

Minutes of: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 11 February 2026

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 M Smith, A Arif, R Bernstein, D Vernon

Public Attendance: Five members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: None

CA.114 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

CA.115 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CA.116 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

On the land adjacent to residential properties on Heywood Old Road, there is a well established population of protected and priority wildlife species, including brown hare, lapwing, common snipe, jack snipe, grey partridge, roe deer, skylark, bank voles.

Many of these species are UK priority or declining species and are native to this area. Can the Council explain how the presence of these species has been identified, assessed, and taken into account at the plan-making stage for the Simister Bowlee development framework, and how the Council can justify progressing the allocation in the absence of published ecological surveys, impact assessments, or demonstrable biodiversity net gain proposals?

A further supplementary question was submitted:

If the ecological surveys are not being completed or published will the council commit to commissioning a full seasonal appropriate survey before any planning application is determined and will allocating be recognised if significant of priority species impacted?

Councillor O'Brien reported that as part of planning assessment, biodiversity of site must take place. To ensure we are holding developers to account and allows planning committee to take this into account.

The GM ecological unit ensures these sorts of investigations and evidence are pulled together and robust enough to ensure we have the information to make informed decisions. Through biodiversity net gain we can ensure biodiversity is enhanced by the fact we have these strong legal agreements.

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

Can the Council explain how it can justify approving a substantially larger “new town” development that relies on Heywood Old Road for access, when that road has repeatedly and historically been assessed as incapable of safely accommodating additional traffic, when no material highway improvements have been made over the last 20–30 years, and when existing traffic — including diverted motorway and heavy goods vehicle traffic — already causes demonstrable safety risks, congestion, environmental harm, and structural damage to nearby homes?

By way of scale, the Simister Bowlee allocation proposes up to 1,550 new homes, which even on a conservative assumption of two cars per household could introduce in excess of 3,000 additional vehicles, rising further when multi-vehicle households and adult children are taken into account.

Responding, Councillor O'Brien reported that strategic highway modelling has indicated that the existing highway network can accommodate the level of traffic that is envisaged to come from the developments with a series of off-site highways works. These are listed in Appendix D of Places for Everyone and include:

- M60 Junction 19/A576 Middleton Road
- M62 Junction 19/A6046 Heywood Interchange
- Corridor improvements on A576 Middleton Road/Manchester Old Road in the vicinity of M60 Junction 19
- A6045 Heywood Old Road/A576
- A6045 Heywood Old Road/Langley Lane
- Active travel improvements
- Introduction of local bus services to, from and within the site

This strategic modelling was fully tested at the PfE Examination.

More detailed highways modelling will be undertaken as part of the as part of the planning application process and this may identify additional mitigation measures to improve accessibility and to mitigate highways impacts arising from the development.

Public transport and active travel will also be provided to provide alternative means of movement in and around the sites.

A further supplementary question was submitted:

It has been widely reported that there is growing frustration with governments new town policies. Traffic congestion is already severe on Heywood Old Road with extended journey time, speeding and ongoing vibration and damage to nearby homes. How can the council justify progressing the Simister Bowlee development, how is this consistent with statutory duties to prevent unacceptable harm to existing residents and with Greater Manchester's commitment on air quality and CO2 reduction.

Councillor O'Brien reported that what is being proposed is not a 'new town'. There are substantial improvements set out to the highways within the proposals. These have been tested at public examination and supported by independent experts. Confident it will mitigate an uncontrolled development.

Set out in the proposals are things the developers will have to contribute to, which we will use to hold them to account.

The following question was asked by a member of the public, Danny Jacobs

The council is reducing the live streaming of democratic meetings. I am live streaming the meeting at the moment, and have 200 viewers. The Council is not trying to maximise the number of viewers. What is more important is that we have clipped parts of the council meetings and it has been viewed more times. If we put it on the right platform we may get more viewers.

