

BOROUGH OF RUSHMOOR

MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Farnborough on Thursday, 26th February, 2026 at 7.00 pm.

The Worshipful The Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart (Chairman))
The Deputy Mayor (Cllr P.J. Cullum (Vice-Chair))

Cllr A. Adeola
Cllr C.W. Card
Cllr A.H. Crawford
Cllr Thomas Day
Cllr A.H. Gani
Cllr Lisa Greenway
Cllr Julie Hall
Cllr Rhian Jones
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr T.W. Mitchell
Cllr Sophie Porter
Cllr Dhan Sarki
Cllr P.G. Taylor
Cllr S. Trussler
Cllr Becky Williams

Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr Leola Card
Cllr Jules Crossley
Cllr Keith Dibble
Cllr C.P. Grattan
Cllr Christine Guinness
Cllr Steve Harden
Cllr G.B. Lyon
Cllr S.J. Masterson
Cllr Bill O'Donovan
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr Sarah Spall
Cllr M.J. Tennant
Cllr Jacqui Vosper
Cllr Gareth Williams

Honorary Alderman Diane Bedford
Honorary Alderman Tony Gardiner

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Abe Allen, Cllr Sue Carter, Cllr Peace Essien Igodifo, Cllr Halleh Koohestani, Cllr Nadia Martin, Cllr M.D. Smith and Cllr Ivan Whitmee.

37. **MINUTES**

It was **MOVED** by Cllr Gareth Williams; **SECONDED** by Cllr Sophie Porter and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council on 4th December 2025 and the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council on 29th January, 2026 (copies having been circulated previously), be taken as read, approved and signed as a correct record.

38. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor reported that he had attended the Holocaust Memorial Day Service on 25th January and the 54th Service of Commemoration of the Aldershot Officer's Mess Bombing on 22nd February. He also extended his thanks to all those who had supported his Charity Quiz Night on 6th February at which over £1,000 had been raised.

39. QUESTIONS

(1) Standing Order 8 – Questions

The Mayor reported that no urgent questions had been submitted under Standing Order 8 (3).

(2) Public Questions

Further to the new scheme for public questions at full Council meetings, the questions that had been accepted had been circulated to Members in advance. Each question was received as set out below, and the Mayor invited a response to each in turn:

- (1) Peter Crerar – Manor Park Ward – **Alfred Burtoo** – “In 1983, Alfred Burtoo was fishing on the Basingstoke Canal and claimed that a UFO landed nearby, and he was examined by two aliens.

I am sceptical about this story for many reasons... particularly that aliens travelled light years across the universe to then visit North Town... why not Manor Park?

Many, however, treat Alfred Burtoo's story seriously including Reform UK PCC for Leicestershire.

Given that Alfred Burtoo has created an urban myth for Aldershot like the Loch Ness Monster, is it not time that we have the location of this legend on the Basingstoke Canal marked out for heritage?”

Cllr Keith Dibble, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning, advised that Alf Burtoo was a man who deserved respect. Alf lived with his wife and son in Pegasus Avenue, Aldershot. He was a friend of Cllr Dibble and had played a very important role when the then Mr Dibble had first won Belle Vue ward, (now North Town), in 1984.

Alf had been convinced it had happened and never doubted it. However, his family and friends were of the opinion that he fell asleep while fishing and had a very deep dream. He believed until his dying day, and he was never mocked by friends and family. The answer was given that a special memorial to Alf Burtoo was not necessary, because every day the diverse and lively North Town community reflected the heritage of Alf and everyone past and present from North Town.

- (2) A resident of North Town – **H-Stop HVM** - “Why are there H-Stop HVM installed at the top of Union St in Aldershot. These things are designed to be rapidly deployed to prevent vehicular attack. Has the Council received such a threat and what is that threat if so, if not, then who has funded these barriers and why?”

Cllr Julie Hall, Portfolio Holder for Economy, Skills and Growth advised that the Council had not received any threat. The bollards controlling access to Union Street and Wellington Street, Aldershot had not been working and during this time the area had been accessed by vehicles which were driven without due care and attention.

The Council had assessed that the risk to pedestrians was significant and the barriers were hired to ensure that, whilst the bollards were out of action, the area could still be quickly secured from uncontrolled vehicles.

