

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET
HELD ON**

24 April 2025

7.00 - 7.40 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Dan Swords, Leader of the Council
Councillor David Carter, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Danielle Brown, Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing
Councillor Hannah Ellis, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and Transformation
Councillor Alastair Gunn, Portfolio Holder for Garden Town and Planning
Councillor James Leppard, Portfolio Holder for Finance
Councillor Nicky Purse, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability

Other Councillors

Councillor Linda Clark
Councillor Jodi Dunne
Councillor Tony Durcan
Councillor Tony Edwards
Councillor James Griggs
Councillor Mark Ingall
Councillor Kay Morrison
Councillor Jake Shepherd

Officers

James Gardner, Managing Director
Niel Churchill, Communications Manager
Giles Clarke, Executive Director
Daniel Dickinson, Assistant Director - Legal and Democratic Services (Interim)
Julie Ellis, Executive Director
Rebecca Farrant, Assistant Director - Corporate Services and Improvement
Paul Keen, Communications Officer
Adam Rees, Senior Governance Support Officer
Cara Stevens, Assistant Director, Housing Operations (People)
Alan Townshend, Executive Director
Jacqui Van Mellaerts, Assistant Director - Finance

155. **WEBCAST INTRODUCTION**

The Leader said the meeting was being webcast live and would be available for repeated viewing after the meeting has ended. By continuing to attend the meeting, you were consenting to being filmed and to appearing in the webcast.

156. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joel Charles and Michael Hardware.

157. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

158. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 19 and 27 March 2025 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

159. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

160. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None. The Leader said that two questions has been submitted. However, as the questioner was not present, under Council Procedure Rule 10.10, the questions were not considered.

161. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

The questions, together with the answers, are appended to the minutes.

162. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader welcomed Giles Clarke and Julie Ellis to their first Cabinet meetings having taken up their roles as Executive Directors at the council this month.

163. **PETITIONS**

None.

164. **RECENT RELEVANT DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE LEADER, DEPUTY OR PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S)**

RESOLVED that the following decisions be noted.

- a) Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing - 31 March 2025
- b) Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing - 31 March 2025

165. **REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING - UPDATE**

Cabinet received an update report on the progress made by the council in respect of actions agreed with the Regulator of Social Housing.

Proposed by Councillor Dan Swords (seconded by Councillor David Carter) it was:

RESOLVED that:

- A** Cabinet noted the progress being made and actions agreed with the Regulator of Social Housing to manage and improve our ongoing social housing compliance responsibilities and the wider elements of the Safety and Quality standard, along with the agreed reformatting of the draft improvement plan and amended brief for the independent review.
- B** Cabinet kept under review the option of making a voluntary undertaking to the Regulator of Social Housing as work on finalising and implementing the improvement plan continues.

166. **PARTNERSHIP GRANTS**

Cabinet received a report on the Partnership Grants Programme 2025-2028.

Proposed by Councillor Danielle Brown (seconded by Councillor James Leppard) it was:

RESOLVED that:

- A** Cabinet approved the allocation of grant aid to projects as set out in Appendix A to the report.
- B** Cabinet approved the allocation of an additional £3,000 per year from the Discretionary Services Fund to support partnership grant funding.

167. **RIGHT TO BUY FINANCIAL CHARGE POSTPONEMENT – POLICY UPDATE**

Cabinet received a report on a policy update for Right to Buy Financial Charge Postponement.

Proposed by Councillor David Carter (seconded by Councillor James Leppard) it was:

RESOLVED that Cabinet approved the updated RTB Financial Charge Postponement Policy attached as Appendix A to the report.

168. **MINUTES OF PANELS/WORKING GROUPS**

None.

169. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM COMMITTEES/WORKING
GROUPS/PARTIES AND PANELS**

None.

170. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Cabinet – 24 April 2025

Questions from Councillors

1 Councillor Tony Edwards to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

Last year we were told the construction of a temporary Town Centre bus station in Post Office Road was to facilitate the demolition and rebuilding of the Terminus Street Bus Station.

The temporary Bus station in Post Office Road was opened at the beginning of December last year. (over 4 months ago).

Since that time there has been no progress with the demolition of the Terminus Street Bus Station.

As this lack of progress is causing uncertainty for businesses and blight to the Terminus Street area, what are the reasons for the delay and when exactly is physical work on the Terminus Street Bus Station site going to recommence?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

The council is working with its contractor to finalise the development programme for the site and demolition will begin shortly in line with the Council's plans, while ensuring it is receiving the best value for money and protecting the safety of Harlow's residents; all of which require careful coordination.

Local businesses, along with all Harlow's residents can rightly look forward to the transformative benefits this substantial and complex development will bring, and the council is working hard to enable this to happen as quickly as is reasonably possible.

Supplementary question from Councillor Tony Edwards:

In September of last year, you said the approach would be sped-up and construction would happen shortly. What is your definition of shortly and when will works commence?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

My definition of shortly is the same as the Oxford English Dictionary's and I also refer you to my previous answer.

2 Councillor Jake Shepherd to Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

Saturday 26 April will be World Sculpture Day, and in a press release on the 15 March 2024, this administration stated that works to improve the areas around the Obelisk, Trigon and Vertex sculptures would take around 12 months (<https://www.harlow.gov.uk/news/broad-walk-transformation-marks-new-era-town-centre>).

Since that time there has been some progress with the new paving of Broad Walk, East Walk and Harvey Centre Approach, but more than 12 months on and work is far from complete. Will you explain to residents the reasons for this delay and when we can expect to see our much-loved sculptures on show again?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

The public realm improvements on and around Broad Walk involve a great deal more than replacing paving slabs. Under the ground, there is a complex web of cables and public utilities that need to be carefully managed and protected as part of the works, which is not always easy to see.

However, with much of this important work done, the more visible elements of the programme should rapidly take shape, with the improvement of the town centre becoming increasingly apparent over the next few weeks and months.

Supplementary question from Councillor Jake Shepherd:

My understanding is that Art UK has given permission for images of the sculptures to be used on hoardings. Will you work with me to get images of the sculptures onto hoardings around these sites?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Leader of the Council):

These hoardings are already being produced.