

COALITION PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Between the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group on Rugby Borough Council

1. Introduction and Purpose

The Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group on Rugby Borough Council acknowledge that no political party currently holds overall control of the Council. Both Groups are committed to providing stable, transparent and effective leadership in the best interests of the residents, businesses and communities of Rugby Borough.

This Coalition Agreement sets out the principles, governance arrangements and shared priorities that will underpin joint working between the two Groups for the municipal year commencing on 21 May 2026.

The Leaders of both Groups will meet monthly to review progress against this Agreement and to ensure continued adherence to its principles and commitments.

2. Principles of the Coalition

The Labour and Liberal Democrat Groups agree to work together on the basis of the following principles:

- To support an agreed nomination for Leader of Rugby Borough Council.
- That, following the election of the Leader, the Leader will appoint as Deputy Leader a councillor nominated by the Liberal Democrat Group, in accordance with Article 7.4 of the Constitution.
- That the Leader will appoint a Cabinet drawn in equal numbers from councillors nominated by each Group, with the total size of Cabinet to be agreed between the Group Leaders, in accordance with Articles 7.2 and 7.5 of the Constitution. Any changes to the numbers of Cabinet Members will be by agreement of both parties.
- To recognise that both Groups share a common understanding of the importance of protecting and improving the services delivered by Rugby Borough Council.
- To recognise that both Groups share a commitment to building a thriving, healthier, fairer, greener Borough, as set out within the Corporate Strategy.
- To commit to ensuring that Rugby Borough Council is a fair, respectful and supportive employer, committed to treating all employees with dignity and professionalism.

Both Groups commit that all their councillors will:

- treat staff, fellow councillors and members of the public with respect;

- uphold the Nolan Principles of Public Life;
- adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct; and
- maintain the highest standards expected of those in public office.

Both Groups will consider measures to strengthen governance and ethical standards, including:

- enhanced councillor Code of Conduct training;
- strengthened reporting arrangements from the Monitoring Officer to the Audit and Ethics Committee; and
- establishment of a Councillor Champion role to provide peer support for councillors on matters relating to their role and conduct in office, to support member induction and training, and to signpost councillors and staff to the appropriate formal routes — including the Monitoring Officer's process under Part 4F of the Constitution — where standards or grievance concerns arise. The Councillor Champion will operate within Terms of Reference agreed by Full Council on the recommendation of the Audit and Ethics Committee and following advice from the Monitoring Officer.

Both Groups commit to improving organisational effectiveness, transparency and accountability across all Council services, including improvements at all levels of the organisation to:

- evidence-based decision-making;
- financial reporting;
- performance management and key performance indicators;
- where decisions are taken, providing clear timelines and accountability for implementation;
- risk management; and
- scenario planning.

3. Governance and Cabinet Arrangements

As part of this Agreement, and consistent with the Constitution:

- The Labour Group shall provide the nomination for Leader of the Council.
- The Leader, having been elected, will appoint as Deputy Leader a councillor nominated by the Liberal Democrat Group.
- the deputy leader of the Labour group will provide non-statutory deputy support to the leader and may be delegated to.
- The Leader will appoint Cabinet Portfolio Holders in equal numbers from each Group, on the basis set out in Section 2.
- The Leader will keep Cabinet portfolio arrangements under review in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Deputy Leader.

Named portfolio allocations between the Groups will be agreed in principle between the Group Leaders before this Agreement is signed and will be reflected in the Leader's Cabinet appointments following election.

Officer-Member Relationships

The Coalition affirms that officers of the Council serve the whole Council and all its members. The existing Protocol on Councillor/Officer Relations (Part 4D of the Constitution) applies to the operation of this Agreement in full.

The Coalition will bring forward to Full Council, in the early part of the municipal year, a refreshed Portfolio Holder Protocol setting out the working arrangements between Portfolio Holders, Strategic Directors and officers, and the arrangements for the sharing of information with opposition members. That Protocol will be drafted in conjunction with the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer and will form part of the Constitution once adopted.

4. Budget, Financial Management and Organisational Performance

Both Groups commit to responsible financial management and to maintaining the long-term sustainability of Council services.

There will be full and meaningful engagement between the Coalition partners regarding:

- annual budget preparation and approval;
- organisational restructuring proposals;
- departmental reporting structures;
- workforce planning;
- service performance; and
- financial monitoring.

The Coalition commits to ensuring that the Council operates within its approved budget and delivers value for money for local taxpayers.

5. Customer Services and Resident Experience

The Coalition will prioritise improving customer access, responsiveness and accountability across Council services.

This work will include:

- reviewing customer service standards;
- improving telephone and online response times;
- reviewing access arrangements and opening hours;
- improving resolution of resident enquiries; and

- publishing key customer service performance data.

This programme of improvement will be jointly led by senior councillors from both Coalition Groups alongside senior officers.

6. Value for Money and Spending Review

A comprehensive review of Council spending and service delivery arrangements will be undertaken to ensure financial sustainability and effective use of public resources.

The review will:

- examine both statutory and discretionary services;
- assess alternative methods of service delivery;
- identify opportunities for efficiency and improvement; and
- inform future budget-setting processes.

External support and challenge may be sought from the Local Government Association and other appropriate organisations.

Relevant performance and review information will be published wherever appropriate.

7. Transparency and Performance Reporting

The Coalition will strengthen openness and accountability by increasing the publication of Council performance information, including where permissible:

- missed bin collection data;
- customer service performance;
- call centre response information; and
- Customer Service Charter measures.

The Coalition will also seek to improve the quality, clarity and accessibility of Council reporting.

8. Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

The Coalition recognises the significance of ongoing Local Government Reorganisation proposals and commits to ensuring Rugby's interests are effectively represented.

To support this work, the Council will establish a Rugby Future Governance Committee as an advisory committee under section 102(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and Article 4.2(e) of the Constitution. The Committee will operate on a cross-party basis with civic representation, will report directly to Full Council, and will make recommendations to Full Council and to Cabinet on matters within its remit, including:

- Local Government Reorganisation;

- the Safe and legal transition to a new Unitary Council;
- devolution proposals affecting Rugby;
- community governance arrangements;
- the potential establishment of a Rugby Town Council and engagement with parish councils within the borough;
- democratic renewal and public engagement; and
- protection of Rugby's civic identity.

Separate Terms of Reference will be brought to the first meeting of Council after the AGM for approval, drafted by officers in consultation with the Group Leaders.

9. Shared Priorities During the Term of the Agreement

The Coalition will establish a delivery plan setting out the workstreams through which the priorities identified in the Corporate Strategy will be progressed during the term of this Agreement. The delivery plan will be agreed between the Group Leaders, will be published, and will be reviewed at the monthly meetings referred to in Section 1.

10. Communications and Media

The Coalition partners commit to open and respectful communications arrangements.

For matters covered by this Agreement:

- draft Council press releases relating to Coalition matters will normally be shared with Coalition partners in advance of publication;
- communications will include comments from representatives of both Groups; and
- both Groups will seek to maintain consistent and professional public messaging.
- Both political groups reserve the right to issue their own communications (outside of the Council communications channels) but commit to recognising the principles of this agreement in any such communications

Corporate and operational Council communications remain the responsibility of officers under the direction of the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service, and are not covered by this Agreement.

Exceptions may apply in emergency situations where urgent communications are required.

11. Right to Differ

Both Groups recognise that they remain separate political organisations with distinct identities, manifesto commitments and traditions, and that the Coalition does not require either Group to abandon those identities.

Nothing in this Agreement prevents either Group, or its individual councillors, from expressing differing views on matters not explicitly covered by this Agreement where consensus cannot reasonably be reached.

Both parties acknowledge that, in accordance with Part 2A paragraph 5.1(c) of the Constitution, Cabinet performs its functions as a collective decision-making body. Cabinet members of both Groups will support Cabinet decisions taken in respect of the matters covered by this Agreement, and will use the dispute resolution arrangements at Section 12 to address any disagreement that arises within Cabinet rather than expressing such disagreement publicly.

Both parties nevertheless commit to resolving disagreements constructively and professionally wherever possible.

12. Dispute Resolution

Where either party believes that this Agreement has not been adhered to, the matter shall initially be raised between the respective Group Leaders or Deputy Leaders.

Both parties commit to making every reasonable effort to resolve disputes through dialogue before any withdrawal of support is considered.

13. Duration and Review

This Agreement shall remain in force for the duration of the municipal year commencing on 21 May 2026.

The Agreement shall be formally reviewed by both Groups prior to the final ordinary meeting of Full Council during that municipal year and may be extended or amended by mutual agreement.

Signed on behalf of the Groups:

Leader, Labour Group

Leader, Liberal Democrat Group

Date: _____