

ECONOMY AND HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 25 November 2025

Attendance:

Councillors
Batho (Chairperson)

Chamberlain	Gordon-Smith
Morris	Bolton
Murphy	White

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Eve

Deputy Members:

Councillor Westwood (as deputy for Eve)

Other members in attendance:

Councillors Reach and Thompson

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

1. APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS

Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations were made.

3. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2025

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 16 September 2025 be approved and adopted.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no comments or questions made during public participation

6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUSINESS PLAN & BUDGET OPTIONS

Councillor Mark Reach, Cabinet Member for Good Homes, introduced the report, ref CAB3523, which set out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and budget options. The introduction included the following points:

1. The paper presented a balanced and viable HRA business plan that protected tenants' money.
2. The main pressures on the HRA were macroeconomic factors, particularly interest rates and inflation, which impacted the HRA's £200 million debt. Consequently, the interest rate assumption was increased from 5% to 6%.
3. Other financial pressures included a £1 million allocation to retrofit approximately 30 properties.
4. Appendix 2 of the report outlined proposals for expenditure reductions, which were ranked according to their deliverability and would require further work to be fully developed.

The Economy and Housing Policy Committee was asked to comment on the proposals contained within the attached Cabinet Report, ref CAB 3523. The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised.

1. A question was asked regarding the timing of the report's presentation to the committee, after it had previously been considered by the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.
2. Clarification was sought on the potential impact on tenants resulting from the proposed savings in Appendix 2, specifically the reduction in the estates improvement budget.
3. A question was raised as to whether the risk of the stock condition survey not being ready in time to inform the major repair programme had been included as a costed risk within the financial projections.
4. It was asked whether the proposed rent increase of CPI plus 1% was mandated by central government or if the council had discretion regarding it.
5. A question was asked about the cumulative effect of CPI plus 1% rent increases on tenants and the potential impact on hardship and rent recovery rates.
6. Further detail was requested on which specific service charges were expected to increase "significantly" as referenced in the report.
7. Clarification was sought on whether service charge increases would affect all residents equally or be concentrated on certain tenants.
8. A question was asked if anticipated additional costs associated with Awaab's Law, concerning responsiveness to damp and mould, were covered within the budget.
9. A question was asked about the expected benefits, both for customer service and financially, from the implementation of the new MRI software module.
10. Clarification was sought on the benefits of having the stock condition survey in place in terms of future operational efficiency.

11. It was asked if any costs associated with the new maintenance contract had been factored into the financial plan.
12. An explanation was sought for the drivers behind the increase in turnover of void properties.
13. A query was raised as to whether the committee would undertake a more detailed review of the 30-year business plan, as Appendix 3 only detailed new builds until 2031/32.

These points were responded to by Simon Hendey, Strategic Director, and Councillor Mark Reach, Cabinet Member for Good Homes, accordingly.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report and the proposed budget options be noted.
2. That the Chairperson and officers consider adding a review of the HRA's 30-year business plan, particularly concerning the new build programme beyond 2032, to the committee's forward work plan for the next municipal year.
3. That the Cabinet Member consider the committee's comments raised during the discussion of the item.

7. **THE LOCAL VISITOR ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP.**

Councillor Lucille Thompson, Cabinet Member for Business and Culture introduced the report which included the following points:

1. The district's visitor economy was significant, welcoming over 8 million visitors annually, which supported 5,760 local jobs and contributed £292 million to the local economy.
2. In May of this year, Winchester City Council, alongside Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, and Southampton City Council, gained Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) accreditation from Visit England.
3. The LVEP provided a strategic approach to grow the visitor economy across the county, strengthening Hampshire's profile as a world-class destination and showcasing the district's offer to a wider audience.
4. The partnership aimed to drive sustainable growth, with the potential to attract new investment and create jobs.
5. In the context of Local Government Reorganisation, the LVEP was timely and ensured the council played a leading role in shaping Hampshire's future visitor economy.

The committee was asked to

1. Review and comment on the work undertaken to develop the Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Winchester Local Visitor Economy

Partnership (LVEP) and the Hampshire Destination Management Plan (DMP)

2. Support the council's role in facilitating the delivery of the LVEP and realising its benefits in supporting the visitor economy across the district.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and debate the report. In summary, the following matters were raised.

1. A question was asked if there were any projections for an increase in visitor numbers or revenue as a result of the partnership, and what the associated risks were.
2. Clarification was sought regarding the £2,000 budget contribution and what this would cover.
3. A question was raised about the specific deliverables of the partnership and how its goals would be achieved.
4. An example was requested of how a working group would function and how its work would translate into deliverables for one of the local authorities within the partnership.
5. A concern was raised about the City Council potentially losing out on central government funding compared to other regions.
6. Given the existing success of Visit Winchester, a question was asked what the LVEP would enable the council to do that it was not already doing, particularly in attracting visitors from neighbouring areas like Portsmouth.
7. Clarification was sought on how the partnership would help promote sustainable travel within the district in support of the "Greener Faster" agenda.
8. A question was asked about how momentum would be maintained and whether the larger structure could hinder the ability to remain nimble at a local level.
9. Further detail was requested on what the £2,000 contribution provided and whether the council would consider investing more in the future if the partnership proved successful.
10. A question was raised about the risk of the Hampshire-wide plan causing the district to potentially lose business to other areas and how this would be measured.
11. Clarification was sought on whether the current membership of the shadow advisory board was a starting point, with an expectation that other organisations would join later.
12. In the context of local government reorganisation, a question was asked about the expected changes to the LVEP, based on the experience of other devolved authorities.

These points were responded to by Andrew Gostelow, Service Lead - Economy & Tourism, Rachel Gander, Tourism Marketing & Development Manager, and Councillor Lucille Thompson, Cabinet Member for Business and Culture accordingly.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee reviewed and commented on the work undertaken to develop the Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Winchester Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) and the Hampshire Destination Management Plan (DMP).
2. That the committee supported the council's role in facilitating the delivery of the LVEP and realising its benefits, noting it was a timely opportunity for the City Council to work on a wider regional stage, particularly in the context of local government reorganisation.

8. **TO NOTE THE COMMITTEES CURRENT WORK PROGRAMME.**
The Chairperson noted that the next meeting on 24 February would include consideration of the Tourism Strategy. He would also be discussing with officers a proposal for an interactive discussion on housing issues, including case studies to enhance understanding of challenges faced by officers in delivering the housing strategy and meeting residents' needs.

RESOLVED:

The current work programme was noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 8.10 pm

Chairperson