

Cllr. Alistair Beales Report to Council
Date of Council Meeting 26th March 2026

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters

I am delighted that this Council has been nominated in two categories in the annual Local Government Chronicle (LGC) awards, the Oscars of the Local Government world. In the words of the LGC editor “We received more than 1,000 entries to the LGC Awards 2026, making it another record breaking year, It’s a huge achievement to make the shortlist.”

<https://awards.lgcplus.com/lgca2026/en/page/2026-shortlist>

The first category is Housing, and the Borough Council has been nominated for the positive intervention in the market of the Major Housing Scheme. This nomination reflects the hard work of officers and councillors across many years and multiple administrations, and my thanks to all involved for their hard work. As the Portfolio Holder who proposed and initiated the Major Housing Scheme, the nomination gives me a great deal of personal pride whatever the outcome at the awards ceremony.

The second category is Most Improved Council and this nomination can be attributed to the fresh perspective, energy and sheer hard work of our CEO and the wider officer team backed up by the support of the elected membership and your willingness to consider and take tough decisions. Some of you will recall the Peer Review in the first year of this council term, and the Peers being present at a Joint Panels meeting which frankly was a tetchy and highly adversarial car crash. The Peer Review initial report on improvements required was not particularly enjoyable reading. So from a personal perspective, it was amusing and satisfying in equal part to be present at the final Peer Review meeting when virtually all of their recommendations and targets and been surpassed. They were bemused shall we say. But whilst that gives me some pleasure, it’s far from enough, we are much improved (and I hope LGC Most Improved!) but we have more to do to prepare our council, our staff and our elected membership for the brave new unitary world.

On that final point, I pursue a relentless leadership style of seeking consensus wherever and whenever possible and putting the residents and our community first. The unanimous support of this council for our three unitary solution was a demonstration of what we can achieve when we all pull in the same direction and I urge more of that please. It may sound trite, but the divisions between us are small compared to the duty to do our best for our community, a duty that binds us all.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments

I have initiated new steering group to strengthen governance of the Major Housing Scheme and support the officers at the coal face of housing delivery. The new Housing Development Steering Group includes senior officers and councillors and is not a decision making body but seeks to better deliver agreed policy. I will not go into detail here but membership and ToR can be made available to those that are interested.

Similar strengthening to the governance of the delivery of the Guildhall project is ongoing, albeit at an earlier stage. More anon.

I will request that the Constitutional Informal Working Group review the process of tabling amendments to the Budget and make recommendations to CPP.

I will be discussing with the Cabinet Member for Finance an idea for a Cabinet Task Group to give as wide a membership as possible the opportunity to review and comment upon the Budget given the widely expressed wish to do so at our full Council meeting when the Budget was considered.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

Too numerous to note. My diary is available on request to anyone who is interested.