

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 1 April 2025 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at 3.40 pm

Present:

Councillor Alison Rooke – in the Chair

Councillors:

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

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.

11/25 MINUTES

(Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2025 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair

12/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bulmer, Gawrysiak, Iott, van Mierlo, Miller, Murphy, and Povolotsky.

13/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda Item 3)

There were none.

14/25 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

(Agenda Item 4)

The Chair reported that Oxfordshire was the first county council in the country to achieve Council of Sanctuary status. This achievement underpinned the Council's commitment to supporting people fleeing war, persecution and serious human rights violations. She expressed thanks to the Migration team in Public Health and Communities, supported by colleagues in the county education team, as well as children's and adult social care for all their work in achieving this.

The Chair also referred to the new link between the county of Oxfordshire with the Royal Navy ship HMS Diamond which was sealed at a special ceremony at Blenheim Palace on Tuesday, 25 February with senior naval officers, including past commanders of HMS Diamond, and Lady Suzie Johns, the Lady Sponsor for HMS Diamond present. They were joined by civic and military representatives from across Oxfordshire including the Lord-Lieutenant Marjorie Glasgow, Oxfordshire County Council leader Cllr Liz Leffman and the Chair of the Council.

Other events attended by the Chair and Vice Chair since the last Council meeting were listed in the Schedule of Business. The Chair highlighted three:

The Chair's Charity Donation reception, County Hall on 25 March. raised £8,738 for Earth Trust, My Vision Oxfordshire, and Parkinson's UK Oxfordshire branches – Henley, Banbury, and Oxford.

Chipping Norton Branch Visit on 11 March.

Launch of the Standing with Giants VE Day event 26 March – especially Bert Courtney.

15/25 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item 5)

Appointments were covered under Item 12 on the agenda – Committees and Review of Political Balance.

16/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item 6)

Petitions

Teresa Fieldwick presented a petition with 392 signatures to allow Carers through all LTNs and ANPR cameras

Bryony McCraw and pupils from Barton Park Primary School presented a petition with 376 signatures requesting the Council to adopt their road and implement traffic calming measures outside their school

Caroline Raine presented a petition with 1,133 signatures to extend the 3 and 3A bus routes to Oxford train station

Matthew Richardson presented a petition with 32 signatures opposing any plan to remove parking from the slip road off the Banbury Road at the Summertown shops

Public Address

Item 9:

Summer Alston-Smith
Claire Brenner
Mina Fazel
Emma Coles

17/25 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(Agenda Item 7)

Two questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions are recorded in an Annex below

18/25 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(Agenda Item 8)

Twenty-two questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions are recorded in an Annex below.

19/25 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

(Agenda Item 9)

Directors of Public Health have a statutory duty to publish an annual report on a subject of their choice that they feel demonstrates the state of health

within their community. Council considered this report which focussed on children and young people's mental health and economic activity.

Before the report was proposed, Council heard from two experts on climate change and the health impacts, Mina Fazel, Chair of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of Oxford, and Emma Coles from Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership.

The report was proposed by Councillor Nathan Ley, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Inequalities & Community Safety and seconded by Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council. Following discussion, the recommendations were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED to note the Director of Public Health's Annual Report in Annex 1 and to take every opportunity to support actions and initiatives that will progress related work.

20/25 REPORT OF THE CABINET

(Agenda Item 10)

Council received the report of Cabinet covering the Cabinet meetings on 17 December 2024, 21 and 28 January 2025, and 25 February 2025.

Under Item 2, Councillor Bearder asked if he could raise Councillor Johnston's question in his stead. The Chair declined the request.

Under Item 3, Councillor Edosomwan and Councillor Elphinstone asked the Leader why bus gates, traffic filters, and low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) were not included in the Citizens' Assembly. Councillor Leffman said that they were included on the recommendation of a cross-party advisory committee and 15 hours were added specifically for the Assembly to talk about these issues. Councillor Smith asked whether those 15 hours were well spent, and Councillor Leffman said that they were.

