

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 4 November 2025 commencing at 11.00 am and finishing at 4.10 pm

Present:

Councillor Mark Lygo – in the Chair

Councillors:

Ted Fenton (Vice-Chair)	James Fry	Kieron Mallon
Thomas Ashby	Andrew Gant	Emma Markham
Brad Baines	Emma Garnett	Gavin McLauchlan
James Barlow	Sean Gaul	Lesley McLean
Ron Batstone	Stefan Gawrysiak	Ian Middleton
Tim Bearder	Andy Graham	Toyah Overton
Will Boucher-Giles	Tom Greenaway	Glynis Phillips
Chris Brant	Kate Gregory	James Plumb
Liz Brighthouse OBE	Jane Hanna OBE	Susanna Pressel
Mark Cherry	Jenny Hannaby	Leigh Rawlins
Andrew Coles	David Henwood	Judy Roberts
Nicholas Michael Cotter	Georgina Heritage	James Robertshaw
Dr Izzy Creed	Ben Higgins	Paul-Austin Sargent
Andrew Crichton	David Hingley	Geoff Saul
Hao Du	Johnny Hope-Smith	Roz Smith
Imade Edosomwan	Robin Jones	Ian Snowdon
Judith Edwards	Emily Kerr	Peter Stevens
Gareth Epps	Dan Levy	Bethia Thomas
Lee Evans	Dr Nathan Ley	Liam Walker
Neil Fawcett	Diana Lugova	Tony Worgan
Maggie Filipova-Rivers	Saj Malik	

The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

78/25 MINUTES

(Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2025 were approved.

79/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillors Field-Johnson, Fletcher, Gordon and Leffman.

80/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

81/25 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

(Agenda Item 4)

The Chair thanked His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant, Mrs Marjorie Glasgow, for addressing Council Members before this meeting commenced.

The County had been honoured to have visits from the Prince and Princess of Wales and Princess Royal in October.

A list of events attended by the Chair, Vice-Chair and past chairs since the last Council meeting was attached to the Schedule of Business in Annex 1.

The Chair recalled that on 6 October, the United Kingdom's Ambassador to the European Union, Lindsay Appleby, came to Oxfordshire to build connections with local firms that he will use to boost investment and trade with the EU. The Ambassador remarked afterwards that it had been the best organised visit he had participated in. The Chair thanked staff who made that occasion possible.

The Chair noted that November was Men's Mental Health Awareness Month. International Men's Day was to be marked in County Hall on 19 November. That day aims to highlight the positive contributions of men to society, raise awareness about men's health issues, and promote gender equality.

The Chair also thanked everyone who came to the second charity quiz, held on 22 October, which raised £253 for his chosen charities: OXSRAD, Abingdon RDA, and Oxford United in the Community. The Chair's Charity Christmas Quiz will take place in Common Hall from 4 pm on Wednesday, 3 December.

The Chair's Christmas Carol Service will take place at St Nicholas Church in Marston from 6.30 pm on Monday, 15 December.

82/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item 5)

The Chair accepted the following requests to present a petition or speak on an item on the agenda:

Petitions

Brenda Boardman 'Transport Hub at Oxford Rail Station'

Brenda Boardman presented a petition with 1,240 signatures, representing Oxon4Buses, advocating for the inclusion of a bus hub in the redevelopment plans for Oxford rail station. The petition highlighted that Network Rail's

tender for the station redevelopment omitted bus facilities. The petition called for a bus hub that is physically and visually linked to the rail station, enabling seamless transfer between train and bus for passengers.

Councillor Roberts, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, welcomed the petition and confirmed the Council's policy to prioritise active travel modes and bus connections at Oxford Station, with minimal car parking. Network Rail's consultant brief now included aspirations for a new transport interchange to enhance bus-rail transition. Council officers will continue collaborating with Network Rail, Oxford City Council, bus companies, and user groups to ensure the station design reflects the Council's transport hierarchy and user needs. Councillor Roberts added that an early meeting with the appointed architect and transport engineers was planned to discuss user group engagement.

Public Address

Item 15 Motion from Councillor Walker

Richard Parnham
Danny Yee
Thaila Carr
Bernadette Evans
Paul Major
Anne Gwinnett
Lydia Jansson
Robin Tucker
Emily Scaysbrook
Geoffrey Sutton

Any speeches provided to the Council are published alongside these minutes.

83/25 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(Agenda Item 6)

Twenty seven questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions and responses are recorded in an Annex below.

84/25 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(Agenda Item 7)

Sixty three questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions and responses are recorded in an Annex below.