The Council would consider whether the barriers had been effective and whether to retain them in the event of future issues with the bollards.

- (3) Caroline Emberson – Aldershot Park Ward – **Lifts in Aldershot Town Centre**
- When will lifts providing access to town and in the town be fixed and maintained fully, including Union Yard, Westgate and the Wellington Centre – it is a nightmare for disabled people currently?

Cllr Julie Hall, Portfolio Holder for Economy, Skills and Growth advised that she understood and recognised the frustration with the lifts.

The only lifts for which the Council was responsible in Aldershot Town Centre was the disabled lift at Union Yard. Unfortunately, despite a number of repairs the lift was currently out of action and both short and medium-term actions to get it working were being pursued. Union Yard was still accessible for disabled visitors via other entrances, though it was recognised this was inconvenient.

The owners of the Wellington Centre had recently invested in fixing their lifts, although there remained a few problems currently with one of them. The escalators were posing a more significant problem due to their age and difficulties obtaining parts, but the owners were continuing to seek a solution, and the Council were pressing as much as was possible for a resolution.

The lift at Westgate, again not a Council owned or controlled property, had been raised repeatedly with the agents and owners of Westgate. The Council were pursuing information on its repair and would share news when it became available.

- (4) Maria Hardy – Fernhill Ward – **A331 Litter and Fly Tipping** - Can the Council tell me what they propose to do about the fly tipping and litter on the A331. Over the last 3 years it has become increasingly worse. I often use this road, and I am appalled at the state it is in. I have reported this litter problem many times, but nothing seems to be done about it.

Cllr Christine Guinness, Portfolio Holder for Pride in Place and Neighbourhood Services, advised that the Council was responsible for cleaning a certain section of the A331, which was between the Basingstoke Canal aqueduct and the Farnborough Gate junction. The section to the south of this was maintained by Guildford Borough Council and the section to the north was maintained by Surrey Heath Borough Council. As this was a high-speed road, there were strict health and safety rules in place to allow work to be carried out, including full lane closures. Due to the significant disruption this causes to the public, the highway authorities for the A331 (which were Hampshire County Council and Surrey County Council) carried out maintenance twice per year when they allowed the district authorities to enter their lane closures to carry out litter and fly tip clearance. This was once in the spring (usually April/May) and once in the autumn (usually September/October).

- (5) Darren Brady – Rowhill Ward - **Cost of Supporting Asylum Seekers** - Data published by Taxpayers' Alliance from local authority spending shows that Hampshire Councils spent £31.7 million supporting asylum seekers during the most recent financial year. How much did Rushmoor Borough Council spend supporting 'asylum seekers'?

Cllr Sophie Porter, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities and Active Lives, advised that Rushmoor Borough Council did not use council tax to support asylum seekers. There was an asylum seeker grant awarded by the Home Office specifically for asylum and resettlement support.

During the 2024/25 financial year, the Council allocated £85,174 towards supporting asylum seeker support from this government grant, therefore, there was no additional cost to the Council. The majority of this expenditure related to direct staffing costs and casework provision.

Funding was also used for initiatives aimed at supporting the integration of asylum seekers and refugees including English language and cultural classes and the coordination of volunteering opportunities to prepare for working life.

- (6) Michael Mills – North Town Ward - **Scout Hut Lease Renewals** - Are the Council supportive of Scouting or trying to close Scout Groups across Rushmoor? If supportive why has rent gone up 700% at the recent lease renewals? This rise is linked to the council's new Asset Management Plan. It affects 50% of groups in Rushmoor, those who own their huts but lease Council land. Our rent for the land increased from £750 to proposed £5,600. Whilst groups receive rebates this is not guaranteed and needs to be applied for every 3 years. This rise is not sustainable. We fundraise to subsidise maintenance, bills and keep subscriptions affordable to all.

Cllr Julie Hall, Portfolio Holder for Economy, Skills and Growth, advised that the Council was supportive of scout groups and had not implemented the large increases referred to – as part of the 2023 asset management strategy as inherited.

The Council were reviewing the situation and was re-examining the rental valuations and subsidies/rent relief it gave. At present 90% rent relief was provided to all eligible community organisations, and this resulted in very low net rents for a number of organisations. For example, a rent of £750 with 90% relief results in a yearly rent of £75. The Council had a responsibility to ensure good management of its assets and part of this was ensuring that at lease renewal, rents reflected current, not historic levels, and that subsidies given were economic and reflected good value for taxpayers.

