



A meeting of the **CABINET** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN** on **TUESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2025** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings held on 18 November 2025 and 24 November 2025.

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388169

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, other registerable and non-registerable interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388169

3. PARKING CHARGES - IMPLEMENTATION OF INCREASE (Pages 5 - 20)

To receive a report providing an update on a number of matters pertaining to parking, including a summary of the impacts on car park usage following the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement.

The report also sought to confirm the approach to be taken in respect of the implementation of agreed parking increases within the 25/26 MTFS - a 20p increase except for the all-day tariff. The report sought confirmation and delegation to implement the agreed increase, or seek confirmation via Council of the agreement to a Budget Policy variation to remove the planned increase or proceed with an alternative scheme.

**Contact Officer: P Scott
(01480) 388486**

4. MARKET TOWNS - RAMSEY UPDATE (Pages 21 - 32)

To receive a report providing an update on progress towards delivering the Ramsey Whyte town centre improvement scheme, including activity to date and the next stages of project development and delivery.

Contact Officer: P Scott (01480) 388486

5. HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP (Pages 33 - 36)

To receive the Minutes of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group meeting held on 21 November 2025.

Contact Officer: B Buddle - (01480) 388008

8 day of December 2025

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 Democratic Services, Tel No: (01480) 388169 / e-mail: Democratic.Services@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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Public

Key Decision: Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Parking Charges - Implementation of Increase
Meeting/Date:	Cabinet - 16 th December 2025
Executive Portfolio:	Cllr Mickelburgh, Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources Cllr Kerr, Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene
Report by:	Head of Economy, Regeneration & Housing (PS)
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

The provision and operation of off-street car parks are non-statutory functions; however, they do provide an important community resource – in particular making a contribution to our town centres and other assets such as One Leisure and Hinchingsbrooke Country Park and provide an income stream to the Council. That income is used to offset the costs of providing the service; with any surplus generated going in to the Councils revenue streams as part of overall budget provisions.

The MTFS contains an increase in parking income from 2025/26 linked to a 20p increase to parking charges. Charges were last increased in 2019 and implemented by 2020. The increase in parking income would be for a partial year (2025/26) post-implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) and fully realised for 2026 onwards. A commitment was also made to undertake an update to the Councils adopted Parking Strategy following the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement.

CPE was approved by the Department for Transport at the end of July 2025, with enforcement commencing from the start of August. The Council has commenced work on reviewing the Parking Strategy.

This report will provide a summary on the impacts on car park usage following the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement, and; seeks clarity on the implementation of the increase (as per agreed Budget), an alternative, or whether no increase is to be implemented within the 25/26 financial year. In all cases, there are budgetary implications.

The report also sets out the timescale implications in respect of implementation – noting the lead in time for practical implementation; and thereafter seeks appropriate delegations to implement whatever decision is reached.

It should be noted that this report includes information relating to financial years 26/27 and beyond in relation to the agreed MTFS from April 2025. It does not seek to bind any future decisions relating to budget setting and the future MTFS from April 2026 which will be made by Council in 2026.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Note the agreed MTFS baseline position in relation to parking charges and in particular the 20p increase; along with the other financial information included in this report.

The Cabinet is further recommended to choose from either b), c), d) or e) below as the agreed way forward:

- b) Agree to implement the charge increase as set out in the MTFS and;
 - i. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to make and confirm necessary changes to Parking Orders in order to confirm and implement the agreed charges, and;
 - ii. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) to instruct the undertaking of any other activities necessary to implement and communicate the increase in charges.

OR

- c) Recommend to Council
 - i. That the 20p increase as set out in the MTFS should not be implemented and;
 - ii. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 25/26 is maintained.

OR

- d) Recommend to Council
 - i. That an alternative increase in car parking fees for 25/26 be implemented, amending the agreed MTFS and;
 - ii. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 25/26 is maintained, and;
 - iii. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to make and confirm necessary changes to Parking Orders in order to confirm and implement the agreed charges, and;

- iv. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) to instruct the undertaking of any other activities necessary to implement and communicate the increase in charges

OR

- e) Recommend to Council
 - i. That the 20p increase as set out in the MTFS should not be implemented in 2026/27. The detail of the charges will be considered and agreed in 2026/27 and will be considered against an updated Car Parking Strategy, and;
 - ii. 2025/26 - Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 25/26 is maintained, and;
 - iii. 2026/27 (forecast) - Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 26/27 is maintained notwithstanding the budget process for the 2026/27 MTFS, and;
 - iv. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to make and confirm necessary changes to Parking Orders in order to confirm and implement the agreed charges
 - v. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) to instruct the undertaking of any other activities necessary to implement and communicate the increase in charges.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on a number of matters pertaining to parking, including summary of the impacts on car park usage following the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement.
- 1.2 The report also seeks to confirm the approach to be taken in respect of the implementation of agreed parking increases within the 25/26 MTFS - a 20p increase except for the all day tariff. The report seeks confirmation and delegation to implement the agreed increase; or seek confirmation via Council of the agreement to a Budget Policy variation to remove the planned increase or proceed with an alternative scheme.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council is required to prepare and approve a budget and Medium-Term Financial strategy (MTFS). The budget and MTFS were approved by Council 26th February 2025. This included increased parking charge related income and associated charge changes.
- 2.2 At the time of Full Council, commitments were given by the Administration that account would be taken of the impacts of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE), along with a commitment to undertake an update of the Councils Parking Strategy – noting the current strategy is dated 2018 -2023.
- 2.3 Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) was introduced in August 2025 following approval granted by the Department for Transport at the end of July 2025. The introduction was the result of collaboration with Cambridgeshire County Council in the undertaking of a statutory process that unfortunately faced delays due to the availability of Parliamentary time required for designation of Huntingdonshire as both a Civil & Special Enforcement Area. CPE is the outcome of a process that decriminalises a number of on-street parking offences and enables them to be enforced as a civil matter by a local authority, instead of the Police. This change to enforcement may have led to an impact on car park usage.
- 2.4 The Council has committed to undertaking a review of its Parking Strategy with works having commenced in October 2025 that included on site occupancy surveys. A recent public user survey has recently been launched. The development of the parking strategy will continue during 2025/26 and is expected to be complete by April 2026. It will include principles for future fee setting, but of itself will not set the approach to fee increases, which are considered through the budget setting process.
- 2.5 Charges are included and set within the Fees and Charges schedule as part of the proposed Budget 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). No further decision is required to implement the charges as detailed in the Fees and Charges schedule. Whilst there is a delegation to the relevant Head of Service and Executive Cllr *'To make and confirm Off-Street Parking Places Orders in future years involving any changes of minor significance and reviews of charges in line with inflation'*, a change above a single year's inflationary value would be significant and require a decision by Cabinet. A variation to the approved MTFS would require a Council decision.

3. **BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The Council is required to prepare and approve a budget and Medium-Term Financial strategy (MTFS). A 2025/26 Revenue Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2026/27 to 2029/30) was prepared and brought before Council 26th February 2025.
- 3.2 The proposed budget and MTFS included items relating to parking income and charges. These are discussed below in sections 3.3 and 3.4
- 3.3 The Council resolved *'that the proposed overall Budget 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 to 2029/30 (Appendix 1) to include the Revenue Budgets at Section 2, the Capital Programme at Section 3 and the 2025/26 Fees and Charges at Section 7, Annex A be approved'*.

