

# POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

Report of the meeting held on Tuesday, 22nd July, 2025 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

## Voting Members

Cllr Abe Allen (Chairman)  
Cllr Lisa Greenway (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A. Adeola  
Cllr Mara Makunura  
Cllr S.J. Masterson  
Cllr M.J. Roberts

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Rhian Jones, Cllr Halleh Koohestani, Cllr T.W. Mitchell, Cllr M.D. Smith and Cllr Ivan Whitmee.

Cllr Becky Williams attended the meeting as a Standing Deputy.

## 8. CHANGE OF BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Board **NOTED** the appointment of Cllr S.J. Masterson as a member of the Board in place of Cllr Peace Essien Igodifo for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

## 9. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th June, 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

## 10. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION - CONSIDERATION OF OPTIONS FOR UNITARY COUNCILLOR RATIOS AND WARDING PATTERNS AND ENGAGEMENT UPDATE (ITEM DURATION - 60 MINUTES)

The Board welcomed the Leader of the Council (Cllr Gareth Williams), Mrs Karen Edwards, Executive Director and Jill Shuttleworth, Corporate Manager – Democracy, who provided an update on recent work that had been undertaken in relation to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). In particular, this item was to consider options for Unitary Councillor ratios and warding patterns and their implications for Members. Also, an update on the LGR engagement process would be delivered, ahead of the submission to the Government in September, 2025.

The Board was advised that the devolution process had been progressing well, with the strategic authority due to be established in Spring 2026 and the inaugural Mayoral election taking place in May 2026. In relation to LGR, it was confirmed that the establishment of a Unitary Council covering the areas currently served by Basingstoke and Deane, Hart and Rushmoor Councils was the preferred option in

each of those areas. A number of governance groups across the three Councils had been meeting now for some time. These included a Leader Group, a Chief Executive Group and a S151 Group.

Regarding engagement, it was acknowledged that this was a confusing picture for residents, with a number of options within the preferred approach. A countywide public survey had been externally commissioned by the twelve (of fifteen) Councils that had continued working together with KPMG. There had also been engagement sessions with countywide partners such as the Police and the Integrated Care Boards. In North Hampshire, a more detailed and focussed public survey had been commissioned. There had also been partner workshops held in relation to sectors including businesses, town and parish councils, the voluntary and community sectors, public sector partners and faith groups. In Rushmoor, several engagement exercises were underway, including roadshows and static displays.

In terms of the timetable of key upcoming decision points, following submissions to the Government in September 2025, the decision of the Government was currently expected by March 2026. This was likely to lead to elections to shadow unitary authorities around May 2027 with new unitaries replacing existing councils in April 2028.

Members were informed of the need to consider the optimum ratio of Councillors to population for the proposed new unitary comprising the Basingstoke, Hart and Rushmoor areas. It was reported that there was a considerable range of ratios currently at Councils that had a similar total population to the proposed new authority. Within Hampshire, Rushmoor had the lowest number of residents per Councillor at 2,737, with Hart at 3,226 per Councillor and Basingstoke at 3,597. Overall, district councils in Hampshire averaged a ratio of 1:3,391, whilst the Hampshire unitaries averaged 1:4,731.

Another consideration would be the warding arrangements of the new authority. It was confirmed that the Boundary Commission would be unlikely to undertake a review before 2028. It was necessary to consider the optimum number of Councillors for the new council. It was confirmed that the total number of Councillors across the three North Hampshire authorities was currently 126. Given levels of representation in other Unitary councils and advice from the Boundary Commission it was considered that this number would have to reduce in the new unitary authority.

The Board was requested to consider the following in its discussions:

- What was the most appropriate Councillor ratio for the unitary configuration area (North Hampshire Authority), based on the population figures and therefore, also, the number of Councillors?
- Given the Government steer, what approach to area committees would best suit the proposed North Hampshire Unitary configuration?
- What were the implications of these arrangements on Members and how could future Councillors manage the enhanced role given to the likely increase in population served and extra demands?

- What did PPAB feel needed to be taken into account in terms of Member support, workload etc?