However, the Council recognised the concern around the cliff edge that rent increases can cause. It would be bringing forward a revised policy to Cabinet on 17th March 2026 to address this issue alongside the new Asset Management Strategy. Cllr Hall offered to have a conversation on this with Mr Mills.

- (7) Martin Gear - Manor Park Ward - **Scout Hut Lease Renewal – Delays** - Why are the leases for scout huts taking so long to renew? It has so far taken over

7 years to renew the lease of the 2nd Aldershot Scout Hut, and it's still not completed. Last correspondence was 5th June 2025 from the legal team saying they would be in touch. The 14th Aldershot has been delayed from November 2025 to June 2026 so far. Is this a trend with the scouting leases. These need to be sorted as soon as possible especially with the uncertainty of the unitary council on the horizon.

Cllr Julie Hall, Portfolio Holder for Economy, Skills and Growth, advised that the recent delay had been due to the issues mentioned in the previous question with changes to rents. Previously when implementing a new IT system a substantial number of issues, including lease renewals, were identified and the Council had been working through these issues over the last couple of years. We regret these delays and we recognise the timing concern and would ensure these leases were resolved this year (2026), and prior to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

40. **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CABINET AND COMMITTEES - PART ONE**

a) **Council Delivery Plan 2026-28**

Cllr Gareth Williams introduced the Report of the Cabinet meeting held on 10th February 2026, which set out the Council Delivery Plan 2026-28. The Plan highlighted the priorities, key projects and activities the Council would take over the next two years that would contribute towards the delivery of strategic priorities.

During debate, Cabinet Members summarised activities achieved and stated their commitment to the priorities planned for their areas of responsibility for residents. It was noted that financial resilience was a primary factor to allow for an achievable plan. In opposition, Members expressed a lack of confidence in the Plan.

It was MOVED by Cllr Gareth Williams; SECONDED by Cllr Sophie Porter – That approval be given to the Council Delivery Plan 2026-28.

There voted FOR: 17; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAINED: 15; and the Recommendations were **DECLARED CARRIED**.

b) **Annual Capital Strategy 2026/27**

Cllr Bill O'Donovan introduced the Report of the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on 28th January, 2026, which recommended the approval of the Capital Strategy 2026/27 to 2028/29, including the Prudential Indicators for capital finance for 2026/27.

It was MOVED by Cllr Bill O'Donovan; SECONDED by Cllr S. J. Masterson – That approval be given to the Capital Strategy 2026/27 to 2028/29 and Prudential Indicators for 2026/27.

There voted FOR: 17; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAINED: 15; and the Recommendations were **DECLARED CARRIED**.

c) **Annual Treasury Management and Non-Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27**

Cllr Bill O'Donovan introduced the Report of the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on 28th January, 2026, which recommended the approval of the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Borrowing Strategy 2026/27, the Annual Non-Treasury Investment Strategy 2026/27 and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement.

It was MOVED by Cllr Bill O'Donovan; SECONDED by Cllr S.J. Masterson – That approval be given to the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Borrowing Strategy 2026/27, the Annual Non-Treasury Investment Strategy 2026/27 and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement.

There voted FOR: 17; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAINED: 15; and the Recommendations were **DECLARED CARRIED**.

d) **General Fund Budget 2026/27 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 to 2029/30**

Cllr Gaynor Austin introduced the Report of the Cabinet meeting held on 10th February, 2026, which recommended the approval of the General Fund Budget 2026/27 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) up to 2029/30, with the addition of a new recommendation, as set out below:

“7. To adopt the Council Tax Support Scheme as per paragraph 3.18”.

The Report was seconded by Cllr Gareth Williams.

The Council were advised that the Conservative Group wished to propose eight amendments, which would be considered individually. Each amendment would be proposed, seconded, debated and put to a recorded vote.

