

Public Document Pack

Cabinet

Cab/1

Tuesday, 24 March 2026

CABINET

24 March 2026

5.00 - 8.03 pm

Present: Councillors Holloway (Chair), Wade (Vice-Chair), Bird, Moore, Nestor, Smart, A. Smith, S. Smith and Todd-Jones

Other Councillors present:

Councillors Bick, Porrer and Young

Also present (virtually) Councillors Bennett and Clough

Officers Present:

Chief Executive: Robert Pollock

Chief Operating Officer: Jane Wison

Chief Finance Officer: Jody Etherington

Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development: Stephen Kelly

Director of Economy & Place: Lynne Miles

Communities Director: Sam Scharf

Assistant Director Development: Ben Binns

Assistant Director Public Realm & Environment: Alistair Wilson

Head of Economy, Energy and Climate: Jemma Little

Inclusive Economy and Climate Manager: David Wright

Senior Development Manager: Jaques van der Vyver

Senior Policy Planner: Mark Deas

Planning Policy Manager: Jonathan Dixon

Planning Policy and Strategy Team Leader: Lauren Wilkinson

Climate Change Officer: Catherine Oakley

Climate Change Officer: Janet Fogg

Arboricultural consultant: Joanna Davies

Democratic Services Manager: Dan Kalley

Deputy Democratic Services Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

26/16/Cab Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Thornburrow.

26/17/Cab Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Reason
Councillor A Smith	26/23/Cab	Personal: Member of the Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook

Councillor S Smith	26/29/Cab	Personal: Chair of the Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly
--------------------	-----------	---

26/18/Cab Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

26/19/Cab Public Questions

Question 1:

- i. On 5th September 2022 Arbury Court Shopping Centre was nominated for inclusion on the County Council's Local Heritage List. Later that month an assessment panel of Conservation and Historic Environment Officers reviewed the nomination and determined that it had achieved a sufficiently high score against the local listing criteria for it to be taken forward for adoption by the City Council (a process which is delegated to the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service).
- ii. Could the Director of Planning or the Executive Councillor explain why, more than three years later, the findings of the assessment panel have not yet been ratified by granting Local Heritage Listing?

The Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development responded with the following:

- i. There had been a delay in considering the request whilst third party representations were considered but had recently met with the Conservation Officers to review the request and anticipated making a decision on the matter shortly.
- ii. As a result of those discussions, was now in the process of issuing a decision on the matter and expected to reach a view shortly.

Supplementary Question

- i. Had received an e-mail two weeks earlier from the 3C Shared Services Information Team stating that a decision would be made by Friday the 20th, that decision had still not been issued.
- ii. Had been unable to locate any publicly searchable background information about the representations submitted for or against the matter.
- iii. Requested whether there were anywhere these representations could be viewed and whether there was any transparency around them.
- iv. When would the decision be made, they and where it would be published once made.

The Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development said:

- i. Representations were not normally published in relation to nominations. Subject to checking whether any redactions were required, would look to see if the comments received could be available.
- ii. The scoring matrix was one adopted by the County Council and was applied consistently across the Cambridge area.
- iii. Had anticipated making the decision by 20 March 2026 but had wished to review additional information. A decision was now expected within the coming week.
- iv. Confirmed that a written notification would be provided to the public speaker once the decision had been made.

Question 2:

- i. Previously at Full Council (November 2025) and in other statements, the Council had confirmed that the present plan-configuration for the North Cambridge Development of Arbury Court, Brackley Close and Kingsway Flats and, in particular, Arbury Court, was not immutable or set in concrete. Would the Council please confirm this by indicating:
 - A. What and how many redesigns or alternative designs would be presented for community consideration before any proposal went to Planning;
 - B. That the density of housing in the North Cambridge Development would be spread across Brackley Close, Kingsway Flats and Arbury Court consistent with the footprint, capacity for housing build and surrounding landscape/area so that no part of the Development was disproportionately impacted, whilst retaining the level of build (that is, housing - plus shops) as required for ensuring council housing levels were consistent with the Council's building programme; and
 - C. That to provide greater potential for this spread of density, would the Council give consideration to including Brackley Close Flats in the plan, in addition to the planned Brackley Close Maisonettes.

The Cabinet Member for Housing said the following in response:

- i. The feedback from the last consultation showed that 61% of those people who had responded were in favour of redevelopment.
- ii. With regards to question A, the Council had on record they would undertake a further consultation in the summer before a planning submission in the Autumn.
- iii. Regarding question B, there were a number of constraints and opportunities that the Council needed to consider, and Officers would work with the planners to find an appropriate development proposal that

would be supported by the planners and would respond to the consultation feedback.

