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ECONOMY AND HOUSING POLICY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16 September 2025

Attendance:

Councillors
Batho (Chairperson)

Chamberlain
Eve
Morris
Murphy

Gordon-Smith
Bolton
White

Other members in attendance:

Councillors Thompson and Tod

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

1. **APOLOGIES AND DEPUTY MEMBERS**

No apologies from members of the Committee were made, however, Councillor Becker, Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities and Councillor Reach, Cabinet Member for Good Homes provided their apologies.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

No declarations were made.

3. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

No announcements were made.

4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 2 JULY 2025**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 2 July 2025 be approved and adopted.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ian Tait addressed the committee regarding items 7 and 8 and a summary of his contributions were captured within those agenda items.

6. **WINCHESTER DISTRICT TOURISM STRATEGY 2026-2030 - BASELINE REPORT AND OUTLINE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Councillor Lucille Thompson, Cabinet Member for Business and Culture, introduced the item regarding the latest findings in preparation for producing a new tourism strategy. The introduction included the following points:

1. The visitor economy was highly important to the district, generating £292 million annually and supporting approximately 5,760 jobs from 8 million visits.

2. The district's offer included heritage, history, market towns, the South Downs National Park, and numerous vineyards.
3. Key findings from the consultation indicated that most visitors were day-trippers, resulting in a lower spend per visitor compared to neighbouring areas.
4. While Winchester City was accessible, reaching the rural district was more challenging.
5. There was potential to strengthen the narrative around heritage, culture, the landscape, and the district's vibrant festival scene.
6. Feedback from businesses highlighted a desire for more collaborative marketing, an effort to attract younger visitors, and improved wayfinding.
7. The current visitor motivation was mainly heritage, indicating missed opportunities with sectors such as family short breaks and younger visitors.

Andrew Gostelow, Service Lead - Economy & Tourism, provided a further introduction which included the following points:

1. The consultation also provided an understanding of what the industry required from the council, which included continuing its role in destination management and acting as a convener and supporter for the local industry.
2. The next steps involved further consultation with an advisory group of key stakeholders, followed by wider industry consultation, with the aim of bringing the final strategy to the cabinet for endorsement by the end of the financial year.

The committee was asked to note the findings outlined in the baseline report and to comment upon the emerging themes and priorities.

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

1. Clarification was sought on the visitor profile, specifically the majority of visitors who were day-trippers.
2. A question was asked regarding the consultation undertaken with rural businesses and their specific needs, including the potential market for active outdoor enthusiasts.
3. A series of questions were asked regarding visitor spend, including why a low percentage of visitors (2.7%) accounted for a high percentage of spend (19%), and what actions the council could take to encourage longer stays and increased spending, such as addressing the availability and affordability of visitor accommodation.
4. A question was asked about the potential tensions between different strategic objectives, such as preserving heritage while attracting younger visitors, and whether the strategy aimed for transformational or incremental change.

5. Clarification was sought on the approach to physical signposting and wayfinding within the city and market towns, specifically whether it should be strong or subtle to align with the new strategy.
6. A series of questions were asked about the economic impact of festivals. This included whether visitor and spend data included events like the Boomtown Festival, the financial contribution of the Foodies Festival, and whether a case could be made for extending events like the Hat Fair if they were shown to benefit the wider local economy.
7. A question was asked how the strategy would address the opportunities for tourism growth given the constraints of the public transport network and whether the Park and Ride service could be more effectively promoted to visitors as part of the strategy.
8. A question was asked whether the upcoming Norman Millennium in 2027 could be utilised in the tourism strategy, given the district's Norman links.
9. A question was asked about how the council would encourage collaboration between competing businesses and whether there had been any indications of private investment to support the strategy's implementation.
10. A question was asked about any potential 'quick wins' identified in the baseline report, such as updating information on third-party websites.

These points were responded to by Andrew Gostelow, Service Lead - Economy & Tourism, Adam Bates, Blue Sail, and Councillor Lucille Thompson accordingly.

RESOLVED:

1. That the baseline report and outline recommendations for the Winchester District Tourism Strategy 2026-2030 were noted.
2. The committee acknowledged the challenges highlighted, including the need to diversify the visitor market, encourage business collaboration, and secure investment to deliver the strategy.
3. The committee supported the progression of the strategy based on the work undertaken.
4. Officers were asked to:
 - i. Confirm whether the recent Foodies Festival at River Park was subsidised by the council.
 - ii. For future, specific festivals, such as Boomtown, to analyse the town centre footfall data to identify any significant differences.

7. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Caroline Egan, Service Lead - New Homes Delivery, introduced the item which provided an overview of the updated Housing Development Strategy 2025 to 2032. The introduction included the following points:

1. The strategy was updated due to significant economic changes, including increased interest rates and build cost inflation, and a slowdown in affordable housing providers acquiring Section 106 units.