Amendment 1 –

It was MOVED by Cllr G.B. Lyon and SECONDED by Cllr Steve Harden that an amendment be made, as set out below:

- “To amend the corporate delivery plan, as set out in Appendix 1. to:*
- *add £50,000 for additional street and park cleaning.”*

During debate, some of those opposing expressed concern about the lack of prior discussion on the proposed amendment, the absence of details about what the additional funding would fund, whether full costings had been carried out, and how the additional funding could be saved elsewhere in the Budget. In support, it was noted that the cleanliness of streets and parks affected how people saw the Borough and it was important to ensure that the overall appearance of streets and parks was positive.

In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs Ade Adeola, A. Gani, Steve Harden, G.B. Lyon, Mara Makunura, S.J. Masterson, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant, S. Trussler and Jacqui Vosper (10); AGAINST: Cllrs Gaynor Austin, C.W. Card, Leola Card, A.H. Crawford, Jules Crossley, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Bill O'Donovan, Sophie Porter, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams (19); ABSTAIN: the Deputy Mayor (Cllr P.J. Cullum) and the Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart) (2) and the Amendment was **DECLARED LOST**.

Amendment 2 -

It was MOVED by Cllr G.B. Lyon and SECONDED by Cllr Steve Harden that an amendment be made, as set out below:

“To amend the corporate delivery plan, as set out in Appendix 1, to:

- *add £105,000 to fund free parking in our town centres and Camp Road Car Park on Sundays.”*

During debate, some of those opposing expressed concern about the absence of detail to inform a decision on the financial/economic return on the investment to offer free parking on Sundays across the Borough. In support, it was proposed that by offering free parking on Sundays it would encourage more shoppers into the town centres, support traders and residents with the cost-of-living crisis.

In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs Ade Adeola, A. Gani, Steve Harden, G.B. Lyon, Mara Makunura, S.J. Masterson, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant, S. Trussler and Jacqui Vosper (10); AGAINST: Cllrs Gaynor Austin, C.W. Card, Leola Card, A.H. Crawford, Jules Crossley, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Bill O'Donovan, Sophie Porter, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams (19); ABSTAIN: the Deputy Mayor (Cllr P.J. Cullum) and the Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart) (2) and the Amendment was **DECLARED LOST**.

Amendments 3 & 5 -

It was MOVED by Cllr G.B. Lyon and SECONDED by Cllr Steve Harden, that the amendments be made, as set out below:

“To amend the corporate delivery plan, as set out in Appendix 1, to:

- *add £65,000 to fund £5,000 of environmental improvements and anti-fly tipping measures in each ward, and*
- *add £11,000 for discounted bulky waste collection.”*

During debate, some of those opposing again expressed concern about the absence of supporting details, the financial implications of the amendments and whether these had been fully costed. In support of the amendment, reference was made to a cross-party discussion at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at which matters relating to bulky waste had been addressed and where there had been a general consensus to look at alternative options to deal with bulky waste. The Portfolio Holder for Pride in Place and Neighbourhood Services, advised that alternatives had

been considered, and it was intended that a revised scheme would be implemented shortly.

In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs Ade Adeola, A. Gani, Steve Harden, G.B. Lyon, Mara Makunura, S.J. Masterson, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant, S. Trussler and Jacqui Vosper (10); AGAINST: Cllrs Gaynor Austin, C.W. Card, Leola Card, A.H. Crawford, Jules Crossley, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Bill O'Donovan, Sophie Porter, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams (19); ABSTAIN: the Deputy Mayor (Cllr P.J. Cullum) and the Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart) (2) and the Amendment was **DECLARED LOST**.

Amendment 4 -

It was MOVED by Cllr G.B. Lyon and SECONDED by Cllr Akmal Gani that an amendment be made, as set out below:

“To amend the corporate delivery plan, as set out in Appendix 1, to:

- *add £30,000 to fund mobile CCTV coverage.”*

During debate, again some of those opposing expressed concern about the absence of supporting details, the financial implications of the amendment, and whether what was intended had been fully costed. In response, reference was made to the overall impact of CCTV on incidents and the prosecution of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs Ade Adeola, A. Gani, Steve Harden, G.B. Lyon, Mara Makunura, S.J. Masterson, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant, S. Trussler and Jacqui Vosper (10); AGAINST: Cllrs Gaynor Austin, C.W. Card, Leola Card, Jules Crossley, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Bill O'Donovan, Sophie Porter, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams (18); ABSTAIN: the Deputy Mayor (Cllr P.J. Cullum) and the Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart) (2) and the Amendment was **DECLARED LOST**.

