



A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS)** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2026** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) meeting held on 22nd January 2026.

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01480 388008

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary and other interests in relation to any Agenda item.

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01480 388008

3. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 9 - 24)

- a) The Panel are to receive the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and Notice of Key Executive Decisions
- b) Members to discuss future planning of items for the Work Programme

Contact Officer: B Buddle
01480 388008

4. LETTINGS POLICY REVIEW (Pages 25 - 34)

The Panel is invited to comment on the Lettings Policy Review.

Executive Councillor: Cllr S Ferguson

Contact Officer: J Collen
01480 388220

5. HABITAT BANKING PROGRAMME (Pages 35 - 52)

The Panel is invited to comment on the Habitat Banking Programme.

Executive Councillor: Councillor J Kerr

Contact Officer: N Massey
01480 388388

6. ONE LEISURE INDEPENDENT REVIEW UPDATE (Pages 53 - 80)

The Panel is invited to comment on the One Leisure Independent Review Update.

Executive Councillor: Councillor S Howell

Contact Officer: L Allaker
07572 028133

7. APPOINTMENT BASED FACE TO FACE SERVICES (Pages 81 - 84)

The Panel is invited to comment on and note the Appointment Based Face to Face Services Report.

Executive Councillor: Councillor S Ferguson

Contact Officer: M Greet
01480 388707

28 day of January 2026

Michelle Sacks

Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution](#)

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The District Council also permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with [guidelines](#) agreed by the Council.

Please contact Mrs Beccy Buddle, Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny), Tel No: 01480 388008/e-mail Beccy.Buddle@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#).

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

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Agenda Item 1

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 22 January 2026.

PRESENT: Councillor N J Hunt – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, S Bywater, S J Criswell, M A Hassall, M Kadewere, S Mokbul, B M Pitt, D J Shaw and N Wells.

APOLOGIES: No apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor L Davenport-Ray.

34. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 6th November 2025 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

35. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

36. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and Notice of Key Decisions for the period 1st February 2026 to 31st May 2026 were presented to the Panel.

37. USE OF URGENCY PROVISION

By means of a report by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Use of Urgency Provision Report was presented to the Panel.

The Panel

RESOLVED

to note the contents of the report.

38. FLEET RENEWAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

By means of a report by the Head of Operational Services (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Fleet Renewal and Infrastructure Improvement Strategy was presented to the Panel.

It was clarified to the Panel that the electric freighters were heavier

than the vehicles currently used. Concern was expressed about the carbon footprint generated during the production of the vehicles, following which, the Panel heard that this concern was recognised and in addition, noted that Germany had introduced some flexibility into their proposal to ban internal combustion engines by 2035. It was further noted that with flexibility in the strategy the main focus would be to secure power onto the site as this would form the basic structure going forward.

The Panel heard that the business continuity plans would be updated as technology was updated and in line with the required power provision at Eastfield House. It was also noted that the flexibility of the report and strategy allowed for further development of emerging technologies and the associated operational delivery and for the Council to react accordingly.

Councillor Shaw reflected that the report had previously been seen and discussed by the Climate Working Group and that he was generally in favour of the Strategy however he did express concerns relating to the optimism surrounding the responsible disposal of lithium batteries.

The Panel heard that modelling on typical mileage per kilowatt hour of the vehicles had been undertaken through the Energy Saving Trust and using existing round data whilst also accommodating the anticipated expansion to rounds encompassing new homes under construction. It was confirmed that an anticipated maximum of 850kVs would be required to charged all vehicles from flat to a full charge and that further work had been done to calculate smart charging to bring vehicles of different charge levels to a balanced charge then complete all vehicles to full charge.

It was noted that the grounds team at St Neots Town Council had acquired an electric lawn mower and that the reduction in noise and fumes experienced by operatives had been well received. This was a sentiment shared by the Council's Operations Team who have been trialling new technologies in order to make informed judgement on their use. It was also noted that smaller, urban authorities were able to make good use of these technologies however significant challenges were posed by the size and rural nature of the district. It was further observed that electrical vehicles tended to have cheaper maintenance costs due to less moving parts however investment would be required to enable the workshop to accommodate parts and training of operatives to service the new technologies.

The Panel were advised that the DVSA would accommodate and account for the weight of the battery on each vehicle in such a way so as not to loose the capacity of the vehicle and that it's payload would not be reduced. It was also advised that the team had previously loaned a vehicle from a neighbouring authority which had performed well but more information was being sought on performance in extreme temperatures and weathers and that a cautious approach was being taken.

It was observed that a cautious approach would be prudent as there were concerns about the infrastructure required for the new technology to function and it was acknowledged that this was

imperative. It was also advised that research was being undertaken on optimum battery conditions and charging to ensure full life expectancy from the technology.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be passed to Cabinet for their consideration when making a decision upon the recommendations within the report.

39. UPDATE ON THE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WEALTH BUILDING STRATEGY AND ASSOCIATED FUND

By means of a report and presentation by the Public Protection Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), an Update on the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy and Associated Fund was presented to the Panel.

In reflection on lessons learned from the application process, the Panel heard that the team had worked to support applicants who were not ready to begin the application process at that point but would proceed when ready as well as ensuring that applicants were not put off with a lengthy application process.

The Panel heard that each project had their own social value measures and that quarterly reports would be produced and reported on. The Panel were assured that risk management was in place and that this would also be accommodated in future Annual Audit Plans.

It was confirmed to the Panel that staff costs for projects were an eligible expenditure and that workshops had been held to understand the problems experienced when securing funding. The team further advised that a library of resources had been created along with standard information to assist further projects in their development. It was noted that this was an evolving model and would develop organically as required.

The Panel heard that following the first round of funding, the team had discovered that ambition was good, by keeping tight timescales the process kept moving with positive responses. The team reflected that applications had come in from similar areas and that going forward it was noted that a communications plan and resource were in place and that support from Members would be appreciated to help spread across the district.

It was further observed that Covid had proved the resilience of communities across the district and that the data available through the projects allowed for further learnings and understandings on this.

The Panel heard that a further role out of the project was planned with a launch event planned in late January 2026 with many local businesses and organisations expected to attend. It was also noted that part of the strategy was to further collaborate with partner organisations including North West Anglian NHS Foundation Trust and Cambridgeshire Constabulary to adopt and improve the funding

model and ways of working.

The Panel praised an excellent report and presentation and were pleased to learn that the Council were early adopters and influencers in this field.

Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2025-26 - Performance and Growth

Forward Agendas

Meeting Date	Pre-Scrutiny	Scrutiny Review
4 th February 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">2026/27 Revenue Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2027/28 to 2029/30); including the Capital ProgrammeCIL Governance - Phase 2 - Strategic Allocation	
4 th March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Community Infrastructure Levy FundingCorporate Plan UpdateHousing Strategy RefreshCorporate Performance Report 2025/26 (Quarter 3)	
1 st April 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">	

Unscheduled Agenda Items

Item	Notes	Progress
Local Plans		
Parking Strategy Refresh		Under development, anticipated for inclusion in the democratic cycle in Spring 2026

O&S Topics Identified For Further Consideration

Subject	Brief	Status
Huntingdonshire Evening Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Huntingdonshire's Evening Economy - supporting the night-time economy across our District• How HDC currently supports the evening economy across our market towns and rural areas (possibly across financial/business support, safety, growth, CCTV service, rural rates relief policies), as well as how we can influence our partners to provide further support for this strategic sector (including wider economic support, skills and employment).	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2025-26 - Environment, Communities and Partnerships

Forward Agendas

Meeting Date	Pre-Scrutiny	Scrutiny Review
5 th February 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lettings Policy Review• Habitat Banking• One Leisure Independent Review Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appointment Based Face to Face Services
5 th March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parks and Open Space Commercial Sustainability Plan• Community Chest Grant Aid Awards 2025/26• Armed Forces Covenant• Great Ouse Valley Trust	
2 nd April 2026		

Unscheduled Agenda Items

Item	Notes	Progress
Community Safety Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider bringing forward a paper to review and understand what Huntingdonshire District Council has done or is currently doing in relation to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).• Given the importance of community safety, I believe it would be beneficial to examine the CSP's	Report being developed ahead of scheduling onto the Agenda.

	<p>activities, outcomes, and any ongoing initiatives to ensure transparency and alignment with local needs, thus improve local understanding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it working, could this be improved? 	
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O&S Topics Identified For Further Consideration

Subject	Brief	Status
Civil Parking Enforcement Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An update on implementation and feedback on progress was requested by Councillor Alban at the July meeting of the Panel 	Investigating with Officers an appropriate time to schedule onto the agenda
Hinchingbrooke Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on redevelopment works • Big organisations making a difference locally, local recruitment • Link to preventative and integrated care 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs
Open Spaces in Huntingdonshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HDC owned – HCP, Paxton Pits • Great Fen • Green spaces perspective and how links with the local plan • Access for residents – health lifestyles, mental health, OLAL • Purpose of open spaces, and strategic use of them • Mental Health, Well-being • Wildlife corridors 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs
Customer Service Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community support • Merits of speed of customer contact versus depth of discussion and customer outcome 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs
Huntingdonshire's Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture and influence of Huntingdonshire • Creating a legacy for the district 	More info and scoping requested from Cllrs

Working Groups

Climate Working Group
Members: Cllrs N Hunt, T D Alban, M Hassall, C Lowe, B Pitt and D Shaw
Lead Officer: Adjusted to suit the topic, enquiries to B Buddle
Progress:
November 2022: Initial Meetings held to establish Terms of Reference for the group.
April 2023: Regular meetings established. Evidence and information gathering to be progressed.
Group to be involved in the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy Development.
January 2024: Meetings held to discuss proposed work plan for the group and to discuss HVO Fuels project
November 2024: Meeting to discuss future proposed projects
January 2025: Group met to review the HVO draft report prior to its consideration by the Panel
August 2025: Group met twice to discuss both the Energy Strategy and the Fleet Decarbonisation Project for initial feedback prior to their inclusion in the democratic cycle of meetings over Autumn 2025
Next Steps: Meetings to be scheduled as required to allow involvement in proposed works.

Disabled Facilities Grants Group
Members: I P Taylor, B Banks, C Tevlin and C Lowe
Lead Officer: Claudia Deeth
Progress:
February 2024: Councillors invited to express their interest in being involved with the project.
August 2024: initial meeting held and scope of project discussed
February 2025: Further meeting held to update the group on the progress of the project
Next Steps: DFG team to arrange ongoing schedule of meetings

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NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS INCLUDING THOSE TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

Prepared by: Councillor Sarah Conboy, Executive Leader of the Council
Date of Publication: 12 January 2026
For Period: 1 February 2026 to 31 May 2026

Membership of the Cabinet is as follows:-

Councillor Details	Councillor Contact Details
Councillor S J Conboy Page 15	Executive Leader of the Council and Executive Councillor for Place Cloudberry Cottage 9 Earning Street Godmanchester Huntingdon PE29 2JD Tel: 01480 414900 / 07831 807208 E-mail: Sarah.Conboy@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor L Davenport-Ray	Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation and Workforce 73 Hogsden Leys St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 6AD E-mail: Lara.Davenport-Ray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor S Ferguson	Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance 9 Anderson Close St Neots Cambridgeshire PE19 6DN Tel: 07525 987460 E-mail: Stephen.Ferguson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Councillor J Harvey	Executive Councillor for Governance and Democratic Services	c/o Huntingdonshire District Council Pathfinder House St Mary's Street Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 3TN Tel: 07941 080531 E-mail: Jo.Harvey@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor S Howell	Executive Councillor for Communities, Health and Leisure	c/o Huntingdonshire District Council Pathfinder House St Mary's Street Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 3TN Tel: 01733 794510 E-mail: Sally.Howell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor J Kerr	Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene	15 Crown Walk St Ives Cambridgeshire PE27 5QN Tel: 07906 899425 E-mail: Julie.Kerr@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor B Mickelburgh	Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources	2 Grainger Avenue Godmanchester Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 2JT Tel: 07441 392492 E-mail: Brett.Mickelburgh@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Councillor T Sanderson	Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Planning	29 Burmoor Close Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 6GE Tel: 01480 436822 E-mail: Tom.Sanderson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Councillor S Wakeford	Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing	4 Croft Close Brampton Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE28 4TJ Tel: 07762 109210 E-mail: Sam.Wakeford@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Notice is hereby given of:

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- Key decisions that will be taken by the Cabinet (or other decision maker)
- Confidential or exempt executive decisions that will be taken in a meeting from which the public will be excluded (for whole or part).

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Formal notice is hereby given under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 that, where indicated part of the meetings listed in this notice will be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain confidential or exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. See the relevant paragraphs below.

Any person who wishes to make representations to the decision maker about a decision which is to be made or wishes to object to an item being considered in private may do so by emailing Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk or by contacting the Democratic Services Team. If representations are received at least eight working days before the date of the meeting, they will be published with the agenda together with a statement of the District Council's response. Any representations received after this time will be verbally reported and considered at the meeting.

Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) (Reason for the report to be considered in private)

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the Financial and Business Affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations that are arising between the Authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of or office holders under the Authority
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings
6. Information which reveals that the Authority proposes:-
 - (a)To give under any announcement a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b)To make an Order or Direction under any enactment
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon PE29 3TN.

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Notes:-

- (i) Additions changes from the previous Forward Plan are annotated ***
- (ii) Part II confidential items which will be considered in private are annotated ## and shown in italic.

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Community Chest Grant Aid Awards 2025/26 To consider applications received via the Community Chest Awards Scheme for 2024/25.	Grants Panel	18 Mar 2026		Claudia Deeth, Public Protection Manager Tel: (01480) 388233 or email: Claudia.Deeth@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Howell & L Davenport-Ray	Environment, Communities & Partnerships
Final 2026/27 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (2027/28 to 2030/31) including Capital Programme	Cabinet	10 Feb 2026		Lydia Morrison, Interim Corporate Director, Finance and Resources (S151) Tel: (01480) 388178 or email Lydia.Morrison@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		B Mickelburgh	Performance & Growth

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Fleet Renewal and Infrastructure Improvement Strategy	Cabinet	10 Feb 2026		Andrew Rogan, Head of Operations Tel: (01480) 388082 or email Andrew.Rogan@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		J Kerr	Environment, Communities & Partnerships
Habitat Banking Page 20	Cabinet	10 Feb 2026		Nick Massey, Open Spaces Project Manager Email: Nick.Massey@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		J Kerr	Environment, Communities & Partnerships
Lettings Policy Review	Cabinet	10 Feb 2026		Jon Collen, Housing Needs Manager Tel: (01480) 388220 or email Jon.Collen@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Wakeford	Environment, Communities & Partnerships

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Treasury Management Capital and Investment Strategies	Cabinet	10 Feb 2026		Lydia Morrison, Interim Corporate Director, Finance and Resources (S151) Tel: (01480) 388178 or email Lydia.Morrison@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		B Mickelburgh	Performance & Growth
PCIL Governance – Phase 2 – Strategic Allocation***	Cabinet	10 Feb 2026		Lydia Morrison, Interim Corporate Director, Finance and Resources (S151) Tel: (01480) 388178 or email Lydia.Morrison@huntingdonshire.gov.uk Mike Gildersleeves, Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director (Place) Tel: (01480) 388568 or email Mike.Gildersleeves@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		T Sanderson	Performance & Growth

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy - Update Page 2	Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance and Section 151 Officer	Feb 2026		Zoe Warren, Council Tax & Business Rates Manager Tel: (01480) 388461 or email Zoe.Warren@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Ferguson	
Community Infrastructure Levy Funding	Cabinet	17 Mar 2026		Claire Burton, Implementation Team Leader Tel: (01480) 388274 or email Claire.Burton@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		T Sanderson	Performance & Growth
Corporate Plan Update	Cabinet	17 Mar 2026		Lucy Aston, Business Performance and Transformation Manager Tel: (01480) 388604 or email Lucy.Aston@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Conboy	Performance & Growth

Matter for Decision Description of Decision	Decision Maker	Date decision to be taken	Documents Available	How relevant Officer can be contacted	Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.)	Relevant Executive Councillor	Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Empty Homes Strategy	Cabinet	17 Mar 2026		Pamela Scott, Head of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Delivery Tel: (01480) 388146 or email Pamela.Scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		S Wakeford	Performance & Growth
Parks and Open Space Commercial Sustainability	Cabinet	17 Mar 2026		Gregg Holland, Head of Leisure Service, Health and Environment Tel: (01480) 388157 or email Gregg.Holland@huntingdonshire.gov.uk		J Kerr	Environment, Communities & Partnerships

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**Public
Key Decision – Yes**

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Lettings Policy Review

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) – 5 February 2026
Cabinet – 10 February 2026

Executive Portfolio: Resident Services and Corporate Performance (Cllr S Ferguson)

Report by: Housing Needs & Resources Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Customers & Partnerships) is invited to comment on the contents of the report and make any comments to the Cabinet.

**Public
Key Decision – Yes**

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Lettings Policy Review

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) – 5 February 2026
Cabinet – 10 February 2026

Executive Portfolio: Resident Services and Corporate Performance (Cllr S Ferguson)

Report by: Housing Needs & Resources Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The Council's Lettings Policy provides the legal allocations framework as to who is accepted onto the register, how the register is administered and how the majority of social rented housing in the district is let.

The policy must be reviewed and amended where necessary in light of changes in legislation, new statutory guidance or precedents and rulings made in the Courts.

The Council's policy has been reviewed and amended to reflect changes as a result of:

1. The Secretary of State amending legislation and statutory guidance which removes the local connection or residency requirement for care leavers and victims of domestic abuse applying to council housing registers.
2. The need to clarify how Cambridgeshire County Council Care Leavers are prioritised once accepted onto the housing register, compared to Care Leavers who are funded by other local authorities and have no other connection to the area.

Delegated authority is also sought so that in future, minor amendments and statutory changes can be made to the Lettings Policy by the Corporate Director (Communities) in consultation with Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance.

Recommendation(s):

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the amendments to the Lettings Policy, as shown in Appendix 1 to the report.
2. Give delegated authority 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.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 As the local Housing Authority, the Council is required by law to have an allocations scheme for determining priorities in the allocation of social rented housing. The Lettings Policy is the Council's allocations scheme.
- 1.2 Although the Council is no longer a stock holding authority it has a housing register of people wishing to be considered for an allocation of social rented housing and a choice-based lettings scheme (the Home-Link scheme) which is the vehicle for letting the majority of these properties in the district. The Lettings Policy dictates how the housing register and the letting of properties operates and the six partner local authorities within the Home-Link scheme each operate a Lettings Policy that follows the same broad principles.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to advise 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 are to ensure that the risk of legal challenge is minimised.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government amended [Part 6 of the 1996 Act](#) and revised statutory guidance in July 2025. These changes came into effect immediately and management instructions and revised guidance for staff were introduced so that these changes were being correctly applied from the outset. The Home-Link partnership of authorities has considered what changes were required to our Lettings Policies and systems and this report seeks approval to make the necessary changes to the published Policy. The report also seeks approval to make minor changes to the Policy in future under delegated authorities, so that these types of changes can be made more quickly.
- 2.2 The changes made by the Secretary of State exempt Care Leavers under 25 and victims of domestic abuse from local connection or residence requirements that may be contained with a council's Lettings Policy. The changes are to ensure fairer access to housing for vulnerable people who often need to move for safety or support.
- 2.3 To comply with this change, the wording in Section 3.4 of the Lettings Policy must be amended to make it clear that certain groups of people are excluded from the Local Connection test. The new wording is attached at Appendix One.
- 2.4 In addition, a further amendment to Section 4.6 of the Policy is required to clarify that Care Leavers funded by Cambridgeshire County Council will qualify for a Band A status when certain other conditions are met. This wording is also contained in Appendix One.

- 2.5 The Band A status awarded to Cambridgeshire Care Leavers is not a new aspect of the Policy. However, the removal of the Local Connection test means that Care Leavers funded by any local authority area in England are now eligible to join the register. This broader eligibility necessitates additional clarification of the circumstances under which Cambridgeshire-funded Care Leavers are awarded the Band A status, and how applications from Care Leavers funded by other local authorities will be assessed. The Home-Link partnership has proposed that although Care Leavers from other local authority areas are eligible to join the register they would not attract the same priority and would be awarded the housing factor relevant to their circumstances in priority Band C.
- 2.6 A full review of the policy is planned for 2026. However, the Local Connection amendments are required immediately to ensure the Policy remains compliant with statutory guidance.

3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 4.1 The proposed to amendments to the Lettings Policy will ensure that it remains legally complaint and aligned with legislation and statutory guidance. This will minimise potential legal challenge should the Policy not include the exemptions introduced by the Secretary of State's amendments.

5. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 The amendments as to how housing register applicants are assessed has already been introduced via a management instruction given that the Secretary of State's immediately introduced these changes.