You have the money to live stream but don't have the willingness to do so. Residents won't go on the Bury Council website to view council meetings. Need to look at it as more of an archive and less as a content stream. Is that a fair assumption?

Responding, Councillor O'Brien reported that all committee meetings are public meetings and there are opportunities for public questions. All Members are elected and representatives of the public.

The Council live streams council and cabinet where key decisions get made. Where there are other meetings where significant will be made it is at the discretion of the chair for the meeting to be streamed. For example, at Overview and Scrutiny last night, the chair and committee members felt it was important for it to be live streamed so arrangements were made to do so.

When we have live streamed in the past, meetings have had a limited number of views, and we took a decision that it was not value for money. We do not think we need to expand the meetings that are livestreamed.

The following question was asked by a member of the public, Angus

As of today, is the council the legal registered owner of the Pinfold Lane library site?

Responding, Roger Frith, Assistant Director of Corporate Assets & Facilities Management reported that we have sold the land however the land registry have yet to complete the registration.

Councillor O'Brien reported that the sale has been agreed and completed by the parties.

CA.117 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions submitted in advance.

CA.118 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2026 be approved as a correct record.

CA.119 ANNUAL HRA BUDGET 2026/27 & RENT SETTING

The Cabinet member for Finance and Transformation presented the report to members. The report highlights the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Annual Revenue Budget and Capital Investment Plan Programme for 2026-27, including the proposed increases in rents,

garage rents, service charges and any other relevant charges within the HRA for 2026/27 Councillor Vernon advised members that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee did scrutinise the budget at their meeting on 10 February 2026, and thanked the Director of Finance and staff for the work they had undertaken.

Councillor Mike Smith queried rent convergence and whether there is an aim to close the gap between affordable and social rent?

Neil Kissock, Director of Finance advised that there has been a consultation around it however there has been a delay in being able to implement it.

Councillor Mike Smith also sought assurance around the debt peaking on HRA, and whether this was a doomsday scenario.

Neil Kissock, Director of Finance responded that this is worst case scenario and work will be completed over the next few years around this.

Decision Cabinet:

1. Approved the 2026/27 budget for the Housing Revenue Account
2. Agreed and approve the proposed HRA Capital Investment Plan for 2026/27.
3. Approved the setting of individual social formula rents for 2026/27 based on the current National Social Rent Policy, giving a real rent increase of 4.8% with effect from 1st April 2026 (being September 2025 CPI (Consumer Price Index) 3.8% plus 1%).
4. Approved the setting of individual actual affordable rents for 2026/27 based on the current National Social Rent Policy, giving a real rent increase of 4.8% with effect from 1st April 2026.
5. Approved shared ownership rents to be increased by RPI (as at February 2026) plus 0.5% in line with provisions set out within shared ownership agreements with effect from 1 st April 2026.
6. Approved an increase in Garage rents of 4.8% with effect from 1st April 2026.
7. Approved an increase in Sheltered Management and Support Charges of 4.8% from 1 st April 2026.
8. Approved an increase in Service and Amenity Charges of 4.8% from 1st April 2026.
9. Approved an increase in Support and Heating charges of 4.8% from 1st April 2026.
10. Approved an increase in Furnished Tenancy charges of 4.8% from 1st April 2026.
11. Approved continuation of the policy that when a social rent property is re-let to a new or transferring tenant the rent level will be revised to match the formula rent (target rent) for that property.
12. Noted in accordance with the Rent Standard, that where an affordable rent property is re-let to a new or transferring tenant the rent level be set by reference to 80% of the market rent (including service charges where applicable) for a similar property at the time of letting or the formula rent for the property, whichever is the greater.
13. Approved in principle in line with Government's commitment confirmed in January
14. 2026, the re-introduction of Rent Convergence for Bury's HRA stock, which will come into effect from April 2027, with an additional rent charge of £1 per week in 2027-28, and £2 per week from 2028-29 onwards until Rent Convergence is achieved.
15. Noted that Government has confirmed its commitment to the re-introduction of rent convergence from April 2027, with a proposed additional £1 per week charge from April 2027 and £2 per week from April 2028. Until the changes are finally confirmed the additional income has not been assumed in the revenue plan.
16. Noted that following the Cabinet decision to wind down and close Six Town Housing
17. (STH), a working group has been set up to oversee this process, led by Management Consultants Campbell-Tickell. This process will take at least 12-18 months, and at this stage it is not possible to state what implications if any