Amendment 6 -

It was MOVED by Cllr G.B. Lyon and SECONDED by Cllr S. Trussler that an amendment be made, as set out below:

“To amend the corporate delivery plan, as set out in Appendix 1, to:

- *add £26,000 to fund a council tax rebate for Band A properties”*

During debate, it was noted that there were around 1,480 Band A properties in the Borough. A query was made as to the percentage of council tax rebate the amount had been based on. In response, it was acknowledged that while the Council were not in a position to help all council taxpayers across all bands, this amendment would help to assist those in most need by giving a small amount back.

In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs Ade Adeola, A. Gani, Steve Harden, G.B. Lyon, Mara Makunura, S.J. Masterson, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant, S. Trussler and

Jacqui Vosper (10); AGAINST: Cllrs Gaynor Austin, C.W. Card, Leola Card, A.H. Crawford, Jules Crossley, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Bill O'Donovan, Sophie Porter, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams (19); ABSTAIN: the Deputy Mayor (Cllr P.J. Cullum) and the Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart) (2) and the Amendment was **DECLARED LOST**.

Amendment 7 -

It was MOVED by Cllr G.B. Lyon and SECONDED by Cllr P.G. Taylor that an amendment be made, as set out below:

“To amend the corporate delivery plan, as set out in Appendix 1, to:

- *add £5,000 for the fit-out of a Cop Shop in Farnborough.”*

During debate, it was indicated that the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire, had offered to take on the operational cost of a facility of this nature, with a cash injection of £5,000 from the Council as a set up cost. In response, it was suggested that the police did not have capacity, at this time, to run a “cop shop” facility. Again, some of those opposing felt the evidence of costing the additional spend had not been clear.

In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs Ade Adeola, A. Gani, Steve Harden, G.B. Lyon, Mara Makunura, S.J. Masterson, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant, S. Trussler and Jacqui Vosper (10); AGAINST: Cllrs Gaynor Austin, Leola Card, A.H. Crawford, Jules Crossley, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Bill O'Donovan, Sophie Porter, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams (18); ABSTAIN: Cllr C.W. Card, the Deputy Mayor (Cllr P.J. Cullum) and the Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart) (3) and the Amendment was **DECLARED LOST**.

Amendment 8 -

It was MOVED by Cllr G.B. Lyon and SECONDED by Cllr Mara Makunura that an amendment be made, as set out below:

“To amend the corporate delivery plan, as set out in Appendix 1, to:

- *add £25,000 to support the fit-out of George V Park Cafe.”*

During debate, the benefits of a café as a social/community hub in the park were raised. There was currently no meeting place in the area where residents could gather in a safe welcoming place, strengthening community cohesion and reducing isolation. However, again, some of those opposing felt that there were no details forthcoming on the financial implications of the additional spend.

In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs Ade Adeola, A. Gani, Steve Harden, G.B. Lyon, Mara Makunura, S.J. Masterson, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant, S. Trussler and Jacqui Vosper (10); AGAINST: Cllrs Gaynor Austin, C.W. Card, Leola Card, A.H. Crawford, Jules Crossley, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Bill O'Donovan, Sophie Porter, M.J.

Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams (19); ABSTAIN: the Deputy Mayor (Cllr P.J. Cullum) and the Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart) (2) and the Amendment was **DECLARED LOST**.

It was MOVED by Cllr Gaynor Austin; SECONDED by Cllr Gareth Williams – That

(i) approval be given to the following recommendations as detailed in Annex 4

- (1) the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the strategy set out in the report to mitigate the 2026/27 and 2027/28 MTFS deficit,
- (2) the General Fund Revenue Budget Estimates Summary 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 1 of the Council Report,
- (3) the Council Tax requirement of £8,324,717 for this Council,
- (4) the Council Tax Level for Rushmoor Borough Council's purposes of £246.87 for a Band D property in 2026/27 (an increase of £7.71)
- (5) the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 1 of the Council Report,
- (6) the Strategy for the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts as per paragraph 3.16 in Annex 4 of the Council Report, and
- (7) to adopt the Council Tax Support Scheme as per paragraph 3.18.

