



Meeting Cabinet

Date and Time Tuesday, 21st July, 2026 at 9.30 am.

Venue Walton Suite, Guildhall, Winchester and streamed live on YouTube at www.youtube.com/winchestercc.

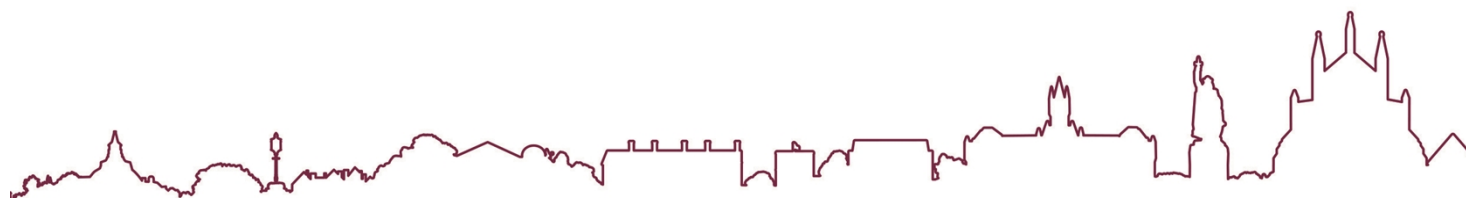
Note: This meeting is being held in person at the location specified above. Members of the public should note that a live video feed of the meeting will be available from the council's YouTube channel (youtube.com/WinchesterCC) during the meeting.

A limited number of seats will be made available at the above named location however attendance must be notified to the council at least 3 working days before the meeting. Please note that priority will be given to those wishing to attend and address the meeting over those wishing to attend and observe.

AGENDA

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

1. **Apologies**
To record the names of apologies given.
2. **Membership of Cabinet bodies etc.**
To give consideration to the approval of alternative arrangements for appointments to bodies set up by Cabinet or external bodies, or the making or terminating of such appointments.
 - a) **Hampshire and the Solent Combined County Authority Planning Advisory Board** – Appointment of Cabinet member as deputy (Councillor Porter previously appointed as representative)
3. **Disclosure of Interests**
To receive any disclosure of interests from Councillors or Officers in matters to be discussed.
Note: Councillors are reminded of their obligations to declare disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs), other registerable interests (ORIs) and non-registerable interests (NRIs) in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct.



4. **To note any request from Councillors to make representations on an agenda item.**

Note: Councillors wishing to speak address Cabinet are required to register with Democratic Services three clear working days before the meeting (contact: democracy@winchester.gov.uk or 01962 848 264). Councillors will normally be invited by the Chairperson to speak during the appropriate item (after the Cabinet Member's introduction and questions from other Cabinet Members).

BUSINESS ITEMS

5. **Public Participation**

– to note the names of members of the public wishing to speak on general matters affecting the District or on agenda items (in the case of the latter, representations will normally be received at the time of the agenda item, after the Cabinet Member's introduction and any questions from Cabinet Members).

NB members of the public are required to register with Democratic Services three clear working days before the meeting (contact: democracy@winchester.gov.uk or 01962 848 264).

Members of the public and visiting councillors may speak at Cabinet, provided they have registered to speak three working days in advance. Please contact Democratic Services **by 5pm on 15 July 2026** via democracy@winchester.gov.uk or (01962) 848 264 to register to speak and for further details.

6. **Minutes of the previous meetings held on 17 June and 30 June 2026**
(Pages 5 - 16)

7. **Leader and Cabinet Members' Announcements**

8. Proposed transfer of public toilets and two car parks to parish councils
(Pages 17 - 28)

Key Decision (CAB3563)

9. Securing the future of Guildhall and Abbey House (less exempt appendices)
(Pages 29 - 40)

Key Decision (CAB3529)

10. To note the future items for consideration by Cabinet as shown on the August 2026 Forward Plan. (Pages 41 - 46)

11. EXEMPT BUSINESS:

To consider whether in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

- (i) To pass a resolution 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 100 (I) and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

12. Securing the future of Guildhall and Abbey House (exempt appendices)
(Pages 47 - 58)

Key Decision

(CAB3539)

Laura Taylor
Chief Executive



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13 July 2026

Agenda Contact: Nancy Graham, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 01962 848 235, Email: ngraham@winchester.gov.uk

**With the exception of exempt items, Agenda, reports and previous minutes are available on the Council's Website www.winchester.gov.uk*

CABINET – Membership 2026/27

Chairperson: Councillor Tod - Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration

Vice-Chairperson: Councillor Cutler - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
Becker	Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities
Cramoysan	Cabinet Member for Recycling and Public Protection
Learney	Cabinet Member for the Climate and Nature Emergency
Porter	Cabinet Member for Place and the Local Plan
Thompson	Cabinet Member for Business and Culture
Reach	Cabinet Member for Good Homes

Quorum = 3 Members

Corporate Priorities

As Cabinet is responsible for most operational decisions of the Council, its work embraces virtually all elements of the Council Strategy.

Public Participation at meetings

Representations will be limited to a maximum of 3 minutes, subject to a maximum 15 minutes set aside for all questions and answers.

To reserve your place to speak, you are asked to **register with Democratic Services three clear working days prior to the meeting** – please see public participation agenda item below for further details. People will be invited to speak in the order that they have registered, subject to the maximum time period allowed for speaking not being exceeded. Public Participation is at the Chairperson's discretion.

Filming and Broadcast Notification

This meeting will be recorded and broadcast live on the Council's website. The meeting may also be recorded and broadcast by the press and members of the public – please see the Access to Information Procedure Rules within the Council's Constitution for further information, which is available to view on the [Council's website](#). Please note that the video recording is subtitled but you may have to enable your device to see them (advice on how to do this is on the meeting page).

Disabled Access

Disabled access is normally available, but please phone Democratic Services on 01962 848 264 or email democracy@winchester.gov.uk to ensure that the necessary arrangements are in place.

Terms Of Reference

Included within the Council's Constitution (Part 3, Section 2) which is available [here](#)

CABINET

Wednesday, 17 June 2026

Attendance:

Councillors
Tod (Chairperson)

Cutler
Learney

Reach
Thompson

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Cramoysan, Becker and Porter

Members in attendance who spoke at the meeting

Councillors Godfrey, Horrill, Lee and Wallace

Other members in attendance:

Councillor Batho

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Becker, Cramoysan and Porter as noted above.

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

There were no changes required.

3. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Tod declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of reports CAB3560 and CAB3561 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**

Two members of the public spoke during public participation as summarised briefly below.

