Amenities Committee – 21st January 2026 **Item 8**

Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council

Report Title:
Blue Flag and Seaside Awards 2026 – Request for Sponsorship

1. Purpose of Report

To advise Members of a request received from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council for parish sponsorship of the Blue Flag and Seaside Awards applications for 2026, and to seek approval for funding this sponsorship via a virement from an underspent budget line.

2. Background

Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council has previously supported the Blue Flag and Seaside Awards through financial contributions, recognising their importance to the local visitor economy, environmental standards, and community pride.

BCP Council has confirmed that its internal funding for these awards has now been withdrawn. As a result, applications for the 2026 awards can only proceed if supported through external sponsorship.

BCP Council has approached the Parish Council to ask whether it is willing to continue its support by sponsoring the 2026 applications.

3. Details of the Request

BCP Council has advised that:

- Applications for the 2026 Blue Flag and Seaside Awards are now being processed.
- Council funding for these awards has been withdrawn.
- Sponsorship is sought from destination partners, including parish councils.
- The cost of sponsorship is £1,212 per flag application.

The awards are nationally and internationally recognised quality standards, demonstrating excellence in beach management, environmental education, water quality, and safety.

4. Benefits of Supporting the Awards

Supporting the Blue Flag and Seaside Awards contributes to:

- Maintaining high environmental and safety standards along the coastline

- Supporting tourism and the local economy
- Enhancing the reputation of Highcliffe as a high-quality coastal destination
- Demonstrating the Parish Council's commitment to environmental stewardship

5. Financial Implications

The Grants budget for 2025–2026 was set at £32,000 and is currently overspent by 38%, with commitments totalling £44,400. As a result, funding this request from the Grants budget is not feasible.

However, Cost Code 224 – Other Events is currently underspent and presents an opportunity to fund the sponsorship through a virement, avoiding further pressure on the Grants budget.

The cost of sponsorship is £1,212 per flag application. Approval of a virement would enable the Council to continue its historic support without increasing overall budgetary pressure.

6. Impact Assessments

Equalities
There are no negative equality impacts arising from this proposal. The awards support inclusive access to safe, well-managed coastal environments for all users.

Environment
The Blue Flag and Seaside Awards promote high environmental standards, water quality, and sustainable beach management, delivering a positive environmental impact.

Crime and Disorder
Improved beach management, safety standards, and visibility associated with the awards can contribute to reduced antisocial behaviour and improved public confidence.

Financial
While the Grants budget is overspent, the proposed virement from an underspent cost code provides a financially responsible means of supporting the sponsorship without increasing overall expenditure.

Resources
No additional staffing resources are required from the Parish Council. Administration and delivery of the awards remain the responsibility of BCP Council.

Risk Management
The primary risk is reputational, should the Parish Council withdraw support and the

awards not proceed. This risk is mitigated by approving sponsorship via an identified underspend. Financial risk is low due to the modest cost and use of a virement.

7. Recommendation (Resolutions)

The Amenities Committee is requested to:

1. Note the request from BCP Council for sponsorship of the 2026 Blue Flag and Seaside Awards.
2. Approve sponsorship of the 2026 Blue Flag and Seaside Award applications at a cost of £1,212 per flag application.
3. Agree a virement of the required funds from Cost Code 224 – Other Events, which is currently underspent.
4. Recommend to Council on 11th March 2026 that the virement be formally approved in accordance with the Council's financial regulations.

Vanessa Ricketts FSLCC
Clerk and RFO
January 2026