

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 10 February 2026.

PRESENT: Councillor S J Conboy – Chair.

Councillors L Davenport-Ray, S W Ferguson, J E Harvey, J E Kerr, B A Mickelburgh, T D Sanderson and S Wakeford.

APOLOGY(IES): Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor Howell.

65. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

66. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Ferguson declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in respect of Minute No. 25/70 as he was employed by a large engine manufacturer which made static engines for industrial purposes, though to his knowledge the company had not been involved with the Council's vehicles. After seeking advice from the Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer, he confirmed that he was involved in engine design and had no involvement in commercial matters and therefore participated in the debate and vote.

67. 2025/26 REVENUE BUDGET & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2026/27 TO 2029/30); INCLUDING THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

A report by the Interim Corporate Director – Finance & Resources was submitted (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) providing the detail of the final Revenue and Capital Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources, Councillor Mickelburgh introduced the report, noting that a balanced and robust budget had been produced despite significant economic pressures. He drew attention to the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth), and advised that when the budget process was completed, the Head of Finance would look into the detail of earmarked reserves from the perspective of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The Cabinet reflected on the value of the considerations from the Overview & Scrutiny Panel. The importance that the Council retained staff in a challenging period approaching LGR was noted, as well as it being well justified on a commercial basis. It was prudent to budget for the increase in staff salaries, and reference was made to the importance of pay rectification and treating staff with equity and recognising outstanding performance. The Cabinet recognised the pragmatic judgement made in terms of the length of the MTFS and

felt the report was robust and appropriate to the Council's circumstances. Furthermore, the Cabinet welcomed the work and detailed analysis of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) and reflected that the Panel had not identified fundamental issues, which was reassuring.

In response to a question from the Cabinet, the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources stated that when it came to LGR the ability to have some confidence over the Council's approach had made Option E possible. That put the Council in a better place in comparison to other Authorities. Furthermore, he reflected on the achievement of passing on good financial footings moving forward, particularly at a time where LGR was approaching. Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that

- (a) the updated Fees and Charges 2026/27 as introduced in Annexe B1 and B2 of the submitted report, be approved; and
- (b) the proposals for the setting of future parking charges and proposals within the main body of the submitted report, be noted.

Recommended to Council

- (a) the approval of the overall budget 2026/27 as set out in within the submitted report;
- (b) the approval of the 2026/27 – 2029/30 Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 2b of the submitted report;
- (c) to set the Band D Council Tax rate for Huntingdonshire at £170.86, representing a £5 (3.01%) increase to the current charge;
- (d) the approval of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2027/28 – 2029/30, Capital Strategy, Investment Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy;
- (e) the approval of the Council Tax Resolution as set out in Appendix 8 in the submitted report;
- (f) to endorse the statement of the Section 151 Officer on the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of the Council's reserves as set out in Appendix 9 in the submitted report; and
- (g) to note the fees and charges 2026/27 as set out in Annexe B1 and B2 in the submitted report.

68. CIL GOVERNANCE - PHASE 2 - STRATEGIC ALLOCATION

A report by the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director (Place) and the Interim Corporate Director - Finance & Resources was submitted (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) seeking confirmation of the Council's updated approach to the

strategic allocation and use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), ensuring decisions remain evidence-based, aligned with the strategic priorities, and responsive to planning reform and Local Government Reorganisation.

The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources, Councillor Mickelburgh introduced the report, drawing attention to the comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth). He commented that the new plan improved on the existing arrangements that sometimes led to applications that the Council wanted to approve not being approved because the rules did not allow and therefore was a step forward. Although it would be desirable to ring-fence CIL funds at the point of Local Government Reorganisation, he advised that the Council could not bind another administration in the future, however it would be prudent to consider putting in place new governance that would allow the Council to make awards with Council funded money and apply that back to residents for schemes within the Huntingdonshire area.

The Cabinet noted that the policy was a much more robust way of distributing money and better met the Council's strategic purposes. Town and Parish Councils were encouraged to go through the process with officers and engage early with them. It was necessary to be satisfied that the money was being spent in ways that met the legal requirements but it was important to support Town and Parish Councils and steer them through accessing District Council CIL as well as accessing their own funding. The policy also set out terms for ensuring money was being used for its intended purpose as effectively as possible and more swiftly than had previously been the case.

