



A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH)** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **WEDNESDAY, 29 JULY 2026** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

Apologies

1. MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

Contact Officer: L Adams
01480 388234

2. COMBINED AUTHORITY MAYORAL CAR PARKING SUBSIDY CALL-IN (Pages 3 - 30)

The Panel is to discuss the call-in of the Combined Authority Mayoral Car Parking Subsidy.

Executive Councillor: J Kerr

Contact Officer: L Jablonska
Lisa.Jablonska@huntindonshire.gov.uk

21 day of July 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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Please contact Miss Lauren Adams, Democratic Services Officer, Tel No. 01480 388234/e-mail Lauren.Adams@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.

Insert:

Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) – 29th July 2026

Report by: Elections and Democratic Services Manager | Deputy Monitoring Officer

Lead Cllr: Cllr J Kerr - Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste & Street Scene



Wards	Open / Exempt	Key Decision?
All	Open	Yes

Report Title

Executive Summary: *In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and following publication of the Cabinet's decision relating to the Combined Authority Mayoral Car Parking Subsidy, the decision has been called in by three Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth).*

Recommendations

- 1.1. The Panel is invited to consider its response to the call in of the decisions of the Cabinet held on 14th July 2026 on the Combined Authority Mayoral Car Parking Subsidy
- 1.2. The Panel is also invited to consider whether to endorse the decisions of Cabinet or otherwise in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report.

Key Corporate Plan Priorities

- 1 *Improving quality of life for local people*
- 2 *Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations*

Place Strategy Priorities

- 1 *Supporting economic growth*
- 2 *Boosting town centre vitality and Improving accessibility*

Report Author(s)

Author 1, Elections and Democratic Services Manager | Deputy Monitoring Officer

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to enable the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to respond to the call in request from Councillors Gardener, Martin and Tomlinson in regard to the Cabinet decisions on the Combined Authority Mayoral Car Parking Subsidy.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

- 2.1** The Cabinet, at its meeting on 14th July 2026, considered a report outlining a proposal for the Combined Authority Mayoral Car Parking Subsidy. A copy of the report is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2** The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) received a report at their meeting on 1st July 2026 on the proposals as part of a pre-decision scrutiny process and the Panel's comments were conveyed to the Cabinet by way of the report attached as Appendix 2. Cllr J Kerr, Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene was in attendance at the meeting of the Panel. The draft Minutes of the Cabinet meeting on 14th July 2026 are attached as Appendix 3.
- 2.3** At the Cabinet meeting on 14th July 2026, Members made reference to the comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth), who had put forward two recommendations in relation to the report. Both recommendations were considered by Cabinet and responded to in the meeting.
- 2.4** In response to questions from the Cabinet regarding the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) to wait for the Car Parking Strategy before making a decision, the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene, Councillor Kerr advised that the consequence of doing so could lead to the Mayor withdrawing the offer and so to avoid the risk of that occurring and the loss of benefits to residents, the decision to proceed was made by the Cabinet.
- 2.5** The recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) requesting the Business Case was welcomed by the Cabinet and will be provided.
- 2.6** Furthermore, the Cabinet was keen that the Mayor listened to the discussion of the meeting and of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) meeting.
- 2.7** The Cabinet approved the following –
 - 2.7.1** noted the proposal for grant funding which has been made by the Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA);
 - 2.7.2** noted that sufficient powers exist for Officers to accept said grant funding in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder;
 - 2.7.3** endorsed that Officers, on behalf of the Council, should undertake steps to formally accept the funding, including formalising necessary grant agreements and payment profiles etc;

- 2.7.4** agreed to the use of the grant funding to implement a 'free after 4pm parking Monday to Friday' scheme based on the recommended option (at section 3) as set out within the report; and
- 2.7.5** delegated responsibility for the implementation of the aforementioned scheme to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene as necessary including:
- a) to make and confirm necessary changes to the Parking Places Orders where required and to make and confirm the Notice of Variation required to implement the agreed charges;
 - b) to make changes to the Parking Places Orders where required and to make and confirm the Notice of Variation to reinstate the current (until 1800 Monday to Friday) chargeable hours from 1st April 2028 or sooner if the operation of the scheme results in unintended or unforeseen detrimental impacts including but not limited to financially impacting the Council (e.g. where loss of income exceeds the grant contribution), or other detrimental impact occurs to people, place or the Council as a consequence of operation; and
 - c) to undertake any other activities necessary to implement, vary or cease the scheme including any necessary changes and reinstatement works.