Jo Burch - Safer Limits on Winchester's Roads (SLoWR)

Jo Burch spoke as co-chair of the SLOWER campaign and expressed concerns regarding rising traffic volumes and speeding vehicles across Winchester, highlighting that in some locations narrow pavements and roads have created dangerous conditions for pedestrians. She particularly referenced Hyde Street where she had experienced vehicles mounting pavements at times to avoid oncoming traffic. Ms. Burch requested the urgent progression of a feasibility study for Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) and the agreement of an installation contract with Hampshire County Council (HCC), noting that funding had already been secured and a 700-signature petition for a pilot on Hyde Street had been collated. She urged the Cabinet to act immediately to ensure the city's roads were safe for all residents.

Councillors Tod and Learney responded to the comments made, including stating that the Winchester Town Forum speed installation project was being progressed but advised that the group needed to obtain permission from HCC (not WCC) in relation to the signs required for the pilot along Hyde Street.

Patrick Davies

Patrick Davies spoke regarding report CAB3561 and raised concern over the plan to spend approximately £750,000 on a Reformer Pilates studio, as he believed that it targeted an exclusive clientele and replicated services already provided by private gyms. He also questioned the integrity of the internal processes involved in putting forward the proposal and the timing of the report, noting that it had not been included in the annual Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) update report to March 2026 Cabinet. He requested that the proposal should be reconsidered as he believed it was not a proper priority for public expenditure.

Councillor Tod stated that Mr Davies' comments would be considered during discussion of report CAB3561 below.

5. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 28 MAY 2026**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 May 2026 be agreed as a correct record.

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

Councillor Thompson provided an update on the large number and variety of organisations, projects and businesses funded by the council following receipt of funding from the UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity funds since 2022. The final meeting of the Property Board had taken place, and she thanked board members for their time and commitment over the previous years.

Councillor Tod announced that he had written to the Minister for Local Government and Homelessness and the Minister for Housing and Planning to ask for clarification about how the council could reconcile the new planning process outlined in the new plan making process guidance with the proposals for boundary changes outlined as a consequence Local Government Reorganisation. No response had yet been received.

Councillor Tod also announced that Councillor Becker was currently on maternity leave and her responsibilities would be covered by other members of cabinet until further notice.

7. **LEISURE CENTRE VAT TREATMENT AND PROPOSED TRANSITION TO AGENCY OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS (LESS EXEMPT APPENDICES)**
(CAB3560)

Councillor Cutler introduced the report on behalf of Councillor Becker, emphasising that it followed updated guidance from HMRC and would not impact on the customer experience of the leisure centre.

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

Councillor Lee

Councillor Lee welcomed the proposal provided that services to residents remain protected. He expressed caution regarding the reliance on external tax advice and suggested delaying implementation until formal HMRC guidance was published. He raised several specific queries relating to the occupational licenses, the continuity of maintenance responsibilities, and the potential implications should the operator experience financial difficulties. He suggested Cabinet should consider using any additional income for reinvestment in energy efficiency and decarbonisation measures across the leisure estate to support the council's green objectives.

Councillor Godfrey

Councillor Godfrey generally welcomed the proposal to transition to an agency operating model for the Sport and Leisure Park. He raised technical queries concerning the treatment of VAT and sought assurance that the council would be fully compensated for the additional administrative burden placed on staff. Finally, he questioned what protection was in place should HMRC change its guidance and queried why this beneficial fiscal solution had taken over three years to be brought forward.

Councillor Cutler, the Strategic Director and the Service Lead: Finance responded to the comments made including confirming that advice and best practice had been sought from other local authorities before the proposal in the report had been brought forward.

Cabinet moved into exempt session to discuss the contents of the exempt appendices before returning to open session to consider the report's recommendations.

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

RESOLVED:

1. That it be agreed in principle that the progression to an Agency Variation to the existing Leisure Management Contract with Sports and Leisure Management Limited (SLM) who will be the agent with Everyone Active Charitable Trust as authorised sub-agent be approved (define in this report as Everyone Active).
2. That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director – Place, in consultation with the Director of Legal, Section 151 Officer, to finalise Heads of Terms and enter into a Deed of Variation and any other necessary and appropriate agreements, including agreement of the detailed financial and operational arrangements.
3. That the estimated financial benefits arising from the proposal be noted, including the introduction of a guaranteed uplift in annual income to the council.

8. **WINCHESTER SPORT AND LEISURE PARK IMPROVEMENTS**
(CAB3561)

Councillor Tod introduced the report on behalf of Councillor Becker emphasising the importance of the WSLP in offering access to different sports and fitness facilities to a wider sector of the community, including NHS referrals. He highlighted that the council owned the WSLP building and it was essential for its offer to be updated to ensure it remained financially viable.

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

Councillor Wallace

As chair of Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Wallace expressed concerns that the accelerated timetable bypassed proper scrutiny and the spirit of the council's constitution provisions relating to decision-making. He questioned the justification for allocating £740,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to a successful leisure facility, noting the lack of a clear link to mitigating development impacts. Furthermore, he highlighted the inequity of using funds generated district-wide for city-based projects, particularly when rural areas contribute significantly to the total CIL pot. Consequently, he stated he could not support the recommendation and urged Cabinet to refocus CIL expenditure on its primary purpose of supporting infrastructure throughout the district.

Councillor Lee

Councillor Lee also questioned whether the allocation of £740,000 in CIL funding for improvements at an already successful urban leisure centre represented the fairest or most appropriate use of scarce resources. He expressed concern regarding the pattern of investment across the district and queried whether the proposal addressed a genuine district-wide priority or served to further enhance a niche Winchester town facility. He highlighted the council's own evidence of substantial unmet needs elsewhere in the district and challenged the justification for directing limited CIL funding in the city centre at the expense of other competitive requirements.

Councillor Horrill

Councillor Horrill welcomed the continued success of the WSLP as a district asset but sought clarification on what specific actions were taken to engage residents and users regarding the proposed improvements. She also raised concerns regarding why the project appeared outside of the standard CIL process and decision-making and believed there was a lack of evidence to support the report's claims of long-term resilience. Finally, she emphasised that while the facility must evolve to meet customer needs, the current proposal lacked transparency.

Councillor Tod thanked councillors for their contributions and also referenced the comments made by Mr Davies during public participation earlier in the meeting.

Councillor Tod and the Strategic Director responded to the comments made including on the CIL process and the high demand for additional group exercise class provision at WSLP. The Strategic Director advised that early engagement had been undertaken with users of WSLP and that further consultation would take place.

The Director: Legal clarified that because the proposed decision was subject to full council approval, it was not an executive decision (i.e. one to be taken by Cabinet) and therefore not classed as a key decision.

The Chief Executive clarified that there was no constitutional requirement for the report to be considered by a scrutiny committee prior to submission to Cabinet. She confirmed that it was for full council to determine whether to approve the capital budget of £740,000.

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

RECOMMENDED (TO COUNCIL):

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That a capital budget of £740,000 be approved to deliver improvements at Winchester Sport & Leisure Park.

