

CABINET

Meeting held on Tuesday, 16th September, 2025 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council
Cllr Sophie Porter, Deputy Leader and Healthy Communities & Active Lives Portfolio Holder

Cllr A.H. Crawford, Finance & Resources Portfolio Holder
Cllr Keith Dibble, Housing & Planning Portfolio Holder
Cllr Christine Guinness, Pride in Place / Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder
Cllr Julie Hall, Economy, Skills & Regeneration 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 **29th September, 2025**.

24. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –**

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

Item No.	Member	Interest	Reason
28	Cllr A.H. Crawford	Personal and non-pecuniary	Member of Hampshire County Council

25. **MINUTES –**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5th August, 2025 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

26. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION –** (Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council)

The Cabinet considered Report No. ED2507, which provided an update on work carried in respect of the ongoing Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process and sought a recommendation to the Council to approve the submission of the proposal and to confirm the Cabinet's preference of the three options for the southern area of Hampshire.

Members were reminded that the proposal would set out how a single tier of local government could be established across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. At its meeting in July, 2025, the Cabinet had recommended to the Council that a unitary council based on the areas of Rushmoor, Hart and Basingstoke and Deane councils should continue to be the preferred option for Rushmoor as, in line with the assessment criteria, it represented the best balance of a Council large enough to

deliver high quality services and value for money but small enough to be connected to the place and needs of the people the council served. At its meeting on 10th July, the Council had agreed that recommendation and had noted the programme of engagement being undertaken to ensure that all residents, businesses and partners had had an opportunity to feed into the process. KPMG had continued to support twelve Councils across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to prepare the necessary evidence base and support the development of a business case to enable final proposals to be agreed and submitted to the Government. The Report also set out the arrangements for engagement with residents, businesses, partners and voluntary organisations. This engagement had included seeking residents' views on the establishment of parish councils and/or Neighbourhood Area Committees, as part of a Community Governance Review.

The Report set out the three options that were contained within the draft proposal as Options 1, 2 and 3. In each of these, the preference for the north of the county was a unitary council based on the areas of Rushmoor, Hart and Basingstoke and Deane councils. Legal advice had been received that recommended that any proposal requiring a modification or boundary change should be seen as being derived from an option created from a combination of complete authority areas. Because Option 3 had been derived from Option 1, the twelve authorities involved had agreed to rename Option 3 as Option 1A, with recommendations revised accordingly. An addendum to Report No. ED2507 had been created and had been published on the Council's website.

The Cabinet was informed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the proposal at its meeting on 4th September, 2025 and requested that its concerns should be brought to the attention of the Cabinet. These were set out in the Report and included concerns over the amount of detail provided in the financial information. The Committee also suggested that the Council should be seeking assurances from the Government in relation to full funding costs for the LGR process being guaranteed. The Cabinet thanked the Committee for its input but decided that this would not affect its recommendation to the Council. Furthermore, it was agreed that the Cabinet would not write to the Government as requested by the Committee.

The Cabinet discussed the Report at length. In particular, Members considered the financial implications of the LGR process. A view was expressed that the proposal was not financially sustainable and that it was wrong to recommend an option that impacted the south of Hampshire without having a detailed knowledge of the circumstances and residents' wishes in those areas. This view was not supported by the other members of the Cabinet. In response, it was clarified that all Hampshire Councils were obliged by the Government to state preferred options for the whole of the county when submitting proposals. The majority of the Cabinet was supportive of the LGR process and felt that this would enable better, joined-up services to be delivered to local residents.

The Cabinet RECOMMENDED TO THE COUNCIL that approval be given for the proposal 'Close Enough to be Local, Big Enough to Stay Strong' to be submitted to the Government by the 26th September deadline confirming that

- (i) a five-unitary Council structure, with four new mainland unitary councils plus the Isle of Wight, would best meet the Government's criteria and provide the

most effective solution for local government reorganisation in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight;

- (ii) a unitary council based on the areas of Rushmoor, Hart and Basingstoke & Deane is the recommended option for Rushmoor as, in line with the assessment criteria, it represents the best balance of a council large enough to deliver high quality services and value for money but small enough to be connected to the place and the needs of the people the council serves; and
- (iii) the Council's preferred option in the proposal that brings together entire existing Council areas is Option 1. The Council would though request the Secretary of State to make a modification to that option involving a range of boundary changes as shown in Option 1A in the proposal, using the modification powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as this represents a stronger case for change.

27. 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
28	3	Information relating to financial or business affairs

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

28. NOS. 16-18 THE MEADS, FARNBOROUGH - COMMERCIAL LETTING –
(Cllr Julie Hall, Economy, Skills & Regeneration Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Exempt Report No. REG2504, which set out a proposal to consider letting a Council-owned property at Nos. 16-18 The Meads, Farnborough.

Members were informed that, whilst this was a positive opportunity to bring an anchor tenant to the town and to the Council's shopping centre asset, the agreement for the new lease as proposed would require significant investment in capital works and a fit-out contribution by the Council. The Exempt Report set out the financial details involved with the proposal and it was noted that it needed to be considered in light of the Council's ongoing financial challenge and recovery plan. It was felt, however, that this would provide an important step forward in the Council's economic and social regeneration plans for Farnborough town centre. It was also envisaged that securing this particular tenant was likely to have a positive impact on the future prospects for the Meads and would increase its commercial viability.

In discussing this option and acknowledging the significant investment required, the majority of the Cabinet was in agreement that this proposal offered an exciting

opportunity with regards to the Council's ongoing priority to regenerate Farnborough town centre and to promote a nighttime economy in that area.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- i) the letting of Nos. 16-18 The Meads, on the Heads of Terms set out in paragraphs 2.4 – 2.5 of Exempt Report No. REG2504, be approved;
- ii) the Executive Head of Property and Growth, in consultation with the Council's Interim Monitoring Officer and Corporate Manager – Legal Services, be authorised to negotiate the lease;
- iii) the allocation of the capital budget, in the sum set out in the Exempt Report, to enable the works and contribution for fit out costs to be funded from capital receipts allocated to commercial lettings in the 2025-26 capital programme, be approved; and
- iv) the Executive Head of Property and Growth, in consultation with the Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder and the Executive Head of Finance, be authorised to exceed the capital estimate by the sum set out in the Exempt Report, with any additional expenditure beyond that amount being subject to further Cabinet approval.

The Meeting closed at 8.43 pm.

CLLR GARETH WILLIAMS, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