3. CALL-IN

- 3.1** Members are reminded of the guidance for call-in as set out in paragraph 15.1 and Appendix B of the Overview and Scrutiny Rules of the Council's Constitution; attached in this report under BACKGROUND PAPERS Council Constitution.
- 3.2** The decision has been called in by three Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth), Councillors Gardener, Martin and Tomlinson.
- 3.3** The Panel plays an important part in the Constitution in regard to the effective scrutiny of Cabinet decisions. It is important that Members are assured that Cabinet decisions have been taken with due process, that Cabinet has acted reasonably and has properly considered the advice and information before them including any pre-decision comments from Scrutiny. The Panel does not have the power in the Constitution to overturn, amend or substitute an executive decision. If after the consideration of the matter relating to the call in it believes that the decision of Cabinet was not in accordance with the Cabinet Procedure Rules then it has powers to make new recommendations, to refer back for reconsideration to Cabinet, and in limited circumstances initiate a referral to Council. The Panel has three options, which are as follows –
- take no further action, if the Panel decides not to refer the matter back to the Cabinet, the decision shall take effect from the date of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting;

- if, having considered the matter, the Panel may refer back to the Cabinet for consideration, with a report being prepared setting out in writing the detail and reasons for the Panel's concerns. These could be new reasons and / or additional concerns from those submitted already to Cabinet which have already been fully considered and may relate to whether the Cabinet took account of relevant information, has fully considered all aspects, has acted reasonably and followed due process. If referred back to Cabinet, they would then be required to meet and reconsider their decision within 10 working days, before making a final decision; or
- refer the decision to Council. This would only be relevant where the Panel considers the decision may be contrary to the approved policy or budget framework.

4. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Financial Implications

- 4.1.1** The financial implications arising out of this call-in are an additional meeting has had to be called, and Officer time and expenditure incurred in that regard. Furthermore, any delay to implementing the decisions made by the Cabinet or changes to those decisions may have financial implications.

4.2 Legal & Constitutional Implications

- 4.2.1** This report has been produced in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Rules of the Council's Constitution.
- 4.2.2** The Local Government Act 2000 established the power of overview and scrutiny to review executive decisions before implementation but does not prescribe grounds for call in or require councillors to provide reasons when requesting a call in. Any such requirements arise from the Council's Constitution rather than statute. The Constitution does not require a specific reason for the call in, however it does describe the call in process as "*consideration of any matter referred to the Panel for a decision in relation to a call in of a decision*". This does imply that information as to the basis for the call in would be provided to enable Members to consider the matter in full, for Officers to provide advice upon and the Executive Councillor to be able to respond. This report is unable to provide any further detail to the Panel on the reasons for the call in.
- 4.2.3** Considered legal opinion is that there was no duty upon the Council to consult in relation to this matter.
- 4.2.4** The considered opinion of the Council's Section 151 Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer is that the process undertaken to date is in accordance with Council's Budget & Policy Framework Procedure Rules. within the Constitution.

5. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 5.1** The Panel is invited to consider the call-in of the decisions of the Cabinet relating to the Combined Authority Mayoral Car Parking Subsidy.

6. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Report presented to Cabinet on the Mayoral Car Parking Subsidy: 14th July 2026

Appendix 2 – Comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) 1st July 2026

Appendix 3 – Draft Minute of Cabinet: 14th July 2026

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Council Constitution](#) – Appendix B Pre-decision scrutiny and Call-in processes

Date:
O&S (P&G) - 1st July 2026
Cabinet - 14 July 2026

Report by:
Head of Economy, Regeneration & Housing Delivery
Operations Manager, Parking & Markets Services

Lead Cllr:
Cllr J Kerr - Executive Councillor for Parks and
Countryside, Waste & Street Scene

Wards
All

Open / Exempt
Open

Key Decision?
Yes

Mayoral Car Parking Offer

Executive Summary: This report provides information on the grant proposal made by the Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) to the Council that asks for the implementation of 'free after 4pm' parking Monday to Friday. This would represent a reduction in chargeable hours. The proposed scheme would operate from 1st October 2026 until 31st March 2028. By return, the Mayor has proposed a grant (£370,000 p/a (pro rata)) to the Council to offset any loss of income that the Council would ordinarily have expected to receive.

The report summarises the offer, its implications, and puts forward a series of recommendations should Members wish to move forward with accepting the proposal.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended in respect of the funding proposal to:

1. Note the proposal for grant funding which has been made by the Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA); and
2. Note that sufficient powers exist for Officers to accept said grant funding in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder; and
3. Endorse that Officers, on behalf of the Council, should undertake steps to formally accept the funding – including formalising necessary grant agreements and payment profiles etc.

Cabinet is recommended in respect of the deployment of the funding and implementation of a 'free after 4pm parking Monday to Friday' scheme to:

4. Agree to the use of the grant funding to implement a 'free after 4pm parking Monday to Friday' scheme based on the recommended option (at section 3) as set out within this paper.
5. Delegate responsibility for the implementation of the aforementioned scheme to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene as necessary including:

- a) To make and confirm necessary changes to the Parking Places Orders where required and to make and confirm the Notice of Variation required to implement the agreed charges; and;
- b) To make and confirm necessary changes to the Parking Places Orders where required and to make and confirm the Notice of Variation to reinstate the current (until 1800 Monday to Friday) chargeable hours from 1st April 2028 or sooner if the operation of the scheme results in unintended or unforeseen detrimental impacts including but not limited to financially impacting the Council (e.g. where loss of income exceeds the grant contribution), or other detrimental impact occurs to people, place or the Council as a consequence of operation; and;
- c) To undertake any other activities necessary to implement, vary or cease the scheme including any necessary changes and reinstatement works.

