

CABINET

Wednesday, 19 November 2025

Attendance:

Councillors
Tod (Chairperson)

Cutler	Learney
Cramoysan	Reach
Becker	Thompson

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Porter

Members in attendance who spoke at the meeting

Councillors Bolton, Godfrey, Horrill, Lee and Warwick

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Porter as noted above.

2. MEMBERSHIP OF CABINET BODIES ETC.

There were no changes to be made.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Councillors Tod declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of various items on the agenda due to his role as a Hampshire County Councillor. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, he remained in the room, spoke and voted under the dispensation granted on behalf of the Audit and Governance Committee to participate and vote in all matters which might have a County Council involvement.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ian Tait spoke regarding reports CAB3523, CAB3527 and CAB3492 as summarised under the relevant minute below.

5. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 October 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

6. **LEADER AND CABINET MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Thompson announced that the Winchester high street vacancy rate had fallen to 2.3% which compared very favourably with the national vacancy rate of 13.3%. She highlighted the number of successful events held annually in Winchester and across the district and expressed her thanks to all the various organisations involved.

Councillor Becker congratulated the Winchester Sports and Leisure Park for winning the regional centre of the year UK active awards 2025 for the south region. She also announced that the first stage of the Community Governance Review (CGR) consultation was underway until 22 December 2025.

Councillor Cramoysan provided an update on the ongoing roll-out of the council's food waste collection service with over 100 tonnes of food waste collected from more than 18,000 properties since the phased service roll-out started in October 2025.

Councillor Tod provided an update on the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process with the government expected to launch its consultation on options imminently*. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had instructed all councils in Hampshire to work together to understand the information that will be required for LGR, such as contract, employment and IT arrangements.

**Note: Subsequently during the meeting, Councillor Tod provided a further update as the government had just launched the consultation on the four options put forward by the councils within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. This would run until 11 January 2026.*

7. **GENERAL FUND BUDGET OPTIONS & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**
(CAB3522)

Councillor Cutler introduced the report and drew members' attention to a number of key points. He advised that the report had been discussed at The Scrutiny Committee on 13 November 2025 where questions and comments were raised which were responded to by Cabinet members and officers at the meeting. The draft minutes from The Scrutiny Committee had been circulated to all those present at Cabinet.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillors Lee, Warwick, Godfrey and Bolton addressed Cabinet as summarised briefly below.

Councillor Lee

Councillor Lee sought clarification on several financial details relating to the (MTFS), including whether the estimated £2.28 million costs for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) included funding for property asset transfer expenses, such as legal and surveying costs for parish asset transfers. He also requested an explanation for the projected fluctuations in rental income risk scheduled for 2028/29 through 2030/31. He queried whether the solar PV programme would be accelerated.

Councillor Warwick

Councillor Warwick celebrated the recent opening of the Allegra's Ambition outdoor gym. However, she contrasted this success with the deteriorating condition of the former RPLC building since its closure five years ago. She also expressed concern about the condition of Nuns Stream adjacent to the site. She queried whether the MTFS included appropriate provision to secure the derelict building and clear the surrounding area until a decision on the future of the area had been made.

Councillor Godfrey

Councillor Godfrey noted that the expected longer term financial settlement should allow for greater certainty about the next few years. However, he expressed criticism for a lack of progress on efficiencies, highlighting that the TC25 review had only identified half of its original savings target of £3 million per year. He believed that Cabinet should recommit to TC25 and utilise the council's strong financial position to strengthen future services, build more council houses, and reduce unnecessary expenditure. He was concerned that following LGR, the new unitary council would use any remaining surpluses which might not provide direct benefit to the current Winchester district residents.

Councillor Bolton

Councillor Bolton also challenged the reported success of the TC25 programme. He believed that the council was over-relying on uncertain revenue growth measures rather than prioritising making difficult decisions to achieve meaningful ongoing savings in order to reduce the baseline budget. He warned that avoiding the difficult decisions regarding meaningful recurring reductions could leave the council financially exposed. He also expressed concern about the proposal to tender a long-term contract for grounds maintenance and street cleansing (report CAB3528 below refers) suggested a focus on maintaining the status quo.