there will be for the Council's General Fund and HRA. The options as to what will happen to the remaining assets currently held by STH will be presented to Cabinet at the appropriate time for any decisions to be made.

18. Noted and approved the revisions made to the HRA 30-Year Business Plan.

Reasons for decisions:

To ensure that there is a balanced budget in place for the HRA, covering both revenue and capital requirements for 2026/27. The approval of these budget plans for 2026/27 will mean that Bury Council can continue to provide critical housing services to our current tenants and invest in maintaining and improving their homes. This sits within a core set of key policy principles for the housing service: -

- Ensure the application of the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- Continue to invest in the existing stock to maintain the Decent Homes Standard.
- Maintain and develop effective engagement with tenants.
- Continually monitor the impact of welfare changes such as Universal Credit on tenants and ensure that they have the appropriate support.
- Work with private landlords to improve their stock where appropriate.
- Undertake environmental improvements to estates if and when possible, acknowledging the impact that this can have in creating safe and clean estates.
- Support the delivery of Affordable Homes across the Borough.
- Undertake direct development, acquisition and refurbishment to bring properties back into use if appropriate and affordable.
- Create sustainable tenancies and maximise rental income collection.
- Undertake sustainability measures across the housing stock as appropriate and affordable to help address the Climate Change Emergency.

CA.120 THE COUNCIL'S 2026/27 REVENUE BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) FOR 2027/28 THROUGH TO 2028/29

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth presented a report that sets out key elements of budget proposals. It makes available the latest financial information that will underpin the budget and MTFS and

- Proposes a legal budget that demonstrates we are making strides to reduce funding gaps and reliance on reserves
- Enables us to continue to deliver key strategic objectives
- Continues the work to support our continuing financial sustainability

Councillor Bernstein thanked the Finance Director and Councillor Thorpe for the briefings over the last few months around the budget. He sought reassurance whether Q3 was likely to increase the need to go into reserves and how challenging it would be to some of the political issues. He questioned whether there would be an argument that if we had chosen to do something about the real living wage, the call on reserves would be significantly less.

Councillor Thorpe responded that participating in real living wage is the morally right thing to do. Whilst these are some of the least paid people in our economy, we rely on them heavily for some important work. If we lost these staff wouldn't be able to look after some of the most vulnerable residents in the Borough. Councillor Thorpe assured Councillor Bernstein that nothing is off the table, and we will consider all the options.

Councillor Mike Smith queried whether the efficiencies being looked at were a short term fix. Is it more realistic that a whole rethink needs to be had about how councils are financed?

Councillor Thorpe responded that around 70% of the council's budget goes on statutory services in adult and children's social care. Demand is not abating and unlikely to do so at any point in the future. Plan over next few years is to review services to ensure they are more efficient. There is a case for reforming the system and the government have already reviewed the settlement provided for councils. Government yesterday announced additional funding for SEND for all Local Authorities.

Councillor Mike Smith queried the increase in income around EV cross pavement charges and what they are?

Councillor Thorpe advised that this was essentially setting a channel in pavements. It is being trialled in councils across both Manchester and nationally.

Councillor O'Brien confirmed that options are being explored and we will wait to see the outcomes of these trials.

Councillor Bernstein questioned the overspend in Q2 and whether this was likely to increase or reduce?

Councillor Thorpe confirmed that pressures aren't abating. Neil Kisson, Director of Finance confirmed we are not in a position to discuss Q3 at the present time. An update will be provided to the March cabinet meeting.

