financing-UCRR**

BF4: Car Parks – Electric Vehicle Charging Point Installation

Initially introduced as a £20,000 Council project in 2023/24, alternative ways of delivering these facilities at nil cost to the Council were researched and it was discovered that the installation of EVCPs could be delivered as part of Dorset Council's 'Charging Ahead' project, via a licence agreement with Joju and Mer.

Lengthy consideration has been given to this project and at the Extraordinary Meeting of the council held on 29th June 2024 Minute 228 (a) it was resolved to enter into a contract with Joju charging for the installation of six EVCP chargers in the Main & North Beach car parks, subject to funding from a 'Charging Ahead' grant from Dorset Council.

It was further resolved to approve the installation of three rapid chargers in Mermond car park, subject to the satisfactory review of the legal agreement with Joju charging.

Ongoing: – Third Party Contributions

AD1: Car Parks – Pay & Display Machines

The Finance & Governance Committee recommended to expedite the purchase of new pay & display machines in some of the council's car parks for operational purposes. This was approved by Council at the meeting held 24th June 2024, with a budget of £44,000 approved for the purchase and installation of machines. **Ongoing. Financing - EMR**

Alison Spencer - Finance Manager

Martin Ayres-Town Clerk

Gail Percival-Assets and Compliance Manager

July 2024

STC Priorities Winter/Spring 2023/24 - Outturn Report

Item 5 a)

Project	Urgency - H/M/L	What does success look like @ 31st May 2024?	% Complete				
			<25%	25%<50%	50%<75%	>75%	
Good Governance							
Financial Planning	H	Council has adopted medium term financial strategy.					
Off-Street Parking Places Order	H	Order made.					
Charitable Trust Review	H	Action plan in advanced stage of implementation.					
Asset Review	H	Property Panel to have completed review and recommendations made to Council regarding any surplus assets identified.					
Lease and licence renewals & rent reviews	H	Rent reviews completed and new licences/leases in place.					
Improve access to Transparency Code Data and Revise Asset Register	H	All relevant data accessible via a single webpage.					
Complete review of Data Protection policies and procedures	H	Full suite of policy documents adopted.					
Finalise lease/licence agreements North Beach and Peveril Point	M	Outstanding lease/licence agreements finalised.					
Develop Communications Plan	M	Plan to be reviewed and priorities actioned.					
Tender new Council website	M	Tender process for a website fully compliant with accessibility regs at an advanced stage.					
Local Economy and Tourism							
Green Seafront Scheme	H	Preferred option identified and project plan agreed.					
Concessions Plan	H	Concessions awarded and agreements in place.					
Develop Marketing Strategy	H	Tourism website live.					
Community Services, Health and Wellbeing							
Investigate options for footpath linking Washpond Lane and Northbrook Road	H	Discussions concluded with stakeholders and outcome determined.					
Washpond Lane/Ulwell Road land	H	Asset transfer completed.					
Progress Football Club redevelopment proposals	H	Preferred option identified and public consultation planned.					
Peveril Point Road stabilisation/improvements	H	Work commissioned					
Town Hall services review	M	Operation of Town Hall/Police help desk reviewed and new opening hours in place; future operation of CAB/Registration agreed.					
Beach Gardens future plan	M	Meetings held with Bowls and Tennis Clubs and outline plan agreed for way ahead, together with financial contributions.					
Planning & Heritage							
Produce Neighbourhood Plan	H	First round public consultation completed and draft plan under preparation.					
Station Approach Improvements	H	Work commissioned					
Environment & Climate Crisis							
Implement next stage of Environmental Action Plan	H	LED lighting, solar panels and EVCPs installed. Next priorities from Environmental Action Plan identified.					