- iv. It was not appropriate to answer question C, without considering the residents in the first instance. If Officers thought there was a case for extending the red line boundary, residents directly impacted would be informed first before this was discussed in public

Supplementary Question

- i. Across Cambridge there were signs stating that ball games were not allowed. When the alternative designs were brought forward would those designs include an option that retained the play park in its current location, preserving the green space where ball games could be played?
- ii. It was also important that a paved courtyard was provided, as would allow children to sing carols during the winter months without standing on wet grass. In addition, a paved area would improve accessibility for wheelchair users, as well as for prams and buggies.
- iii. Would one of the alternative proposals include both the retention of the existing grass area and the provision of a paved courtyard?

The Cabinet Member for Housing said the following:

- i. Currently there were no plans in place, when ready the Council would make sure that everyone was informed.
- ii. Was aware that some parks did display “no ball games” signs, but this varied from park to park. Could not say at this stage whether such a sign would be put up, but the information would be shared once available.

Question 3:

- i. Had been told that alternative options for the Arbury Court Development were being considered. However, what are the plans for developing these and how, and when, would there be a consultation with the public about these. Would there be options that keep the current park?

The Cabinet Member for Housing said the following:

- i. Early development proposals at Arbury had been shared and the engagement report has been published.
- ii. Officers were working through the feedback, undertaking surveys, and working with planning colleagues to review next steps, which took time to ensure it was properly completed.
- iii. Had gone on record that that the Council would consult on updated designs before a planning submission. The strong feedback on the park along with the support for redevelopment has been noted in the engagement report.

26/20/Cab Draft Greater Cambridge Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document Adoption

The Deputy Leader introduced the report.

The report referred to the draft Greater Cambridge Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which once adopted would be a material consideration in the determination of planning Page 17 applications. The SPD would support the Council in securing infrastructure necessary to provide for the needs generated by new development. It would also improve the process of negotiating, preparing and completing a S106 agreement.

In response to questions from Cabinet Members and those Councillors present, the Leader and the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development said the following:

- i. Noted the comment by the Cabinet Member for Safety, Wellbeing and Tackling Homelessness regarding the Health Scrutiny Committee meeting with representatives from primary care and the Integrated Care Board. It had been confirmed that developer contributions and Section 106 funding for both physical infrastructure and primary care services required a more strategic, coordinated approach. The Board's representatives indicated they were willing to meet with the Planning Service to explore options. Highlighted the relevance of this issue given the scale of local development.
- ii. Welcomed the comments made by Councillor Porrer that she was supportive of the SPD.
- iii. The SPD cross-referenced the Housing Strategy; the Housing Strategy was not before Cabinet at this meeting.
- iv. Noted that the overall approach to housing tenure mix and split was interpreted by the Housing Team on a case-by-case basis, taking account of site characteristics, location, and suitability for different uses.
- v. The SPD signposted that decisions on tenure and affordable housing rates were determined through the joint Housing Strategy prepared with South Cambridgeshire District Council, and reflected the approach set out.
- vi. It was shown on the Housing Strategy, 25% of homes on sites of 10–14 dwellings were required to be affordable, rising to 40% on sites of 15 or more dwellings. This was provided as a helpful reference point.
- vii. Important to highlight the City Council's strong record of delivering new social housing, noting that approximately 700 new council homes had been built over the past eight years, with plans for a further 1,300 over the next ten years

Cabinet **unanimously resolved** to:

- i. Agree the draft Greater Cambridge Planning Obligations SPD (attached at Appendix 1 of the Officer's report) and accompanying Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) (Appendix 2) are formally adopted subject to any changes following the Cambridge City Council Cabinet.
- ii. Agree that any subsequent material amendments following the SPD's adoption to be made by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport, and that any subsequent minor amendments and editing changes that do not materially affect the content prior to consultation be delegated to the Joint Director of Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport.

26/21/Cab Climate Change Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Environment introduced the report.

The report referred to the new Climate Change Strategy which built upon the previous strategy and progress to date and takes account of changes in national policy and context. It also set out how the Council plan to work towards its net zero vision for the city and net zero target for the Council by 2030; and to deliver the associated benefits of improved health, wellbeing, and livelihoods for current and future generations.

In response to questions from Cabinet Members and those Councillors present, the Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Environment said the following:

- i. Welcomed the comment highlighting that the work that was being with community groups; collaborative work with community groups had significantly increased.
- ii. The former single group, Cambridge Climate Leaders, had been divided into two groups, Cambridge Climate Leaders demonstrated clear action-focused outcomes. The Cambridge Climate Forum, comprising community groups across the city worked on environmental issues which was an invaluable resource for the City Council. The intention was to strengthen this partnership further, to ensure it became a strategy for the whole city rather than solely for the City Council.
- iii. Noted the following comments made by the Chair of the Services, Climate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

- The Member stated that the Committee fully recognised the importance of climate change. There had been some concern about the deliverability of the strategy should major projects, such as the city centre heat network and the Civic Quarter scheme not proceed, given the scale and ambition of these initiatives.
 - The Committee also highlighted that the City Council's own emissions represented only a small proportion of citywide emissions, and felt it was important to continue working collaboratively with other organisations and groups to encourage wider action on reducing carbon footprints.
 - The Committee expressed strong approval for the innovative work underway, including efforts to address water scarcity, and acknowledged the use of offsetting only as a last resort. Overall, the scrutiny committee had given its broad support to the strategy.
- iv. Acknowledged that the deliverability of some projects carried risk due to their scale and ambition. This reflected the Council's aspirations but also the fact that lower-cost, easier measures had largely already been implemented. Further progress would therefore require addressing more complex and challenging actions.