RESOLVED:

That subject to budget approval by full Council as set out above:

1. That the allocation of £740,000 of District-wide Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding and associated capital expenditure to deliver improvements at Winchester Sport & Leisure Park (WSLP) be approved, subject to Full Council approval of the associated capital budget.

2. That an exception to the Contract Procedure Rules to enable one of the direct award options set out in section 3.6 of this report be approved.

3. That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director, to approve minor amendments to the detailed design, specification and scope of the project during delivery, provided such changes remain within the approved budget and do not materially alter the strategic objectives or overall outcomes of the scheme approved by Cabinet.

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

RESOLVED:

That the list of future items as set out in the Forward Plan for July 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	Leisure Centre VAT Treatment and Proposed Transition to Agency Operating	))))	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority

Arrangements (exempt) holding that information).
appendices)) (Para 3 Schedule 12A refers)

11. **LEISURE CENTRE VAT TREATMENT AND PROPOSED TRANSITION TO
AGENCY OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS (EXEMPT APPENDICES)**

During exempt session, the Strategic Director responded to Cabinet Member questions regarding the details of invoice payments under the proposed arrangements. In addition, she responded to a question from Councillor Godfrey in relation to the predicted savings.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the exempt appendices be noted.

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and concluded at 11.05 am

Chairperson

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CABINET

Tuesday, 30 June 2026

Attendance:

Councillors
Tod (Chairperson)

Cutler
Cramoysan

Porter
Thompson

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Becker, Learney and Reach

Members in attendance who spoke at the meeting

Councillors Horrill, Laming, Lee and Warwick

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

1. **APOLOGIES**

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

2. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Tod and Porter declared disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of reports CAB3566 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.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

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

Councillor Tod announced that later that day the councils that would make up the proposed new Mid-Hampshire Unitary Authority (MHUA) would submit the proposed warding arrangements for the new authority to the government. This comprised 78 councillors across the four local authority areas, of which 22 councillors would be within the existing Winchester district area. The proposal was based on three member county divisions with two member county divisions within the Meon Valley. There was no guarantee that the government would

agree the proposal but no other submission had been made for the mid-Hampshire area.

5. **NOTICE OF INTENTION TO COMMENCE LOCAL PLAN PREPARATION UPDATE**
(CAB3566)

Councillor Porter introduced the report confirming that the notice of intention to commence plan preparation would be published by 30 June and a number of additional steps would be taken to mitigate against the continued uncertainty due to the proposed boundary changes in relation to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). She advised that the council would use the time before the first gateway to work with other councils in the proposed Mid-Hampshire Unitary Authority and the South East Hampshire Unitary Authority to ensure the plan remained secure and fit for purpose as the new unitary authorities came into existence.

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

Councillor Lee

Councillor Lee supported the immediate commencement of a plan-led approach to avoid development being shaped by appeals, although he expressed concern about the complexity of meeting the demands both of LGR and new national planning regimes. He raised a number of detailed questions including relating to the timing and coherence of a joint local plan, specifically questioning how value for money would be protected if work had to be redone once government transitional guidance emerged. He expressed concern over maintaining Winchester's high policy standards within a more prescriptive national framework and how would nature be embedded as critical infrastructure to address the climate and nature crisis.

Councillor Warwick

Councillor Warwick acknowledged the pressure of delivering a 60% housing uplift through a fast-tracked plan revision while simultaneously navigating the complexities of LGR. She requested an explanation of the financial and statutory risks associated with delaying the plan's launch and sought assurance that investments in producing the technical evidence would remain valid for any successor authority. She requested that infrastructure planning receive equal priority with housing numbers and requested that the SHELAA site assessments be published to ensure parish councils and residents had sufficient time to scrutinise developer submissions.

Councillor Horrill

Councillor Horrill acknowledged the legal necessity of issuing the notice of intention to commence the Local Plan but sought clarification on the specific penalties for non-compliance and the actions required to remain compliant before reaching the next milestone. She asked that Cabinet

commit to transparent communication with all members and requested that engagement on planning issues include every district MP to ensure a cross-party approach. She queried proposals for the governance of collaborative plan-making and the potential impact of the judicial review submitted by Hampshire County Council. She also questioned the apparent exclusion of the general public from the proposed consultation strategy. Finally, she expressed concern over the omission of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) changes from the risk assessment and asked for better insight into how these reforms might impact the council's immediate planning activities.

Councillor Laming

Councillor Laming welcomed the proposals in the report as a sensible means of complying with government requirements during the transition towards LGR.

Councillor Porter, the Strategic Director, the Corporate Head of Planning and Regulatory Services and the Strategic Planning Manager responded to the comments and queries raised, including advising that the new local plan timetable would be published on the council's website and this would be updated as new guidance was received.

The Director (Legal) outlined the potential legal implications if the council failed to publish the Notice of Intention by 30 June 2026.

In response to Cabinet Member questions, the Strategic Director advised that further clarification was being sought from the government about the exact date of the first gateway.

Councillor Tod confirmed that all members would be notified of future letters to and from government in relation to this matter and that all MPs within the district would also be involved. He also suggested that the full list of questions raised by invited councillors and cabinet members at the meeting be compiled and referred to in future communications with the government.

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

RESOLVED:

1. That the Government's requirements for commencement of Local Plan preparation under the new plan making system introduced through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 be noted, specifically the letter from Government to the Chief Executive on January 15, 2026 and the Government guidance on the 'Roll out of the new plan-making process' updated on 6 March 2026.

2. That the proposed Local Government Reorganisation arrangements for Hampshire be noted, including the proposed Mid Hampshire unitary authority, the transfer of the Parish of Newlands to the proposed South-East Hampshire unitary authority announced on 26

March 2026, and emerging arrangements for devolution and strategic planning across Hampshire and the Solent.

3. That in the absence of Government guidance on transitional arrangements for authorities affected by Local Government Reorganisation and to be legally compliant, it be agreed that Winchester City Council will continue to publish a Notice of Intention to Commence Plan Preparation by 30 June 2026 on the current administrative boundary.

4. That the Strategic Director (Place) be authorised to engage with other Mid Hampshire authorities to explore opportunities for collaborative or joint plan-making and shared evidence gathering for the proposed Mid Hampshire geography.

5. That the Strategic Director (Place) be authorised to engage with other South-East Hampshire authorities to explore how we can support an appropriate plan-making process to include Newlands Parish as part of South-East Hampshire.

6. That the Strategic Director (Place) be authorised to continue engagement with Government regarding plan making requirements, transitional arrangements and future strategic planning responsibilities arising from Local Government Reorganisation and devolution.