Following debate, the Recommendations at (i) (1)-(7) above, were put to the meeting. In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs Gaynor Austin, A.H. Crawford, Jules Crossley, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Bill O'Donovan, Sophie Porter, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams (17); AGAINST: Ade Adeola, C.W. Card, A. Gani, Steve Harden, G.B. Lyon, Mara Makunura, S.J. Masterson, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant, S. Trussler and Jacqui Vosper (11); ABSTAIN: Cllr Leola Card, the Deputy Mayor (Cllr P.J. Cullum) and the Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart) (3) and the substantive Motion, with the additional recommendation, was **DECLARED CARRIED**.

41. **THE COUNCIL TAX 2026/27**

It was MOVED by Cllr Gareth Williams; SECONDED by Cllr Gaynor Austin – That:

- (i) it be noted that the overall council tax base be £33,721.50 for the year 2026/27 in accordance with Section 31B (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 (the 'Act')
- (ii) the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2026/27 be £8,324,826.71
- (iii) it be noted that the following amounts had been calculated by the Council for the year 2026-27, in accordance with Sections 31 and Sections 34 to 36 of the Act:
 - (a) £46,531,725.10 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act;

- (b) £38,206,898.39 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act;
- (c) £8,324,826.71 being the amount by which the aggregate at (iii (a)) above exceeds the aggregate at (iii(b)) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year;
- (d) £246.87 being the amount at (iii(c)) above, all divided by the amount in (i) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of Council Tax for the year;

(e)

Valuation Band	Rushmoor Borough Council £
A	164.58
B	192.01
C	219.44
D	246.87
E	301.73
F	356.59
G	411.45
H	493.74

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (iii)(d) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which, in that that proportion, is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

- (iv) it be noted that, for the year 2026-27, Hampshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire, and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued by the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:

Precepting Authority	Precept Amount £
Hampshire County Council (HCC)	56,993,044.37
Police & Crime Commissioner for Hampshire (PCCH)	9,794.746.89
Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Authority (HIWFRA)	3,130,704.06

Valuation Band	Hampshire County Council	Police & Crime Commissioner for Hampshire	Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Authority
	£	£	£
A	1,126.74	193.64	61.89
B	1,314.53	225.91	72.21
C	1,502.32	258.19	82.52
D	1,690.11	290.46	92.84
E	2,065.69	355.01	113.47
F	2,441.27	419.55	134.10
G	2,816.85	484.10	154.73
H	3,380.22	580.92	185.68

- (v) having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at (iii)(e) and (iv) above, the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby set the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2026-27 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

(vi)

Valuation Band	Total £
A	1,546.85
B	1,804.66
C	2,062.47
D	2,320.28
E	2,835.90
F	3,351.51
G	3,867.13
H	4,640.56

- (vii) the Council determine that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2026-27 is not excessive, in accordance with principles approved under Section 52(ZB) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs Gaynor Austin, A.H. Crawford, Jules Crossley, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Bill O'Donovan, Sophie Porter, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams, (17); AGAINST: Cllrs A. Adeola, A. Gani, Steve Harden, G.B. Lyon, Mara Makunura, S.J. Masterson, M.J. Tennant, S. Trussler and Jacqui Vosper (9); ABSTAINED: Cllrs, C.W. Card, Leola Card, the Deputy Mayor (Cllr P.J. Cullum) and the Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart) (4) and the Recommendations were **DECLARED CARRIED**.

42. **STANDING ORDER 16 - CLOSURE AND ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

Due to the late running of the Council meeting past eleven o'clock, the Mayor called over the outstanding items of business which remained to be transacted to identify the opposed business which remained on the agenda.

The Mayor PROPOSED; and Cllr Gareth Williams SECONDED that, under Standing Order 16 (1), the sitting would continue to determine the Notice of Motion on the National Year of Reading on the understanding that it would not need a full debate due to cross-council support for the motion.

The Motion to continue the sitting for this item was put to the meeting. There voted FOR: 29; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAIN: 2; and the Motion was **DECLARED CARRIED**.

In accordance with Standing Order 16, the following items of opposed business would be adjourned to the next Ordinary meeting of the Council on 19th March:

- Notice of Motion – Rights of Rivers
- Extension of Term of Office for the Designated Independent Person
- Report on the work of the Community Engagement Task and Finish Group
- Report of the Cabinet Meeting – 15th December 2025 (to enable a question)

Questions for the Cabinet would be dealt with via written responses following the meeting.