Cabinet **unanimously resolved** to:

- i. Note progress made in carbon reduction and the high international ranking of the Council and the City for work to address Climate Change
- ii. Note the outcome of the public engagement and feedback of the Services, Climate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- iii. Approve the new Climate Change Strategy (2026-2031).

26/22/Cab Biodiversity Strategy Mid-term review (2022 - 2025) and Action Plan (2026 - 2031)

The Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Space and City Services introduced the report.

The report referred to the revised Strategy incorporated consultation feedback while retaining the supported vision, themes, and objectives. It added new actions and projects to reflect the statutory Biodiversity Reporting Duty, the Urban Forest Strategy, the emerging Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the BIG Chalk partnership, and the ambition to work with communities toward future Nature City Accreditation.

In response to questions from Cabinet Members and those Councillors present, the Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Space and City Services said:

- i. Targeted community support had been provided through several programmes, including Nature City Accreditation to help residents, businesses, and institutions improve local spaces; promotion of the Parks Biodiversity Toolkit to enable communities to enhance nearby parks with planting, ponds, or wildlife corridors; and the Nature Recovery From the Ground Up programme, supported ward-based Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) delivery over four years, focused on areas with the poorest access to greenspace.
- ii. Additional support had been offered for Friends Groups, volunteering, swift boxes, neighbourhood canopy projects, and community nurseries for elms and black poplars, which provided practical opportunities for community participation regardless of neighbourhood constraints.
- iii. The 2026 consultation showed strong support for publicly sharing progress on the Council's biodiversity ambitions. Annual reporting would continue through an online Biodiversity Strategy Progress Report, outlining project delivery, habitat condition changes, and progress against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) such as biodiversity net gain.
- iv. Regular biodiversity updates would continue in the Council's monthly newsletter, Cambridge Matters, alongside a bi-monthly online chalk streams newsletter for Councillors and communities.
- v. The Council would work with the Combined Authority and partners to develop shared performance monitoring for LNRS delivery. Together, these tools would provide a clear year-on-year picture of improvements and areas needing further focus.
- vi. Residents should expect clear, place-based improvements across the city, such as the expanded wetlands at Logan's Meadow, new diverse habitats were already attracting water voles, otters, and kingfishers. More species-rich grasslands and wildflower areas would replace closely-mown turf in parks and on commons, while the Urban Forest Strategy would deliver additional shade trees and climate-resilient planting on streets and estates, creating greener, cooler neighbourhoods and better habitats for wildlife.
- vii. Chalk streams one of Cambridge's most distinctive habitats, making improvements especially significant. The Council's wider streams project used restoration, monitoring and citizen-science to support long-term recovery in watercourses such as Cherry Hinton Brook and Hobson's Brook. The outcomes were intended to be visible to the public through clearer, healthier and more natural streams that better support wildlife and are easier for residents to value.
- viii. Practical improvements would also be seen in parks through enhanced meadows, wetlands and pollinator habitats, and in short streams through more natural banks, cleaner gravels, improved flow and stronger aquatic

vegetation, demonstrating measurable biodiversity net gain on the ground.

- ix. Noted the comments made by the Chair of the Services, Climate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
- The Committee expressed broad approval for the policy.
 - Members noted that the definition of measurable net gain needed strengthening, as it appeared vague.
 - Highlighted the importance of joint working with external partners and effective communication with the public and community groups.
 - A discussion took place regarding the impact of dog fouling on soil composition and biodiversity, illustrating some of the practical challenges in delivering the strategy.
 - Overall, the Committee was supportive of the strategy.

Cabinet **unanimously resolved** to:

- i. Note the outcome of the midterm Biodiversity Strategy review, public consultation and recommendations of the Services, Climate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- ii. Approve the content of the midterm review of the Cambridge City Council Biodiversity Strategy (2022 – 2031) for corporate design and publication.

26/23/Cab Urban Forest Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Space and City Services introduced the report.

The report referred to the Urban Forest Strategy 2026-2036 (UFS). This would provide the Council's strategic framework for protecting, managing, and growing Cambridge's Urban Forest over the next decade.

In response to questions from Cabinet Members and those Councillors present, the Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Space and City Services and Assistant Director, Public Realm and Environment said:

- i. The Urban Forest Strategy built on the existing Tree Strategy and projects such as Cambridge Tree Canopy Project. It strengthened data, engagement and shifted from a Council-led approach to a whole-city urban forest model, with measurable outcomes and ward-level analysis.
- ii. A new tree dashboard was being developed to support decision-making for households, land managers, and planners.