85/25 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item 8)

Council was asked to consider a report regarding the current vacancy on the Planning and Regulation Committee and also addressing any similar vacancies in the future.

The Liberal Democrat group was entitled to seven of the twelve positions on the Planning and Regulation Committee. However, only six Members had been appointed by the political group leader leaving one vacancy on the committee. Under the legislation, it fell to Council to fill the current vacancy.

The report also proposed that Council delegate to all council committees the authority to appoint to its future vacant committee seats in the event that a political group has not expressed its wishes in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Councillor Lugova moved the recommendations in the report and nominated Councillor Gawrysiak for the vacant position on the Planning and Regulation Committee. Councillor Worgan seconded the recommendations and the nomination.

The Chair explained that, because Councillor Gawrysiak was not a member of the Liberal Democrat group, Council would also have to approve the resulting variation of the political balance on the Committee with no votes against in accordance with Section 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The Chair also clarified that any abstentions on this vote would not count as votes against.

Following discussion, the proposal to appoint Councillor Gawrysiak and vary the political balance on the Committee was put to a vote and approved with 2 abstentions and no votes against.

Recommendation b) was put to a vote and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED (with 2 abstentions and no Member voting against):

- **to appoint Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak to the vacant position on the Planning and Regulation Committee in accordance with the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, Regulation 15;**
- **to agree, with no votes against, to vary the political proportionality on the Committee in accordance with Section 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.**

RESOLVED (unanimously):

- **to delegate to all council committees the authority to appoint to its vacant committee seats in accordance with legislation if a political group fails to make a nomination.**

86/25 REPORT OF THE CABINET

(Agenda Item 9)

Council received the report of Cabinet covering its meetings for 10 September 2025, 16 September 2025 and 21 October 2025.

On Item 1: Strategic Plan

Councillor Baines asked how the proposals by the administration will be more ambitious than that required and funded by central government in regard to establishing new Best Start Family Hubs. Councillor Fawcett responded on behalf of the Leader and said he will ask Councillor Leffman to respond in writing and indicated that it was planned to put additional resource into family hubs.

Councillor Phillips asked how it was concluded that the strategic plan was aligned with the residents' priorities when none of the primary or secondary priorities listed by residents made any reference to being greener. Councillor Fawcett responded that the consultation response was part of the evidence base that was looked at in drawing up the strategic plan and that the mandate for the majority administration was based on climate change and making Oxfordshire greener.

Item 3: Oxford temporary congestion charges

Councillor Pressel asked why there was such a short lead time in the period for the implementation of the congestion charge and why some of the information leaflets were not distributed on time. Councillor Gant responded that the leaflets were delivered very efficiently. The Councillor further responded that it was appropriate to deliver the benefits of this scheme as soon as possible, which is what had been done.

Councillor Baines asked what plans were in place to monitor any modal shift from driving to cycling during the operation of the temporary congestion charge and what steps would be taken if the resultant shift was below the levels required to deliver the target reduction in car journeys. Councillor Gant responded that precise changes from one mode to the other, particularly with cycling and pedestrians, was difficult to measure. He further responded that these schemes did not exist in isolation, and the ambition was to create a better county by making everybody's journeys better.

Councillor Fry asked that with growing evidence of resignations among badly needed school and hospital staff, would the cabinet member give urgent consideration to extending permit exemptions to these workers, if their employers support such exemption, to staunch the outflow of valuable staff. Councillor Gant responded that he would request that the evidence of resignations be provided to him. He further responded that access to Oxford hospital sites was central to the policy, and that one cannot get the benefits unless one supports the policies.

Councillor Graham asked how many applications have been received for exemptions and if he could ensure that officers responded to these exemptions. Councillor Gant responded that the figure was around 63,000 altogether of which around 50,000 were from within Oxford and Oxfordshire. He further said that the officers in customer services do a brilliant job.

Councillor Brighouse asked for discussions to be held with ambulance authorities and various organisations that operate ambulances around the city because it was virtually impossible for many people on the eastern

bypass to try and move out of their way. The Councillor further asked if congestion was being monitored. Councillor Gant responded that the impact of the scheme would be monitored very carefully and verified and audited by external contractors. The Councillor further said that he cannot possibly comment on the individual experience of a particular ambulance on a particular road but he was happy to continue discussions.

Councillor Brant asked about the progress on Oxford's new congestion charges and the response of bus companies. Councillor Gant responded that he could not comment on behalf of the bus companies but that the uptake of the Free Park and Rides had been substantial.

Councillor Malik asked about tackling congestion which now sits on Marsh Lane instead of the Marston Ferry Road where there is a charge. He further asked as to how the congestion would be dealt with when people were travelling to get to the eastern bypass and avoid the charge on Hollow Way. Councillor Gant responded that the system was carefully designed by expert officers over a very long period and that it was not about certain roads but about managing the way traffic moves around the city as a whole.