Councillor Enright asked the Leader whether the Assembly had gone well in general and, secondly, whether Citizens' Assemblies would be pursued by the Council as a model in the future, especially with respect to controversial issues such as traffic filters. Councillor Leffman stressed that traffic filters were going ahead but reiterated that questions about them were included in the Assembly. She said that she attended the final session of the Assembly. Citizens' Assemblies were something she wanted to see again in the future as this Assembly had gone well and had been especially well-recruited. Nevertheless, she said that Citizens' Assemblies should be reserved for big issues such as transport because they are expensive and take time to implement. She added, other options such as Citizens' Juries were available to hear the people's voice.

Councillor Baines noted the success of the Assembly in bringing the public into the heart of decision making. He asked the Leader, if her administration were re-elected, what steps would be taken to change how the Council

operated to regain trust of communities and to ensure public buy-in for ambitious new transport schemes. Councillor Leffman said there were several ways the Council engaged with the public, including regular consultation that would continue into a second term.

Councillor Brighthouse asked for clarity on why the contract for the Assembly did not initially include the Central Oxfordshire Traffic Plan. Councillor Leffman said that the purpose of the Assembly had been to look forward to 2050, not back. She said that LTNs and traffic filters were included in the discussions of the Assembly because of representations by the Labour Group. She said that it was now clear that people endorsed those measures in Oxford to reduce traffic, make walking and cycling safer, and reduce air pollution.

Councillor Leffman mentioned the budget containing LTNs in her response to Councillor Brighthouse and noted that the administration that included the Labour Group at the time had approved that budget. Councillor O'Connor raised a point of order: Under 3.2, s.1 of the Constitution, the budget was the responsibility of the whole Council, not just the administration.

Under Item 7, Councillor Baines asked whether the Cabinet Member welcomed the decision by the new Labour government to extend the Warm Home Discount to a further 2.7 million eligible households and, secondly, of its action to reduce the cost of barriers for people to access the Boiler Upgrade Scheme and Warm Homes: Local Grant. Councillor Sudbury said it was difficult to object to any of this but stressed that the amount of money for retrofit in Oxfordshire needed to be proportionate to the government's ambitions in this area.

Under Item 8, Councillor Pressel said that she found the report far too bureaucratic and stressed that above all else the Council needed to effectively communicate with people in high-risk flood zones. Councillor Sudbury said he agreed with Councillor Pressel and that it was for this reason that flood wardens were included in the report.

Under Item 9, Councillor Coles welcomed the stance taken by the Cabinet and asked whether there had been a response from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Councillor Sudbury said, to his knowledge, Defra had not yet given a response.

Under Item 11, Councillor Baines asked if the Cabinet Member could explain why people must hire a petrol or diesel van to drop off waste at Redbridge Waste Recycling Centre and, secondly, why dropping waste off by foot or bike was not permitted as it was permitted in London Boroughs and other built-up areas around the country. Councillor Sudbury said that access to the site on foot or by bike was not allowed because of a problem with the site itself. He said that the site needed to be stabilised, after which construction work would take place to enable cycling and walking on to the site.

Councillor Enright asked what the Council could do to further reduce the amount of waste that is produced. Councillor Sudbury said that officers ran campaigns almost continuously on trying to reduce the amount of waste produced and, secondly, on having it correctly sorted so that more of it can be recycled. He said that he expected recycling as a proportion of waste to go up from 60 to 80 per cent under the new Labour government. He praised plans to have the polluter pay and Ed Miliband's ambition for a zero-waste society.

