

CABINET

Meeting held on Tuesday, 26th November, 2024 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council and Finance Portfolio Holder
Cllr Sophie Porter, Deputy Leader and Community & Residents Portfolio Holder

Cllr Abe Allen, Enabling Services Portfolio Holder
Cllr Jules Crossley, Policy, Climate & Sustainability Portfolio Holder
Cllr Keith Dibble, Development & Economic Growth Portfolio Holder
Cllr Christine Guinness, Regeneration & Property Portfolio Holder
Cllr Becky Williams, Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder

The Cabinet considered the following matters at the above-mentioned meeting. All executive decisions of the Cabinet shall become effective, subject to the call-in procedure, from **9th December, 2024**.

35. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –**

Having regard to the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors, the following declarations of interest were made:

Item No.	Member	Interest	Reason
44	Cllr Jules Crossley	Personal and non-pecuniary	Trustee of Rushmoor Voluntary Services
44	Cllr Sophie Porter	Personal and non-pecuniary	Council appointed representative on Rushmoor Voluntary Services

36. **MINUTES –**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 15th October, 2024 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

37. **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES –**

(Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council and Finance Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. ACE2416, which set out the strategic priorities of the administration that had taken control of the Council in May, 2024.

Members were reminded that the Council's Vision had been approved in July, 2019. Since then, the Borough had faced significant challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and significant pressures on the Council's budget. The new administration was now in a position to set out its strategic priorities, along with a proposed Council Delivery Plan to cover the following civic year from April,

2025. The Report also set out a programme of work to develop a new Council Vision and Council Plan by December, 2025.

The Cabinet welcomed the opportunity to present its strategic priorities document and considered that this would enable the Council to continue to improve in many areas of service delivery.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the strategic priorities, as set out in Annex 1 of Report No. ACE2416, and the process for developing a delivery plan for the coming year, alongside a new Council Plan by December, 2025, be approved.

38. **BUDGET MANAGEMENT AND MTFS STRATEGIC REVIEW –**
(Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council and Finance Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN2416, which set out an update on the Council's latest budget position and details of a strategic review of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Members were reminded that the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which had been approved on 22nd February, 2024, had presented a cumulative £16.651 million budget deficit over the four years to 2027/28, before mitigation through a savings programme. The budget estimates had included several significant assumptions and risks and a set of savings targets to mitigate the deficit to bring the Council back to financial sustainability by 2027/28. The Cabinet had previously committed to updating the Council on these assumptions and on progress against the savings targets. It was reported that there was now a significant variation in the potential outcomes on the various matters that were set out in the Report. It was explained that this would give rise to the delivery of a detailed MTFS update at the Council meeting in February, 2025. Additionally, in relation to the Water Lane playground project, the Cabinet was being asked to accept a grant of £55,000 from the Prospect Estate Big Local and to authorise the equivalent uplift to the budget for the expenditure on this project, which would be delivered from January, 2025.

The Cabinet was supportive of the suggested approach and expressed gratitude to the finance team for its work in this respect.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the position to date and the Medium Term Financial Strategy assumptions, as set out in Report No. FIN2416, be noted; and
- (ii) the acceptance of the Prospect Estate Big Local contribution of £55,000, to be spent on the Water Lane playground project, along with an equivalent uplift in the expenditure budget, be approved.

39. **FINANCE SERVICE DEVELOPMENT –**
(Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council and Finance Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN2415, which set out matters relating to the Council's Finance Team's management structure and the provision of internal audit services.

Members were informed that the 2024/24 budget report had identified a need to rebuild financial capability, capacity and resilience within the Council and specifically within the finance team. The Report set out a series of proposals that would help to focus on improving financial management, governance and decision making. Included in this was a proposal for internal audit services to be provided by the Southern Internal Audit Partnership through a five-year Service Level Agreement. Members were informed that, additionally, changes were proposed to the senior management structure and capacity of the Council's finance team. It was confirmed that the Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee had been consulted on the proposals and had recommended approval.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the repurposing of the internal audit and financial services budgets, in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules – Part 4, C10 virements: above £50,000 reserved for Cabinet, be approved, to achieve the finance service development plan, as set out in Report No. FIN2415; and
- (ii) the Council entering into an inter authority agreement for the provision of the internal audit service by the Southern Internal Audit Partnership through a five-year Service Level Agreement, including the provision of the Chief Internal Audit function, as set out in the Report and in line with the Scheme of Delegation Part 3, Section 3, paragraph 3.5.26: agreeing agency agreements with other local authorities for the delivery of services, be approved, subject to the agreement of the Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee.

40. **COUNCIL PLAN, PERFORMANCE & RISK REGISTER QUARTERLY UPDATE JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2024/25 –**
(Cllr Jules Crossley, Policy, Climate & Sustainability Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet received Report No. ACE2412, which set out the performance monitoring information for the Council Plan and key service measures for the second quarter of 2024/25. Members were informed that key projects and activities from the Council Plan and key service indicators and measures used by the Council to monitor how the Council runs were included in the Report. Members were informed that the monitoring document had been updated and refreshed for quarter two, to give a better picture of performance across the Council. The Cabinet heard that the Council's Corporate Risk Register tried to identify factors that could impact on the future delivery of the Council Plan and the Council business performance. It was confirmed that, at the request of the Cabinet, the new performance monitoring information was now laid out under Cabinet portfolios.

In discussing the Report, Members were satisfied that the changes to the document would help Portfolio Holders to better track performance within their areas of responsibility.