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

- A view was expressed that around 75-90 Councillors would be appropriate, around two thirds of the current number. This would result in increased workloads for Councillors.
- In coping with increased workloads, would new authority consider more daytime meetings? Or Councillors being considered full time positions?
- Point made that Councillor ratios and wards would be different under shadow authority and would be amended as a result of the Boundary Commission review.
- Broad consensus that around 85 the right number, possibly in two-Member wards.
- In answer to a question, it was confirmed that the three existing authorities would need to come to a consensus view on these matters in relation to the proposed new authority. It was reported that it was thought there was broad consensus between the three at this point.
- Must be careful to avoid 'democratic deficit' as a result in the reduction of the number of elected representatives and take steps to ensure that representation was both diverse and representative of local communities.
- Suggested we should only change member numbers in Rushmoor when instructed to by Boundary Commission.
- Confirmed that Basingstoke currently had 54 Councillors across 18 wards.
- Southampton Unitary allowance = £14K – not considered high enough to be considered a full time role.
- Felt that lower than two Members per ward would lead Members feeling unsupported.
- How can Councillors be supported with casework? Could there be a formal 'caseworking system'?
- Could the introduction of 'hybrid' decision-making meetings increase capacity for Councillors?
- Confirmed that ward changes would be likely to take some time – first elections would be using existing wards.

- In relation to Local Area Committees, the view was expressed that there could be just one that cover the whole of the Rushmoor area to avoid the establishment of 'silos'. An alternative view of at least two Area Committees to cover the Rushmoor area was expressed, possibly around Aldershot and Farnborough.

In summarising the Board's feedback on these matters, the Chairman made the following points:

- The Board agreed that given the guidance from the Boundary Commission the suggested figure of 85 for the number of Councillors on the new authority was about right, subject to concerns over the level of representation in areas with a high level of deprivation, as set out below;
  - Concern was expressed that the Member to resident ratio should take account of whether the area/ward has high levels of deprivation. This should be taken into account when considering ward changes.
  - Appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that future Councillors were properly supported including case management systems, training and development and working arrangements that would ensure that future representation was both diverse and representative of local communities.
- The Board's view on Area Committees, should they be established by the new authority, was that there should be two or more covering the current council area.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Williams, Mrs Edwards and Ms Shuttleworth for their input.

#### 11. **IMPLICATIONS OF THE SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENT ON THE INTERPRETATION OF THE EQUALITY ACT (ITEM DURATION - 30 MINUTES)**

In introducing this item, the Chair explained that he had been advised by the Council's Interim Monitoring Officer that the publication of statutory guidance had been delayed. This delay, along with the need to give full attention to the Local Government Reorganisation agenda item, had led to the Interim Monitoring Officer recommending that this item should be deferred to a later date.

The Board **RESOLVED** that the agenda item on the implications of the Supreme Court judgement on the interpretation of the Equality Act be deferred.

#### 12. **WORK PLAN**

The Board noted the current Work Plan.

It was agreed that future items would be based around the Council's Delivery Plan and would be discussed in detail at the next Progress Group meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

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# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Report of the meeting held on Thursday, 31st July, 2025 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

## **Voting Members**

Cllr Halleh Koohestani (Chairman)  
Cllr Nadia Martin (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Leola Card  
Cllr Thomas Day  
Cllr C.P. Grattan  
Cllr Steve Harden  
Cllr G.B. Lyon  
Cllr Bill O'Donovan  
Cllr S. Trussler  
Cllr Becky Williams

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr M.J. Tennant.

## **6. APPOINTMENTS**

The Committee NOTED changes to the Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year, as set out below:

- Cllr C.P. Grattan to be appointed to the Committee in place of Cllr Abe Allen
- Cllr Dhan Sarki to be appointed as Standing Deputy for the Committee in place of Cllr C.P. Grattan

## **7. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th June 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

## **8. HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2023-27**

The Committee welcomed Mrs Zoe Paine, Strategy and Enabling Manager, and Mr Jermiane Pinto, Housing Options Manager, who were in attendance to provide an update on the Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2023-27 as set out in Report No. PG2524. Cllr Keith Dibble, Housing and Planning Portfolio Holder, was also in attendance to answer Members' questions.

It was noted that the Strategy, adopted by the Council in 2023, was an overarching way to deal with all housing matters. The Strategy supported the Council's Homes for All priority and set out the approach to, housing delivery, homelessness prevention, and housing standards. The Committee were advised of the statutory duty to have a homelessness strategy and the good practice of having a published

strategic approach to housing matters, to help underpin the operational work of the service.