Councillors Cutler and Tod responded to the comments made, including disputing the criticism of TC25 and emphasising the expected consequences of LGR on the council's decision-making powers beyond September 2026. Councillor Learney also responded to the comments made in relation to Nuns Stream by Councillor Warwick and offered to discuss with Councillor Lee the matters raised regarding Solar PV panels further outside of the meeting.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out in the report and outlined above.

RESOLVED:

1. That the assumptions set out in respect of Government funding, council tax, inflation rates and fees and charges (set out in full in section 13 of the report) and the projections set out in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.

2. That the Medium-Term Financial Strategy be approved as set out in sections 13 to 17 of the report.

3. That the following one-off revenue budget growth requests be approved;

- a. An additional £0.3m revenue budget, funded by the transitional reserve, towards the Community Governance Review.
- b. A revenue budget of £2.280m, funded by the transitional reserve, towards the Local Government Review.
- c. A revenue budget of £0.03m in 2025/26, to be funded by higher than budgeted Parking income, towards additional Parking Enforcement overtime costs.
- d. A revenue budget of £0.05m in 2025/26, funded by the property reserve, for fees to design and plan works to the Guildhall.

4. That a detailed budget be prepared for consideration by Council in February 2026 based on the assumptions set out in this MTFS; final spending review announcements; and including the following options shown in Appendix 2 and Section 14 of the report:

a. That, in relation to services:

- i. Forecast increase in utility costs of £0.15m per annum.
- ii. Forecast annual savings of £0.3m per annum due to a reduction in the employer's pension scheme contribution from 18.0% to 15.9%.
- iii. An additional baseline £0.115m revenue budget for the permanent recruitment of a Corporate Head of Resources.

b. That, in relation to other annual budgets:

- i. Forecast increase in democratic costs of £0.085m
- ii. Increase in garage maintenance budgets of £0.120m per annum.

c. In relation to management of the council's property assets:

- i. An additional £400,000 per annum be set aside into the Property Reserve for the maintenance of and investment in operational assets.
- ii. An additional £100,000 per annum baseline revenue budget, for new requirements highlighted by the latest Asset Management plan and uplifts to existing maintenance budgets.

5. That the following regarding Car Parking fees from October 2026 be approved:

- a. Freeze on park and walk and market town car park fees

b. CPI increase to all central parking and overnight charges, generating an additional £150,000 per annum (£85,000 in 2026/27)

6. That a capital budget of £100,000 be approved, funded by the Homelessness risk reserve, for the conversion of Stable Yard, to the rear of 59 Colebrook St, for temporary accommodation. This is subject to a business case and subsequent approval of expenditure under Financial Procedure Rule 7.4.

8. **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUSINESS PLAN & BUDGET OPTIONS**
(CAB3523)

Councillor Reach introduced the report which set out proposals to ensure a sustainable HRA and to deliver the best value for tenants. Cabinet noted that the report had been considered at The Scrutiny Committee on 13 November 2025 and the draft minute had been circulated to all those present at Cabinet.

Ian Tait spoke during public participation and his comments are summarised briefly below.

Ian Tait expressed concern regarding the financial viability and strategic direction of the council's affordable housing programme, noting that a major element of the HRA business plan was the goal to build 1000 new homes. He highlighted the high development costs of recent schemes, such as Woodman Close, Sparsholt. He also criticised the strategy of acquiring Section 106 sites as he believed that this merely shifted ownership from registered and charitable providers to the council without increasing the overall number of homes.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillors Lee and Horrill addressed Cabinet as summarised briefly below.

Councillor Lee

Councillor Lee welcomed the comprehensive business plan and budget, but was concerned about the future-proofing of the HRA business plan given growing costs, supply chain volatility, and environmental challenges. He specifically questioned whether the budget could be more ambitious in specifying low-carbon and biogenic products for repairs and maintenance which would help future-proof both the HRA and the housing stock against the increasing climate and nature crisis.

Councillor Horrill

Councillor Horrill highlighted that she had spoken at The Scrutiny Committee on 13 November 2025 on this report and requested that any unanswered questions be followed up by the Cabinet Member and Director. She welcomed the proposals to consult tenants. She was concerned about the lack of plans for new homes after 2032 and suggested this be discussed further at the Economy and Housing Policy Committee. Other concerns raised, included asking for an explanation for the rent table discrepancy concerning five-bedroom homes, inquiring about the expected number of void days, action to prevent ongoing

issues with below standard retrofit work and the ongoing issue of cost recovery for sewage charges.

