

POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting held on Tuesday, 24th March, 2026 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr S.J. Masterson (Chair)
Cllr Abe Allen (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Lisa Greenway (Vice-Chair)

Cllr A. Adeola
Cllr Steve Harden
Cllr Rhian Jones
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr Dhan Sarki

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllrs T.W. Mitchell and Ivan Whitmee.

29. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th December, 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

30. FREE PARKING FOR SHOPPERS

The Chair welcomed Mr Lee McQuade, Economy and Growth Service Manager and Mr David Phillips, Service Manager – Commercial Services, who provided further information in relation to the approval of a Motion at the October, 2025 Council meeting that had called upon the Board to consider whether free or discounted car parking might be offered to shoppers in Aldershot and Farnborough town centres. The Board was reminded that an initial discussion on this matter had been held at its meeting in December, 2025. The wording of the agreed Motion was attached to the agenda and this requested that officers, under guidance from PPAB, should develop a suitable method of consulting residents, local businesses and potential investors about the likely impact of free or discounted parking and how it might work best.

Members were reminded that, at the December meeting, it had been explained that evidence showed that parking cost could influence behaviour and that high charges could discourage short visits, impulse shopping and the use of cafes and other hospitality outlets but it was also acknowledged that cost was one of many factors that could affect these decisions. It was agreed at the December meeting that officers would:

- Assess the impact of limited or targeted changes, e.g. time-limited offers at specific car parks

- Present PPAB with information to assess views on these options
- Exclude wider measures e.g. refund mechanisms or other ways to support town centre businesses
- Note that no formal consultation with residents or businesses had taken place at this stage

The Board was informed that research had shown that free parking trials had been carried out in Farnham, Cambridge and Peterborough but, in each case, special circumstances had prevailed, such as major roadwork disruption in Farnham town centre. In Rochford a 30-minute free parking pilot had been trialled, aimed at supporting quick trips and boosting local access. It was found, however, that whilst the trial had encouraged shorter stays but it had not increased overall time spent in the town and longer stays had been found to contribute significantly more to High Street spending.

Following the December meeting, officers had worked up three options for the Board's consideration:

- Free after 3pm at High Street Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP), Napier Gardens and Farnborough Leisure Centre
- £1 after 3pm at High Street MSCP, Napier Gardens and Farnborough Leisure Centre
- Free on Sundays at all car parks

Members were informed that Option 1 (free after 3pm at selected car parks) would lead to a predicted loss of income of £68,585 over a twelve-month period, Option 2 (£1 after 3pm at selected car parks) would lose £26,682 p.a. and Option 3 (free on Sundays) would lose £100,330 per year. In considering these figures, the Board was informed that additional costs had not been included at this stage, such as the reprogramming of ticketing machines and the advertising of the new tariffs. There was also the likelihood that drivers would divert from other Council-owned car parks to the cheaper car parks, therefore reducing revenue at those sites also. Members were informed that to trial any of the options for three months would result in the Council accepting a loss of revenue of 25% the totals set out above.

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

- Widely felt that the new leisure centre car park would be too remote for shopping – Meads car park considered a better option and would drive footfall through the Meads
- Query as to way figures representing the losses that would apply were higher than previously quoted – explained that tariffs had gone up since that time

- Any initiative would need to demonstrate a cost benefit, especially when Council finances are so tight
- Could any initiative target days of the week where footfall struggling in the town centres? Also days when events happening in town centres
- Need also to consider any additional income lost from not issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) whilst concession in place
- View expressed that the suggested three month trial would not produce accurate results due to seasonal changes – would need to be minimum of one year
- View expressed that the Sunday free parking option provided the highest potential for getting extra people into the town centres
- View expressed that free parking may not provide the desired results and that improving/repairing infrastructure in town centres might be a better spend
- Felt that free/reduced parking after 3pm would not be likely to benefit Napier Gardens users as many North Camp shops close early

In summarising the discussion the Chair made the following observations:

- Too many relevant observations made to allow a decision to be made this evening
- Officers requested to take away the feedback from the meeting and return with further/amended options
- Leisure Centre car park to be replaced by Meads car park
- Re; amending the relevant time period for reduced/free parking, felt that might be different for North Camp as opposed to town centres

The Chair thanked Mr McQuade and Mr Phillips for their input and confirmed that this item would be programmed to be discussed again at a future Board meeting.

