

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday, 12 February 2025 commencing at 3.00 pm and finishing at 3.23pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor John Howson – in the Chair

Officers:

	Jack Nicholson – Democratic Services
Agenda Item 5 and 7	Caroline Kelly, Lead Commissioner – Start Well
Agenda Item 6	Les Oosthuizen – Finance
Agenda Item 7	Lisa Lyons, Director – Children & Young People's Services

The Cabinet Member considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.

34/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda No. 1)

There were no declarations of interest.

35/25 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS (Agenda No. 2)

There were no questions from County Councillors.

36/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS (Agenda No. 3)

There were no petitions and public address.

37/25 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS (Agenda No. 4)

The minutes of the meetings held on 6 November 2024 and 21 January 2025 were both approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

38/25 HOMES 2 INSPIRE - CONTRACT EXTENSION AND AMENDMENTS (Agenda No. 5)

The Chair asked why the contract was only being extended for two years rather than five and, secondly, why the contract was not being cancelled all together. The officer

explained that the Council would not have time to find another provider should the contract be cancelled in March. She added that there would be another opportunity to renew the contract in 2 years' time and that 2 years provided an opportunity for review.

The Chair remarked that 2 years is not a very long period and that the evaluation would have to be undertaken soon. The officer agreed and said that the evaluation would be done within 1 year.

The Chair asked that future documentation consistently refer to either 'Homes2Inspire' or to 'Homes to Inspire'.

The Chair approved the recommendations.

RESOLVED to:

- a) agree the extension of the Residential Children's Homes Contract with Homes to Inspire for a term of 2 years from 1 April 2025 to the value of £7.024m; and**
- b) delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children's Services, in consultation with the Head of Procurement and Contract Management, to finalise the required Contract documentation for that extension.**

39/25 FORMAL APPROVAL OF EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA 2025/26
(Agenda No. 6)

The Chair asked if some children would now receive dual funding from both the SEN Fund and the Disability Access Fund referred to in paragraph 11 of the report. The officer confirmed that this was the case.

The Chair remarked that it would be a challenge for the Council to identify all SEN children, particularly those younger than 2 years' old.

The Chair said that given the Schools' Forum was content, he was happy to approve the recommendations.

RESOLVED to:

- a) Pass the funding increase received by Oxfordshire onto providers (after allowing for centrally retained funding per Department of education (DfE) criteria) and approve the 2025-26 Early Years funding formula for 3- and 4-year-old provision with an underlying hourly rate of £5.53 (excluding the supplements, SEN Inclusion Fund and Contingency).**
- b) Pass the funding increase received by Oxfordshire onto providers and approve the 2025-26 Early Years funding formula for 2-year-old working parent provision at an hourly rate of £8.05.**

- c) Pass the funding increase received by Oxfordshire onto providers and approve the 2025-26 Early Years funding formula for 2-year-olds of families receiving additional support at an hourly rate of £8.05.
- d) Pass the funding increase received by Oxfordshire onto providers and approve the 2025-26 Early Years funding formula for 9 Months to 2-year-old provision at an hourly rate of £11.05.
- e) Pass on the additional 15 hours for entitled “2yrs olds” & “9-months to 2 years old” (new entitlement from 1 September 2025).

40/25 JOINING THE SOUTH EAST REGIONAL CARE COOPERATIVE (RCC)
(Agenda No. 7)

The Chair remarked that under local government reorganisation, Greater Manchester would come under the Metropolitan Districts not the Combined Authority and as such a question may arise around what constitutes the South East Region.

The Chair noted that Oxfordshire County Council just falls into Tier 1, which would cost the Council an additional £50,000 over three years. He said that he felt the boundaries between the tiers came across as arbitrary decisions. The Director said that there was a profiling matrix used in establishing these boundaries, based on a look back and a forward projection around number of children cared for within a given area. The Chair said that Kent would get a very good deal compared to Oxfordshire.

The Chair asked if looked after children included unaccompanied asylum seekers or not. The Director said that that was her understanding.

The Chair asked if everybody in the South East had agreed to join the RCC. The Director said that 18 of 19 authorities had agreed to join in principle.

The Chair asked if £625,000 was to go up in line with inflation. The Contact Officer said that it would not go up.

The Chair approved the recommendations.

RESOLVED to:

- a) agree to Oxfordshire County Council joining the Department for Education (DfE) approved pathfinder for the South East Regional Care Cooperative (RCC) for a period of three years from 1 April 2025–31 March 2028; and
- b) contribute financially to the RCC at a total cost of £625,000 for the three-year commitment.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 2025