3.4 **MTFS PARKING INCOME POSITION**

- 3.4.1 In relation to parking pay & display income, and the approved budget and MTFS, a baseline income position was established with increases to parking income applied to determine the total budget figure. Note that parking income associated with Hinchingsbrooke Country Park is not included within these figures; and the Council does not currently charge for parking at One Leisure sites.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF PARKING INCOME BASELINE BUDGET AND AGREED INCOME INCREASES

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Baseline Budget	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	£2,336,000
Income Increase	£136,000	£270,000	£270,000	£270,000	£270,000
Agreed Budget	£2,472,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000

- 3.4.2 The pay & display income received in 2024/25 was ~£2,256,000. This does not include parking income associated with Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

3.5 **MTFS PARKING CHARGES**

- 3.6 The 2025/26 Revenue Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2026/27 to 2029/30) contained the 'Fees and Charges schedule for 2025/26'. This included parking charges post-CPE implementation at a 20p increased level and was approved by Council in February 2025 – noting that fees were last increased in 2019.
- 3.7 The Council may continue to charge lower (retain current charge) which is an established charge. A fee other than either the current or the 20p variant would require taking this through the decision-making process – decision by Full Council.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF PAY & DISPLAY CHARGES RELATING TO COUNCIL OPERATED CAR PARKS

	Short Stay		Long Stay	
Stays up to:	Current	20p	Current	20p
1 Hour	£1.00	£1.20	-	-
2 Hours	£1.80	£2.00	£1.60	£1.80

3 Hours	£2.60	£2.80	£2.00	£2.20
4 Hours	£3.40	£3.60	£2.40	£2.60
10 Hours	-	-	£3.00	£3.00
23 Hours	-	-	£4.00	£4.00

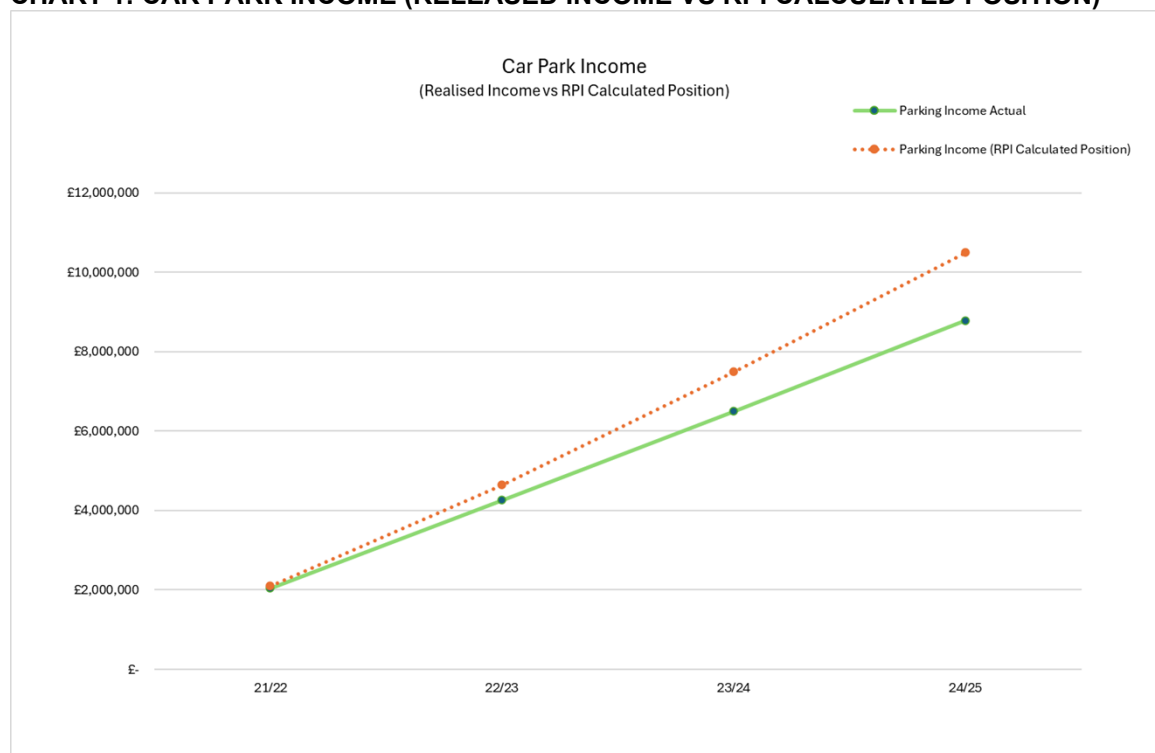
- 3.7.1 This level of charges remains lower than the application of both the consumer and retail price index inflationary values. The last increase to parking charges was implemented in April 2020.

TABLE 3: RPI & CPI APPLIED TO £1.00

		Previously	Indexed
Application of index (<i>Apr 20 to Oct 25</i>)	RPI	£1.00	£1.39
	CPI	£1.00	£1.29

- 3.7.2 The retail price index is a measure of inflation published monthly by the Office for National Statistics. It measures the change in the cost of a representative sample of retail goods and services. Whilst increasing parking charges solely in accordance with this index may not be practicable due to the resultant change denominations, it serves to demonstrate the result of potential income received through the adoption of an annual system and the impact on the budget and MTFS.
- 3.7.3 The chart below applies the % change to the index value (April of year vs April 2020) to the actual income realised by the Council since the last charge changes implement by April 2020. The cumulative impact over the 4 year period provides a calculated additional income figure in excess of £1,700,000. This figure assumes no other changes to usage and is therefore representative only.

CHART 1: CAR PARK INCOME (RELEASED INCOME VS RPI CALCULATED POSITION)



- 3.7.4 In February 2021, the Council agreed to the progression of Civil Parking Enforcement in Huntingdonshire. This implementation was noted to create an annual operating deficit in the region of £60,000 p/a. In an exempt report submitted, Cabinet agreed to the recommendations whereby the council undertook to incur costs associated with the remedial works required to establish Huntingdonshire as a Civil Enforcement Area.
- 3.7.5 Benchmarking information provided to the Council identified that the long and short stay charges in operation are within the lower quartile compared to the CIPFA neighbour average. It was noted in the information provided to the Council that 9 of the 16 CIPFA neighbours charge on a Sunday (either nominal fee c. £0.20 - £1.80, or normal charges).

