

CABINET

Tuesday, 21 July 2026

Attendance:

Councillors
Tod (Chairperson)

Cramoysan
Learney

Porter
Thompson

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Cutler, Becker and Reach

Members in attendance who spoke at the meeting

Councillors Godfrey and Wallace

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Becker, Cutler and Reach as noted above.

2. **MEMBERSHIP OF CABINET BODIES ETC.**

Cabinet noted that at its meeting on 21 May 2026, Councillor Porter had been appointed as the council's representative on the Hampshire and the Solent Combined County Authority Planning Advisory Board. Subsequent to that meeting, it had been advised that the council was also entitled to appoint a deputy. It was agreed that, before confirming the appointment, further clarification be sought as to whether the appointment was required to be a member of the Cabinet.

3. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Tod and Porter declared disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of both the reports on the agenda due to their roles as Hampshire County Councillors. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, they 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**

Parish Councillor David Evans spoke regarding report CAB3563 in addition to Patrick Davies and Ian Tait who spoke regarding report CAB3529. Their comments are summarised under the relevant minutes below.

5. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 17 JUNE AND 30 JUNE 2026**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meetings held on 17 June and 30 June 2026 be agreed as a correct record.

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

Councillor Cramoysan provided an update on the improved recycling performance for Quarter 1 2026, the first full quarter following the full rollout of food waste collections. The overall recycling rate for the quarter was 47.8%, compared with 40.6% for the corresponding period in the previous year.

Councillor Learney announced that the Council's 82 public charging points had recorded another record year of usage in 2025/26 with a total of 479,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity supplied through the network. Councillor Learney also provided details regarding an upcoming change in charging network operator and users of former Mer charge points would see the introduction of B.EV.

The Leader provided an update regarding recent correspondence with Government ministers regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the emerging planning framework. A response had been received from Baroness Taylor, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), who advised that the guidance was not yet available but was currently being developed and was expected to be issued in due course. However, MHCLG officials had met with Council officers on 17 July 2026 to seek their views on how transitional arrangements could operate and the council had been invited to continue working with the department as proposals were developed.

7. **PROPOSED TRANSFER OF PUBLIC TOILETS AND TWO CAR PARKS TO PARISH COUNCILS**
(CAB3563)

Councillor Learney introduced the report which set out the proposed transfer of four public toilets and two car parks to parish councils. She emphasised that under the proposed Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process it was considered that parish and town councils would be best placed to understand local priorities, respond quickly to community needs and make decisions about the long term future of such local assets.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillors Godfrey addressed Cabinet as summarised briefly below.

Councillor Godfrey noted the financial logic of transferring responsibility for certain assets but raised concerns that the current report overlooked responsibilities regarding ongoing maintenance. He highlighted the varying levels of refurbishment of public toilets in different areas of the district and specifically the lack of refurbishment for Denmead's public toilets, suggesting it would be negligent for a parish council to accept ownership without the city council first completing promised upgrades. Regarding the transfer of car parks, he raised queries about the future costs of resurfacing and requested that the council offer safeguards or insurance schemes to protect parish councils from inheriting substantial liabilities. Finally, he raised the question of the ongoing costs and income associated with electric vehicle charging points and sought clarity on whether these responsibilities would be fully transferred to the parish councils.

Parish Councillor David Evans (Wickham and Knowle Parish Council) also addressed Cabinet during public participation as summarised briefly below.

Councillor Evans expressed concern that despite previous assurances, the report failed to reflect the significant work undertaken between the parish council and city council over the previous six months. The parish council had stated that it would only accept the transfer of Wickham public toilets if the transfer of associated car parks was also considered to help offset costs and had received confirmation that the city council had accepted this position. He questioned why the previous joint work and expenditure on surveys appeared to have been disregarded in the report and requested that members be given the opportunity to consider the original proposal to ensure an informed, transparent, and fair decision.

Councillors Learney and Tod apologised to Councillor Evans and Wickham and Knowle Parish Council that they had not been provided with an explanation of the report's recommendations in advance of the Cabinet meeting. It was explained that the council had a duty to undertake full due diligence on what the financial implications would be in relation to the potential transfer of car parks and it was complex process to disaggregate the revenue and capital costs involved. It was confirmed that discussions with Wickham and Knowle Parish Council and other parish councils in the district remained open regarding the potential for further car park or other asset transfers in the future.

