

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, 16 December 2025

PRESENT: Councillor S J Conboy – Chair.

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

APOLOGY(IES): Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J E Harvey and S Wakeford.

56 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th November 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. The Minutes of the 24th November 2025 were amended to reflect the following corrections:

The second paragraph of Minute 25/55 was amended to read:

*'it mattered that they weighed all the options and considered the views of others as the discussion **developed**'.*

The ninth paragraph of Minute 25/55 was amended to read:

*'She referenced the result of the public consultation **and** the focus groups which had been compelling'.*

The ninth paragraph of Minute 25/55 was amended to read:

*'especially in the **case of** our region where **there** were very different contrasts in urban areas and rural populations'.*

After which the Minutes of the meeting held on 24th November were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair at the 20th January Cabinet meeting.

57 Members' Interests

No declarations were received.

58 Parking Charges – Implementation of Increase

A report by the Head of Economy, Regeneration & Housing was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing 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. The report also sought to confirm the approach to be taken in respect of the implementation of agreed parking increases within the 25/26 Medium Term Financial Strategy

(MTFS) – namely a 20p increase except for the all-day tariff. The report set out a number of options, which were confirmation of the increase 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.

The Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources – Councillor Mickelburgh introduced the report. He clarified that the decision to increase parking charges had been made; the decision in front of Cabinet was whether to reverse that, stay with that decision or do something else. He emphasised the importance of considering factors such as the Civil Parking Enforcement which went live in August, as well as car park usage and dwell time. Some of this data was included in the report but it had not been possible to interpret the data fully, which was why a revised parking strategy was underway. If the decision was taken to not make the increase, the MTFS would remain balanced by the use of reserves. Furthermore, he commented that there was little point in trying to do anything else when the publication of the new MTFS for the next budget year was only four weeks away.

The Cabinet were grateful to the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources – Councillor Mickelburgh for clarifying how the parking strategy related to the parking charges. A decision could now be made based on the data that was not available when Council agreed the budget in February 2025. Reference was made to the Quarter 2 Finance Report that was considered by Cabinet at its 18th November 2025 meeting, which showed a forecast underspend of £926,000. This meant there was revenue available if the decision was taken to not implement the increase. Going forward, a policy was needed on agreed principles of car parking charges so there did not need to be a deep dive each year and Cabinet endorsed the timeline of that policy being developed. It was intended that the parking strategy would achieve equity in the way the Council supported residents who had cars and residents who used public transport to visit Market Towns across the District. There needed to be a way of encouraging and supporting Towns and Businesses, whilst balancing the fact that the Council had to deliver a service which had a cost to the public. Having a strategy based on data and which was forward looking would enable decisions to be made as appropriate. It also meant that as costs increased, there might be an opportunity to balance the income and expenditure accordingly.

The Cabinet noted Recommendation A in the report.

The Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources – Councillor Mickelburgh commented that it was unfair and imprudent to bind another administration to the decision taken by Cabinet and some of the options in the report would reach and go beyond May 2026. As such, he proposed the following amended recommendation:

- 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. 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”.

At 7:37pm, the meeting was adjourned to allow for printed copies of the amended recommendation to be circulated to Officers and Cabinet. The meeting resumed as 7:46pm.

The Interim Corporate Director (Finance & Resources) and S151 Officer – Lydia Morrison advised that the proposed amendment impacted on the in-year revenue budget and therefore the wording needed to be slightly changed to have that transparency, to the following:

- i. “that the 20p increase as set out in the revenue budget should not be implemented in 2025/26. 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. delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance & Resources) and Section 151 officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Council’s Finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced revenue budget position for 2025/26 is maintained”.

The Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer advised that the revised amendment would be a recommendation to Council.

The Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources – Councillor Mickelburgh confirmed that he accorded with the suggested amended wording. He proposed the revised amendment, which was duly seconded by Councillor Kerr.

In response to a question from Cabinet, the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources – Councillor Mickelburgh advised that the impact of the decision on the budget gap would be addressed by the use of underspends as previously referenced in the Quarter 2 Finance report.

On being put to the vote, the revised amendment was carried and would therefore form part of the substantive motion.

The substantive motion was then put to the vote. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet has recommended to Council:

- i. to note that Cabinet agreed that the 20p increase as set out in the revenue budget should not be implemented in 2025/26. 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. to delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources to make necessary changes to the Council’s

finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced revenue budget position for 2025/26 is maintained.

The Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer advised that because Cabinet had given a preference for an option that was contrary or not wholly in accordance with the budget as agreed in February, it needed to go to Full Council for a decision. She would circulate a report to all Members of the Council in line with the requirements of the Constitution, drafted by herself and the Corporate Director (Finance & Resources) and S151 Officer the following day, and would be considered at the 17th December Council meeting.

The Chief Executive also advised for clarity that regarding that report, Officers were unable to issue it until such time as Cabinet had taken a decision. An item had been placed on the Council agenda with a note to say in the event Cabinet determined to implement the charge increase, then the report would be withdrawn as there would not be requirement for Council to consider the matter.

59 Market Towns - Ramsey Update

A report by the Regeneration & Housing Delivery Manager was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing an update on progress towards delivering the Ramsey Great Whyte town centre improvement scheme. The report included activity to date and the next stages of project development and delivery.

In the absence of the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration & Housing – Councillor Wakeford, the Corporate Director (Place) – Mike Gildersleeves set out the report. In doing so he took the opportunity to thank the Market Towns Team for their work in progressing the scheme.

The Cabinet discussed the benefits of the support the Council provided to towns and villages across the District and were invested in the success of such important projects. Reference was made to the Environmental Sustainability Design document discussed at the 18th November Cabinet meeting, and the fact that this report provided an example of thinking about circular economy and reuse of materials. Furthermore, the Cabinet commended the fact that communities had been listened to as part of the iterative process and looked forward to the community being able to use that new space when fully developed. Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report and the proposed approach to delivering improvements to Ramsey Town Centre, be noted.

60 Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group

The Cabinet received and noted the Minutes of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group meeting held on 21 November 2025.

Chair