The Strategy covered three themes, these included:

- Theme 1 – increasing the supply of good quality homes for residents and prospective residents for every stage of life
- Theme 2 – support residents to access affordable, well managed and maintained housing in the private and social sectors
- Theme 3- work proactively to improve the condition and energy efficiency of housing in the Borough

A progress report was provided on each theme, which included:

- Theme 1-
  - housing demand – 1,964 families were currently on the Homefinder list looking for a variety of different types of accommodation at affordable rents
  - officers were now sourcing private rented housing market data from local agents to help better assess local demand
  - £2billion was to be made available through planning reform and Government capital funding via the Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP) aimed at helping deliver more homes – 60% of which would be social housing
  - introduction of new rent regimes for Registered Providers (RPs) and low interest loans
  - 94 homes had been delivered in the last financial year with a further 236 to be delivered by April 2026
  - work was ongoing towards securing developments that would deliver affordable homes via S106 sites and with RPs to secure funding for non S106 sites – for example £7.5million had been secured for use on the Wellesley development for social and affordable rent properties
  - work was underway towards securing pathways for supported accommodation for street homeless individuals and safe temporary accommodation for homeless households to reduce the need to utilise bed and breakfast accommodation
- Theme 2 –
  - the Council had achieved above the national average for homelessness prevention at 77.9% against 51.9% nationally
  - specialist staff had been recruited, including a domestic abuse worker and private rent and accommodation officer
  - the Communications team had a programme of work to engage with specific groups at risk of homelessness, this included addressing severe weather controls
  - work was underway with charities and faith groups to share expertise and enhance services to achieve positive outcomes
  - training was being provided to Members to inform how systems worked to assist with casework

- work was underway with the Registered Providers Group (RPG) and Hampshire County Council (HCC) on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)
  - upgrades to the Abris system had been made to allow direct messaging for quicker access, secure document downloading, self-serve options to reduce barriers and a mobile friendly design
- Theme 3-
    - regulatory and enforcement work continued to ensure good standards of housing, this was done through the RPG, Housing Regulator and Housing Ombudsman. In addition, the Council were a member of the Warmer Homes Consortium and promoted the Home Upgrade Grant
    - measures were being taken to ensure staff resource focussed on housing standards
    - development of effective communication to residents and landlords regarding the support and advice available

It was also reported that further changes were imminent, these included tenancy reforms to the Renters Right Act, new statutory duties for the Council in relation to the Supported Housing Act and reforms to the Decent Homes Standards (DHS) and Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for social and affordable homes. It was also expected that Local Government Reorganisation would have an impact on the housing service.

In response to a query regarding DHS and MEES, and how noncompliance could affect residents, it was advised that the proposed reforms were currently in the consultation stages and work would have to be undertaken with the ombudsman and regulators to deal with any implications following any implementation of the proposed standards.

In response to a question regarding how the demand for social housing would be met, the Portfolio Holder advised that meetings were being arranged with the top five-ten Registered Providers, operating in the Borough, to enhance partnership working. Pockets of land potentially available for social housing development in the future included the Civic Quarter, Farnborough, a number of brownfield sites and some military land. The Committee discussed the Local Plan and how that had the opportunity to influence and meet the needs of local residents. The need for more bungalows was noted and it was advised that the Council were working with Rushmoor Accessibility Action Group (RAAG) and others, to best address this issue, taking account of land values, single storey properties were not a priority for developers. The Committee commented that the “pepper pot” approach, where social housing was scattered amongst private properties on developments, and how this helped sustain people’s feelings of being part of the community. In response to a query around demand for houses by age group, it was reported that the average age group was those in their mid-40s. Further data would be sought and shared via the Committee’s Action Tracker.

During a discussion regarding temporary accommodation, the Portfolio Holder advised that work was underway with a partner who purchased larger homes and converted them into Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO). There was also potential



for them to purchase existing HMO's and upgrade them to rent out. In response to a question, it was noted that there were currently only two-three individuals housed in hotels outside the Borough, two-three homeless people across the Borough and a high number of street attached. During April – June 2025, 78% of 91 cases of those at risk of homelessness had been prevented.

The Committee discussed shared ownership and were advised that there was good demand for this type of property, in particular two bed properties. Specific data was requested on the interest/take up of shared ownership, and this would be provide through the Committee's Action Tracker. It was noted that people looking for shared ownership properties could apply anywhere in the country and not just within Rushmoor. It response to a query regarding veterans and military personnel it was noted that these individuals took priority on shared ownership properties, if the individual had a local connection.

With regards to adaptations to properties, it was advised that this was the responsibility of HCC. Enquiries were referred to Occupational Therapy (OT) via HCC and it was thought that currently waiting lists were long. It was noted that individuals were able to use private OTs to expedite the process.

During a discussion on how the building of new homes could be quicker, it was advised that the Council had limited influence over private developers, however, it was reported that the requirements around Homes England funded developments was much stricter, and monies could be lost if developers failed to meet set timescales. SANG allocations could also be withdrawn if developers failed to develop to certain timescales.

The Committee discussed the 82 units at Union Yard, Aldershot, that had been allocated for key workers. It was noted that arrangements were in place with the provider and Frimley NHS Trust to ensure key workers and critical members of staff had access to the accommodation. It was also advised that there would be onsite management for the units and strong working links would be established with Frimley NHS Trust Human Resources teams to ensure standards were maintained.

<b>What</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>When</b>
Data to be share on interest/take up of shared ownership	Zoe Paine, Strategy and Enabling Officer	August 2025
Data on demand for housing by age group	Jermaine Pinto, Housing Options Manager	August 2025
Data to be provided on take up of the Warmer Homes scheme	Jermaine Pinto, Housing Options Manager	August 2025

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder, Mrs Paine and Mr Pinto for their contribution to the meeting.

## 9. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee noted the current Work Plan.

It was noted that a Special Meeting of the Committee had been scheduled for 4th September to carry out pre decision scrutiny on the Council's response to Local Government Reorganisation prior to Cabinet on 16th September and the Full Council Meeting on 25th September, 2025. The Progress Group would follow up on this at their meeting on 13th August, 2025.

It was advised that the Police and Community Safety Team would be in attendance at the Meeting on 18th September, 2025. The Progress Group would scope the item at its meeting on 13th August, 2025.

The potential future items would also be considered at the Progress Group meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.52 pm.

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Report of the meeting held on Thursday, 4th September, 2025 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

## Voting Members

Cllr Halleh Koohestani (Chairman)  
Cllr M.J. Tennant (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr C.P. Grattan  
Cllr Steve Harden  
Cllr Rhian Jones  
Cllr G.B. Lyon  
Cllr Bill O'Donovan  
Cllr S. Trussler

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Leola Card, Cllr Nadia Martin and Cllr Becky Williams

## 10. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31st July 2025 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of some additional wording (*in bold italic*) relating to Union Yard, Aldershot, as agreed with Cllr Trussler and the Portfolio Holder and set out below:

“The Committee discussed the 82 units at Union Yard, Aldershot, that had been allocated for key workers *for which contract negotiations were still ongoing*. It was noted that arrangements were in place with the provider and Frimley NHS Trust to ensure key workers and critical members of staff had access to the accommodation. *In addition, it was advised that, a condition of the award of contract had been that all staff housed at Union Yard would work primarily at Frimley Park Hospital.*”

It was also advised that *a condition of the award of contract* had been that there would be *an Estate Officer, employed by the registered provider, permanently located at the site to manage the 82 units, this individual would have strong links with Human Resources (HR) at Frimley Park Hospital (FPH) to manage any matters arising. The Portfolio Holder advised that he was confident that that all the checks and balances were in place to deal with the Committees’ concerns and it was confirmed that once the deal had been completed the Committee would be provided with the detail of the contract documentation.*”

## 11. APPOINTMENTS

The Committee **NOTED** changes to the Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year, as set out below:

- Cllr Rhian Jones to be appointed to the Committee in place of Cllr Thomas Day
- Cllr M.J. Roberts to be appointed as Standing Deputy for the Committee in place of Cllr Sarah Spall

The Committee **DEFERRED** the appointment to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Progress Group pending changes to the membership of the Committee to secure political balance.

## 12. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Committee welcomed Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council and Mrs Karen Edwards, Executive Director, who were in attendance to provide an update on the development of the Council's proposal for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) as set out in Report No. ED2505.

Members were reminded that the proposal would set out how a single tier of local government could be established across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. At its meeting in July, 2025, the Cabinet had recommended to the Council that a unitary council based on the areas of Rushmoor, Hart and Basingstoke and Deane councils should continue to be the preferred option for Rushmoor as, in line with the assessment criteria, it represented the best balance of a Council large enough to deliver high quality services and value for money but small enough to be connected to the place and needs of the people the council served. At its meeting on 10th July, the Council had agreed that recommendation and had noted the programme of engagement being undertaken to ensure that all residents, businesses and partners had had an opportunity to feed into the process. KPMG had continued to support twelve Councils across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to prepare the necessary evidence base and support the development of a business case to enable final proposals to be agreed and submitted to the Government. The Report also set out the arrangements for engagement with residents, businesses, partners and voluntary organisations. This engagement had included seeking residents' views on the establishment of parish councils and/or Neighbourhood Area Committees, as part of a Community Governance Review.

The Report set out the three options that were contained within the draft proposal as Options 1, 2 and 3. In each of these, the preference for the north of the county was a unitary council based on the areas of Rushmoor, Hart and Basingstoke and Deane councils.

