

Decisions taken by the Cabinet on Tuesday, 21 July 2026

Agenda Item No	Topic	Decision	Reasons	Alternative Options
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Part A – Items considered in public

A7	Proposed transfer of public toilets and two car parks to parish councils	1. That the transfer of the Council's four parish public convenience assets to the relevant Parish and Town Councils be approved, subject to final legal and financial agreements. Where agreed with the relevant Parish or Town Council, this will also include the transfer of the Kidmore Lane and Harestock free car parks as part of a single local management arrangement. 2. That authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer, in	Report CAB3563 seeks Cabinet approval to progress the transfer of four public convenience assets and two free car parks (Kidmore Lane and Harestock) to Parish Councils, where agreement can be reached, as part of the Council's wider commitment to localism, community-led service delivery and preparing for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Public conveniences are important community assets that support residents, visitors, local high streets and tourism across the district. Equally, the two free	<u>Retaining all assets under direct Council management</u> This option was considered but rejected due to ongoing financial pressures, increasing maintenance liabilities and the wider direction of travel towards devolution and community-led asset management. <u>Closure of facilities</u> Closure was not considered appropriate given the importance of public conveniences to residents, visitors, accessibility and local economies. <u>Short-term arrangements</u>
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		consultation with the Strategic Director and the Director of Legal, to negotiate and finalise the detailed legal, financial and operational terms of each individual transfer, including the assets to be transferred in each case. 3. That the continuation of existing operational support arrangements be approved, including cleaning services and any agreed service contributions, until April 2027 where appropriate to support an orderly transition.	car parks play an important role in serving their local communities. The proposed transfers recognise that Parish Councils are often best placed to shape, manage and invest in these local assets in a way that reflects local priorities and needs. The report therefore proposes the transfer of the four public convenience sites and the Kidmore Lane and Harestock car parks, subject to agreement with the relevant parish councils, together with any associated operational arrangements. The proposed approach will give parish councils greater influence over the future of these facilities, support local decision-making and create	<u>only</u> Short-term arrangements were discounted as they would not provide sufficient certainty for Parish Councils to invest in or sustainably manage facilities over the longer term.

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			opportunities for future investment where sustainable long-term management arrangements can be secured.	
A8	Securing the future of Guildhall and Abbey House (less exempt appendices)	1. That the formal marketing of the Guildhall and Abbey House to secure an offer for an occupational lease be approved as combined and separate lots. 2. That a budget of £ 97k for the reolocation of the Walton Suite and other Guildhall offices into City Offices as well as other one off costs be agreed. 3. That a further report will be presented on the outcome of the marketing exercise before the Council enters into the lease.	The Guildhall is one of Winchester's most important civic and heritage buildings and has a key role to play in the future cultural life of the city. Winchester already benefits from a rich cultural offer, underpinned by its internationally significant heritage, thriving arts sector, festivals, independent businesses and strong partnership working. The Guildhall has the potential to further enhance this cultural capital, broadening the city's offer, attracting new audiences and strengthening Winchester's position as a leading cultural	<u>Option 1: Select and directly appoint a qualified team to manage the Guildhall and Abbey House.</u> This could be a small team to run the venues as 'dry' facilities i.e. with no catering or added service support such as event management, security and IT. This is the current arrangement but does not optimise use of the assets. Alternatively select and directly appoint a larger management team to offer fully serviced venues. This was the Council's model before the Covid pandemic and required employment of

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			and visitor destination. The refurbishment of the building forms an important part of the wider regeneration of the city centre. This report proposes the next stage in delivering that ambition by securing an operator through an occupational lease who can maximise the potential of these important assets and support the Council's wider strategic objectives. In February this year, Full Council agreed to invest £5 million in essential maintenance and repair works to the Guildhall. These works will require a 14-month closure of the building. In planning for the reopening of the building, consideration has been given to an alternative operating model	23 staff. Neither of these direct management models have proved to generate a profit for the Council. This option is not recommended. <u>Option 2: Close the buildings for public use</u> Holding costs will be significant but moreover it would hamper the Council's wider strategic objectives for the City. Given the approved spend of £5m to undertake essential maintenance of the Guildhall and Abbey House it is already recognised that this would not be an appropriate way forward. The Council could consider freehold disposal of the buildings. Given the historical and cultural significance and ability to play a positive part in the local economy of the

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			that would: Unlock the full potential of the Guildhall and Abbey House as a unified civic and cultural quarter, complementing and enhancing Winchester's existing cultural offer whilst creating new opportunities for residents and visitors alike; Deliver sustained economic, social and cultural value for the city, supporting both the Winchester Cultural Strategy and the ambitions set out in the Winchester District Tourism Strategy, along with A reduction of operating costs through transfer operational risk to a specialist third-party events venue operator through a 25-year occupational lease.	city and the loss of control this approach is not recommended.

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			Soft market testing undertaken by Blue Horizon the Council's expert advisors has demonstrated healthy demand from specialist venue operators willing to assume responsibility for operating the properties under a lease arrangement, whilst providing the Council with a regular rental income. Report CAB3529 therefore proposes a formal marketing process, undertaken by Blue Horizon, to secure an appropriate tenant through an operational lease arrangement. The successful operator will be expected to maximise the cultural, civic and commercial potential of the site, ensuring the Guildhall builds upon Winchester's already strong cultural foundations and remains an important asset	

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			for future generations.	