- iii. The strategy recognised that most canopy was on private land and needed both influence and management.
- iv. Cambridge was among the leading authorities taking this data-led whole-city approach.
- v. Coleridge Ward had seen the largest canopy gains.
- vi. Priorities included sustaining progress through continued planting, protecting existing trees, and enabling more trees to reach maturity to improve street presence and shade.
- vii. The Council managed only a portion of the city's tree canopy, with a substantial proportion of it located on private land, institutional estates, and the highway network.
- viii. The Urban Forest Strategy took a whole-city approach, setting out how the Council would provide leadership and work collaboratively with landowners and agencies. This approach aimed to ensure decisions were coordinated, evidence-based and defensible, recognising that the strategy was about influencing and partnering rather than assuming control of assets the Council did not own.
- ix. Held a database on canopy composition, including tree types, sizes, and overall canopy cover, as well as detailed information on land types across wards. This enabled targeted policy decisions on planting locations and volumes.
- x. Larger gardens in the west of the city allowed for encouraging private garden planting, while in the east, with smaller gardens, planting in open or communal spaces was prioritised.
- xi. Species selection was also guided by the data to improve climate resilience, considering not only tree numbers but also types, sizes, locations, and the environmental impact they created in those spaces.
- xii. Noted that the Services, Climate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee had reviewed the strategy, with no comments but general approval.
- xiii. Noted the following comments made by the Green Party, Opposition Leader:
 - Expressed appreciation for the prompt and thorough support provided by Officers and reiterated support for the Urban Forest Strategy.
 - Welcomed the guidance on planting and the good-practice material on appropriate planting strategies and building near trees but noted that this information was not always reaching residents; asked what could be done to ensure people know what to plant, where to plant it, and how to report threats to trees quickly.

- xiv. The strategy set out high-level principles, including the need of increased planting, but residents would need practical guidance on choosing the right tree for the right place.
- xv. The Council already had guidance on tree planting, locations, and species choice on its website. Officers would consider how this information could be given greater prominence. With additional resources secured through the budget-setting process, Officers could take this forward with the Tree Team to support implementation and accelerate delivery of the strategy's outcomes.
- xvi. Tree planting was a long-term project, noting that today's actions would shape the city for future generations.
- xvii. Emphasised the importance of planning for a leafy Cambridge for residents now and for children and future communities and expressed gratitude for the work being undertaken.

Cabinet unanimously resolved to:

- i. Approve the Urban Forest Strategy 2026-2036 (v5) and the supporting Topic Papers.
- ii. Note Scrutiny Committee's consideration of the Strategy's development history and consultation process (see section 6.4 of the Officer's report).
- iii. Endorse the proposed Delivery Framework (see Appendix 6 of the Officer's report), Policies, Actions and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as the basis for delivery and monitoring of the Strategy.

26/24/Cab City Centre Heat Network

The Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Environment introduced the report.

The report referred to the development of an outline Business Case for a Cambridge City Centre Heat Network. The Detailed Project Development (DPD) proposed a network using air source and river source heat pumps supported by a transition to electric boilers from gas boilers to generate energy. A Memorandum of Agreement had been jointly signed with Cambridgeshire County Council and 19 Academic institutions with significant heating demand in the city centre.

In response to questions from Cabinet Members and those Councillors present, the Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Environment said:

- i. Noted the Cabinet's enthusiasm for the project, noting its strong potential to deliver significant benefits for Cambridge if it proceeded and highlighting the environmental benefits of slightly cooling the river and

- the potential to create new, varied habitats through the way water and welcomed the progress of the project.
- ii. Welcomed the comment that the project offered a meaningful way to address the climate crisis and could also deliver long-term financial savings. The project represented the Council as a community leader, bringing together numerous colleges typically not known for collaboration. The project would enable heritage buildings to be preserved while being decarbonised.
 - iii. Noted the comments of the Chair of the Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
 - Governance: the need to establish robust arrangements, provide updates when the Green Heat Network Grant was confirmed, and consider governance models involving elected councillors.
 - Partnership working: close coordination with partners, including South Cambridgeshire, particularly as the business case moved forward.
 - Costs and technology: monitoring project costs, clarifying the planned reduction in gas-boiler use against expected financial benefits, coordinating with utilities, and keeping future expansion options under review.
 - Risk management: considering consequences of not proceeding, reviewing assumptions such as the net-present-value hurdle rate, managing risks linked to utility trenching, local government reorganisation, grid capacity, potential cost overruns, and licensing requirements for river extraction.
 - Communications: ensuring clear communication to residents about the project's benefits, learning from similar schemes elsewhere, and coordinating utility works during the build-out stage. Ongoing engagement with elected councillors was also requested.
 - The Committee was broadly supportive of the recommendations, subject to Scrutiny comments.
 - iv. Confirmed the Cabinet report had been edited to reflect the comments made by the Scrutiny Committee and had noted all comments particularly those relating to the later stages of the project.
 - v. A group of Council representatives (Councillors and Officers), partners, and colleagues from other UK authorities working on district heat networks had been invited by the Danish Embassy to visit established schemes in Denmark. The delegation would travel in April to learn lessons from these projects as learning from other schemes was vital.

