

Minutes of: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 5 November 2025

Present: Councillor E O'Brien (in the Chair)
Councillors C Cummins, R Gold, C Morris, A Quinn, L Smith,
T Tariq, S Thorpe and S Walmsley

Also in attendance: Councillors S Arif, R Bernstein and M Smith

Public Attendance: One member of the public was present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: None

CA.65 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

CA.66 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CA.67 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following question was submitted in advance of the meeting by a member of the public, Marlene Dawson:

When is it proposed to replace the picture of Queen Elizabeth II with that of King Charles III in the Council Chamber?

Responding, Councillor Gold advised that Bury Council has two official portraits of His Majesty King Charles III: one which is currently used for Citizenship ceremonies, and another which is displayed in the Mayor's Parlour for formal occasions. The intention is to replace the portrait of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in the Council Chamber with a portrait of King Charles III as part of a future refurbishment of the Chamber. He undertook to ensure that a discussion around changing the photo sooner is had outside this meeting and thanked Ms Dawson for raising this. He advised that the reason the picture of the late Queen has been kept is a sentimental one, as she opened the Town Hall and was present for the unveiling foundation stone in 1937.

Ms Dawson replied that it's symptomatic that you stop seeing familiar things around you. She expected there to be pictures of the King elsewhere, but the meetings are permanent records for posterity.

CA.68 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

CA.69 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2025 be approved as a correct record.

CA.70 NORTHERN GATEWAY (TRANSPORT FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT; SOCIAL VALUE STRATEGY; MDC BUSINESS PLAN AND ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN) - PART A

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth presented a report regarding the development of a Northern Gateway Transport Framework Document, Social Value Strategy and accompanying Delivery Plan, and an updated 5-year Business Plan and accompanying Delivery Plan. This was the next step to move forward with delivery of a site that can deliver a generation of job creation, and as such there was a need to ensure it is well connected by public transport and is delivered in a way that benefits local people and maximises social value as much as possible.

In response to Members' questions it was noted that the investment needed was being quantified, but major work was underway to develop a funding mechanism that works for public and private sectors. This report ensured that expectations were more than a wish list; that they were formally set out and the means of who would provide funding, for what, and when, could be established. Members discussed the commitment to Real Living Wage and GM Good Employment Charter employers, and noted this set out the intention of good quality jobs and good quality employers for the project, and would hopefully attract similar employers for the site.

With regards to transport, it was noted that the 60% estimated car use to the site was an achievable target, and still marked an improvement on current commuting. Members recognised the importance of securing public transport to the site, and it was noted as additional investment and transport comes forward and the public transport system improves, we can improve this ratio and secure opportunities for all residents across the borough. In response to a Members question regarding the benefits to small, local businesses, it was noted that existing GM experience and the Social Value Strategy allowed for this; to influence those responsible for the procurement to look for local opportunities through supply chains, starting with Bury before moving further out, and showcasing the benefits of using local businesses and labour.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Endorsed the Northern Gateway Transport Framework Document and delegated authority to the Executive Director (Place – Business, Growth and Infrastructure) to make adjustments to the document as the Northern Gateway project progresses;
2. Endorsed the Northern Gateway Social Value Strategy and Delivery Plan and delegated authority to the Executive Director (Place – Business, Growth and Infrastructure) to make adjustments to the documents as the Northern Gateway project progresses;
3. Noted the implementation of the MDC Business Plan and annual Delivery Plan in advance of MDC implementation to enable the work of the Northern Gateway Strategic Board to move forward at pace and delegated authority to the Executive Director (Place – Business, Growth and Infrastructure) to make adjustments to it as the project progresses;

4. Noted the MDC Business Plan and annual Delivery Plan will be brought back to Cabinet for final approval once the MDC Board has been established and has formally approved the documents; and
5. Noted the Rochdale Borough Council's intention to take a similar report to their Executive.

Reasons for the decision:

- The Northern Gateway Transport Framework Document (TFD) sets out the transport vision for the site and its endorsement will support sound decision making through the planning process alongside Supplementary Planning Documents. The framework will also be a critical tool in making the case for and securing the investment needed to deliver the required transport infrastructure, from a number of funding sources, including financial and non-financial contributions from the private sector.
- The endorsement of the Northern Gateway Social Value Strategy and Delivery Plan will support with maximising the benefits of commissioning for projects associated with Northern Gateway. The aligned social value priorities presented within the Strategy will mean that, irrespective of the organisation commissioning work on behalf of Northern Gateway, tangible and quantifiable outcomes will be realised for the communities and businesses of Bury and Rochdale. The Strategy and Delivery Plan will also provide a basis for provision of joined-up social value in advance of the implementation of the MDC.
- The noting of the MDC Business Plan and annual Delivery Plan will enable the Northern Gateway Strategic Board to move forward at pace with critical path workstreams identified as essential to drive forward the delivery of the site.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

- The development of a Transport Framework is a best practice planning requirement to set the vision led strategy for the site. The public sector has developed the TFD to ensure it adequately reflects planning and transport policy requirements and can be applied to applications across the site as they come forward. Alternative option for each developer to produce a Transport Plan for individual application areas, risking a non-cohesive approach.
- Continue to provide social value based on commissioning organisations' individual social value objectives. Whilst on occasion this would mean the residents and businesses of Bury solely benefit from social value outcomes, there would also be occasions where no positive outcomes were realised within Bury. This option does not reflect the agreed cross-border, joined-up approach to working for Northern Gateway, nor does it maximise the social value opportunities associated with the scale and longevity of the site.
- Continue to work to the approved 2024 / 25 Business Plan, for which many of the workstreams are well advanced, and wait until formal implementation of the MDC Board before endorsement of the MDC Business Plan and annual Delivery Plan. As the MDC implementation is not anticipated until early 2026, interim workstreams would need to be agreed and put in place to direct work going forward for the intervening period.

CA.71 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2026

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation presented a report regarding the Council's Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme, which had been reviewed to ensure it remains fair, efficient, and sustainable. Three alternative models had been modelled to explore simplification and fairness, with option 3 recommended for approval to go out for public consultation:

- 20% minimum payment
- Only earned income included in assessment
- £8k capital limit
- £40.00 flat non dependant deduction
- Higher income 'bands' used for assessment

This increases average awards, benefits 88% of claimants, reduces administrative burden and only cost £65k more than the current scheme. It was noted the scheme only applied to working age residents.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Approved a consultation to present options to move to a CTS scheme based on the principles of Option 3 (an earnings-only assessment, £8k capital limit, £40 flat deduction, higher income bands. Increases average awards, benefits 88 per cent of claimants, and costs only £65k more than the current scheme);
2. Agreed that officers prepare the final scheme parameters, conduct a full EIA, and undertake statutory consultation; and
3. Noted that adoption must be by Full Council and that equality compliance, UC alignment, and administrative readiness be confirmed before implementation in 2026/27.

Reasons for the decision:

Option 3 is identified as the most viable reform option based on analysis.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

- Option 1: Reduced capital limit (£6k), higher B and C cap, £65 flat non-dependant deduction. Yields large savings (£6.8m) but severe losses for 99% of claimants.
- Option 2: Retains £8k capital limit, £40 flat non dependant deduction, up to 100% support. Produces £3.4m savings but reduces generosity and removes support for many families with children.

CA.72 APPROVAL OF DOMESTIC ABUSE RELATED CONTRACTS FOLLOWING PROCUREMENT EXERCISE

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion presented a report regarding a commissioning exercise to secure refreshed Safe Accommodation provision up to March 2028, as part of Bury's Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy approved by Cabinet in April. The Strategy had informed the Council's commissioning intentions to secure future provision based on local insight. The Social Value Strategy allowed for this, to influence those responsible for the procurement.

In response to Members' questions, it was noted that, in awarding contracts like this, it was crucial that the organisation was in-line with the Council's principles. A number of deliverables were set out in the management agreement with Safenet, and quality would be assessed through regular monitoring.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Approved the award of Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation provision to Safenet for a two year & five month term with a total contract value of £917,935 (£379,835 x 2 years + 5/12 taking to end of March 2028) following a competitive tender process; and
2. Approved the award of core IDVA provision to Safenet for a two year & five month term with a total contract value of £724,635 (£299,849 x 2 years + 5/12 taking to end of March 2028) following a competitive tender process.

Reasons for the decision:

- The Safe Accommodation strategy delivers on a statutory requirement within the Domestic Abuse Bill to review and ensure provision to meet local need. This contract award secures provision to meet such requirements, having undertaken a competitive process to source a provider.
- A competitive tendering process under the Procurement Act 2023 was advertised with multiple applications received across the two contracts which were assessed and moderated to determine the most advantageous tender.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

- Do nothing – this was not a viable option given the requirement to deliver against the Domestic Abuse Bill and given that existing contracts were coming to an end.
- Deliver in-house – this was not a viable option given the specialist nature of support and in particular for the IDVA roles the need for independence.
- Extend existing contracts – this was rejected in order to meet procurement guidelines and to not run an exercise with an updated approach would fail to capitalise on the journey made in recent years but more importantly miss the opportunity to further tailor and target the focus of such support provision.

CA.73 BELL GROUP DAMP AND MOULD SERVICES CONTRACT AWARD DECISION

The Cabinet Member for Housing Services presented a report regarding a contract for the delivery of Reactive Damp, Mould Treatment and Ancillary Works within Housing Services. In response to Members' questions it was noted that the contract would be implemented as soon as the report was agreed. There was ambition to eventually have this service in-house, but this contract allowed residents to have their requirements met within required timescales while in-house resources were developed. It was noted that Bell Group had a strong reputation in this area, but that the contract would be managed and monitored regularly through the use of KPIs. Members discussed the importance of Awaab's Law, responding to residents and ensuring the balance of power between residents and landlords was more even, and noted that GM was the first City Region to adopt the Good Landlord Model and, as such, housing standards across private rented, social, or Council housing should improve.

Decision:

Cabinet approved the award of the new Damp, Mould Treatment and Ancillary Works Contract to Bell Group for 36 months until November 2028.

Reasons for the decision:

The contract delivers Landlord Statutory Compliance Services under Awaab's Law on behalf of the Council.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

None.

CA.74 APPOINTMENTS UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Customer Service, Communications and Corporate Affairs presented a report regarding amendments to the appointments made at the Annual Council meeting in response to changes in the Conservative Group

Decision:

Cabinet noted the changes.

Reasons for the decision:

N/A

Alternative options considered and rejected:

N/A

CA.75 URGENT BUSINESS

There was one item of urgent business.

CA.76 FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth presented a report regarding nominations for Freedoms of the Borough, as agreed by Group Leaders at Democratic Arrangements Forum. The Leader briefly paid tribute to Councillor Joan Grimshaw, for her decades of service and breadth of the work and support she had provided, and to Keith and Helen Atkinson, who have done amazing things for Looked After Children in the borough for decades along with wider fostering support. It was noted that the ceremony would be held in January, subject to Council approval.

Decision:

Cabinet approved the nominations of Keith and Helen Atkinson and Councillor Joan Grimshaw for Council approval, and agreed that a ceremony be arranged for January 2026.

Reasons for the decision:

To recognise the nominees' achievements as well as their exceptional service.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

None.

CA.77 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Decision:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting under Section 100 (A)(4), Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, for the reason that the following business involves the disclosure of exempt information as detailed against the item.

CA.78 NORTHERN GATEWAY (TRANSPORT FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT; SOCIAL VALUE STRATEGY; MDC BUSINESS PLAN AND ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN) - PART B

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth presented the Part B report containing the full financial information.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Endorsed the Northern Gateway Transport Framework Document and delegated authority to the Executive Director (Place – Business, Growth and Infrastructure) to make adjustments to the document as the Northern Gateway project progresses;
2. Endorsed the Northern Gateway Social Value Strategy and Delivery Plan and delegated authority to the Executive Director (Place – Business, Growth and Infrastructure) to make adjustments to the documents as the Northern Gateway project progresses;
3. Noted the implementation of the MDC Business Plan and annual Delivery Plan in advance of MDC implementation to enable the work of the Northern Gateway Strategic Board to move forward at pace and delegated authority to the Executive Director (Place – Business, Growth and Infrastructure) to make adjustments to it as the project progresses;
4. Noted the MDC Business Plan and annual Delivery Plan will be brought back to Cabinet for final approval once the MDC Board has been established and has formally approved the documents; and
5. Noted the Rochdale Borough Council's intention to take a similar report to their Executive.

Reasons for the decision:

As set out for the Part A report.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As set out for the Part A report.

COUNCILLOR E O'BRIEN
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.48 pm)