

**Divisions- N/A**

## **COUNTY COUNCIL – 8 July 2025**

### **REPORT OF THE CABINET**

#### ***Cabinet Member: Leader***

#### **1. Initial Response to Government: Statutory invitation for Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution**

*(Cabinet, 20 March 2025)*

Cabinet had before it a report on interim proposals for Local Government reorganisation in response to a statutory invitation by the Government following publication of the Devolution White Paper on 16 December 2024. Since the receipt of the statutory invitation, all Councils across Oxfordshire had been working together on initial options accompanied by a single interim plan. The three proposals presented for restructuring: a single unitary authority, two unitary authorities including parts of West Berkshire, and three units which would include Greater Oxford and parts of Berkshire would be submitted to the Government. The County Council's preferred option was the single unitary authority for Oxfordshire.

Cabinet approved the recommendations to submit to Government the interim plan and each option for local government reorganisation as set out in the report and to support the optimal model for re-organisation – a single county unitary for Oxfordshire. Members also agreed that, as the constituent member of any future Mayoral County Combined Authority, the Cabinet's preferred geography for a Mayoral Strategic Authority was Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

#### ***Cabinet Member: Resources and Deputy Leader***

#### **2. HR & Cultural Change - Quarterly Employee Data Report - Quarter 4 2024-25**

*(Cabinet, 17 June 2025)*

Cabinet had before it a report which provided an overview of the progress towards delivering the "Our People and Culture Strategy" (as measured by the achievement of its key performance indicators) and summarised the main employee-related trends for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2024/25

Members noted the report and welcomed the positive trends illustrated in the statistics.

## ***Cabinet Member: Children and Young People***

### **3. Home to School Transport & Post 16 Travel Policy 2025-26**

*(Cabinet, 17 June 2025)*

The Council's existing Home to School Transport Policies were last consulted upon in 2014 (Compulsory School Age) and 2018 (Post 16). Department for Education Guidance was last updated in 2019 for Post 16 Travel and in 2023 and 2024 for Compulsory School Age.

Local authorities were required to keep their school travel policy under regular review to ensure it continued to meet local needs and comply with statutory requirements. Due to the significant time that had passed since the previous consultations, a review of the policies was undertaken in 2024. The purpose of the review was to ensure alignment with the Council's statutory obligations and identify existing areas of discretionary provision.

Cabinet approved the recommendations following analysis of the public consultation feedback in relation to the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy 2025/26 onwards for Reception to Year 11. Members also agreed to the adoption of the proposed Post 16 Transport Policy Statement Academic Year 2026/27, which reflected the consultation analysis recommendations to not introduce a contribution charge for those eligible for support under the policy.

## ***Cabinet Member: Place, Environment and Climate Action***

### **4. Response to Council Motion on Part-Night Lighting by Councillor Brighthouse**

*(Cabinet, 25 March 2025)*

Cabinet had before it a report which proposed a response to the motion on part-night lighting that was passed at Council on 10 December 2024. The revised proposals for part-night lighting would be subject to consultation with residents and stakeholders.

Members welcomed the proposed response and emphasised the importance of knowledge about nighttime behaviour patterns, particularly those of the younger population when considering any changes to street lighting.

Cabinet approved the recommendations including proposals for a full and thorough consultation and a community led approach to any part-night lighting proposal, through an application made by the town/parish council (if there is one) and the local county councillor, which, following this request, would include an area specific public consultation.

## ***Cabinet Member: Finance, Property and Transformation***

### **5. Treasury Management Q3 Performance Report 2024/25**

*(Cabinet, 25 March 2025)*

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) 'Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021' requires that the committee to which some treasury management responsibilities are delegated, will receive regular monitoring reports on treasury management activities and risks. Cabinet received a report which set out the position at 31 December 2024.

Cabinet noted the report which confirmed that the Council operated within its prudential indicators and included the repayment of loans during the third quarter, and the new debt of £500,000 through a community municipal investment to finance decarbonisation initiatives.

### **6. Business Management and Monitoring Report - January 2025**

*(25 March 2025)*

Cabinet considered a report presenting the January 2025 performance, risk, and finance position for the council. The business management reports were part of a suite of performance, risk and budget documents which set out the council's ambitions, priorities, and financial performance. The report explained the background to the Council's current financial position. The projected underspend of £10.5 million would be considered by the Cabinet at the June 2025 meeting.