The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources made reference to a question from the Overview & Scrutiny Panel which had not been included in the Scrutiny Comments document, regarding how much money the Council would have saved if the policy change had been implemented sooner. He advised that the Council had not engaged in any external borrowing, therefore could not have avoided external borrowing costs. Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that

- (1) the paper and the alignment of the approach with the existing CIL Governance arrangement be noted;
- (2) the approach to the Strategic Allocation of CIL funds as set out in the submitted report forms the Strategic Priority Programme to be delivered as part of the next stage of CIL Governance (approved in 2024) be agreed;
- (3) the suggested approach in respect of use and assignment of CIL funding, or 'forward funding' towards projects which form part of the Councils wider Capital Programme, where those projects would align with the adopted CIL Governance be agreed;

- (4) to retain a minimum level of CIL funding of £3-5m, in order to maintain a level of funding available to support future funding rounds be agreed;
- (5) that the use of CIL funds does not preclude the Council from utilising other funding approaches for future projects should this be required in future; in all cases, this would be subject to detailed assessment at the relevant time be noted;
- (6) authority be delegated to the Corporate Director (Place) and the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources and Section 151 Officer) in consultation with the Leader, Executive Councillor for Finance, and Executive Councillor for Planning to determine the level of allocation of CIL funding to be awarded towards projects which form part of the Councils agreed Capital Programme, based on the principles set out in the submitted report; and
- (7) authority be delegated to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources and Section 151 Officer) to undertake all necessary actions to ensure that appropriate governance and financial reconciliation measures are in place

69. LETTINGS POLICY REVIEW

A report by the Housing Needs & Resources Manager was submitted (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) advising of necessary changes to the Lettings Policy in light of changes made to legislation and statutory guidance by the Secretary of State. As these changes were implemented immediately, they were introduced to staff by a management instruction whilst the necessary changes to Lettings Policies were agreed amongst the Home-Link partner councils. The proposed amendments to the Policy were to ensure that the risk of legal challenge was minimised.

The Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance, Councillor Ferguson introduced the report. Reference was made to the Council meeting on 15th October 2025 where a resident asked whether the Council would recognise being a Care Leaver as a Protected Characteristic. The amendments to the policy provided clarity as to how the Care Leavers funded by Cambridgeshire County Council were prioritised compared with Care Leavers funded by other authorities. This reflected the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities to those who deserved support, while maintaining fair and lawful access for all eligible applicants and removing barriers for people in crisis when stability mattered most. Reference was also made to the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) which were unanimously supportive, however he understood the concerns around what 'minor future changes' would be and advised any changes would be done in discussion with relevant officers and communicated to the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel.

The Cabinet commended the valuable change to the Policy which was right and proper and was testament to how the team of officers had worked. Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that

- (1) the amendments to the Lettings Policy, as shown in appendix 1 in the submitted report, be approved; and
- (2) authority be delegated to the Corporate Director (Communities), in consultation with Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance, to make minor amendments and statutory changes to the Lettings Policy

70. FLEET RENEWAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

A report by the Head of Operational Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) seeking adoption of the Fleet Renewal and Infrastructure Improvement Strategy, aligning with the Corporate Plan 2023–2028, Climate Strategy and Building Energy Strategy.

The Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene, Councillor Kerr introduced the report and drew attention to the comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships), advising that the phasing of the Strategy and flexibility built into it would allay concerns regarding changes in legislation and technology.

The Cabinet noted that the Strategy was a pragmatic solution to the Council's position on solving the Climate Emergency, was a future proof, well-considered piece of work and reflected well on the work of officers. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that

- (1) the Fleet Decarbonisation Strategy be adopted as the strategic approach to transition the Council's fleet to net zero emissions in response to the Council's Climate Strategy commitments and the UK Government's confirmed phasing out of new petrol and diesel vehicle sales (2030) and non-zero-emission HGVs (2040), ensuring alignment with the Corporate Plan 2023–2028, Climate Strategy, and Building Energy Strategy;
- (2) the phased delivery model and implementation plan (2025–2035) as set out in the HDC Fleet Programme Report (Appendix 1) be approved, including
 - Phase 1 (2025–2028): Grid upgrade to 800–850kVA and modular charging infrastructure;
 - Phase 2 (2028–2031): Accelerated vehicle roll-out aligned with business case viability; and
 - Phase 3 (2031 onwards): Completion of full fleet transition to zero1emission vehicles to deliver a modern,

resilient, and cost-effective low1carbon fleet;

- (3) the enabling infrastructure capital investment of approximately £600,000 for depot grid upgrade, trunking and cable installation and the incorporation of this figure for budget setting for the MTFS from 26/27, be approved, and that this investment represents a long-term enhancement to Council assets regardless of future service arrangements including Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), be noted;
- (4) vehicle capital expenditure over the programme period (2025–2035) will be managed through the Council's existing fleet replacement programme and standard budget-setting cycles, with individual business cases approved annually by the Corporate Director of Finance (Section 151) Officer and Corporate Director for Place in accordance with the established Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) financial governance process, be noted; and
- (5) authority be delegated to the Corporate Director for Place, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder(s), to explore and develop commercially viable opportunities linked to depot infrastructure, fleet operations, or renewable energy generation that support long-term financial sustainability.

