

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at County Hall, Glenfield on Tuesday, 24 March 2026.

PRESENT

Mr. D. Harrison CC (in the Chair)

Mr. C. Abbott CC
Mr. K. Crook CC
Mr. H. Fowler CC

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

Apologies

Mr. C. Pugsley CC

In attendance

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

94. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2026 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

95. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

96. Declarations of Interest.

Mr. D. Harrison CC, Mr. V. Richichi CC, Mr. M. Squires CC and Mr. A. Tilbury CC declared an other registrable interest in Agenda Item 14 – A511 Growth Corridor – Approval to Undertake Pre-Commencement Works and Submit the Full Business Case as members elected to represent divisions in North West Leicestershire.

97. Environment and Transport 2026/27 Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which presented the Environment and Transport Department 2026/27 Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 4', is filed with these minutes.

Members noted representations which had been received from Mr. P. King CC, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. In response, the Director of Environment and Transport reported that, in relation to the A6 around Kibworth, details had been provided on the short and long term strategy to address the issues.

In relation to flooding, the County Council was working with the Environment Agency to identify actions and solutions to mitigate the impact of flooding. It was also important to continue to work with local communities previously affected by flooding.

Members recognised the importance of the transport network and commended the work being undertaken by officers to maintain Leicestershire's roads. The capital programme for this formed an important element of spending overall and it was agreed that this recognised the challenges faced by the County Council.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the 2026/27 Programmes, noting the acute financial context in which they have been developed and will be delivered, as set out in Part B of the report, be approved;
- b) That the submission of the draft Local Transport Delivery Plan (LTDP) to the Department for Transport (DfT) on 20 March 2026 for review, to meet the DfT's requirements be noted. A separate report will be presented to the Cabinet in September 2026, prior to the submission of the final LTDP;
- c) That the Director of Environment and Transport be authorised:
 - i) Following consultation with the Director of Corporate Resources and the relevant Cabinet Lead Members, to prepare and submit bids, as appropriate, to secure external funding for delivery of schemes identified in the Programmes;
 - ii) Following consultation with the Director of Corporate Resources, the Assistant Director of Law and Governance and the Cabinet Lead Member for Corporate Resources, to enter such contracts as is necessary to progress schemes in the approved Programmes to allow early contractor involvement to take place in advance of all external funding required to deliver the scheme being secured, provided that any such arrangements are appropriately limited in scope and progressed in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules, and do not commit the Council beyond the intended early-stage works prior to the relevant funding and governance approvals being in place, noting the challenges set out in Part B of the report;
 - iii) Following consultation with the Director of Corporate Resources, the Assistant Director of Law and Governance and the Cabinet Lead Member for Resources, to undertake preparatory work as considered appropriate to develop savings as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and to consider that further savings are implemented in a timely manner.

(KEY DECISION)

REASONS FOR DECISION

To highlight the challenging financial context in which the Programmes are being developed and will be delivered.

To enable the delivery of the Programmes for the 2026/27 financial year.

To enable the delivery of large capital schemes using a collaborative approach, to work with contractors to reduce risk and increase cost certainty. Working in this way will also provide necessary assurance to partners and third-party funders contributing to the cost of delivering the Capital Programme.

To enable early work to be undertaken on the development of new savings to address the worsening financial position.

98. Delivering the Local Transport Plan (LTP4) 2025-2040 - Enabling Travel Choice Strategy.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which presented the outcomes of the initial consultation that had been undertaken to inform the development of the Enabling Travel Choice Strategy (ETCS), which formed part of the Council's full Local Transport Plan 2025-2040 (LTP4). Approval was also sought to undertake a further consultation on the draft ETCS document. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 5', is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Tilbury CC reiterated that the consultation had asked residents to comment on the barriers to travel, and the draft Strategy would address these concerns. Members agreed that it was important to ensure that communities were connected to the services that they needed.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the work undertaken to date on the development of the Enabling Travel Choice Strategy (ETCS) and the outcomes of the initial consultation held to inform its development be noted;
- b) That the draft ETCS document, attached as Appendix A to the report, be approved for consultation;
- c) That a twelve week consultation on the draft ETCS document be undertaken;
- d) That subject to the outcomes of the consultation, the Director of Environment and Transport, in accordance with the Council's Constitution:
 - i) Following consultation with the Cabinet Lead Member for Highways, Transport and Waste, the Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Public Health, Law and Governance, undertake further work to prepare a final version of the ETCS;
 - ii) Submits a further report to the Cabinet in Autumn 2026, seeking approval of the final version of the ETCS.

