

CABINET

Meeting held on Tuesday, 14th October, 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 Gaynor Austin, Finance & Resources Portfolio Holder
Cllr Keith Dibble, Housing & Planning Portfolio Holder
Cllr Christine Guinness, Pride in Place / Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Cllr Julie Hall.

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 **27th September, 2025**.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Having regard to the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors, no declarations of interest were made.

30. MINUTES –

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16th September, 2025 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

31. BUDGET MANAGEMENT - MONTH 5 –

(Cllr Gaynor Austin, Finance & Resources Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN2516, which set out an update on the Council's forecasted financial position for 2025/26, as at the end of August, 2025.

Members were reminded that the Council had a statutory obligation to set and maintain a balanced budget. It was reported that, in February 2025, the Council had identified a significant challenge to its future financial sustainability. Members were informed that the forecast outturn for 2025/26 was on track, with the full £1.8 million savings requirement achieved. The level of external borrowing had reduced through careful cashflow management, which had delayed and reduced the need to borrow externally. It was confirmed that work would continue to identify long term sustainable savings to achieve financial sustainability and resolve the savings requirements for 2026/27 and 2027/28, as set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Cabinet was pleased with the progress that had been made in addressing the Council's challenging financial position and expressed gratitude to the finance team for its work in this respect.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the revenue budget forecast, as set out in Section 3 of Report No. FIN2516, be noted; and
- (ii) the capital budget forecast, as set out in Section 4 of the Report, be noted.

32. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025-26 TO 2028-29 - MID YEAR REVIEW –

(Cllr Gaynor Austin, Finance & Resources Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN2517, which set out a review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as at the end of September, 2025. The Chairman welcomed the Cllr S. Trussler who had requested to address the Cabinet on this issue.

Members were informed that the report provided an assessment of existing and newly identified budget pressures and progress to date on delivering the required budget savings to achieve financial sustainability with the MTFS period (2025-26 to 2028-29), which was the Council's top corporate objective. It was explained that the MTFS was being adversely impacted by increased cost pressures identified in the February 2025 budget setting report and delays in identifying and delivering savings, which had been compounded by the Local Government Reorganisation's significant impact on the capacity of the Council's strategic leadership team, along with changes within the senior management team as a result of the departure of the Chief Executive. Members were informed that it was essential that the Council identified long-term underlaying savings to address the Council's financial challenges over the medium term.

The Cabinet heard from Cllr Trussler, who was a member of the Financial Recovery Working Group and had been a member of the Budget Strategy Working Group before this. From his involvement with the Working Groups, Cllr Trussler expressed concern that potential savings from efficiencies were now running out and that it was unclear where these would be delivered going forward. He also felt that, with the Union Yard disposal being delayed, it was time to revisit some decisions that had been taken in that regard. Cllr Trussler went on to state that, as Shadow Finance & Resources Portfolio Holder, he felt unsighted on the details and timetable for proposed changes to the Council's commercial property portfolio and that he had been promised two-weekly updates had not materialised. Finally, Cllr Trussler expressed concern over the possibility of a delay to the timetable for Local Government Reorganisation. It was his contention that, should this happen, the Council's financial position would become increasingly precarious over time and he proposed that the Council should consider taking action now to mitigate this eventuality.

During discussions the Cabinet thanked Cllr Trussler for his contribution to the meeting and also considered the importance of monitoring risks and uncertainties. It was acknowledged that the coming period would continue to be challenging for the Council but it was felt that extra resources had been put in place where required and

that financial plans had been drawn up to place the Council in the best possible position to deal with this.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as set out in Report No. FIN2517, be noted and that the following actions be recommended to the Council's Senior Management Team:

- to continue with existing plans for the rigorous review of the Council's services and the finding of efficiency savings within those, including staff structures;
- to ensure sufficient resources continue to be put into asset disposals, along with regular structured monitoring of the process;
- to ensure realistic and deliverable timetabling in respect of asset disposals; and
- to ensure that the Council's budget process is published as soon as practicable.

33. AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT UPDATE 2025 –

(Cllr Keith Dibble, Housing & Planning Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. PG2531, which set out an updated Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for consultation and subsequent adoption.

Members were reminded that the Affordable Housing SPD was a subsidiary document to the Local Plan and provided additional information to developers on the implementation of the Local Plan policies related to the delivery of new affordable homes. The current SPD had been adopted in 2019 and there had, since then, been changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, Building Regulations, Government Housing Priorities and increases in rents and benefits and this had meant that an update was required. The report set out the details of the changes proposed.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that a consultation exercise on the revised Affordable Housing SPD, as set out in Report No. PG2531, be approved, with the Executive Head of Property and Growth, in consultation with the Housing & Planning Portfolio Holder, being authorised to make any subsequent final, non-substantive amendments to the document prior to adoption.

