

POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting held on Tuesday, 10th June, 2025 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr Abe Allen (Chairman)

Cllr A. Adeola
Cllr Lisa Greenway
Cllr Rhian Jones
Cllr Halleh Koohestani
Cllr T.W. Mitchell
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr Ivan Whitmee

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllrs Peace Essien Igodifo, Mara Makunura and M.D. Smith.

Cllr S.J. Masterson attended the meeting as a Standing Deputy.

1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Cllr Lisa Greenway be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th March, 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION - APPROACH TO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

The Board welcomed Mrs Karen Edwards, Executive Director and Alex Shiell, Service Manager – Policy, Strategy and Transformation, who provided an update on recent work that had been undertaken in relation to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The Board was advised that this was a fast-moving area with the position developing on a daily basis. It was confirmed that twelve of the fifteen Councils in the Hampshire and Solent area continued to work together, through the KPMG Programme, towards the submission deadline of 26th September, 2025. Currently, Chief Executives met on a weekly basis and Council Leaders every fortnight. Funding to support the work totalled £542,000 across Hampshire and Leaders were currently discussing individual allocations. Members were informed that that a Ministerial Statement on LGR had been released on 3rd June and this had provided further

detail in many areas. The Board was informed that the item today was specifically about the approach around public engagement and involvement in relation to LGR. As this needed to be done before the submission date of 26th September, this was now a priority task.

Regarding public engagement, it was acknowledged that this was a confusing picture for residents, with a number of options within the preferred approach. It was likely that Hampshire County Council would be consulting with residents at the same time as the 'KPMG' authorities and this would present a completely different approach. The proposed engagement approach was:

- Group led engagement from the twelve Councils remaining in the 'KPMG Group' – all favouring the four unitary option
- Basingstoke, Hart and Rushmoor – Leaders have agreed to joint additional engagement around whether there was support for the establishment of a Unitary Council based on combined geography, a Northern Hampshire authority
- Rushmoor led engagement to be scoped – to establish what is important to local residents

In discussing the content of the presentation, the Board raised the following points:

- Parishing – should Rushmoor form town and/or parish councils ahead of LGR implementation? Agreed it was complex and difficult to determine without an indication of what the additional costs would be of forming. Council could consider a site visit to a Council currently operating with parish councils? Agreed that further investigation into the viability of parishing should be undertaken.
- How to engage with those excluded from consultation 'drop-ins'? Would home visits be provided?
- Agreed that sample size appeared too small.
- Agreed that colleges/young people should be a high priority.

In summarising the Board's feedback on this matter, the Chairman made the following points:

- Sample size should be increased and Board would like to see cost analysis behind that
- Should be drop-ins in town centre locations, including North Camp
- Analyse gaps whilst doing engagement to add specific approach to deal with them, to be reviewed regularly

- Particularly target young people, schools, colleges and Garrison – should be balanced group with provision for those with limited access
- Make it clear what the impact is so residents understand what they are being asked about
- Provide simplified visuals for those with learning difficulties

The Chairman thanked Mrs Edwards and Mr Shiell for their input.

4. POTENTIAL FUTURE CHANGES TO INTEGRATED CARE BOARDS

The Board welcomed Mrs Karen Edwards, Executive Director, who provided an update on potential future changes to Integrated Care Boards.

The Board was reminded that the current arrangements had seen the establishment of the Frimley Health and Integrated Care System (ICS), which was a partnership of NHS and local government organisations working together to join up health and care services to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents. In April 2025, NHS England had informed Chief Executive Officers of local Integrated Care Boards (ICB) that ICBs need to reduce running costs by 50 per cent. Members were informed that Frimley ICB was the Board that covered the Rushmoor area and that the ICB was an important part of the ICS. It was explained that, with Frimley being one of the smallest ICBs, there was an expectation of a merger being required. Alongside the cost reductions, a refreshment of the role of ICBs had been developed. In a letter to partners, the Chair of the Frimley ICB set out that work should commence of the establishment of four South East ICBs instead of the current six. Seemed likely that the Rushmoor area would be part of an ICB that covered the whole of the Hampshire and Solent Strategic Authority area. It was confirmed that the Council would await formal engagement from both Frimley ICB and Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB.

In discussing this matter, Members were reassured that Frimley Park Hospital would continue to serve Rushmoor residents, as before, but services were likely to be commissioned in a different way.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Edwards for her update.