Councillor Bernstein observed that there had been lots of debate about housing developments and when we look at council tax income, it is significantly less than all other Local Authorities. Additional properties will help to increase the income to the council

Councillor Thorpe confirmed this was a good point. There will be challenges in next 2-3 years. Need to maintain sustainability.

Councillor O'Brien remarked that if the council had developed homes at the level to meet the demand over the last decade, it would have had the benefit of supporting council tax income and local economies.

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Approved the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2028/29 and the assumptions regarding resources and spending requirements.
2. Approved the Council Tax base for Bury Council for 2026/27 of 58,709.94 Band D equivalent dwellings, this is the basis on which the Council Tax funding has been calculated (Appendix 1).
3. Approved the net revenue budget of £252.135m for 2026/27.
4. Approved the Council Tax requirement of £124.224m and the increase in Council Tax in 2026/27 of 2.99% in terms of General Council Tax and a further 2% for the Adult Social Care precept for 2026/27 (Appendix 1).
5. Approved the budget assumptions of £29.364m in 2026/27.

6. Approved new revenue budget proposal relating to additional Place Directorate income to be achieved across 3 areas: car parking, moving vehicle offences and EV cross pavement fees. Delivery plans will be brought forward for consideration by Cabinet in the new financial year, including the detail of any specific consultation exercises that
7. may be required to be undertaken. The consultation outcomes will be considered by Cabinet before implementation along with any financial implications adopted in the 2027/28 budget proposed by Cabinet to Council.
8. Noted the remaining budget gap of £21.155m over the medium-term to 2028/29.
9. Approved the use of £3.977m of reserves from the budget stabilisation reserve for 2026/27.
10. Noted the forecast position on reserves over the medium-term to 2028/29.
11. Approved the recommendations set out in the Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix 2):
 - i. To approve the Treasury Management Strategy including the associated Prudential Indicators and Annual Investment Strategy.
 - ii. To approve the Treasury Management Policy Statement.
 - iii. To approve the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement.
12. Approve the Capital Strategy and the Programme for 2026/27 – 2028/29 (Appendix 3).
 - Cabinet to recommend and council to approve the use of £2m flexible use of capital receipts in 2026/27. 23.
13. Approved the Dedicated Schools Grant budget for 2026/27 at £257.345m and approved the allocations between the four funding blocks as set out in Appendix 4 of this report.
 - i. The Schools and Academies 2026/27 funding unit values as recommended by Schools Forum and detailed at Annex 1 to appendix 4.
 - ii. Approve the 2026/27 hourly rates for all early year's providers as follows: i.
 14. £5.77 per hour for 3- and 4-year-olds. ii. £8.35 per hour for 2-year-olds. iii. £11.30 per hour for under 2's. 24. Note the Equality Impact Assessment for the budget report (Appendix 5).
15. Noted the Chief Finance Officer (Director of Finance) statement on the robustness of estimates and adequacy of financial reserves in setting the budget (Appendix 6).

Reasons for decisions:

The Council has a legal requirement annually to set a balanced budget and Council Tax and where necessary undertake consultation with the public, businesses, stakeholders and internally with staff and through Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

- The current assumption within the 2026/27 budget and medium term is for an ongoing 4.99% annual Council Tax increase (2.99% general precept and 2% adult social care precept). The government's Core

Spending Power calculations include the assumption that Councils will increase the Council Tax by these percentages.