Under Item 12, Councillor O'Connor noted the controversy around the removal of short-stay beds in the Henley area. He noted the contract for the provision of short-stay beds expired last month and that a business model was being developed for their replacement. He asked the Cabinet Member to outline that case and evidence how it would avoid similar controversy. Councillor Bearder said that under the Oxfordshire Way, 23 per cent more people were being discharged into their own homes and hailed this as a success that was welcomed by residents and NHS staff. As a result of this, short-stay beds were being reduced. He said work had been undertaken to ensure people understand why this was important and added that he would follow up with a written answer to Councillor O'Connor containing details of the relevant contracts.

Under Item 13, 'Funding contribution towards a jointly commissioned Mental Health Contract 2025-2035', Councillor O'Connor asked whether Oxford Health as a provider would be subject to regular and formal performance review. Councillor Bearder said Oxford Health was already evaluated at regular intervals.

Under Item 14, Councillor Pressel asked whether the Cabinet had considered reporting on the disability pay gap. Councillor Fawcett said that it had been considered and discussed with officers, but it was a challenge to find a way to do so that was meaningful because the pay gap was not easy to define.

Under Item 15, Councillor Baines noted the increase in cost of several projects identified. He asked what steps the Cabinet Member was taking to ensure the Capital Programme continued to deliver value for money and, secondly, to ensure that the impact of inflation was mitigated to ensure the full programme was delivered. Councillor Levy said reports delivered to Cabinet were regularly monitored and made public. He said there was insufficient money to do all the things in the programme.

Under Item 16, Councillor Baines asked the Cabinet Member to provide an update to the Council on the final figures for the delivered savings in Children's Services and, secondly, to outline any additional steps he was taking to improve the financial resilience and efficiency of these services, drawing on national best practice. Councillor Levy said he would provide Councillor Baines with a written response. He added that the Council was doing an excellent job at delivering services more efficiently.

Under Item 17, Councillor Baines noted that delivering better public services through transformation and reform required upfront investment to deliver returns over the medium term. He asked what further efficiencies and invest-to-save options the Cabinet Member would be exploring in addition to those already agreed to in the budget. Councillor Levy assured Councillor Baines that these matters were kept under review but noted that it was difficult to find ways in which to achieve further savings, given legislative constraints. He said he wanted central government to address the power of local authorities in this area.

Councillor Baines noted increasing concern about modern slavery and forced labour in international production. He asked what steps the Cabinet Member was taking to eradicate modern slavery from Council supply chains. Councillor Levy said there was no modern slavery in the Council supply chains to the best of his knowledge and assured Councillor Baines that the procurement team continued to look at the issue when awarding contracts.

Under Item 19, Councillor Pressel asked for an update on the Council's plans to regenerate the area around Speedwell House. Councillor Levy noted that Councillor Pressel and all other councillors had recently been invited to an exhibition in the chamber on the plans for Speedwell House. He assured Councillor Pressel that more information on the regeneration of the area was forthcoming.

Under Item 23, Councillor Saul noted that Witney Rotary Club was recently deterred from holding a public event in the marketplace in Chipping Norton because of Council charges associated with blocking parking spots. Councillor Gant noted that Councillor Saul's question was not about civil enforcement procurement issues, but he said he would happily provide a written answer.

Councillor Enright noted that West Oxfordshire District Council had recently transferred powers for civil enforcement of parking restrictions to the County. He also noted that the community found it could not use public spaces because these were now being managed as parking and highway spaces. He asked if this could be looked at in the context of this particular contract and whether local authorities could get together to support making more spaces available for public events. Councillor Gant said he would happily provide a written answer.

Councillor Baines asked if the Cabinet Member believed that the levels of parking enforcement were sufficient to act as a consistent and effective deterrent against use by commuters and non-residents. Councillor Gant said he was glad to hear Councillor Baines acknowledge the benefits of controlled parking zones. He said that the frequency of visits was a matter for the contractor but that the Council wanted more enforcement as was made clear by other members. He said he wanted central government to enable local authorities to do more in this area.