6. LINK TO HUNTINGDONSHIRE FUTURES, THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 Improving the quality of life for local people by keeping them out of crisis through assisting to help meet their housing needs is a strategic priority of the Council. By keeping our Lettings Policy up to date with both legal requirements and government policy this will enable us to provide the most appropriate advice and assistance to customers wishing to apply to the housing register and access social rented housing.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 As the suggested changes do not affect a large proportion of applicants on the register, or constitute a significant alteration to procedure, this is not

considered to be a major change of policy and a wider consultation exercise is therefore not required at this stage.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Home-Link partners have sought legal opinion about the proposed Lettings Policy changes and have been advised that they will ensure the policy remains legal considering the changes to legislation and statutory guidance.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no resource implications associated with this report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

10.1 The Lettings Policy must be amended in light of changes to legislation and statutory guidance. This report recommends the necessary changes to ensure that the Lettings Policy remains legal and minimises the risk of legal challenge.

11. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Proposed changes to the Council's Lettings Policy

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Statutory guidance - Providing social housing for local people](#)

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title Jon Collen – Housing Needs & Resources Manager
Tel No: 01480 388220
Email: Jon.Collen@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

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Appendix One

Minor amendments to the Lettings Policy relating to Local Connection

The current policy can be accessed here: [HDC Lettings Policy](#)

Policy Section	Current wording	Proposed wording
3.4 Connection to the Local Area Criteria		
3.4.4	<p>Retain wording in 3.4.1 a to i.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">j. The applicant is a care leaver from the County who has been placed (by Children's Services) outside the Council area; ork. There are special circumstances that the Council considers give rise to a local connection.	<p>From 3.4.1 j replace with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">j. The applicant is a care leaver assessed as an eligible, relevant, or former relevant child (as defined under Children Act 1989) aged 16 to 24 who has spent a period of, or periods amounting to, at least 13 weeks in care in England or Wales since their 14th birthday, including at least one day since turning 16; ork. The applicant is a person who is or has been a victim of domestic abuse carried out by another person and who needs to move for reasons connected with that abuse, including from accommodation initially occupied on a temporary basis; orl. There are special circumstances that the Council considers give rise to a local connection.

4.6 Band A:

Urgent need Applicants with the following circumstances will be placed into Band A:

4.6	b) Current supported housing resident Applicants leaving Social Services care or other supported accommodation, and are ready to move to a permanent home of their own. This will be subject to the Council, Social Services (where applicable) and the landlord of the supported accommodation agreeing that the applicant is ready to move to their own home. If the applicant needs an on-going support package to allow them to live independently, confirmation that this will be put in place will also be required from the proposed support provider. The date that this priority is awarded (date in Band A) will be the date that the resident is ready to move to independent living, as recommended by their support worker. The decision to apply this priority will be made by the relevant decision-making process in the district where the supported housing is based.	b) Current supported housing resident and Care Leavers Applicants who are ready to leave local supported accommodation or Care Leavers funded by Cambridgeshire County Council who are ready to move to a permanent home of their own.** ** This will be subject to the Partner Council, Social Services (where applicable) and the landlord of the supported accommodation agreeing that the applicant is ready to move to their own home. If the applicant needs an on-going support package to allow them to live independently, confirmation that this will be put in place will also be required from the proposed support provider. The date that this priority is awarded (date in Band A) will be the date that the resident is ready to move to independent living, as recommended by their support worker. The decision to apply this priority will be made by the relevant decision maker in the district where the supported housing is based. Supported Housing residents and Care Leavers who do not meet these criteria will be placed in the relevant housing factor within priority Band C (see 4.8).
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Confidential (Part 2)
Key Decision – Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Habitat Banking Programme

Meeting/Date: Overview & Scrutiny - (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) – 5th February 2026

Cabinet – 10th February 2026

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor Julie Kerr

Report by: Nicholas Massey-Vernon – Biodiversity for All Project Manager

Ward(s) affected: All Ward(s)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities & Partnerships) is invited to comment on the contents of the Habitat Banking Programme report and make any comments to the Cabinet.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Habitat Banking Programme
Meeting/Date:	Environment O&S Panel – 05/02/2026 Cabinet – 10/02/2026
Executive Portfolio:	Executive Councillor Julie Kerr
Report by:	Nicholas Massey-Vernon – Biodiversity for All Project Manager
Ward(s) affected:	All Wards

Executive Summary:

This report seeks Cabinet approval to establish habitat banks on appropriate Council-owned sites, generating Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) units.

Habitat banking enables Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) to meet its statutory duties under the Environment Act 2021, while retaining investment within the district and improving the quality of parks and open spaces for residents.

Habitat Banking Council sites can be delivered in a proposed two-phase approach:

Phase 1 – which is underway, utilises the underspend from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) funded Biodiversity for All (Bio4All) project to pilot the approach on three sites by providing £49,416 of funding for surveys, habitat management and monitoring plans (HMMP) and initial capital investment (habitat creation) to deliver some of the wider uplifts required.

Phase 2 – following on from the work in phase 1 a £220,000 capital bid has been submitted to the 26/27 MTFS to habitat bank a further three Council owned or leased sites and deliver capital investment across the 6 sites (habitat creation). This report is seeking permission to proceed with phase 2 to habitat bank a further three sites – subject to the approval of the relevant capital funding which will be dealt with separately via the Councils budget setting process.

The Bio4All project has helped to identify six potential Council owned and leased sites for the project:

Phase 1:

- Barford Road, Pocket Park (St Neots)
- Huntingdon Riverside
- St Neots Riverside

Phase 2 (Potential sites):

- Spring Common
- Berman Park
- Priory Park

The financial modelling undertaken by Officer's indicates a net income potential of £1.96m (Phase 1) and £818,000 (Phase 2) a total of £2.78m over a 30 year period. Inclusive of management, staffing and maintenance costs this would facilitate a positive financial contribution of £1.74m over the same period. This would be dependent based upon market conditions alongside the improved biodiversity conditions on each site.

The proposals set out in this report support the Corporate Plan 2023–2028, the Climate Strategy, the Huntingdonshire Futures Strategy and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), providing a financially sustainable, nature-based approach to improving biodiversity, climate resilience and community wellbeing.

The report aims to establish the principles relating to Habitat Banking and the Councils approach, and ensure sufficient delegations are available for Officers to implement the agreed direction of travel – subject to the necessary and relevant separate financial approvals.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet/Committee is

RECOMMENDED

- a) To update the Council on the Bio4All programme and showcase the partnership work between the Council and CPCA for Phase 1; and note how this can be taken forward in an approach for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).
- b) To acknowledge the environmental, social and economic benefits of Habitat Banking across Huntingdonshire; alignment with existing policies/strategies; and role of BNG and Habitat Banking in relation to development delivery within the District.
- c) To seek approval for the principle of and approach outlined to phased establishment of Habitat Banks on suitable Council owned land to generate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) units.
- d) To note the inclusion of a £220,000 capital investment bid and associated income impact within the 2026-2027 MTFS to deliver Phase 1 & 2.

- e) To seek approval on 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.
- f) To ensure 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.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the design, delivery and overall process that officers will use to deliver, launch and implement the Habitat Banking Programme in Phase 1 and Phase 2.
- 1.2 To showcase the opportunity that exists for the council to improve biodiversity across parks and open spaces, to support financial sustainability, allowing for long-term improvements and investment into important local assets, and to create spaces that local residents want to visit.
- 1.3 To secure Cabinet approval for the phased establishment of habitat banks on Council-owned and leased land, enabling and supporting the Council to generate Biodiversity Net Gain units for commercial sales to developers and other interested parties. The report is intended to establish the strategic direction and approach; and provide a plan within which Officers can operate to deliver and implement the proposals, and deliver the identified outcomes.
- 1.4 To utilise the implementation of the Habitat Banking Programme to promote and support the Council's wider strategic approach of its Corporate Plan 2023–2028, the Climate Strategy, the Huntingdonshire Futures Strategy and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), helping provide a financially sustainable, nature-based approach to improving biodiversity, climate resilience and community wellbeing

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Environment Act 2021 requires most developments in England to deliver a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), secured for at least 30 years. Where on-site mitigation is not possible, developers must purchase BNG units from off-site registered habitat banks.
- 2.2 This national requirement has created a growing environmental market. Local authorities are encouraged to participate directly by restoring or enhancing their own land to produce measurable biodiversity units. The habitat banking process is set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.3 Huntingdonshire District Council manages a diverse portfolio of parks and open spaces suitable for habitat banking, which gives the council the opportunity to enhance biodiversity across its sites fulfilling the objectives set out by Cabinet on the 16/01/2024 ([Cabinet](#) Report). Delivering habitat banks locally will:
 - retain developer investment within the district
 - enhance biodiversity and ecosystem resilience
 - improve public open spaces for residents
 - create a long-term, self-sustaining income model
 - support delivery of the Corporate Plan, Climate Strategy and Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

2.4 Initial feasibility work under the CPCA-funded Biodiversity for All (Bio4All) programme identified six suitable sites, with potential to generate approximately 65 units.

2.5 Whilst building the business case for the habitat banking programme the following assumptions have been used:

- The BNG sale price for a BNG unit within this report and programme has been modelled on the information set out in the following link. ([Biodiversity Units UK — February 2025 BNG Pricing Report: One Year On](#))
- 4% inflation on staff and maintenance costs
- 6.1% capital interest payable if capital investment was borrowed over 30 years

2.6 Further financial breakdowns can be seen in **Appendix 2 and 3**. In addition a wider explanation of how the business case was developed by officers can be seen in section 5.

2.7 The Bio4All project identified the issue of being able to fund the creation of habitats (trees, hedges, ponds etc), but not the maintenance costs associated to establish and maintain them (watering etc), as this is counted as revenue funding. This resulted in the risk of the newly created habitats dying and the capital investment being lost and a reluctance to spend all of the capital budget without a plan to maintain the new natural assets, resulting in an underspend of approximately £100,000. Therefore, the team identified the creative solution of habitat banking the sites to enable a longer-term funding model to support the creation and maintenance of the new natural assets.

2.8 The CPCA approved the use of the funds (£50,000) for this purpose and the habitat banking work began in September 2025, with the initial planting and habitat creation taking place in October 2025 (Phase 1).

2.9 Phase 1, covering Barford Road Pocket Park (St Neots), St Neots Riverside and Huntingdon Riverside, have been funded through Bio4All project underspend to test the approach and establish baselines, Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans (HMMP) and initial ecological works. The breakdown of the costs and activities can be seen in the table below.

2.10 Details of Phase 1 Activities and Costs

Site	Activity	Cost
St Neots Riverside	Ecological Baseline and HMMP	£6,246
	Initial Ecological Capital Works	£6,753
Huntingdon Riverside	Ecological Baseline and HMMP	£6,246
	Initial Ecological Capital Works	£11,757
Barford Road, Pocket Park	Ecological Baseline and HMMP	£6,246

	Initial Ecological Capital Works	£12,167
Total		£49,417

2.11 Phase 2 proposes further habitat banking at Spring Common, Berman Park and Priory Park, subject to new capital and revenue funding being approved in the MTFS for 2026/27.