- An alternative option could be made to increase its 'relevant basic amount of council tax' above the levels set out in the Provisional 2026/27 Local Government Finance Settlement published in December 2025 of 4.99%, but this would require holding a local referendum and a majority vote.
- A 1% increase or decrease in Council Tax is the equivalent to c.£1.242m

CA.121 CHILDREN'S SERVICES - YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE PROPOSAL

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People introduced the report to bring youth justice service back into Bury whilst achieving better outcomes for children and young people

Decision:

Cabinet:

1. Approved the establishment of a standalone Bury Youth Justice Service. With a target go-live date of 1 September 2026, subject to discussion and agreement with Rochdale Brough Council.
2. Approved the termination of the current Youth Justice Collaborative Agreement dated 12 th November 2015 with Rochdale Borough Council.
3. Authorise officers to identify and secure an appropriate local venue within Bury from which the Youth Justice Service will operate.
4. Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to take all necessary steps to implement the new service arrangement, including any TUPE transfer of staff, whilst ensuring compliance with Youth Justice Board requirements and inspection expectations.
5. Consider the proposal in line the wider Families First Partnership reforms, and the development of a targeted adolescent service which is outlined below.

Reasons for decisions:

The recommendation is driven by the need to ensure that Bury's Youth Justice provision is fully aligned with national expectations, including the Youth Justice Board's child-first, trauma informed approach and the focus on prevention, diversion, and reducing reoffending.

Establishing a local service will enable stronger oversight of quality and performance, improved partnership engagement, and greater responsiveness to the specific needs and profiles of Bury's children and young people. Delivering our own Youth Justice Service will provide us with a greater opportunity to develop the service tailored to local demographics and priorities supported by the ability to make decisions locally.

The original agreement was put in place to achieve economies of scale with shared staffing and management, training, case management tools, and the input of specialist services which would have been less affordable if Bury had delivered the service alone. In addition, working in partnership with Rochdale Council was considered to be beneficial due to joint governance arrangements with Police, Health and Education driving service improvement and performance leading to improved outcomes for young people.

Both Bury and Rochdale Children's Services now consider it to be in the best interests of both Local Authority areas to separate and deliver local Youth Justice Services.

If agreed we would take the opportunity to redesign the service under one Directorate ensuring effective use of resources aligned to local services around our wider adolescent offer for example Youth Service, Prevention, Keeping Families Together, and Complex Safeguarding ensuring a more tightly joined up approach and greater impact.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

- Option 1: Continue the partnership arrangement with Rochdale Council. This option was rejected due to limited local control, reduced visibility of performance, and challenges in ensuring services are delivered close to where Bury young people live.
- Option 2: Enter a partnership with another local authority. This option was rejected as it would continue to create dependency on external governance arrangements and would not fully support the integration of youth justice with Bury's wider children's services.
- Option 3: Commission the service from an external provider. This option was rejected due to higher costs, potential instability, and reduced direct accountability to the Council and statutory partners.

CA.122 WALSHAW DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - CONSULTATION DRAFT

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth recommended the Members take questions of all three reports together, Member agreed with this approach.

Councillor O'Brien introduced the reports and explained that as we have heard tonight, these big decisions do cause questions and concerns.

The papers for the meeting are the detailed development frameworks that start to fill in some of the gaps around infrastructure that is required and what safeguards and assurances we can give to the public to ensure we get the right things in at the right time.

Councillor Vernon advised that members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee had a long discussion about the framework at their meeting on 10 February 2026. Queries and concerns raised at the committee covered biodiversity, infrastructure, housing and housing density. Members considered the format of publication.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee thanked officers for their work and Councillor Vernon confirmed that a further scrutiny meeting will be held to discuss the plans again as well as the Bury West Transport Framework and the Local Plan.

Councillor O'Brien agreed that the frequently asked question accompanying the consultation document would be amended and confirmed this has been completed.

Councillor Mike Smith queried the living wage and that many properties are unaffordable for residents.

Councillor O'Brien advised that the technical definition of 'affordable housing' is subjective. For some people it is affordable for others it isn't. The Council have to use planning language and terminology.

Councillor Mike Smith queried what protections were in place to prevent land banking?

Councillor O'Brien confirmed that the legal powers to the Council are limited. Developers leading on the sites have spent a lot of time, money and effort to get to this stage. Council would work to ensure these risks are limited as far as possible.