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

- Clarification of some of the language used in the six criteria would be helpful, eg 'stronger' in Criteria 6 and 'financial shocks' in Criteria 2

- It was clarified that this Report was only dealing with the three options drawn up by the twelve authorities with KPMG, not Hampshire County Council's preferred options
- Projections showed that the costs of the LGR process would be recovered within the first 2-3 years of operation but this was felt to be optimistic
- Concern expressed over the robustness of the sign off of the KPMG work
- Several Members expressed the feeling that not enough financial detail had been included in relation to the thirteen councils being merged into four, including which had considerable deficits etc.
- Do we sufficiently understand what the County Council currently does and how this will be provided in the new model?
- View expressed that work by KPMG was almost all based on assumptions – viability of Council Tax Base, how social care would be handled and spending on key services before and after reorganisation were all missing
- Suggestion that the Council should write to the Government to seek a guarantee that it would cover any shortfall in funding for the LGR process
- Members were keen to see details of where savings were envisaged to be delivered under the new model
- In setting the number of Councillors in the new authority at around 85, this would mean that local residents might be less well represented than at present

In summarising the Committee's feedback on these matters, the Chair proposed the following representations should be made to the Cabinet:

- The Committee did not feel that the proposal fully met all of the criteria, in particular;
  - Concerns that the financial information was not sufficiently detailed. Specifically, that the financial information was not broken down by the current authority areas or the proposed new unitary areas and that too much of the financial case relied on assumptions
  - In relation to the proposed changes in Councillor representation, whilst acknowledging that the proposal fitted within the parameters set by the Government and the Boundary Commission, the Committee was concerned that there would be a loss of local connection and empowerment and that future arrangements should ensure that a diverse range of councillors would be possible

- Given the known situation relating to local government funding, regardless of local government structures, funding needed to be reviewed before any LGR took place to address this and that a letter should be sent to the Government highlighting this.

The Committee **AGREED** the above as being an accurate summary of the consensus view of Members on the Committee.

The Chair thanked Cllr Williams and Mrs Edwards for their input.

### 13. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee noted the current Work Plan.

With the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee due to be held on 18th September, 2025, it was agreed that potential future items would be considered at the following Progress Group meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.09 pm.

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# POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

Report of the meeting held on Wednesday, 17th September, 2025 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

## Voting Members

Cllr Abe Allen (Chairman)  
Cllr Lisa Greenway (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A. Adeola  
Cllr Thomas Day  
Cllr Halleh Koohestani  
Cllr Mara Makunura  
Cllr S.J. Masterson  
Cllr T.W. Mitchell  
Cllr M.J. Roberts  
Cllr Dhan Sarki

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Cllr Ivan Whitmee.

## 13. CHANGE OF BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Board **NOTED**

- i) the appointment of Cllr Thomas Day as a member of the Board in place of Cllr M.D. Smith for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year;
- ii) the appointment of Cllr Dhan Sarki as a member of the Board in place of Cllr Rhian Jones for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year; and
- iii) the appointments of Cllrs Gaynor Austin and G.B. Lyon as Standing Deputies to the Board for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

## 14. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd July, 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

## 15. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The Board welcomed Mrs Karen Edwards, Executive Director and Mr Alex Shiell, Service Manager – Policy, Strategy and Transformation, who provided an update on the recent consultation exercise that had been carried out in respect of the Community Governance Review (CGR).

The Board was advised that 412 local residents had provided an individual response to the survey. There was broad support for the view that parish councils or

neighbourhood area committees in the Rushmoor area would help to make sure that local communities would have their views heard and be able to influence what happened in the local area. This view was particularly strongly held by Aldershot residents and less so by residents in Farnborough. Respondents expressed a preference for parish councils over neighbourhood area committees but concern was expressed over additional costs/precepts. The most common response in terms of what area a parish should cover was around the Boroughs two towns, Aldershot and Farnborough. Other areas were mentioned also, including North Camp/South Farnborough, Cove, Hawley and Southwood. The majority of residents only wanted this additional layer of local government if there was no increase to council tax bills. The Board was asked to express a view as to whether the Council should proceed to a second round Corporate Governance Review consultation.

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

- A view was expressed that, if progressing to a second round, residents should be asked what range of activities any parish council should undertake.
- It was confirmed that it would be for the new parish council to develop its own objectives – these could not be imposed on them.
- Need to make an effort to ensure residents understand how Neighbourhood Area Committees would work so that a reasonable comparison can be made between these and parish councils.
- We should give resident indicative figures as to what a parish council might cost.
- We need to protect and safeguard the assets we currently have.
- We should use plain english, such as 'additional cost to your council tax' as opposed to 'precept'.
- Can social media be used to get message across?
- How do we deal with 'hard to reach' groups such as young people, ethnic minorities and digitally excluded?
- Significant cost associated with door knock survey – considered elected members would have a role to play in this area.
- Could churches and Garrison Radio be good outlets for getting message out?
- Considered that a parish council covering the entire Aldershot and Farnborough area would be unusual.