- vi. The Council had been successful to date in securing government funding to support feasibility and earlier project stages, and continued government support was considered essential for progressing the scheme.
- vii. A significant benefit would be improved energy security. The scheme would enable the city centre, and potentially wider areas to generate its own energy in future. At present, energy costs were tied to gas prices, but hoped that this would change, potentially allowing the district heat network to deliver financial savings as well as environmental benefits.

Cabinet **unanimously resolved** to:

- iv. Agree to support the next steps in this transformative project to decarbonise a significant portfolio of Council and Academic estates in the city centre of Cambridge.
- v. Agree to support the Draw down of £0.6m from the Council's Climate Change Fund to fund pre-commercialisation activities
- vi. Agree to delegated authority to the Assistant Director, Development in consultation with the Director of Economy & Place and the Chief Finance Officer to submit a bid to the Green Heat Network Fund (GHNF) in 2026 to bring forward a City Centre Heat Network. This will require the council to:
 - 1. Enter into an updated Memorandum of Agreement with Academic Partners and County Council.
 - 2. Appoint a Specialist delivery Contractor to undertake design and commercialisation plans 1.4

That Cabinet **unanimously noted**:

- i. subject to the additional project development a final decision on whether to proceed would be brought to Cabinet and then to Full Council no later than March 2028
- ii. Connecting a heat network to Council assets would enable budgetary savings and carbon benefits for the Civic Quarter project compared to the business case estimates presented to Cabinet in September 2025.
- iii. At this outline stage the estimated project cost could be up to £121m, with the council share of £4m equity, £4.2m connection fees and a £18.4m loan at a rate compliant with Subsidy control.
- iv. With planned Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), and conditions arising from a Structural Changes Order (SCO), it is recognised that this final decision to proceed or not will need scrutiny and agreement from the Shadow Authority.

- v. Feedback to Cabinet from the Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 3rd March 2026 will be issued separately.

The meeting broke for 10 minutes at the conclusion of this item.

26/25/Cab Transition Plan – Guildhall and Corn Exchange

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Economy and Skills Labour introduced the report.

The report referred to the closure of the Corn Exchange and Guildhall from December 2026 as part of the approved Civic Quarter Programme. The report sought approval to progress the temporary venue option to planning and preparatory procurement only. It is estimated that c£60,000 of costs ahead of any final decision will be incurred covering legal, planning and specialist venue and sound consultants.

In response to questions from Cabinet Members and those Councillors present, the Cabinet Member Culture, Economy and Skills Labour, the Leader and Director of Communities said:

- i. Welcomed the comment a pragmatic approach had been taken to retain and provide consistency for the staff at the Corn Exchange which was an important message to communicate.
- ii. As options for a temporary venue continued to be explored, consideration would be given to how the venue would be publicised, how people would access it, and the implications of locating it outside the city centre.
- iii. Welcomed the comment there was a strong value-for-money case. Noting that the value derived not only from maintaining cultural events for the public but also from retaining and utilising the skilled staff and sustaining key relationships with agents who booked the venue. This continuity was considered critical to ensuring that once the Corn Exchange reopened audience levels could be rebuilt if not increased beyond current levels.
- iv. In terms of reputational damage, the temporary venue(s) was identified as risk-mitigation measure linked to the Civic Quarter business case, not a discretionary cultural add-on. Doing nothing posed the highest financial and reputational risk, including audit concerns, promoter disengagement, and a 12–24-month delay in recovery.
- v. The temporary venue(s) would protect the Council's investment, the city's cultural ecosystem, and significant associated economic activity.

- Although some risk remained, inaction would carry greater reputational consequences and believed audiences would understand the reasoning.
- vi. Officers had visited Orchard West in Dartford, where a temporary venue had been constructed, and had used this to inform adjustments to the Council's modelling. The projected 50–60% level was based not only on reduced capacity which was lower than the Corn Exchange's current 1,600 seats, but also on programming limitations. It would not be possible for any temporary venue to equal the full programme delivered across the Guildhall and the Corn Exchange. The figure therefore reflected both capacity and programming assumptions, supported by the performance of a comparable venue.
 - vii. Noted further comments made by the Leader of the Liberal Democrats:
 - The group remained sceptical about the proposal and believed the evidence presented was insufficient to justify progressing to a planning application or incurring the associated costs.
 - Emphasised the primary priority for the Civic Quarter project should be reducing overall costs and improving the financial payback. It was not proven that adding an additional £1 million to an already expensive scheme would reduce risk but might increase it.
 - Alternative, less costly and less risky options could be explored to mitigate any delays to reopening and audience recovery.
 - The proposal felt premature and it was important to recognise that the sum in question would be in addition to the existing high project cost. This was not being debated as million pounds, but a million pounds on top of an already expensive project; the cost should be reduced and the payback increased.
 - viii. Important to note that while the financial case centred on enabling the Corn Exchange to reopen at pace and return to full, potentially higher capacity, the Council also had responsibilities to its staff and to the wider local economy. These objectives needed to be balanced and did not consider the proposal premature, if the Council wished to proceed, it would need to bring it forward quickly given the Civic Quarter project timelines.
 - ix. £1 million referenced was an already-approved earmarked reserve within the 2026–27 budget and therefore did not represent an additional cost. The substantive decision would come forward in September; the current request was to authorise the initial £60,000 within that provision.

