

## **CABINET**

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Tuesday, 17 December 2024 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 3.05pm

### **Present:**

**Voting Members:** Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair  
Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury (Deputy Chair)  
Councillor Tim Bearder  
Councillor Neil Fawcett  
Councillor Andrew Gant  
Councillor Kate Gregory  
Councillor John Howson  
Councillor Dan Levy  
Councillor Dr Nathan Ley  
Councillor Judy Roberts

### **Other Members in Attendance:**

### **Officers:**

Whole of meeting

*The Cabinet considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting, and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda, reports and schedule, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.*

### **159/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

(Agenda Item. 1)

There were none received.

### **160/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

### **161/24 MINUTES**

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2024 were approved as a correct record.

### **162/24 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

(Agenda Item. 4)

See annex.

## **163/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda Item. 5)

### 8 Henley Short Stay Hub Beds

Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak

### 9 Beyond Net Zero – Growing the Market for Carbon Dioxide Removals

Professor Steve Smith

## **164/24 APPOINTMENTS**

(Agenda Item. 6)

There were none to report.

## **165/24 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

(Agenda Item. 7)

Councillor Eddie Reeves, Chair of the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the reports on Community Asset Transfer Policy and Commercial Strategy.

Cabinet received the reports and will respond in due course.

## **166/24 HENLEY SHORT STAY HUB BEDS**

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report which outlined a response to the Motion on Henley Short Stay Hub Beds agreed by the Council on 5 November 2024 and the questions subsequently raised by Councillor Gawrysiak addressed to Cabinet set out in Annexes 1 and 2 to the report. It sets out the background to the decisions made in 2023 and the actions taken subsequently to address the concerns raised in the Motion.

Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak addressed the Cabinet, expressing gratitude for the work by officers in preparing the report. He emphasised the importance of geographically spread beds for those who were not able go home after hospital discharge and disagreed with the officers' recommendation not to reinstate the beds. Councillor Gawrysiak expressed concern about the lack of public engagement and consultation with patient groups and GPs on this matter. He presented responses to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests indicating that the beds were NHS funded, contradicting the report's claim that they were not. He urged for a review of the contracts to consider a geographical spread of beds and hoped for the reinstatement of beds in Henley.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, presented the report. He acknowledging the serious concerns that had been raised by and Councillor Gawrysiak and clarified that the beds were funded by both the County Council and the NHS, and confirmed that the Secretary of State did not require a consultation on the matter.

Councillor Bearder emphasised the financial and health benefits of the discharge to assess model detailed in the report, which allowed patients to recover better at home.

During discussion, members noted the history of step-down bed provision in Oxfordshire, endorsed the home first discharge to assess model.

**RESOLVED to:-**

- a) Note the history of step-down bed provision in Oxfordshire and to endorse the Home First Discharge to Assess model of care that has been implemented countywide since January 2024**
- b) Note the impact of Home First Discharge to Assess for users, hospital flow and on business efficiency across the County and in the South Oxfordshire area**
- c) Agree that the former Chiltern Court beds are not reinstated for the reasons set out in the paper**
- d) Note the decision of the Secretary of State for Heath not to “call in” the decision to close the Chiltern Court beds**
- e) Note the engagement that has taken place with the public and stakeholders during 2024**
- (f) Endorse ongoing engagement with Oxfordshire residents around out of hospital care**

**167/24 BEYOND NET ZERO - GROWING THE MARKET FOR CARBON DIOXIDE REMOVALS**

(Agenda Item. 9)

Professor Steve Smith from the University of Oxford addressed the Cabinet, emphasising the importance of carbon dioxide removal methods as part of the council's climate ambitions. He highlighted the need to scale up these technologies rapidly and said that Oxfordshire had the skills and vision to support these efforts. Professor Smith explained that carbon dioxide removal technologies were effective and currently removed approximately 1 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere annually. He stressed that while these technologies were at an early stage, they were necessary for achieving net zero and potentially becoming net negative. He also mentioned specific projects in Oxfordshire, such as woodland restoration and biochar, and highlighted the involvement of companies like Veolia in trialling agricultural fields for carbon removal.

Councillor Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations presented the report. He outlined the background to the report which underscored the Council's commitment to leadership on climate change policies and the potential for Oxfordshire to play a significant role in advancing carbon removal technologies.

Councillor Sudbury moved and Councillor Howson seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

**RESOLVED to**

- a) Note the underdevelopment of the market for Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) technologies, and the risk this creates for meeting net zero.**
- b) Support the recommendations to scale the market for CDRs through the council's policy making and partnership activity, growing both the supply and demand side of the market, subject to funding.**
- c) Subject to funding, commit to go 'Beyond Net Zero' - extending the council's current carbon neutral target for the council's own estate emissions to be 'beyond zero', with a target figure to be agreed at a later date.**

**168/24 INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT**

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet had before it a report on the Infrastructure Funding Statement. This was a statutory statement of fact to be reported annually, by 31 December 2024 on developer contributions secured, spent or received during the previous financial year, 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Development Strategy, presented the report. She referred, in particular to the range of schemes delivered during the year including new primary schools, improvements to libraries and traffic calming measures.

