Council – 14 January 2026 **Item 12**

Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council

Report: Shoreline Paths Project – Funding Approval

Purpose: To consider and approve a funding request from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) for the Shoreline Paths Project within the parish area.

1. Background

The Shoreline Paths Project is a coastal access and public realm improvement scheme being delivered by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) within the Highcliffe and Walkford Parish area.

The project seeks to:

- Improve accessibility along existing shoreline paths
- Enhance connectivity between routes and seating areas
- Improve safety and usability for residents and visitors
- Support inclusive access for users with limited mobility

Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council has been engaged in dialogue with BCP officers throughout the project's development and has previously indicated support in principle, subject to satisfactory design detail and planning status.

BCP has now confirmed that a planning application has been submitted, supported by updated drawings that incorporate minor amendments requested by engineers, including additional pinning where gradients exceed 12% and improved ramp geometry to allow more gradual access to seating areas.

BCP is seeking a formal written commitment from HWPC to **approve £110,000 of funding** towards delivery of the scheme.

2. Current Position and Design Considerations

Correspondence from BCP confirms the following:

- **East Ramp Handrail:**
  A handrail has not been included at this stage due to time constraints linked to submission of the planning application. Engineers have confirmed that a handrail could be retrofitted at a later date without compromising path construction. This can be reviewed once the path is laid and subject to budget and any further permissions required.

- **Signage:**
  Suggested signage locations have been acknowledged and will be progressed in the new year, including seeking any necessary permissions.
- **Ramp Junctions:**
  The west ramp intersects with the lower path at a single bell mouth. Dimensions have been added to drawings to clearly identify the interface between the new Bodpave40 surfacing and existing paths.
- **Updated Drawings:**
  Revised drawings submitted with the planning application reflect these changes and include notes addressing construction on steeper gradients and improved accessibility to benches. These are attached to this report and will be in hard copy for members to review at council.

3. Funding and VAT Considerations

BCP has requested confirmation that HWPC's £110,000 contribution is:

- Made solely for the benefit of local residents and visitors
- Not linked to any goods, services, or direct return to the Parish Council

This confirmation is required to establish that **VAT is not chargeable** on the funding contribution. A short written statement from HWPC will satisfy this requirement for BCP's tax officers.

4. Legal and Governance Considerations

Under Regulation 59C of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended), parish councils may use CIL to fund infrastructure that supports development in their area.

The Shoreline Paths Project:

- Constitutes infrastructure improvement
- Enhances public access and connectivity
- Supports increased use of coastal areas by residents and visitors
- Is aligned with mitigating recreational and access pressures associated with development

There is no requirement for the infrastructure to be owned or delivered by the parish council, and funding a BCP-delivered project is permissible where local benefit is clearly demonstrated.

5. Impact Assessments

5.1 Equalities Impact

Strong positive impact.
The project improves accessibility for people with mobility impairments, older residents, families with pushchairs, and those with visual or physical limitations. More gradual ramps and clearer path definition support inclusive use of the coastline.

5.2 Environmental Impact

Moderate positive impact.
The scheme formalises and manages pedestrian movement, helping to reduce path erosion and informal desire lines. Improved surfacing and design will support long-term protection of the coastal environment.

5.3 Crime and Disorder Impact

Low positive impact.
Improved, well-defined and well-used routes can increase natural surveillance and perceptions of safety, particularly along coastal paths.

5.4 Financial Impact

Planned and justified impact.
Approval of £110,000 represents a significant but strategic investment in long-term parish infrastructure. The project delivers visible, lasting benefit and aligns with the intended purpose of CIL expenditure. There is currently an earmarked reserve of £100,000 for this project. The further £10,000 could be taken from the current unallocated CIL fund of **£43,680.37 reducing this to £33,680.37**.

5.5 Resources Impact

Minimal parish resource impact.
Delivery, procurement, and project management are undertaken by BCP. HWPC involvement is limited to funding approval and monitoring.

5.6 Risk Management

Risks identified and mitigated:

- **Delivery risk:** Reduced through BCP-led project management and planning submission.
- **Design risk:** Ability to retrofit handrails provides flexibility.
- **Reputational risk:** Mitigated by clear community benefit and accessibility improvements.

- **Financial risk:** Managed through defined contribution and written commitment.

Overall risk level is considered **low to moderate and acceptable**.

6. Recommendation

That Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council:

1. Approves the allocation of £110,000 towards the Shoreline Paths Project as delivered by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.
2. Formally signs off the updated drawings submitted with the planning application.
3. Provides written confirmation that the funding contribution is made solely for the benefit of local residents and visitors, with no goods, services, or other consideration received in return.
4. Requests that BCP continues to engage with the Parish Council on:
    - Potential future provision of a handrail to the East Ramp, subject to budget and permissions
    - Final signage locations and implementation

Suggested wording for 3):

Subject: VAT Status Confirmation – Shoreline Paths Project Funding

Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council confirms that its £110,000 contribution towards the Shoreline Paths Project is a non-contractual funding contribution made solely to support community infrastructure for the benefit of residents and visitors, and that no goods, services, or other taxable supply are provided to the Parish Council in return.