Councillor Quinn highlighted there will be a problem with a shortage of skilled individuals to undertake the building work.

Councillor O'Brien confirmed that work is being carried out in Greater Manchester to ensure skills supply is there to meet the demand alongside a £10m pot from government to focus on construction skills.

We have also had confirmation that a technical excellence college in Wigan and Leigh is being set up. The Leader is also convening a meeting with Councillor Craig and Councillor Dennett to develop this work.

Councillor O'Brien confirmed a range of property types, tenures and densities were needed to support rented and supported housing.

Councillor Morris commented that a case was made that this development wasn't needed in Walshaw, which the council agreed with. This was overruled by the planning inspectorate. Councillor Morris is pleased to see the framework come forward and will be encouraging residents to engage with the consultation.

Councillor Lucy Smith commented that this is not just talking about houses, it's talking about how we create homes and communities.

Councillor Arif expressed concerns that green belt land is not just waiting to be built on. These areas cannot be replaced once destroyed and the council must use brownfield land first.

Councillor O'Brien commented that this isn't a repeat debate about Places for Everyone as the principles have been agreed and reminded Members that over half of the Borough would remain as green belt.

Each recommendation was considered as follows -

Decision Cabinet:

1. Approved the draft Walshaw Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 1) as the basis for public consultation for six week period commencing on 13th February 2026.
2. Delegated power to the Executive Director of Place to make minor nonmaterial editorial amendments to the draft Walshaw Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document before consultation commences.

Reasons for decision

To enable stakeholders to have the opportunity to submit comments on the draft Walshaw Development Framework and to comply with the statutory requirements for consultation.

Alternative options considered and rejected

To not approve the WDF for consultation. This would prevent stakeholders from commenting on the WDF and would prevent the Council from being able to proceed to adopt the WDF as a Supplementary Planning Document because it is a statutory requirement that such documents must be consulted on before adoption.

CA.123 ELTON RESERVOIR DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - CONSULTATION DRAFT

Decision

Cabinet:

1. Approved the draft Elton Reservoir Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 1) as the basis for public consultation for six-week period commencing on 13th February 2026.

2. Delegated power to the Executive Director of Place to make minor nonmaterial editorial amendments to the draft Elton Reservoir Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document before consultation commences.

Reasons for decisions:

To enable stakeholders to have the opportunity to submit comments on the draft Elton Reservoir Development Framework and to comply with the statutory requirements for consultation.

Alternative options considered and rejected

To not approve the ERDF for consultation. This would prevent stakeholders from commenting on the ERDF and would prevent the Council from being able to proceed to adopt the ERDF as a Supplementary Planning Document because it is a statutory requirement that such documents must be consulted on before adoption.

CA.124 SIMISTER BOWLEE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION DRAFT

Decision

Cabinet:

1. Approved the draft Simister Bowlee Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 1) as the basis for public consultation for a six-week period commencing on 13 February 2026.
2. Delegated power to the Executive Director of Place to make minor nonmaterial editorial amendments to the draft Simister Bowlee Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document before consultation commences.

Reasons for decisions:

To enable stakeholders to have the opportunity to submit comments on the draft Simister Bowlee Development Framework and to comply with the statutory requirements for consultation.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

To not approve the SBDF for consultation. This would prevent stakeholders from commenting on the SBDF and would prevent the Council from being able to proceed to adopt the SBDF as a Supplementary Planning Document because it is a statutory requirement that such documents must be consulted on before adoption.

CA.125 BURY WEST TRANSPORT FRAMEWORK

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth introduced the report advising that on top of the development frameworks this transport framework has been produced to identify and set out the types of infrastructure we need to support the plans.

Significant challenges come with development and this report shows how we can deliver better public transport solutions across this part of the borough.

Councillor Bernstein welcomed the paper and commented that it gives reassurance that we have listened to residents and have sought to mitigate the challenges.