In summarising the Board's feedback on these matters, the Chairman made the following points:



- Support the recommendation to proceed to a second-round Corporate Governance Review consultation
- Reiterate that clear, concise and easy to understand information should be provided to residents alongside the consultation to enable them to make an informed decision, such as:
  - a comparison of the differences between parish councils and neighbourhood area committees
  - a demonstration of the cost-benefit of different combinations of precepts, assets and services
- Suggest that action is taken to improve the response rate, particularly amongst under-represented groups (younger people and the Nepali community, such as:
  - an enhanced communications campaign across digital channels and in person events
  - engagement of local partner and community groups.
- Encourage all councillors to promote the consultation to their communities.

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

## 16. **PERMITTING SCHEME FOR AUTOMATED PASSENGER SERVICE CONSULTATION**

The Board welcomed Ms Rachael Howes, Licensing Officer, who provided a presentation on the Government's consultation on driverless passenger vehicles.

The Board was advised that the Government had passed the Automated Vehicles Act 2024, which had set the framework for self-driving vehicles to be used commercially by the late 2020s. The law would allow for licensed operators (companies not individuals) to run automated taxis and private hire services. The Department for Transport was carrying out a consultation that sought views on the proposed automated services to support the deployment of commercial self-driving pilots and the Portfolio Holder had asked the Board to give its views to be incorporated in the Council's response. It was proposed that these pilots would start around spring 2026 with wider deployment from 2027. Local licensing authorities would be responsible for granting consent for taxi/private hire vehicle-like services before the Government, via the DVSA, would issue a permit for an Automated Passenger Service (APS). When deciding whether to give consent, an authority would consider local policy issues, such as local taxi licensing standards and policies, local transport integration and passenger safety and safeguarding expectations.

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

- Need to be aware of the danger of APS operators working over a wide area – how should the Council support its local businesses?
- With pilots not starting until later this year, there was no data at present on accident rates etc.
- How would passengers needing physical support be dealt with in this situation?
- How would passengers be safeguarded from being followed by unwanted parties?
- What would the procedure be if the vehicle was involved in an accident?
- Need to make sure fare information is transparent.
- With cameras in vehicles, where would the images and data be stored and who would have access to this – a safeguarding/GDPR concern?
- In administering APS in future, the Council should seek to do this on a cost-recovery basis.
- The view was expressed that being amongst the first to adopt APS in the Borough could bring benefits to the local economy.

In summarising the Board's feedback on these matters, the Chairman set out the Board's recommendations to the Portfolio Holder to facilitate the completion of the APS consultation document as follows:

**In your view, what information are taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing authorities likely to consider most relevant when determining whether to grant approval or authorisation?**

The licensing authority already has stringent policies in place for Taxi/PHV licensing, these should be applied for any operators, drivers / anyone who will be present in the vehicle and vehicles with adaptations where necessary to account for the automation. This will ensure consistency, and fairness of operation with the conventional taxi companies already operating in our Borough. In addition, the Board would want to see:

- Information about how the controlling mechanisms are applied to the vehicle (to understand the likelihood of their being any issues)
- Information about what level of testing has taken place for the vehicles
- What will the operator put in place for disabled passengers who need support
- Details of how the operator will ensure the cleanliness of the vehicle between passengers

- Emergency procedures for system failure, accidents, incidents or a passenger feeling unsafe
- Information on how fares will be calculated
- What level of automation the vehicles will have
- Proposed locations, times of operation, restrictions to operating e.g. in inclement weather
- Information about the safety mechanisms in place in the vehicle e.g. CCTV
- GDPR Policy and information about what data will be captured about passengers
- Levels of insurance, indemnity, liabilities

The Board would like to see operators applying for permits demonstrate that their business operation (not just their vehicles) will be situated in our Borough, therefore providing jobs and boosting our local economy – this could be a condition of any consent, or consideration being given to a jobs guarantee.

Consideration should also be given to what we can learn from other areas where automated vehicles are used e.g. Europe, USA, and UK for driverless cars not used as taxis, and whether there are any specific issues that should be addressed.

Whether we have the infrastructure in place for the proposed operation.