Councillor Reach responded to the comments made, including confirming that as he had suggested at The Scrutiny Committee, he would be discussing the possibility of an item considering new homes post 2032 with the chair of Economy and Housing Policy Committee.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out in the report and outlined above.

RESOLVED:

1. That the draft HRA Business 30-year Plan for 2025-26 to 2055-56 metrics shown in Appendix 3 and current 5 year projection at Appendix 1 of the report be noted.
2. That the business plan pressures identified in the 2025/26 business planning exercise as outlined in paragraphs 11.41 to 11.51 of the report be noted, totalling £1.26m one off pressures and £1.2m ongoing pressures.
3. That the budget options outlined within the report and detailed at Appendix 2 be approved, as a basis for consultation to inform the February budget setting, including potential options for rent convergence in line with government proposals.
4. That the allocation of £0.12m per annum to support upgrades to the asset and property management systems be approved, including reprofiling £0.02m from the one-off investment budget set in the 2023/24 business plan to cover initial preparatory costs in 2025/26, with clearer estimates of project management costs for 2026/27 to be included in the February budget report.
5. That a change in the calculation of interest on internal borrowing and lending between the General Fund and HRA be approved, namely to equalise the interest rate at the PWLB 3 month variable loan rate for both borrowing and lending as outlined at paragraphs 11.34 to 11.36 of the report.
6. That the assumption in the business plan for New homes to be aligned to the Housing Development Strategy be noted.
7. That the current financial viability assessment for new build from paragraph 11.16 to 11.22 of the report be noted.
8. That it be noted that quantified revenue savings of £0.892m, and capital savings of £0.25m outlined in Appendix 2 of the report, have been identified to assist with bridging the forecast gap in annual HRA budgets.

9. That the proposed assumptions and timescale for asset disposals outlined in paragraphs 11.62 to 11.64 of the report be noted.

10. That it be noted that based on the September 2025 CPI figure of 3.8% that the average formula rent increase for 2025-26 for all affordable and social housing will be 4.8%.

11. That it be noted that the government is consulting on rent convergence criteria which indicates preference to increase rents above CPI+1% for social rent tenants below formula rent levels, with announcement expected as part of the wider Budget on 26 November 2025.

12. That the principle of full cost recovery in tenant service charges (other than sewage treatment works) in 2026/27 be approved.

13. That it be noted that following implementation of options, the draft HRA Business 30-year Plan is viable and sustainable and has the capacity to support the council's ambitious delivery of 1,000 new affordable homes by the end of 2031/32.

9. **HOUSING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2025-2032**
(CAB3527)

Councillor Reach introduced the report which set out the strategy for the council to deliver affordable new homes across the district and included a specific rural strategy section.

Ian Tait spoke during public participation and his comments are summarised briefly below.

Ian Tait reiterated comments he had made at previous council meetings promoting the idea that the council acquire a large area of land for the purpose of building a new council housing estate. He highlighted his experience working with organisations delivering affordable housing over the years. He suggested that the council should take a stand and make a commitment to say to a landowner that if they came forward with sufficient land, the council would work with them to build a new housing estate.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillors Lee and Horrill addressed Cabinet as summarised briefly below.

Councillor Lee

Councillor Lee welcomed the new Strategy. He requested that the strategy make a stronger and clearer reference to the nature crisis and also highlighted the serious demographic pressures from an ageing population, suggesting integrated housing and care models were necessary. He requested that the council should prioritise higher performance, lower carbon construction, including piloting Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) and aspiring to Passivhaus standards.

Councillor Horrill

Councillor Horrill welcomed the strategy but regretted that it had not been subjected to further discussion at other meetings prior to consideration at Cabinet. She drew attention to an inconsistency with the strategy's positive forecast for new homes delivery whilst the HRA financial outlook did not include any new homes after 2032. She queried the reference to the South Downs National Park Local Plan delivering housing in significant numbers and also how the council would ensure that all partners utilised the Hampshire Home Choice system for rented homes. She welcomed the focus on the rural housing strategy and extra care support, but stressed that the strategy must be backed by a clear financial plan to ensure it delivered.