Councillor Walmsley welcomed the report. Area where there is piecemeal development sites that are having an impact on local residents. Shows forward planning that is needed.

Decision Cabinet:

1. Endorsed the Bury West Transport Framework and delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place to make non-material adjustments to the document as the Elton Reservoir and Walshaw projects progress.

Reasons for decisions:

The Bury West Transport Framework sets out the transport vision for the Bury West area, and its endorsement will support sound decision making through the planning process alongside the proposed 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 nonfinancial contributions from the private sector.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

The development of a Transport Framework is a best practice planning requirement to set the vision-led strategy for these sites. The public sector has developed the Bury West Transport Framework to ensure it adequately reflects planning and transport policy requirements and can be applied to applications across these sites as they come forward. The alternative option for each developer to produce a Transport Plan for individual application areas, risks a noncohesive approach and would undermine the overall strategy to develop these sites.

CA.126 BURY FLEXI HALL - OPERATOR CONTRACT AWARD - PART A

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth introduced the report. Following public consultation, a name has been agreed for the flexi hall, 'Casewell's'.

Councillor O'Brien thanked everyone who has been part of the project up until now.

Councillor Mike Smith ask a question regarding Radcliffe Market Councillor Morris confirmed she would contact Cllr Smith to update on the matter.

Councillor Tariq highlighted that this is a significant step forward for the borough and will benefit the local community.

Councillor Walmsley welcomed the development and is assured it will improve the town centre.

Decision

Cabinet:

1. Approved the grant of a lease for a term of 15 years with an option to grant a further 10-year term to MEB to occupy the ground floor and if required part of the 1st floor for use as a food and events hall.
2. Approved a 12-month rent free period.
3. Approved the loan to MEB of up to £1.1m.
4. Delegated any minor variations to the final Heads of Terms and Key Performance
5. Indicators (KPIs) to the Assistant Director for Corporate Assets and Facilities Management.
6. Delegated the commercial terms of the loan facility to the Section 151 Officer.
7. Delegated the signing of all the required documents to complete the transaction, including the Agreement for Lease, Lease and Loan Agreement to Director of Law and Governance.
8. Noted that the name selected for Bury Flexi Hall as 'Casewells'.

Reasons for decisions:

MEB has a strong track record in delivering and operating successful food, drink and events venues, providing confidence in their ability to activate and manage Casewells effectively.

Granting the lease and enabling the associated loan for fitout works will ensure the operator can deliver a high-quality food and events venue, supporting the Council's regeneration objectives for the town centre.

Alternative options considered and rejected

- Do not proceed with the lease and loan to MEB and Bury Council operate and manage the facility directly. This option has been discounted due to lack of internal capacity and experience of operating modern food and entertainment facilities.
- Lease to another third party. The Council undertook a procurement exercise to secure best terms for a third party and this bid aligns with the Council's objectives and timescale for delivery. To rerun the exercise would delay the opening of Casewells and incur further cost to the Council and could negatively impact the Council's reputation.

CA.127 IN-HOUSE DELIVERY OF BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN ON COUNCIL-OWNED LAND - PART A

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Climate Change and Operations introduced the report which sets out how these receptor sites can be brought forward through in-house delivery now that the options available to the Council have evolved following Defra's grant of Responsible Body status to Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).

Councillor Mike Smith queried the Defra calculations Councillors Quinn and O'Brien confirmed that these were specialist calculations carried out by the GM ecology unit.

Councillor Mike Smith queried whether planning applications would be legally restricted. Councillor Quinn confirmed no development would be allowed.

