

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 16 September 2025 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 2.50pm

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 Dan Levy
Councillor Judy Roberts

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors Thomas Ashby and James Robertshaw

Officers:

Whole of meeting Martin Reeves (Chief Executive), Lorna Baxter (Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer), Anita Bradley (Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer), 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.

118/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

There were none.

119/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

120/25 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2025 were approved as a correct record.

121/25 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

There were none received.

122/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

There were none.

123/25 PARKING AWARD

The Chair congratulated the Oxfordshire County Council's Parking schemes and Traffic orders teams for winning the brand new traffic team award at the British Parking Awards, highlighting the professionalism and hard work of the team.

124/25 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet approved the following appointments: -

The Resources & Waste Partnership (Strategic Partnership) – Cllr Judy Roberts

England's Economic Heartland – Strategic Transport Leadership Board (Strategic Outside Body) – Cllr Liz Leffman

South East Strategic Leaders (Strategic Partnership) – Cllr Liz Leffman

Cooperative Councils Innovation Network (Strategic Outside Body) – Cllr Ben Higgins

School Organisation Stakeholders Group -
Cllr James Plumb

Adoption Panel – Cllr James Robertshaw to be appointed to Oxfordshire Alliance vacancy

125/25 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 7)

Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Chair of the Education Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. presented the reports concerning school catering services and the corporate cleaning contract. The catering service had been previously run by Carillion and returned to the council in 2018. The committee emphasised concerns about ensuring quality food in smaller and

rural schools, protecting staff rights and conditions during contract transitions, and avoiding redundancies.

Councillor Tanya Overton, Deputy Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the report on Oxfordshire Employment Services. Recommendations included increasing employer engagement through an accreditation scheme promoting inclusive employment practices and expanding the programme target to 2,500 individuals. The report underscored employment as a route to independence and a preventative health measure.

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Chair of the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the report on Our People and Culture Strategy. Recommendations included requesting more granular sickness absence data to better target interventions and suggestions for optimising apprenticeship levy spending, including funding apprenticeships externally, especially in the voluntary sector. The committee also recommended maintaining good relations with unions and involving them in the Strategy. Additionally, the Committee suggested discussing changes to the employee engagement survey at the Employment and Joint Consultative Committee.

Councillor Phillips also presented the report on the e-bike and e-scooter contract. Recommendations included writing to the Department of Transport for clarity on the trial's end date, conducting local evaluations of the trial's impact—especially on bus usage, increasing the availability of e-bikes and scooters using park and ride facilities, and considering the use of on-road parking spaces to reduce pavement clutter caused by abandoned vehicles. Cabinet received the reports and will respond in due course.

126/25 DELIVERING THE FUTURE TOGETHER - DIGITAL, DATA AND TECHNOLOGY (DDAT) STRATEGY

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report which provided a strategic overview consolidating Oxfordshire County Council's new Digital Strategy, Data Strategy, and Technology Strategy into a unified framework for transformation and innovation from 2025 to 2028. It supported the Council's "Delivering the Future Together" vision and aligned with its seven operating principles, focusing on efficiency, collaboration, digital-first service delivery, and proactive demand management.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, presented the report. He emphasised the main elements of the strategy including a digital-first customer experience, innovation through AI and cloud technologies, and developing data management and analytics capabilities. The strategy focused on building data confidence across the organisation, ensuring security and privacy, and supporting efficient service delivery.

Councillor Levy moved and Councillor Higgins seconded the recommendation, and it was approved.

RESOLVED to adopt the Digital, Data and Technology (DDAT) Strategies 2025-2028.

127/25 HR AND CULTURAL CHANGE QUARTERLY EMPLOYEE DATA REPORT - QUARTER 1 2025-26

(Agenda Item. 9)

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 Q1 2025/26.

Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Resources and Deputy Leader, presented the report. The report highlighted positive trends such as a decrease in agency spend and staff turnover, though challenges remained in recruitment due to market conditions. The report also highlighted the importance of detailed sickness data.

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

RESOLVED to note the report.

128/25 TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER 1 REPORT

(Agenda Item. 10)

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) 'Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021' requires that 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 the end of the first quarter of 2025-6.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, presented the report. He highlighted that the council operated within debt indicators and had reduced Public Works Loan Board debt. Investments yielded returns above budget due to higher cash balances and interest rates. The report also highlighted the ongoing challenge of the negative High Needs Block Direct Schools Grant (DSG) balance, expected to reach £137 million, and the need for government intervention.

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

RESOLVED to note the council's treasury management activity at the end of the first quarter of 2025/26.

129/25 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & MONITORING REPORT -- PERFORMANCE AND RISK QUARTER 1 2025-26

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet received a report which set out the Quarter 1 2025/26 performance and Strategic risk overview for the council as well as an update on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, presented the report. The report emphasised addressing underperformance and the importance of meaningful metrics. The council noted challenges with special educational needs and but acknowledged progress and adherence to budget plans. The report also covered the Homes for Ukraine scheme, praising community support for displaced Ukrainians and Hong Kong residents.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) note the report and annexes.**
- b) approve the allocation of Homes for Ukraine grant funding as set out in Annex C.**

130/25 CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE - SEPTEMBER 2025

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet had before it a report which set out changes to the capital programme requiring Cabinet approval to be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next update to the Capital Programme in October 2025.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, presented the report. The report sought approval for a new primary school for Grove Airfield with a budget of £1.6 million and £2.4 million for purchasing two new buildings to facilitate staff relocation from a costly lease in central Oxford. These items were a response to rapid growth in the Grove area and local government reorganisation.

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

RESOLVED to:

- a) **approve the inclusion of Grove Airfield Primary School (Phase 2 of Grove Airfield Development) into the capital programme with an indicative budget of £1.600m**
- b) **approve £2.400m to enable the purchase of two new buildings to facilitate staff relocation**

131/25 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 13)

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.

132/25 FOR INFORMATION ONLY: CABINET RESPONSES TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

(Agenda Item. 14)

Cabinet noted the following responses to Scrutiny recommendations: -

Education Act 1996 (Section 19) – Response to the report of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Education other than at School (EOTAS)

Home to School Transport Policy

Transport Working Group

.....in the Chair

Date of signing