**What information would you expect to see published by permit holders on the safeguarding of passengers?**

- Information that is required by the licensing authorities policy for operators of PHVs/Taxis
- Information for passengers as to how they can get support if needed, request alternative vehicle, make complaints (contact details)
- What passengers should do in the event of a system failure, emergency or where they are concerned for their safety
- Information on how fares are calculated
- Information about safety features e.g. CCTV
- GDPR Policy
- Levels of insurance, indemnity, liabilities

## **General Comments**

Generally, the Board was supportive of allowing automated passenger services, provided that it would be well regulated and the relevant safety measures are in place to protect passengers, other road users and residents. They eliminate human error but there needs to be appropriate safeguards in place in the event that the technology fails. There needs to be an even playing field for these operators and the current taxi companies, to enable fair competition and consistency in safeguarding passengers.

Any pilot should have a scope and limits and take place at a time where there is likely to be a lesser impact if there are issues e.g. not during the Farnborough Airshow, however the Board recognises that once pilots are over, an automated passenger service when embedded and working would be good for the local economy and would support the airport and large events that take place in the Borough.

Statutory guidance must be clear and fit for purpose.

The Chairman thanked Ms Howes for her input.

## **17. WORK PLAN**

The Board noted the current Work Plan.

It was agreed that items to be included in the Plan would be discussed at the next Progress Group meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.39 pm.

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# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Report of the meeting held on Thursday, 18th September, 2025 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

## Voting Members

Cllr Halleh Koohestani (Chairman)  
Cllr Nadia Martin (Vice-Chairman)  
Cllr M.J. Tennant (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Leola Card  
Cllr C.P. Grattan  
Cllr Steve Harden  
Cllr Rhian Jones  
Cllr Bill O'Donovan  
Cllr S. Trussler  
Cllr Becky Williams

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr G.B. Lyon.

Cllr Mara Makunura attending the meeting as Standing Deputy.

## 14. POLICING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Committee welcomed Chief Inspector Gillian Cox, Hampshire Police and the Council's Community Safety Manager, David Lipscombe who were in attendance to report on current issues, challenges and positive news stories within the policing and community safety sector. Also in attendance was the Portfolio Holder for Pride in Place and Neighbourhood Services, Cllr Christine Guinness.

The Chief Inspector (CI) gave her presentation which provided an overview of the past 12 months. It was noted that CI Cox's would be moving on to a new role the following week and the new Chief Inspector would be Alex Reading. Alex was an experienced officer in district policing and had chosen to get back to operational policing in Rushmoor and Hart.

The past year had been very busy, with a reduction in crimes recorded against the previous year. There had, however, been an increase in shop lifting over the year and initiatives had been introduced to help reduce the number of incidents. In addition, a decrease in drug offenses had been recorded and it was advised that robust measures were in place to deal with weapon and knife crime.

CI Cox reported on anti-social behaviour (ASB) data. It was noted that there had been a decrease in incidents of ASB in the past twelve months with 451 incidents reported against 470 in the previous year. The data was monitored monthly and considerable work had been undertaken, particularly in Farnborough town centre where there had been a resurgence of incidents, to address ASB. The Committee

discussed the different types of ASB activity and noted that these could vary widely. The Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBO) were a good tool for tackling ASB and continued to be used as required. It was noted that there were currently 13 individuals with a CBO and seven individuals were in prison as a result of a breach of their CBO.

The Committee noted that Operation Sentinel, a Home Office led initiative tackling serious violence hotspots, operated in both town centres. Officers were required to patrol specific areas at set periods and had achieved 96% compliance with these requirements only missing 10 planned patrols. However, it was reported that an additional 1,422 unplanned patrols had been undertaken across the two town centres over the past twelve months.

In relation to Formal Action Taken (FAT) outcomes on criminal activity, it was noted that the number had dropped on the previous year. Resources and demand were contributing factors to the drop and although it was felt that there were enough officers to meet daily demand, more officers would always be welcome – it was difficult to follow up on incidents when officers were continually being deployed to other reported incidents. It was however reported that average handling and response times had improved on both 999 and 101 calls.

The Committee discussed engagement, in particular the role of the Local Bobbys. It was noted that the Local Bobby, of which there were four across the whole Borough, was to be involved in the community by providing a police presence, attendance at community events and through work with local partners. It was noted that the Local Bobbys were not able to be deployed to incidents to ensure that they remained available to their communities at all times. Cops and Coffee event dates would be shared with the Community Safety Team to be shared with elected Members. Other forms of engagement included Hants Alert, Let's Talk, Facebook and the Independent Advisory Group (IAG). The IAG was a group made up from the community to review and act as a critical friends on all kinds of matters relating to the police. There was currently a recruitment drive for the IAG and Members were asked to help seek members of the community who may wish to get involved.

The Committee discussed different types of crimes and where they sat in the reporting lines, it was noted that it depended on the form of the crime where it sat, for example, malicious communications could come under the categories of harassment/cyber crime etc. It was advised that a tool was available, publicly, to search crime types by area.