REASONS FOR DECISION

The ETCS is being prepared as part of the Council's full Local Transport Plan (LTP4).

The twelve week public consultation exercise will seek the views and perspective of local communities, partners and stakeholders to inform the development of the final version of the ETCS.

99. East Midlands Freeport: Change of Accountable Body and Governance Implications.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive which presented details of the transfer of the Accountable Body role for the East Midlands Freeport from the County Council to the East Midlands Combined County Authority, and outlined the key issues, governance and voting implications, along with the County Council's position. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 6', is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Fowler CC stated that the issue surrounding Leicestershire being allocated an additional vote on the EMF Board, to be exercised by one of the Leicestershire local authority representatives, was still under discussion currently. However, it was hoped that this would be resolved in the near future.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the transfer of the Accountable Body role from the County Council to the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA), along with the governance, assurance and voting implications arising from this be noted;
- b) That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Director of Corporate Resources and the Cabinet Lead Member for Resources, to take all actions and decisions required of the County Council in its capacity as a member organisation of the East Midlands Freeport, excluding any matters reserved to, or exercised by, the County Council's appointed EMF Board Director.

REASONS FOR DECISION

The transfer of the Accountable Body role is driven by national policy and ministerial directives. EMCCA is anticipated to assume responsibility as the Accountable Body for EMF, subject to approvals from the EMF Board, EMCCA Board and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This process must uphold robust governance standards, facilitate meaningful engagement from both public and private sectors, and ensure adequate mayoral oversight of EMF's strategic direction.

Any changes to EMF's governance arrangements arising from the Accountable Body transfer and the County Council's proposal will require unanimous agreement from all EMF Board members.

100. Leicestershire School Term Dates Autumn 2027 to Summer 2032.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which sought approval to consult on three potential models for Leicestershire school term and holiday dates, covering the period from autumn 2027 to summer 2032 for schools maintained by the local authority. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 7', is filed with these minutes.

Members noted representations which had been received from Mr. J. Miah CC and Ms. B. Gray CC, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. In response, Mr. Crook CC gave assurance that it was not the intention to remove the 'Leicestershire fortnight'. This was statutory consultation which had to be undertaken and provided local residents with an opportunity to have their say on the proposals being suggested.

Following discussion with the Cabinet Lead Member, it had been agreed to reconsider the models being proposed, in particular Option 2, and present a further report to the Cabinet at its meeting on 28 April. The Cabinet expressed its thanks to officers for the work undertaken on the various options, which would enable the correct decision to be made.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed term date models for Leicestershire for the academic years 2027/28 to 2031/32, in particular Option 2, be reconsidered and presented to the Cabinet on 28 April, prior to a consultation exercise being undertaken.

(KEY DECISION)

REASONS FOR DECISION

The Education Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on the County Council to determine the number of school days that schools under its control must open. The County Council is required to determine a pattern that ensures at least 380 sessions (190 days) during each school year.

A public consultation will seek feedback on potential term date models to inform a recommended model for implementation.

101. 'Belonging in Education' Strategy 2026-2029.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which sought approval to consult on the 'Belonging in Education' Strategy. The Strategy would serve as the overarching strategic framework and direction for the education system in Leicestershire, to ensure that all children and young people felt a sense of belonging in education. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Crook CC commended the draft Strategy, which had been developed through genuine co-production and had four clear priorities. He emphasised that it was essential that children and young people felt that they belonged, and the Strategy was a significant step towards improving inclusion.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the draft Belonging in Education Strategy be approved for consultation;
- b) That a further report be submitted to the Cabinet in July 2026 presenting the outcomes of the consultation and the final Strategy for approval.