7. That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director (Place), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan and the Director of Legal to amend the above timetable where necessary should the Government issue revised guidance, transitional arrangements or legislation relating to the Local Government Reorganisation and plan making.

The meeting commenced at 11.30 am and concluded at 12.35 pm

Chairperson

CAB3563
CABINET

REPORT TITLE: PROPOSED TRANSFER OF PUBLIC TOILETS AND TWO CAR PARKS TO PARISH COUNCILS

21 JULY 2026

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Kelsie Learney

Contact Officer: Campbell Williams Tel No: Email cawilliams@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): ALL WARDS

PURPOSE

This report 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 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 opportunities for future investment where sustainable long-term management arrangements can be secured.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Approve the transfer of the Council's four parish public convenience assets to the relevant Parish and Town Councils, 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. Delegate authority 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. Approve the continuation of existing operational support arrangements, including cleaning services and any agreed service contributions, until April 2027 where appropriate to support an orderly transition.

IMPLICATIONS:1. COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

1.1. Greener Faster

Local ownership of the public conveniences will allow fewer resources to be used as local management should allow more reactive management of issues such as leaks.

The city council has invested in electric vehicle charging points in car parks neighbouring the toilets in parished areas. Any transfer of car parks alongside the toilets, would need to take into account the ongoing support for these EV charging points.

1.2. Thriving Places

Public conveniences support vibrant local centres, tourism destinations and community spaces by ensuring residents and visitors have access to essential facilities.

Supporting Parish Councils to take on greater responsibility for local assets strengthens community stewardship and local place shaping.

1.3. Healthy Communities

Public conveniences form part of inclusive and accessible public infrastructure which supports residents of all ages and abilities to confidently access town and village centres, parks and community spaces.

The proposal supports stronger local ownership and responsiveness to community needs.

1.4. Good Homes for All

n/a

1.5. Efficient and Effective

The proposed transfers support a more sustainable long-term operating model for public conveniences across the district.

The approach reduces ongoing operational liabilities for the Council whilst maintaining local provision.

1.6. Listening and Learning

Enagement has taken place with Parish Councils regarding future arrangements for public conveniences.

The proposal reflects feedback from parishes who expressed interest in taking a greater role in local asset management and service delivery.

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1. Public conveniences create ongoing operational and maintenance costs for the Council, including utilities, cleansing, repairs and reactive maintenance.
- 2.2. The proposed transfer arrangements of public conveniences would reduce the Council's future operational liabilities by an estimated £30,000 per annum whilst enabling services to continue locally.
- 2.3. Transitional financial support arrangements are proposed to continue as they are now, within existing budgets, until April 2027 to support Parish Councils in taking on management responsibilities.
- 2.4. Future refurbishment investment would only proceed where sustainable long-term management arrangements are secured.
- 2.5. Detailed financial implications for each asset transfer will be finalised through individual legal agreements, which would include an understanding of the financial impact if discussions included the transfer of neighbouring car parks too. The balance sheet value of the assets will be removed and show as a "loss" on disposal in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. However, as a non-cash transaction, the "loss" will be reversed out of the General Fund balance.
- 2.6. In summary the cost of running each public convenience is set out in the table below. These costs are based on 2025/26 financial year.

Public Conveniences	Balance sheet value as at 31/03/26	Annual income (cont. from Parish)	Annual Expenditure	Annual net surplus/(cost)
Alresford	79,000	7,000	(15,000)	(8,000)
Bishops Waltham	154,000	7,670	(15,350)	(7,680)
Denmead	67,000	6,730	(13,450)	(6,720)
Wickham	74,000	8,110	(16,230)	(8,120)
Total	374,000	29500	(60,000)	(30,500)

Where an individual agreement to take on the public convenience includes the transfer of city council owned car parks these legal agreements would include their financial implications. In summary the cost of running each public car park in the area is set out in the table below;

Car Parks	Balance sheet value as at 31/03/26	Annual Income	Annual Expenditure	Net annual surplus/(cost)
Kidmore Lane	264,600	2,300	(7,000)	(4,700)
Harestock	£145,000	<£500	0	£500
Total	£409,000	£1,800	(7000)	(£4,200)

The costs of the car park management above does not include depreciation, staffing or enforcement costs. As the car parks concerned only make up a small percentage of the overall car park estate, no savings in staffing and enforcement costs are anticipated. Similarly, the table above excludes periodic one-off costs such as resurfacing which will also present a saving to the council should the car parks be transferred to the parishes.

3. LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. Individual legal agreements would be required with each parish or town council, to take into account the financial, and operational requirement for the continued operation of the facilities and other assets alongside them.
- 3.2. The current cleaning contract with Wettons, allows for the removal of individual toilets from the cleaning contract.

4. WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None. The proposals do not directly impact Council staffing structures.
- 4.2. Operational arrangements currently managed through existing contracts would continue during transitional periods where agreed.

5. PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. These are assets which are fully owned by the city council. The relevant locations are
 - New Alresford. - Station Road toilets
 - Bishops Waltham - Central Car park toilets
 - Denmead - Kidmore Lane car park and toilets
 - Wickham - Station Road toilets
 - Harestock - Priors Dean Road Car park

The transfers would offer long leases or freehold transfers depending upon the aspirations of the parish councils and the attributes of the facilities to be transferred. Development potential on any car park land will be reviewed prior to transfers and restrictive covenants and/or overage provisions included if necessary.

6. CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1. Engagement has been and is being undertaken with relevant Parish Councils regarding future management arrangements for public conveniences.
- 6.2. Parish Councils have been invited to consider a range of future operating models including local management and ownership arrangements.
- 6.3. Several parishes have expressed interest in taking on a greater role in local management and stewardship of facilities.
- 6.4. Ward Members will continue to be engaged throughout the process as detailed proposals are developed.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1. Supporting locally managed community assets can reduce unnecessary duplication and support more responsive local maintenance arrangements.
- 7.2. Future refurbishment programmes provide opportunities to improve environmental performance, accessibility and energy efficiency of facilities.

8. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 8.1. Public conveniences are important community infrastructure supporting accessibility and inclusion for residents and visitors.
- 8.2. Transfer arrangements and future investment proposals will seek to maintain accessible provision and appropriate disabled access arrangements.
- 8.3. Equality considerations will continue to be assessed as part of individual asset transfer arrangements.

9. DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1. None required

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure	Detailed financial information, including running costs, maintenance liabilities and any income streams, will be shared with parish councils as part of the due diligence process. Appropriate legal agreements will be put in	Transfer of assets and services can reduce Winchester City Council's future financial liabilities whilst enabling local councils to make decisions that reflect local priorities and community needs.

	place to protect the Council's interests.	
Reputation	Early engagement with parish councils, ward members, residents and key stakeholders. Clear communication that the proposals support local decision-making and are not simply a cost-saving exercise.	Demonstrates the Council's commitment to localism, community empowerment and preparing communities to play a greater role in service delivery as local government structures evolve.
Property	Asset condition surveys, legal investigations and title reviews will be completed before any transfer. Agreements will clearly define future responsibilities and liabilities.	Provides an opportunity for parish councils to invest in and improve local assets, ensuring decisions are taken closer to the communities that use them.
Community Support	Engagement and consultation with parish councils and local communities will inform the approach. Transitional support arrangements can be considered where appropriate.	Stronger local ownership can increase community involvement, responsiveness and accountability for local facilities and services.
Loss of provision	Transfers will only proceed where there is confidence in the future operation and maintenance of the asset. Appropriate lease, transfer or service agreements will be established.	Creates the opportunity for assets such as public conveniences and car parks to be managed in a way that reflects local priorities, helping to secure their long-term future.
Timescales	Early legal, property and finance engagement will ensure issues are identified and resolved promptly. A phased approach can be adopted where appropriate.	Progressing transfers ahead of Local Government Reorganisation provides greater certainty for local communities and allows sufficient time for implementation and transition.

Local Government Reorganisation	Early transfer of appropriate local assets reduces uncertainty regarding future ownership and management arrangements under successor authorities.	Provides an opportunity to place genuinely local assets under local stewardship ahead of LGR, ensuring decisions are taken by organisations with a direct connection to the communities they serve.
Achievement of Outcomes	Clear transfer objectives and success measures will be agreed with receiving parish councils. Post-transfer monitoring arrangements will be considered where appropriate.	Supports the Council's wider ambitions around devolution, community empowerment and ensuring services remain responsive to local needs.
Other	Individual asset considerations will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.	Opportunity to strengthen partnerships between Winchester City Council and parish councils, creating a model for future collaborative working and service delivery.

11. SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 11.1. The Council currently operates a number of public conveniences across the district which provide an important service to residents, visitors and local communities.
- 11.2. Aaway from central Winchester these include 4 in parished areas at
- Alresford (Station road)
 - Bishops Waltham (Basingwell Car Park)
 - Deneamd (Kidmore Lane)
 - Wickham (Station Road)
- 11.3. Public conveniences support tourism, local high streets, community activity and accessibility, particularly for older residents, families and people with disabilities.
- 11.4. The ongoing operation and maintenance of public conveniences presents increasing financial and operational pressures for the Council. At present with each parish covering at least half the cost of the operation and maintenance

of the toilets, the costs to the city council is estimated at £30,000 per annum which includes rates, operational cleaning costs, utilities and maintenance costs.

- 11.5. As part of wider service reviews and discussions regarding Local Government Reorganisation, the Council has engaged Parish Councils regarding future management arrangements for public conveniences.
- 11.6. The engagement explored a range of options including:
 - Continuing current arrangements
 - Parish operational management
 - Longer-term lease and ownership models
- 11.7. Parish councils have responded individually, with all indicating a clear interest in playing a more active role, particularly where this could support the long-term viability of local facilities. Bishops Waltham for example have taken on the responsibility for cleaning the toilet in their parish since the 1st January 2026.
- 11.8. The proposed transfer of all four parish public convenience assets reflects the Council's commitment to supporting localism and devolved community asset management, and builds on the decision taken to improve the public toilets across Winchester taken in September 2023. Since this time the majority of toilets across Winchester have been upgraded, including Alresford and Bishop's Waltham. The city council remains committed to upgrades to Denmead and Wickham toilets if the transfers, securing their long term futures, go ahead.
- 11.9. The proposed arrangements could be long term leases through peppercorn lease agreements designed to provide local flexibility whilst protecting community access and use, or through full freehold transfers. The choice will be dependent upon individual Parish and Town council aspirations and the attributes of individual locations.
- 11.10. Discussions are ongoing with individual parish councils, but approval is required to transfer the facilities, which will then allow each parish council to take a formal decision about taking on the facilities.
- 11.11. Expressions of interest in taking on the operation and management of the toilets permanently have raised the possibility of taking on their neighbouring car parks too, to secure their position as community assets post LGR. The income and expenditure related to these is set out in the financial section of this paper. Whilst these are valuable community assets the cost and benefits of running these car parks are not significant, and could potentially benefit from a transfer to secure local community ownership.
- 11.12. Each parish would need to review the condition of assets in their parish prior to making a decision about transferring the toilets and potentially the local car

parks, so that they are aware of the liabilities that these entail, not just the local benefit that it would bring with local control of the facilities.

- 11.13. The Council also proposes transitional support arrangements until April 2027 to support Parish Councils in assuming operational responsibilities, in essence continuing to cover the cost of maintaining and operating the public conveniences at the current rate.
- 11.14. Future refurbishment and investment opportunities would be linked to securing sustainable long-term management arrangements. If there is no interest from individual parish councils to taking on the responsibility for operation and maintenance of the facilities, then the city council does not have the financial resources to continue their refurbishment.
- 11.15. **Conclusion**
- 11.16. Public conveniences remain important community assets which support residents, visitors and local economies across the district.
- 11.17. The proposed transfer of all four parish public convenience assets, and the highlighted car parks supports the Council's wider ambitions around localism, devolution and community-led service delivery.
- 11.18. The approach enables greater local control and stewardship of assets whilst supporting a more sustainable long-term operating model.
- 11.19. The proposed arrangements provide a managed and collaborative transition ahead of wider Local Government Reorganisation.
- 11.20. Cabinet is therefore asked to approve the progression of transfer arrangements with the relevant Parish Councils. Following such an approval each individual parish council would need to understand the responsibility and activity entailed within this and then agree to take on the asset. This progression is one which the city council would aim to achieve by April 2027, .

12. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1. Retaining all assets under direct Council management
- 12.2. 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.
- 12.3. Closure of facilities
- 12.4. Closure was not considered appropriate given the importance of public conveniences to residents, visitors, accessibility and local economies.
- 12.5. Short-term arrangements only

- 12.6. 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.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 13/09/2023 09:30](#)

Other Background Documents:-

None

APPENDICES:

None

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CAB3529
CABINET

REPORT TITLE: SECURING THE FUTURE OF GUILDHALL AND ABBEY HOUSE

21 JULY 2026

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Lucille Thompson

Contact Officer: Geoffrey Coe gcoe@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): ST MICHAELS

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 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 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.

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.

This report 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 for future generations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet

1. approve the formal marketing of the Guildhall and Abbey House to secure an offer for an occupational lease as combined and separate lots.
2. agree 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.
3. Notes a further report will be presented on the outcome of the marketing exercise before the Council enters into the lease.

IMPLICATIONS:

1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

1.1 Greener Faster

The Guildhall is a Grade II listed building with associated limitations imposed on energy efficiency. However, the repairs and maintenance programme due to start next year will include energy saving measures designed to reduce CO2 emissions. The proposal is for an event Operator tenant to be responsible for maintaining new systems and ensuring efficient management.

1.2 Thriving Places

The Guildhall is one of the largest event venues in Winchester serving the community, charities, businesses, and civic demands. A specialist event Operator will maintain access to the building for these groups and be able to offer an enhanced product and service.

This proposal is in line with the Council's Cultural Strategy.

<https://www.winchester.gov.uk/assets/attach/43521/Winchester-District-Cultural-Strategy-2024-2030-Final-compressed.pdf>

1.3 Healthy Communities

Building on the range of events offered to date, a thriving Guildhall will offer a wide range of events supporting physical and mental wellbeing.

1.4 Efficient and Effective

Changing the operating model for the Guildhall and Abbey House is intended to create financial savings for the Council and provide a more diverse range of events for the public and business communities, thereby making best use of a major Council asset.

1.5 Listening and Learning

Soft market testing was undertaken as part of these proposals which are set out later in the report.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 Although part of the cultural heart of Winchester, it is important that operation of the Guildhall operates at a financially sustainable level, therefore the option to seek a partner to operate a lease for the Guildhall and Abbey House was identified as part of the Council's ongoing efficiency programme. Feedback from soft market testing suggests that a letting of the building to a specialist operator could generate a net income of over £500,000 during the first ten years, which would be in addition to savings on the current net operating cost of the Guildhall and Abbey House. The net income over the following ten

years is likely to be higher as the venue becomes more established and Operator set up costs are written down.

- 2.2 Savings of just over £300k per annum are forecast compared to current Guildhall operations, which would lead to savings of almost £3.7m over 10 years once adding in forecast lease income indicated from the soft market testing.

During the 14 month closure period for essential works it is estimated that savings of c£250k will be achieved, including the existing maintenance budget which won't be required during this time one off costs of closing the Guildhall for the essential repair works and re-locating some existing services such as committee space, is forecast at £97k.

- 2.3 The council will remain responsible for certain maintenance works to the Guildhall and after the upcoming programme of significant works a further £335k is estimated over the next 10 years.
- 2.4 The scope of the proposed operator lease for the Guildhall includes the spaces currently occupied by the Visitor Information Centre (VIC), the unit currently leased to Shoal, the main Guildhall event space, the meeting rooms used by Democratic Services for Cabinet and Committee meetings, and some ground floor space currently used by the council for business support functions, including goods-in and the print room.
- 2.5 The cost summary below includes the estimated costs of relocating the council's meeting spaces to the Colebrook Wing of the City Offices. At this stage, no decisions have been made regarding the future operational arrangements for the Visitor Information Centre. These will be informed through the operator procurement process and considered alongside the council's wider approach to visitor information across the district. As a result, no provision has been made within this report for potential VIC relocation costs. Should a temporary relocation be required during the investment works, the estimated one-off cost would be approximately £20,000.
- 2.6 In addition to the costs set out in appendix A and summarised below, it is expected that the council may have to contribute financially to the refurbishment of the Guildhall to get it to a condition that will make it attractive for an operator to take on a lease. This is addition £5m that the council has already committed for essential and structural repairs. At this stage, it is unknown how much additional investment will be required. A report setting out the outcome of the marketing exercise and requesting any additional budget will be brought back to Cabinet ahead of entering into any lease on the Guildhall.
- 2.7 Full details of the financial implications are set out in exempt appendix A, but a summary of the one off costs and projected ongoing savings from the operator model proposal are shown below (based on the soft market testing):

Ongoing Savings:

Annual revenue expenditure savings	£603k
Less:	
Loss of income	(£250k)
Use of city office space	(£40k)
Ongoing annual revenue savings	£313k

One-off costs:

Fitting out costs	£45k
Costs associated with the closure of the Guildhall	£52k

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no procurement implications relating to this arrangement as it is a property transaction being a lease of the properties. The Council will be offering a lease only arrangement and will be retaining the freehold of the properties which is considered expedient in the event that any lessee were to fail and for future estate management purposes.
- 3.2 The Council has a duty under S123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to secure the best consideration and it is considered that this requirement will be

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Prior to the Guildhall closing for refurbishment and repair, the potential impact on employees will need to be considered. Subject to the proposals in this paper being approved, HR will support the relevant managers to implement the council's Managing Workforce Change policy.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Both Guildhall and Abbey House are Listed assets with a long history of community and civic importance in Winchester. However, both properties have significant levels of maintenance and complexity in use due to the design and fabric of the building. Specialist Event Venue Operators with experience in heritage buildings also bring economies of scale in terms of management expertise, procurement of supplies and services, and use of marketing platforms offering an enhanced customer interface and market reach. They also have direct access to international, national, and regional end- users/hirers that go well beyond the Council's network.
- 5.2 Strategic capital works (CAB 3541) undertaken prior to lease commencement will protect the long-term integrity of these heritage buildings but also ensure they are fit for purpose and aligned with the operator's business model from day one.

- 5.3 By coupling this investment with a new operating model that draws on external expertise balancing cultural ambition with commercial discipline, the Council can optimise the use of these buildings and make a major contribution towards the Cultural Strategy.

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 Soft market testing has involved approaches to stakeholders including local performance and heritage groups and gathered feedback on how the Guildhall performs currently and what improvements could be made and how they could contribute.

Stakeholder Feedback - Overall Themes

Blue Horizon has undertaken engagement with a broad range of stakeholders – including council members, officers, cultural organisations, hirers, suppliers, and community representatives – has highlighted consistent themes.

The Guildhall is recognised as an iconic and central cultural asset with untapped potential, but stakeholders consistently identified challenges around infrastructure, visibility, and accessibility.

There was positive support in terms of the venue's heritage value, landmark location, large kitchen and event spaces, and potential for significant economic and cultural impact.

- **Challenges Identified:** Outdated technical infrastructure (AV/IT), tired and underutilised spaces, inflexible layouts, high running costs, and the need for the business model to complement Winchester's wider cultural ecosystem.
- **Perceptions:** Iconic landmark, important civic role, but more of a "monument" than an active contributor.
- **Strengths:** Central location, ability to host large-scale events, good catering facilities, diverse spaces.
- **Challenges:** High costs for community use, poor building condition, lack of event support and marketing, invisible programming, and insufficient commercial focus.
- **Priorities:** Broader and more varied event content (music, comedy, exhibitions, conferences, education, youth activity) and essential improvements (accessibility, acoustics, toilets, catering, flexible AV).

In summary, stakeholders view the Guildhall as a unique and iconic civic and cultural asset with significant untapped potential. Its location, scale, and heritage are major strengths, but realising its potential will require investment

in infrastructure, a clearer cultural identity, improved accessibility and support for hirers, and a more dynamic programming and marketing strategy.