Decision Cabinet:

1. Noted the opportunities identified in relation to in-house delivery of BNG on Council owned land.
2. For the six Council-owned receptor sites, authorised the Executive Director of Place, Head of Property and Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holders to:
 - a. engage in works to prepare the sites for delivery;
 - b. enter into an agreement with the GMCA for the commissioning of the GMCA Responsible Body service, and agree to use the service for a period of three years;
 - c. sign a legal agreement securing the sites for 30 years, if terms can be agreed; and d) submit the sites to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs for inclusion on their register of biodiversity gain sites to enable the Council to advertise the units for sale.
3. Noted the intention to initially submit two pilot receptor sites at Hollins Mount and Chesham (if legally secured with GMCA) to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs for inclusion on their register of biodiversity gain sites;
5. Approved the in-house self-management of the sites and authorise up-front investment required to bring these sites to market, recognising that this work will require a dedicated resource to track and manage the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain in the Borough; and
6. Authorised the Director of Finance to ringfence income from Biodiversity Unit sales to cover 30-year management and, maintenance costs along with any profits to support resourcing demands and, where relevant, implement other nature related projects across the Borough in accordance with the Bury Biodiversity Strategy.

Reasons for decisions:

To help ensure that the benefits of biodiversity net gain from development in the Borough are secured locally, as opposed to regionally or nationally.

To improve management of, and maximise investment in, Council-owned greenspace.

To have the ability to redirect any surpluses/profits to support the growth of resources to implement other nature related projects across the Borough.

To support and facilitate the delivery of development in Bury which meets the statutory BNG requirements.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

- To take no action. The lack of opportunities for developers to deliver off-site BNG within Bury is likely to result in developers delivering this outside of the Borough meaning that Bury would not benefit from biodiversity enhancements.
- Furthermore, the Council would lose the opportunity to secure investment in and enhancement of its land.

CA.128 STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR BURY'S LEISURE CENTRES

The Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Health and Public Services thanked everyone involved in this piece of work. The report presents a proposed strategic approach for the Council's leisure services in the context of the wider 2026/27 budget-setting process.

Councillor Quinn congratulated the team on the work completed.

Councillor Bernstein welcomed the Local Authority leisure provision but queried whether closure was an option.

Councillor Tariq responded that investment was required and there were benefits from retaining leisure facilities.

Councillor Cummins confirmed her delight in still have leisure offer in Ramsbottom and across the Borough.

Decision

Cabinet:

1. Approve enabling repair and maintenance investment totalling £4.5million across Ramsbottom (£1 million) and Castle Leisure Centre (£3.5 million), ensuring facilities remain safe, operational, and capable of supporting enhanced commercial activity.
2. Approve the implementation plan for repairs, commercialisation, and opening of the Radcliffe leisure offer within the new Radcliffe Hub.
3. Approve the commercialisation programme, including pricing changes (including a 10% increase per year over 3 years), enhanced income-generation activity, and service modernisation.
4. Note that performance and income will be monitored quarterly through the Council's financial reporting cycle, with a commitment to bring a further Cabinet report should targets not be achieved with alternative proposals.
5. Note the consultation outcomes.

Reasons for decisions:

To maintain safe, legally compliant facilities, to protect valued public health assets and to unlock commercial potential.

To deliver required savings while protecting services, to reflect consultation feedback and to improve long term sustainability of the leisure offer.

To ensure robust financial oversight, provide transparency and accountability and allow for reconsideration of options should income not materialise as planned.

To demonstrate decisions have been informed by feedback along with openness and transparency.

Enables an organised timely delivery programme, supports a coordinated transition linked to Radcliffe and ensures service can meet revenue targets.

Alternative options considered and rejected

- Reduce the estate - (e.g., close one site) to achieve savings through reduced operating costs. It was clear through the consultation that it was important to the public to retain all sites and commercialise.
- Do nothing – This would make achieving the savings unattainable.

CA.129 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

CA.130 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.131 BURY FLEXI HALL - OPERATOR CONTRACT AWARD - PART B

CA.132 IN-HOUSE DELIVERY OF BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN ON COUNCIL-OWNED LAND - PART B

COUNCILLOR E O'BRIEN
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 8.10pm)