HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 18 November 2025

PRESENT: Councillor S J Conboy – Chair.

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

45 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 14 October 2025 and 21 October 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

46 Members' Interests

Councillors Harvey, Sanderson and Wakeford declared an interest under Minute Number 25/52 as they were Councillors in Huntingdon but were able to engage in the debate as normal.

Councillor Kerr declared an interest under Minute Number 25/52 as she was a Councillor in St Ives but was able to engage in the debate as normal.

47 Environmental Sustainable Design and Construction Technical Advice Note

A report by the Head of Planning, Infrastructure & Public Protection was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking Cabinet approval to adopt the Environmentally Sustainable Design & Construction Technical Advice Note (TAN), providing practical guidance to support the implementation of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (and emerging Local Plan) and the delivery of the Council's Climate Strategy.

The Executive Councillor for Planning - Councillor Sanderson, set out the report and thanked the team of officers involved for their hard work in preparing the report. He further thanked the Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation & Workforce – Councillor Davenport-Ray, who had played a key role in shaping this as Portfolio Holder. He noted that the recent additional changes were made to the guidance as a result of comments from the Scrutiny Panel, particularly on battery storage and in relation to power failures and how they affected disabled users.

The Cabinet welcomed the report. It was noted that when the administration was formed, a document was created called the Joint Administration Agreement, and the TAN represented some of the best parts of that agreement that the administration came together and agreed on. It was one of the campaign promises so the Cabinet were proud to see the report. In terms of Climate Change, the Council was committed to doing things but also to enable and

influence others, and this document did that. Reference was made to the biodiversity 10% minimum net gain, but also that developers were encouraged to exceed this minimum, which showed the Council's intention. It was hoped it would improve the sustainability of the designs coming through the planning department moving forward.

The Cabinet paid tribute to officers who had done them proud, recognising what a big piece of work it was on top of other ambitious strategies. Developers did read the Council's documents, with the Local Plan and Pay Strategy cited as examples. It was felt that this was a good document to try and encourage more of what was desired, and Cabinet looked forward to developers engaging with this ambition.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet

(1) adopted the Environmentally Sustainable Design & Construction TAN (Appendix 1) as non-statutory guidance; and

(2) delegated authority to the Head of Planning, Infrastructure & Public Protection, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning, to make any necessary typographical, visual or other minor changes to the Document prior to its publication

48 Council Tax Support 2026/27

A report by the Revenue and Benefits Manager was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing an update on the operation of the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme since 2024-25, alongside recommendations for 2026/27.

The Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance – Councillor Ferguson, set out the report and paid credit to the officers involved for doing proper simulation and due diligence. He referenced that the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities & Partnerships) were highly supportive of the scheme - a scheme which was one of the successes of this Council. Credit was given to officers who had designed this well, did proper due diligence up front, detected risks and had delivered the scheme which not only had saved people money, but also made the Council more efficient and able to serve them better.

In response to questions from the Cabinet, the Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance – Councillor Ferguson advised that there had been an increase in numbers due to the scheme being linked to Universal Credit which had automatically triggered those people who were entitled to the benefit who may not have been aware previously.

The Cabinet noted the remarkable reduction in the average number of days taken to process changes in circumstances and congratulated the team of officers for this achievement. It also noted that the support scheme had made a

huge difference to residents' mental health; money issues were often the cause of mental health problems and the scheme helped take some of that pressure off. Furthermore, the scheme was a reflection of the Council's collective values, and it was right that support be given regardless of age to those who were least able to pay Council Tax.

The Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance – Councillor Ferguson commented that as LGR was approaching, there may be an opportunity to convince other authorities who had less generous schemes, of the benefit of this scheme which provided a genuine benefit to society.

The Cabinet were of the opinion that it was better to help people that needed help rather than spend that money to go to court. The measures were a good example of when a change in policy not only brought a better outcome for people but was also a better use of the limited resources the Council had, which could result in an opportunity for a case study. The money could be regenerated into frontline services and potentially the most vulnerable residents.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet noted the contents of the report and endorsed the recommendation that the scheme principles for 2026-27 remain unchanged, ensuring that the scheme continues to deliver support to low-income households across the District in line with the Corporate Priorities to improve the quality of life for local people, and to deliver good quality, high value-for-money services.

49 Treasury Management 6 Month Performance Review

A report by the Financial and Treasury Accountant was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) updating Members on the Council's treasury management activity for the first six months of the year, including investment and borrowing activity and treasury performance.

The Executive Councillor for Finance & Resource, Councillor Mickelburgh set out the report, noting that it played into the Finance Performance Report elsewhere on the agenda, as it set the scene nicely.

In response to questions from the Cabinet, the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resource, Councillor Mickelburgh stated that the Debt Management Office (DMO) allowed the Council to lend to fellow Councils and Government in a way that reduced costs to taxpayers/citizens because they did not have to go to the money markets in order to plug short term gaps. The Council had tended to stick to the DMO for that reason, and also partly because of risk and partly because the rates of return were currently strong. The previous review of the money market funds was looked at and there were concerns around the content of some of them; because of the situation with the DMO there had not been the motivation to go looking at those other funds because the DMO was giving what was considered to be a good return.