2.12 The capital bid submitted as part of the 26/27 MTFS is £220,000 of which £95,000 will be used to finalise Phase 1 and the rest £125,000 will be used to implement Phase 2.

3. STRATEGIC BENEFITS

3.1 Financial Sustainability

- Establishes a long-term revenue stream through BNG unit sales.
- Reduces reliance on external grant funding.
- Ring-fenced surpluses support 30-year management and future investment.
- Enhances the value and resilience of Council assets.

3.2 Environmental and Climate Benefits

- Delivers habitat creation including wetlands, species-rich grasslands and woodland enhancements.
- Supports carbon sequestration, flood mitigation and air quality improvement.
- Strengthens the district's ecological network and climate resilience. Aligns with the Climate Strategy, LNRS and Huntingdonshire Futures.

3.3 Community and Wellbeing

- Enhances accessible open spaces for residents.
- Supports physical and mental health through contact with nature.
- Creates opportunities for education, volunteering and community engagement.

3.4 Reputational and Strategic Leadership

- Positions HDC as a regional leader in nature-based delivery.
- Demonstrates alignment between statutory duties and local priorities.
- Provides a model that can be scaled across the district.

4. Options Appraisal

4.1 Three delivery approaches were considered.

- **Option 1** — Do Nothing would forgo a significant financial and environmental opportunity, leaving the Council reliant on external providers to meet local Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) demand.
- **Option 2** — Partnership or Lease Model would reduce upfront delivery risk but would limit the Council's long-term financial return and control over habitat quality, with the majority of value captured by a private provider.

- **Option 3** — HDC-Led Habitat Banking, delivered on Council-owned land, offers the strongest alignment with strategic priorities, maximises revenue retention, and provides full oversight of environmental outcomes. This is the preferred option, as set out in detail in **Appendix 2 & 3**.

4.2 **Option 3 is recommended** because it maximises long-term financial return to the Council, ensures local delivery of high-quality habitats, and aligns most strongly with HDC's Corporate Plan, Climate Strategy and Huntingdonshire Futures priorities. While Option 2 reduces some upfront risk, it significantly limits the Council's financial return and long-term control. Option 1 offers no strategic or financial advantage and would result in a lost opportunity for improvement of Council-owned land.

5. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

5.1 The sale price for BNG units has been calculated by officers using the information set out in the following link – [Biodiversity Units UK — February 2025 BNG Pricing Report: One Year On](#).

5.2 Based upon the information from the link above and to take a prudent and risk-based approach, officers have used the framework price (link above) to model the total income expected from the sale of 65 units, as set out in **Appendix 2**.

5.3 Officers have worked with colleagues in Planning and Operations (Grounds Maintenance) to explore and fully understand the overarching costs for staff, contractors and maintenance costs. This information can be seen in **Appendix 2**.

5.4 As outlined in **Appendix 2**, the positive contribution between the direct sale of a BNG unit (income) versus the direct costs (staff, contractor and maintenance) can be seen in the Total Return Average column in **Appendix 2**.

5.5 Whilst it is strongly felt that all 65 BNG units could be sold in one year, officers have built the business case, presented as part of this report split equally over a four-year period. Therefore, at the conclusion of the four-year period and working on this basis the total income from the BNG sales would be £2.8m.

5.6 In terms of costs (staff, contractor and maintenance) an inflationary annual allowance of 4% has been applied every year to ensure that a realistic business case was applied from the outset of this proposed project. In addition to this and through engagement with the Council finance team officer's have also included a 6.1% interest cost for the borrowing of the requested capital (£220,000). These costs combined are £1.16m and can be seen in **Appendix 2**.

5.7 In addition to the inflationary costs and interest costs for borrowing the Minimum Revenue Payments (MRP) has also been included within the overall expenditure for this project. These costs can also be viewed in **Appendix 2**.

5.8 Therefore, in summary and as can be viewed within **Appendix 3** the main financial income and costs are summarised below:

Item	Income/Cost
Direct sale of BNG Credits in Phase 1 & 2	£2,779,087
Total Income	£2,779,087
Direct Costs (Staff, Contractor & Maintenance)	£1,042,560
Inflationary (4%) & Interest Costs (6.1%) + MRP	£1,381,289
Total Expenditure	£2,423,849
Overall Net Contribution	£355,238

6. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

6.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

7. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

7.1 The below table summarises the key risks associated with the projects and the mitigations to address the risks.

7.2 Detail of the Project Risks and Mitigations

Category	Risk	Mitigation
Financial	Upfront investment; variable BNG market.	Phased rollout; conservative pricing; external funding sought; ring-fenced income.
Legal	30-year management obligations and compliance risk.	Standard HMMP templates; Legal & Finance oversight; formal covenants.
Operational	Delivering the works required	Utilise inhouse services where possible
Capacity	Limited in-house expertise for monitoring.	Commission ecologists short-term; build internal capacity through BNG income.
Reputational	Public misunderstanding of habitat banking.	Clear communications highlighting community benefits.
Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)	Misalignment between asset ownership and ongoing habitat management responsibilities.	Embed Habitat Banks within robust legal frameworks

8. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

8.1 The implementation of the Habitat Banking Programme will be phased to deliver the Bio4All-funded pilot works in 2025, followed by full programme rollout and policy implementation during 2026–27.

8.2 Details of the Project Milestones and Timeline

Year	Month/s	Detail
2025	October – December	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Phase 1 works commencement under Bio4All (delivered)
2026	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Register x 3 Phase 1 habitat banks
	February	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overview & Scrutiny CommitteeCabinetBudget approval
	March - April	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Budget implementationProcurement & baselining for Phase 2Sale of first HDC BNG Units
	May – September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Phase 2 habitat creation
	September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Register Phase 2 habitat banks
	October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monitoring framework established
	December	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fully established habitat banking programme in place
2027	January – March	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Council 12-month updateRolling programme from 2027 onwards – embed in BAU

8.3 This timeline ensures that Bio4All-funded pilot sites are completed and registered early 2026, enabling Cabinet to approve the full rollout, subject to approval in mid-2026 and for the wider Habitat Banking Programme to become fully operational by late 2026.

9. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

9.1 The Habitat Banking Programme directly supports the Council's Corporate Plan 2023–2028 priorities of *Environment, Economy, and Communities*. They contribute to the Council's ambition to create a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable district by delivering measurable biodiversity enhancement, supporting local climate resilience, and generating long-term income to reinvest in public services.

9.2 The proposals also underpin delivery of the Huntingdonshire Climate Strategy (2023), the Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy, and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), ensuring that Council land management aligns with national environmental policy. Together, these initiatives demonstrate HDC's commitment to climate action, natural

capital investment, and sustainable local growth in line with regional and national priorities.

- 9.3 The Habitat Banking Programme can also support the wider financial and commercial sustainability of the Council through helping offset wider service costs in Parks and Open Spaces and at the same time creating opportunities to influence other service areas by upskilling staff, creation of job roles and apprenticeships and wider service modernisation.
- 9.4 This opportunity will also allow itself to support further stakeholder engagement programmes like Groundwork East, enable the Parks and Open Spaces team to facilitate new and innovative programmes of a similar nature and seek out opportunities for volunteering to create and launch new habitat banks in the future.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Habitat banking will operate in compliance with the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 and associated statutory guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).
- 10.2 BNG legislation requires that sites be legally secured for a minimum period of 30 years, either through a Section 106 agreement or a conservation covenant and registered on the national BNG Register managed by Natural England.
- 10.3 To ensure compliance, the Council will:
 - a) Establish appropriate legal agreements for each habitat bank site.
 - b) Monitor habitat delivery against approved management plans.
 - c) Maintain governance arrangements across internal departments to fulfil ongoing obligations over the 30-year period.

- 10.4 Flexibility will be incorporated into legal agreements where possible to account for unforeseen force majeure events, such as wildfires, invasive species outbreaks, or extreme weather impacts.
- 10.5 While early informal discussions have taken place, full engagement with the Council's Legal Services will be undertaken as part of the next phase of the project.

11. CLIMATE IMPACT IMPLICATIONS & CONSIDERATIONS

- 11.1 Habitat banking will deliver significant positive contributions to the Council's climate change objectives, supporting the Climate Strategy, the Corporate Plan, the Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy, and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).
- 11.2 Habitat creation and enhancement activities, including wetlands, species-rich grasslands, woodlands, and hedgerows will:

- Support carbon sequestration, helping to mitigate climate change.
- Enhance ecosystem resilience to climate impacts such as flooding, drought, and extreme heat.
- Provide natural flood management and urban cooling benefits.
- Improve air quality and water quality through enhanced green infrastructure.

11.3 Furthermore, improving habitat connectivity across Council sites will allow species to migrate, adapt, and survive under changing climate conditions, strengthening the district's overall ecological resilience.

11.4 Through habitat banking, the Council will deliver an integrated, nature-based response to climate change while enhancing the natural capital of Huntingdonshire for future generations.

12. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The initial resource implications will be met from the underspend of the Bio4All project, which will fund ecological baselines, HMMPs, and initial works for Phase 1 sites, totalling £49,416.

12.2 The bid to the MTFS 2026/2027, subject to approval, will establish a new capital budget to support the implementation of habitat banking across all six identified sites, covering establishment costs, monitoring, and legal compliance.

12.3 Over time, the programme is designed to be self-funding. Income from BNG unit sales will be ring-fenced to a long term investment fund to support the 30-year management obligations, reinvestment in additional sites, and day to day service operations.

13. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The establishment and long-term management of high-quality green spaces will have positive public health impacts, particularly by improving opportunities for physical activity, recreation, and contact with nature.

13.2 Emerging evidence indicates that exposure to green environments rich in biodiversity, beyond simply green space alone is associated with improved psychological wellbeing, stress reduction and greater social cohesion (Dallimer et al., 2012; Sandifer et al., 2022).

13.3 Habitat enhancements and invasive species management will also reduce physical risks (e.g. injuries from Giant Hogweed exposure or flooding linked to obstructive invasive vegetation), improving public safety and environmental health outcomes across the district. This also complements our Community Health and Wealth Building strategy and approach.

14. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 14.1 Habitat banking provides a financially sustainable and environmentally responsible approach to meeting statutory biodiversity requirements.
- 14.2 Cabinet approval will enable the Council to deliver habitat banking across appropriate Council sites, embed biosecurity and habitat management standards across its estate, and position the Council as a regional and national leader in nature-based innovation and sustainable land management.
- 14.3 The scheme based upon the business plan outlined within this report will allow the Council if it chooses to re-invest the surpluses delivered by the proposed schemes to help support the wider financial sustainability of the Council.
- 14.4 Launching this scheme will enable the Council to work with its strategic partners to upskill, train and launch new innovative programmes to help support residents back into work, new apprenticeships or widen its reach across the volunteering sector
- 14.5 The launch of this habitat banking programme will enable the Council to protect its local ecology environment and engage with local and national developers and with the retained income from the BNG sales it will allow the Council to improve and support wider services for local resident benefit.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Nicholas Massey-Vernon / Biodiversity for All Project Manager

Email: nick.massey@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

15. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- **Appendix 1** – Habitat Banking Process Flow Chart
- **Appendix 2** – Financial Breakdown

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Report Template for Cabinet / Committee Reports](#)

Appendix 1 – Habitat Banking Process Flow Chart

Step	Theme	Detail
1	Site Identification & Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select suitable Council-owned land • High-level ecological assessment
2	Baseline Surveys & BNG Metric Calculation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full ecological surveys • Establish baseline habitat condition • Calculate starting biodiversity units
3	Habitat Design & HMMP Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a site enhancement plan • Produce 30-year Habitat Management & Monitoring Plan (HMMP) • Costings for establishment + long-term management
4	Internal Review & Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks, Planning, Legal, Finance review • Sign-off to proceed
5	Procurement & Habitat Creation Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission contractors/ecologists • Deliver wetland, grassland, woodland or river corridor works
6	Register Site with Natural England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit baseline, HMMP and spatial data • Site enters the Biodiversity Gain Site Register
7	Habitat Bank Becomes Active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Units available for developers • Monitoring underway
8	Marketing & Developer Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Planning Service • Promote available BNG units to developers
9	Sale of Biodiversity Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal agreement (S106 or conservation covenant) • Units transferred; payment received
10	Long-Term Management (30 Years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income ring-fenced • Annual monitoring & adaptive management • Reporting to Natural England

Appendix 2

Table A - Details the financial breakdown of phase 1

Site	Potential Units Created	Potential Income from Units (UK Framework)	Capital Set Up Costs	Total 30-Year Maintenance	Total Return (Average)	Inflation & Borrowing Costs
St Neots Riverside	19.7	£1,007,908.02	£46,820.14	£195,293.33	£812,614.68	£269,004.63
Huntingdon Riverside	13.2	£475,502.89	£17,040.19	£220,333.33	£255,169.55	£231,921.91
Barford Rd, Pocket Park	12.67	£477,973.84	£30,844.17	£264,763.33	£213,210.51	£297,834.90
Totals	45.57	£1,961,384.74	£94,704.50	£680,390.00	£1,280,994.74	£798,761.44

Table B - Details the financial breakdown of phase 2

Site	Potential Units Created	Potential Income from Units (UK Framework)	Capital Set Up Costs	Total 30-Year Maintenance	Total Return (Average)	Inflation & Borrowing Costs
Spring Common	2.43	£95,749.29	£25,059.10	£74,833.33	£20,915.96	£121,257.96
Berman Park	13.3	£618,259.43	£88,780.81	£197,408.33	£420,851.10	£353,771.67
Priory Park	3.72	£103,694.25	£11,455.59	£89,928.33	£13,765.92	£107,498.03
Totals	19.45	£817,702.97	£125,295.50	£362,170.00	£455,532.97	£582,527.67

Appendix 3 – Financial Breakdown

Phase 1

Site	30 Year Income	30 Year Expenditure	30 Year Return	Yearly Return
St Neots Riverside	£1,007,908.02	£464,297.96	£543,610.06	£18,120.34
Huntingdon Riverside	£475,502.89	£452,255.24	£23,247.64	£774.92
Barford Rd, Pocket Park	£477,973.84	£562,598.24	-£84,624.40	-£2,820.81
Totals	£1,961,384.74	£1,479,151.44	£482,233.30	£16,074.44

Phase 2

Site	30 Year Income	30 Year Expenditure	30 Year Return	Yearly Return
Spring Common	£95,749.29	£196,091.30	-£100,342.01	-£3,344.73
Berman Park	£618,259.43	£551,180.00	£67,079.43	£2,235.98
Priory Park	£103,694.25	£197,426.37	-£93,732.12	-£3,124.40
Totals	£817,702.97	£944,697.67	-£126,994.70	-£4,233.16

Overall

	30 Year Income	30 Year Expenditure	30 Year Return	Yearly Return
Overall Total	£2,779,087.72	£2,423,849.11	£355,238.61	£11,841.29

Assumptions Used:

- 30 year income includes:- Income from selling 65 credits
- 30 year expenditure includes:- Staff & Maintenance costs of sites over 30 years, inflationary impact (4.00%) on staff & maintenance costs and interest payable (6.10%) on borrowing £220k over 30 years.
- Prudently we have assumed selling the 65 credits over a 4-year period, but expect that we could sell these within 1 year

Public
Key Decision – No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: One Leisure Independent Review Update

Meeting/Date: Overview & Scrutiny - (Environment, Communities & Partnerships) – 5th February 2026

Cabinet – 10th February 2026

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Leisure & Health – Councillor Sally Howell

Report by: One Leisure Business and Operations Manager - Leigh Allaker

Ward(s) affected: All Ward(s)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities & Partnerships) is invited to comment on the contents of the One Leisure Independent Review Update report and make any comments to the Cabinet.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: One Leisure Independent Review Update

Meeting/Date: Overview & Scrutiny - (Environment, Communities & Partnerships) – 5th February 2026

Cabinet – 10th February 2026

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Leisure & Health – Councillor Sally Howell

Report by: One Leisure Business and Operations Manager - Leigh Allaker

Ward(s) affected: All Ward(s)

Executive Summary:

The Council originally commissioned First Point Management & Consultancy Limited (First Point) in September 2023 to undertake an Independent Review of the One Leisure Long Term Operating Model and its in-house leisure function. The Independent Review included focussed on:

1. Short Term Operating Models (2-3 years)
2. Staff Review
3. Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies
4. Medium (3-5 years)- & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years)

The One Leisure Long Term Operating Model Independent Review was presented to and approved by Cabinet on 19th March 2024. As part of the Independent Review it stated:

“A transformed in-house option is the recommended approach for the short term; this should allow sufficient time to optimise the service before considering medium and long-term delivery options”.

The Independent Review provided a number of recommendations that One Leisure and the Council should consider for implementation. These can be seen in the Independent Review on pages 50 – 51.

As part of the Cabinet report presented to and approved by Cabinet on 19th March 2024 it stipulated that the Head of Leisure, Health and Environment would provide Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet a 12-month update. This was completed on 10th and 15th July 2025 respectively.

Within this 12-month update report as outlined above it identified 7 further actions for One Leisure and the Council to consider and complete. [These can be found in section 4.4 points a – h.](#)

Therefore, this report aims only to update the Council and solely focus on the 7 actions identified following the most recent 12-month update report (July 2025) for approval and conclusion of these actions.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet/Committee is:

RECOMMENDED

1. To agree and approve that all outstanding actions from the 12-month update report (July 2025) have been concluded;
2. To acknowledge and accept 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;](#)
3. To accept and/or approve 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;](#)
4. To approve the One Leisure Vision, Customer Charter, and the new structure of the One Leisure 3-year business plan;
5. To delegate authority 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.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform and update Councillors that One Leisure and the Council have either completed, are in the process of completing, or have deferred some of the actions due to LGR.
- 1.2 To provide Councillor's an opportunity to review, consider and respond on One Leisure's and the Council's progress since the 12-month update (July 2025) of the One Leisure Independent Review recommendations.
- 1.3 To gain approval of the newly created One Leisure Vision, Customer Charter, and the new structure of One Leisure's 3-year business plan;

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Built & Playing Pitch Strategies for Huntingdonshire were commissioned in late 2022 and were then presented to [Overview & Scrutiny Committee \(Environment, Communities & Partnerships\) on 8th June 2023](#) and full approval from [Cabinet was gained on 20th June 2023](#).
- 2.2 The Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure was undertaken in late 2023 and subsequently adopted by the Council in April 2024.
- 2.3 The review focussed upon the following key areas:
 1. Short Term Operating Models (2-3 years)
 2. Staff Review
 3. Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies
 4. Medium (3-5 years)- & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years)
- 2.4 From the Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure it provided 22 recommendations that the Council and One Leisure needed to consider for implementation.
- 2.5 An external report was commissioned by the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment in early 2025- and First-Point Management were requested to undertake a 12-month review of One Leisure's performance against the original independent review recommendations. A link to these recommendations can be seen in the Executive Summary.
- 2.6 The findings from the First Point Management report was presented to Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in July 2025. A link to these recommendations can be seen in the Executive Summary.
- 2.7 Following this the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment and Business & Operation's Manager set about completing the identified actions from the updated First Point Management 12-month update report. These included:
 - a. Commission an independent review of:
 - i. One Leisure's readiness for LGR

- ii. High level state of the market review of leisure providers across Cambridgeshire
- iii. Options, Risks & Recommendations for One Leisure
- b. To complete all outstanding feasibility studies for One Leisure sites to RIBA Stage 1.
- c. Gain full approval for Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub (RIBA Stage 2)
- d. Secure partnership arrangement with NHS/ICB for Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub.
- e. Finalise and gain approval for One Leisure Design Principles - Vision & Customer Charter.
- f. Mobilisation & Re-Opening of Sawtry Leisure Centre.
- g. Continue working with colleagues to develop de-carbonisation plans.

2.8 This report is designed to update Council on the progress, completion and/or deferment due to LGR on all of the actions identified within section 2.7 above.

3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

3.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

4. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION & COMPLETION

4.1 Following the identification of the actions as per section 2.7 above earlier in this report please see below for an update as to where the actions have either been completed or are ongoing:

Action	Status Update
Commission an independent review of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Leisure's readiness for LGR • High level state of the market review of leisure providers across Cambridgeshire • Options, Risks & Recommendations for One Leisure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioned November 2025 • To be completed by March 2026
To complete all outstanding feasibility studies for One Leisure sites to RIBA Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site walks completed 19th November 2026 • Feasibility study proposal for all sites received - January 2026 • Feasibility studies to be completed by March 2026
Gain full approval for Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub (RIBA Stage 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIBA Stage 2 approved in October 2026 by Cabinet

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full planning application to be approved - February 2026 • Full budget approval at Full Council – February 2026
Secure partnership arrangement with NHS/ICB for Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing discussions • Legal Heads of Terms aimed for completion by March 2026
Continue working with colleagues to develop decarbonisation plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A decarbonisation option is included as part of Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub – October 2025 • Wider review for other centres will be undertaken as part of feasibility proposal - Ongoing
Mobilisation & Re-Opening of Sawtry Leisure Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoU (One Leisure staff interim agreement) – November 2025 • License for Works – Completed - December 2025 • Re-opening of Swimming Pool – Spring 2026
Finalise and gain approval for One Leisure Design Principles - Vision & Customer Charter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Staff Engagement Session – March 2025 • External Consultant Support – March 2025 – December 2025 • Approvals sought via Cabinet – February 2026 • Launch Vision, Charter, Design Principles & Business Plan – April 2026

4.2 One of the key actions for completion was centred around the design principles, customer charter and overarching vision for One Leisure. This also included the key principles of what a new dedicated 3-year business plan for One Leisure should consist of. This is outlined within the “Design Principles Stakeholder Engagement Report” undertaken by First Point Management in May 2025 and can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

4.3 The report took a 'bottom-up' approach to the process that offered a range of opportunities and options to develop, shape, finalise and improve the service in the short, medium and the longer term. Developing a collaborative approach to service improvement opportunities will help place the service to be in a strong position in future years as the implementation and impact of Local Government Reform approaches.

