

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at County Hall, Glenfield on Tuesday, 21 July 2026.

PRESENT

Mr. D. Harrison CC (in the Chair)

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

Mr. A. Hamilton-Gray CC
Mr. P. Harrison CC
Mr. C. Pugsley CC

In Attendance

Mrs. D. Taylor CC

Apologies

Dr. J. Bloxham CC, Mr. M. Squires CC and Mr. A. Tilbury CC

126. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2026 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

127. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

128. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

Mr. H. Fowler CC declared an other registrable interest in Agenda Item 11 – Harborough District Local Plan – as a local resident of the district.

129. Tree Management Strategy.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Growth, Environment and Transport which presented the revised Tree Management Strategy 2026-2031, which set out the approach for the management of the County Council's trees and woodlands. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 4' is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Crook CC welcomed that the Strategy set out standards for the management of all trees which were managed directly by the County Council to ensure that they complied with nationally recognised codes of practice. He commented that by adhering to the Strategy, the Council would ensure that its trees and woodlands were protected and continued to be recognised as a valuable natural asset to the county.

Mr. Hamilton-Gray CC noted that the Strategy provided a framework to ensure that the Council met its ambition to plant one million trees for Leicestershire by 2032. This would benefit local communities and help to meet the Council's commitment to improve biodiversity across Leicestershire.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the comments of the Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
- b) That the refreshed Tree Management Strategy 2026-2031 be approved.

(KEY DECISION)

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The County Council is responsible for managing trees on land within its ownership or control and, as local highway authority, for managing tree-related risks affecting the public highway. The Strategy sets out a reasonable, proportionate and risk-based approach to inspection, maintenance, prioritisation and record keeping.

The Tree Management Strategy sets out standards and procedures for the management of the tree resource under the stewardship of the County Council. It is intended to assist the Council in protecting trees and woodlands as a valuable natural asset to Leicestershire while complying with recognised industry guidance and relevant statutory duties, mitigate legal and financial risk, including claims arising from tree failure.

The Tree Management Strategy will provide a framework to support delivery of the Council's ambition to plant a million trees for Leicestershire by 2032.

130. Update on Local Government Reorganisation and Establishment of Voluntary Joint Committees.

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer which provided an update on the Government's plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and outlined proposals and recommendations relating to the establishment of Joint Committees. Since publication of the original report, the Government had announced its decision regarding LGR in Leicestershire, and an update was provided on the decision and its implications for the County Council. Copies of the report and a supplementary paper, both marked 'Agenda Item 5', are filed with these minutes.

Mr. D. Harrison CC commented that the decision was not the outcome that the County Council had argued for and was disappointed that the Government had chosen the City boundary expansion proposal. However, he stated that it was now important to protect services, support staff across Leicestershire and Rutland and ensure that the transition to the two new unitary authorities was managed properly. Mr. Harrison CC also gave thanks to the officers who had worked exceptionally hard throughout the process.

Mr. Crook CC echoed that a different outcome would have been preferable, but the focus now had to be on ensuring that the transition was delivered effectively and that residents continued to receive the services they relied on. He also wished to put on record his thanks to the officers involved in the work.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Secretary of State's decision to process with the two-unitary proposal submitted by Leicester City Council, with the requested boundary modification except for the six part-parishes identified in the Secretary of State's letter be noted;
- b) That it be noted that implementation will require a Structural Changes Order, subject to Parliamentary approval, to abolish the existing councils, establish the new unitary authorities and make transitional arrangements;
- c) That the implications for the County Council, as set out in the supplementary report, including the need to engage fully in transitional and implementation arrangements while continuing to discharge its statutory responsibilities until vesting day, be noted;
- d) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Monitoring Officer, be authorised to take such steps as are necessary, through the County Council's usual decision making and governance processes, to protect the County Council's interests during the transition, including in relation to governance, service continuity, assets, liabilities, staffing, finance, data and programme implementation;
- e) That it be agreed that further reports be brought to the Cabinet as necessary as the detail of the Structural Changes Order, implementation arrangements and programme governance become clearer.

