TCMG - 17th July 2026
Report by: Pamela Scott, Head of Economy, Regeneration & Housing Delivery
Lead Cllr: Councillor Brett Mickleburgh

Huntingdonshire DISTRICT COUNCIL

Wards	Open / Exempt	Key Decision?
All	Open	No

Cambridgeshire Horizons legacy funding

Executive Summary: To seek agreement to allocate the remaining legacy Cambridgeshire Horizons funding (£2,841,500) towards Huntingdonshire District Council's (HDC) regeneration and economic development priorities. The objective of which is to enable the Council to sustain delivery of high impact projects at a critical time, when future government regeneration funding is uncertain. The continued investment into key priorities builds on the Council's proven track record of delivery, supporting the preparation and early implementation of a two year investment programme ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.

Recommendations

1.1. Approve the use of the remaining Cambridgeshire Horizon funding of £2,841,500 to support projects which align with the Councils agreed Corporate Priorities, including regeneration; economic development; and the Market Towns Programme projects, activities and initiatives

1.2. To delegate to the Deputy Chief Executive & Corporate Director (Place) and the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151 Officer) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources and the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Regeneration and Housing to identify and allocate funding to specific projects which accord with the Councils agreed Corporate Priorities and which would align with the Council's regeneration; economic development; and Market Towns Programme projects, activities and initiatives.

	Key Corporate Plan Priorities
1	The proposed allocation of the remaining Cambridgeshire Horizons funding directly supports the Council's Corporate Plan 2023 to 2028. In particular, it aligns strongly with Priority 2: Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations, specifically through: • Forward thinking economic growth, by enabling investment in regeneration projects, business support, market town vitality, defence sector opportunities, and high street/town centre improvements that attract investment, create jobs, and foster an inclusive local economy. • Supporting high quality, sustainable development and community infrastructure that contributes to long-term prosperity. The funding also contributes to Priority 1: Improving quality of life for local people by enhancing community facilities (e.g., Priory Centre), public realm improvements, and cultural/leisure offerings that boost wellbeing, social connection, and pride in place. It underpins Priority 3: Doing our core work well by ensuring efficient delivery of existing regeneration programmes and prudent use of legacy resources ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.

	Place Strategy Priorities
1	The proposals are aligned with the Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy, particularly the following journeys: • Inclusive Economy: supporting business growth, rural economy grants, skills/employment opportunities, and strategic sites that build a resilient and diverse local economy. • Pride in Place: through public realm enhancements, cultural assets, and market town regeneration that strengthen community identity and make Huntingdonshire an attractive place to live, work, and visit. • Environmental Innovation (where relevant): by prioritising sustainable development and climate responsive regeneration projects in line with the Council's Climate Strategy.

Report Author(s)

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report seeks approval to allocate the remaining £2,841,500 of legacy Cambridgeshire Horizons funding to support Huntingdonshire District Council's regeneration, economic development, and Market Towns Programme priorities.
The funds, received as HDC's share from the wind-up of the Cambridgeshire Horizons partnership, have been largely unspent since a £1.05m contribution to the A14 upgrade.

They provide a timely, flexible resource to sustain high impact projects at a critical period of funding uncertainty and ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.

Key uses include:

- Completing or enhancing major schemes (e.g. Priory Centre St Neots, Ramsey Great Whyte public realm).
- Supporting town centre regeneration, business grants, defence innovation (e.g. Project FAIRFAX at RAF Wyton), and cultural projects (e.g. proposed boutique cinema in Huntingdon).
- Bridging gaps in the successful but oversubscribed Rural England Prosperity Fund programme.

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

2.1 Cambridgeshire Horizons was established in 2004 as a partnership vehicle to coordinate sustainable development, infrastructure, and economic growth across the County, funded primarily by central government allocations.

2.2 Following the withdrawal of Government support in 2011 due to changes in national policy it led to the cessation of active operations, leaving substantial cash reserves from the unspent grants; the company was wound down operationally during that year. The funds remained in the dormant company for over a decade before being distributed to shareholders upon formal wind up proceedings in 2022. Distributions were made to support objectives consistent with Horizons' mission, such as capital investments in growth and infrastructure, with requirements for match funding, environmental considerations, and community benefits where applicable.

2.3 Cambridgeshire Horizons Limited was formed as a not for profit company involving Cambridgeshire's Councils (including HDC), and other stakeholders to deliver the government's growth agenda for the Cambridge Sub-Region. It focused on housing, transport, economic development, and sustainable communities.