21/25 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

(Agenda Item 11)

Council had before it a report and recommendations on proposed amendments to the Council's constitution. The cross-party Constitution Working Group had proposed a number of changes to the Constitution which had been reviewed by the Audit & Governance Committee at its meeting on 12 March 2025. The Oxfordshire Health & Wellbeing Board at its meeting on 13 March 2025 agreed further amendments to its Terms of Reference to reflect changes to the operating model and staffing structure of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB).

The report was moved by Councillor Ted Fenton and seconded by Councillor Roz Smith.

The following amendment to the recommendations was proposed by Councillor Phillips and seconded by Councillor Baines:-

"Part 4.2 Cabinet Procedure Rules

Rights of Members to speak 4.1 which refers to Part 9.2 of the Constitution 'Protocol on Councillors' Rights and Responsibilities'

Part 9.2 of the Constitution Para 3 to be amended to include

*'All other members may request **by 9.00 a.m. on third working day before the meeting** to speak on a matter under consideration at meetings of the Cabinet or any committee of the Cabinet or when an individual member of the Cabinet is taking decisions in accordance with the rules of the Constitution and agreement to speak will be at the discretion of the Chair. Consideration will also be made for the relevant local member to speak if a matter under consideration relates to a specific Division. This request will be made by 9.00 am on the **third** working day before the meeting and shall not exceed 3 minutes.'*

Following debate, the amendment was lost with 17 votes in favour, 1 abstention and 32 against.

Following further debate, the recommendations were approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- (a) to approve amendments listed and tracked in Annex 1 (including Appendices 1 to 21) to the following Parts of the Council's Constitution, as proposed by the Constitution Working Group and, in the cases of (iii), (xii), (xiv) and (xvii), as amended by the Audit & Governance Committee:

- (i) Part 1.2 How Oxfordshire County Council Operates;
 - (ii) Part 1.3 Decision Making;
 - (iii) Part 3.1 Council Procedure Rules;
 - (iv) Part 3.1A Virtual Meeting Procedure Rules (delete);
 - (v) Part 3.3 Virement Rules;
 - (vi) Part 4.2 Cabinet Procedure Rules;
 - (vii) Part 4.4 Delegated Decisions by Individual Cabinet Members;
 - (viii) Part 4.6 Transport Advisory Panel (delete);
 - (ix) Part 5.1A Regulatory and Other Committees;
 - (x) Part 5.1B Health and Wellbeing Board;
 - (xi) Part 6.1A Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
 - (xii) Part 6.1B Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
 - (xiii) Part 6.1C Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire West Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference (new Part);
 - (xiv) Part 6.2 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules;
 - (xv) Part 6.3 Protocol on Scrutiny Participation (delete);
 - (xvi) Part 7.2 Scheme of Delegation to Officers;
 - (xvii) Part 8.3 Contract Procedure Rules;
 - (xviii) Part 9.2 Protocol on Councillors' Rights and Responsibilities;
 - (xix) Part 9.4 Policy on IT Use by Members of the County Council (delete);
 - (xx) Part 9.6 Protocol on Member-Officer Relations;
 - (xxi) Part 10.1 Members' Allowances;
 - (xxii) correct erroneous references and update titles where they have changed;
- (b) to approve additional items in Annex 2 agreed by the Audit & Governance Committee;
- (c) to approve amendments in Annex 3 agreed by the Oxfordshire Health & Wellbeing Board to its Terms of Reference;
- (d) to delegate to the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer the ability to make any necessary additional changes to the Constitution to amend any inconsistencies arising from these proposed changes and where any existing drafting in the Constitution is inconsistent with the changes set out in this report and approved by Council.

22/25 COMMITTEES AND REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE

(Agenda Item 12)

Council was requested to approve committee appointments based on revised political balance calculations following group membership changes.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Rooke and seconded by Councillor Lygo. The proposals were approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **note the review of political balance of committees to reflect the formation of the Green Group and Reform UK Group.**
- b) **appoint members to the committees of the Council as listed at Annex 1 to the report.**

23/25 THE USE OF URGENCY PROVISIONS

(Agenda Item 13)

Council had before it a report on one urgent decision which had been exempt from call-in on the agreement of the Chair of the Council, in accordance with the Constitution.