43. **NOTICES OF MOTION**

The Council were asked to consider a Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr Steve Harden under Standing Order 10 (1) on National Year of Reading, as set out below:

“This Council notes that:

1. 2026 has been designated the National Year of Reading, UK-wide initiative encouraging people of all ages to engage with reading for pleasure and learning.
2. Reading improves educational attainment, mental wellbeing, social connection and lifelong learning, yet national evidence shows a decline in reading for pleasure, particularly among children and young people.
3. Local councils have an important role in supporting literacy through libraries, schools, community groups and cultural activities.

This Council believes that:

1. Promoting reading supports the Council's wider priorities around education, wellbeing, inclusion and opportunity.
2. Rushmoor's libraries, schools, councillors and community organisations are well placed to help residents “go all in” on reading.

This Council resolves to:

1. Formally endorse the National Year of Reading 2026.
2. Request that the Council Leader writes to the campaign organisers confirming Rushmoor's support and interest in promoting reading.
3. Encourage Council services, libraries and partner organisations to promote and participate in reading-related activities during 2026.
4. Invite Members, schools, voluntary organisations, and community groups to feedback on sustainable and viable options for implementing community book sheds and informal book sharing initiatives within the Borough to help maximise local participation."

In PROPOSING the Motion, Cllr Harden highlighted the issues some individuals had with basic literacy skills and the opportunities of working with local libraries and organisations to help promote reading in the Borough. In SECONDING the Motion, Cllr S.J. Masterson endorsed the Motion and expressed the importance of being able to read. It was highlighted that reading was a fundamental skill that underpinned education and activities in everyday life. Working with partners would provide an opportunity to engage with individuals through activities such as book exchanges and the establishment of community book sheds.

The Motion was put to the meeting. There voted FOR: 29; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAIN: 2; and the Motion was **DECLARED CARRIED**.

44. **QUESTIONS FOR THE CABINET**

Due to the late running of the meeting, Questions for the Cabinet were all answered in writing by the appropriate Cabinet Member following the meeting.

The responses are recorded in these minutes for reference:

- (1) Cllr Steve Harden had submitted a question for response by the Pride in Place and Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder, (Cllr Christine Guinness), on a request for quarterly reporting detailing letter levels, complaints, response and enforcement action.

Cllr Guinness advised that the Council already published local environmental survey results (NI195) for litter and detritus three times per year, which showed how the Council was performing boroughwide, year on year. Whilst the data could be broken down by ward, only five wards were targeted at each inspection period and therefore, the data would not be comparable by ward as the number of samples per land use type and per ward varied year on year. Regarding enforcement action for littering, as previously advised, the Council focused more enforcement action on higher level environmental crimes and chose to focus on education and behaviour change in the first instance.

- (2) Cllr Leola Card had submitted a question for response by the Economy, Skills and Regeneration Portfolio Holder, (Cllr Julie Hall), on the impacts of increased traffic movements since the exhibition centre opened.

Cllr Hall advised that the Exhibition Centre was a fantastic local asset, and we were lucky to have it in Farnborough. The centre was restricted to 50 days for ticketed

events, (apart from the airshow) and it was required to comply with all travel rules and regulations established as part of its planning consent.

The centre brought visitors and businesses into the local economy throughout the year. In 2024, it attracted more than 300,000 visitors to the area, with the Airshow attracting 100,358 visitors.

The venue hosted several events that were popular with the local community including Screwfix Live (26,000 visitors) and The British Motor Show (10,000 visitors) as well as a series of defence related events that supported our Armed Forces, including Warfare, JOSCAR Live and Security and Policing.

The venue contributed to local employment in several ways:

- Direct Employment - event management, operations, logistics, sales, digital, publishing marketing, hospitality and catering
- Event-Related Staffing: temporary and contracted staff in areas such as catering, technical services and visitor support.
- Indirect Jobs: Supporting the local supply chain, including hotel and accommodation providers, local restaurants and catering suppliers, transport and taxis.

