

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 17 June 2025 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 4.15 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Neil Fawcett
Councillor Tim Bearder
Councillor Andrew Gant
Councillor Sean Gaul
Councillor Kate Gregory
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Ben Higgins
Councillor Judy Roberts

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillors Thomas Ashby, Liz Brighthouse OBE. Izzy Creed, Imade Edosomwan, and Kieron Mallon

Officers:

Whole of meeting Lorna Baxter (Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer), Stephen Chandler (Executive Director of People, Transformation and Performance), Anita Bradley (Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Lisa Lyons (Director of Children's Services), Chris Reynolds (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

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.

77/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dan Levy.

78/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

79/25 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 March and 22 April 2025 were approved as a correct record.

80/25 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

See annex.

81/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

7 – Report from Scrutiny Committee - Place OSC report to Cabinet - Transport Working Group

Amanda Chumas
Danny Yee

9 – Traffic Filter Trial Delay – Mitigation Proposals

City Councillor Lubna Arshad
Ian Loader
City Councillor Katherine Miles
John Center
Luke Marion
Sajad Khan
Becky Carlyle
Jeremy Mogford
Danny Yee
Patrick Lingwood
Robin Tucker
Aeron Buchanan
Anne Gwinnett
Emily Scaysbrook
Duncan Parkes
Chris Hanson
Councillor Emily Kerr
Councillor David Henwood
Councillor Emma Garnett
Councillor James Fry

82/25 APPOINTMENTS 2025-26

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet had before it a report asking it to consider member appointments to a variety of bodies which in different ways supported the discharge of the Council's executive functions.

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

RESOLVED to agree the appointments to the bodies set out in the Annex to the report.

83/25 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet received the following Scrutiny reports and will respond in due course:-

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

- a) Report of the Virtual School
- b) Update of Children's Homes
- c) Home to School Transport Policy

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

- d) Local Enterprise Partnership Integration
- e) Business Management and Monitoring Report

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee reports on:-

- f) Report of the Transport Working Group
- g) s.106 Improvement Project
- h) Rail Strategy

84/25 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT & POST 16 TRAVEL POLICY 2025-26

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report on a review of the Council's Home to School Transport Policies. These 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.

Councillor Sean Gaul, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, presented the report. The report reflected extensive analysis and consultation feedback on the revisions to the Home to School Transport Policy. He said that the report highlighted that 60% of respondents to the consultation opposed the introduction of charges for post-16 transport.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Chair of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended an annual review of the policy. She also suggested more flexibility in the policy to accommodate individual circumstances, such as the example of siblings traveling separately to the same school.
- Another member expressed satisfaction with the extensive consultation process and the decision not to introduce contribution charges. The importance of considering the lived experiences of those affected by the policy was emphasised.

Councillor Gaul moved and Councillor Gregory seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **endorse 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.**
- b) **agree to the adoption of the proposed Post 16 Transport Policy Statement Academic Year 2026/27, which reflects the consultation analysis recommendations to not introduce a contribution charge for those eligible for support under this policy.**

85/25 TRAFFIC FILTER TRIAL DELAY - MITIGATION PROPOSALS

(Agenda Item. 9)

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.

Cabinet was addressed by a number of members of the public and councillors on the proposals.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, presented the report. He outlined, in detail, the reasons for the proposed temporary implementation of a congestion charging scheme using the infrastructure developed for the traffic filter trial.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- the need to reduce congestion and improve bus services was emphasised
- Members highlighted the historical context and previous support for traffic reduction measures in Oxford.

The Chair highlighted the lack of any credible alternative proposals and the need to tackle congestion in Oxford.

Councillor Gant moved and Councillor Bearder seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) 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.**
- b) authorise officers to develop the minor schemes as outlined in paragraph 13 (e) to (i)**
- c) request 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.**

86/25 HR & CULTURAL CHANGE - QUARTERLY EMPLOYEE DATA REPORT - QUARTER 4 2024-25

(Agenda Item. 10)

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 Q4 2024/25.

Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Resources and Deputy Leader, presented the report. He commented, in particular, on the positive trends illustrated in the report including the reductions in agency staff spend and staff turnover.

During discussion, members made the following comments:-

- the significant increase in the utilisation of the apprenticeship levy, from 66.5% in the previous year to 89.6% in the current year.
- An apprentice from the Council won an award for their achievements, showcasing the success of the apprenticeship programme.
- the positive working relationship with trade unions, who provided constructive feedback and worked collaboratively with the Council was noted

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

RESOLVED to note the report.