Councillor Learney and the Corporate Head of Service Place responded to the other comments and queries raised, including clarifying the situation regarding the agreed refurbishment of Denmead public toilets which was subject to asset transfer.

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

RESOLVED:

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 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.

8. **SECURING THE FUTURE OF GUILDHALL AND ABBEY HOUSE (LESS EXEMPT APPENDICES)**
(CAB3529)

Councillor Thompson introduced the report which sought approval for the marketing of the Guildhall and Abbey House for the purpose of securing an operating partner with the aim of ensuring both buildings long term future.

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

Councillor Wallace

Councillor Wallace welcomed report's proposals but emphasised that members require greater clarity on the potential financial exposure and capital investment required beyond the previously approved £5m. He raised several queries regarding how community access and democratic functions would be protected whilst balancing commercial returns against Winchester's cultural and civic objectives. As chair of the Scrutiny Committee, he requested that the committee be involved early in the project to help shape its direction rather than simply commenting on a pre-developed preferred option. He sought Cabinet's assurance that all issues already raised and emerging from the marketing exercise would be fully explored through the scrutiny process to ensure members have a meaningful opportunity to influence the final decision.

Councillor Godfrey

Councillor Godfrey considered that while the principle of a commercial handover was acceptable, the proposed contract length was too short and other constraints (such as existing tenants) would not attract the substantial investment required. The previously approved £5m expenditure would only cover basic repairs rather than establishing a genuinely commercial venue. With regard to Abbey House, he highlighted its lack of civic use currently and significant maintenance requirements, the costs of which had not been included in the report. In

summary, he believed that the proposals for the two buildings would not be successful without greatly extending tenure being offered.

Patrick Davies and Ian Tait also addressed Cabinet during public participation as summarised briefly below.

Patrick Davies

Patrick Davies expressed disappointment about what he considered to be the poor state of the Guildhall building due to ongoing neglect by the council. He criticised the lack of transparency due to the exempt financial appendices and queried why the proposal appeared to have bypassed established scrutiny and committee processes. Regarding the impact of the proposed Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), he argued against the proposal to relocate meeting spaces as LGR would probably decrease future requirements for such facilities. He requested that the entire project involve meaningful consultation with residents in relation to these historic community assets.

Ian Tait

Ian Tait considered that Abbey House had been losing money for the council for a long time and the building should either be sold or placed on a long-term lease. He stated that the asset was currently underused, expensive to maintain, and failed to meet modern disability standards, asserting that traditional justifications for its retention carried no weight given current financial pressures. He also reminded members of previous proposals to replace the current City Offices with a modern development and argued that the Colebrook Street car park was a waste of valuable land. He urged Cabinet to proceed with proposals and to engage with the community to ensure residents had a say in the future of these important civic assets.

Councillor Thompson and the Strategic Director responded to the comments and queries raised, including emphasising future decisions would also have regard to the balance between civic and community uses. The Strategic Director advised that the information in the exempt appendices in relation to the soft marketing testing undertaken confirmed that there was commercial interest in a lease of the length of time being suggested.

Cabinet and invited councillors present confirmed that they did not wish to move into exempt session to discuss the contents of the exempt appendices further.

In relation to the comments made by Councillor Wallace, Councillor Tod confirmed he would discuss further with the councillor and the Chief Executive about how wider member involvement could best be achieved, within the necessary commercial constraints.

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

RESOLVED:

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 relocation 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.

9. **FUTURE ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION BY CABINET**

RESOLVED:

That the list of future items as set out in the Forward Plan for August 2026 be noted.

10. **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>
11	Securing the future of the Guildhall & Abbey House (exempt appendices)	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). (Para 3 Schedule 12A refers)

11. **SECURING THE FUTURE OF GUILDHALL AND ABBEY HOUSE (EXEMPT APPENDICES)**

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the exempt appendices be noted.

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and concluded at 10.50 am

Chairperson