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

RESOLVED to note the exemption from Call-in of the following decision:

- **Cabinet on 20 March 2025 - Initial Response to Government: Statutory invitation for Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution**

24/25 INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS FOR TAKING EMERGENCY DECISIONS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

(Agenda Item 14)

Council received a report seeking approval to a temporary variation to the delegated powers of the Chief Executive to aid effective decision making in the period between the retirement of councillors following the elections in May and the Annual Council meeting on 20 May 2025. A revised version of the report stating the correct dates during which the variation would apply had been published in the Schedule of Business.

The report was proposed by Councillor Rooke and seconded by Councillor Lygo.

The recommendations were approved unanimously.

RECOMMENDED to agree a temporary variation to Part 7.2 of the Scheme of Delegation to Officers with effect that from 6 May to 20 May 2025 paragraph 6.3 (c) is to be read as follows:-

“(c) Any function of the Cabinet or of a Council committee or subcommittee, after consultation with the appropriate Director and thereafter with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council and the Leader, as appropriate.”

25/25 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR GLYNIS PHILLIPS - NATIONAL CARE SERVICE

(Agenda Item 15)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Phillips and seconded by Councillor Edosomwan.

The following amendment proposed by Councillor Sudbury and seconded by Councillor Bennett was accepted by the proposer and seconder of the original motion and by Council.

“A National Care Service funded through fair taxation is required in England to provide consistent high-quality care and provide further support for unpaid carers by creating and implementing national standards.

There is a crisis in the adult social care workforce with the figures from Skills for Care showing that there are currently over 131,000 vacancies in the care sector. There are variations across the country in the way this vital workforce is treated with some care workers suffering from poor pay and conditions.

This council agrees for the Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care setting out our support for a National Care Service that will

- Improve the quality of care for everyone who needs it and providing further support for unpaid carers
- Support independent living and enable people to recover outside hospital and care homes with the right level of support
- Promote public sector and not for profit organisations delivering care services
- Support partnership working with care providers including the voluntary sector, unions and government
- Implement a fair pay agreement with all care providers including the voluntary sector.
- **End the current unjust funding lottery, with funding coming instead from progressive taxes on land, property, or extreme wealth.**

This council supports the setting up of a National Care Service and urges the Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to prioritise this reform”

Following debate, the motion, as amended, was lost with 16 votes in favour, 4 abstentions and 27 against.

26/25 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR DONNA FORD - BANKING HUBS

(Agenda Item 16)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Ford and seconded by Councillor Fenton. Following debate, the motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

Councillors note the increasing number of vacant bank and building society buildings on our high streets, which are largely the result of technological change. The loss of community banking services is of concern to many residents, especially older constituents and those with disabilities and adaptive needs.

Buckinghamshire Council has set up a Banking Hub in Buckingham library for people to access banking services in the town centre.

Established in partnership with Buckinghamshire Council through its Buckingham and Villages Community Board, with the support of Buckingham Town Council and community representatives, the temporary Banking Hub provides local people with access to banking services. This offers a counter service operated by the Post Office, where customers of all major banks and building societies can carry out regular cash transactions. It also offers a Community Banker service where customers can talk to their banking provider about more complicated issues. Community Bankers work on rotation, with a different bank or building society available on each day of the week, to ensure fair and equitable access to major banking and building society customers.

Council requests the relevant Cabinet member for Community and Corporate Services and the Cabinet Member for Finance to take a lead from forward-thinking colleagues at Buckinghamshire Council and, working with its Town Council, and District Council partners, invite banks and building societies that have left – or are due to leave – our high streets to explore opportunities to work with this Council to set up similar banking hubs within appropriate Council libraries.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