87/25 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & MONITORING REPORT - ANNUAL REPORT, PROVISIONAL REVENUE OUTTURN 2024/25

(Agenda Item. 11)

The business management reports were part of a suite of performance, risk and finance documents which set out the council's ambitions, priorities, and financial performance.

Cabinet had before it a report which presented the year-end position for 2024/25 performance, risk, and finance for the council. It also provided the council's Annual Report for 2024/25.

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, presented the report. She highlighted the following points from the report:-

- Oxfordshire County Council remained the top-performing waste disposal authority for the 11th consecutive year, with nearly 58% of household waste being recycled, reused, or composted.
- Progress was made on the Vision Zero initiative to improve road safety and reduce road traffic accidents.
- £106,530 in grants were awarded to maintain community transport services.
- The Council became the first County Council to be awarded Authority of Sanctuary status.
- Digital and information support sessions have been rolled out in libraries, with several libraries undergoing refurbishment.
- Oxfordshire had become a Marmot Place, focusing on reducing health inequalities.

- The longest waiting time for social care assessments has been reduced to 42 days, an 80% reduction over the last four years.
- The quality of education healthcare plans has improved, with 44% rated good or outstanding in November 2024, compared to 21% in July 2023.

Councillor Leffman reported on the Council's financial position including the delivery of savings, underspend and general balances which put the Council in a strong financial position for 2025/26.

The high needs deficit for 2024-2025 was £36.5 million, increasing the cumulative negative balance to £92.3 million. The Council awaited government action to address this national issue.

Members noted that the Cheers M'Dears community support service in Banbury had won the MJ Award for Innovation in Children's and Adult Services and that two graduates were runners-up in the Young Local Authority of the Year Awards.

During discussion, a member highlighted that Oxfordshire County Council remained the top council in the Climate Emergency Scorecards, with an improved score from the previous year.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **note the report and annexes including the council's Annual Report for 2024/25 (Annex D).**
- b) **note the summary of the provisional year-end financial position for 2024/25 along with the year-end position on general balances and earmarked reserves (Annex B).**
- c) **approve the following proposals relating to reserves and the use of general balances:**
 - i. **Add the £1.8m underspend against budgeted funding for investments in 2024/25 to the Budget Priorities reserve for use in 2025/26 (Annex B Paragraph 12).**
 - ii. **Agree that the £1.2m 2024/25 On-Street Parking Account surplus, that has not yet been applied to fund eligible expenditure in accordance with Section 55(4) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, is carried forward to 2025/26 as set out in Annex B-3c (Annex B Paragraph 64).**

- iii. **Approve the use of one - off funding from General Balances to support Innovate Oxfordshire (£0.5m) and the Business and Intellectual Property Centre (£0.1m) (Annex B Paragraph 14).**

88/25 CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT 2024-25

(Agenda Item. 12)

The ten-year Capital Programme set 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.

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, presented the report. She referred to the significant number of schemes which had been delivered including additional school places and progress on various major infrastructure projects.

Councillor Leffman also referred to the Schools Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme and schemes delivered through the Children's Home Programme.

Councillor Leffman moved, and Councillor Roberts seconded the recommendations, and they were accepted.

RESOLVED to:

- a) **note the performance against the capital programme for 2024/25 as set out in the report.**
- b) **note the Capital Programme Provisional Outturn Summary for 2024/25 as set out in:**

Annex 1a: Strategy Programmes Expenditure

Annex 1b: Capital Financing

Annex 1c: Strategy / Programme Level Reporting

89/25 CAPITAL PROGRAMME APPROVALS - JUNE 2025

(Agenda Item. 13)

The Capital Programme was approved by Council in February 2025 and would be updated during the year through the capital programme and

monitoring reports. The report set out change requests requiring Cabinet approval that would be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next update to the Capital Programme in July 2025.

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, presented the report. She referred to the various schemes requiring approval and inclusion in the capital programme.

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

RESOLVED 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.

90/25 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 14)

The 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.

91/25 FOR INFORMATION ONLY: CABINET RESPONSES TO SCRUTINY REPORTS

(Agenda Item. 15)

Cabinet noted the following responses to Scrutiny items:-

- a) Network management (Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee)**
- b) Local Area Partnership SEND Update (Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee)**

.....in the Chair

Date of signing