(KEY DECISION)

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Secretary of State's decision represents a significant development in the local government reorganisation process for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Although the existing councils will continue to operate until vesting day, substantial transitional and implementation work will now be required. The Cabinet is therefore asked to note the decision, the requirement for a Structural Changes Order, and the need for the County Council to participate fully in implementation arrangements while protecting the interests of residents, service users, staff and council taxpayers.

131. Strategic Plan (2027-2031) Consultation.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Public Health, Communities, Law and Governance which sought approval to consult with residents, stakeholders and employees on the key elements of the draft Strategic Plan 2027-2031. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 6' is filed with these minutes.

Mr. D. Harrison CC commented that, as the Council transitioned to a new local government structure, it was important to have a clear and widely supported Strategic Plan to help provide continuity and maintain a strong focus on achieving positive outcomes for Leicestershire. He added that the consultation would provide an opportunity to further develop and refine the priorities for the county, and the feedback received would play a vital role in strengthening the Plan, enabling the Council to develop strategic priorities to focus on delivering the outcomes that mattered most to residents.

Mr. Abbott CC also stated that the draft Strategic Plan set out an ambitious vision for Leicestershire and would help provide a clear direction for the Council. The consultation was an important part of developing the new Strategic Plan, and the commitment to seeking a wide range of views was welcomed.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the draft Strategic Plan (2027-2031) be approved for consultation;
- b) That a further report be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 17 November 2026, presenting the outcomes of the consultation and seeking approval for the revised draft Strategic Plan (2027-2031) to the County Council for approval.

(KEY DECISION)

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The current Strategic Plan expires at the end of 2026 and therefore a revised draft Plan, covering the period from 2027-2031, has been developed.

Consultation on the key elements of the draft Strategic Plan 2027-2031 will help to ensure that the Council's ambitions for Leicestershire are informed by local insight, reflect community priorities and support effective and deliverable outcomes.

132. Annual Treasury Management Report 2025/26.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which advised of the action taken and the performance achieved in respect of the treasury management activities in the final quarter of 2025/26 and the overall position for 2025/26. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 7' is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Fowler CC noted the effective management of the Council's investments and loans during the year, and commented that the early repayment of £44m of external debt was very positive, reducing the Council's overall external debt to its lowest level. Mr. Fowler CC also mentioned that the future funding gap for the capital programme had been reduced by £19m since May 2025, and options continued to be considered to reduce this further.

Mr. D. Harrison CC also commended the excellent performance, with the reduction in external debt and debt costs, and the additional investment income all contributing to vital savings.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION:

The Authority's full adoption of the CIPFA Code of Practice for treasury management requires an annual report on Treasury Management activity and performance to be considered by both the Cabinet and the Corporate Governance Committee before the end of September each year.

133. Belonging in Education Strategy 2026-2029.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services which presented the outcome of a six week public consultation on the Belonging in Education Strategy 2026-2029 along with the final Strategy. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Pugsley CC noted that the Strategy set out a clear and ambitious vision that every child and young person in Leicestershire should be seen, heard, valued and supported within their educational setting. The Strategy had been developed collaboratively and the consultation had demonstrated strong support for its four priorities. Mr. Pugsley CC also stated that the Strategy provided a shared framework for schools, services and partners to work together to improve outcomes, and he was particularly pleased that the consultation feedback had led to an even stronger focus on inclusion, co-production with children and families, and clarity around delivery and accountability.

Mr. P. Harrison CC also commented that the Strategy reflected the consultation feedback, especially the need to strengthen SEND support, and that it recognised that belonging was vital to children's wellbeing. He said that the Strategy demonstrated the Council's commitment to an inclusive education system, where every child could belong, achieve and thrive.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the outcomes of the public consultation on the Belonging in Education Strategy 2026-2029 be noted;
- b) That the final Belonging in Education Strategy 2026-2029, as set out in Appendix A of the report, be approved.

(KEY DECISION)

REASONS 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 with stakeholders since the beginning of the academic year, with much of the strategic direction and themes also reflected in the recently published White Paper, 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving'.

The consultation findings demonstrate broad support for the strategic priorities, alongside clear feedback on the need for greater clarity on delivery, strengthened inclusion for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and a stronger emphasis on the voice of children, young people and families. The final Strategy has been updated to reflect these findings.

134. Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026-2029.