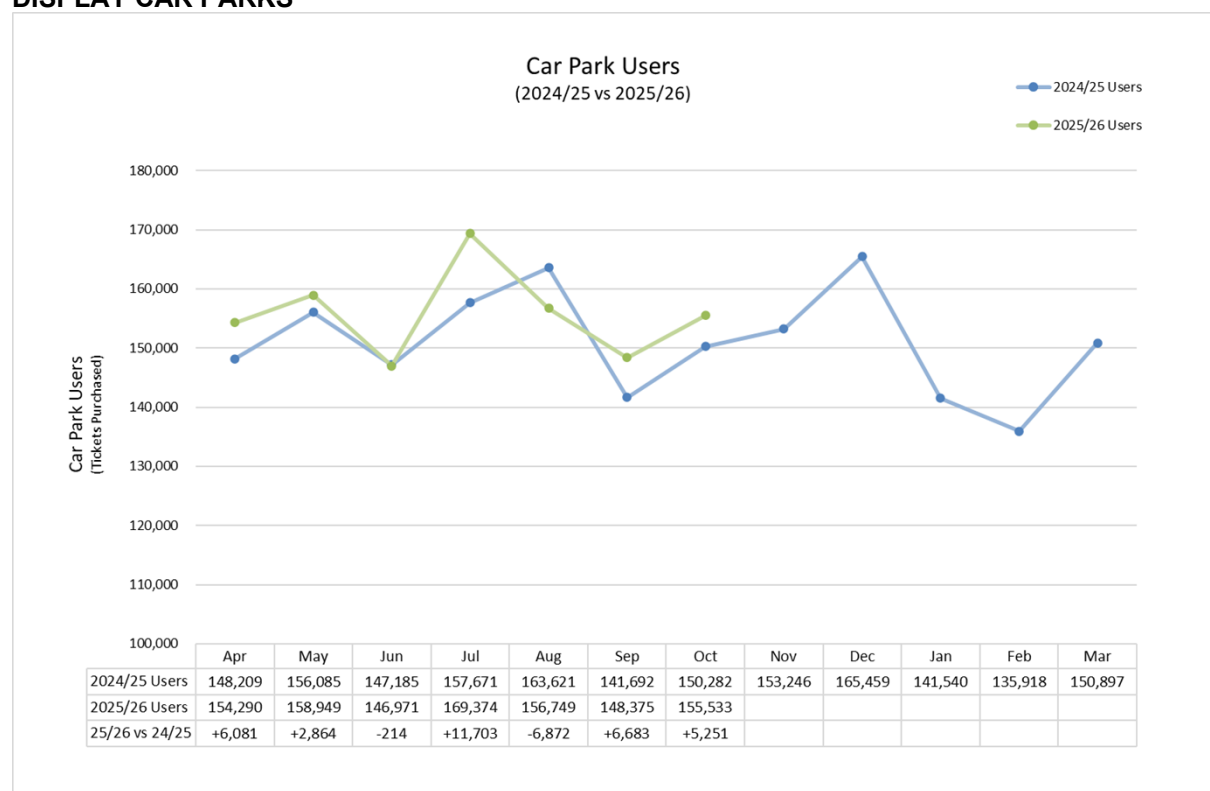
4. **CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

Prior to the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) high levels of non-compliant parking in the town centres were observed. The introduction of CPE has provided an increased on-street enforcement presence which would likely deter and lead to changed behaviours with those drivers opting to park legally elsewhere, including within/to Council operated car parks.

4.1 **CAR PARK USAGE**

- 4.1.1 A comparison of the total number of tickets purchases within Council operated pay & display car parks has been undertaken. Note that the count of tickets purchased does not include Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

CHART 2: CAR PARK USERS (TICKETS PURCHASED) IN COUNCIL OPERATED PAY & DISPLAY CAR PARKS

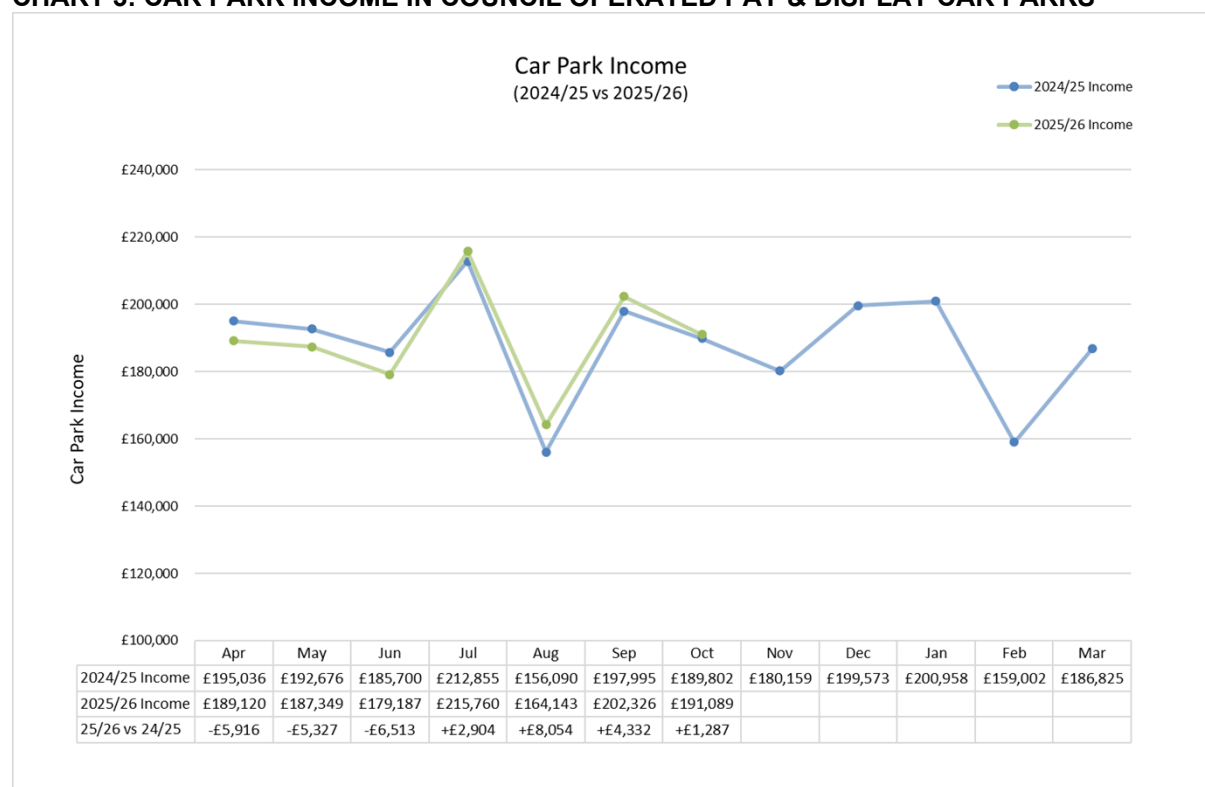


- 4.1.2 The comparison shows that the year to date usage (2025/26) is broadly similar to that of the year prior (2024/25), noting an uplift of 2.34%. Whilst this represents an increase in car park users, income remains similar to the year prior therefore usage increase alone is unlikely to have a significant impact on parking income.