31. MAINTENANCE OF UNATTACHED LAND

The Chair welcomed Mr James Duggin, Executive Head of Operations, and Ms Julia Hutley-Savage, Principal Regeneration and Property Solicitor, who presented information in relation to the maintenance of unattached land, which had been the subject of a Motion that had been approved at the Council meeting in December, 2025. The wording of the Minute relating to the agreed Motion was attached to the agenda and requested that the Board should consider and report to the Cabinet:

- Feasibility and associated costs of undertaking an urgent review of all parcels of unattached or unregistered land within the Borough, in order to confirm the appropriate owners and clarify responsibility for their maintenance
- The extent of emergency works needed to address neglected areas and the funding requirements for this
- The projected costs, resource implications and legal considerations of the Council assuming ongoing responsibility for maintaining such areas on a permanent basis
- Proposals for the establishment of a formal working partnership with Crown land authorities, Hampshire County Council and other relevant bodies including, where appropriate, Rushmoor agencies to coordinate land management and ensure clarity of ownership and responsibility

The Board was advised that there were four ways that the Council could take ownership of Crown land:

- Negotiated Purchase – direct negotiation with the Crown Estate to acquire land
- Bona Vacantia Process – acquisition of land from dissolved companies through formal application to the Bona Vacantia Division (BVD) of the government Legal Department
- Adverse Possession – obtaining of ownership by the uninterrupted use of land for 30 years without the owner's consent
- Compulsory Purchase – although this generally cannot be used against the Crown

In relation to non-Crown land, there were several ways that the Council could take ownership of land including all of the above, with the exception of the Bona Vacantia Process.

Members were informed of the processes and costs associated with each of these options and this information had also been including within the agenda pack.

In conclusion, the Board was advised that:

- There was an unknown quantity of parcels of Crown or unattached land across the Borough
- The Council did not have sufficient resources within the core establishment for a significant acquisition process
- Costs of acquisition were not fully known and would be highly variable based on a number of factors

- A trial process was recommended to learn more

The Board was asked to consider:

- Members' views on the overall purpose of this project
- Given the current resourcing picture, how did Members want to proceed?
- How would the Council determine community benefit to any proposed acquisitions?
- Would the Board be happy to consider a trial?
- What updates would Members like to see before the next meeting?

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

- Queried what would happen if conducting a trial acquisition as LGR happened – confirmed the new Council would have to continue if contracts exchanged
- Confirmed that some large areas involved but expected to be mostly small parcels – but not known for sure
- A view was expressed that this was not a key issue for the Council ahead of LGR
- Not so much buying the land as establishing who is responsible for it – to help residents
- Where we know the landowner, can we carry out any works and charge back to the owner? Confirmed the Crown does not pick up such charges and with other owners, this approach would put the Council at risk
- Noted that some of the land is County Council owned
- Suggested the Crown may be keen to release some parcels bulked together – whilst best value must be obtained, this can be expressed as community best value
- Council should target areas that would make a difference
- Confirmed that level of legal costs could be a problem, especially where cases were complicated – in negotiations with the Crown, Council would be required to pick up all of the legal costs
- Worth speaking to Vivid? Would they give us the land if the Council paid the legal costs?

- A few areas in Fernhill Ward that might be good for trial
- If decided not to progress with large scale exercise, could we at least strengthen contacts with Crown Estates?
- Was it worth involving Alex Baker?

The Chair thanked Mr Duggin and Ms Hutley-Savage for their input and confirmed that this item would be programmed to be discussed again at a future Board meeting.

32. **WORK PLAN**

The Board noted the current Work Plan.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm.

CLLR S.J. MASTERSON (CHAIR)
