

## **CABINET**

**Thursday, 20 March 2025**

Attendance:

Councillors  
Tod (Chairperson)

Cutler  
Becker  
Learney

Porter  
Westwood

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Thompson

Members in attendance who spoke at the meeting

Councillor Horrill

[Video recording of this meeting](#)

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### 1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Thompson as noted above.

### 2. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Tod and Porter declared disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of various items on the agenda due to their role 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 present.

### 4. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION IN HAMPSHIRE AND THE SOLENT - AGREEMENT TO JOINT INTERIM PLAN** (CAB3502)

Councillor Tod advised that the report had been debated at Council the previous evening and he provided a summary of the comments made for

Cabinet's consideration as outlined below.

- a) Dialogue and collaboration with neighbouring authorities should be maintained and the council should remain actively engaged in the ongoing process. Collective progress should be ensured to learn from all parties, including dissenting views. Ongoing learning and participation must be prioritised.
- b) Clarity on the engagement plan - engagement with residents was essential as specific options emerged, ensuring clear choices and input opportunities. Residents should remain central to engagement planning.
- c) The importance of equality and diversity were highlighted regarding local representation. Councils should be accessible to all, considering factors beyond age and gender, such as caring responsibilities and work. This should also be reflected in resident engagement, which should ensure all voices are heard.
- d) A robust approach regarding neighbouring authority discussions on localism, local identity, and empowering local communities was emphasised, requiring action and demonstrable work. Learning from best practices elsewhere.
- e) Core objectives included local resident interests and broader Hampshire and Solent commonality. Effective delivery across all authorities was crucial, requiring a system designed for regional functionality, irrespective of hosting authority or structure. The system's effectiveness for all residents, regardless of location, was paramount.
- f) Parishes and local communities (particular in the southern parishes) require consultation and support, ensuring their voices were heard as well as assistance with identifying potential community assets. The Winchester town would be subject to a community governance review to establish a town council, and this review must consider the town area's relationship with neighbouring authorities.
- g) Ward Councillor roles were recognised and appreciated, especially for their understanding of local communities and for their engagement with residents on the local government reorganisation process. Their feedback was highly valued.
- h) A strategic regional approach to the climate and nature emergencies was essential and appropriate representation within the interim combined authority was a means to facilitate this.
- i) Staff support was a priority during the transition of local government reorganisation.
- j) Overall, despite concerns regarding process and impact on communities, submitting the interim plan was considered the right course. Prioritising resident needs, effective service delivery, and achieving a strong council

representing local communities were paramount within a functional regional system.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillor Horrill addressed Cabinet as summarised briefly below.

Councillor Horrill welcomed the debate at council the previous evening and congratulated the Leader for his work in representing the council during the reorganisation negotiations with other authorities. She reiterated comments made the previous evening, including that the conservative group supported the proposals for devolution the Hampshire and Solent area. In relation to local government reorganisation (LGR), she emphasised the importance of local authorities driving the reorganisation themselves (rather than government) and highlighted their better understanding of residents who must be central to the proposals. She underlined the need for a sustainable solution, ensuring financial stability in the long term, acknowledging the crucial role of staff and the importance of encouraging equality and diversity in new councillor positions.

Councillor Tod thanked Councillor Horrill for her comments and her support.

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

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the submission of the joint interim plan for Local Government re-organisation in Hampshire and the Solent dated 21 March 2025 as requested by the Government be approved (Appendix 2 of report CAB3502).

2. That if any minor amendments to the proposed interim plan are agreed by the 15 Councils, the Leader of the Council in consultation with the Chief Executive has authority to approve the updated report on behalf of Winchester City Council.

3. That authority be delegated to the Leader and Chief Executive to negotiate the final business case for local government reorganisation, prior to approval by Council and submission to Government later in 2025.

**5. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

Councillor Tod provided an update regarding River Park Leisure Centre advising that having taken account of the overall economic environment for the university sector and for construction projects more generally, the University of Southampton was no longer intending to invest in the area. Council officers had been instructed to begin an open process of finding a new partner to invest in the site, subject to three conditions:

- a) The green space (for example the park, sports or play area, tennis courts or access through the site) was out of the scope for the scheme.
- b) The public would be fully consulted during the process.
- c) Provision of the skate park and indoor bowling would be protected.

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and concluded at 9.50 am

Chairperson