2. The 2024 resident survey identified the availability of affordable housing as the most urgent issue facing communities, reinforcing the need for an up-to-date strategy.
3. The council's target was to add 1,000 new affordable homes to its stock between 2020 and 2032 through a combination of acquiring Section 106 units and building new homes.
4. The strategy prioritised building in areas of highest need, including rural areas, and ensuring all schemes represented good value for money.
5. The council's priority tenure was social rent, with shared ownership as the preferred low-cost homeownership option. A strong focus would be placed on the energy efficiency of all new homes.
6. Significant consultation had been undertaken with members, officers, and external stakeholders. The final strategy was scheduled to be presented to Cabinet in November 2025 for adoption.

Ian Tait addressed the committee. He noted the strategy's supportive statements regarding other affordable housing providers but questioned what tangible support the council made available to them. He referred to his recent experience with the Winchester Housing Trust but believed that when the Trust had approached the council, no support was offered.

He expressed concern that the council was now acquiring most of the Section 106 units, which could result in a shift in delivery from registered providers to the council, rather than an overall increase in affordable housing numbers.

The committee was asked to note and provide comments on the contents of the presentation.

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

1. A question was asked how shared ownership properties could be ensured to be genuinely affordable, considering issues such as high service charges and resale difficulties in rural areas where staircasing was limited.
2. Clarification was sought on how the strategy would protect residents from overheating, and whether requirements for air conditioning could be embedded in new developments.
3. A question was raised regarding the extent of consultation that had been undertaken with registered providers and what did registered providers identify as their needs from the council to encourage development.
4. A question was asked about how the strategy integrated with the homelessness strategy, specifically in planning for the types and locations of temporary accommodation required.
5. Clarification was sought on what the development strategy does once a specific housing need has been identified.
6. A question was asked about how the strategy would address the challenges of cost and land availability to deliver housing in rural areas.

7. A query was raised about what could be done to provide more single-person accommodation to meet the significant need from various groups.
8. A question was asked whether the council had engaged with potential downsizers to understand their needs and help release larger family homes.
9. A point was raised about the term 'value for money', questioning whether 'value' could be considered in a broader sense than just financial viability, particularly when addressing homelessness.

These points were responded to by Caroline Egan, Service Lead - New Homes, and Karen Thorburn - Strategic Housing, accordingly.

RESOLVED:

The committee agreed the following comments:

1. That the draft Housing Development Strategy 2025-2032 be noted.
2. That the final strategy should place a strong emphasis on proactively working with and supporting registered providers and other partners to ensure their capacity to deliver affordable housing is maximised.
3. That officers consider providing clarification on overheating solutions (e.g., MVHR, solar shading, expert advice) to the "how we will achieve this" section of the strategy.
4. Where appropriate, councillors promote awareness of Action Hampshire's rural housing enabling service to parish councils

8. **PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING**

Karen Thorburn, Service Lead - Strategic Housing, introduced the report. The introduction included the following points:

1. The draft Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2025-2030 set out how the council and its partners would respond to the risk of homelessness and the reality of rough sleeping.
2. Despite national pressures, including rising housing costs and a shortage of affordable homes, the council had successfully remained in the top 25% nationally for homeless prevention activities, and the use of bed and breakfast accommodation had been kept to a minimum.
3. The strategy was structured around four key priorities:
 - i. Making homelessness a partnership-wide priority.
 - ii. Preventing and responding to homelessness through early intervention and personalised solutions.
 - iii. Meeting complex needs to prevent rough sleeping and repeat homelessness.
 - iv. Developing sustainable, supported, and settled housing solutions.
4. The draft strategy was developed through engagement with stakeholders and service users and reflected a shared commitment to ensuring rough sleeping was rare, brief, and non-recurrent.

Ian Tait addressed the committee. He explained that he was often approached by individuals who were homeless or at risk of homelessness and had become involved in housing and benefit advocacy work. Mr Tait shared recent examples of individuals he had supported who, despite intervention, were now sleeping rough.

He acknowledged the complexity of the cases, which often involved addiction and mental health issues, and stressed the importance of treating each person as an individual with a high level of support. He expressed his hope that the new strategy would incorporate a genuine human touch.

The committee was asked to review and comment on the proposals within the attached draft report, ref CAB3508(H) which was to be considered by Cabinet Committee (Housing) at its meeting on the 4 November 2025.