The Cabinet NOTED the progress made towards delivering the Council Plan and Council services and the changes highlighted in the Council's Corporate Risk Register, as set out in Report No. ACE2412.

41. **NEW PREVENTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY –**
(Cllr Abe Allen, Enabling Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. PEO2402, which set out a new Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy.

Members were informed that the new policy reflected a recent legislative change known as the Worker Protection Act that had come into force in October 2024. The new law had introduced enhanced responsibilities for employers to proactively prevent workplace harassment, specifically in relation to sexual harassment and strengthened protections for all employees.

In discussing this, Members expressed their strong support for the introduction of this new policy as a vital step in the improvement of the workplace for all employees.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the adoption of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy, as set out in Appendix 1 of Report No. PEO2402, be approved.

42. **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2025-2028 –**
(Cllr Abe Allen, Enabling Services Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. ACE2413, which set out an update to the Council's Procurement Strategy.

Members were informed that the current Procurement Strategy covered the period 2020 to 2024 and that the new Strategy would set out the Council's strategic vision and priorities for procurement for the period from 2025 to 2028. It was confirmed that the Strategy would support and promote the use, wherever possible, of local businesses and SMEs and would place more emphasis on wider social value and sustainability. Upon agreement of the new Procurement Strategy, the Council would next develop its revised Contract Standing Orders.

The Cabinet expressed support of the revised Strategy and welcomed the increased emphasis on social value and sustainability.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the adoption of the Procurement Strategy 2025-2028, as set out in Annex A of Report No. ACE2413, be approved, including the introduction of new performance measures from 1st April, 2025.

43. **REVIEW OF CHARGES FOR PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE –**
(Cllr Keith Dibble, Development & Economic Growth Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. PG2431, which set out proposed changes to the Council's level of charges for pre-application planning advice.

Members were reminded that the charges were to potential planning applicants and developers for discussion and advice before the submission of planning applications and had been introduced for the first time in February, 2017. Recently, an exercise had been carried out to benchmark the levels of charges levied by neighbouring local authorities. It was confirmed that the proposed level of charges reflected the cost of

staff time involved in giving the advice and that the Council was not permitted to make a profit from this area of work. The Report set out the full results of the benchmarking exercise and the rationale for the proposed changes to the levels of charges.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the continuation of the practice of charging for pre-application planning discussions be approved;
- (ii) the setting of the level of charges as set out in Section 7 of Report No. PG2431, to take effect from 1st December, 2024, be approved; and
- (iii) the continuation of the application of the minimum householder/minor development charge for requests for pre-application advice, irrespective of the proposal type, made by community/charity groups be approved, subject to the organisation meeting the following criteria:
 - a registered charity
 - headquarters in Rushmoor
 - involved in activity which serves the people of Rushmoor
 - not part of a national charity with multiple UK or international offices.

44. **REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REGARDING RUSHMOOR VOLUNTARY SERVICES (RVS) SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT –**
(Cllr Halleh Koohestani, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

The Cabinet considered Report No. ACE2415, which set out the work carried out by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of support for Rushmoor Voluntary Services. The Chairman welcomed Cllr Halleh Koohestani, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who was attending to report on the Committee's considerations and recommendations.

Members were informed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had held a meeting on 24th October, 2024 where Rushmoor Voluntary Services (RVS) had attended and had given a presentation on its performance during quarters one and two of 2024/25 and on the 2023/24 Annual Report, in line with the Service Level Agreement with the Council. The Committee had considered the representations made by RVS in respect of the challenges and risks it faced as an organisation. The following were the recommendations of the Committee to the Cabinet:

- To consider a multi-year settlement agreement from 2025/26
- To consider bridging the gap in funding as a result of any withdrawal of the Hampshire County Council grants to RVS from 2025/26
- To consider waiving the rent of £20,000 due to Rushmoor Borough Council through 100% rent relief

The Cabinet expressed gratitude both to Rushmoor Voluntary Services for the excellent work carried out by them in the local area and to the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their diligence in producing these

recommendations. It was confirmed that these would be considered fully during the budget setting process in the following months.

The Cabinet RESOLVED to consider the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in Report No. ACE2415, as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process.

45. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC –**

RESOLVED: That, taking into account the public interest test, the public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the under mentioned item to avoid the disclosure of exempt information within the paragraph of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 indicated against the item:

Minute No.	Schedule 12A Para. No.	Category
46	3	Information relating to financial or business affairs

**THE FOLLOWING ITEM WAS CONSIDERED
IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC**

46. **LONG LEASEHOLD EXTENSIONS - FARNBOROUGH INDUSTRIAL ESTATE –**
(Cllr Christine Guinness, Regeneration & Property Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Exempt Report No. PG2432, which sought approval to enter into long leasehold extensions in relation to two premises on the Farnborough Industrial Estate.

Members were informed that the Council's Financial Resilience Plan had identified the need for the Council to realise capital receipts whilst minimising income loss. Long leasehold extensions were a means of achieving a capital receipt without sacrificing income. In the case of each of these two properties, there had been a period of negotiation which had now concluded and the Exempt Report set out the resulting proposed terms of the transactions.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the granting of new 150-year leases in respect of the two properties, on the terms set out within Section 3 of Exempt Report No. PG2432, be approved; and
- (ii) the Executive Head of Property and Growth, in consultation with the Corporate Manager – Legal, be authorised to agree the final terms of the respective leasehold extensions, including modernisation of the leases.

The Meeting closed at 8.16 pm.

CLLR GARETH WILLIAMS, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND FINANCE
PORTFOLIO HOLDER