4.4 From the actions identified in the 12-month update report (July 2025) on the Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model, the outstanding actions that this report sets out to conclude and update on was the need for One Leisure to develop a Service Vision and Customer Charter and identify a framework for the 3-year business plan.

4.5 Cementing the bottom-up approach to delivering on the Business Plan, Customer Charter and Vision, two Engagement sessions were held with a cross section of One Leisure operational staff, feeding into the Senior Management Team of One Leisure and representatives of Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) Senior Leadership Team and the Member Advisory Board. To note, the Member Advisory Board had originally been set up to provide insight and feedback to the capital projects being planned and delivered by One Leisure over 2025/2026, however the board is proving to provide greater value by enabling the service to present and update on changes to the service, not just capital investments into it.

4.6 The first session took place in March 2025 initially to workshop the detail, considerations and design principles for the Customer Charter and Vision for One Leisure; fundamental to this was to ensure the Customer Charter and Vision Statement were specific to One Leisure and did not override or go against the Council's service values and commitments. The input from staff and agreed principles were to be captured and developed for an options approval and final draft of the Customer Charter and Vision that was presented back to the same group of One Leisure Staff in November 2025.

4.7 Following the final One Leisure staff engagement workshop; the One Leisure Customer Charter as seen in 4.8, Vision Statement as seen in 4.9 and the 3-year Business Plan Principles as seen in 4.10 were presented to the Member Advisory Board on 16th December 2025 for endorsement and the submitted through the political process for final approval.

4.8 The proposed One Leisure Customer Charter can be seen below:

We Will:

- Design our service offer around the customer.
- Provide accessible and affordable services.
- Understand and 'live' the Customer Journey.
- Make it simple and easy to access our services.
- Welcome customer feedback.
- Embrace the use of technology to enhance the customer experience.
- Have consistency of process and core standards across the service.

- Invest in our staff to ensure they have the tools and knowledge to deliver the service.
- Have a 'Can Do' and 'Fix It' culture.
- Not tolerate any form of discrimination

4.9 The proposed One Leisure Vision can be seen below:

'Deliver high quality and sustainable customer led, affordable services and facilities for the local community'

4.10 The proposed 3-year Business Plan Principles can be seen below:

- Executive Summary
- Transformation Journey
- Service Performance 2025/26
 - Key Achievements
- Financial Plan
 - Pricing Strategy
- People Plan & Structure
- Operational Plan
 - Facility Management
 - Service Investment & Growth
 - Programming
 - Customer Engagement Plan
- Performance Targets
- Risks & Opportunities

5. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 To fulfil the commitment made to Council that One Leisure would return and provide a final update on the additional 7 recommendations set out in 2.7 of this report and actions stemming from the 12-month update of the Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure.
- 5.2 To allow Councillors to review, comment, and feedback on the progress One Leisure have made on the additional 7 actions provided in the Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure 12 Month Update report, that have now either been completed, in the process of being completed or deferred due to LGR.
- 5.3 To acknowledge the actions outlined in Section 4.1 of this report have been incorporated into the service plans for One Leisure spanning 2025-2026 and 2026-2027.

6. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Design Principles Stakeholder Engagement Report

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Built & Playing Pitch Strategies 2022 – 2043](#)

[Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure \(First Point Management\)](#)

[Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure \(Cabinet Report & Approval\)](#)

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Leigh Allaker – Business & Operations Manager

Tel No: 07572028133

Email: leigh.allaker@huntingdonshire.gov.uk



Design Principles

Stakeholder Engagement



May 2025



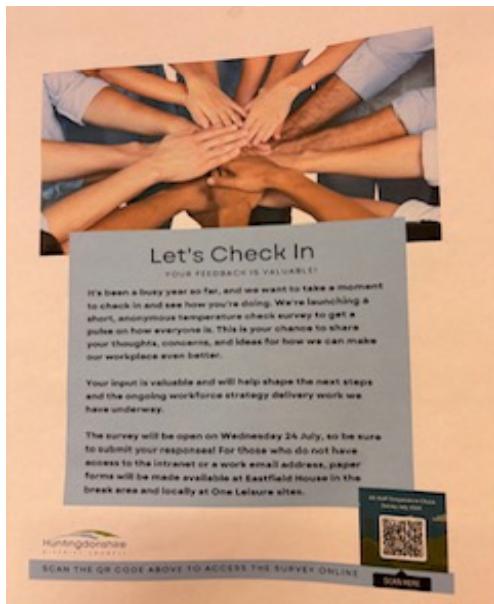
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Introduction

This report provides a summary of the outputs from stakeholder engagement sessions to establish a framework that will support the on-going service transformation of One Leisure.

These engagement sessions are part of the on-going process of meaningful consultation with staff throughout the One Leisure transformation journey that follows engagement undertaken throughout the service restructure and the corporate *Let's Check In* Staff Temperature Check Survey undertaken in summer 2024.



First Point Management & Consultancy have been a partner in helping to shape and define the service transformation and have been commissioned to lead the stakeholder engagement on this next phase of the transformation journey.

This has been a 'bottom-up' process that offers a range of opportunities and options to develop, shape, finalise and improve the service in the short, medium and the longer term. Developing a collaborative approach to service improvement opportunities will help place the service to be in a strong position in future years as the implementation and impact of Local Government Reform approaches.

Engagement sessions were held with a cross section of One Leisure operational staff, feeding into the Senior Management Team of One Leisure and representatives of Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) Senior Leadership Team and lead Members.

The outcomes from the engagement sessions are presented in this report.

Background

The Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure was undertaken in summer/autumn 2023 and subsequently adopted by the Council in April 2024. One of the recommendations from this review was to:

Establish a set of Transformation Design Principles and an Outcomes Framework for the service.

The Outcomes Framework will be formed from Design Principles, the Vision for the service and subsequently developed to form part of the target setting and performance management within future Performance Development Reviews that are proposed to be introduced corporately.

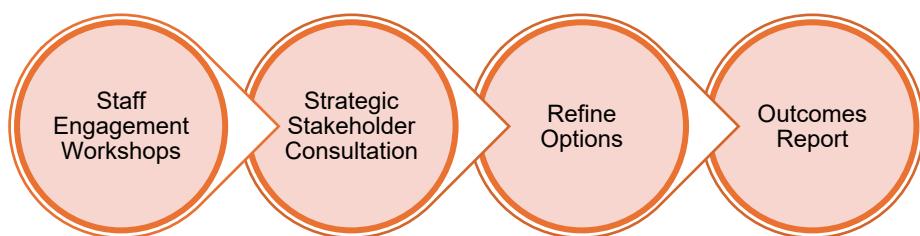
The Approach

Two staff workshops were undertaken at St Ives Outdoor and St Neots on 25th and 26th March 2025, with a cross section of c. 20 staff from across One Leisure attending, providing a good representation across job roles. This was followed up with a feedback session with staff on 4th December 2025 to reflect upon and refine the workshop outcomes where deemed appropriate.

It should be noted that as a front-line service it is always going to be difficult to facilitate 'in person' sessions particularly in a service like leisure that operates a near 24-7 service.

The staff workshops included undertaking a SWOT analysis, exploring service improvement opportunities, drafting a Vision Statement, supported by a set of Design Principles for One Leisure, a discussion about the corporate values and how they are applied within the service and drafting a Customer Charter.

Following the workshops the outcomes were discussed with the senior team of One Leisure, senior officers of HDC, portfolio holder and lead Members to refine the workshop outputs and determine the Vision Statement, Design Principles, Customer Charter and any other future actions.



Workshop Outcomes

Two workshops took place on 25th and 26th March 2025 at St Ives Indoor and St Neots respectively. In total nineteen staff members from a range of job roles across all One Leisure sites attended the workshops. A full list of consultees is included as Appendix 1

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis is a tried and tested tool used to draw out key issues and opportunities to help inform future actions. Key issues from the two workshops are presented below.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job Security – Regular Hours• Facilities – variety of the product offer• St Ives Outdoor – 'regional facilities'• Geographic Locational Spread of sites• Scale – Burgess Hall• Family Offer• Value for Money• Customer Loyalty• Staff• Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resources – enough time to do the job• Facility Investment Requirements• Service Contracts – need more options/capacity• Lack of Maintenance staff• Internal Comms – no structure• Lack of Senior Management Feedback/Comms/Engagement• Not Listening to 'shop floor'• Effective Planning for introduction of new products – failure to engage with staff at the outset• Lack of Consistency in process/delivery between sites• Loss of Skills/Knowledge• No Marketing Strategy• Insufficient Marketing Resource• Understanding the Customer Journey• Customer Engagement – no 'You Said We Did'
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capital Bids• How to expand Ramsey• More Events in Burgess Hall• Staff Training – Learning & Development Plan• Improve Marketing• Maximise Social Media – promo clips – create 'Tribes'• Reach New Customers• Customer Growth• Embrace AI – to assist the service• Increase Awareness of the positive impacts internally/externally	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job Security – Restructures• Competition – gyms• Financial Pressures• Condition & Maintenance of Facilities

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Teamwork • Staff Progression Opportunities (post restructure) • Resourceful (with limited resource) • Facilities – variety of the product offer • Location – close to schools and future customers • Community Connections/Active Lifestyles - Clubs • Value for Money • Customer/Staff Loyalty • Call Centre 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No PDR/Appraisal (HDC wide) • Effective Comms structure, 1-2-1s, reward system etc • No regular GM meetings • Ageing Stock – need Capital Investment to maintain existing sites properly • Design/configuration of sites – customer flows etc • Responsiveness of Service Contracts • Site capacity – to meet needs of growing population • Leisure Trends – slow to react • No Digital Programme Offer • Social Media presence – variable • Effective Planning for introduction of new products – need to co-design • Marketing Strategy – not data driven, lack of research. • App scope for improvement • No plans to use AI • Sales System • Customer Retention • ‘Cheap’ systems – to check H&S, equipment – (need to upgrade package)
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Investment • Population Growth (facilities need grow to keep up with demand) • Harness the passion within One Leisure. • Communicate with Upskilling of Staff – L&D Programme • Have space to run courses for staff or sell to others • Local Connections – use Town Councils & other community partnerships • Improve Internal Comms Structure • Develop a Marketing Strategy • Design a ‘Competition Defence Strategy’ – NOW – facility investment/marketing 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing 11–19-year-olds in the gym –(need additional resource at peak times to resolve) • Competition – gyms – plans for a new David Lloyd • No H&S lead with H&S oversight (recruitment failure) • Trend Lag – behind the curve • Condition & Maintenance of Facilities (unplanned closures)

Whilst the two workshops identified different issues, potentially influenced by different work locations and experiences some common themes emerged as highlighted in the Word Cloud below.



