

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

11 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Cllr P Williams – Vice-Chair in the Chair
Cllr MJ Surtees – Vice-Chair
Cllr MJ Crooks, Cllr J Moore, Cllr A Pendlebury, Cllr M Simmons, Cllr R Webber-Jones and Cllr A Weightman

Also in attendance: Councillor MC Bools and Councillor SL Bray

Officers in attendance: Paul Grundy, Rebecca Owen, Madeline Shellard and Sharon Stacey

146. Apologies and substitutions

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cope, Harris and Lambert.

147. Minutes

It was moved by Councillor Crooks, seconded by Councillor Pendlebury and

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 26 June be confirmed as a correct record.

148. Declarations of interest

Councillor Pendlebury declared an Other Registrable Interest in the Homelessness Prevention Policy as director of Hinckley Homeless Group, however the interest was not pecuniary and did not prevent her from taking part in the item.

Councillor Williams stated, in relation to the Heritage Strategy, that he was heritage champion for the authority, however this did not preclude him from taking part in the debate.

149. Question and answer session with the Leader and Deputy Leader of Council

Councillors Bray and Bools, as Leader and Deputy Leader of Council, were in attendance to answer questions about their priorities and challenges. During the session and in response to questions, the following points were raised:

- There was no intention at this stage to reduce the number of members of Planning Committee
- Whilst officer capacity would continue to be taken up with work on local government reorganisation, delivery of successful and high quality services for the benefit of residents would be a priority for the life of the authority

- Local government reorganisation brought challenges including capacity and staff morale, although experience with reorganisation elsewhere had demonstrated that staff below senior management level were largely retained by the successor authority
- The increase in government housing targets was a key challenge as many areas, including Hinckley & Bosworth, had insufficient brownfield sites to deliver the housing numbers required
- Immigration concerns including managing community tensions and misinformation were presenting a current challenge
- Building more council houses, delivering changes to food waste collections, work around the town centre and markets and welfare/cost of living support were current priorities for the Leader and Deputy
- A decision would be made on the crematorium within the next few months.

150. **Scrutiny Commission Work Programme**

In discussing the work programme, it was suggested that some of the items scheduled for the November meeting be deferred to an additional meeting which would be scheduled for mid-December to enable a greater focus on fewer agenda items in November, including local government reorganisation. The budget strategy, the final report of the Adoption of Infrastructure review and the infrastructure funding statement would also be included on the agenda for the November meeting, with the remaining items being considered at the additional meeting. This was supported by the Scrutiny Commission.

Following discussions at previous meetings, the need to discuss bus services was raised. It was noted that in some areas residents were happy with changes to services whereas in others there had been a negative impact. Whilst Leicestershire County Council would not attend district councils' scrutiny bodies, it was suggested that direct contact be made with the bus operators.

151. **Heritage Strategy update**

Consideration was given to the Heritage Strategy 2025 to 2029. Concern was expressed about the need to protect historic buildings to prevent their importance being lost if a large unitary authority takes over the duties of districts. It was noted that neighbourhood plans could identify local heritage assets, and that the strategy created links with parish councils to ensure the local connection was retained.

A member highlighted the importance of recognising within the strategy the voice of children and young people as the future protectors of our heritage. The importance of acknowledging the borough's sporting history was also highlighted.

It was moved by Councillor Crooks, seconded by Councillor Pendlebury and

RESOLVED – the Heritage Strategy and action plan be endorsed and recommended to the Executive.

152. Homelessness Prevention policy

The Scrutiny Commission received the Homelessness Prevention Policy which set out tools available to the Housing Options service to prevent homelessness and move cases on from temporary accommodation. During discussion, the following points were raised:

- The need to encourage and attract private landlords
- The national housing crisis which resulted in less accommodation being available and the homelessness situation not improving
- The difficulties for those living in temporary accommodation, particularly families, who have to adapt their way of life due to the constraints of the environment
- The need to examine planning policy due to developers being unable to find a registered provider to take on affordable housing in an increasing number of cases
- The importance of increasing council housing whilst acknowledging the lack of funds in the housing revenue account
- The increasing complexity of needs of those contacting the housing service
- The importance of appropriate support to prevent cycles of homelessness
- Financial assistance and rent in advance were supported by a homeless prevention grant from the government, but this did not cover the full cost.

It was moved by Councillor Surtees, seconded by Councillor Crooks and

RESOLVED – The Homelessness Prevention Policy be endorsed and recommended to the Executive.

153. Council Housing Service Rent Policy

The Council Housing Service Rent policy was presented to the Scrutiny Commission. It was noted that the policy had been informed by a workshop with tenants to ensure they were involved with shaping and influencing the policy. It was noted that the policy would be subject to wider tenant consultation before being finalised.

In response to a member's question, it was confirmed that those in arrears were signposted to support to assist with financial management. It was noted that whilst the capacity of the team hadn't increased, the structure of the team had changed to ensure more staff were able to support residents with rent issues which had reduced arrears over the previous year.

It was moved by Councillor Crooks, seconded by Councillor Webber-Jones and

RESOLVED –

- (i) The report and policy be endorsed and recommended to the Executive;
- (ii) A period of tenant consultation be endorsed;

- (iii) Delegation of authority to the Interim Director of Community Services and the Executive member for Housing and Community Safety to make amendments to the policy arising from the consultation and agree an implementation date be endorsed.

154. Forward plan of Executive and Council decisions

The forward plan was noted.

(The Meeting closed at 7.51 pm)

CHAIR