In response to a query regarding cuckooing, it was noted that cuckooing, where vulnerable individuals were targeted by drug dealers to store and sell drugs, was categorised as a priority crime and was handled by a specific team with wider involvement from partners such as social services.

In relation to a question regarding staffing and deployment from other areas across the county, it was advised that staff worked a shift pattern of six days on, four days off, 365 days per year. Staff levels were maintained at a certain level and each area supported each other when levels dropped or extra emergency cover was required. Recruitment was challenging due to the geography of Rushmoor and Hart and

its close borders to Surrey and proximity to London. However, it was noted that a successful recruitment drive had been held at the Princes Hall, Aldershot, and it was hoped that another would be held in due course.

Mr. Lipscombe then provided his presentation on community safety matters which included the staffing structure and the working arrangements of the team. It was noted that the Team had a statutory duty to respond to crime, disorder and ASB under the Crime and Disorder Act. Early intervention methods were used to try and tackle these issues in the first instance, these methods included warning letters, home visits, education, and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts. Management of the CCTV service also fell within the Teams' remit. Other areas covered included, the co-ordination of cases with partner agencies including, meeting coordination, case conferences etc., use of formal tools and powers for more serious cases e.g. Community Protection Notices / Warnings (CPN/W), Injunctions, Closures and Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO), and Antisocial Behaviour Case Reviews.

Other key areas included:

- Safeguarding lead for the Council – ensuring training and updates were provided to all staff and ensuring staff completed referrals when required
- Members of Hampshire PREVENT partnership, promoting awareness of PREVENT and sitting on the Channel Panel
- Part of Hampshire wide Violence Reduction Unit - to consider local picture and actions
- Coordination of NE Hants Domestic Abuse Forum with Hart District Council and responsible for considering applications for Domestic Homicide Reviews

The Committee were made aware of some of the facts and figures around daily work carried out by the Team, these included, 901 police 101 reports sent direct to the team to triage and follow up, 161 direct enquiries, 899 incidents recorded by the CCTV Control Room with 41 associated arrests, nine new referrals received from partners for the People meeting to consider, nine CPN/W issued, four Acceptable Behaviour Contracts with a further one pending sign-up, one Domestic Homicide review application considered and awaiting Home Office approval, and one Antisocial Behaviour Case Review carried out.

In addition to the day-to-day work, the Team had also undertaken a Think Safe project for year 6 pupils, at which 840 young people had been engaged with. A 60 camera CCTV replacement scheme had also been completed, which included three town centre CCTV cameras installed in Queensmead. Promotion of the DISC retailer system, continued detached youth work, a joint partnership cycling and e-scooter awareness campaign in Farnborough Town Centre, and promotion of ASB Awareness Week in July.

The Committee discussed the presentation and raised a point regarding the welfare of officers and the support in place to access help if required, it was noted that all staff had access to support and wellbeing services should they be needed.

In response to a query regarding closure orders, it was noted that closures could take place on any tenure of property, mortgaged or rented. Properties could be

closed for 3-6 months and issues which could cause a closure included cannabis use and noise nuisance.

In response to a discussion on the CCTV service, it was noted that there was no public access to CCTV camera footage, those with access easily obtained were the police, the Council and insurance companies. It was also noted that facial recognition and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) facilities were not available on the Council's cameras. The Committee noted that Aldershot had great coverage and the underserved areas in Farnborough were being addressed. The use of mobile cameras was costly and took time, especially if to be placed on land not owned by the Council.

Other matters raised included, Farnborough town centre Sainsbury's, which was considered a hotspot, it was advised that CCTV coverage was good in the area and action was being taken to address the issues in this area. On the matter of street preachers, it was advised that complaints came from both the public and shop owners and mainly related to the volume and nature of the preaching – it was important to take account of the right of freedom of speech but also the impacts on those being subjected to it. Work was underway with faith leaders to discuss how the matter could be addressed, and a code of conduct was currently being developed for people to sign up to.

The Committee were made aware of the current concerns for the team, these included increasing numbers of cases relating to mental health and social care matters and the lack of partner resources to deal with them, ongoing community cohesion matters, ASB in Aldershot town centre – the problem had reduced since the children returned to school, but a number of young people were being worked with by the team and youth catapult issues.

The Chairman thank Chief Inspector Cox, Mr Lipscombe and Cllr Guinness for their presentation and contributions to the meeting.

## 15. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee noted the current Work Plan.

It was noted that the item on Community Engagement would be fully scoped at the next meeting of the Progress Group and that currently Serco were scheduled to attend the December meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.29 pm.

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