Proposed STC Priorities Summer/Autumn 2024

Item 5 b)

Project	Urgency - H/M/L	What does success look like @ 31st December 2024?	Immediate Next Steps
Good Governance			
Budget Setting 2024/25	H	Draft budget presented to F&G Committee.	Prepare draft budgets and present to autumn committee meetings.
Corporate Plan 2025-29	H	Draft plan prepared for public consultation.	Arrange councillor workshops and plan process for consultation and adoption.
Charitable Trust Review	H	Action plan in advanced stage of implementation.	Follow up response from Charity Commission; complete transfer of James Day Trust
Asset Review	H	Property Panel to have completed review and recommendations made to Council regarding any surplus assets identified.	Property Panel to meet to complete review of list of assets.
Committee Structure Review	H	Review of committee structure complete.	Prepare report for autumn meeting of F&G Committee.
Implement Parking Order	H	New signage installed and site-specific parking arrangements in place (e.g. Mowlem turning circle, Peveril Point Rd).	Signage to be designed and ordered. Public engagement re. Peveril Pass scheme.
Lease and licence renewals & rent reviews, including North Beach & Peveril Point	H	Rent reviews completed and new licences/leases in place.	Valuer recommendations to be presented to Council; solicitors to be instructed.
Implement Data Protection policies and procedures	H	Significant progress made towards implementation of One West Action Plan	Tailor document retention policy and commence implementation
Communications Plan	H	Plan to be reviewed and priorities actioned.	Adopted plan to be reviewed. Arrange meeting of communications working party for September.
New Council website	H	Undertake process for a website fully compliant with accessibility regs at an advanced stage.	Develop new website in consultation with communications strategy working party.
Local Economy and Tourism			
Green Seafront Scheme	H	Preferred option identified and next phase of public consultation planned.	Review revised costings and Shore Road options autumn 2024.
Concessions Plan	H	Procurement underway for any additional concessions.	Review concessions options for Main Beach Car Park.
Car Park Cash Collection	H	Procurement completed.	Plan procurement exercise.
Swanage Coastal Defence Scheme	H	Agree public realm improvements to be delivered as part of scheme.	Continue to participate in Dorset Council project team and board meetings.
Private Site Beach Hut Review	M	Review completed and any amendments to agreement drafted.	Determine format of review.

Community Services, Health and Wellbeing			
Investigate options for footpath linking Washpond Lane and Northbrook Road	H	Discussions concluded with stakeholders and outcome determined.	Once received, consider advice from Dorset Council.
Washpond Lane/Ulwell Road land	H	Asset transfer from Dorset Council to Swanage Community Housing Group completed.	Town Council to continue to attend meetings and assist in driving project forward.
Day's Park Community Sports Facility	H	Planning permission obtained, legal entity registered and community fundraising underway.	Continue regular meetings with S&HFC Ltd.
Peveril Point Road stabilisation/improvements	H	Work commissioned	Finalise project and undertake procurement.
Beach Gardens future plan	H	Outline 3-year plan drafted and agreed with Bowls and Tennis Clubs.	Develop draft three-year plan and consult with sports clubs.
Swanage Skatepark Community Project	M	Plan for phase 1 installation completed.	Support SSCP in development of proposals and plan procurement of phase 1.
Beach Gardens Tennis Court Upgrade	M	Plan for installation completed.	Complete agreement re. future reserve contributions with Tennis Club and plan procurement.
Town Hall services review	M	Operation of Town Hall/Police help desk reviewed and new opening hours in place; future operation of CAB/Registration agreed.	Liaise with partners and develop timetable for reopening joint help desk, in consultation with communications strategy working party.
Planning & Heritage			
Produce Neighbourhood Plan	H	First round public consultation completed and draft plan under preparation.	Plan initial round of public consultation.
Station Approach Improvements	H	Work commissioned.	Conclude negotiations with Cooperative Group and place order.
Environment & Climate Crisis			
Instal additional EVCPs in Car Parks	H	Legal agreements signed and installation programme agreed.	Finalise legal documents.
Implement next stage of Environmental Action Plan	H	LED lighting, solar panels and EVCPs installed. Next priorities from Environmental Action Plan identified.	Working party to review action plan to identify priorities.