

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at County Hall, Glenfield on Tuesday, 18 November 2025.

PRESENT

Mr. D. Harrison CC (in the Chair)

Mr. C. Abbott CC
Mr. H. Fowler CC
Mr. C. Pugsley CC

Mr. V. Richichi CC
Mr. M. Squires CC
Mr. A. Tilbury CC

Apologies

Mr. K. Crook CC

In attendance

Mr. J. Boam CC and Mrs. D. Taylor CC.

60. Minutes of previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2025 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

61. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

62. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

63. School Places Strategy 2026-2031.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which sought approval to consult on Leicestershire County Council's draft School Places Strategy 2026-2031. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 4' is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Pugsley CC commended the work that had been undertaken to produce the draft Strategy and acknowledged the challenges associated with ensuring that sufficient school places were delivered. Members agreed that the draft Strategy set out how the Council would achieve this and the consultation would enable all stakeholders to comment.

RESOLVED:

That approval be given for a consultation to be undertaken on the Leicestershire County Council's draft School Places Strategy 2026-2031.

(KEY DECISION)

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The School Places Strategy sets out how the Council will meet its statutory duties to ensure that there are sufficient high quality school places in Leicestershire which are in the right place, at the right time. It outlines the background, principles and challenges of delivering school places in Leicestershire and how the Council will work with stakeholders to fund and deliver places between 2026 and 2031.

A public consultation on the draft Strategy will seek to confirm that the final Strategy reflects local needs and will enable stakeholder feedback to be considered before adoption.

64. Proposed Transfer of Funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2026/27.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which presented the outcome of the consultation process with schools on a proposed funding transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2026/27, along with feedback from the Schools Forum. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 5' is filed with these minutes.

There were two options for funding a sustainable outreach and graduated support offer to mainstream schools, continuing with the transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block or implementing a range of other measures to continue to fund the outreach support.

Mr. Pugsley CC reiterated that the number of children and young people with SEND in the county was growing at a faster rate than the funding available and he felt that there was a need for an ongoing outreach and graduated support offer for pupils in mainstream schools. Members of the Cabinet agreed that pursuing another Schools Block transfer was not the solution to the funding issues and were supportive of option 2, which was to support the funding of outreach and support from Oakfield School through a per-pupil contribution model.

Mr. Harrison CC commented that the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit was a significant financial concern to the Council and measures to support more children with SEND remaining in mainstream schools were essential. The model from Oakfield School would provide children and young people with the support they needed, reducing the need for specialist school places and growth on the High Needs Block budgets.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the responses to the consultation on a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant for the 2026/27 financial year be noted;

- b) That in considering the two options set out in paragraphs 48-64 of the report for funding a sustainable outreach and graduated support offer to mainstream schools through Oakfield School, the decision of the Schools Forum to not support either Option 1 (a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block) or Option 2 (a per-pupil contribution from schools to support pupil outreach support and a commitment from schools to supporting ongoing mainstream inclusion) but proposed further consultation with schools on Option 2, be noted;
- c) That the preferred option 2 for implementation be agreed, noting that if it agrees to progress with a Schools Block Transfer, the Director of Children and Family Services will be authorised to seek permission from the Secretary of State to approve a 0.5% transfer.

(KEY DECISION)

REASONS FOR DECISION:

Demand for support for children and young people with SEND in Leicestershire is growing at a significantly faster rate than was anticipated in the current Medium Term Financial Strategy, leading to an increasingly unsustainable financial position for the Council and education system in the county. These pressures are also reflected nationally. There is a need for ongoing support for inclusion and belonging of children and young people with SEND in mainstream schools, and a clear need for outreach and graduated support for pupils with additional needs following the ending of existing offers funded through the SEN Investment Fund for 2025/26. Mainstream inclusion is anticipated to be a key expectation from the upcoming Schools White Paper.

Local authorities are able to transfer 0.5% of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the DSG following consultation with schools and the approval of the Schools Forum. If the Schools Forum does not approve, or if a transfer in excess of 0.5% is being sought, local authorities can seek formal permission from the Secretary of State to disapply sections of the School and Early Years Finance England Regulations which govern the use of DSG.

This report notes the views of consultees, feedback from the Schools Forum and seeks a decision from the Cabinet on the preferred approach for funding a sustainable outreach and graduated support offer for children and young people with SEND in mainstream schools.

Should a School Block Transfer of 0.5% be the preferred option, the Cabinet's approval is necessary in order for the Director of Children and Family Services to approach the Secretary of State for permission to undertake the transfer which would be used to continue the SEN Investment Fund.

65. Response to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Regulation 18 Local Plan Consultation 2025.

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and Director of Environment and Transport which advises on the content of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council's Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation and the County Council's proposed response. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 6' is filed with these minutes.

Comments had been received from Mr. J. Melen CC in support of a written submission from Norton Heath Objection Group. These were circulated separately and a copy of which is attached to these minutes. Mr. Tilbury CC also expressed concern around the proposed Norton Heath development and the potential consequences arising from this if it was allowed to go ahead.