The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Director of Children and Family Services and the Director of Public Health, Communities, Law and Governance which presented the Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026-2029, following responses to a

consultation period. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Pugsley CC commended the Strategy, which set out a clear and coordinated approach to reducing domestic abuse across Leicestershire, and provided a framework for prevention, early intervention, partnership working, performance monitoring and continuous improvement.

RESOLVED:

That the Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2026-2029 be approved.

(KEY DECISION)

REASONS FOR DECISION:

Producing a Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy is a statutory duty under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

A consultation has been undertaken ensuring that the Strategy reflects the views of survivors, professionals, partners, and the public, and demonstrates transparency and accountability.

Consultation has allowed 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 document.

135. Response to Blaby Regulation 19 Local Plan Consultation.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Growth, Environment and Transport which advised of the progress of Blaby District Council's Local Plan and presented the County Council's emerging position to its Regulation 19 consultation. The report also set out the officer's recommended course of action for the County Council, in its role as Local Transport Authority, to undertake its own separate evidence work to support the progress of the Local Plan. Copies of the report and a supplementary paper, both marked 'Agenda Item 10', are filed with these minutes.

Mr. Hamilton-Gray CC stated that the Blaby Local Plan would shape growth and infrastructure across the district to 2042 and was therefore of significant importance. He acknowledged that further work was required around transport impacts and infrastructure delivery, and was keen that the right policies were in place to ensure that the highways and transport networks were fit for purpose in the future.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the proposed timetable for the progression of the Blaby District Council (BDC) Local Plan be noted;
- b) That the County Council's emerging position on BDC's Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation, set out in paragraphs 41 to 88 and the Appendix to the report, be agreed, noting in particular that the County Council:

- i. Recognises the significant challenges and pressures that Plan Making Authorities, such as BDC, are facing;
 - ii. Does not raise any fundamental issue with the Plan's spatial strategy, subject to a suitable delivery and contribution strategy, and consideration of viability implications over the plan period being set out with necessary modifications to plan policies for identified strategic sites;
 - iii. In its role as Local Transport Authority, the County Council considers that the Plan in its current form fails to meet the National Planning Policy Framework tests of soundness, insofar as its transport evidence and policy approach to mitigating cumulative transport impacts;
- c) That the Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Lead Members, be authorised to make amendments to the detailed Regulation 19 response, noting that:
- i. Amendments will take into account officers' views of the recently published Whole Plan Viability Assessment and Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
 - ii. The formal response (comprising the Cabinet report and updated Appendix) will be submitted to BDC ahead of the consultation period closing on 24 August 2026;
- d) That, in its role as Local Transport Authority, the County Council undertakes its own separate transport evidence work given the County Council's recognition of the importance of the next Blaby Local Plan to the future delivery of strategic growth and infrastructure across south Leicestershire.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The Local Plan process is the main opportunity available to planning authorities and statutory consultees to influence places on a strategic level and ensure the cumulative impacts of growth are planned for.

The County Council is therefore seeking to influence the content of the Blaby Local Plan in the interests of local communities. This includes ensuring that the Local Plan provides an as robust as possible policy platform for securing the provision of the infrastructure and services that are required to support its successful delivery.

In its role as Local Transport Authority, the County Council undertaking its own separate evidence work will provide the Local Transport Authority with sufficient evidence to appropriately demonstrate the Plan's transport impacts and associated requirements for mitigation and transport interventions. The intention is that the work would be completed and shared with the district council so as to inform discussions about, and agreement of, a schedule of proposed Main Modifications to the Plan (and to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan) to be submitted alongside the Plan.

On 25 March 2026, new regulations came into force, which meant that the Duty to Co-operate would no longer apply to new, or emerging Local Plans. Notwithstanding this change, the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) still requires "maintaining effective co-operation" across administrative boundaries (paragraphs 26-29). Inspectors are expected to continue to examine plans in line with these policies.

136. Harborough District Local Plan.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Growth, Environment and Transport which advised of the progress of Harborough District Council's Local Plan and sought appropriate delegations for the County Council to work with the District Council as required by the Inspectors ahead of the Examination in Public and the initial hearing session, which was scheduled for 12 August 2026. Copies of the report and supplementary paper, both marked 'Agenda Item 11', are filed with these minutes.