Key Corporate Plan Priorities

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | <i>Improving quality of life for local people</i> |
| 2 | <i>Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations</i> |

Place Strategy Priorities

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | <i>Supporting economic growth</i> |
| 2 | <i>Boosting town centre vitality and Improving accessibility</i> |

Report Author(s)

Author 1, Head of Economy, Regeneration & Housing Delivery
 Author 2, Operations Manager, Parking & Markets Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide details of the grant proposal made by the Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) to the Council.
- 1.2** This proposal asks the Council to consider a 'free after 4pm parking Monday to Friday' scheme from 1st October 2026 until 31st March 2028. This would represent a reduction in chargeable hours. The scheme proposal is accompanied by a grant funding offer to mitigate the budget impact to the Council to offset any loss of income that the Council would ordinarily have expected to receive.
- 1.3** The report summarises the grant proposal, its implications, and puts forward a series of recommendations should Members wish to move forward with accepting the grant.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

- 2.1** An approach was made by the office of the Mayor of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) to the Council following the elections in 2025 to discuss options for a CPCA-funded free parking scheme focussed on St Neots.
- 2.2** The CPCA did not provide the Council with a budget envelope to work within. It was discussed what a scheme might look like (e.g. a free day, free after a particular time) so that officers of the Council could calculate initial costs.
- 2.3** The Council communicated to the CPCA that the grant proposal should:
 - Cover a period up to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) being enacted and new authorities being created.
 - Backfill in full, the equivalent loss of income based on the modelling information provided.
 - Be a whole Huntingdonshire district solution (not just St Neots).
 - Be a scheme which focuses timing on the evening economy as this approach would align with our Economic Growth Strategy.
- 2.4** Refined were developed by officers of the Council to inform the grant proposal that has now been made to the Council.
- 2.5** The Mayor believes this scheme will attract more visitors, support city centre businesses and attractions, help local traders compete with out-of-town and online retailers, and strengthen the evening economy. It is contingent on the CPCA to measure and document any economic benefit to the scheme they have chosen to fund.
- 2.6** Members will be aware that the Council's current Car Parking Strategy was adopted in 2018 and applied until 2023. During this time, it was agreed that the Council

would deviate from this strategy enabling the pursuit of Civil Enforcement in Huntingdonshire. Key principles included *implementing technology that positively assists our car park users* which led to the installation of equipment that facilitated card and contactless payment, along with *promoting environmental sustainability by supporting alternative fuel and travel methods* that supported our installation of cycle shelters and our early works implementing EV charge points.

- 2.7** Members are also aware that the Joint Administration have committed to refreshing the aforementioned strategy following significant local change with the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement in 2025. It is envisaged that the new strategy reflects the current position and car park usage data, whilst informing and providing clear direction for the service and guiding future courses of action. The strategy review commenced in early October 2025 following a procurement exercise. An updated parking strategy is expected to be presented to members for their review at Overview & Scrutiny on 2nd September 2026. This work is being undertaken by Ethos, who are experienced consultants operating in this sector.

3. RECOMMENDED OPTION

- 3.1** The grant proposal made by the CPCA to the Council is for a scheme which:

- Operates 1st October 2026 until 31st March 2028.
- Reduces the chargeable hours in all Council pay and display car parks so that they conclude at 1600 (4pm) instead of the current 1800 (6pm) for 5 days of the week (Monday to Friday).
- Makes no changes to the chargeable hours on Saturday (remaining chargeable until 1800).

- 3.2** The CPCA proposed scheme is accompanied by a grant funding offer of £370,000 p/a (pro rata) discussed in Financial Implications (8.2).

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED & NOT RECOMMENDED

- 4.1** A request from the CPCA was made for information to inform options as initially no budget envelope had been assigned to the implementation of a scheme. The early focus was to provide estimates which could then be refined to ensure that the grant proposal returned to the Council is fully funded.

- 4.2** The information provided by the Council to CPCA included:

- **Free after X.** Information provided explored the costs of operating a 'Free after x' scheme, with the start time for operation being 3, 4 and 5pm. Figures were provided for individual and all days.
- **Free hour(s).** This looked at the option to provide a free 1 hour (or 2 hour) parking session to users on selected days of the week.

- 4.3** The Council may choose not to accept this grant proposal and continue to operate the current chargeable hours.

5. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

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

6. POST-DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1** Should the proposed scheme and matching grant funding be approved, the Parking Service will undertake the actions to facilitate the implementation which is supported by the recommendations. These actions include:

- A review of the Off-Street Parking Places Order (the Order) and development of the 'Notice of Variation'. The Order is the basis for enforcing restriction and for confirming the charges and hours/days that they apply.
- Updates to car park signage to confirm the chargeable hours and ensure that these are communicated to car park users.
- Changes to the configuration of payment methods to ensure that these align to what is agreed. Changes are required for both the pay & display equipment and to the mobile payment system (MiPermit) and will take approximately 10-12 weeks.

- 6.2** Officers of the Council in the Parking & Economic Development Services Teams are working with CPCA officers to understand what data sources we may be able to provide access to so that CPCA officers can review the effectiveness of the scheme and assess any economic benefit to the scheme they have chosen to fund.

7. POST IMPLEMENTATION

- 7.1** Whilst enforcement will be mostly unchanged, should the scheme be approved and implemented, the Parking Service will monitor feedback and concerns. This is necessary because operation of the scheme may lead to prolonged dwell in short stay locations impacting turnover of spaces and reducing access to these locations. Enforcement officers may be utilised to undertake periodic checks to alleviate these issues.

- 7.2** Should the proposal be approved and implemented, the Economic Development service would explore opportunities to maximise the impact of the initiative and encourage additional footfall within Huntingdonshire's market town centres.

- 7.3** Whilst free parking after 4pm may help reduce barriers to visiting town centres later in the day, experience elsewhere suggests that parking incentives are most effective when combined with activities that encourage people to spend more time within town centres and support local businesses.

- 7.4 Subject to available resources, partner engagement and future funding opportunities, the Council could consider working with local businesses, Huntingdon Business Improvement District, Town Councils and community organisations to explore complementary initiatives. These may include coordinated late-opening periods, town centre events and markets, promotional campaigns supporting local businesses, seasonal activities, environmental enhancements, and initiatives designed to strengthen the evening economy. Any future interventions would be developed in consultation with stakeholders and aligned with the Council's Economic Growth Strategy, with activity focussed on supporting vibrant, attractive and commercially sustainable market town centres across Huntingdonshire.
- 7.5 At this stage no additional programmes or financial commitments are proposed as part of this decision. Any future initiatives would be subject to separate consideration, funding availability and appropriate approvals.
- 7.6 It is contingent on the CPCA to measure and document any economic benefit to the scheme they have chosen to fund.

8. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

8.1 Council Key Priorities and Performance

There is currently no evidence base to suggest a direct causal link between free parking and increased local retail spend or growth in night-time economy. Therefore, the effects of this proposal on Council policies are untested and uncertain.

The **Council's Corporate Plan** would support boosting the night-time economy of our market towns:

- Improving quality of life for local people - a locally focussed parking scheme could encourage local shopping, helping create livelier, more inclusive places where people feel connected and enjoy spending time
- Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations - a parking scheme could lead to an increase in town centre usage driving higher footfall to local businesses which could see more businesses choose our towns in the future ensuring thriving town centres that remain economically viable and attractive over time.

The **Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy** aims to make town centres more attractive, accessible and economically active, specifically by:

- Boosting town centre vitality and Improving accessibility - reducing costs of visiting our towns could encourage residents to shop local and help to maintain vibrant high streets which is especially important for our rural communities who rely on car ownership, due to limited public transport options.
- Supporting economic growth – should the scheme lead to an increase in visitor numbers, the benefit will be seen by retailers, hospitality businesses and local

services therefore making Huntingdonshire's towns more competitive with out of town retail locations.

Our **Economic Growth Strategy** has ambitions to increase access to town centres, encourage visitor spending and creating a more attractive environment for businesses to grow and invest specifically by;

- Supporting local businesses – the scheme could encourage more people to shop in the town rather than out of town retail centres.
- Boosting the Visitor Economy – the scheme could make it more affordable for people to visit our towns for attractions and events and thereby supporting the Tourism Growth Strategy

The **Local Plan** includes objectives to improving access to town centres and provide support for local businesses including opportunities for retail development which could benefit from the introduction of a parking scheme.

The implementation of the 'free after 4pm parking Monday to Friday' scheme could also support the aims of the **CPCA Corporate Plan** in helping to create conditions for growth and providing support for high streets. The **CPCA Local Growth Plan** has key objectives around connectivity, supporting businesses, attracting investment and enabling economic activity which *could* equally benefit from the scheme introduction.

8.2 Financial Implications

8.2.1 The council depends on income from its car parks to help fund other important public services. For that reason, any potential loss of income was assessed and calculated before proposals were developed. Several options were explored and costed using actual 2024/25 income figures and available parking transaction data.

