

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 11 February 2025 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Alison Rooke – in the Chair

Councillors:

Mark Lygo, Vice Chair	Ted Fenton	Calum Miller
Juliette Ash	Donna Ford	Jane Murphy
Brad Baines	Andrew Gant	Michael O'Connor
David Bartholomew	Stefan Gawrysiak	Glynis Phillips
Tim Bearder	Andy Graham	Sally Povolotsky
Robin Bennett	Kate Gregory	Susanna Pressel
Felix Bloomfield	Jane Hanna OBE	Eddie Reeves
Liz Brighouse OBE	Jenny Hannaby	G.A. Reynolds
Kevin Bulmer	Damian Haywood	Judy Roberts
Nigel Champken-Woods	Charlie Hicks	David Rouane
Mark Cherry	John Howson	Geoff Saul
Andrew Coles	Tony Ilott	Les Sibley
Yvonne Constance OBE	Bob Johnston	Nigel Simpson
Ian Corkin	Liz Leffman	Roz Smith
Imade Edosomwan	Nick Leverton	Ian Snowdon
Trish Elphinstone	Dan Levy	Peter Stevens
Duncan Enright	Dr Nathan Ley	Dr Pete Sudbury
Mohamed Fadlalla	Kieron Mallon	Bethia Thomas
Arash Fatemian	Ian Middleton	Michael Waine
Neil Fawcett	Freddie van Mierlo	Liam Walker

The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

1/25 MINUTES

(Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2024 were approved subject to the following amendment:

On page 2 under item 124/24, fourth paragraph, replace 'at 6.30pm' with 'at 6.30pm'.

2/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillors Banfield and Field-Johnson.

3/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

4/25 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

(Agenda Item 4)

Chief Fire Officer and Director of Community Safety, Rob MacDougall, was rewarded for over 25 years of service to public safety with a King's Fire Service Medal in this year's New Year's Honours. He was recognised for his exemplary work over the years, in particular his contributions to the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit; leadership during times of crisis; ongoing voluntary work; and his commitment to equality and diversity.

The other Oxfordshire recipients of awards in the New Year's Honours were listed in Annex 1.

The following is a list of events attended by the Chair and Vice-Chair since the December Council meeting:

10/12 – VCH Trust Christmas Lecture, St John's College, Vice Chair attended
13/12 – Albert Park Singers Concert, Abingdon, Chair attended
14/12 – Lowland Rescue Service, Shiplake, Chair attended
16/12 – OCC Chair's Carol St Michaels, Abingdon
16/12 – Lord Mayor's Christmas Reception, Oxford, Vice Chair attended
21/12 – Sheldonian Carols Oxford Bach Choir, Oxford, Chair Attended
22/12 – Lord Mayors Carols, Oxford, Chair attended
23/12 – Oxford Cathedral Carols, Oxford, Chair attended
09/01 – Farming Conference with Princess Royal, Oxford, Chair attended
10/01 – Chair's charity gala dinner, Oxford
20/01 – Oxford Buildings Trust AGM, County Hall, Chair attended
24/01 – OCC music service Sheldonian, Oxford, Chair attended
27/01 – Holocaust Memorial Day, Oxford, Chair attended
29/01 – Christ Church Civic party, Oxford, Chair attended
29/01 – PA Network, County Hall, Oxford, Chair attended
31/01 – West Oxford Chair's fundraiser, Woodstock, Chair attended
04/02 – High Sheriff's Law Lecture, Oxford, Chair attended

The Chair thanked everyone who attended the Carol Service at St Michael's, Abingdon led by the Bishop of Dorchester at which over £400 was raised. She also thanked all who came to the gala dinner at the Mercure Hotel in Iffley, as well as those councillors who made a donation despite being unable

to attend. Over £2000 was raised that night for those charities. The funds raised will go to My Vision Oxfordshire, Parkinsons UK and the Earth Trust.

5/25 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item 5)

There were no appointments to note.

6/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item 6)

Petitions

Jenny Wells presented a petition with around 570 signatures regarding Low Traffic Neighbourhoods on behalf of mobile trades.

Anthony Cheke presented a petition with approximately 1330 signatures regarding visitor permits in Controlled Parking Zones.

Bernadette Evans presented a petition with 14 signatures regarding representation on the Citizens' Assembly.

Laura Greatrex presented a petition with 22 signatures calling for the widening Hitchcock Way in Didcot.

Item 10 – Budget and Business Planning 2025/26

Gill Bindoff
Richard Drew
Sumukh Kaul
Robin Tucker

Where the texts of speeches have been provided, they are published alongside the minutes.

7/25 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2025 / 26

(Agenda Item 7)

Council was asked to consider the Pay Policy Statement which, under the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to agree and publish every financial year. The statement, attached to the report, had been recommended for approval by the Remuneration Committee at its meeting on 15 January 2025.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Liz Leffman, Chair of the Remuneration Committee and seconded by Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Deputy Chair.

Following discussion an electronic vote was taken. The recommendation was passed with 58 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions.

Resolved to:

Approve and adopt the 2025/26 pay policy statement and agree to its publication on the council website and intranet, as required by The Localism Act 2011 (the Act) and the Code of Practice on Data Transparency.

8/25 GENDER EQUALITY AND ETHNICITY PAY GAP REPORTS

(Agenda Item 8)

Council had before it a report on the Council's Gender Pay Gap which is a statutory requirement as well as a report on the Ethnicity Pay Gap which is currently voluntary and a matter of best practice. The reports had been recommended for approval by the Remuneration Committee at its meeting on 15 January 2025.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Liz Leffman, Chair of the Remuneration Committee and seconded by Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Deputy Chair.

Following discussion an electronic vote was taken. The recommendation was passed with 56 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions.

RESOLVED to:

a) Note and approve the council's statutory gender equality pay gap report of 2024 for onward submission to the Gender Pay Gap Service, and making it available to the council's employees, and on the council's website by 30 March 2025.

b) Note the council's voluntary ethnicity pay gap report of 2024.

9/25 THE USE OF URGENCY PROVISIONS

(Agenda Item 9)

Council was asked to note recent urgent decisions which were made exempt from call-in on the agreement of the Chair of the Council.

This report was proposed by Councillor Leffman and seconded by Councillor Sudbury.

Following discussion, Council noted the report.

RESOLVED to note:

a) the exemptions from Call-in of the following decisions:

- (1) Cabinet on 17 December 2024 - Oxfordshire County Council response to Government Consultation on Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Council Meetings**
- (2) Shareholder Committee (Cabinet Committee) on 17 December 2024 - Changes to the Articles of Association and Board Director Appointments**

- (3) Cabinet on 9 January 2025 - Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation**
- (4) Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services on 21 January 2025 - Formal Approval of Schools Funding Formula 2025/26**

10/25 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLANNING 2025/26 - 2027/28

(Agenda Item 10)

Council had before it the Cabinet's proposed budget for 2025/26, medium term financial plan to 2027/28 and capital programme to 2034/35, together with a number of strategies and policies that the Council was required to approve for the 2025/26 financial year.

Amendments had been submitted by the Conservative Independent Alliance and by the Labour & Cooperative Group. The Chair decided to hear the debate on the Cabinet proposals first, followed by the debate on the amendments from the Conservative Independent Alliance and finally the debate on the amendments from the Labour & Cooperative Group. The Chair proposed that the meeting then be adjourned for discussions between the groups to formulate proposals that would achieve majority support.

The Cabinet recommendations were proposed by Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, and seconded by Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance. The recommendations were debated.

The amendments in Addenda 1 were proposed by Councillor Eddie Reeves, Leader of the Opposition, and seconded by Councillor David Bartholomew, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance. The amendments in Addenda 1 were debated.

The amendments in Addenda 2 were proposed by Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Leader of the Labour & Cooperative Group, and seconded by Councillor Brad Baines, the group's spokesperson on Finance. The amendments in Addenda 2 were debated.

The Chair proposed an adjournment at 4.50pm and this was agreed.

The meeting resumed at 6.10pm.