71. HABITAT BANKING

A report by the Biodiversity for All Project Manager was submitted (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) setting out the design, delivery and overall process that officers would use to deliver, launch and implement the Habitat Banking Programme in Phase 1 and Phase 2. The Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene, Councillor Kerr introduced the report, highlighting that the Council would be one of the first in the country to undertake this Programme, giving the Council a significant advantage in being able to offer something for which there was a strong and growing demand.

The Cabinet were content with the report and noted that it helped ensure that Biodiversity Net Gain happened for planning applications approved in Huntingdonshire. Furthermore, it was important that Councils were entrusted with undertaking such Programmes. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that

- (a) the Bio4All programme and the partnership work between the Council and CPCA for Phase 1 and how this can be taken forward in an approach for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), be noted;
- (b) the environmental, social and economic benefits of Habitat Banking across Huntingdonshire, alignment with existing policies/strategies, and the role of BNG and Habitat Banking in relation to development delivery within the District, be noted;

- (c) the principle of and approach outlined to phased establishment of Habitat Banks on suitable Council owned land to generate (BNG) units, be approved;
- (d) the inclusion of a £220,000 capital investment bid and associated income impact within the 2026-2027 MTFS to deliver Phase 1 & 2, be noted;
- (e) the approach, governance, process, and timeline for full implementation across the district by April 2026 and embedding BNG delivery and management as part of business-as-usual activity, be approved; and
- (f) it be noted that the appropriate delegations are in place to enable efficient and effective implementation, delivery of actions, and monitoring pertaining to BNG units as part of business as usual (BAU), and maximise the potential social, environmental and economic benefits of BNG on Council owned land

72. 2025/26 FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT - FORECAST AT QUARTER 3

A report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) was submitted (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) presenting details of the Council's financial performance for 2025/26 as at quarter 3. The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources, Councillor Mickelburgh introduced the report, commenting that the Council was in a good, strong financial position, and he advised where some of the overspends and underspends had come from and what had caused them.

The Cabinet discussed the overspend by Communications, which considering the quality of work from a team which was small compared with neighbouring authorities, was money well spent. It was noted that some of the overspend was due to the response to the national emergency at Huntingdon Train station. The Cabinet also noted the small revenue saving as a result of the underspend on the rent for the St Neots Market as the Council now owned the charter. This allowed the Council to ensure the market square was thriving with regular markets and met the needs and ambitions of the local community.

In response to questions from the Cabinet, the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources advised that in terms of the Commercial Investment Strategy (CIS), the entire market was still readjusting after the change the Covid-19 pandemic brought which had been significant. A new CIS had been produced which was an improvement on the previous one, but the ability to execute it may be limited by LGR. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that

- (1) the Cabinet considered and commented on the revenue

financial performance for the financial year 2025/26 quarter 3, as detailed in Appendix 1 and summarised in paragraph 3.2 in the submitted report; and

- (2) the Cabinet considered and commented on the capital financial performance for 2025/26 quarter 3, as detailed in Appendix 3 and summarised in paragraph 3.3 in the submitted report.

73. ONE LEISURE INDEPENDENT REVIEW UPDATE

A report by the One Leisure Business and Operations Manager was submitted (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) providing confirmation that One Leisure and the Council had either completed, were in the process of completing, or had deferred due to Local Government Reorganisation actions arising from the One Leisure Independent Review. The report provided Cabinet with an opportunity to review, consider and respond on One Leisure's and the Council's progress since the 12-month update in July 2025 and sought approval of the newly created One Leisure Vision, Customer Charter, and the new structure of One Leisure's 3-year business plan.

The Executive Councillor for Communities, Leisure and Health introduced the report and invited the One Leisure Business and Operations Manager, Leigh Allaker to deliver a presentation to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet paid tribute to the work that officers had undertaken, and commended the projects at Sawtry Leisure Centre and Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub, which were important to communities.

In response to a question from the Cabinet regarding securing the partnership arrangement with National Health Service Integrated Care Board (NHS ICB) for Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub, the Head of Leisure, Health and Environment advised that there had been a number of meetings with the NHS ICB in the last 12 months, with the discussion now moving away from a long-term lease. A meeting was scheduled the following day with NHS England to discuss the powers they had around longer-term funding, so progress would be made over the next few months. Officers were also working with a number of other stakeholders to conclude legalities. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that

- (1) the conclusion of all outstanding actions from the 12-month update report (July 2025) be agreed;
- (2) the 7 new actions from within the Year 1 – Transformation Progress Report of Actions & Recommendations from the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure undertaken by First Point Management, be noted;
- (3) the completion or on-going nature of the 7 actions identified within the Transformation Progress Report of Actions & Recommendations from the Long-Term Operating Model for

One Leisure undertaken by First Point Management, be noted;

- (4) the One Leisure Vision, Customer Charter and the new structure of the One Leisure 3-year business plan, be approved; and
- (5) authority be delegated to the Head of Leisure, Health and Environment in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Health, to undertake all necessary actions required to implement the aforementioned strategies; and embed the vision for One Leisure and its continuous improvement

74. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE UPDATE 2025/26 Q3

A report by the Business Performance and Transformation Manager was submitted (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) presenting progress against the actions identified from the Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken in May 2024 and a progress review in March 2025. With the formal recommendations and agreed actions being fully met and embedded, the report summarised ongoing oversight to ensure these remained upheld.

The Executive Leader, Councillor Conboy introduced the report, drawing particular attention to the eight formal recommendations which had all been fully met and transitioned into business as usual.

The Cabinet commented that the Council was in a much better place as a result of the Peer Challenge, and it was important to have the formal recommendations in place but also to think about the future. The Peer Challenge had made a significant difference to the Overview & Scrutiny Panels, who were more involved than ever before. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that

- (1) the Cabinet has reviewed and commented on progress made in Quarter 3 of 2025/26, and that all formal recommendations and suggestions have now been fully met and transitioned to business as usual, with ongoing oversight to ensure they are maintained, be noted; and
- (2) the action for the Executive Leader and Chief Executive Officer to write to the LGA informing them of completion of the formal CPC action plan and to provide the necessary evidence to support this position be confirmed.

75. CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH 2026/27

A report by the Insights Coordinator was submitted (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) providing updates on the annual refresh of the Corporate Plan for 2023-2028 and presenting the actions and key performance indicators for 2026/27 for Council approval. The Executive Leader, Councillor Conboy introduced the report, highlighting the importance of having a good Corporate Plan for staff to work to through the Election period to the start of a new

administration, to ensure business as usual was maintained. Particular reference was made to the reduction of the Planning backlog by 92%, which was as a result of due diligence from staff, and attention was drawn to the number of Key Performance Indicators that had their targets stretched.

The Cabinet noted the responses made to the comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth). Regarding Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 1 and the change of circumstances regarding contracts, the Executive Leader reported that the Active Lifestyle Team bid on contracts every year, and one of the longstanding contracts had decided to go in a different direction for 2026/27, meaning there would be a reduction in the number of attendances compared to the previous 3 financial years.

Regarding KPI'S 12,13 and 14 not being raised for the coming year, she advised that the Performance Team would take this away and explore possible changes, however the Council was 5-10% above the national average on performance. The Planning Improvements Programme was underway, and a significant amount of change was already taking place in that service, but the ongoing commitment to continuous improvement was taken seriously.

Regarding KPI 16, reference was made to the strong performance of the Economic Development Team, which was hard to replicate, however until a budget was set it was difficult to confirm attendances at some of the business engagements in the coming year. There was a balance to be had in the number of engagements and the quality of the engagements. Regarding why the implementation of the Hybrid Working Policy would affect short term staff sickness, the change was informed via a report from the Chartered Institute of Personal Development which found hybrid working increased sickness, however there was a commitment to taking action to mitigate this, though it was noted that staff absence at the Council remained below the national average.

Regarding the North Huntingdon Growth Cluster, the Performance Team would reword KPI 18 to include reference to working with communities, which had been unintentionally not specifically referenced. In terms of whether KPI's would be created for the Empty Homes Strategy and the Food Waste Collection Service, this would be taken back to the Teams to look at what may be appropriate alongside work already being done. This would come back to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel's pipeline of work. Furthermore, at the request of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel, officers would explore whether rough sleepers could be part of the Homelessness KPI. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that

- (a) the refreshed Corporate Plan (Appendix A), be endorsed; and
- (b) the Key Performance Indicator changes (Appendix D), be endorsed.

Recommended to Council

- (a) the approval of the refreshed Corporate Plan (Appendix A); and
- (b) the approval of the Key Performance Indicator Changes (Appendix D).

Chair