(KEY DECISION)

REASON FOR DECISION

The Strategy establishes a robust strategic framework designed to align all related policies, practices and education improvement initiatives. It articulates clear aims and objectives for educational leaders and the broader Children's Partnership across Leicestershire to enhance outcomes for all children and young people. This Strategy has been developed collaboratively, particularly with schools, since the beginning of the

academic year and much of the strategic direction and themes are reflected in the recently published White Paper, 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving'. A public consultation on the Strategy will help to validate that the identified priorities reflect the appropriate focus for future improvement efforts.

102. Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026-2029 - Permission to Consult.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which sought approval to undertake a public and stakeholder consultation on the Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026-29. This had been developed following a comprehensive SafeLives Needs Assessment and extensive engagement with survivors, professionals, voluntary sector partners and statutory agencies. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Crook CC commended the draft Strategy, which built on existing work undertaken to support victims and encapsulated the voices of survivors. Members agreed that the consultation would enable further refinement of the draft Strategy, which would also ensure that children were seen as victims of domestic abuse.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the draft Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026-2029 (attached as Appendix A to the report) be approved for a twelve week consultation exercise;
- b) That a further report be submitted to the Cabinet in July 2026 presenting the findings of the consultation and a final Strategy for approval.

(KEY DECISION)

REASONS FOR DECISION

Conducting a consultation will ensure that the final Strategy reflects the views of survivors, professionals, partners and the public, and demonstrates transparency and accountability.

Consultation will allow further refinement of the Strategy, ensuring that the lived experiences of victims and survivors, including children recognised as victims under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, are embedded into the final proposals.

Consultation is required to ensure the Council is meeting its statutory duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, including responsibilities relating to support for victims and survivors in safe accommodation.

Failure to consult may result in statutory non-compliance, insufficient alignment with survivor voice, reputational risk, and weak partnership assurance as well as operational and safeguarding risk.

103. Draft Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030.

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Directors of Adults and Communities and Children and Family Services which sought approval to consult on the draft Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Abbott CC commented on the Council's commitment to supporting carers and stated that the Strategy would help to further develop the offer to carers. Mr. Richichi CC reiterated the importance of engagement, and stated that further work should be undertaken with GP surgeries to raise awareness, as these were often the first point of contact for carers.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the draft Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030 be approved for consultation;
- b) That a further report be submitted to the Cabinet in September 2026 presenting the outcome of the consultation and the final Strategy for approval.

REASON FOR DECISION

A public consultation will enable the Council to reach more carers, people who use services, professional and other interested parties to inform the priorities and implementation of the Strategy. This will build upon the pre-consultation engagement that helped to form the draft Strategy. The public consultation will target seldom heard groups of people. The consultation findings and further developed Strategy will then be presented for endorsement by the Cabinet to ensure the public are aware of the commitment the Council has to supporting carers.

104. Change to the Order of Business.

The Chairman sought and obtained the consent of the Cabinet to vary the order of business from that set out on the agenda.

105. Local Government Reorganisation - Response to Consultation.

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate Resources which presented the County Council's response to the Government consultation on Local Government Reorganisation in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Copies of the report, and the supplementary report, marked 'Agenda Item 15', are filed with these minutes.

The Scrutiny Commission had received a presentation which provided an outline of the consultation response at its meeting on 18 March. The Commission had indicated strong support for a single Leicestershire model.

Mr. Crook CC stated that the proposed response set out a clear, credible position on local government for local communities and provided an opportunity to simplify the existing local government structure. He also commented that the proposal was sensible and deliverable, and welcomed the emphasis on realism.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the consultation response be approved, for submission to the Government by the deadline of 26 March 2026, as set out in Appendices A-C of the report;

- b) That the consultation response ratings be approved, for submission to the Government by the deadline of 26 March 2026, as set out in Appendix D of the report;
- c) That the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader and the Director of Corporate Resources, be authorised to make any necessary amendments to the consultation response before it is submitted to the Government provided that these do not change the underlying principles of the response as presented in the report;
- d) That the comments of the Scrutiny Commission be noted.