It is noted that there are some recurring themes identified within the two workshop engagement sessions to those highlighted in the corporate Staff Temperature Check Survey undertaken in 2024. Of the total survey respondents, Leisure & Health made up c. 16.6% of the total, with 39.1% of staff from this service area responding to the survey.

Comparing the 2024 corporate Staff Temperature Check Survey with feedback from the workshops the main similarities were as indicated below.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teamwork• Colleagues• Friendly Environment• Job Security• Job Satisfaction		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resources (staff/time)• Communication• Recognition & Reward• Poor IT Systems• Don't Feel Listened To	
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The implementation of the corporate Workforce Strategy and actions that can be implemented within One Leisure can help to address some of the negative issues raised.

It should be noted, that whilst the 2024 Survey highlighted Training & Development and Incremental Progression amongst the top 10 areas for improvement, career progression opportunities were highlighted as a positive in the workshop sessions, following the One Leisure restructure.

Proposed Priority Actions

Senior Management of One Leisure recognise the need for further improvement actions as part of the on-going service transformation journey and have identified the following actions against key issues identified as indicated below.

Issue	Proposed Action	Timescale
Capital Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor Projects completed at St Ives (Indoor) and St Neots. Huntingdon Leisure Centre - potential Major Project to create a Sport & Health Hub. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed January 2025 RIBA Stage 1 Feasibility Study completed April 2025 Full Feasibility complete September 2025 Planning Application Submission December 2025
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff/Managers PDR Planning of Campaigns & Initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly Site Team Meetings & Manager Meetings May 2025 PDRs in place as part of 'My Conversation' May 2025 Quarterly & Annual Planning Meetings in place December 2025
Facility Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dilapidations Sub-contractor capacity & service contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial Programme April 2025 (annually) Review suppliers April 2025 (annually)
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review resources Marketing Strategy developed Develop a Plan to increase Social Media presence and use of Artificial Intelligence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 2025 February 2026 September 2025
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade of LMS (Gladstone) Review One Leisure App capabilities Launch Gladstone <i>Go Mobile</i> App 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 2025 April 2025 December 2025 January 2026

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procure Tablets to support sales and customer service 	
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A Vision Statement for One Leisure

A vision statement defines an organisation's or service's ambition and set the direction for future service delivery, it should be clear and succinct and something all stakeholders can identify with. The staff engagement workshops developed some options for One Leisure that have been interpreted below.

- Supply the best sustainable service to our local community providing great experiences.
- Deliver the best possible service to our customers and provide positive experiences.
- Deliver the best possible service to our customers and create enjoyable positive experiences.
- Provide a positive, value for money customer experience for all our communities that is sustainable for the future.
- Provide a positive, value for money experience for all our customers that is sustainable for the future.
- Deliver high quality, customer led, affordable services and facilities for the local community.

Following consultation with key Members and staff a vision statement for One Leisure will be determined.

Tools & Actions to Succeed

This element of the staff workshops used the themes emerging from the SWOT analysis and draft Vision Statements, explore some possible actions on the key issues to support service delivery improvements as highlighted below.

What Needs to Happen?	Develop a 3 Year Marketing Plan 1 Year Diary Plan
Who Needs to Do It?	Senior Management
What Are the Barriers?	Capacity; Resources – only have a 22hr post Marketing Assistant post
What Are the Solutions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic Marketing Budget (2% of turnover)? • Provide a comprehensive marketing function • Directly Employ • Procure a Leisure Marketing Agency

What Needs to Happen?	Internal Communications Structure & Processes
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Who Needs to Do It?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-designed with Senior Management
What Are the Barriers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity – lack of time to deliver Commitment to deliver
What Are the Solutions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in the Comms Process Two Way Feedback Mechanism/Process Staff Forums Site Plans up/down the structure Engage with colleagues/teams Accountability to communicate – (who owns communication)? Create a culture where it is OK to Challenge
What Needs to Happen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve infrastructure & expand Review staff resources Re-evaluate Finances Respond to leisure trends quicker Training & development of staff Have a Listening Leadership Team Co-design projects and the future True Engagement Stronger Customer Focus
Who Needs to Do It?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Management Site Managers HDC Financial Support for Capex Customers as Active Participants/Stakeholders Community Partnerships
What Are the Barriers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources Strategic Leadership Understanding/Appreciation of site limitations/potential Limited Active Listening Site Communications
What Are the Solutions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement – Active Listening Realistic and achievable budgets/targets Site Led decision making – delegation Sharing the Vision and Information Communication – true engagement Effective use of Technology/Digital Measure Outcomes Sustainable Service

One Leisure Design Principles

Design Principles set the framework and act as the foundation for all future strategic service development decisions and improvement plans that support the service objectives.

Examples of Design Principles from a local authority IT department and a retail organisation were provided to stimulate the discussion and conclude with a draft set of Design Principles derived from the workshops as illustrated below.

Draft One Leisure Design Principles

- Design our service offer around the customer.
- Provide a range of services and activities that increase usage.
- Design and deliver a service that support financial sustainability.
- Understand and 'live' the Customer Journey.
- Make it simple and easy to engage and do business with us.
- Embrace the use of technology to improve customer communication and promote the service offer.
- Have consistency of process and core standards across the service.
- Invest in our staff to ensure they have the tools and knowledge to deliver.
- Welcome customer feedback.
- Have a 'Can Do' and 'Fix It' culture.



Values

There was clear agreement that the corporate *icare* values were well considered, relevant and that were applicable for One Leisure.



The values have been in place for c. 4 years; however, it is questionable on how universally they are applied across One Leisure or the authority per se, this may in part be in relation to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The lack of corporate implementation of the PDR process to formally record and acknowledge or challenge delivery of living the values, is now being addressed through the implementation of the Workforce Strategy.

Customer Charter

From the workshops with staff, a draft Customer Charter was developed for consideration. In line with good practice within the leisure industry it is proposed that once approved the Customer Charter is displayed in all One Leisure facilities and used to measure delivery of these commitments through annual customer surveys, mystery shopper visits etc.

Customer Charter

We Will:

- Design our service offer around the customer.
- Provide accessible and affordable services.
- Understand and 'live' the Customer Journey.
- Make it simple and easy to access our services.
- Welcome customer feedback.
- Embrace the use of technology to enhance the customer experience.
- Have consistency of process and core standards across the service.
- Invest in our staff to ensure they have the tools and knowledge to deliver the service.
- Have a 'Can Do' and 'Fix It' culture.
- Not tolerate any form of discrimination.



Other Issues/Actions

In summary a number of other issues and actions are list for consideration:

- Understand and map the customer journey for each element of the service offer
- Implement the principles around customer excellence – '10ft rule' of engagement
- Review and communicate the Digital Plan
- Fast Forward digital agenda – remove paper systems
- Automate processes where possible – through co-creation with front line staff
- Integrate AI into the service
- GOO – invest in staff L&D to Grow Our Own and improve skills/capability
- Have a core One Leisure On-Boarding/Induction process
- Push for implementation of PDRs as part of corporate roll out – be a pilot
- Transparent measurement and comparison of outcomes & performance
- Staff input into target setting and KPI's
- Consider reinstating the 'You Said – We Did' customer feedback mechanism
- Have a better connection between senior management and staff to support a cultural shift and alignment to a shared vision and set of actions.

- Have a Year Planner of Events and Actions (including the mundane) to allow sufficient time to respond/deliver effectively, co-created for better outcomes.

Although outside of the client brief and not explored in any detail, the staff engagement workshops did generate some issues for consideration re: capital investment some of which are were highlighted in other aspects of the workshops as indicated below:

- 2 elements for facility investment
 - repair/dilapidations/maintain
 - Improve/expand
- Refurbish/upgrade to 'Club Class' changing facilities
- Increase Pool Capacity
- Learner Pools need moveable floors to optimise use
- Gym expansions
- Welcoming – entrance/exterior view/lighting
- Infrastructure – car parking capacity; EV charging points etc.
- Involve site staff in capital investment thinking/design
- St Neots – uplighters on external roadside sign
- Future of small ATP @St Neots to be reviewed

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Consultees

One Leisure Management Team	
Leigh Allaker	Business & Operations Manager
Gregg Holland	Head of Leisure, Health & Environment
Workshop Attendees	
Luke Bryant	Recreation Assistant
Ben Channon	Business Analyst
Dan Clough	Supervisor
Edward Cochrane	Supervisor
Dean Collins	Assistant Manager
David Crooke	Centre Manager
Rob Duckett	Centre Manager
Anita Fisher	Hospitality Supervisor
Carly Harlock	Supervisor
Sam Harrison	Supervisor
Paul Howard	Activities Manager
Scott James	Supervisor
Kat Mitchell	Supervisor
David Newman	Assistant Manager
Evie Ruffles	Recreation Assistant
Lisa Ruffles	Cleaner
Toby Summerfield	Recreation Assistant
Natalie Tailor	General Manager
Rob Ure	Fitness Consultant

Appendix 2 –Staff Engagement Workshops - Slide Deck

<p>One Leisure Design Principles Staff Engagement 25/26th March 2025</p>  <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome & Purpose of Today• Introductions• SWOT Analysis• Vision<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service aspirations (see Corporate Plan & One Leisure Business Plan)• Tools & Actions to Succeed• Design Principles• Values• Customer Charter  <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>				
<p>SWOT Analysis</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>Strengths</td><td>Weaknesses</td></tr><tr><td>Opportunities</td><td>Threats</td></tr></table> <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats	<p>Corporate Priorities</p>  <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
Strengths	Weaknesses				
Opportunities	Threats				
<p>Priority 2 - Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations</p> <table border="1"><tr><td> Improving housing</td><td> Forward-thinking economic growth</td><td> Lowering carbon emissions</td></tr></table> <p>Priority 3 - Doing our core work well</p>  <p>Delivering good quality, high value-for-money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations</p> <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	 Improving housing	 Forward-thinking economic growth	 Lowering carbon emissions	<p>One Leisure Priorities 2023-24</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Digital Innovation2. People Focussed3. Service Modernisation4. Commercial Sustainability5. Community Provision <p>Are these still right for the next 5 Years?</p> <p>Are there any others?</p> <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	
 Improving housing	 Forward-thinking economic growth	 Lowering carbon emissions			