34. ADOPTION OF A NEW PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY –

(Cllr Keith Dibble, Housing & Planning Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. PG2530, which set out a proposed update to the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy for Rushmoor.

Members were informed that the previous Playing Pitch Strategy had been adopted in 2014 and was now in need of updating. The Strategy would be used to guide the preparation of policy, determine planning applications impacting on existing or the

need for new sports pitches and to guide investment in pitches from a range of bodies. It also set out details of the current provision of pitches and the current and expected future demand for pitches, along with how this could be met, although there was no obligation on the Council to do so.

The Cabinet expressed support for the Strategy and felt it was important that residents were made fully aware of the range of facilities that were available in the Borough.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the adoption of the Playing Pitch Strategy for Rushmoor, as set out in Report No. RG2530, be approved.

35. **HAMPSHIRE LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY –**
(Cllr Keith Dibble, Housing & Planning Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. PG2532, which set out the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Members were informed that Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) had been introduced as a result of the Environment Act 2021 and were a new system of plans for nature recovery covering the whole of England. It was explained that Hampshire County Council was the responsible body for preparing the LNRS for Hampshire and had formally provided the Council with the final LNRS under the Regulations. This had triggered a 28-day period for the Council to either confirm that it was content for the final LNRS to be published or to issue a publication advisory notice if it did not consider that this was the case.

In expressing its strong support for the Strategy, the Cabinet thanked the Council's Planning Team for its hard work in the development of this document.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the publication of the final Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, as set out in Report No. PG2532, be approved.

36. **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 items to avoid the disclosure of exempt information within the paragraph of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 indicated against the items:

Minute Nos.	Schedule 12A Para. No.	Category
37 and 38	3	Information relating to financial or business affairs

**THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WERE CONSIDERED
IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC**

37. DISPOSAL OF NO. 101 HAWLEY LANE, FARNBOROUGH –
(Cllr Julie Hall, Economy, Skills & Regeneration Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Exempt Report No. REG2536, which sought approval to dispose of the freehold interest in No. 101 Hawley Lane, Farnborough and the adjoining St. John Ambulance site, subject to the finalisation of terms.

Members were informed that this disposal would contribute to the delivery of the Council's Financial Recovery Plan and was, therefore, a key priority. The Exempt Report set out the process that had been carried out so far and Members were informed that a preferred purchaser had been selected.

The Cabinet expressed strong support for the proposed approach as making a significant contribution towards improving the Council's financial position.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the agreement, in principle and subject to final legal due diligence, to the disposal of the freehold interest in No. 101 Hawley Lane, Farnborough, as set out in Exempt Report No. REG2536, be approved;
- (ii) the agreement, in principle and subject to final legal due diligence, to the disposal of the St. John Ambulance freehold, linked to the disposal of No. 101 Hawley Lane, Farnborough, as set out in the Exempt Report, be approved; and
- (iii) the Executive Head of Property and Growth, in consultation with the Executive Head of Finance, the Interim Monitoring Officer and Corporate Manager – Legal Services and the Economy, Skills & Regeneration Portfolio Holder, be authorised to confirm the final terms of the disposal.

38. FARNBOROUGH LEISURE CENTRE - UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS –
(Cllr Sophie Porter, Deputy Leader and Healthy Communities & Active Lives Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Exempt Report No. LEG2505, which set out an update and the next steps in relation to the provision of a new leisure centre in Farnborough.

The Cabinet was reminded that, in July 2025, the Cabinet had agreed to continue to progress with the delivery of a leisure centre in Farnborough, utilising the remaining Levelling Up funding. Approval had been given to progress design works to the end of RIBA Stage 4, following the conclusion of RIBA Stage 3, subject to the forecast operator income being in line with expectations. Members were now receiving an update on the legal constraints of the sites for development, along with the options to overcome these.

The Cabinet considered that the recommended approach would best deal with the legal constraints set out in the Exempt Report.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the legal constraints of the sites and the requirement to either appropriate the land and use Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to enable the development or to obtain title indemnity insurance, as set out in Exempt Report No. LEG2505, be noted;
- (ii) the Executive Director, in consultation with the Interim Monitoring Officer and Corporate Manager – Legal Services, be authorised to choose the best option to deal with any legal constraints to development;
- (iii) the carrying out of a consultation exercise, should Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 be considered to be the best option, be approved; and
- (iv) it be noted that compensation may be payable following consultation and that, if insurance was obtained, a premium would be payable.

The Meeting closed at 8.21 pm.

CLLR GARETH WILLIAMS, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