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

1. Further information was sought on current homelessness trends and how these trends were projected to continue.
2. A question was asked about whether there had been an increase in older people experiencing housing issues upon retirement.
3. Clarification was sought on the impact of the withdrawal of Hampshire County Council funding and whether the proposed local government reorganisation would create further challenges.
4. A question was raised regarding the council's ability to access mental health services for its clients and whether this was an underlying issue for homelessness and rough sleeping.
5. Clarification was requested on what analysis had been undertaken to identify key local partners, such as the Royal British Legion, who could help deliver the strategy.
6. A question was asked about the increased spending on bed and breakfast accommodation, what measures were in place to ensure value for money, and whether the increase was partly due to the closure of West View House by the County Council.
7. Further details were requested regarding the average length of stay in temporary accommodation (312 days), the reasons for this duration, and how this compared to national and previous local figures.
8. A question was asked about the difference the full implementation of the strategy would make for the district's residents and what was critical for its successful delivery.
9. Clarification was sought on whether the council could provide additional financial support, given the anticipated reduction in the homeless prevention grant.

These points were responded to by Karen Thorburn, Service Lead - Strategic Housing and Simon Hendey, Strategic Director accordingly.

RESOLVED:

1. That the draft Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 be noted.
2. The committee commended the officers and partner organisations for their work in preventing homelessness and noted the significant achievements made.
3. The committee acknowledged the external challenges, including funding constraints and demographic changes, and supported the need to ensure council funding provisions continued through any period of local government reorganisation.
4. Officers to provide data on the average length of stay in temporary accommodation for the previous two years.

Note. Following the meeting, officers provided the Temporary accommodation figures for the past two years in the table below.

	Qtr 4 2023/24	Qtr 4 2024/25	Qtr 2 2025/26
Singles/Couples	31	38	48
Families	33	33	35
Total	64	71	83

9. **HOUSING COMPLIANCE POLICIES**

Gillian Knight, Corporate Head of Housing, introduced the report which was due to be presented to the Cabinet Committee (Housing) in November 2025 for approval. The introduction included the following points.

1. The purpose of the report was to seek approval and adoption of six core housing repair, maintenance, and compliance policies covering fire safety, gas and heating, electrical safety, asbestos, water hygiene, and lift safety.
2. There was a business need to navigate a complex framework of statutory obligations to ensure council homes were safe and legally compliant.
3. Pennington's Choice, specialist property and surveying consultants, were commissioned to develop the policies in partnership with the council's technical teams.
4. The presentation was to raise awareness of the policies with committee members, rather than for consultation on the content.
5. The policies were required to underpin the procurement of the housing repair, maintenance, and compliance contract, which was due for renewal the following summer.
6. The policies incorporated legal requirements such as Awaab's Law and the Building Safety Act 2022, and defined roles and responsibilities to foster a culture of respect and accountability.
7. Tenant engagement was underway, and feedback would be incorporated into the final paper to be presented to the Cabinet Committee (Housing) in November 2025.

The committee was asked to review and comment on the proposals within the attached draft report, ref CAB3520(H) which is to be considered by Cabinet Committee (Housing) at its meeting on the 4 November 2025.

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

1. A question was asked to confirm that Pennington's Choice was selected to advise on the policies due to their professional accreditation in the relevant fields.
2. Clarification was sought on how the finalised policies would be communicated to tenants in an accessible format, given the length and technical nature of the documents.
3. A question was asked about the methods for disseminating the policies to relevant technical officers and other staff to ensure they were understood and implemented correctly.
4. Further information was requested regarding the review process for the policies, including the frequency of reviews and who would be responsible for conducting them.
5. A query was raised as to whether the policies were fixed or if they could be subject to negotiation by contractors during the procurement process for the new repairs and maintenance contract.
6. A question was asked whether contractors or technical staff who would implement the work had been consulted to ensure the policies were practical.
7. Clarification was sought regarding an apparent discrepancy in the lift safety policy, where two different emergency response times were listed for an incident where a person was trapped in a lift.

These points were responded to by Yvonne Anderson, Service Lead - Housing Landlord Services and Gillian Knight, Corporate Head of Housing accordingly.

RESOLVED:

1. That the committee noted the report.
2. That the committee thanked the officer for bringing the report forward and noted that it would progress through the appropriate council committees for approval.
3. That officers clarify the response times regarding lifts as noted in sections 6.4 and 6.5 of the policy.

Note: Following the meeting, officers clarified that paragraph 6.4 of the Lifts Policy refers to a lift outage, which will be attended to within 4 hours. Paragraph 6.5 refers to a situation where a passenger is trapped in a failed lift, which will be responded to within 1 hour.

10. **TO NOTE THE COMMITTEES CURRENT WORK PROGRAMME.**
RESOLVED:

1. The Chairperson noted that he would discuss the November meeting agenda with officers.
2. It was envisaged that the Tourism Strategy would form part of the February 2026 meeting agenda.
3. The current work programme was noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 9.00 pm

Chairperson

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