The Cabinet paid tribute to the Treasury Exchequer team and noted the significant amount of work in making the Council's Treasury Management successful.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet noted the treasury management performance included in the Treasury Management 6 Month Performance Review, for the first 6 months of 2025/26 and recommended the report to Council for consideration.

50 2025/26 Finance Performance Report - Forecast at Quarter 2

A report by the Interim Corporate Director – Finance and Resources was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which presented details of the Council's financial performance for 2025/2026 as at quarter 2.

The Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources – Councillor Mickelburgh set out the report, noting that the Council was in a good situation and things were very well managed. The team of officers were on top of everything and planning was going into the budget for next year, so he commended them on the job they were doing on the revenue side. White chocolate, toffee, fish, ketchup,

In response to questions from the Cabinet, the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resource, Councillor Mickelburgh advised that in terms of the Cambridgeshire Local Government Pension Fund, which was currently undergoing a valuation process, this had been looked at 18 months ago and based on financial risk and prudence it was better to maintain the current contributions to the pension fund. Once the current valuation had been undertaken, though he did not want to speculate, it would be a topic for conversation as that data arrived.

Furthermore, the Council was on track in comparison to previous years. The Council had always been prudent and looked to have a defensive position but if money arrived and they were in a position to do something, that bonus would be taken at that point in time in order to do something good with it. Inflation was currently running ahead of what Council Tax could be increased by so the challenge for the team at the end of the year would be that they would have less money if they did nothing extra as a result of that. That was why the Council was running finances prudently; not gambling but making sensible decisions, then implementing once in a position to – a model which they were excelling at.

The Cabinet commented that the prudent approach involved being careful and cautious as to uncertainties and headwinds. It was visible that elements of the positive picture were a function of good work and careful budget management by officers. The £800k from Planning Performance Agreements recorded as an underspend, but it was income brought in for specific work the Council was doing collaboratively with developers and investors into Huntingdonshire, which illustrated the partnership influencing approach put at the forefront of how the Council operated. Furthermore, the Cabinet thanked officers for their dedication and making sure the Council had good financial reporting; they had worked hard and done their jobs diligently to ensure the resources available were deployed in the best way possible.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet

(1) considered and commented on the revenue financial performance for the financial year 2025/26 quarter 2, as detailed in Appendix 1 and summarised in paragraph 3.2; and

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

51 Corporate Performance Report 2025/26 (Quarter 2)

A report by the Performance Coordinator and Business Performance and Insights Team Leader was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) presenting the Council's progress against the Corporate Plan Actions and Corporate Performance Indicators during Quarter 2 (July to September 2025).

The Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance, Councillor Ferguson set out the report, particularly noting the significant improvement in the average waiting time between referral and completion of jobs funded through the Disabled Facilities grants, and that the economic development team had done a fantastic job. He made reference to comments from the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) regarding PI11, Affordable Housing, advising that although the target for this year would not be met, across the administration's tenure a record number of affordable housing had been delivered. Even if some of these houses slipped into quarter 1, they were still being built. He noted the rightful concern from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel because previously some of the downstream measures on temporary accommodation and homelessness were affected by this directly. The Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration & Housing, Councillor Wakeford also addressed comments from the Overview & Scrutiny Panel on this matter, stating that the matter would be addressed by proactively working harder and being more innovative to deliver affordable housing. There was variability in the housing market; no houses were lost it was just a question of which years they fell in. He was always happy to relay back to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on this matter.

The Cabinet recognised the challenge of the Council constantly being innovative and continually reviewing and challenging itself. Furthermore, the Cabinet thanked the team of officers for looking at disabled facilities grants; it had been quite a challenge but there had been a huge improvement. The Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance, Councillor Ferguson paid tribute to Councillor Harvey for her insight on the real effect this had had on residents and for her constant motivation to solve this matter; her input had been appreciated. Furthermore, the Council were doing so well on KPI's and had really embedded that in the organisation in a way that it wasn't previously. It was a good sign that sometimes ambitious targets were set; sometimes they were missed but not often. It was always a question of resource

allocations and chasing record performances – the sign of an organisation transforming itself and working hard to do the best for residents. The Cabinet thanked all of the officers involved.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet considered and commented on progress and performance during Quarter 2, as summarised in the Corporate Performance Report attached and detailed in Appendices A, B, C and D.

At 19:53, Councillor Wakeford left the meeting.