Cabinet **unanimously resolved** to:

- i. Approve progression to planning submission for a temporary performance and events venue to support the transition period during the

- closure of the Corn Exchange and Guildhall, subject to statutory processes and continued engagement.
- ii. Note that preliminary expenditure within the £1million approved provision will be incurred prior to a planning application and September Cabinet decision on the Civic Quarter project.
 - iii. Approve progression to procurement of required venue infrastructure, equipment, and ancillary services, in preparation for a final decision in September.
 - iv. Note the indicative programme and key delivery milestones.
 - v. Note that alternative transition options have been considered and assessed.

26/26/Cab Consultation on the establishment of a centrally led Urban Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge

The Leader introduced the report.

The report referred to the Government proposals for a Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge. The Corporation would cover the areas of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. The purpose would be to accelerate economic growth in and around Cambridge over the next 25 years.

In response to questions from Cabinet Members and those Councillors present, the Leader said:

- i. Highlighted the summary of feedback from a meeting of the extraordinary Council held on 19 March 2026, where Members held a substantive discussion on this topic and expressed a range of views. There had been considerable agreement on several elements of the proposals, alongside some areas of disagreement.
- ii. Summarised concerns regarding the Government's proposals to remove planning powers from local authorities. They noted that the proposals covered two areas:
 - Plan-making powers, which would be transferred immediately but not used until after adoption of the next Local Plan, expected around 2029.
 - Planning determination powers, under which the Development Corporation would determine applications for larger sites, while local authorities would retain responsibility for smaller applications.
- iii. Key concerns included the loss of local democratic accountability, the reduced ability for residents' voices to influence planning decisions, and

- the view that elected local authorities were best placed to balance competing considerations.
- iv. Highlighted the robust performance of the current democratically controlled planning service, noting 37,000 approved but unbuilt homes, the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan due for submission later in the year, and the high level of community engagement with over 100 events held during the most recent consultation. Such engagement would not be achievable under an unelected body.
 - v. Noted the comment regarding the potential for unrestricted growth with no master planning in place.
 - vi. Believed the central issue was the democratic deficit created by moving planning powers from elected local authorities to a Development Corporation, stressing that residents currently influenced decisions through their elected representatives, the Government and the Development Corporation must justify how a new planning committee would operate differently and sufficiently better to warrant removing these powers.
 - vii. Question what a Development Corporation Planning Committee would do that was sufficiently different or better, and whether creating an entirely new committee could be justified when it would still be bound by the same national planning laws.
 - viii. Although planning was a quasi-judicial function, elected councillors retain a closer and more accountable relationship with residents than appointees who may not live in the city and are not directly elected. The justification for such a transfer of powers should come from Government and the proposed Development Corporation.
 - ix. Noted the comment made that the proposals undermined the Council's best-value duty, transferring profitable planning functions to a Development Corporation would leave the Council with a significant budget gap, harm recruitment, and retention, and weaken service quality. The Development Corporation should instead focus on long-standing infrastructure deficits, such as wastewater capacity and grid limitations before attempting to accelerate growth. The growth assumptions, particularly for the life sciences sector, were uncertain and required stronger national support. It was concluded that the proposals needed substantial improvement and warned that pursuing the transfer of planning powers would be detrimental.
 - x. Highlighted that much of the planning process occurred before applications were formally determined, involving substantial engagement between developers and the planning service. Transferring this work to a Development Corporation would further reduce the influence of the local

authority and elected representatives over major schemes and how the city developed.

- xi. Noted the following points raised by Councillor Porrer:
- The Planning Committee always abided with the National Planning Policy Framework who considered applications where there has been an objection(s).
 - Stressed the importance of retaining cross party locally elected councillors in planning decisions, noting that councillors played a vital role in explaining decisions to residents and maintaining accountability.
 - Transferring functions to a Development Corporation could weaken enforcement, risk losing experienced officers, and undermine a high-performing planning service.
 - Agreed that the main concerns related to the proposed removal of plan-making and development-management powers and reiterated that infrastructure must be addressed first.
- xii. Noted the comments made by the Leader of the Liberal Democrats:
- Mistake not to have taken a vote on this matter at the extraordinary Council meeting.
 - The Cabinet debate seemed to have gone from a clear consensus at Full Council, where all contributions had warned against creating a democratic deficit, with a comment now made that was not so important. Urged the Leader not to be swayed from that position when finalising the response.
 - The comments collated from Full Council by the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development was a fair and accurate representation.
 - Democratic accountability remained a central concern, as planning decisions involved a long, formative process, not just the final committee vote. Major applications, such as Cambridge East or North East Cambridge, would directly shape the existing urban area, making it essential that the Council retained control throughout.
 - Asserted reassurance that democratic deficit would be fully addressed in the Council's consultation response and noted that this had consistently been a core theme in their own contributions.
- xiii. The consultation consisted of 13 questions relating to the Government's proposal for a Development Corporation. The Council's response would be submitted in accordance with the Constitution agreed in May of the previous year, with the Leader holding ultimate responsibility for government consultation submissions. It would not have been practical

to vote on the precise wording of every part of the response, the views expressed were extremely helpful and would be fully considered.

- xiv. Confirmed they would be happy to share the draft response with group leaders before submission and the issue of democratic deficit would be included as had indicated in public debate.
- xv. Would encourage all residents to take part in the consultation.

[Greater Cambridge Development Corporation: Consultation - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - Citizen Space](#)

The Chair sought general assent that the Cabinet had considered the feedback from the extraordinary Council meeting held on 19 March and had provided sufficient advice for preparing the final response to the consultation on the proposal to establish a centrally-led Urban Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge. Members were reminded that they could submit any further advice after the meeting and that the draft would be shared with Opposition Group Leaders.

26/27/Cab Local Nature Reserve Designations in Cherry Hinton

The Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Nature, Open Space and City Services introduced the report.

The report referred to, a joint public consultation on the draft Biodiversity Strategy mid-term review and the draft Urban Forest Strategy was carried out via the City Council's Go Vocal portal from 7 January to 10 February, with a further one-week extension granted for email responses at the request of specific groups.

The strategy action plan proposed the designation of two new Local Nature Reserves in Cherry Hinton. These received support through the consultation, and, if approved, the Council would seek formal declaration through the statutory Natural England process during 2026.

In response to questions from Cabinet Members and those Councillors present, Nature, Open Space and City Services said:

- i. Noted the comments regarding Cambridge becoming a butterfly-friendly city work on the Cambridge butterfly trail had revealed that the Fulbourn Road open space was being considered for nature reserve status partly due to its increasingly important butterfly habitat.
- ii. The Member also emphasised the importance of creating connected nature networks, aligning with county-wide work, so that wildlife could

- move between sites rather than being confined to isolated biodiverse areas.
- iii. Establishing smaller new nature reserves would benefit not only local flora and fauna but also residents' physical and mental health. They reiterated their support for the proposals.
 - iv. Agreed that creating biodiversity corridors was essential and had agreed to speak residents in Coleridge ward about linking green spaces to support such corridors. Expanding these connections would significantly benefit the environment across the city.

Cabinet **unanimously resolved** to:

- i. Approve the proposed Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designations of Fulbourn Road Open Space, Cherry Hinton 2.
- ii. Approve the proposed Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designation of Church End, Cherry Hinton

26/28/Cab Greater Cambridge Authority Monitoring Report 2024-25

The Leader introduced the report.

The report referred to an overview of some of the key public sector reforms that will impact on the council in 2026-27. An annual report on the work of the key strategic partnerships that the council was involved in 2025-26 and an overview of their priorities for 2026-27.

The Leader noted the following comments made by those present:

- i. Highlighted the inclusion of bus franchising highlighting the initiatives which provided low cost or free travel, including free pre 9:30 travel for concessionary bus pass holders across the Cambridge and Peterborough area and the Tiger Pass.
- ii. Noted the role of young people, particularly through Citizens UK, in the campaign to retain the Tiger Pass.
- iii. Highlighted the Council's designation as a Youth Guarantee Trailblazer which was a significant achievement.
- iv. Commended the Region of Learning team, noting that their long-standing work on digital badging which had now been adopted and showcased by the Combined Authority.
- v. The Tiger Bus initiative had originated as a pledge from the Youth Assembly as part of the Youth Strategy.
- vi. Commended the strong work of the Community Safety Partnership, noting that this was clearly presented in the report.

- vii. To note the forecast funding gap arising as the Greater Cambridge Partnership progressed through the statutory processes and approvals for the sustainable transport routes. They noted that securing medium-term funding for delivering these schemes should be identified as a priority within the report.