Mr. P. King CC spoke as a local member on this report. He stated that the outstanding transport matters needed to be resolved, and expressed particular concern over the A6 corridor. Mr King CC was supportive of the County Council working together with the district council to resolve outstanding issues.

Mr. Hamilton-Gray CC noted that the recommendations would enable continued collaborative working and ensure that the County Council could represent its position to the Inspectors where necessary. It was important that the County Council's response to the Regulation 19 was addressed as part of the examination process.

Mr. Fowler CC also stated that the update on key matters and next steps was a continuation of the process to date and was necessary to ensure that the interests of local communities were represented.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the proposed timetable for the progression of the Harborough District Council (HDC) Local Plan be noted;
- b) That the Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Lead Members, be authorised to work with HDC in preparing for the Plan's Examination in Public (EiP), to demonstrate effective and ongoing joint working. This includes:
 - i. To work through issues to seek to reach a satisfactory resolution to the County Council's transport concerns expressed in its Regulation 19 consultation response;
 - ii. To work with HDC with a view to signing an appropriate Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) on transport matters between HDC and the County Council as the Local Transport Authority, in accordance with the timeframe of 14 August 2026 set by the Plan's examining inspectors. The SoCG would need to include areas of disagreement where there remain unresolved concerns;
- c) That it be noted that, in the event that the County Council's transport concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved and/or it is not possible to reach agreement on a suitable and appropriate SoCG, this could pose a material risk to the continuation of the Plan through its EiP;
- d) That the Director of Growth, Environment and Transport be authorised where necessary to write to the Plan's Inspectors to update them on the County Council's position.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The County Council continues to seek to influence the content of the Local Plan in the interests of local communities, including ensuring that the Local Plan provides an as robust as possible policy platform for securing the provision of the infrastructure and services that are required to support its successful delivery.

Independent Planning Inspectors who have been appointed by the Secretary of State to conduct an independent examination into the soundness and legal compliance of the submitted local plan, have requested that Harborough District Council and the County Council work together to ensure that the Statement of Common Ground is agreed and signed to meet a deadline of 14 August 2026.

On 25 March 2026, new regulations came into force, which meant that the Duty to Co-operate would no longer apply to new, or emerging Local Plans. Notwithstanding this change, the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) still requires “maintaining effective co-operation” across administrative boundaries (as explained in paragraph 33 of the report). Inspectors are expected to continue to examine plans in line with these policies.

Transport is a significant matter in respect of this Plan. It is important that the Cabinet makes its decisions understanding the potential risks involved.

Given the significance of these transport matters, it may be necessary to update the Inspectors of the Plan on the County Council’s position as the Examination progresses.

137. Action Taken by the Chief Executive to Approve the Procurement of Two Contracts in Relation to the Crisis and Resilience Fund.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Public Health, Communities, Law and Governance which advised of action taken by the Chief Executive to approve two procurement requests concerning the commissioning of services required to deliver the Crisis and Resilience Fund between 2026 and 2029. A copy of the report marked ‘Agenda Item 12’ is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Abbott CC commented that it was appropriate to move quickly to put the scheme in place to help residents with the provision of emergency support and support to achieve longer term financial stability. It was pleasing to see that the Crisis and Resilience Fund was already making a difference.

RESOLVED:

That the action taken by the Chief Executive following consultation with the Leader to approve the procurement of contracts relating to the Crisis and Resilience Fund be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The County Council’s Contract Procedure Rules (Part 4G of the Constitution) require that where a procurement under the Rules invokes a Key Decision, then prior to the commencement of the procurement it must be taken to the Executive (the Cabinet) for approval. The Council’s Constitution (Part 3, Responsibility for Functions) provides that the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader of the Council, may take action in between Cabinet meetings which they consider is urgent subject to the detail of

such action being reported for information to the next appropriate meeting of the body concerned.

In this instance, there was no Cabinet meeting in July to enable timely approval. In order to avoid delay to critical procurement activity associated with delivery of the Crisis and Resilience Fund, the Chief Executive approved the procurement requests.

138. Items referred from Overview and Scrutiny.

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

2.00 - 2.55 pm
21 July 2026

CHAIRMAN