

MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF CABINET

8 JANUARY 2026

PRESENT:

Councillors Moran (Chair), C Edwards, Livesey, Mistry, O'Rourke and Robinson.

Councillors Brown, Freeman, Garcia, Harrington, Karadiar, Lewis, McKenzie, Picker, Poole, Roodhouse, Ward and Willis were also in attendance.

97. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence from the meeting was received from Councillor Roodhouse.

98. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Item 4 of Part 1 – Resourcing – for 2026 elections and local government reorganisation – Councillors C Edwards and Robinson (non-registerable interests as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a member of Cabinet and due to stand for re-election in May 2027).

Item 4 of Part 1 – Resourcing – for 2026 elections and local government reorganisation – Councillors Mistry and O'Rourke (non-registerable interests as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a member of Cabinet and due to stand for re-election in May 2028).

Item 4 of Part 1 – Resourcing – for 2026 elections and local government reorganisation – Councillors Livesey and Moran (non-registerable interests as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a member of Cabinet and due to stand for re-election in May 2026).

All members of the Cabinet had sought advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer and had decided they were able to continue in the meeting. The Leader of the Council also considered that the letter from the Government Minister dated 18 December explicitly requested his views. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, it was identified that Cabinet is the appropriate governance to express those views.

99. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following questions were received in accordance with the Council's Constitution. Mr Bearne, Mrs Milne and Mr Dahmash did not attend the meeting. Ms Kedward attended the meeting and asked her question in person.

(a) Mr Bearne, submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Moran:

"The Labour run central Government has recently 'invited' the Labour Leader of RBC, amongst 60+ other local Council Leaders, to consider whether they wish to participate in the forthcoming local elections, planned for May 2026.

As a democratically elected Councillor himself, could the Labour Leader of RBC council please confirm his ongoing commitment and belief in the democratic process, and reassure the voting public of Rugby Borough that the May 2026 elections will proceed as planned?"

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Moran, provided the following response:

"In accordance with the Constitution, a written response will be sent to Mr Bearne after the report has been discussed and Cabinet voted on the matter. Within that written response, I will clarify that any decision to postpone an election can only be taken by the Government and would require a statutory instrument to be laid in Parliament and approved.

The matter before Cabinet this evening is simply to set out their views on the postponement of elections, as requested in the minister's letter which is appended to the report."

(b) Mrs Milne, submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Moran:

"As a resident of Wolston in the Borough of Rugby and a Council Tax Payer, I am writing regarding the Notice of an Extraordinary Cabinet Meeting to be held on the 8th January, 2026. At this meeting your Council is being asked to recommend delaying the local elections scheduled for the 7th May 2026 until at least 2027 and I am writing to express and record my serious concern at the prospect of your Council absolutely denying your residents and council taxpayers from having their democratic right to vote on that day. As I understand it you already have prepared all the paperwork for this venue to take place, the venues have been booked and arrangements made for staff.

What gives you the right to seek to deny my husband and myself our democratic right to vote for our choice of candidate in the local elections on 7th May 2026?"

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Moran, provided the following response:

"In accordance with the constitution, a written response will be sent to Mrs Milne after the report has been discussed and Cabinet voted on the matter. [Within that written response, I clarify that any decision to postpone an election is not for this Council or the Leader individually to take. This decision can only be taken by the Government and would require a statutory instrument to be laid in Parliament and approved.

The matter before Cabinet this evening is simply to set out their views on the postponement of elections, as requested in the Minister's letter which is appended to the report."

(c) Devenne Kedward, submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Moran:

"What lawful and exceptional justification exists for cancelling a scheduled election and thereby extending the terms of the Leader and Cabinet without voter consent, and on what basis does the administration claim this is compatible with democratic accountability?"

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Moran, provided the following response:

“Thank you for the question.

Tonight’s Extraordinary Cabinet meeting is focused on the Government letter dated 18 December 2025, sent by Alison McGovern MP, which asked the Leader of the Council by midnight of Thursday, 15 January 2026, to set out their views on the postponement of elections. – *‘Consider if taking this step would release essential capacity to deliver local government reorganisation in the area and so allow reorganisation to progress more effectively.’* The letter in full is an appendix to the report.

We have been asked because we have submitted our proposal for local government reorganisation, but Government has made no decision on which unitary councils are to be formed.

I want to clarify that any decision to postpone an election can only be taken by the Government and would require a statutory instrument to be laid in Parliament and approved. By example, the statutory instrument to postpone some local elections in 2025 was the Local Authorities (Changes to Years of Ordinary Elections) (England) Order 2025. Rugby BC cannot postpone the local government elections for May 2026.

It is important to recognise that the Council’s response to the Minister’s invitation must balance the potential benefits of postponement - such as releasing vital capacity for effective delivery of Local Government Reorganisation - with the need to ensure democratic continuity and public confidence in local governance arrangements.

The Council remains committed to engaging constructively with stakeholders during this period of uncertainty, seeking pragmatic solutions to both operational and financial pressures that may arise and ensuring that any transition is managed transparently and in the best interest of the borough, residents and communities. The Ministerial letter invites the Council to provide its comments, which the Minister will then take into consideration in determining whether to bring forward the election’s subsequent postponement.

In relation to the Council’s process to enable it to make comment, as this is an election matter, there are no clear delegations available which would enable a response to be collected on behalf of the Council and for those comments to be returned to the Minister. The Council constitution is clear that the Cabinet has the executive responsibility for resources, which is why tonight’s Cabinet report has been prepared to enable them to consider the matter of the resource and a response then made to the Minister.

63 different councils throughout England in the same position as this Council, who have been asked to respond, have approached this in different ways. This Council looked to its Constitution and identified that Cabinet is the appropriate governance to express its views, through me.

I welcome the fact that members of the public are so interested in how this Council conducts its affairs and does so in such a transparent manner. Once Cabinet has

debated the report and made its view known, then I will respond to the Minister.”

(d) Yousef Dahmash, submitted the following question to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Moran:

“Did the Council, whether through elected members or officers, at any time and in any capacity, approach central government regarding the potential cancellation of the May 2026 Borough Council elections prior to receipt of the Minister’s letter inviting councils to request such cancellation?”

If so:

- a) What was the content of any such correspondence?
- b) On what date or dates did it occur, and from whom did it originate?
- c) What discussions took place prior to the correspondence being sent?
- d) Are minutes or records of those discussions available, and will they be disclosed? If no minutes or records exist, on what basis were they not taken, and how does the Council consider this consistent with transparency and good governance?
- e) Which elected members were aware that such correspondence was (i) being considered and (ii) being sent?”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Moran, provided the following response:

“In accordance with the Constitution, a written response will be sent to Mr Dahmash after the report has been discussed and Cabinet voted on the matter. Within that written response, I will clarify that I am unaware of any approach by the Council to Government about cancelling the May 2026 elections, prior to receipt of the Minister’s letter.”

100. RESOURCING FOR 2026 ELECTIONS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Executive (Part 1 – agenda item 3) together with the addendum report circulated prior to the meeting concerning the resourcing for the 2026 elections and local government reorganisation.

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) the position of Cabinet is that the Council should express a view to government that the 2026 elections should be postponed to release essential capacity to deliver local government reorganisation; and
- (2) delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive to make a submission to the Minister as stated in (1) above.

CHAIR