A new proposal, with amendments published in a Supplementary Report, was proposed by Councillor Liz Leffman and seconded by Councillor Dan Levy. The new proposal was debated and put to a vote.

Councillors voting for the proposal (40):

Baines, Bearder, Bennett, Brighthouse, Cherry, Coles, Edosomwan, Elphinstone, Enright, Fadlalla, Fawcett, Gant, Gawrysiak, Graham, Gregory, Hanna, Hannaby, Haywood, Hicks, Howson, Johnston, Leffman, Levy, Ley,

Lygo, Middleton, van Mierlo, Miller, O'Connor, Phillips, Povolotsky, Pressel, Roberts, Rooke, Rouane, Saul, Smith, Stevens, Sudbury, Thomas.

Councillors voting against the proposal (0)

Councillors abstaining (13):

Ash, Bartholomew, Corkin, Fatemian, Fenton, Ford, Mallon, Reeves, Sibley, Simpson, Snowdon, Waine, Walker.

The proposal as amended was moved by Councillor Leffman, seconded by Councillor Levy and put to a vote.

Councillors voting for the proposal (40):

Baines, Bearder, Bennett, Brighthouse, Cherry, Coles, Edosomwan, Elphinstone, Enright, Fadlalla, Fawcett, Gant, Gawrysiak, Graham, Gregory, Hanna, Hannaby, Haywood, Hicks, Howson, Johnston, Leffman, Levy, Ley, Lygo, Middleton, van Mierlo, Miller, O'Connor, Phillips, Povolotsky, Pressel, Roberts, Rooke, Rouane, Saul, Smith, Stevens, Sudbury, Thomas.

Councillors voting against the proposal (0)

Councillors abstaining (13):

Ash, Bartholomew, Corkin, Fatemian, Fenton, Ford, Mallon, Reeves, Sibley, Simpson, Snowdon, Waine, Walker.

The Council is RECOMMENDED to:

- a. have regard to the statutory report of the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer set out in Section 3.1 alongside Labour & Co-operative Group Section 3.1 in approving recommendations b to d below;
- b. (in respect of the budget and medium term financial strategy – at Section 4) approve the following:
 - (5) the council tax and precept calculations for 2025/26 [at Section 4.3] and in particular:
 - (i) a precept of £533,328,633;
 - (ii) a council tax for band D equivalent properties of £1,911.40;
 - (6) a budget for 2025/26 [at Supplementary Section 4.4 which incorporates the changes set out in Section 4.2 amended by Labour & Co-operative Group Section 4.2 and further amendments in Supplementary Section 4.2.1];
 - (7) a medium term financial strategy for 2025/26 to 2027/28 [at Supplementary Section 4.1 [which incorporates changes to the existing medium term financial strategy as set out in Section 4.2

- amended by Labour & Co-operative Group Section 4.2 and further amendments in Supplementary Section 4.2.1];
- (8) the Financial Strategy for 2025/26 [at Section 4.5];
 - (9) the Earmarked Reserves and General Balances Policy Statement 2025/26 [at Section 4.6 amended by Labour & Co-operative Group Section 4.6]. This includes:
 - (i) the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer's recommended level of General Balances for 2025/26 [at Section 4.6], and
 - (ii) the planned level of Earmarked Reserves for 2025/26 to 2027/28 [at Section 4.6.1 amended by Supplementary Section 4.2.1 (see paragraph 6 below)].
- c. (in respect of capital – at Section 5) approve:
- (1) the Capital & Investment Strategy for 2024/25 to 2034/35 including the Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Methodology Statement [at Supplementary Section 5.1 which incorporates Section 5.3 amended by Labour & Co-operative Group Section 5.3];
 - (2) a Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2034/35 [at Supplementary Section 5.4 which includes new capital proposals set out in Section 5.3 and amended by Labour & Co-operative Group Section 5.3].
- d. (in respect of treasury management – at Section 5) approve:
- (1) the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2025/26 [at Section 5.2] including the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and the Specified Investment and Non-Specified Investment Instruments.
 - (2) that any further changes required to the 2025/26 Treasury Management Strategy be delegated to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing