Minutes of the Business, Infrastructure and Growth Committee
1 October 2026

Present:

Councillor H.R.D. Williams (Chair)
Councillor S. Gyawali (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:

C. Bateson	D.C. Clarke	K. Howkins
M. Buck	M. Gibson	J.R. Sexton

Substitutions: Councillors J.T.F. Doran (In place of S.N. Beatty)

38/26 Apologies and Substitutes

Apologies were received from Councillors Beatty and Geach. Councillor Doran attended as a substitute for Councillor Beatty.

39/26 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

40/26 Disclosures of interest

Councillor Bateson, Buck, Clarke, Gibson and Howkins were also members of the Planning Committee.

41/26 Questions from members of the Public

There were none.

42/26 Inclusive Economy - Governance Assurance

The Committee considered a report that sought to inform and assure members on the “Inclusive Economy” section of the Council’s Governance Assurance Register. This section currently had an overall assurance level of high, with only two sections listed as amber. The amber areas, “Establish a Business Engagement Framework” and “Shared Data & Intelligence”, were

rated as such as this work was ongoing and had been delayed due to resource restrictions.

The Committee acknowledged that some of the work being undertaken would be useful for the new West Surrey authority, and encouraged collaboration with existing district and borough councils. The Committee noted that there were local restrictions, such as the lack of appropriate schools in the area, that affected some of the performance outcomes.

Councillor Buck arrived at 19:20

The Committee **resolved** to:

a. Note the current overall assurance level for the Governance Assurance Area relating to 'Inclusive Economy', which forms part of the Council's Governance Assurance Register; and
b. Acknowledge the key focus areas, concerns and issues relating to this Governance Assurance Area as outlined in Appendix A.

43/26 Ashford Business Improvement District (BID) proposal

The Committee considered the Business Improvement District (BID) Proposal for Ashford to determine whether the proposal should proceed to ballot. Officers had reviewed the BID proposal and supporting documentation, and were satisfied that the relevant legislative requirements had been met, appropriate governance and operational arrangements were in place, and no grounds had been identified to justify the exercise of the Council's veto powers, including policy conflict, disproportionate financial burden, or concerns regarding deliverability.

The Committee noted the BID was considered financially viable, and the delivery plans were realistic and proportionate. Ballot papers were scheduled to be issued mid-November, with the result being announced by the Council before Christmas. If successful, the BID would commence April 2027.

The Committee **resolved** to:

1. Acknowledge the BID Proposal, Draft Operating Agreement, Draft Baseline Agreement, BID Compliance Matrix, Provisional List of Voting Businesses, and Summary of Consultation and Engagement; and
2. Agree not to exercise a power of veto under Section 51 of the Local Government Act 2023; and
3. Delegate authority to the Economic Development Manager to confirm to the BID proposer that ballot can proceed.

44/26 Update on Ashford Business Improvement District

The Committee received an update on the Ashford Business Improvement District from Gary Reeves and Rishi Sood.

It was proposed by Councillor Sexton, seconded by Councillor Buck and **resolved** to exclude public and press for part of the discussion of this item and for the remainder of the agenda in accordance with paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government 1972 (as amended) because it was likely to disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because the disclosure to the public would prejudice the financial position of the authority in being able to undertake even handed negotiations and finalising acceptable contract terms.

Engagement was underway with businesses on the Ashford BID Business Plan, which set out four key pillars: A Connected Ashford, A Safer Ashford, A Thriving Ashford, and An Attractive Ashford. Feedback would be collated and presented back to businesses to gain support for the forthcoming ballot. 138 businesses would be balloted.

The Committee noted the proposed BID boundary and acknowledged how the BID would be managed and administered if successful.

The Committee **resolved** to note the update.

45/26 Forward Plan

The Chair of the HSR/SLR Working Group confirmed there was no update to provide at this time, but suggested updates be added to future meetings.

The Committee **resolved** to note the forward plan with the addition of HSR/SLR Working Group Updates.

Meeting ended 20:52

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