There were ongoing significant issues with the Direct Schools Grant funding for high needs. These had been highlighted to the government, but no sustainable solution had been provided as yet.

Cabinet noted the report and approved a number of recommended financial adjustments.

### **7. Capital Programme and Monitoring Report - January 2025**

*(Cabinet, 25 March 2025)*

Cabinet had before it the fourth capital programme update and monitoring report for 2024/25 which set out the monitoring position based on activity to the end of January 2025. The report also updated the Capital Programme approved by Council in February 2025 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.

Cabinet noted the report and approved the following changes to the Capital Programme:-

- a) a budget increase for the Speedwell House Redevelopment programme, to be funded from corporate resources. (see paragraph 63 - 65)
- b) the inclusion of £2.500m funding into the Capital Programme to fund a contribution to the Cowley Branch Line. The expectation is that as far as possible, this will be funded by S106 developer contributions. Any funding gap will be met through alternative funding sources. (see paragraph 66 - 70)

## **8. Capital Programme Approvals - April 2025**

*(Cabinet, 22 April 2025)*

Cabinet had before it which set out change requests requiring Cabinet approval that will be incorporated into the agreed Capital programme and included in the next update to programme in June 2025

Cabinet approved the following changes to the programme:-

- a) the addition of a new phase of energy saving measures into the capital programme, at a total cost of £10.360m. The two-year programme will run from 2025-2027 and is to be funded by £10.000m from corporate resources, as approved by Council in February 2025, with the remaining £0.360m to be funded by a successful bid to Phase 4 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS4).
- b) the inclusion of phase 2 and 3 of Fire Compartmentation Remedial works into the capital programme, at a cost of £3.700m. The programme of work is to be funded from £2.000m corporate resources agreed by Council in February 2024 and a further £1.700m agreed by Council in February 2025.

## **9. Business Management & Monitoring Report - Annual Report, Provisional Revenue Outturn 2024/25**

*(Cabinet, 17 June 2025)*

Cabinet had before it a report which presented the Council's year-end position for 2024/25 on performance, risk, and finance.

Members highlighted a number of achievements by the Council during the year:-

- a) Oxfordshire was again the top performing waste disposal authority in the Country for the 11th year running. Residents recycled, reused, or composted nearly 58% of household waste.
- b) To make roads safer and to avoid any deaths or serious injuries on our roads, the Council had awarded £106,530 in grants to organisations to maintain Community transport services.

- c) The Council was first in the country to achieve authority of sanctuary status.
- d) Members also noted positive steps forward in driving digital and information support sessions in libraries. A number of libraries had been refurbished during the year.
- e) The Council had become a Marmot place. These are areas that are actively working to reduce health inequalities and improve overall well-being by addressing the social determinants of health.
- f) The longest waiting time for adult social care assessment was now 42 days, which is a reduction of 80% over the last four years. In children's services, the quality of education, healthcare plans is improving. 44% were rated good or outstanding in November 2024 compared with 21% in July 2023.

Cabinet also welcomed the Council's positive financial position detailed in the report. This puts the authority in a strong financial position as it heads into 2026 and beyond.

Cabinet noted the report and approved a number of proposals relating to reserves and the use of general balances.

## **10. Capital Outturn Report 2024-25**

*(Cabinet, 17 June 2025)*

The ten-year Capital Programme sets out the agreed capital investment to deliver the priorities identified in the council's Capital and Investment Strategy. Cabinet received a report which provided an update on the performance against the programme shown in the latest monitoring report for 2024/25 and also compared back to the capital programme agreed by Council in February 2024. Figures shown reflected those to be included in the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2024/25.

## **11. Capital Programme Approvals - June 2025**

*(Cabinet, 17 June 2025)*

The Capital Programme was approved by Council in February 2025 and will be updated during the year through the capital programme and monitoring reports. Cabinet had before it a report setting out change requests requiring Cabinet approval that will be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next update to the Capital Programme in July 2025.