2.4 HDC, as one of the original partners, received its share of these funds, amounting to £3.891,500 million in 2021/2022, these funds were intended for purposes aligned with Horizons' original objectives, including supporting growth, infrastructure, and community benefits, with an emphasis on capital projects that promote sustainability and local empowerment.

2.5 In 2022/2023 a total of £1,050,000 was used as HDC's contribution to the A14 upgrade works; there has been no further use of these funds and they have been held in reserves, since this first draw down of spend. There remains a total of

£2,841,500 of the original funds. There are currently no delegations or approvals in place for the use of these funds, although Officers have researched and attached original documents / reports from 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012 where Cambridge Horizons funding was referenced.

2.6 For HDC, this funding resource aligns with ongoing regeneration efforts, such as the Market Towns Programme (MTP), and associated UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) programmes. The funds available provides flexible resources to address district wide priorities.

2.7 Over the past four years, HDC has successfully delivered multiple regeneration projects under the Market Towns, UKSPF, and REPF programmes. These initiatives have seen over £22 million invested in key priorities, significantly enhancing our market towns and community facilities.

2.8 Major investments have included substantial upgrades to community venues such as the Priory Centre in St Neots, Huntingdon Commemoration Hall, and St Ives Corn Exchange. Public realm improvements have also transformed key areas, including St Neots Market Square and the Broadway in St Ives.

2.9 Two significant schemes remain in active delivery. The largest, the redevelopment and refurbishment of the Priory Centre in St Neots, is currently under construction. The Ramsey Great Whyte public realm project is in its final preparatory stages (securing planning permission and Traffic Regulation Orders), with on-site works scheduled to commence in Autumn 2026.

2.10 With the current funding cycle in the process of concluding, the availability of further government regeneration grants in the short to medium term remains uncertain. At this critical moment, particularly in the lead-up to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the opportunity to deploy Horizons funding is both timely and highly valuable.

2.11 By directing Horizons funding towards HDC's core economic and regeneration priorities, we can deliver a range of strategic benefits, including economic and social uplift by investing in regeneration or economic development based projects, like high street improvements, business grant funding or new / refurbished community facilities, which can boost local trade, tourism, and employment, echoing Horizons' growth focus and supporting HDC's vision of prosperous market towns.

2.12 The funding can provide targeted resource for key initiatives and existing priorities, such as defence sector growth. This includes project FAIRFAX at RAF Wyton. This partnership seeks to transform the site into a defence innovation centre. Funding could also support private sector based proposals for the redevelopment of town centre sites, which can provide community benefits, e.g. Capital and Centric proposals in St Ives, St Neots and Huntingdon.

2.13 Horizons funding can also be used to support the completion of existing projects, protecting HDC’s position, or to add value to ongoing proposals. Progress on the Priory Centre redevelopment in St Neots continues at pace; however, the scheme has encountered challenges arising from defects in the original building structure, which have required resolution. As a result, supplementary investment may be necessary to ensure successful delivery.

2.14 HDC is also collaborating with Huntingdon BID on a comprehensive feasibility study to repurpose a long vacant, council owned property at 12 All Saints Passage into a high-quality boutique cinema. This initiative has strong potential to reduce HDC's ongoing liabilities and maintenance costs while introducing a new cultural attraction to the town centre. It would also help strengthen the evening and night-time economy. Subject to positive feasibility outcomes, Horizons funding could contribute to the overall package, potentially alongside external sources such as National Lottery grants and/or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to enable delivery.

2.15 The current 2026/27 Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) business grant scheme has allocated over £279,000 to date and has proven highly successful, attracting far more high quality applications than available resources can support. This oversubscription highlights strong demand and untapped potential in the rural economy.

2.16 Allocation of the Horizons funding to HDC regeneration and economic development priorities offers clear advantages. Consistency with Horizons' Legacy by reinvesting in regeneration also maintains the spirit of the original grants, promoting balanced growth and infrastructure improvements. The funds, as noted, can bridge gaps in existing budgets for defence sector initiatives (e.g., business support at key sites) and Priory Centre works, accelerating delivery without diverting core resources. Existing strategies and corporate plans can be drawn on for developing appropriate activities.

2.17 Capital investments in regeneration can leverage additional funding, when available, such as match funding / contributions or grants, amplifying benefits for residents and businesses and generating an economic multiplier effect. Proactive use demonstrates prudent financial management, avoiding potential scrutiny over dormant funds while enhancing community engagement.