52 A Sustainable Framework for Play in Huntingdonshire

A report by the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) presenting a strategic framework for the sustainable delivery of outdoor play across Huntingdonshire, ensuring inclusive, high-quality provision that met the needs of current and future generations. The framework aimed to prioritise investment in areas of greatest impact, enhance flagship sites capable of generating income, and review the entirety of the Council's play assets to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

This approach aligned with the Council's Healthy Open Spaces Strategy (2020) and the Council's Place Strategy, Corporate Plan priorities—particularly Priority 1: Improving health and wellbeing and Priority 3: Doing our core work well, and the Climate Strategy, by embedding inclusive design, environmental stewardship, and commercial viability into the future of play provision. It also supported the Council's ambition to reduce inequalities, promote preventative health, and deliver resilient community infrastructure.

The Executive Councillor for Parks & Countryside, Waste and Street Scene – Councillor Kerr, set out the report and paid thanks to the Parks & Countryside Development Coordinator - Kirstien Drew for her comprehensive report and extensive presentation she gave to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities & Partnerships).

In response to questions from the Cabinet, the Executive Councillor for Parks & Countryside, Waste and Street Scene – Councillor Kerr advised that in terms of seeking opportunities for income generation at the flagship sites, the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment – Gregg Holland had lots of good ideas, including an inflatable play area at Hinchingbrooke Country Park running during the school holidays, and a mobile coffee shop at Paxton Pitts.

The Cabinet noted the importance of play for health and wellbeing for youngsters, but also as part of community engagement and feeling part of a place and being included. It was also important for adults as it provided an opportunity to make connections and talk to other people. The Cabinet were pleased to have a good strategic plan. One of the challenges was that playgrounds could get tired quickly and it was hard if investment wasn't drip-fed on a regular basis, so it was important to look at how to resource this and keep on top of that investment.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet

(a) adopted the Sustainable Play Framework as the strategic approach for play provision across Huntingdonshire, ensuring alignment with the Corporate Plan, Healthy Open Spaces Strategy (2020) and the Council's Climate Strategy;

(b) approved the tiered play provision model as detailed in the HDC Final Report (Appendix 1) and phased implementation plan (2025–2030) as outlined in the HDC Final Report (Appendix 1) and supported by the HDC Implementation Guide (Appendix 2), including audit and prioritisation, pilot projects, and District-wide rollout, to deliver inclusive, high-quality play spaces;

(c) committed to securing multi-year funding through the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to lock in the indicative £730,000 capital investment and enable delivery of the framework;

(d) delegated authority to the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to identify and co-ordinate the development of income-generating flagship sites to create a commercially sustainable model that reinvests revenue into the wider play network; and

(e) delegated authority to the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to develop community engagement initiatives and co-design to ensure inclusivity, local ownership, and alignment with the needs of children, young people, and families.

53 Transformation Framework

A report by the Business Performance & Transformation Manager was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) presenting the Council's approach to Transformation with the framework, including the delivery of programmes and projects for 2025/26, which set out six Programmes, 31 Major Projects and 30 Operational Projects.

The Transformation Framework was not a new, additional piece of work but a concise summary of the projects across the Council focussed on transformation and service improvement.

The Transformation Framework included projects that delivered on the objectives of the Corporate Plan, change programmes, and service plan projects classified as major or operational level projects.

A series of 80 continuous improvement activities from across the Council, underpinning service delivery and the successful implementation of

transformational projects, were also identified through the service planning process. These had not been included in the Transformation delivery for 2025/26.

The Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation & Workforce – Councillor Davenport-Ray, set out the report and made reference to the interesting, valid feedback and constructive criticism from the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) which had been taken on board. Feedback had been around the terminology; originally the report had been called 'Transformation Plan', and they had therefore anticipated a strategic document giving the vision of a strategic plan which was not the intention. Accordingly, the title of the report was changed to 'Transformation Framework'. In terms of a Transformation Plan, this was interesting feedback but came with risks; she was proud of how these transformational projects had come from service areas themselves, but it was preferred to bring those concepts together and highlight them rather than create another piece of work. In response from further feedback from the Scrutiny Panel around ensuring this would go back to them, she clarified that it was not clear enough in the original report, but the intention was to publish this every year, therefore the Transformation Framework 2026/27 would go back to the Scrutiny Panel in June 2026.

The Cabinet was of the opinion that the fact it was a Transformation Framework spoke volumes about how they thought as an administration and as officers. Typically, Council's did projects and that was how to benchmark success, however HDC led the way in how Council thinking was evolving, with a framework woven through how things were done and approached. It was about welcoming the opportunity to encourage teams to think about how things were done, innovate and work more efficiently which was a welcome culture. It was a framework around the cultural change being embedded. Further positive comments were made where officers were commended for many of the good ideas that had come from Service Managers; the service improvements and innovations came up through the service areas, and it was part of the Cabinet's role to support them and give them the resources they need to deliver those. Lots of hard work had gone into the framework and it was a good way of mentioning the good things coming through the Council.

The Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation & Workforce – Councillor Davenport-Ray commented that it was important to remember that this framework was what transformation meant for the Council. There was now a document in place setting out programme by programme, project by project, this was what was meant by how the Council was transforming. She paid tribute to the Transformation team which had only been set up over the previous nine months and had learned at speed; their work had been impressive.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet approved the approach to Transformation.

Chair