4.2 CAR PARK INCOME

- 4.2.1 A comparison of the income from Council operated pay & display car parks has been undertaken. Note that the income does not include Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

CHART 3: CAR PARK INCOME IN COUNCIL OPERATED PAY & DISPLAY CAR PARKS

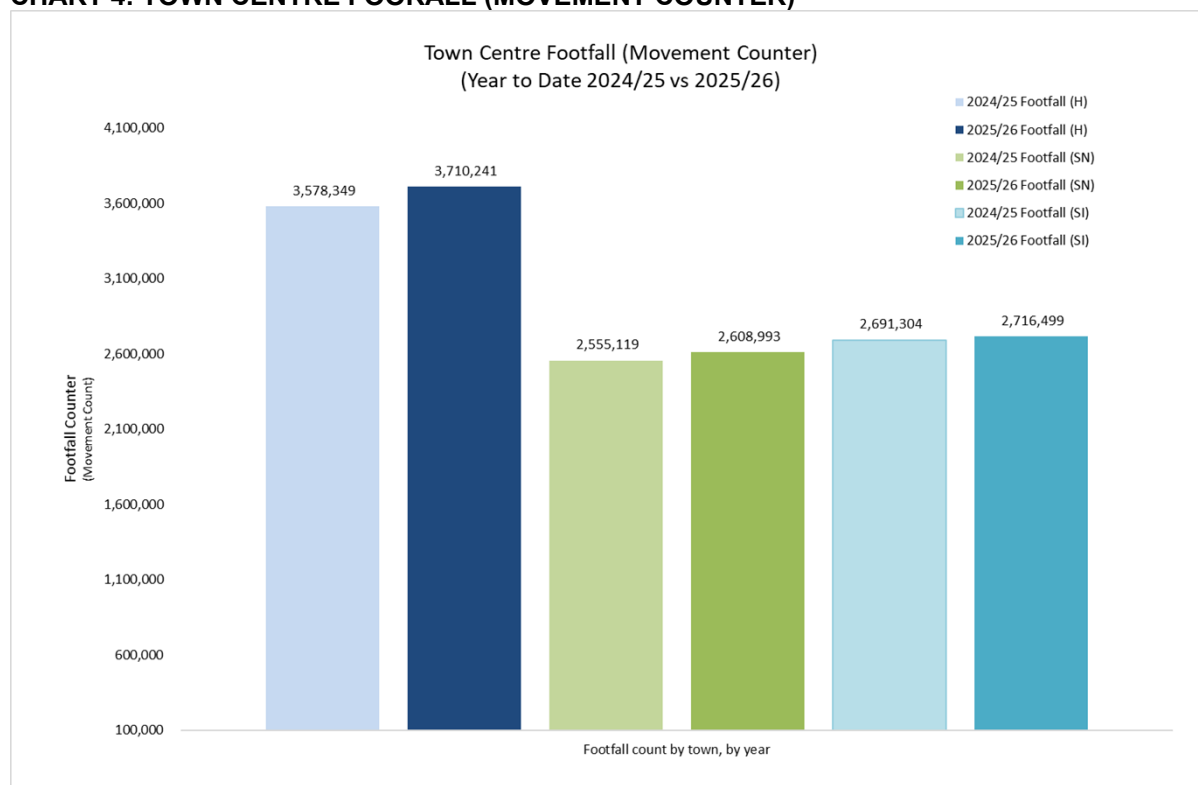


- 4.2.2 The comparison shows that the year to date income (2025/26) is broadly similar to that of the year prior (2024/25). No significant increase in usage has been noted.

4.3 FOOTFALL AND TOWN CENTRE USAGE

- 4.3.1 Huntington, St Neots & St Ives have footfall counters deployed within the town centre. These counters record pedestrian movement within the counters field of capture. The information presented is the year-to-date totals for each Huntington, St Neots & St Ives.
- 4.3.2 This data is not a true representation of the number of visitors to the area; however, it can be used to determine footfall trends when considered against itself.
- 4.3.3 The information shown here indicates an overall increase in the movements captured by the counters in each location ranging from 0.94 - 3.69% representing an average increase of 2.24% year-to-date. This increase closely reflects that seen in the number of car park uses for the same period.

CHART 4: TOWN CENTRE FOORALL (MOVEMENT COUNTER)



5. BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY IMPACT SUMMARY

- 5.1 The comparison works undertaken show that no significant changes to the income and tickets purchased in Council operated pay & display car parks has occurred following the introduction of civil Parking Enforcement.
- 5.2 The Council has an established budget and MTFS position in relation to parking income. This was based upon a partial, in-year implementation of the increase. Noting the lead in times for amendment of the relevant Parking Orders and practical implementation, a decision is now required either to proceed with that increase or not.
- 5.3 The pressures associated with a decision to *not increase charges* are:
- in-year pressure (2025/26) of £136,000. Due to the timescales associated with implementation of charge increase this is non-recoverable this year.
 - Pressure of £270,000 p/a for the remainder of the MTFS. Prompt implementation of the charge changes increase the likelihood of this being achieved from April 2026.
- 5.4 To not increase the charges (*continue with the current level of charges*) impacts the income received by the Council. It is unlikely that the income received without increasing charges will meet the budget and MTFS requirements. Officers would also advise that determining to not increase the charges would in effect see the costs of car parking provision and operation being subsidised by other services and other council income; or require the council to consider what activity may have to cease. This is due to the increased costs in car park operation as a result of inflation; utilities increase; business rates increase and staffing costs.

- 5.5 In order to manage pressures to the surplus generated by the service (*revenue stream as part of overall budget provision*) which were not accounted for at the time of setting the budget over the MTFS period will require political choices over where funding comes from to fill the resultant gap. This could include money from reserves, stopping or reducing services, or reallocating money from other objectives such as the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy (CHAWS) fund - thus resulting in less money being available for those objectives.

6. PARKING CHARGE IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

- 6.1 The options available to the Council relating to the implementation of charge changes are presented below. Option A sets out the progression of the charge change in line with the approved budget. Should Option B or C be progressed, then there will be a requirement for a Budget BID to adjust the baseline income.

6.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARGE CHANGES

- 6.2.1 On 26th February 2025, the Council resolved 'that the proposed overall Budget 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 to 2029/30 (Appendix 1) to include the Revenue Budgets at Section 2, the Capital Programme at Section 3 and the 2025/26 Fees and Charges at Section 7, Annex A be approved'.
- 6.2.2 The Off-Street Parking Places Orders established to support Civil Parking Enforcement specifies the level of charges within Schedules (*likened to appendices*). Implementation of the agreed Council charges is by way of a Notice of Variation. This notice details the current and the new (varied) charges and confirms the date of commencement by providing notice of 28 days.
- 6.2.3 The implementation process normally requires a window of 10-12 weeks. Actions that are to be undertaken include:
- Preparation and undertaking of the Notice of Variation process;
 - Co-ordination with external suppliers for system configuration changes required;
 - Signage updates required to ensure correct advertisement of charges in car parks.
- 6.2.4 Note that a normal external supplier timescale of 10-12 weeks applies to the implementation of system charge changes. This timescale can vary due to the demand on the supplier which increases between January and April as many Councils' look to bring in charge changes for the start of the financial year.
- 6.2.5 Members expressed a desire to take account of CPE, and data pertaining to behavioural change (as opposed to assumption), before taking a decision to implement the approved fees set out in the budget. This report includes that data both in usage and income terms, as well as other variables. This report comes forward at the last responsible opportunity to enable the implementation to occur; enabling consideration of the initial data from CPE and the timescales likely for the review of the Parking Strategy. In the alternative this report enables an informed view can be taken in light of the wider financial position of the Council if an alternative proposal is to be pursued, as opposed to a high-level budget which is based on prudent assumptions and budget principles.