2.18 Whilst on face value, £2,841,500 of the original funds remain, this is a relatively small amount considering the scale and value of the works identified in earlier paragraphs of this section. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the funding is not spread too thin, to ensure that it has meaningful impact and benefit – for example, provision of sums for the cinema, priory centre and Ramsey could conceivably utilise all of this funding with very little effort.

2.19 Additionally, in considering what to do with the funds, Officers are mindful of what can actually be delivered within the next 18mths, pre-LGR; and have therefore looked to existing schemes rather than looking to spin up new activities.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED & NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 **Do Nothing / Retain the funds in reserves:** Not recommended. This would leave the funds dormant and at risk of being lost, reallocated, or diluted during Local Government Reorganisation. It represents a missed opportunity to deliver tangible benefits from legacy funding specifically intended for growth and regeneration, while current regeneration projects (e.g. Priory Centre, Ramsey Great Whyte) face funding pressures and high demand for business grants remains unmet.

3.2 **Return the funds to central government or another authority:** Not recommended. There is no mechanism or requirement to return the funds, and doing so would remove resources from Huntingdonshire at a time when external regeneration funding is uncertain. This would contradict the original purpose of the Horizons funding and fail to support local priorities.

3.3 **Allocate the funds to non-regeneration purposes (e.g. general reserves, unrelated services, or one-off revenue spending):** Not recommended. This would not align with the original objectives of the Cambridgeshire Horizons funding or the Council's Corporate Plan priorities. It would dilute the impact on economic growth and place-shaping and expose the Council to challenge regarding the proper use of ring-fenced legacy capital-style funding.

3.4 **Spread the funding thinly across many small projects or new initiatives**: Not recommended. Given the relatively modest sum remaining (£2.84m) and the 18-month window before LGR, spreading funds risks delivering minimal impact. Officers have therefore prioritised existing high-value schemes and proven programmes where funds can be deployed effectively and quickly.

3.5 **Risks of Not Approving the Recommended Option:** Loss or dilution of the £2.84m during Local Government Reorganisation, with no guarantee of equivalent funding being available to the successor body for Huntingdonshire-specific priorities.

- Slowing or stalling of key regeneration projects (e.g. Priory Centre completion, Ramsey public realm, town centre opportunities), damaging the Council's track record and reputation.
- Failure to capitalise on oversubscribed demand for business grants and economic initiatives, limiting support for local businesses and the rural economy.
- Reduced ability to lever in additional external funding or private investment through match-funding opportunities.
- Missed opportunity to strengthen market towns, cultural assets, and strategic sites (e.g. defence innovation at RAF Wyton) at a critical time, undermining progress against Corporate Plan Priority 2 and the Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

4.1 Not applicable.

5. POST-DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Subject to approval of the recommendations:

- **Immediate delegation and prioritisation**: The Deputy Chief Executive & Corporate Director (Place) and the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151 Officer), in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, will identify and approve specific project allocations from the £2,841,500. Priority will be given to schemes that can be delivered or substantially advanced within the next 18 months ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.

- **Project integration**: Selected projects will be incorporated into the existing regeneration and economic development work programmes, including the Market Towns Programme, ensuring alignment with the Corporate Plan, Economic Growth Strategy, and Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy.

- **Governance and monitoring**: All allocations will be subject to standard Council financial controls, value for money assessments, and monitoring. Progress on the use of Horizons funding will be reported through performance reports to the relevant Committees.

- **Delivery timeline**: Funds will be committed and spent progressively during 2026/27 and early 2027/28, focusing on high-impact, deliverable schemes such as Priory Centre enhancements, Ramsey Great Whyte completion, business grant top-ups, and feasibility/delivery support for priority town centre projects (e.g. All Saints Passage cinema).

- **Legacy and transition**: This approach will help secure tangible outcomes and assets for Huntingdonshire residents and businesses, providing a strong foundation for the new unitary authority and demonstrating effective stewardship of legacy funding.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

6.1 Council Key Priorities and Performance:

6.2 This report directly supports the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan 2023 to 2028 by deploying legacy funding into high impact activities that advance all three strategic priorities.