The Director of Environment and Transport acknowledged the concerns raised and gave assurance that these would be fully considered by the County Council as part of its role in the wider consultation process. Further discussions would also take place in light of the concerns raised ahead of any consultation on the next stage of the Local Plan process.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the County Council's response to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council's Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation, set out in paragraphs 37 to 65 and the appendix to the report, be noted and approved;
- b) That the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member, be authorised to make any minor amendments to the consultation response prior to its submission to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council by 28 November 2025, including to strongly emphasise the urgent need for further evidence on the proposed strategic development, Norton Heath, given the significant concerns the County Council has over the proposed allocation.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The County Council's response will set out key comments for consideration by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council in progressing its new Local Plan. It seeks to ensure alignment with the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan, and to influence the content of the Local Plan in the interests of local communities, including ensuring that the Local Plan provides the most robust possible policy platform for securing the provision of the infrastructure and services required to support its successful delivery.

66. Annual Delivery Report and Performance Compendium 2025.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive which presented the Annual Delivery Report and Performance Compendium for 2025, which set out the Council's progress and performance over the past year. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 7' is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Fowler CC, as the Lead Member, thanked officers for the thorough assessment in the report. Despite the funding issues faced by the Council, it remained in a relatively strong position. He also felt that it was important to address criticisms in the report.

Mr. Harrison CC commented on the good work and services delivered by the Council. He also stated that work was taking place to close the budget gap whilst ensuring that high quality service delivery for residents continued.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the progress in delivering on the Council's service priorities as set out in the draft Annual Delivery Report 2025 be noted;

- b) That the Council's low comparative funding, good performance outcomes position, and the financial pressures and risks now facing the Authority set out in the Performance Compendium be noted;
- c) That in light of the pressure on the Council's financial sustainability arising from continued service demand, improvement and cost pressures, the Council continues to press its case for a fairer funding settlement, progresses plans for a fundamental Budget and Efficiency Review and its preference to secure c£40m efficiency savings and wider benefits from a new unitary authority for Leicestershire and Rutland;
- d) That the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader, be authorised to make any amendments to the draft Annual Delivery Report and Performance Compendium prior to its submission for approval to the County Council on 3 December 2025.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

It is best practice in performance management, implicit in the LGA Sector-Led approach to local authority performance and part of the Council's Internal Governance Framework, to undertake a review of overall progress at the end of the year and to benchmark performance against comparable authorities. It is also good practice to produce an annual performance report and ensure that it is scrutinised, transparent, and made publicly available.

The National Audit Office has issued best practice guidance for annual reports, highlighting that the annual report is a key mechanism for transparent disclosure of an organisation's in-year performance and governance matters. The report should discuss how the entity has performed in the year, including areas where performance has deteriorated or is below expectations, and the other key risks.

The County Council is poorly funded in comparison with other local authorities and this, until addressed, will continue to affect delivery, performance, risks and Council Tax levels. The Annual Performance Report will be a useful source of data for the Council's Efficiency Review which is due to start this month with the aim of identifying further opportunities to reduce costs, generate income and deliver services differently.

The draft Annual Delivery Report and Performance Compendium may be modified to reflect comments made by the Cabinet as well as to include any final national comparative data which becomes available prior to its consideration by the County Council.

67. Annual Report of the Traded Services Strategy.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which advised of the performance of the County Council's Traded Services Strategy, which set out the performance of the Council's traded services. An update was also provided on the progress on exiting the school food business and engagement over the future of Beaumanor.

Mr. Fowler CC commended the work undertaken by the Services over the year, despite there being a number of challenges. Members agreed that the decision to exit the school food service was regrettable but was the right thing to do. It was felt that the option to

lease cafés could generate some revenue and members also agreed that the engagement around the future of Beaumanor Hall had been well received.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the performance against targets in the Traded Services Strategy during 2024/25 be noted;
- b) That the future developments as outlined in the report and Outlook for 2025/26 be welcomed;
- c) That the current status of the programme to exit the school food service be noted;
- d) That the current status of the engagement process for the future of Beaumanor be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The Annual Report on the Traded Services Strategy outlines the progress that has been made by the County Council (via the Leicestershire Traded Services).

The changes to the school food service and engagement programme for Beaumanor were decisions taken by the Cabinet at its meeting in July 2025.

68. Items referred from Overview and Scrutiny.

There were no items referred from Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

69. Exclusion of the Press and Public.

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 10 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and that, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information:

- Expanding Locality Based Support for Early Years Children with Additional Needs

70. Expanding Community Based Support for Early Years Children with Additional Needs.

The Cabinet considered an exempt report of the Director of Children and Family Services which sought approval to consult on the provision of increased levels of inclusion support and funding for Early Years children with additional needs to enable greater access to mainstream provisions across the county and to remove the reliance on specialist nurseries. The report also outlined the proposed changes to the way in which Early Years children with additional needs would be supported. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That a consultation process on a new model for the provision of additional locality-based inclusion support and funding for Early Years children with additional needs, as set out in the report, be approved.

(KEY DECISION)

REASONS FOR DECISION

The Council aims to enable more Early Years children with additional needs to access mainstream provision in their local communities, to reduce reliance on specialist nursery provision and ensure equity of provision across the County. This would also ensure the Council can deliver the Government's mainstream inclusion aspirations which are expected to be set out in the Schools White Paper.

Consultation with stakeholders on the proposed changes will help inform the proposals and the approach to implementation of the new delivery model.

2.00 - 2.43 pm
18 November 2025

CHAIRMAN