(KEY DECISION)

REASON FOR DECISION

The Government is undertaking consultation on the proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland for 7 weeks between 5 February and 26 March 2026. The County Council is a statutory consultee.

106. Items referred from Overview and Scrutiny.

There were no items referred from the Overview and Scrutiny bodies.

107. 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:

- A511 Growth Corridor – Approval to Undertake Pre-Commencement Works and Submit the Full Business Case.

108. A511 Growth Corridor - Approval to Undertake Pre-Commencement Works and Submit the Full Business Case.

The Cabinet considered an exempt report of the Director of Environment and Transport which advised of the progress of the A511 Major Road Network. As the project moved towards submission of the Full Business Case to the Department for Transport for final funding and subsequent construction, authorisation was sought to submit the Full Business Case and progress a series of pre-commencement activities that would help de-risk the construction stage of the project. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 14', is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Director of Environment and Transport and the Director of Corporate Resources, following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Lead Members, in accordance with the Council's Constitution and with any necessary officer decision records being completed, be authorised, with reference to the proposed funding

arrangements and associated risks outlined in paragraphs 25-37, to undertake a series of pre-commencement works, which could include, but are not limited to:

- i) Advance diversion of Statutory Undertakers services;
 - ii) Enabling works, including site clearance;
 - iii) Advance purchase of land and property either by agreement with landowners where possible or by implementing the Leicestershire County Council (A511 Growth Corridor) Compulsory Purchase Order 2023 prior to approval of the Full Business Case (FBC);
- b) That the Director of Environment and Transport and the Director of Corporate Resources, following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Lead Members, be authorised to submit the FBC to the Department for Transport (DfT) provided that the outcome of the Contractor's target cost price exercise demonstrates the A511 Major Road Network (MRN) scheme still represents value for money and remains within the overall funding envelope.

(KEY DECISION)

REASONS FOR DECISION

As part of scheme delivery, the project team regularly review risks and programme to identify opportunities to reduce risk of delays and cost escalations. Building on lessons learned from multiple major projects delivered by the Local Highway Authority, a number of activities have been identified that would provide mitigation for potential risks associated with delay. Where actions fall within the scope of the existing permissions and budget approval these are managed through the project governance. However, the actions proposed in this report require additional funding for 'at risk' investment ahead of the final decision of the DfT's on award of full MRN funding.

The proposed scheme will be funded from a combination of Section 106 funding and grant funding under the MRN fund administered by the DfT. The full award MRN grant is subject to approval of the full business case. The business case can only be submitted once a target price has been obtained from the contractor. Whilst this work is underway, it will not be completed until June 2026 and in order to provide more certainty of the target price the advanced works have been identified. Delivering these pre-commencement works now will ultimately help to de-risk the construction stage of the project and mitigate the risk of cost escalations occurring late in the delivery programme.

In order to fund the advanced works alongside the detailed design, surveys, planning and land acquisition, it will be necessary to draw together both existing DfT funding and available Section 106 in the current financial year (2025/26) and the next financial year ahead of the FBC. It is necessary to draw down Section 106 and use a combination of grant funding in order to ensure that the proposed use of receipted Section 106 contributions falls within the scope and purposes of the relevant planning obligations secured through the Coalville Contribution Strategy (CCS).

In accordance with the DfT funding guidance, the County Council will be required to submit the FBC once the Contractor's target price is known. Whilst approval by the Cabinet to submit the FBC will achieve a key milestone in the programme, the final decision on progressing the scheme to construction will be sought from the Cabinet in Autumn 2026.

In the event the DfT rejects the FBC, the County Council is committed to continuing to deliver the A511 MRN improvements and these would be funded by additional Section 106 payments secured through the CCS. In this scenario, as the scheme would not have the benefit of the £41.7m from the DfT, the improvements would need to be delivered over a longer timeframe and in phases as Section 106 is received. The proposed advanced works would support the delivery of improvements in this scenario, albeit the benefits of the investment might not be realised for several years.

2.00 - 2.59 pm
24 March 2026

CHAIRMAN