<h2>Vision for One Leisure</h2>  <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<h2>Tools & Actions to Succeed</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Need To Happen? • Who Needs To Do It? • What Are The Barriers? • What Are The Solutions? <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<h2>Design Principles – ICT Example (1)</h2> <p>Customer first Our website is built around what our customers want from us, not what we want to present to them</p> <p>Mobile first Over half our customers use smartphones to our website. We need to build online services that work on the suits these devices</p> <p>Transaction first As a local authority, customers interact with us when they have a task to complete. Our website needs to make these tasks and transactions easy to find and to complete</p> <p>Data driven design We use data to inform and support the decisions we make about our website including styling, design, content and navigation</p> <p>Just the right amount Our website focuses on the services we provide and lets customers move from interest to action at any point</p> <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<h2>Design Principles – ICT Example (2)</h2> <p>What would the web do? Customers expect our website and online services to perform as well as the other websites they use day to day. This means looking beyond what we want and puts the online customer at the heart of what we are doing</p> <p>Do the hard work to make it easy Making something look simple is easy. Making something simple to use is much harder especially when the underlying systems are complex- but that's what we should be doing</p> <p>Better, better, best! We use a continuous improvement approach and constantly review our website and all its content to make it better</p> <p>Inclusive and accessible Our website is designed and built for the way people use it. It takes into account all users and the different ways they access it. It meets the AA standard of WGAC 2.1</p> <p>Consistent Although we use different templates, websites and portals, the design and build of our site is based on a seamless customer journey</p> <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<h2>Design Principles – Retail Example</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark out the customer journey through your store • Use eyecatching merchandise to attract your customer's attention • Slow down the customer journey using your store's layout • Use the right side of the store to your advantage • Embrace boldness and creativity • Use negative space effectively • Embrace your space's limitations <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<h2>One Leisure Design Principles</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Our Service Offer Around Customer Needs • Understand and 'Live' the Customer Journey - making it easy <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>

<h2>Corporate Values</h2>  <p>icare</p> <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>-----</p>  <p>INSPIRING We have genuine pride and passion for public service, doing the best we can for our customers.</p> <p>COLLABORATIVE We achieve much more by working together and this allows us to provide the best service for customers.</p> <p>ACCOUNTABLE We take personal responsibility for our work and our decisions and we deliver on our commitments to customers.</p> <p>RESPECTFUL We respect people's differences and are considerate to their needs.</p> <p>ENTERPRISING We use drive and energy to challenge the norm and adapt to changing circumstances. We are always ready for challenges and opportunities and we embrace them.</p> <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>		
<h2>Customer Charter</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succinct & Clear Messages • Single Sentence • Single Page-not a book • Two Approaches (there maybe more <table border="1" data-bbox="262 954 738 1089"> <tr> <td data-bbox="262 954 500 1089"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service • We Will • Facilities • Expectations of the Customer • Contact Point </td><td data-bbox="500 954 738 1089"> <p>We Will.....</p> </td></tr> </table> <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service • We Will • Facilities • Expectations of the Customer • Contact Point 	<p>We Will.....</p>	<h2>Customer Charter (We Will)</h2> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure experience both safe and enjoyable. • Ensure our sites are clean and safe. • Provide a welcoming atmosphere at all sites. • Listen to our customers. • Give prompt, helpful and friendly response to all enquiries, be it in person, over the telephone, via social media and email enquiries. • Provide a feedback form on our website to give customers the opportunity to feedback electronically if preferred. • Regularly update and publish any changes to the service offer or fees as soon as possible. • Keep personal information safe and comply with the UK Data Protection Act. • Comply with all current relevant statutory legislation. • Provide equality of opportunity and treatment for all.. • Operate a Zero Tolerance policy on any form of discrimination. • Continually strive to improve our service for our customers. <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service • We Will • Facilities • Expectations of the Customer • Contact Point 	<p>We Will.....</p>		
<h2>Thank You For Participating</h2>  <p>Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>			

Public
Key Decision – No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: **Appointment Based Face to Face Services**

Meeting/Date: Overview & Scrutiny – 5th February 2026

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor Stephen Ferguson

Report by: Michelle Greet

Ward(s) affected: All or list individual Ward(s)

Executive Summary

Purpose & subject: This report reviews how we provide face-to-face customer service and the plan to pilot a move from walk-in access to an appointment-only model for in-person support.

Key benefits & links to strategy: The appointment model will help us match capacity to demand, provide more focused support for complex needs, and make better use of staff time, supporting a modern, efficient and sustainable customer offer.

Key issues & risks: Main risks are excluding customers who are digitally disadvantaged or creating confusion during transition. These will be mitigated through clear communications, accessible booking routes, and additional support at Pathfinder.

This report is to provide an update on the operational change and the reasons behind it. There will be a 6-month pilot starting in May 2026, to transition council customer service face-to-face support to appointment-only, with an Equality Impact Assessment and close monitoring of demand, customer experience and efficiency.

Resources / staffing: The pilot will be delivered within existing resources. If successful, the model could enable a reduction of up to 1 FTE over time through redeployment or natural turnover.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Customers & Partnerships) is invited to note the contents of the report.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 We want to ensure the way we deliver face-to-face customer service reflects how residents interact with the council today. While many residents now prefer to access services online or by phone, some still need or strongly prefer in-person support.
- 1.2 This report sets out a single approach: piloting an appointment-only model for face-to-face customer service, while retaining appropriate support for residents who need help accessing services digitally or by phone.

BACKGROUND

- Footfall has reduced significantly since Covid.
- Walk-in demand is uneven across the week, resulting in inefficient use of resources.
- Face-to-face is the highest-cost channel due to staffing, space, and time required per customer.
- We must protect access for customers who are digitally excluded or have complex needs, while also improving efficiency and value for money.

CURRENT SETUP: WALK-IN ACCESS ALL WEEK

- 1.3 We are currently open Monday to Friday, all day, for walk-in support. Customers can attend without an appointment for enquiries including Housing, Council Tax, Benefits, and general advice.

1.4 What works well

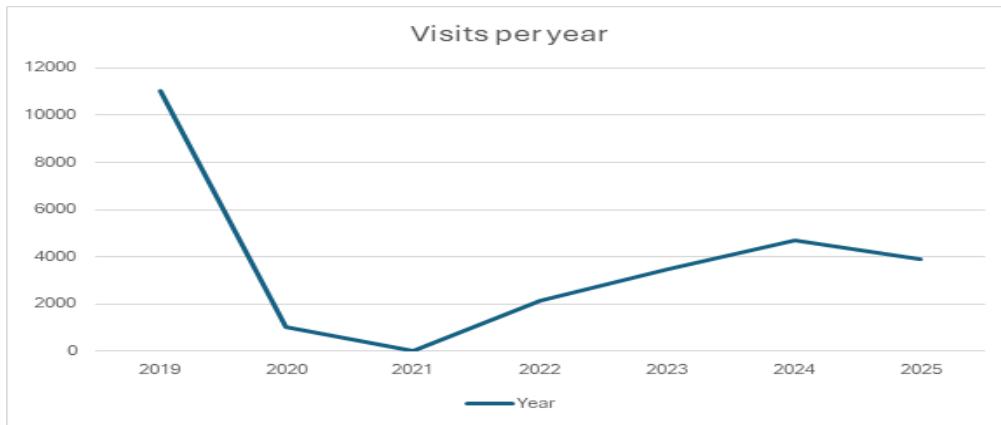
- Flexible access for residents
- Particularly helpful for customers who are less confident online
- Supports complex or sensitive queries

1.5 What are the challenges

- Inefficient use of resources - walk-in demand is inconsistent.

2. WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR

- 2.1 Customer footfall has reduced significantly; the table below summarises the trend;



- Around **40%** of customers supported at Reception are **not attending for an HDC service**
- **Mondays and Council Tax peak periods** are busiest
- **Fridays and midweek afternoons** tend to be very quiet

3. PROPOSED APPROACH: APPOINTMENT-ONLY MODEL (PILOT)

3.1 Customers that are unable to access services online or over the phone, will book a time slot to speak to someone in person.

3.2 Benefits

- Better matching of staffing to demand
- More planned, focused support for customers with complex needs
- Improved use of staff time and building space
- Supports wider channel shift while keeping a strong assisted offer

3.3 Key requirements for success

- Booking must be simple and accessible
- Clear guidance on what issues need an appointment vs can be resolved by phone/online
- Flexible handling for urgent, complex, or exceptional cases

4. SUPPORTING CUSTOMERS THROUGH THE CHANGE

4.1 To ensure the new approach remains inclusive and practical, we will introduce additional support at Pathfinder, including:

- A confidential phone line customers can use on site for sensitive or complex issues

- Supported digital access, with staff assistance to help residents complete online forms, set up accounts, upload evidence, and navigate key transactions
- Clear signposting and “warm handovers” to the right channel (phone, online, or booked appointment)

This will reduce barriers for digitally excluded residents and protect access for people who need extra support.

5. PEOPLE, EQUALITIES AND ACCESS

- 5.1 If the new model works well, it could allow us to reorganise the team and reduce staffing by up to 1 FTE over time through redeployment or natural turnover.
- 5.2 A full Equality Impact Assessment will be completed to ensure we do not exclude customers, particularly those who are digitally excluded, have disabilities, language barriers, or complex needs, and to confirm mitigations (including the Pathfinder support above).

6. KEEPING THE PANEL INFORMED

- 6.1 This paper is provided to keep the panel informed of an operational change to how face-to-face customer service will be delivered, and the reasons for the change.
- 6.2 In May 2026 we will proceed with a 6-month pilot to stop routine walk-in access for council customer service counters and transition to an appointment-only model for face-to-face support, with strengthened assisted access at Pathfinder (including a confidential phone line and supported digital use).
- 6.3 We will monitor demand, customer experience, equality impacts and efficiency throughout the trial, and will report back to the panel at the end of the pilot with findings, lessons learned and recommended next steps.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Michelle Greet, Customer Service Manager
01480 388707

Email: michelle.greet@huntingdonshire.gov.uk