The Guildhall and Abbey House are key components of the civic life of Winchester therefore all members have been briefed on these proposals at the early stage of consideration in August 2025 and prior to consideration by Cabinet in July 2026. Alternative arrangements for civic events will be made should a lease be awarded to operate the Guildhall or Abbey House in the future.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 As listed heritage assets, both buildings present challenges for carbon management. However, the repair and maintenance works to be commissioned will include several measures designed to improve the buildings energy efficiency. Selection of an Operator will have reference to their ability to address the climate emergency in the way they run their operations.

8 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 8.1 Although there are no direct public sector equality duties stemming from this proposal it will be necessary to include accessibility requirements in the lease so as to ensure access to the buildings is maintained.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 None

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure	The costs of marketing are limited. Blue Horizon Fees are capped for the marketing exercise. Soft market testing has indicated a favourable financial position for the Council	Securing a tenant who can operate the building more efficiently than the Council
Exposure to challenge	Limited by virtue of this being a letting of buildings and not a procurement of services	To generate a rental income and reduce overheads
Innovation	This is an innovative proposal	Enhanced deployment of Council assets

Reputation	A robust Comms plan	To demonstrate active management of the portfolio
Achievement of outcome	Project Management	A flagship events venue
Property	This proposal ensures optimum use the important civic asset. The lease will be drawn up to ensure user clauses protect the Council's interests and future potential civic uses.	Better use of assets
Community Support	Local engagement with Comms plan	Better facilities for local communities
Timescales	Contractual performance requirements in Agreement for Lease	The Operator takes over when repairs and maintenance works are completed
Project capacity		
Local Government Reorganisation	Aim for completion of Agreement for Lease before any S24 Direction	The proposal will benefit the future Unitary Authority
Other		

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 11.1 Winchester is a city with a rich cultural heritage, a vibrant creative community and a growing recognition of the role culture plays in driving social, economic and civic outcomes. The recently adopted Winchester Cultural Strategy sets out a bold ambition to harness the district's heritage, creativity and partnerships to deliver a more inclusive, diverse and sustainable cultural ecology.
- 11.2 Alongside this, the Winchester District Tourism Strategy identifies a significant opportunity to grow the value of the visitor economy by attracting more higher-value overnight visitors. Whilst Winchester attracts millions of visitors each year, the majority are day visitors and the strategy recognises that the district has a relatively limited supply of visitor accommodation compared with similar heritage destinations. Research undertaken to support the strategy demonstrates that overnight visitors contribute significantly more to the local economy through spending on accommodation, food and drink, retail and cultural activities.
- 11.3 Whilst the Guildhall will not directly address the accommodation challenge, it has an important role to play in strengthening Winchester's overall visitor offer and enhancing the city's already strong cultural capital. As one of

Winchester's most significant civic and heritage buildings, the Guildhall has the potential to support the ambitions of both strategies through the delivery of a diverse programme of cultural, business and community events. A professionally operated venue will complement and strengthen the wider cultural and visitor economy, attract new audiences, increase visitor dwell time and reinforce Winchester's reputation as a vibrant year-round destination. In doing so, the Guildhall can make an important contribution to the wider ambitions of the Tourism Strategy by encouraging repeat visits and supporting increased visitor spend across the district.

- 11.4 The Guildhall stands at the heart of this ambition. As an iconic civic landmark and multi-functional venue, it has the scale, location, and symbolic value to become a cornerstone of the city's cultural future. The cultural strategy highlights both Winchester's strengths, its heritage, festivals, and creative industries, and its challenges, including gaps in infrastructure, limited diversity, and the need for stronger provision for young people and a more vibrant night-time economy.
- 11.5 A revitalised Guildhall has the potential to respond directly to these challenges. The proposed commercial model for Winchester Guildhall is designed to reposition the venue as a dynamic cultural and civic asset, balancing financial sustainability with community access and cultural ambition. The model draws on benchmarking from comparable venues and reflects best practice in live entertainment, conferencing, hospitality, and social value delivery. Its central aim is to transform the Guildhall into a vibrant, self-sustaining operation that maximises the use of its heritage spaces, strengthens Winchester's cultural offer, and contributes positively to the local economy and community wellbeing.
- 11.6 The model assumes a phased implementation, with activity building steadily across the first three years, and reaching maturity by years three to five. Growth is underpinned by investment in programming, staffing, marketing, and partnerships, supported by robust ancillary income streams and disciplined cost management.
- 11.7 This model provides a pathway for the Guildhall to transition from its current deficit position to a sustainable, commercially resilient operation that balances cultural vibrancy with financial responsibility.
- 11.8 The challenges facing the Guildhall and Abbey House are clear, but so too is their collective potential. With targeted investment in their building fabric, technical infrastructure, and environmental performance delivered in collaboration with a preferred operator tenant, both venues can be transformed from financial liabilities into flagship cultural, civic, and hospitality assets for Winchester.
- 11.9 Guildhall and Abbey House are to imminently receive investment to address repair and refurbishment. This will complement the regeneration of that part of the city that will be regenerated by CWR.

- 11.10 The marketing exercise to offer a lease will be undertaken by Blue Horizon who have provided expert consultancy advice on the future of the Guildhall and Abbey House.
- 11.11 The market analysis undertaken to date followed up by soft market testing has identified there is market interest in taking a lease of both buildings. It is recommended that the marketing offers a lease of both buildings and also as separate lots so as to maximise interest from the market. It may be that the market has an interest in one and not both buildings and so this approach will ensure the Council achieved best consideration. That lease will have to be at least 20 years to attract interest and mitigate the operator investment returns. This is not a procurement exercise it is disposal of a lease to obtain best consideration. There will not be a specification but there will be a user clause in the lease controlling what can happen in the buildings. The lease will ensure certain civic events can still take place from the Guildhall. The Council is not bound to accept the best offers.
- 11.12 The marketing exercise aims to secure an operator and to enter into an agreement for lease. The tenant can then be engaged in the finer detail of future maintenance and repair works and integrate their fit-out works in the most efficient way. Upon completion of the Council's works contract the lease would be granted to the tenant. The timing of this offer of a lease needs to dovetail with the refurbishment work so that the operator can influence the work and also follow on and complement with their investment.
- 11.13 A high level timeline to offer and enter into an operational lease with an operator is as follows,
- Subject to cabinet decision marketing to begin 28/7/26
 - Submissions from operators beginning September 2026
 - December 2026 due diligence concluded and preferred operator identified
 - February 2027 Cabinet to consider operator submission and approve entering into lease
 - •March/ April 2027 enter into agreement to lease
- 11.14 Following completion of works and lease to operator beginning the new venues will open July 2028.