Councillor Roberts moved and Councillor Leffman seconded the recommendations and they were approved.

**RESOLVED to:-**

- a) note the content of the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24**
- b) approve the publication of the report onto the Oxfordshire County Council website**
- c) delegate authority to make any minor amendments to the report prior to its publication to the Director of Economy & Place in consultation with the Chief Executive**

## **169/24 RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING AT COUNCIL MEETINGS**

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet considered a report proposing a response to the Government's consultation on enabling remote attendance, remote and hybrid meetings as well as proxy voting at Council meetings.

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, presented the report and said that there was support within the Council for flexibility to enable remote and hybrid meetings.

During discussion, members concurred with the proposed response to the consultation.

Councillor Leffman moved, and Councillor Howson seconded the recommendation and it was approved.

**RESOLVED to agree to the proposed consultation response outlined in Appendix 1.**

## **170/24 WORKFORCE REPORT AND STAFFING DATA - QUARTER 2 - JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2024**

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet had before it a report which provided an overview of the progress towards delivering the Our People and Culture Strategy and also reviewed the workforce profile for July - September 2024 (Q2 2024/2025) including the key workforce trends and other relevant management information and performance indicators which were set out in the annexes.

Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services, presented the report. He expressed thanks to the Council's employees for their hard work and delivery of services during the calendar year. The report indicated that a number of the trends were moving in a positive direction. There was a need to address the issues concerning stress and anxiety which had contributed to sickness absence. There had been a reduction in turnover and agency spend.

Councillor Fawcett referred to the increased allocation of resources which had led to success of the Council's apprenticeship scheme.

During discussion, members welcomed the positive direction of travel in terms of the performance indicators detailed in the report.

Councillor Fawcett moved and Councillor Leffman seconded the recommendation, and it was approved.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

## **171/24 CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND MONITORING REPORT - OCTOBER 2024**

(Agenda Item. 13)

Cabinet had before it the third capital programme update and monitoring report for 2024/25 which set out the monitoring position based on activity to the end of October 2024. The report also updated the Capital Programme approved by Cabinet on 15 October 2024 taking into account additional funding and new schemes. The updated programme also incorporated changes agreed through the Capital Programme Approval Reports to Cabinet during the year as well as new funding.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report.

Councillor Levy moved and Councillor Howson seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

### **RESOLVED to:-**

#### **Capital Programme**

- a. Note the capital monitoring position for 2024/25 set out in this report and summarised in Annex 1.**
- b. Approve the updated Capital Programme at Annex 2 incorporating the changes set out in this report.**

#### **Budget Changes / Budget Release**

- c. Note the reduction of £0.5m budget provision from the Defect Liability Programme funded from corporate resources, thereby returning £0.5m to the capital programme which will contribute towards funding for the 2025/26 the capital budget setting process (para 68).**

#### **Additions to the Capital Programme**

- d. Approve the inclusion of the William Fletcher CE Primary School (Expansion) scheme in the Capital Programme with an indicative budget of £3.9m to be funded from S106 developer contributions and basic need funding (para 65).**

- e. Approve the inclusion of a programme of work which will create breathing apparatus and cleaning / decontamination areas across Oxfordshire's fire stations, with an indicative budget of £1.8m, to be funded from earmarked reserves, agreed by Council in February 2024 (para 66).

## **172/24 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS**

(Agenda Item. 14)

Cabinet considered a list of items for the immediately forthcoming meetings of the Cabinet together with changes and additions set out in the schedule of addenda.

**RESOLVED to note the items currently identified for forthcoming meetings.**

## **173/24 FOR INFORMATION ONLY: CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY ITEM**

(Agenda Item. 15)

Cabinet noted the response on Community Wealth Building.

.....in the Chair

Date of signing .....

## ANNEX

### CABINET – 17 DECEMBER 2024

#### ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions are listed in the order in which they were received. Should any questioner not have received an answer in that time, a written answer will be provided.

1. COUNCILLOR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW	COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE
<p>With regard to HIF1, the Council applied to itself for planning permission and refused it, resulting in a referral to the Secretary of State for a decision, who has now approved the application. What are the approximate costs to the council of the public enquiry and the inflationary increase in cost of the HIF1 project itself?</p>	<p>Specifically to the county council very little, as the overwhelming majority of these costs have been reclaimed from Homes England as funders for the scheme.</p> <p>The cost associated with both the CPO and Planning Public Inquiries are estimated to be around £1m. It is important to note though that the CPO enquiry was always anticipated, and that work undertaken within this figure was not needed solely for the inquiry. Also note that this figure does not include the inspector costs, which are not yet known.</p> <p>The all-party planning committee made its decision, in accordance with its duties, and can confirm that the potential costs of an appeal, or call-in, are not legitimate planning matters.</p> <p>The inflationary increase of the construction works due to the delay in commencement is estimated to be 15% which equates to approximately £28m</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Is the Cabinet Member concerned about the waste of £29 million of public money on this matter?</p>	<p>The costs of the delays were caused by the Planning and Regulation Committee's decision and the subsequent actions of the Secretary of State. The focus of the Council now was on efficiently delivering the project for the benefit of the community.</p>