8.2.2 The method of calculation considers the 'direct losses' associated with tickets purchased after the commencement time (4pm) and the payment required by users arriving before the commencement time (4pm) which would be reduced to reflect the change in chargeable hours.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	All
Start After 4pm	28,245	30,030	31,187	31,983	39,110	32,472	193,027
Before 4pm, End 4-5	16,753	16,299	15,793	16,805	20,266	24,334	110,250
Before 4pm, End 5-6	10,705	11,031	10,397	11,445	13,975	18,084	75,637
By Day (Total)	55,703	57,360	57,377	60,233	73,351	74,890	378,914

8.2.3 The calculated figures do not include losses that may arise due to behavioural changes in instances where users may

- Arrive prior to the commencement of the free period who may delay arrival to avoid payment (e.g. users arriving at 3pm may wait until 4pm).
- Changes to the day of the week visits are made impact income received elsewhere within the week (mitigated if an all-days scheme is implemented).

8.2.4 The council will incur implementation and reversal costs for the various elements to implement the scheme which includes signage works and equipment configuration costs.

8.2.5 The estimated loss of income received through parking charges is £152,012 in 2026/27 and £304,024 in 2027/28. This loss of income is offset by the CPCA's proposed grant to the Council

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Parking Charges (CPCA)	152,012	304,024	<i>no change</i>
CPCA Grant	(185,000)	(370,000)	<i>no change</i>
Implementation/Reversal	17,500	17,500	
Contingency	+15,488	+48,476	

8.2.6 The value of the grant exceeds the direct parking income losses. This allows grant funds to be allocated to the costs of implementation and provides a contingency that may be used to accommodate any impact of behavioural changes.

8.3 Policy Implications

8.3.1 The proposal is considered to be in alignment with the Councils agreed policy framework.

8.4 Legal & Constitutional Implications

8.4.1 The Council's established Financial Regulations within the Constitution provide powers to budget managers to take advantage of or receive grants, where such arrangements will deliver additional or improved services, consistent with their service plan without creating any current or future commitment to net expenditure they may do so, subject to:

- the relevant Head of Service or Assistant Director being satisfied that the project funding meets with corporate objectives and that the resource required to produce the bidding documents is reasonable.
- the funds being dependent upon a particular project or service being provided but, in the case of S106/CIL agreements, the location or some other aspect is at the Council's discretion.
- informing the RFO of the details.
- consulting the relevant Executive Councillor(s) if the proposal exceeds £30,000 revenue or £50,000 capital in any one year with any capital having been previously agreed with the MTFS or any discretionary element of a S106/CIL agreement.

The proposed grant funding from CPCA is considered to accord with these requirements. As such, no formal authority is required to accept the grant funding in this case.

- 8.4.2** The Council's Interim Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer is aware of and has reviewed the proposals and is in agreement, as is the council's Corporate Director of Place who has overall responsibility for the relevant directorate, and the Head of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Delivery who is responsible for the relevant service area.
- 8.4.3** Given the sensitivity of the matter at hand, the Cabinet is requested to review the grant funding proposal and are asked to endorse the proposal as recommended within the report. This provides assurance of Member oversight of the proposals, and alignment with the ambitions of Council and the Joint Administration as set out in the Corporate Plan, Place Strategy etc.
- 8.4.4** Necessary delegations are however required to enable the efficient and effective implementation of the scheme, including powers to amend, vary, or cease the scheme. Along with powers to reverse the charging situation and implement formal changes through legal processes. These have been clearly set out and are reflective of the principles of Officers being empowered to action the will of Members.
- 8.4.5** The Monitoring Officer and S151 have both been consulted on the decision-making route and the proposals themselves and have no adverse comments to make.
- 8.4.6** Subject to the recommendations in the report, it will be necessary for the Council to enter into a legal contract/grant funding agreement with the CPCA – which we have experience of from other funding schemes – and also take other legal steps in connection with implementation. Where necessary, Officers will take appropriate legal advice, in order to provide overall assurance.
- 8.4.7** The use of the Notice of Variation has been confirmed by the Council's Legal services as a means to amend the Parking Orders with a draft example to make the changes as per the grant having been reviewed.
- 8.4.8** There are therefore no legal or constitutional implications which should prevent this matter from proceeding.

8.5 Community Impact

- 8.5.1** Please see section 7 for information relating to Economic Development.

8.6 Environment & Climate Change Implications

- 8.6.1** There is currently no evidence base to suggest a direct causal link between free parking and increased footfall or local retail spend.
- 8.6.2** The proposed scheme reduces the chargeable hours for the Council's car parks which might change driver behaviour and might see an overall increase in vehicles being used to access our local towns. Those who perceive parking charges as a

barrier, who currently opt to travel further to free out of town retail areas, might increase their local retail spending.

8.6.3 Increased town centre vehicle usage might result in increased air pollution in town centres from the tail pipe emissions of internal combustion engines.

8.6.4 Increased use of private vehicles to visit town centres might reduce public transport usage. This could jeopardise the ability to document demand or the viability of expanding bus and rail services for local people.

8.7 Equality & Diversity Implications

8.7.1 N/A

8.8 Implications on Resources

8.8.1 The scheme directly impacts the parking budget, however, is offset by the external grant funding. The service will monitor the impact and may utilise the delegated authority to revert the scheme if required.