Councillor Reach responded to the comments made above including confirming that the council was actively looking for possible sites for affordable housing and would welcome any suggestions from ward councillors.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out in the report and outlined above.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Housing Development Strategy 2025-2032 be adopted.
2. That the Service Lead – New Homes be authorised to make non-material amendments to the Housing Development Strategy 2025-2032 from time to time, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Good Homes.

10. **HOBBS VIEW, SOUTHBROOK COTTAGES, MICHELDEVER - LESSONS LEARNED**
(CAB3492)

Councillor Reach introduced the report which had been brought to Cabinet as required by the Council's constitution and also offered the opportunity for lessons to be learned. The report had been considered at The Scrutiny Committee on 13 November 2025 and the minutes of that meeting had been circulated to all those present at Cabinet. Specifically, Cabinet had been asked to consider the following points:

- a) That future projects should include a clear assessment of the council's risk appetite to determine the most appropriate method of delivery and form of contract.
- b) That upon completion of the Woodman Close project, the effectiveness of the lessons learned from Hobbs View should be evaluated.
- c) That the lessons learned should include the views of residents, the Parish Council, and ward members.
- d) That future lessons learned reports provide a broader evaluation of the entire project, including all objectives, risks, and stakeholder engagement, rather than solely focusing on the constitutional requirement related to budget overspend.

- e) That a comparison of the ongoing running costs for Hobbs View and Woodman Close properties be undertaken.

Councillor Reach confirmed that since The Scrutiny Committee, the views of the parish council had been sought (but not yet received) so they could be incorporated into the lessons learned.

Ian Tait spoke during public participation as summarised briefly below.

He expressed concern about the high cost of the scheme overall, making comparisons with a nearby housing scheme developed by the Winchester Housing Trust in 2012. He queried whether lessons had been learned highlighting the recent decision to proceed with a new homes development at Woodman Close, Sparsholt which was also anticipated to have high costs.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillors Lee and Horrill addressed Cabinet as summarised briefly below.

Councillor Lee

Councillor Lee welcomed the Passivhaus Plus pilot at Hobbs View as directly supporting the council's "Greener Faster" priority, the nature emergency declaration, and the carbon neutrality action plan, whilst also offering benefits for tenants in terms of comfort and lower running costs. He acknowledged the project's significant cost overrun but noted the employment of a Clerk of Works had been a positive step and that the council had gained valuable experience for future Passivhaus projects. He objected to any consideration of removing the Passivhaus certification for future schemes, emphasising that it helped future-proof the housing stock against the impact of the climate and nature emergencies.

Councillor Horrill

Councillor Horrill supported the conducting of project reviews to ensure lessons were learned, but believed that the report lacked full facts, specifically relating to experience of the Parish Council. She highlighted the challenges caused by the limited availability of compliant Passivhaus components and the rigorous certification process, which resulted in significant time delays and necessitated rectification work that led to a loss of accommodation for tenants and loss of rental income. She stressed the importance of identifying suppliers and appropriate contractors if the council pursues high-specification projects in future. Finally, she urged the council to utilise land which landowners had already indicated could be used for affordable housing to continue delivering smaller schemes in rural areas.

Councillors Reach and Tod responded to the comments made, together with the points forwarded by the Scrutiny Committee for consideration by Cabinet. The Chief Executive confirmed that in the future, any lessons learned reports would provide a broader evaluation of the entire project, highlighting that this information was already routinely provided by officers as part of the council's internal review process.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out in the report and outlined above.

RESOLVED:

That the reasons for the project overspend are noted, along with the points that Cabinet was asked to consider by the Scrutiny Committee, and that procurement and management of future projects seeks to learn from this pilot scheme.

11. **GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT PROCUREMENT (LESS EXEMPT APPENDIX)**
(CAB3528)

Councillor Learney introduced the report which set out proposals regarding the procurement of the contract, noting that these should take account of the impacts of the ongoing Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme, together with the outcome of the Community Governance review (CGR).

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillors Lee and Horrill addressed Cabinet as summarised briefly below.

Councillor Lee

Councillor Lee emphasised the importance of this significant contract and acknowledged the risks associated with the procurement timeline running into the period of LGR structural change orders and restrictions. He requested that the contract specifications adopt best practice for managing biodiversity and minimising chemical use, specifically urging the council to strengthen policy by requiring ecological pre-checks before vegetation works year-round and aspiring to a pesticide-free grounds maintenance service, consistent with the council's climate and nature emergency commitments.