Members agreed the recommendations to:-

- a) approve the inclusion of a programme of work into the capital programme with an indicative budget of £5.906m to be funded from the Traffic Congestion Improvement Fund (TCIF), agreed through Council in February 2024.

- b) note the proposed schemes to be delivered under the TCIF programme of work.
- c) approve a budget increase of £1.800m for the Access to Witney Scheme from £25.025m to £26.825m to be funded by incorporating £1.800m from the Traffic Congestion Improvement Fund.
- d) approve the inclusion of the Benson Lane Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) into the capital programme, with an indicative budget of £1.232m, to be funded by a combination of developer contributions, Transport Provision funding, BSIP programme funds and the Traffic Congestion Improvement Fund.

### ***Cabinet Member: Public Health and Inequalities***

#### **12. Cost of Living programme for 2025/26**

*(Cabinet, 22 April 2025)*

Cabinet had before it a report setting out the intended approach to support those residents who were most negatively impacted by cost-of-living pressures following the government's announcement of an extension of the Household Support Fund from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

The report also provided the latest position on the impact of cost-of-living pressures and set out highlights from the 2024/25 funding programme. The main elements of the programme including holiday free school meal support, resident support scheme (crisis payments and local district level funding), and advice services.

Cabinet approved the support package for 2025/26 and the repurposing £85,000 of funding held in the Emergency Welfare Fund reserve to support the Community Wealth Building programme.

### ***Cabinet Member: Transport Management***

#### **13. Citizens' Assembly Update**

*(Cabinet, 25 March 2025)*

Cabinet considered a report which provided an update on the first ever citizens' assembly organised by Oxfordshire County Council. The report described the process followed, presented the key recommendations from the assembly and set out how the Council intended to respond to them using a structured framework.

The assembly's purpose was to make recommendations on how the vision and targets set out in the council's local transport and connectivity plan (LTCP) could be achieved in ways that best met the needs and preferences of the people of Oxfordshire and other stakeholders. Part of the scope of the assembly was to consider congestion in central Oxfordshire and the core schemes in the central Oxfordshire travel plan.

Cabinet approved the recommendations to commit to considering and responding to the key recommendations of the travel and transport citizens' assembly and requested that the Place and Overview Scrutiny Committee consider the council's response to the assembly recommendations, prior to consideration by Cabinet in July 2025.

#### **14. Traffic Filter Trial Delay - Mitigation Proposals** (17 June 2025)

Network Rail's ongoing closure of Botley Road at Oxford station meant that Cabinet's November 2022 decision to introduce six trial traffic filters in Oxford could not be implemented until at least August 2026.

Officers had reviewed a range of potential options to mitigate this situation, and the recommended options to pursue (subject to consultation and development) had been identified. Cabinet received a report outlining the background, the need for intervention, and the options considered.

Members were addressed by a number of members of the public and councillors on the proposals.

Cabinet approved the recommendations to authorise officers to carry out a public consultation on a proposal to temporarily implement a congestion charging scheme using the systems and infrastructure developed for the traffic filter trial, to mitigate the impact of the delay of the traffic filter trial while Botley Road remains closed. Members also requested officers to develop an 'income spending strategy' which will focus the net surplus income on reducing the costs of bus travel, including potential park and ride incentives, in accordance with relevant legislation.

#### **15. Scrutiny Reports**

*(Cabinet: 25 March, 22 April and 17 June 2025)*

Cabinet received the following Scrutiny Reports: -

a) Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee reports on:-

Local Area Partnership SEND Update (25 March 2025)

Report of the Virtual School (17 June 2025)

Update of Children's Homes (17 June 2025)

Home to School Transport Policy (17 June 2025)

b) Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee reports on:-

Network Coordination of Road and Street works and Lane Rental for  
Oxfordshire (25 March 2025)  
Report of the Transport Working Group (17 June 2025)  
s.106 Improvement Project (17 June 2025)  
Rail Strategy (17 June 2025)

c) People Overview and Scrutiny Committee's report on:-

Co-production in Adult Social Care (22 April 2025)

d) Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
reports on:-

Local Enterprise Partnership Integration (17 June 2025)  
Business Management and Monitoring Report (17 June 2025)

**LIZ LEFFMAN**

Leader of the Council

July 2025