6.3 OPTION A: DO NOTHING

- 6.3.1 Given the financial implications, doing nothing is not an available option as a decision other than that in line with the budget and MTFS requires a corresponding financial change to provide a balanced budget as the Council has a duty to set a balanced budget.

6.4 OPTION B: PROGRESS A CHARGE INCREASE AS BUDGET AND MTFS

- 6.4.1 This option represents the implementation of a charge change in line with the approved budget and MTFS.

This option is reflected by recommendation 'b) Agree to implement the charge increase as set out in the MTFS'.

TABLE 4: OPTION B - IMPACT ON BUDGET AND MTFS

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Impact
Agreed Budget	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	
Option Impact	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Option Budget	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	

- 6.4.2 The implementation process normally requires 10-12 weeks due to the actions required to support charge changes; however, timescales can vary.
- 6.4.3 Prompt confirmation to pursue will enable the process of enactment of the charge changes to commence with a view to timely implementation, reducing the likely impact on the agreed 2026/27 budget.
- 6.4.4 To proceed with this, whilst there is a Council decision in place, further delegations are required to make and amend the Parking Orders and undertake practical implementation. In short, in order to proceed with an increase in the financial year, a decision on this needs to be taken before the end of the calendar year.

6.5 OPTION C: DO NOT PROGRESS ANY CHARGE INCREASE

- 6.5.1 Should the Council not wish to implement an increase to parking charges, a decision will be required by Council to vary the approved budget and MTFS. The impact of this on the budget and MTFS is:
- £136,000 in the current year (2025/26)
 - £270,000 p/a for the remainder of the MTFS

This option is reflected by recommendation 'c) Recommend to Council That the 20p increase as set out in the MTFS should not be implemented'.

TABLE 5: OPTION C - IMPACT ON BUDGET AND MTFS

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Impact
Agreed Budget	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	
Option Impact	- £270,000	- £270,000	- £270,000	- £270,000	- £270,000	- £1,350,000
Option Budget	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	£2,336,000	

6.5.2 The Council will be required to make a decision in relation to the budget and MTFS. This could include money from reserves, stopping or reducing services, or reallocating money from other objectives such as the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy (CHAWS) fund - thus resulting in less money being available for those objectives.

6.5.3 Taking out the full budget within the MTFS relating to a parking income increase will prejudice the outcome of the parking strategy.

6.6 OPTION D: PROGRESS AN ALTERNATE CHARGE INCREASE (2025/26)

6.6.1 The Council may consider the implementation of an alternate increase within 2025/26. The basis of this option are assumptions that:

- the charges are agreed in 2025/26 and implemented as soon as practicable.

This option is reflected by recommendation 'd) Recommend to Council that an alternative increase in car parking fees for 25/26 be implemented, amending the agreed MTFS'

6.6.2 If this option is progressed there will be a variation to the agreed MTFS for years 2-5. This will necessitate a starting position of inclusion within the budget for the 5-year MTFS period from 2026/27. The scale of this impact will be dependent on the charges agreed.

TABLE 6: OPTION D - IMPACT ON BUDGET AND MTFS

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Impact
Agreed Budget	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	
Option Impact	- £270,000 (up to)	- £270,000 (up to)	- £270,000 (up to)	- £270,000 (up to)	- £270,000 (up to)	- £1,350,000 (up to)
Option Budget	£2,336,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	

6.6.3 The implementation process normally requires 10-12 weeks due to the actions required to support charge changes; however, timescales can vary.

6.6.4 Prompt confirmation of the charges is required to enable the process of enactment of the charge changes, reducing the impact to a revised 2026/27 budget.

6.6.5 An appropriate recommendation had been made to support the implementation of this option.

6.7 OPTION E: DEFER AND PROGRESS AN ALTERNATE CHARGE INCREASE

- 6.7.1 The Council may consider an option to defer the implementation of the any charge changes until the development of the parking strategy has concluded. Once this is clear, the implications for the Councils MTFS will be put forward for approval.

This option is reflected by recommendation 'e) Recommend to Council that the 20p increase as set out in the MTFS should not be implemented in 2026/27. The detail of the charges will be considered and agreed in 2026/27'.

- 6.7.2 If this option is progressed there will be a variation to the agreed MTFS for year 2. Once the position on charges is known adjustment to subsequent years in the MTFS will be required.

TABLE 6: OPTION E - IMPACT ON BUDGET AND MTFS

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Impact
Agreed Budget	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	
Option Impact	- £270,000	£0	£0	£0	£0	- £270,000
Option Budget	£2,336,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	£2,606,000	

- 6.7.3 The outcome of the strategy is unknown and will not be available until after a proposed budget and MTFS are brought to Council. Should the strategy not support the charges as agreed, this would impact the agreed budget and MTFS.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) *Note the agreed MTFS baseline position in relation to parking charges and in particular the 20p increase; along with the other financial information included in this report.*

The Cabinet is further recommended to choose from either b), c) or d) below as the agreed way forward:

- b) *Agree to implement the charge increase as set out in the MTFS, and;*
- Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to make and confirm necessary changes to Parking Orders in order to confirm and implement the agreed charges, and;*
 - Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) to instruct the undertaking of any other activities necessary to implement and communicate the increase in charges.*

OR

- c) *Recommend to Council*
- i. *That the 20p increase as set out in the MTFS should not be implemented and;*
 - ii. *Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 25/26 is maintained.*

OR

- d) *Recommend to Council*
- i. *That an alternative increase in car parking fees for 25/26 be implemented and;*
 - ii. *Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 25/26 is maintained, and;*
 - iii. *Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to make and confirm necessary changes to Parking Orders in order to confirm and implement the agreed charges, and;*
 - iv. *Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) to instruct the undertaking of any other activities necessary to implement and communicate the increase in charges.*

OR

- e) *Recommend to Council*
- i. *That the 20p increase as set out in the MTFS should not be implemented in 2026/27. The detail of the charges will be considered and agreed in 2026/27 and will be considered against an updated Car Parking Strategy, and;*
 - ii. *2025/26 - Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 25/26 is maintained, and;*
 - iii. *2026/27 - Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 26/27 is maintained notwithstanding the budget process for the 2026/27 MTFS, and;*
 - iv. *Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to make and confirm necessary changes to Parking Orders in order to confirm and implement the agreed charges and;*
 - v. *Delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) to instruct the undertaking of any other activities necessary to implement and communicate the increase in charges.*

8. COMMENTS OF O&S

- 8.1 No pre-decision scrutiny has been undertaken. Given the nature of the decision, Cabinet will either be delegating to implement the will of Council; or in the alternative, will be recommending to Full Council to consider an alternative and the subsequent changes to budget policy which are reserved for Full Council. In that context, there is sufficient scope for Scrutiny of any alternative proposal by Full Council.

9. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 9.1 The budget is the financial interpretation of the Council's strategic and operational priorities that are included within the Corporate Plan.
- 9.2 The Council has recently adopted an Economic Growth Strategy (2025–2030) which includes a strong focus on revitalising town centres—specifically Huntingdon, St Ives, Ramsey, and St Neots—by supporting infrastructure, businesses, public realm improvements, and connectivity.
- 9.3 Car parking plays a significant role in supporting town centres by influencing accessibility, economic vitality, and overall attractiveness.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 Deviation from the current charges agreed will impact the income received by the Council in relation to parking charges. The Council approved a balanced budget and MTFS which set a dependency on a level of income received and associated with an increase to parking charges.
- 10.2 Failure to implement Option A would be a deviation from the Council's existing Medium-Term Financial Strategy which received full Council approval in February 2025. This decision would immediately create an in-year shortfall of £136,000 and a recurring annual deficit of £270,000, equating to over £1 million across the MTFS period.
- 10.3 It is highly unlikely that such a gap could be absorbed without needing to utilise reserves, undermine financial resilience, or consider service delivery. This would effectively cause other community priorities to have to be reconsidered to subsidise parking. These are ultimately choices for Members to make, balancing up the need for financial sustainability, with other priorities. This could include money from reserves, stopping or reducing services, or reallocating money from other objectives such as the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy (CHAWS) fund – thus resulting in less money being available for those objectives.
- 10.4 Parking charges have not increased since the change implemented in 2019 and remain below inflationary levels; in this time, costs have increased (for example business rates, utilities, and staffing costs); rejecting this modest increase would not be financially prudent. If not increased, over time the gap between the charges and the costs will continue to widen, and the shortfall in income cannot be recovered.
- 10.5 The Council has a legal commitment to maintain a balanced budget.

- 10.6 The implementation of charges other than those set out in the 'Fees and Charges schedule for 2025/26' will require a formal decision to agree and establish prior to the service related implementation process of charges which includes the Notice of Variation and other activities set out in 6.2

11. Legal Implications

- 11.1 The process of Notice of Variation may be used by the Council to implement changes to parking charges and is allowed for under the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984, the Parking Places (Variation of Charges) Act 2017, and the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure).
- 11.2 The Council exercises its power for off-street parking places in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 (the Act). Section 55 of the Act comments on the ringfencing of income in respect of parking on highways for payment. The ringfencing is not applicable to off-street parking places.

12. Background papers

Meeting of Council, 26th Feb 2025 - Final 2025/26 Revenue Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2026/27 to 2029/30)

[Agenda item - FINAL 2025/26 REVENUE BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY \(2026/27 TO 2029/30\) - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](#)

13. Contact Officers

Head of Economy, Regeneration & Housing (PS)

Public
Key Decision – No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Ramsey Great Whyte Regeneration

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 16th December 2025

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration & Housing

Report by: Regeneration & Housing Delivery Manager

Ward(s) affected: ☐ All

Executive Summary:

This report updates Cabinet on progress towards delivering the Ramsey Great Whyte town centre improvement scheme. It focuses on three core areas: 1) improvements to the Mews Close car park; 2) the development of 'shop in a box' semi-permanent units to enhance retail choice and the town market; and 3) enhancements to the public realm, with particular emphasis on the pedestrian environment.

A brief update is also provided on the delivery of a separate project in Ramsey town centre, focused on improving the Rivermill location through the provision of a new accessible path to the canal, alongside the reinstatement of original cast-iron handrails and improved surfaces that reuse block paving previously in situ at St Neots Market Square.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is asked to:

- Note the contents of the report and the proposed approach to delivering improvements to Ramsey town centre,

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on activity to date and the next stages of project development and delivery.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. The Ramsey Great Whyte project aims to revitalise Ramsey's high street by strengthening the town's unique character, celebrating its heritage as the 'Gateway to the Fens', and enhancing public spaces through improvements such as pedestrianisation and the introduction of new retail facilities.

- 2.2. The project builds on previous investment by HDC and partners. This includes the development of the new Civic Centre within the Great Whyte area itself, Digital Information screens, launched in the Summer, to promote local businesses, as well as provide information on the town's heritage and culture. We have also provided funding to deliver community events and activities to Ramsey Town Council, and community organisations, with several activities for residents scheduled for Christmas this year.
- 2.3. This initiative continues HDC's approach to investing resources locally and aligns with the town's vision of becoming a prosperous market town with balanced growth, improved connectivity, and opportunities for residents and the wider community. Key benefits include economic uplift, better pedestrian safety, and more retail and service choice through the 'shop in a box' initiative.
- 2.4. HDC has worked closely with Ramsey Town Council to develop project proposals, which include the potential pedestrianisation of a small part of the Great Whyte. This may result in the loss of a small number of on-street parking spaces, necessitating measures to mitigate any potential impact.
- 2.5. It is important to emphasise that such changes are currently the suggested approach only and are subject to testing and approval by the Highways Authority. It is equally important to state that disabled parking is retained and in fact improved, regardless of the final approach to general on street parking.
- 2.6. In relation to off-street car parking, HDC owns and manages the Mews Close car park. HDC has developed proposals to improve this car park. It will be resurfaced and relined with additional parking bays created through a more efficient layout.
- 2.7. The Council also owns an adjacent undeveloped space, with potential for small-scale development. Ramsey Town Council (TC), a key project partner, has expressed interest in converting the undeveloped space into an additional car parking facility. This could mitigate on-street parking changes, improve local communications, and promote community empowerment. HDC is working with Ramsey Town Council to explore this and other options for the site. Any changes to the status and use of this site, however, would be subject to an options assessment, an appraisal and a decision making process independent of the Great Whyte project.

3. PROJECT CONTEXT

- 3.1. The Ramsey Great Whyte project delivers multiple benefits:
 - **Economic and Social Uplift:** By potentially pedestrianising a limited part of the Great Whyte and introducing new retail units in the form of 'Shop in a Box', the scheme creates safer, more inviting spaces for markets, events, retail and community gatherings, encouraging local trade and

tourism. This supports Ramsey's vision of a "prosperous market town" with pride in its rural Fens heritage.

- **Heritage Preservation:** Interventions celebrate the town's history, such as referencing the River and Fens landscape, fostering community pride and attracting visitors.
 - **Improved Connectivity and Accessibility:** Enhanced pedestrian walkways, cycle facilities, and public transport links will benefit young people, residents, and the wider community, promoting sustainable travel.
 - **Mitigation of Impacts:** Car park upgrades, and potential new spaces address the loss of on-street parking due to pedestrianisation, ensuring continued access for shoppers and businesses.
 - **Local Empowerment:** Partnering with Ramsey TC empowers the community to manage local assets, improving communications and aligning with devolution principles.
- 3.2. This project primarily focuses on enhancing the core Great Whyte area of the town centre. The project seeks to achieve this through improvements to the public realm, better landscaping, and pedestrian-friendly designs. As detailed in the 'Look and Feel Design Research Report' (dated 11 March 2025), the scheme draws on historical sketches and maps to inform modern interventions, such as highlighting the river's legacy and improving public realms.
- 3.3. A complementary element is the refurbishment of the Mews Close car park. This will include resurfacing of the car park, (approximately 1,940.8 m² of tarmac), which is currently in a poor state of repair and relining.
- 3.4. HDC is also currently working with CPCA to investigate the potential for creating a mobility hub in Ramsey town centre. This may include, for example, improvements to public transport facilities, alongside other innovative measures such as a Car Club for residents and businesses. HDC is keen to ensure that all learning from the St Neots town centre improvements, including improvements to public transport facilities and disabled car parking provision are applied to this project.

4. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 4.1. The Project has developed a range of designs covering all the aforementioned areas. These were subject to an extensive engagement process with residents, businesses, and Town Council members during autumn last year. Over 200 people attended project exhibitions, with more than 300 responses submitted via an online consultation
- 4.2. These responses have informed further development of the project proposals, particularly in relation to accessibility improvements, car parking, and measures to mitigate any loss or reduction in on-street parking availability.

- 4.3. HDC has been unable to publish a full response to the consultation to date, to allow the Highways Authority sufficient time to fully test and evaluate the proposed changes and improvements to the Great Whyte. Once this stage of the design and consultation process is complete, we will share updated proposals and designs with residents, businesses, and Town Council representatives, accompanied by a 'you said, we did' explanatory note. This information will be circulated early next year.

5. SHORT TERM OFF-STREET CAR PARKING IMPROVEMENTS

- 5.1. HDC will be proceeding with works in the Mews Close Car Park for the purpose of improving the facility. This will include resurfacing and relining parking bays. The improvements to be made include additional disabled parking bays. Several additional standard car parking bays will also be created to improve the efficiency of the car park layout.
- 5.2. Although several options were reviewed to improve the car park layout, the decision was ultimately made to retain the existing layout while optimising underutilised spaces for greater efficiency.
- 5.3. The resurfacing works are expected to be carried out and completed during January and February to minimise disruption to the town centre. Furthermore, the works will be phased so that half of the car park remains available for use throughout the duration.

6. DESIGN DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

- 6.1. This scheme is being delivered in partnership with the Highways Authority, Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC). CCC officers have worked closely with HDC project staff on the scheme designs and delivery arrangements since the project's inception in 2023.
- 6.2. The original project concept included a much larger 'Market Produce Hub' structure in the Great Whyte area. CCC engineers collaborated with HDC to assess the deliverability of this concept, given its proposed location above the river culvert. Following this assessment, both HDC and CCC concluded that the concept was not feasible due to weight restrictions and the complexities of undertaking excavations directly above the culvert.
- 6.3. HDC therefore revised the project approach, focusing instead on developing a number of smaller semi-permanent structures within an improved pedestrian environment. This revised strategy delivers the original project objectives to enhance the attractiveness of Ramsey town centre while maximising deliverability.
- 6.4. As noted, these designs were consulted upon during autumn 2024. Since this point, project designers have engaged in a pre-application process with planners to refine the designs, incorporating consultation feedback and planners' views. In parallel with the highway approval process, a planning application will also be required.

- 6.5. To formalise HDC's partnership with CCC, HDC submitted a Privately Financed Highways Initiative (PFHI) application to CCC in June 2025. The PFHI process provides a structured mechanism for securing CCC input on design and obtaining the necessary approvals for works and improvements in the public highway.
- 6.6. The PFHI process is managed on a strict first-come, first-served basis, with schemes developed in order of submission. As of November, collaborative work between HDC and CCC has now formally commenced.
- 6.7. In the interim, HDC has been unable to submit a planning application for the scheme or publish a full response to the public consultation, owing to these critical highway dependencies.
- 6.8. While the delay in finalising the project designs has inevitably extended the overall timetable, work is now progressing at a pace. HDC is targeting the commencement of works during summer 2026, subject to securing the necessary highways and planning approvals, including completion of relevant statutory consultation processes.
- 6.9. HDC project staff will engage with the local community, including Ramsey Town Council, throughout this period to keep them updated and informed of progress. This will include regular updates to the Town Council and HDC ward members, alongside a dedicated newsletter to be produced ahead of the final scheme designs and the commencement of works.

7. PROJECT TIMELINE – INITIATION TO DELIVERY

- 7.1. The following table summarises project activities to the current point and anticipated target dates for completion, subject to planning and statutory consultation and approvals.

Ref:	Milestones / key activities	Date
1.	Ramsey Visioning document approved by HDC	November 2022
2.	Evidence base preparation - Ramsey car parking study produced, informed by survey data.	August 2023
3.	Ramsey Great Whyte public realm improvement project initiated, utilising CPCA Public Realm grant funding, allocated as part of Market Town's programme.	January 2024
4.	Stage 1 (preparation and briefing) undertaken stage and 2 concept design commissioned	January 2024
5.	Engineering assessment undertaken in liaison with Cambridgeshire County Council regarding river culvert and potential impact of the project (as based on original visioning concept) undertaken.	February to April 2024
6.	LGF grant funding awarded by CPCA (formerly Market Produce Hub), approved by CPCA and entered into by HDC	March 2024
7.	Stage 2 concept reports comprising outline designs and proposals completed	April 2024

8.	Ramsey retail support project initiated as a linked and complimentary project, funded by UKSPF. Ten retail businesses provided with support and training.	June 2024 to January 2025
9.	Stage 3 (spatial co-ordination) to Stage 6 (handover and closure) commissioned, as part of new contract procurement process	June 2024
10.	Stage 3 concept and spatial design proposals developed in detail in advance of consultation	July to September 2024
11.	Public engagement and consultation held for 6 weeks comprising in person exhibitions and online surveys. Over 300 responses were provided.	September to October 2024
12.	Planning pre-application consultation and discussion.	December 2024
13.	Detailed design work and scheme alterations to consider public and planning feedback undertaken. Designs submitted to Cambridgeshire County Council Highways for consideration.	March 2025
14.	Privately Financed Highways initiative application submitted to Cambridgeshire County Council. Purpose of application is to enable statutory consultation and required highway approval, a dependency to the submission of a planning application.	June 2025
15.	Project effectively paused until highways process commences in December 2025. Delay is due to schemes being processed in order of submission	July to November 2025
16.	Stage 3 spatial report completed	February 2026
17.	Stage 4 technical design completed	April 2026
18.	Planning and highways statutory consultation and approvals process completed.	February to June 2026
19.	Stage 5, (manufacturing and construction) undertaken and completed.	July to October 2026
20.	Stage 6, (handover and project closure)	November 2026
21.	Scheme components are in full use.	November 2026

8. RIVERMILL IMPROVEMENTS

- 8.1. Whilst not part of the Ramsey Great Whyte project, it should be noted that HDC is also working with Ramsey Town Council to deliver improvements to Ramsey Lode.
- 8.2. Ramsey Lode is located directly on the western edge of Ramsey's town centre at the edge of the Great Whyte. It is part of the 19th-century Fen drainage network, designed to manage flooding in the low-lying peatlands. This location is often referred to as the "Rivermill" due to the adjacent River

Mill (a Grade II-listed 18th-century tidal mill structure on the riverbank, used for grinding corn until the early 20th century). The canal endpoint forms a scenic, narrow waterway inlet that effectively "meets" the town at the historic core, blending urban and rural elements.

- 8.3. HDC is providing funding via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to develop an accessible path from the main street to the Canal. HDC and Ramsey Town Council will also be reinstating the original cast iron handrails for the stepped access alongside other environmental improvements which will include 150 sqm of new block paving.
- 8.4. This project is a prime example of a sustainable approach to improvement works of this kind. Over 100 sqm of the blocks to be used are being recycled from the surface of the former St Neots Market Square. HDC is liaising with CCC on providing these blocks to the appointed contractor. The works schedule is currently to be confirmed; however, all works will be completed before March 2026.