6.3 **Priority 1**: Improving quality of life for local people. The proposed investments will enhance wellbeing and community pride through improved cultural and leisure facilities (e.g. Priory Centre redevelopment in St Neots and the potential boutique cinema at All Saints Passage, Huntingdon, public realm improvements (e.g. Ramsey Great Whyte, and strengthened town centres. These interventions promote social connection, support the evening economy, and create more attractive places for residents and visitors.

6.4 **Priority 2**: Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations This is the strongest area of alignment. The funding will drive forward thinking economic growth by supporting business grants (addressing oversubscription in the Rural England Prosperity Fund), defence sector development (Project FAIRFAX at RAF Wyton), and town centre regeneration. It also contributes to sustainable place making through high quality public realm and community infrastructure upgrades, consistent with the Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy (Inclusive Economy and Pride in Place journeys).

6.5 **Priority 3**: Doing our core work well The report demonstrates prudent financial management and value for money by bringing dormant legacy funds into active use. It supports efficient delivery of the existing capital and regeneration programme without requiring additional resources, while mitigating risks associated with Local Government Reorganisation.

6.6 Performance Measures and Controls Progress on funded projects will be monitored through existing Corporate Plan performance reporting mechanisms, including updates as appropriate to the Overview & Scrutiny (Performance & Growth) Panel and Cabinet. Relevant operational indicators include those relating to regeneration delivery, economic development outputs (e.g., business engagements and grants awarded), and town centre vitality. All allocations will be subject to standard project governance, financial controls, and S151 Officer oversight.

6.7 **Priority Projects:** The funding will directly support key projects within the Market Towns Programme, including the Priory Centre (under construction), Ramsey Great Whyte public realm scheme, and potential enabling works for strategic sites.

6.8 **Implications for Delivery with Public Sector Partners:** The approach will strengthen collaborative working with partners such as Huntingdon BID, Cambridgeshire County Council (where relevant for transport/public realm), and Ministry of Defence stakeholders on Project FAIRFAX. It also positions the Council well for future external funding bids by demonstrating match funding capacity and delivery momentum. No adverse implications for partners are anticipated; instead, it will help maintain delivery confidence during the transition to unitary local government.

6.9 Financial Implications

6.9.1 The proposal involves the allocation and expenditure of £2,841,500 from existing earmarked reserves (Cambridgeshire Horizons legacy funding). There are no additional calls on the Council's revenue or capital budgets. The full £2,841,500 will be treated as capital expenditure and drawn from the existing Horizons reserve. This is a one-off use of previously received funds with no impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) or requirement for new borrowing.

Key Financial Details:

- Estimated Expenditure: Up to £2,841,500 (capital) over 2026/27 and 2027/28.

- Funding Source: Fully funded from the existing Cambridgeshire Horizons legacy reserve (currently held at £2,841,500).

- Revenue Implications: None anticipated. Any minor associated revenue costs (e.g. ongoing maintenance of completed assets) will be met from within existing approved revenue budgets or absorbed through normal service planning. No new revenue commitments are expected.

- Capital Implications: One off drawdown of reserves. No new capital budget requirement.

- Ongoing Commitments / Savings: The investments are expected to generate long term efficiency savings (e.g. reduced maintenance liabilities on council owned assets such as the All Saints Passage property) and potential increases in income (e.g. through enhanced town centre vitality and commercial activity). No recurring costs beyond normal asset management.

- Period of Impact: Primarily 2026/27 and 2027/28, with benefits accruing beyond this period.

- Financial Risks / Uncertainties: Project cost overruns (e.g. on the Priory Centre due to building defects – see paragraph 2.13) could require careful prioritisation of the available funding. Inflation or supply chain issues may affect costs. These risks will be managed through standard project governance and delegated authority.

- Key Assumptions: Projects can be delivered within the identified sum and timescale; funds will be fully committed before Local Government Reorganisation; no clawback of Horizons funding by external bodies.

- The resolution and allocation of this funding will provide clarity in light of LGR and enable opportunities to deliver regeneration benefits and deliver a strong legacy for Huntingdonshire.

6.10 Policy Implications

6.10.1 The recommendations have no adverse policy implications and are fully consistent with the Council's existing strategic policies and frameworks. The proposal supports and advances several key Council policies and strategies, including:

- Corporate Plan 2023–2028 (particularly Priority 2: Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations, forward-thinking economic growth).
- Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy (Inclusive Economy and Pride in Place journeys).
- Economic Growth Strategy.
- Market Towns Programme.
- Climate Strategy
- Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy.