8.8.2 Implementation:

- The delivery of operational elements will be undertaken by the Parking Services Team, including coordination with suppliers.
- Support from the Communications Team will be required as part of the messaging linked to the implementation.
- Support from 3C ICT to make changes to the website to communicate correct information to users.

8.8.3 The works to enable the operation of the scheme will be undertaken by the Parking Service.

8.8.4 Post-Implementation:

- The Economic Development Team will consider undertaking the activities as per section 7.
- Services in the Council (Parking / Economic Development) will be required to support the CPCA with the provision of information so that CPCA officers can review the effectiveness of the scheme. This will use data that is readily available and will not require additional undertakings for the Council. Should additional data be required by the CPCA this will need to be considered, discussed and agreed separately to ensure HDC officer capacity to undertake. It would also need to be funded by the CPCA where this exceeds our current planned scope.

8.9 Health & Wellbeing Implications

- 8.9.1** Supports access to town centres by reducing cost to visit which may be a barrier to some members of the community.

8.10 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

- 8.10.1** If pursued, the scheme would end prior to the commencement of the new authority. The recommendations support the reversal of the scheme prior to the new authority.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1** The costing of the options considers the direct costs of the scheme with the grant providing additional revenue that might accommodate the behavioural changes that may occur.
- 9.2** The recommendations allow the Council to reinstate the previous chargeable hours should the scheme result in unintended or unforeseen detrimental impacts.
- 9.3** Whilst enforcement will be mostly unchanged, should the scheme be approved and implemented, the Parking Service will monitor feedback and concerns. This is necessary because operation of the scheme may lead to prolonged dwell in short stay locations impacting turnover of spaces and reducing access to these locations. Enforcement officers may be utilised to undertake periodic checks to alleviate these issues.
- 9.4** The Council was clear in discussion with the CPCA that implementation would take up to 12 weeks from the Council's decision. The CPCA wish is that the scheme starts in October 2026, which may not allow sufficient time for all reprogramming to take place. The Council can advise car park users of the requirement to 'not pay' after 4pm utilising on site signage as has been done during previous scheme operation. This will enable the scheme to commence in October 2026.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

- 10.1** N/A

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Combined Authority Mayoral Car Parking Subsidy
Comments of Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth)

- 1.1 The Overview & Scrutiny (Performance & Growth) Panel discussed the report at its meeting on 1st July 2026.
- 1.2 Councillor Ferguson sought clarification on whether any assessment had been undertaken to determine both the beneficiaries of the proposal and those who would bear its cost. He expressed concern that the Organisation could be perceived as endorsing, or partially funding, a campaign commitment, with the associated costs ultimately being met through council tax contributions, including by residents who may derive no direct benefit from the proposal.
- 1.3 The Panel was reminded that the decision to allocate funding in this manner was a matter for the Mayor, who had chosen to utilise his budget accordingly. It was noted that the budget from which the funding was drawn was funded by contributions from across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- 1.4 Councillor Ascroft requested further information regarding the financial implications of the proposal. She sought clarification on whether any additional or indirect costs would be incurred, including costs associated with updating parking payment infrastructure. She also enquired about any costs that might arise upon the conclusion or withdrawal of the Scheme, and requested confirmation of the duration for which the funding would be available.

In addition, Councillor Ascroft requested sight of the supporting business case, including evidence relating to anticipated impacts on town centre footfall. She emphasised the importance of establishing baseline data and projected outcomes, noting that it would otherwise be difficult to assess the economic success of the Scheme or determine the impact of any additional funding provided.

- 1.5 The Panel was advised that, as this was a Mayoral Scheme, responsibility for undertaking the associated research and developing the supporting evidence base rested with the Mayor. It was noted that the Council's role was limited to its inclusion within the Scheme as a provider of car parking facilities and that undertaking such research did not fall within the Council's remit. The Panel also noted that the Scheme was intended to continue throughout the period of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- 1.6 Their attention was drawn to section 8:2:5 of the report which included a breakdown of the costs requested by the Member.