5. PATHWAYS TO WORK CONSULTATION

The Board welcomed Cllr Jules Crossley, Policy, Performance & Sustainability Portfolio Holder, who had been invited to attend to present this item.

The Board was advised that a consultation on the Pathways to Work Green Paper was currently underway. The proposed Pathways to Work changes would affect working-age adults in terms of a number of changes to benefits receivable. The Council was in the process of consulting with benefit recipients and had received 40 responses at that point. Of the 40 respondents, 80% had expected negative impacts from the proposed changes. Members were informed that a Pathways to Work Working Group had been set up and this group would look in detail at the survey responses and would discuss the contents of the Council's response to the Green

Paper consultation. It had been agreed that the Council would send a letter to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. Key points to be included in the letter would include:

- Lack of planning and forethought - the way the Green Paper was delivered has caused unnecessary anxiety
- The DWP must be reformed before any changes to benefits are introduced
- Employment and Training programme for young people needs to be embedded before benefit changes are made
- An Impact Assessment should have been commissioned and published before the Green Paper was released
- Personal Independence Payment is not a means-tested or a work-related benefit. Current proposals risk removing all support from those who don't score 4 points on any one component.
- Poverty: Risk of people being pushed into poverty
- NHS waiting lists has contributed to the number of people who can't work
- Impact on carers: If the person they care for loses PIP, they will no longer qualify for Carer's Allowance
- Right to Try: A positive is that it will give people receiving health and disability benefits more freedom to attempt work without fear of losing their benefits.
- The lack of detail needs to be addressed in the White Paper, including clarification on the proposed new National Insurance scheme
- Increased pressure and impact on local authorities and support organisations

The letter would ask for a number of changes to the proposals, including:

- Keep PIP and UC uplift separate. PIP shouldn't be used to push people into work
- Reform the DWP before making any changes
- Publish a full Impact Assessment before the White Paper, with transitional support in place
- Set out investment and reform plans for health services, including mental health, before changes happen
- Put people's welfare before cost-cutting

It was also noted that the Council would need to rethink its Young People's Plan and put all programmes into place before the benefits were removed.

The Board discussed this and made the following comments:

- Council should copy Aldershot MP, Alex Baker and the Swansea West MP into response
- Could the Council create more jobs to offer to people affected by these changes?
- Would be good to help with training and interview techniques
- Should Council encourage employers to offer more part-time positions, due to them tending to lead to better mental health outcomes?
- Ensure Rushmoor Accessibility Group fully engaged with process

The Chairman thanked Cllr Crossley for her report.

NOTE:

Under the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors, all Members are required to disclose relevant Interests in any matter to be considered at the meeting. Where the matter directly relates to a Member's Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Registrable Interest, that Member must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless they have been granted a dispensation (see note below). If the matter directly relates to 'Non-Registrable Interests', the Member's participation in the meeting will depend on the nature of the matter and whether it directly relates or affects their financial interest or well-being or that of a relative, friend or close associate, applying the tests set out in the Code.

IN RELATION TO THIS ITEM:

On 10th June, 2025, the Council's Interim Monitoring Officer and Corporate Manager – Legal Services granted dispensations to Cllr Jules Crossley and Lisa Greenway to present at this item despite each having a declarable interest.

6. APPOINTMENTS 2025/26

(1) Progress Group

RESOLVED: That the following members be appointed to serve on the Policy and Project Advisory Board Progress Group for the 2025/26 Municipal Year:

PPAB Chairman	Cllr Abe Allen
PPAB Vice-Chairman	Cllr Lisa Greenway
Labour Group (1)	Cllr Ivan Whitmee
Other Groups (2)	Cllrs T.W. Mitchell plus one Conservative vacancy

(2) Elections Group

RESOLVED: That the following members be appointed to serve on the Elections Group for the 2025/26 Municipal Year:

PPAB Chairman	Cllr Abe Allen
Cabinet Member with responsibility for Electoral Issues	Cllr Sophie Porter
Chairman or Vice-Chairman of Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee	To be advised
Labour Group (1)	Cllr Gaynor Austin
Conservative Group (2)	Cllrs Steve Harden and G.B. Lyon
Liberal Democrat Group (1)	Cllr C.W. Card

7. **WORK PLAN**

The Board noted the current Work Plan.

It was agreed that the Work Plan would be discussed in detail at the next Progress Group meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.01 pm.

CLLR ABE ALLEN (CHAIRMAN)