The Centre also gave back to the community through hosting events, making donations and providing free event space, for example:

- Hosting free of charge networking space industries, e.g. creative catalyst
- Supporting Farnborough Men's shed by donating materials
- Working with local teachers (nearly 40) on pupil careers support and students from Farnborough College of Technology (FCOT) on skills enhancement
- Hosting women in film events, and skills bootcamps from which some participants had secured employment in the sector
- Each Christmas, the Centre hosted and funded 'One Day at Christmas' - A celebration three course meal, drinks and dance, for 300 local people who might not otherwise have had the opportunity to take part in festivities, with many community support and volunteer heroes attending with their service users.

A formal economic impact study specific to the Exhibition Centre was not currently held by the Council and there were no plans to commission one, partly due to the disproportionate cost of a study. However, the Council would be exploring, with the Exhibition Centre, how to quantify its outcomes and impacts during the course of fulfilling our Delivery Plan and, in their role as a member of the Aldershot and Farnborough Growth Partnership.

- (3) Cllr G.B. Lyon submitted a question for response by the Leader of the Council (Cllr Gareth Williams), on consideration of a business rate rebate for traders impacted by the sink hole on Victoria Road, Aldershot.

Cllr Gareth Williams advised that the Council sympathised with traders in Victoria Road and it was keen to see the issue resolved as soon as possible. Local Labour Councillors, Council Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Skills & Regeneration had all engaged with local traders to support the businesses, including consideration of compensation from the utility company responsible.

Members will appreciate that the Council was not in a position to compensate all businesses for the impact of planned or unplanned roadworks. However, businesses that were suffering from economic hardship could apply to the Council for business rates relief through existing schemes.

- (4) Cllr A.H. Crawford submitted a question for response by the Housing and Planning Portfolio Holder, (Cllr Keith Dibble), on the prevention and relieving of homelessness in the Borough by the Housing Options Team.

Cllr Dibble advised that the Housing Options Team applied themselves to support homeless households, across all needs, to a high standard every day. In 2025, the Team had been able to stop cases of homelessness and find new homes for households in 69% (322 households) of homeless cases. This achievement had been based on supporting people, whatever their situation, to the provision of sustainable homes, including, helping rough sleepers to get off the streets, helping new families find their first home and assisting families who had lost a home through no fault of their own. It was their commit to help, advise and support the wide spectrum of needs and vulnerabilities, that had been identified as exceptional.

At a recent meeting with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), this level of success was highlighted as exceptional, and MHCLG were considering how they could learn from the work of the Council's Team, to improve the national response to homelessness.

- (5) Cllr A.H. Crawford submitted a question for response by the Leader of the Council on how the Council's aim to promote social cohesion, diversity, equality and inclusion is compatible with the decision by Hampshire County Council to allow widespread fixing of illegal attachments to local street lighting and state what action would be taken to defend its values and argue for their removal.

Cllr Gareth Williams advised that this matter was debated at length by Council in December, when a motion asking Hampshire County Council (HCC) to remove the illegal attachments was not adopted. Given the stance adopted by the Leader of HCC, that he would not prioritise the removal of these attachments over other highways works, the Leader did not believe that arguments from the Council, would influence a change in this approach in the short term.

The Leader appreciated that some residents wished to display their feelings of national pride. He also understood the feelings of other residents that the display of these flags, although themselves part of our shared national heritage, had been accompanied by intimidatory behaviour and were associated with groups that had shown hostility to people of colour or those who had recently arrived in the UK.

The Leader had made it clear, previously, that the Council needed to ensure pride in our nation was not exclusive to any one group or community, and he was determined that the Council would continue to demonstrate its commitment to social cohesion, equality and inclusion, through positive action and communications to residents. This would include the promotion and celebration of the Borough's diverse community as part of Armed Forces Day 2026.

45. **REPORTS OF CABINET AND COMMITTEES**

RESOLVED: that the Reports of the following meetings be received:

Cabinet

25th November 2025
13th January 2026
20th January 2026
10th February 2026

Committees

Audit and Governance	26th November 2025
Special Audit and Governance	11th December 2025
Licensing and Corporate Business	15th January 2026
Audit and Governance	28th January 2026

46. **REPORTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD**

RESOLVED: that the Reports of the Policy and Project Advisory Board meeting held on 9th December and the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11th December, 2025 and 5th February 2026 be noted.

The meeting closed at 11.34 pm.