7. FINANCE UPDATE

Funding source	Grant secured	Spend to date	Balance
3. Ramsey			
Local Growth Fund	£1,153,525	£0	£1,153,525
CPCA Accelerated Funding (legacy)	£295,000	£58,652	£236,347
Funding totals	£1,609,360	£185,821	£1,423,539

10. KEY RISKS

BUDGET MANAGEMENT RISK

- 10.1. This project has two primary funds sources, CPCA Accelerated Funding (AF) and Local Growth Fund (LGF). The CPCA AF allocation will be spent within the current financial year.
- 10.2. Most of the funding is via LGF. Whilst these funds were originally allocated to the current 2025/26 financial year, a change request has been submitted to CPCA to extend use of these funds into 2026/27. Whilst this is not yet confirmed, we do not consider this to be a critical risk.

11. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 11.1. The delivery of the Ramsey Great Whyte project and the proposed improvements to the Rivermill location are aligned with the principles and key objectives of the HDC Corporate Plan, specifically it links to:
- Priority 2: Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations, through Forward Thinking Economic Growth

12. CONSULTATION

- 12.1. Within the reporting period, no informal or formal consultations were undertaken. However, it should be noted that the project proposals will be subject to further statutory consultation in highways and planning terms before the final project designs and approach are confirmed. HDC will also seek to ensure that members of the local community, including Ramsey Town Council, are fully informed during this process.

13.LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. Project Staff will liaise with the Legal Services Manager as required to ensure appropriate legal oversight and advice if provided when relevant.

14.RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. The Regeneration Project team is currently fully resourced in staffing and budget terms to deliver this project as set out.

15.EQUALITIES

- 15.1. The Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 15.2. Good planning and effective regeneration can improve environments and opportunities for communities experiencing disadvantage. Planning which does not engage with or consider the needs of local communities is unlikely to improve their life chances and may further entrench area-based disadvantage.

16.ENVIRONMENTAL

- 16.1. The Council has a duty to deliver sustainable place making. In December 2021, the Council adopted a core set of environmental principles. In October 2022, the Council passed a Cost of Living and Climate Change motion that recognises that the current cost of living, and climate crises require joint attention to support the wellbeing of residents and businesses. In February 2023 Council formally recognised the Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency, adopted the Council's Climate Strategy underlining the organisations commitment to:
- setting a positive example through its actions to be a net carbon zero Council by 2040
 - an enabler supporting action within our communities and across our partners.
 - an encourager to those that live, work, and visit Huntingdonshire to take climate action and reduce carbon emissions.
- 16.8. The Council has direct control of only a tiny proportion of all the carbon emissions within Huntingdonshire, but we can adopt a key role to influence the district, demonstrating good practice whilst setting policies and strategies to influence businesses and communities to tackle climate change whilst enabling sustainable living and growth. These principles are embedded within the MTP, of which the Ramsey Great Whyte project is a key element.

LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1: Look and Feel Report:

AOC 299 Ramsey Great Whyte Look and feel design research report 250311.pdf

BACKGROUND PAPERS

It should be noted that the reports listed below refer to the wider Market Town Programme of which Ramsey Great Whyte is a key component. This report is specific to this project.

- Report to Cabinet (FHSF (Future High Street Fund)) 13th February 2020 can be found [here](#)
- Report to Cabinet (FHSF) 28th July 2020 – EXEMPT.
- Report to Cabinet (Market Towns Accelerated Programme) 18th March 2020 can be found [here](#)
- Report to Cabinet (FHSF) 23rd. February 2021 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Spring 2022 Update to Cabinet, 17 March 2022 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Summer 2022 Update to Cabinet June 2022 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Autumn 2022 Update to Cabinet September 2022 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Winter 2022 Update to Cabinet December 2022 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Spring 2023 Update to Cabinet March 2023 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Autumn 2023 Update to Cabinet October 2023 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Winter 2023 Update to Cabinet December 2023 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Spring 2024 Update to Cabinet April 2024 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Summer 2024 Update to Cabinet July 2024 can be found [here](#)
- Market Towns Programme Winter 2024 Update to Cabinet December 2024 can be found [here](#)

- Market Towns Programme Spring 2025 Update to Cabinet March 2025 can be found [here](#)

CONTACT OFFICER

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP held in Lancaster & Stirling, Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Friday, 21 November 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor M L Beuttell – Chair.

Councillors C Lowe and D J Shaw.

APOLOGIES: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor J E Kerr.

10. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th July 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

11. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

12. HEAD RANGER'S REPORT

By means of a report and presentation by the Parks and Countryside Development Co-ordinator and the Commercial Manager (copies of which were appended in the Minute Book), the Head Ranger's report and an update on the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Development Project were presented to the Group.

Following enquiries from Councillors Lowe and Shaw, the Group heard that trees from the nursery were mainly used in tree planting events within the park and that these events were publicised on social media with volunteers being welcome.

It was confirmed, following a question from Councillor Beuttell that there were no Christmas events planned at the Park due to the planned development works, which were due to commence on 28th November 2025.

The Group heard that temporary catering facilities and wc facilities had been sourced and would be located within the current carpark area of the site to allow for the commencement of works and that temporary signage would be in place. Safe and accessible routes would remain open around the site in order to minimise impact to visitors during the construction phase of the development. Following an enquiry from Councillor Shaw about the access route through Bobs Wood, the Group were advised that this was already in hand with an anticipation that a more robust underfooting for visitors would be maintained.

The plans for the development were shared and the biophilic design was noted. It was advised that a look and feel identity for the Park was hoped for whilst keeping within the Council's corporate identity.

The Group were advised that future plans for the Park post development would aim for a dwell time of 4 hours which would also encourage secondary spend within the onsite café. Following an enquiry from Councillor Shaw about the impact of this on the onsite carparking, the Group heard that this would be reviewed in line with the business case and that the team were looking to the future and longevity of the site.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Beuttell, the Group heard that following a competitor analysis, it was hoped that the site would rival local attractions such as Johnsons and Wimpole Home Farm with country parks increasing in popularity. Councillors Lowe and Shaw enquired about the potential to include either a high ropes or water sports offer within the new site with the opportunity to appeal to both children and adults for family activities.

The proposed industrial park on the boarder of the park was discussed and it was noted that officers were in conversation with planning colleagues to better understand the development. Concern was expressed by the Group in relation to the height of the development and the potential impact this could have upon the Park.

Following enquiries from Councillors Beuttell and Lowe, the Group heard that 6 contractors had responded to the public tender for the project and that 2 had been shortlisted, both of whom were local to the region.

13. FINANCE REPORT

By means of a report by the Finance Business Partner (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book), the Group heard that the large underspend shown in the report was due to vacancies during the development phase of the park and additionally assumptions made on the development when forecasting which had since been adjusted. It was also noted that the new electricity contract had also brought lower costs than budgeted. It was noted that the staffing structure would be revisited post development. The café had remained open for longer than anticipated and although catering supplies had increased in cost, more income had been generated assisted by an increase in events.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 17th April 2026 at 10:00am.

Chair

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