6.11 Legal & Constitutional Implications

6.11.1 The report is presented to the TCMG and aligns with the Terms of Reference by agreeing to the use of these funds within the Capital Programme and the undertaking of all capital development including the approval of business cases.

6.11.2 Officers will report to Cabinet and other committees as required. Officers will continue to liaise with the Legal Services Manager and the Monitoring Officer to ensure all individual project allocations comply with legal, procurement, and subsidy requirements.

6.12 Community Impact

6.12.1 The recommendations will have a positive community impact by investing in regeneration projects that enhance town centres, public realm, cultural facilities, and economic opportunities across Huntingdonshire. This will improve quality of life, support local businesses, and foster pride in place for residents.

6.13 Environment & Climate Change Implications

6.13.1 The proposed recommendations will have positive implications. The funded projects will support sustainable place making and align with the Council's Climate Strategy and environmental principles by promoting high quality, climate resilient regeneration and reducing long-term carbon impacts through efficient use of existing assets

6.14 Equality & Diversity Implications

6.14.1 The proposals support the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010. Regeneration and economic development initiatives can help reduce area based disadvantage by improving access to jobs, community facilities, and attractive public spaces for all groups. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed for individual projects as required. For example an EIA is I the process of being completed for the Ramsey Great Whyte scheme. No negative impacts are anticipated

6.15 Implications on Resources

6.15.1 **Staffing / Workforce:** No additional staffing required. Delivery will be managed within existing resources in the Regeneration and Economic Development teams.
6.15.2 **Property / Assets:** Positive impact, will support better use and potential reduction in liabilities for Council-owned assets.
6.15.3 **Procurement:** Standard Council procurement rules will apply to all funded works.

6.16 Health & Wellbeing Implications

6.16.1 The approval of this report's recommendation will lead to positive benefits. This includes improvements to community venues, public realm, and cultural offerings (e.g. Priory Centre, potential cinema) will support physical activity, social connection, and mental wellbeing, contributing to Priority 1 of the Corporate Plan.

6.17 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

6.17.1 The recommendations will help secure visible wins and lasting assets for Huntingdonshire ahead of LGR by accelerating regeneration delivery and protecting legacy funding that might otherwise be lost or diluted. This provides a strong legacy, demonstrates effective stewardship, and delivers return on investment through enhanced economic vitality and quality of place that will benefit the future unitary authority

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1.1 The main risk is the potential loss or dilution of the £2.841m during LGR if not spent (high impact, high probability without action). Not taking the decision would result in missed opportunities to deliver regeneration benefits and could lead to scrutiny over dormant funds.

7.1.2 **Controls in place/proposed:** Delegated authority for targeted allocation to deliverable projects, standard project governance, financial controls, and quarterly monitoring. With these controls, residual risk is reduced to low. Individual project risks (e.g. cost overruns) will be managed through normal risk registers.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS: LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

8.1 Cabinet Meeting – 2 February 2006: "Cambridgeshire Horizons Limited" report by the Head of Legal and Estates (seeking approval for English Partnerships to join as a member).

Link: https://democracy.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s15523/Cambridgeshire%20Horizons%20Limited.pdf

8.2 Cabinet – 20 July 2006: Quality of Life documents/strategies produced by Cambridgeshire Horizons (including Arts, Culture, Sports, and Green Infrastructure).
Link:
https://democracy.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s16569/quality%20of%20life%20June%2006.pdf

8.3 Cabinet: 30 November 2006: Report and appendices on the Memorandum of Understanding with Cambridgeshire Horizons Limited. Agenda item 83.

Link: https://democracy.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s17555/Cabinet%20Report%20and%20Appendices%2030%2011%2006.pdf

8.4 Cabinet: 17 July 2008: Design Brief for Mayfield Road, Huntingdon (references partnership with Cambridgeshire Horizons for Housing Growth Funding).

Link: https://democracy.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s21390/report%20to%20CABINET%2017%20July%2008.pdf

8.5 Cabinet:11 February 2010 (St Neots Eastern Expansion item): References collaboration with Cambridgeshire Horizons, agenda item 97.

Link: https://democracy.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s28939/Minutes%20of%20Previous%20Meeting.pdf

8.6 Cabinet: 19 January 2012: Endorsement of the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (developed by Cambridgeshire Horizons).

Link: https://democracy.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s44596/GI%20Strategy%20Endorsement%2019%201%202011%20Cabinet.pdf