- 1.7 Councillor Tomlinson noted that the Mayor's manifesto had indicated that funding would be made available to support the implementation of a free car parking scheme. He sought clarification on the process by which the various options had been considered and evaluated, and how the proposal had developed from the Mayor's initial approach to the recommended Scheme now before the Panel.
- 1.8 The Panel was advised that no initial budget envelope had been proposed for the Council. Following early discussions, the Organisation considered the comments received and subsequently provided indicative costings to the Combined Authority to support the further development and refinement of the proposal. Officers have highlighted the associated financial implications to ensure that the Combined Authority is fully aware of the potential budgetary impact of the option under consideration.
- 1.9 Councillor Tomlinson went on to ask for confirmation that the Mayor is the one who asked for the 4pm to 6pm scheme as set out in the main report which was confirmed to the Panel that yes this was correct.
- 1.10 Councillor Tomlinson expressed concern regarding the latest letter from the Mayor, which had been circulated to the Panel as a supplementary document. He commented that the correspondence appeared to follow a decision that had already been made, leading to some uncertainty as to its purpose and timing.
- 1.11 The Panel was advised that the proposal before them represented the original option for consideration. It was noted that the Mayor had subsequently requested that the Council consider the provision of free parking; however, any decision on this matter would be for the Council to determine. The Panel was further informed that the Chief Executive had been asked to consider the inclusion of an additional hour within the proposal.
- Officers confirmed that the principal report before the Panel was the proposal currently open for consideration. It was also highlighted that the alternative option would have financial implications, unlike the main proposal, and would therefore require a budget amendment to be approved by Full Council.
- 1.12 Councillor Ferguson noted that the scheme would remain cost neutral only if residents' parking behaviours remained unchanged. He sought clarification on the measures and performance indicators that would be used to assess the success of the scheme and monitor any changes in parking patterns.

- 1.13 The Panel was advised that the scheme would be monitored through the Council's budget management processes. Members were informed that the recommendations included a safeguard which would delegate authority to reverse the scheme if necessary. It was further noted that a contingency provision had been incorporated within the budget. Officers confirmed that both income levels and any changes in user behaviour would be monitored to assess the ongoing impact of the scheme.
- 1.14 Councillors Ferguson and Ioannides stated that they did not support the proposed additional hours, citing concerns regarding the financial risks and potential budgetary implications associated with the extension.
- 1.15 Councillor Martin referred to the criteria previously submitted by the Council to the Mayor for consideration and highlighted the emphasis placed on supporting the evening economy, which aligns with the Council's Economic Strategy. He noted that this objective is not explicitly referenced within the current Corporate Plan. Councillor Martin further observed that Council car parks are already free of charge after 6.00 pm and suggested that this existing arrangement more closely supports the evening economy.
- 1.16 The Chair queried whether, if Council car parks were already operating at or near capacity until 6.00 pm, the proposal might encourage increased footfall and activity within the town centres during the period after 6.00 pm.
- 1.17 Councillor Kerr commented that the available data indicated that car park utilisation falls after 4.00 pm..
- 1.18 Councillor Gardener queried whether the proposed scheme could be terminated early should it become apparent that residents were using the car parks primarily because of the free parking offer. He also sought clarification on whether any costs or financial penalties would be associated with ending the arrangement before its intended completion date.
- 1.19 The Panel was advised that the Council had not yet been provided with the Grant Funding Agreement and was therefore unable to confirm whether any penalties or costs would be incurred in the event of early termination. Officers noted, however, that any such obligations would be carefully considered and taken into account as part of the Council's decision-making process. In response, Councillor Gardener advised the Grant Funding Agreement should be seen before a decision is made.
- 1.20 Councillor Ferguson reiterated the importance of ensuring that the Council was clear regarding the precise nature of the proposal being adopted, including

where responsibility and ownership for the scheme would ultimately rest. Attention was drawn to point 2.3 of the report by Councillor Tomlinson

- 1.21 Officers confirmed that the proposal under consideration formed part of a scheme led by the Mayor. It was further clarified that, should the option to introduce an additional free parking hour be pursued, this would require approval by Full Council due to the associated financial implications. It was noted that this is the Mayor's scheme, not Officers of this Council.
- 1.22 In response to a question from Councillor Tomlinson, it was confirmed that Members had previously indicated that any such scheme should be applied across multiple areas within the district, rather than being limited to St Neots as originally proposed by the Mayor.
- 1.23 Councillor Martin put forward a motion for an additional Recommendation for Cabinet to not go ahead as planned. This motion was seconded by Councillor Tomlinson.
- 1.24 Councillor Tobias commented that he had not seen any evidence demonstrating that the scheme would deliver tangible benefits for residents. He therefore requested clarification on the research undertaken and the evidence base used to support the proposal.
- 1.25 The Panel hears the new Recommendation and a vote is called.

6 Members are For, 0 Against and 5 Abstainers.

Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for Cabinet to make a decision upon the recommendations within the report, and additionally, the Panel request that the Cabinet consider adding the following recommendation to their report;

- 1) That we do not go ahead as currently planned
- 2) That we write to the Mayor, explaining that we will wait for the Parking Strategy and determine what the best option is from this.
- 3) Any future recommendation that comes forward to the Panel does not include a delegation to vary or cease the Scheme to Officers. Any variation or cessation of the Scheme should come through the Democratic cycle and be a decision for elected Councillors not Officers.

1.26 Councillor Tobias put forward a motion for an additional Recommendation for further details around costing from the Mayor. This motion was seconded by Councillor Ioannides.

1.27 The Panel hears the new Recommendation and a vote is called.

3 Members are For, 0 Against and 8 Abstainers.

Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for Cabinet to make a decision upon the recommendations within the report, and additionally, the Panel request that the Cabinet consider adding the following recommendation to their report;

- 1) That further details of full costings and the business case be shared as to who the parking proposal funding will actually benefit and how.

1.28 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for an informed decision to be made on the report recommendations.

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Cabinet Meeting 14th July 2026

Mayoral Car Parking Offer Minutes

A report by the Head of Economy, Regeneration & Housing Delivery was submitted (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) providing details of the grant proposal made to the Council by the Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA).

The Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste & Street Scene, Councillor Kerr introduced the report and made reference to the comments of the Overview & Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) Panel, who had put forward 2 recommendations in relation to the report.

In response to questions from the Cabinet regarding the recommendation from the Overview & Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) Panel to wait for the Car Parking Strategy before making a decision, the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste & Street Scene, Councillor Kerr advised that the consequence of doing so could lead to the Mayor withdrawing the offer.

In discussing the report, the Cabinet discussed the following points;

- that there was no such thing as 'free parking', and the bill would not be paid by those taking advantage of the free 2 hours. It was a universal subsidy paid for by all residents to benefit the few who happened to use car parks;
- from a financial perspective it would be prudent to support the proposal. Any opportunity to help invest and put money into the Council's market towns should not be declined;
- it was a difficult decision as there were better ways of spending the money, however it was offered to the Council packaged in a certain way, and residents may be confused if the Council refused money that was giving them free parking;
- the Mayor had made the political decision to prioritise subsidising car parking over sustainable transport. There was scepticism about free parking being advertised as a silver bullet for high street regeneration, though reference was again made to the fact that there was no such thing as 'free parking'. However, the grant proposal was a beneficial option for residents;
- reference was made to the CPCA reducing bus services across the region and the impact that would have on residents, and the money might have been better spent on such services. There was frustration that those using the car parks would not pay for their parking, it would be everyone else. However, there was reluctant support for the proposal;
- although the proposal may help some residents, shops and the bottom line of the Council, it was important to note that the money would come from the taxpayer and was being used in a specific way to support what was being called 'free parking', at the political choice of the Mayor. Furthermore, evidence also showed that free parking did not clearly bring more footfall into the town and did not help shops earn more money.
- the proposal was being labelled as a trial, which was not the case as the Council would cease to exist at the end of the period proposed, and it was not for the Council or the Mayor to decide what Parking looked like after May 2028;
- the recommendation from the Overview & Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) Panel requesting the Business Case was welcomed;
- there were other services the Mayor could preferably have used the money for, such as buses, bus shelters, train stations, light rail or road improvements;

- there was concern whether this was the right use of public money and whether it genuinely served the residents who needed help the most. The report acknowledged there was no evidence base to suggest a direct causal link between free parking and increased local retail spend or growth in the night-time economy;
- concern was also raised around the threat to bus routes which would impact those who did not own a car and who would not benefit from free parking; the residents that most needed the Council's help were not those driving in to town centres after 4pm;
- the Cabinet was keen that the Mayor listened to the discussion of the meeting and of the Overview & Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) Panel meeting; and
- the Mayor had reached out earlier in the day regarding an ongoing conversation about the proposal, but there were no details around what that may include.

In response to a question from the Cabinet, the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director – Place advised that in respect of any clawback arrangements, that had not been expressed to date, however the Council regularly entered grant agreements and Officers would approach such matters cautiously and would not put a grant agreement in place if it was going to put the Council at undue risk from those clawback arrangements. He also clarified that in terms of recommendations 1, 2 and 3 which related to agreeing the receipt of the funding, those delegations already existed with Officers to do that, and what was being sought was the agreement of Cabinet to then use that funding to implement the scheme and to secure the practical powers needed to implement it.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that

- (1) the proposal for grant funding, which has been made by the Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), be noted;
- (2) it be noted that sufficient powers exist for Officers to accept said grant funding in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder;
- (3) Officers, on behalf of the Council, should undertake steps to formally accept the funding – including formalising necessary grant agreements and payment profiles etc, be endorsed;
- (4) the use of the grant funding to implement a 'free after 4pm parking Monday to Friday' scheme based on the recommended option (at section 3) as set out within the report, be agreed; and
- (5) authority be delegated, for the implementation of the aforementioned scheme, to the Corporate Director (Place) in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene as necessary including:
 - (a) to make and confirm necessary changes to the Parking Places Orders where required and to make and confirm the Notice of Variation required to implement the agreed charges;
 - (b) to make and confirm necessary changes to the Parking Places Orders where required and to make and confirm the Notice of Variation to reinstate the current (until 1800 Monday to Friday) chargeable hours from 1st April 2028 or sooner if the operation of the scheme results in unintended or unforeseen detrimental

impacts including but not limited to financially impacting the Council (e.g. where loss of income exceeds the grant contribution), or other detrimental impact occurs to people, place or the Council as a consequence of operation; and

- (c) to undertake any other activities necessary to implement, vary or cease the scheme including any necessary changes and reinstatement works.

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