Councillor Bolton

Councillor Bolton believed that the procurement plan was a prudent exercise, noting the integration of robust KPIs and environmental priorities, but expressed concern that it was not being used as an opportunity to deliver radical transformational cost reduction and service redesign. He believed that the proposal to enter into a long-term agreement (up to 16 years) was a missed opportunity to challenge costs and asked for assurance that the core principles of the TC25 financial transformation strategy would genuinely be applied throughout this procurement process.

Councillor Learney and the Corporate Head of Service Place responded to the comments made, including confirming that it was intended to build flexibility into the contract in order to address the demands faced by the changing climate, including examining best practice from other local authorities.

Cabinet members and invited councillors present confirmed they did not wish to move into exempt session to ask any questions on the exempt appendix.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out in the report and outlined above.

RESOLVED:

1. That following pre-market engagement, the procurement of a new Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing contract be approved for an initial term of up to 8 years, with an extension option of up to a further 8 years and within existing budgets.
2. That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director with responsibility for grounds maintenance and street cleansing, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member and the Section 151 Officer, to conduct a competitive and compliant procurement and award the contract within the existing budget, with flexibility to adjust the contract term within a range of 3 to 16 years total duration as informed by pre-market engagement and value for money assessment.
3. That the financial implications, risk management measures and timetable be noted as set out in the report.

12. **Q2 FINANCE & PERFORMANCE MONITORING**
(CAB3525)

Councillor Cutler introduced the report and advised that the report had been considered at The Scrutiny Committee on 13 November 2025 which had made four recommendations for consideration by Cabinet as set out below. The draft minutes of that committee had been circulated to all those present.

- a) That a members' briefing be arranged on the "Greener Faster" priority, to include updates and clarification on nutrient credits, biodiversity net gain (BNG), and carbon targets.
- b) That future performance reports should make explicit where major projects are paused, restarted, or significantly altered, such as the Station Approach and Bar End Depot projects.
- c) That officers provide a written response to the committee clarifying the data regarding housing stock EPC ratings and the number of retrofits completed (KPIs GH1, GH5, and GH6).
- d) That officers provide further information regarding average trends and comparisons concerning local procurement performance.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillors Lee and Bolton addressed Cabinet as summarised briefly below.

Councillor Lee

Councillor Lee asked if the next quarters report could include information on key changes relating to the government's recently published carbon budget and growth delivery plan. In addition, he asked for further clarification regarding the Air Quality KPI actions. He queried how the council intended to deliver key housing initiatives without securing the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund,

specifically the solar PV, battery, and air source pump programmes for housing. He questioned whether the Local Area Energy Plan was progressing fast enough to feed into the evidence base for the next Local Plan, sought assurance that the Electric Vehicle Charging Point framework would serve wider rural locations and whether the Nature Emergency Plan could include a specific section on chalk rivers.

Councillor Bolton

Councillor Bolton emphasised the risk presented by the withdrawal of national decarbonisation schemes for public buildings and raised concerns that the council might rely on carbon credits to meet its carbon zero targets. He asked that clear information be provided on the proportion of the carbon zero target that would be achieved through offsets versus genuine structural reductions in energy use. In addition, he believed there had been a lack of transparent communication regarding the major project development at Station Approach, which the performance report noted would not proceed at this time.

Councillors Cutler, Tod and other Cabinet Members responded to the comments made, including emphasising that a verbal update on the position regarding Station Approach had been provided in response to questions at the previous Scrutiny Committee meeting on 8 September 2025.

Councillor Tod referred to the recommendations from The Scrutiny Committee and advised that these would be actioned, as far as they related to Cabinet.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out in the report and outlined above.

RESOLVED:

That the progress achieved during Q2 of 2025/26 be noted and the contents of report CAB3525 be endorsed.

13. FUTURE ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION BY CABINET

RESOLVED:

That the list of future items as set out in the Forward Plan for December 2025 be noted.

14. EXEMPT BUSINESS:

RESOLVED:

1. That in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

2. That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
15	Grounds Maintenance & Street Cleansing contract procurement (exempt appendix)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). (Para 3 Schedule 12A refers)

15. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT PROCUREMENT (EXEMPT APPENDIX)

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the exempt appendix be noted.

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and concluded at 12.45 pm

Chairperson