12 OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1 Option 1: Select and directly appoint a qualified team to manage the Guildhall and Abbey House.

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 23 staff. Neither of these direct management models have proved to generate a profit for the Council.

This option is not recommended

12.2 Option 2: Close the buildings for public use

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 city and the loss of control this approach is not recommended.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

None

Other Background Documents:-

None

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Soft Market testing outcome – Exempt - commercially sensitive

Appendix 2: Financial Business Case – Exempt

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Forward Plan of Key Decisions

1 August 2026 – 31 October 2026

This document sets out key decisions to be taken within the next 28 days, together with any key decision by individual Members of the Cabinet and officers. It also includes potential key decisions beyond that period, though this is not comprehensive and items will be confirmed in the publication of the key decisions document 28 days before a decision is taken.

Key Decisions are those which are financially significant or which have a significant impact. This has been decided, by the Council, to be decisions which involve income or expenditure over £250,000 or which will have a significant effect on people or organisations in two or more wards.

The majority of decisions are taken by Cabinet, together with the individual Cabinet Members, where appropriate. The membership of Cabinet and its meeting dates can be found [via this link](#). Other decisions may be taken by Cabinet Committees, Cabinet Members or Officers in accordance with the Officers' Scheme of Delegation, as agreed by the Council.

Whilst the majority of the Cabinet's business at the meetings listed in this document will be open to the public, there will be occasions when the business to be considered contains confidential, commercially sensitive or personal information. The items of business where this is likely to apply are indicated on the plan.

This is formal notice under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 that part of the Cabinet meetings listed in this document may be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

If you have any representations as to why the meeting should be held in private, then please contact the Council via democracy@winchester.gov.uk . [Please follow this link to the Council's Constitution](#) which includes a definition of the **paragraphs** (Access to Information Procedure Rules, Part 4 paragraph 8.4) detailing why a matter may be classed as exempt from publication under the Local Government Acts, and not available to the public.

Anyone who wishes to make representations about any item included in the Plan please contact the Democratic Services Team prior to the meeting to make your request. Copies of documents listed in the Plan for submission to a decision taker are available for inspection on the Council's website. Where the document is a committee report, it will usually be available five days before the meeting. Other documents relevant to the decision may also be submitted to the decision maker and are available on Council's website or via email democracy@winchester.gov.uk.

Please note that the decision dates are indicative and occasionally subject to change.

If you have any queries regarding the operation or content of the Forward Plan please contact David Blakemore (Democratic Services Team Manager) on 01962 848 217.

	Item	Cabinet Member	Key Decision	Wards Affected	Lead Officer	Documents submitted to decision taker	Decision taker (Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Officer)	Date/period decision to be taken	Committee Date (if applicable)	Open/private meeting or document? If private meeting, include relevant exempt paragraph number
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Section A

Decisions made by Cabinet & Cabinet committees

1	Central Winchester Regeneration (CWR) business case	Cabinet Member for Regeneration	Yes	All Wards	Ken Baikie	Cabinet report	Cabinet	Aug-26	25-Aug-26	Part exempt 3
2	Former RPLC Site Disposal Decision	Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities	Yes	All Wards	Emma Taylor	Cabinet report	Cabinet	Aug-26	25-Aug-26	Part exempt 3
3	Land transaction (if required)	Cabinet Member for Regeneration	Yes	All Wards	Geoff Coe	Cabinet report	Cabinet	Aug-26	25-Aug-26	Part exempt 3
4	General Fund outturn 2025/26	Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation	Yes	All Wards	Liz Keys	Cabinet report	Cabinet	Sep-26	9-Sep-26	Open
5	Housing Revenue Account outturn 2025/26	Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation	Yes	All Wards	Liz Keys	Cabinet report	Cabinet	Sep-26	9-Sep-26	Open

	Item	Cabinet Member	Key Decision	Wards Affected	Lead Officer	Documents submitted to decision taker	Decision taker (Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Officer)	Date/period decision to be taken	Committee Date (if applicable)	Open/private meeting or document? If private meeting, include relevant exempt paragraph number
		n								
6	Q1 Finance & Performance monitoring	Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation	Yes	All Wards	Simon Howson	Cabinet report	Cabinet	Sep-26	9-Sep-26	Open
Section B Decisions made by individual Cabinet Members										
	Housing Complaints Self-Assessment	Cabinet Member for Good Homes	Yes	All Wards	Sarah Hobbs	Cabinet Member decision report	Cabinet Member for Good Homes Decision Day	Sep-26	9-Sep-26	Open
Section C Decisions made by Officers										
8	Treasury Management - decisions in accordance with the Council's approved strategy and policy	Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation	Yes	All Wards	Designated HCC Finance staff, daily	Designated working papers	Designated HCC Finance staff, daily	Aug-26	Aug-26	Open

	Item	Cabinet Member	Key Decision	Wards Affected	Lead Officer	Documents submitted to decision taker	Decision taker (Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Officer	Date/period decision to be taken	Committee Date (if applicable)	Open/private meeting or document? If private meeting, include relevant exempt paragraph number
Section D <i>Proposed budget timetable 2027/28</i> <i>*Not classed as key decisions as final decision taken by full Council</i>										
Page 45	9	General Fund Budget Options & Medium Term Financial Strategy	Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation	Yes	All Wards	Liz Keys	Cabinet report	Cabinet	Nov-26	18-Nov-26 Open
	10	HRA Business Plan & Budget Options	Cabinet Member for Good Homes	Yes	All Wards	Liz Keys	Cabinet report	Cabinet	Nov-26	18-Nov-26 Open
	11	General Fund Budget 27/28*	Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation	No	All Wards	Liz Keys	Cabinet report	Cabinet Council	Feb-27	11-Feb-27 24-Feb-27 Open
	12	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 27/28*	Cabinet Member for Good Homes	No	All Wards	Liz Keys	Cabinet report	Cabinet Council	Feb-27	11-Feb-27 24-Feb-27 Open

	Item	Cabinet Member	Key Decision	Wards Affected	Lead Officer	Documents submitted to decision taker	Decision taker (Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Officer)	Date/period decision to be taken	Committee Date (if applicable)	Open/private meeting or document? If private meeting, include relevant exempt paragraph number
13	<i>Capital Investment Strategy 27-37*</i>	<i>Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>All Wards</i>	<i>Liz Keys</i>	<i>Cabinet report</i>	<i>Cabinet Council</i>	<i>Feb-27</i>	<i>11-Feb-27 24-Feb-27</i>	<i>Open</i>
14	<i>Treasury Management Strategy 27-28*</i>	<i>Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>All Wards</i>	<i>Liz Keys</i>	<i>Cabinet report</i>	<i>Cabinet Council</i>	<i>Feb-27</i>	<i>11-Feb-27 24-Feb-27</i>	<i>Open</i>

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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