

CABINET

Report of the meeting held on Tuesday, 11th March, 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 Jules Crossley, Policy, Performance & Sustainability 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 **24th March, 2024**.

67. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –**

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

68. **MINUTES –**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 11th February, 2025 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

69. **BUDGET MANAGEMENT - MONTH 10 –**

(Cllr A.H. Crawford, Finance & Resources Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN2508, which set out an update on the Council's forecasted financial position for 2024/25, as at the end of January, 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 2024/25 was on track, with the full £740,000 savings requirement achieved for 2024/25. 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 the overall reduction in the level of borrowing required in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy could only be achieved through capital receipts.

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 3.1 of Report No. FIN2508, be noted; and
- (ii) the virements, as set out in Section 3.12 of the Report, be approved.

70. **DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICIES - 2025/26 –**
(Cllr A.H. Crawford, Finance & Resources Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN2507, which set out two changes to discretionary rate relief policies that had been announced by the Government.

Members were informed that retail, hospitality and leisure businesses would continue to receive relief, which had originally been introduced in 2014, but that the level of relief from 2025/26 would be reduced on previous years. The other change related to private schools, that would no longer be receiving mandatory relief. The purpose of the report was to amend the Council's existing Discretionary Business Rate Relief Policies to reflect the changes.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the amendment to the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Rates Relief Policy, as set out in Appendix A of Report No. FIN2507, be approved; and
- (ii) the amendment to the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for charities, not for profit organisations and other specified organisations under the Localism Act 2011 to exclude private schools receiving Discretionary Rate Relief, as set out in Appendix B of Report No. FIN2507, be approved.

71. **COUNCIL TAX SECOND HOME PREMIUM –**
(Cllr A.H. Crawford, Finance & Resources Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. FIN2509, which set out the proposed introduction of a Council Tax premium to be paid on second homes.

Members were informed that it was hoped that the introduction of a premium would encourage owners of furnished but unoccupied properties to bring them back into use. It was confirmed that the Council already levied a premium in respect of long term vacant properties that were unfurnished. It was reported that owners would receive at least one year's notice of the introduction of the premium and that this period would provide sufficient time to make any appropriate changes. The premium would be applicable in respect of 98 properties in the Rushmoor area. It was confirmed that the premium would be introduced on 1st April, 2026 and not 1st April, 2016 as stated in the report.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the increase of Council Tax by 100% for second home properties from 1st April, 2026, as set out in regulations and in Report No. FIN2509, be approved; and

- (ii) the amendment to the long-term empty homes policy, to include changing an additional 100% to second homes, as set out in Report No. FIN2509, be approved.

72. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN 2025-28 –
(Cllr Jules Crossley, Policy, Performance & Sustainability Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Report No. ACE2505, which set out an update to the Council’s Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

Members were reminded that the Council had declared a climate emergency in June 2019 and that the Cabinet had approved a Climate Change Action Plan shortly after this. Since that time, the Council had been delivering a number of projects and programmes that had sought to mitigate the impact of climate change. The Cabinet was informed that the report provided details of revisions to the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan to cover the period 2025-28. The Action Plan now identified ten priority actions and these were set out in the report. It was confirmed that, in a change to earlier versions of the report, the use of UKSPF Funding to deliver climate change actions would be considered as an option.

In discussing this, Members stressed the importance of the Rushmoor Climate Community Group in progressing the Council’s climate change response. The Cabinet expressed strong support for the updates to the Council’s approach in addressing climate change.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the Climate Change Strategy 2025-2028, as set out in Annex 1 to Report No. ACE2505, be approved; and
- (ii) the Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2028, as set out in section 3.3 of the Report, be approved.

73. 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
74	3	Information relating to financial or business affairs

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

74. **LAND DISPOSAL - FARNBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE –**
(Cllr Julie Hall, Economy, Skills & Regeneration Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Exempt Report No. REG2502, which sought approval to dispose of the freehold interest in a property that was currently owned by the Council in Farnborough town centre, subject to the finalisation of terms.

Members were informed that this disposal would contribute towards the Council's capital receipts target that had been agreed at the Council meeting in February, 2025. The Exempt Report set out details of the disposal and how this would contribute to the delivery of the Council's Financial Recovery Plan.

The Cabinet expressed support for the proposed approach as an important strand towards delivering stability to the Council's financial position. Members requested that the Portfolio Holder should be satisfied with the preferred purchaser's approach to the provision of affordable housing and that the finalisation of terms should only be progressed with the agreement of the Portfolio Holder in this regard.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) in principle and subject to due diligence, the disposal of the freehold interest of the property to the preferred purchaser at the conditional value set out in paragraph 3.5 of Exempt Report No. REG2502, be approved; and
- (ii) the Executive Head of Property and Growth, in consultation with the Economy, Skills & Regeneration Portfolio Holder and the Executive Head of Finance, be authorised to confirm the final terms and enable the disposal, subject to the Economy, Skills & Regeneration Portfolio Holder confirming satisfaction with the preferred purchaser's approach to the provision of affordable housing.

The Meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

CABINET

Report of the meeting held on Thursday, 20th March, 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 Jules Crossley, Policy, Performance & Sustainability Portfolio Holder
Cllr Keith Dibble, Housing & Planning Portfolio Holder

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllrs A.H. Crawford, Christine Guinness and Julie Hall.

The Cabinet considered the following matters at the above-mentioned meeting. As set out below, both of these executive decisions were designated by the Cabinet to be of an urgent nature and, therefore, took immediate effect.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

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

76. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION - INTERIM PLAN – (Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council)

The Cabinet considered Report No. ACE2506, which set out an interim plan in respect of the ongoing Local Government Reorganisation process.

Members were reminded that the Government had selected all authorities within the Hampshire and the Isle of Wight area to be part of its Devolution Priority Programme (DPP). A requirement of the DPP was that Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) should be taken forward, with district councils joining together with other councils to create larger, unitary councils. The Secretary of State had formally requested that an interim LGR plan should be submitted by the deadline of 21st March, 2025, with a final business case to be submitted later in the year. It was explained that, in light of this deadline, this Cabinet decision would be considered to be urgent and, therefore, would be exempt from the call-in process.

The Cabinet was informed that the proposed interim plan had been drawn up collaboratively by all authorities in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight area and that there had been good joint working between the councils at this stage. The same interim plan was being considered by the relevant decision-making body within each of the councils involved. It was confirmed that there would be two changes to the document before submission in relation to the removal of signatures and the correction of data in terms of Hampshire County Council's financial deficit.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that the interim plan, as set out in Appendix 2 of Report No. ACE2506, be approved for submission to the Government, subject to the changes detailed above.

77. 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
78	3	Information relating to financial or business affairs

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

78. FRIMLEY 4 BUSINESS PARK – DISPOSAL OF PLOTS 4.2 AND 4.3 - REVISION OF HEADS OF TERMS –
(Cllr Julie Hall, Economy, Skills & Regeneration Portfolio Holder)

The Cabinet considered Exempt Report No. PG2509, which sought approval to revise the Heads of Terms for the disposal of the freehold interests in plots 4.2 and 4.3 at Frimley Business Park.

Members were informed that this disposal would contribute to the delivery of the Financial Recovery Plan and was, therefore, a key priority. The Exempt Report set out all of the terms of the disposal, including where changes had been made. It was explained that, in light of financial disadvantages should the deal not be secured by 31st March, 2025, this Cabinet decision would be considered to be urgent and would be, therefore, exempt from the call-in process.

The Cabinet expressed strong support for the proposed approach as an important step towards improving the Council's financial position.

The Cabinet RESOLVED that

- (i) the amendment of the Heads of Terms, to proceed with the disposal of the freehold interests in plots 4.2 and 4.3 at Frimley 4 Business Park, for the consideration and on the amended terms set out in Exempt Report No. PG2509, be approved; and
- (ii) this decision be treated as an urgent decision due to any delay caused by the call-in process being likely to seriously prejudice the Council's financial interest. The Mayor and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in consultation with the Executive Head of Property and Growth, had agreed that the decision proposed was reasonable in all of the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency.

The Meeting closed at 7.32 pm.