Cabinet **unanimously resolved** to:

- i. Endorse the work programme for the council's Strategy team for 2026/27 as set out at 4.2 of the Officer's report, including keeping abreast of public sector reform initiatives that will impact upon the Council.
- ii. Note the achievements and progress of the key strategic economy, health and community safety-related partnerships that the council is engaged with, as detailed in section 5 of the Officer's report.
- iii. Endorse the importance of partnership working in the context of a changing public sector landscape.

26/29/Cab Strategic Policy and Partnerships Report

The Leader introduced the report.

The report referred to an overview of some of the key public sector reforms that will impact on the council in 2026-27. An annual report on the work of the key strategic partnerships that the council was involved in 2025-26 and an overview of their priorities for 2026-27.

The Leader noted the following comments made by those present:

- i. Highlighted the inclusion of bus franchising highlighting the initiatives which provided low cost or free travel, including free pre 9:30 travel for concessionary bus pass holders across the Cambridge and Peterborough area and the Tiger Pass.
- ii. Noted the role of young people, particularly through Citizens UK, in the campaign to retain the Tiger Pass.
- iii. Highlighted the Council's designation as a Youth Guarantee Trailblazer which was a significant achievement.
- iv. Commended the Region of Learning team, noting that their long-standing work on digital badging which had now been adopted and showcased by the Combined Authority.
- v. The Tiger Bus initiative had originated as a pledge from the Youth Assembly as part of the Youth Strategy.
- vi. Commended the strong work of the Community Safety Partnership, noting that this was clearly presented in the report.

- vii. To note the forecast funding gap arising as the Greater Cambridge Partnership progressed through the statutory processes and approvals for the sustainable transport routes. They noted that securing medium-term funding for delivering these schemes should be identified as a priority within the report.

Cabinet **unanimously resolved** to:

- iv. Endorse the work programme for the council's Strategy team for 2026/27 as set out at 4.2 of the Officer's report, including keeping abreast of public sector reform initiatives that will impact upon the Council.
- v. Note the achievements and progress of the key strategic economy, health and community safety-related partnerships that the council is engaged with, as detailed in section 5 of the Officer's report.
- vi. Endorse the importance of partnership working in the context of a changing public sector landscape.

26/30/Cab Risk Management Strategy and Framework

The Leader introduced the report.

The report referred to the update to Risk Management Strategy and Framework. The strategy set out the purpose of having a risk management process and highlighted the new Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act, legislation, which came into force 1 September 2025 and brought in the offence of 'failure to prevent'

The framework provided detail on how the Council conducted that risk management process, which has the risk management cycle at its core. It also highlighted how staff are supported and trained to use the process, and the recording systems in use across the Council.

In response to comments from those present the Chief Operating Officer said the following:

- i. Hazards formed a normal part of the overall risk-management process.
- ii. Risk management followed a hierarch which eliminated a risk where possible, through mitigation measures, and, where necessary, to protective equipment and other controls.
- iii. Identifying a hazard was therefore only one element of the process; the key was determining how it would be managed.

Cabinet **unanimously resolved** to:

- i. Approve the revised Risk Management Framework and Strategy attached as appendix A of the Officer's report.
- ii. Agree the delegation of authority to approve minor changes and amendments to the Chief Operating Officer.

26/31/Cab Quarterly Performance Report

The Leader introduced the report.

The report provided Cabinet with an overview of the Council's performance over the period 1 October to 31 December 2025 (Q3).

In response to questions from the Liberal Democratic Opposition Leader, the Leader, the Chief Operating Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Cabinet Member for Housing responded with the following:

- i. Noted the following comment that a Q3 forecast, especially the financial elements, would have been beneficial during the budget-setting period, it was unfortunate it had not been available a month earlier. However, it had been a challenge to produce the report earlier due to the volume of information that needed to be collected and verified. Had worked closely with the Chief Finance Officer to bring the data together as quickly as possible but timings for this quarter had been particularly difficult because of the timetable of various meetings.
- ii. The projection for spending on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) indicated a £3.1million spending above budget. This was due to significant structural overspends relating to repairs, particularly increased responses to damp, condensation, and mould in line with Awaab's Law. There had also been substantial interim waking-watch costs for fire-safety reasons, though these were now beginning to wind down. As part of the recent budget-setting round, over £2 million per year had been added to HRA revenue budgets from 2026/27 onwards. Work was underway within the Housing teams to ensure services could remain within these revised budgets going into 2026/27.

Time (8:00pm) Members unanimously agreed to continue the meeting an additional thirty minutes if required.

- iii. Officers had done an excellent job on the budget this year, noting that the scrutiny process had now been undertaken twice. It was important of securing additional funding for damp, condensation, and mould work and for essential repairs.

- iv. Acknowledged significant additional investment had been allocated to the HRA the coming year. Officers would closely monitor how the funding was used to reduce current cost pressures and to deliver an improved service for residents.

Cabinet **unanimously resolved** to:

- i. Note the contents of the Quarterly Performance Report for the period 1 October to 31 December 2025.

The meeting ended at 8.03 pm

CHAIR