Item 4: Future Bus Regulation Options

Councillor Epps asked what government support was being made available towards purchasing bus fleets and depots. Councillor Gant responded that there was no support from central government.

Councillor Baines asked, with regard to the £150,000 that would pay for a detailed franchising plan and detailed proposals for franchising, could the cabinet member outline what had become of this funding and why it was not spent as agreed by Council. Councillor Gant responded that it had been spent and that £150,000 did not come anywhere near the cost of a franchising assessment or the implementation.

Councillor Middleton asked about the problem that non-profitable rural routes cannot be subsidised by the Council because it does not reap the benefits from the more profitable routes which have been franchised to private companies. Councillor Gant responded that the partnership with the bus companies was very successful, including the payment for electric buses.

Councillor Garnett noted that in Oxfordshire congestion charge revenues were effectively handed over to the bus companies, but the Council does not have a direct say in what service will be run. Councillor Gant responded that the bus companies provided the biggest share of investment which was a good deal and that the review of the bus franchising model will be a matter for any possible future Mayoral Combined Authority.

Councillor Fry asked if revenues raised by congestion charges will be directed towards services such as the 17 bus route, under Enhanced Partnership Plus. Councillor Gant responded that regular meetings were held with bus companies on routes.

Councillor Malik asked if Councillor Gant would use his influence to provide residents of Cowley with a bus service from the east to the north of the city. Councillor Gant said that some of the improved services already announced by the bus companies were as a direct result of the congestion charge policy and he was happy to talk to the councillor about his proposal.

Item 5: Update to the Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets Policy with respect to Part Night Lighting

Councillor Cherry asked about the part time lighting consultation and the anxiety it caused. Councillor Roberts responded that officers together with councillors would have to determine that the night time lighting policy was suitable.

Councillor Pressel noted that the plans for street lighting were supposed to benefit wildlife, but LED lighting was actually bad for wildlife. She asked why the Council had introduced it. Councillor Roberts responded that, with regard to LED lighting, it depended on what wavelengths were used in the lights and not all of them were bad for wildlife.

Councillor Fry asked that motion-activated lighting be included as one of the options during local consultation. Councillor Roberts responded that motion-activated lighting was not available, and the costs would need to be determined before that system could be implemented.

Councillor Creed asked about the impact of night lighting on the safety of young women. Councillor Roberts responded that those safety concerns were important and that everyone in an area would have to agree for this lighting option to happen.

Councillor Rawlins asked that a proactive approach be undertaken to appropriate parish councils based on the officers' judgement, as suggested by the scrutiny committee, by specifically writing to identified parishes with a proposal seeking support. Councillor Roberts responded that it should be seen how the policy lands before encouraging people in areas where it would seem appropriate to at least look at it and engage with them as to whether there is an interest in the area.

Item 6: Oxfordshire County Council's Biodiversity Action Framework and Action Plan

Councillor Pressel asked why there was no reference to working with schools. Councillor Roberts responded that work was being undertaken with schools that were local authority schools and that they had actually implemented a lot of carbon saving projects with them by putting photovoltaic cells on their roofs. The Councillor further said that it will need be checked with the officers whether it is within the scope of the framework and action plan.

Councillor Barlow asked what actions Councillor Roberts will be asking each cabinet member to take to ensure biodiversity targets were embedded in each of their portfolios and thus delivering the 43 actions in an integrated

way across the Council. Councillor Roberts responded that if there were any specific actions that need to be looked at, she will take those away to the officers.

Councillor Garnett asked that runaway road building be stopped in the county and stated that better public transport for new housing developments was needed. It was essential for preserving biodiversity. Councillor Roberts responded that that was the aim of most of the local transport connectivity plan and the Council was trying very hard to repurpose parts of the network and to increase all of the transport schemes.

Councillor Fry asked if, in relation to biodiversity, the Council could give priority to schemes that generated benefits in a short period and were more easily verified, even if more costly. Councillor Roberts responded that most of the biodiversity gain was actually funded by developers with very clear-cut legal requirements and, on those, the funding cannot be adjusted. Furthermore, the Council was keen to increase biodiversity right across the county.

The agenda item was concluded by the Chair on reaching the constitutional time limit of 30 minutes as set out in CPR 2.4.

87/25 STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2028

(Agenda Item 10)

Council had before it the Strategic Plan which had been developed following the county council elections in May 2025 and the formation of a new administration. The period of this plan will be November 2025 to 1 April 2028.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Fawcett, Deputy Leader of the Council, and seconded by Councillor Gaul.

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The recommendation was approved with 39 votes in favour, 12 against and 12 abstentions.

RESOLVED: to approve and adopt the Strategic Plan 2025-28.

88/25 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

(Agenda Item 11)

Council considered a report on the Financial Regulations proposing to update Section 5 of the Financial Regulations which sets out the arrangements for capital expenditure and which required updating to align with the threshold for a Key Decision

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Levy and seconded by Councillor Fawcett.

Following discussion, the recommendations were approved with 3 abstentions.

RESOLVED to approve:

a) amendments to Section 5 of the Financial Regulations increasing the limit for Cabinet approval for new inclusions and variations to capital schemes from £1.0m to £2.0m to align with the key decision threshold of £2m.

b) that in exceptional circumstances up to £0.500m funding for exploratory feasibility works can be approved by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer (following discussion and recommendation at, and with the support of the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board).

89/25 YOUTH JUSTICE ANNUAL PLAN 2025-26

(Agenda Item 12)

Council had before it a report recommending the adoption of the Youth Justice Annual Plan for 2025/26. The plan must outline progress against the previous year's priorities, performance data, set out a plan for the forthcoming year and how the partnership is meeting its statutory responsibilities against the Youth Justice National Standards for Children and the national Key Performance Indicators.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Gaul and seconded by Councillor Fawcett.

Following discussion, the recommendation was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: to adopt Oxfordshire's Annual Youth Justice Plan 2025-2026.

90/25 USE OF SPECIAL URGENCY

(Agenda Item 13)

Council was asked to note the use of Special Urgency for a Key Decision taken on 1 September 2025 by the Leader of the Council on the funding of Woodeaton Manor Academy.

The report was moved by Councillor Fawcett, Deputy Leader of the Council and seconded by Councillor Levy.

Following discussion, Council noted the report.

91/25 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2026/27

(Agenda Item 14)

The calendar of meetings for the 2026/27 civic year, from one Annual Council meeting to the next, was presented to Council for approval.

The recommendation was moved by the Chair who noted that the proposed dates took account of school holidays and that important religious dates for the main religions represented in the UK had also been taken into consideration.

The recommendation was seconded by the Vice-Chair and agreed.

RESOLVED: to approve the calendar of meetings for the 2026-27 Council Year attached to the report as Annex 1.

92/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR LIAM WALKER

(Agenda Item 15)

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Walker and seconded by Councillor Henwood.

“This Council notes:

The strong opposition from some residents, businesses, and key workers to the Oxford Congestion Charge scheme and their ongoing concerns about its impact on the cost of living, local trade, and access to services across Oxford.

This Council believes:

The scheme is unfair, harmful to the local economy, and does not have public support and it's time to end the scheme.

This Council therefore resolves to:

Call on the Leader and Cabinet to immediately end the operation of the Oxford Congestion Charge scheme and ensure no further expansion or reintroduction of similar charging schemes without full public consultation and support.”

Following discussion, Councillor Walker called for a named vote and was supported by at least six other councillors as required under Council Procedure Rule 17.4.1.

The motion was lost with 22 votes in favour, 36 against and 2 abstentions.

Council voted as follows:

For the motion –

Councillors Ashby, Baines, Brighouse, Cherry, Coles, Creed, Crichton, Du, Edosomwan, Evans, Fry, Henwood, Lygo, Malik, Mallon, Phillips, Plumb, Pressel, Robertshaw, Saul, Snowdon and Walker.

Against the motion –

Councillors Barlow, Batstone, Bearder, Brant, Cotter, Edwards, Epps, Fawcett, Filipova-Rivers, Gant, Garnett, Gaul, Gawrysiak, Graham, Greenaway, Gregory, Hanna, Hannaby, Heritage, Higgins, Hingley, Hope-Smith, Jones, Levy, Ley, Lugova, McLauchlan, McLean, Middleton, Overton, Rawlins, Roberts, Smith, Stevens, Thomas and Worgan.

Abstentions:

Councillors Boucher-Giles and Markham.

93/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR GAVIN MCLAUCHLAN

(Agenda Item 16)

The time being 4.00 pm, this motion was considered dropped in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2.

94/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR NATHAN LEY

(Agenda Item 17)

The time being 4.00 pm, this motion was considered dropped in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2.

95/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR LIZ BRIGHOUSE

(Agenda Item 18)

The time being 4.00 pm, this motion was considered dropped in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2.

96/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR MAGGIE FILIPOVA-RIVERS

(Agenda Item 19)

The time being 4.00 pm, this motion was considered dropped in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing