

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 25 February 2025 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 3.30 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Neil Fawcett
Councillor Andrew Gant
Councillor Kate Gregory
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Dan Levy
Councillor Judy Roberts

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Donna Ford

Officers:

Whole of meeting Martin Reeves (Chief Executive) 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.

29/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Bearder and Dr Nathan Ley.

30/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

31/25 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meetings held on 9, 21 and 28 January 2025 were approved as a correct record.

32/25 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

There were none received.

33/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

8 Badger Culling

Cllr Ian Middleton

34/25 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item. 6)

There were no appointments to report to this meeting.

35/25 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 7)

Councillor Liam Walker, Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the reports on:-

- a) Infrastructure Funding Statement and S106 Project Review
- b) Disposal of County Hall

Cabinet received the reports and will respond in due course.

36/25 BADGER CULLING

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report which set out a proposed response to the motion on Badger Culling passed at the meeting of the Council on 10 December 2025.

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Councillor Ian Middleton thanked the Leader for writing to DEFRA and reaffirming the Council's opposition to the badger cull. He noted that since 2018, hundreds of thousands of badgers, including over 8,000 in Oxfordshire, had been killed using public funds. He criticised the randomised badger culling trial from over 20 years ago for its flawed science and lack of evidence supporting the claim that badger culling reduced TB in cattle. Councillor Middleton emphasised that the County Council should not permit culling on its land, sending an important message. He clarified that his motion aimed to find humane and effective measures to control bovine

TB, such as better herd-based measures and accurate testing, rather than disadvantaging farmers. He urged the Council to fully implement the measures in his motion and hoped this stance would prompt the Labour government to review their position on the cull. He concluded by thanking the Council for considering this matter.

Councillor Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations presented the report.

During discussion, members expressed support for ending the cull, stating that the evidence linking badgers to the spread of TB was inadequate.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **re-affirm the Councils opposition to badger culling**
- b) **note that a specific policy about badger culling not being permitted on Council-owned land would be presented for adoption in due course**
- c) **note that the Leader had written to DEFRA making clear the council's continued opposition to the cull and any extension in size and scope.**

37/25 COUNCILS FOR FAIR TAX DECLARATION

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet had before it a report proposing a response to a motion to request Cabinet to consider approving the "Council's for Fair Tax Declaration" that was passed at the meeting of the County Council on 5 November 2024

The "Councils for Fair Tax Declaration" was created by The Fair Tax Foundation Limited that operated as a not-for profit social enterprise. It was developed in collaboration with UK cities, towns and districts who believe they could and should stand up for responsible tax conduct. There were currently 63 Councils across the UK which had made the declaration.

The declaration would commit the council to pursuing exemplary tax conduct in its own affairs, require greater transparency from suppliers and support the call for more meaningful powers to tackle tax avoidance amongst suppliers when buying goods and services.

Under the same motion the Leader of the Council was requested to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer supporting calls for urgent reform of UK

procurement law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies. A response was received from the Cabinet Office on 7 January 2025 confirming that The Procurement Act which was due to go live on 24 February 2025 would introduce new mandatory grounds for the exclusion of bidders who are found guilty of tax evasion or involvement in abusive tax avoidance schemes whether in the UK or overseas.

The Council's existing policies and procedures underpinned the values of good tax conduct, and this would be supported further by the Procurement Act. Approving the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration did not bring any additional responsibility or requirements on the council.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report. He emphasised that the declaration required the Council to take even more care to ensure it only dealt with entities that were responsible and paid their taxes.

During discussion members expressed support for the declaration, highlighting the importance of responsible tax practices and the need for the government to act on this issue.

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

RESOLVED to approve the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration

38/25 ENHANCED PATHWAYS BUSINESS CASE - SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) STRATEGIC EARLY INTERVENTION TEAM

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet had before it a report which sought approval to expand the funding for the Enhanced Pathway project, which was part of the SEND transformation programme.

Councillor Kate Gregory, Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement, presented the report. She explained that Enhanced Pathways provided teacher-led support in mainstream schools for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The initiative offered a bespoke curriculum to meet their needs at mainstream schools. The programme started in 2020-21 and had shown promising results, as evidenced by the case studies detailed in the report.

The programme was fully funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant. The report sought approval for the continuation of funding for the 20 existing Enhanced Pathways, approval for funding an additional 20 Enhanced Pathways to expand the project, and a commitment to a three-year funding

period. It also proposed exploring opportunities to scale the programme in the future.

During discussion, members expressed support for the project, noting that it allowed more children to stay in their communities, which was beneficial for families with multiple children. They referred to the importance of ensuring that the funding was used for staff development to benefit teachers, teaching assistants, children, and the rest of the school.

They also pointed out the advantages for children in maintaining friendships within their local area and the positive impact on their social development.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **approve Oxfordshire County Council (“the Council”) continuing to fund 20 existing Enhanced Pathways to enable the Council to meet the increasing numbers and complexities of children and young people with Special Educational Needs in mainstream schools and to realise probable savings through this spend to save model.**
- b) **approve the Council to fund a further 20 Enhanced Pathways to double to reach of the project to enable the Council to offer a more equitable offer across the county to meet the increasing numbers and complexities of children and young people with Special Educational Needs in mainstream schools and to realise probable savings through this spend to save model.**
- c) **approve the Council’s budgetary commitment for a period of 3 years for each Enhanced Pathway (barring significant changes to central government funding of SEND during that period).**
- d) **commit to consider and review opportunities to upscale the Enhanced Pathways programme over the coming years in line with the impact evidence provided.**

39/25 OXFORDSHIRE CLIMATE ADAPTATION ROUTE MAP & OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CLIMATE ADAPTATION DELIVERY PLAN

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet had before it a report proposing a Climate Adaptation Route Map and Delivery Plan. The route map identified the key actions that needed to be taken by Oxfordshire’s stakeholders to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Councillor Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations, presented the report. He highlighted the urgency of the situation, noting that climate change impacts were already being felt. The Route map was based on the third Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA 3) published in 2022 and identified 82 actions that needed to be taken as a county. The Route map prioritised 15 actions that need to be started immediately in partnership with key stakeholders.

The Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Manager provided an overview of the Route map and the County Council Delivery Plan. The Route map had been developed in partnership with district councils and has been endorsed by the Future Oxford Partnership. It served as a framework strategy, directing stakeholders on where action was needed. The County Council Delivery Plan focused on addressing the strategic risk of climate impacts on vulnerable residents. An adaptation summit was scheduled for March, with almost 60 people signed up to attend. The summit would focus on capacity building, engagement, and running a risk management workshop. A countywide working group will be set up through the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership to implement the Route map.

During discussion, members expressed support for the Route map, highlighting the importance of prioritising schools for climate adaptation. A fund was in place to help small primary schools adapt and suggested working with the 36 Multi Academy Trusts in Oxfordshire to ensure a coordinated approach.

Members also emphasised the financial requirements of the Route map and the need for assistance from central government and stakeholders.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) note the recent endorsement of the Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP).**
- b) approve the adoption of the Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map and OCC Delivery Plan.**

40/25 CIVIL ENFORCEMENT PROCUREMENT MODEL

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet had before it a report on proposals for a preferred service model and procurement strategy (enhanced multi contractor) for the Council's Civil Enforcement and Zero Emission Zone (ZEMZ) operation.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, presented the report. He explained that this was the second of three cabinet stages for the civil enforcement procurement contract. The third stage would involve moving towards the go-live of the new contract next year.

Councillor Gant highlighted several key features of the recommended model.

During discussion, members expressed support for the proposed model, emphasising the importance of flexibility in the new contract. They noted that issues around dangerous parking were a common concern among residents and highlighted the need for flexibility in terms of where and when enforcement took place. The importance of ensuring that the contractor could recruit enough staff to carry out enforcement effectively was emphasised.

Members echoed the need for flexibility, particularly in adapting to new technologies and maintaining free pavement space. They emphasised the importance of the new contract in supporting the Council's efforts to keep social spaces in town centres free from obstructive parking.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) approve the preferred service model and procurement strategy (enhanced multi contractor) for the Civil Enforcement and Zero Emission Zone (ZEMZ) operation.**
- b) support progression to the next stage of the project, that being the development and drafting of the specification, contract, and other tender documents required for procurement.**

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41/25 HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

(Agenda Item. 13)

Cabinet had before it a report in proposals for a new service delivery model for the Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres.

Councillor Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations, presented the report. He explained that Oxfordshire has been the top waste recycler in England for the past ten years. The Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) were a popular and effective part of this success. The Council was already investing significantly in maintaining and improving the Redbridge site and searching for a replacement for the Ardley site, which was nearing the end of its lease.

The Council recently extended the current contract for the management of HWRCs by three years, but this contract would need to be re-tendered in 2.5 years. The Council's waste team was proactively starting the process to explore and consider options for the future management of HWRCs. This included taking into account the new government's implementation of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and the goal of zero waste.

During discussion, members expressed support for exploring options and highlighted the importance of collaboration with neighbouring authorities to address gaps in HWRC coverage, particularly in the northwest of Oxfordshire.

Councillor Sudbury acknowledged the challenges of cross-border collaboration but emphasised the importance of finding a solution that worked for Oxfordshire residents. He added that the Council would use EPR funding to support the development of a new HWRC service delivery model.

Councillor Sudbury moved and Councillor Howson seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to

- a) approve the commencement of work to explore and consider options for the household waste recycling centre management service delivery provision, noting that the current contract is coming to an end in September 2027.**
- b) endorse the proposed approach for developing the options and key procurement stages as set out in this paper.**
- c) approve the use of Extended Producer Responsibility funding for consultancy work to support the future household waste recycling centre model development.**

42/25 WORKFORCE REPORT AND STAFFING DATA - QUARTER 3 2024-25

(Agenda Item. 14)

Cabinet had before it a report providing an overview of the progress towards delivering the Our People and Culture Strategy and a review of the workforce profile for October to December 2024 (Q3 2024/25) including the key workforce trends and other relevant management information and performance indicators.

Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services, presented the report, highlighting that the new aspect of this quarterly report was the inclusion of more information about the implementation of the People and Culture Strategy. This strategy, which was two years old, was built around four themes: attract, grow, develop, and lead. It aimed to make Oxfordshire County Council an employer of choice. Councillor Fawcett commended the team for their significant achievements in moving this strategy forward, noting that almost all planned initiatives have been delivered.

The report also included statistics on various workforce trends. Key highlights included:

- A slight drop in the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, which is a positive trend compared to the private sector.
- Ongoing success in apprenticeships, with 45 new apprentices starting in the quarter and an increase in the proportion of available funding being utilised.
- The introduction of a new associate educational psychologist role to undertake statutory work, reducing reliance on expensive agency staff.

Members welcomed the reduction in working hours lost due to sickness, which decreased from 4.98% to 4.54%. This reduction was seen as an early indicator of employee well-being and satisfaction. They also highlighted improvements in workforce diversity, with an increase in the proportion of staff from ethnic minorities (from 9.44% to 11.3%) and staff with disabilities (from 6% to 8.7%).

Cabinet discussed the positive impact of the People and Culture Strategy and the importance of continuing to support staff development and well-being. The reduction in agency staff spending over the past 12 months was also highlighted as a significant achievement.

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

RESOLVED to note the report.

43/25 CAPITAL PROGRAMME APPROVALS - FEBRUARY 2025

(Agenda Item. 15)

Cabinet had before it a report setting out change requests requiring Cabinet approval that will be incorporated into the agreed Capital Programme and included in the next update in March 2025.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report and explained the background to the requests for changes to the programme.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) approve the inclusion of a new one-form-entry primary school -East Carterton - into the Capital Programme with an indicative budget of £10.227m, to be funded from S106 developer contributions and basic need funding.
- b) note that £7.500m of the remaining Housing and Growth Deal funding is to be allocated to Grove Airfield School in 2024/25.

44/25 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 16)

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.

45/25 FOR INFORMATION ONLY: CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY ITEMS

(Agenda Item. 17)

RESOLVED to note the responses to the following Scrutiny items:-

**Local Transport and Connectivity Plan Progress Report
Flood Event Response
Community Asset Transfer Policy
Commercial Strategy Update**

46/25 CITY CENTRE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY - PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF NEW AND OLD COUNTY HALL

(Agenda Item. 18)

RESOLVED: that the public be excluded for the duration of item 18 since it is likely that if they were present during that item there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and specified below in relation to those items and since it is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Cabinet had before it a report on the proposals for the disposal of New and Old County Hall and the establishment of the Council's core office at a reimagined Speedwell House campus. This City Centre Accommodation strategy aimed to consolidate the council's physical presence in Oxford to have one core central office complemented by community hubs across the county.

The strategy also emphasised the importance of maintaining public access to the new and Old County Hall as far as possible, recognising it as a massive community asset in the centre of Oxford. Additionally, the strategy aimed to set out the council's ambitions around regeneration, renewal, and restoration of the city centre.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report.

The Director of Property and Assets then answered a number of questions about the proposals.

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

RESOLVED to :-

- a) agree to the freehold disposal of New and Old County Hall, on the terms set out in exempt Annex 4.**
- b) delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to negotiate and agree the final heads of terms which will be substantially in accordance with the details set out in exempt Annex 4.**
- c) delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, to conclude negotiations**

and complete all necessary legal documentation to implement the disposal.

.....in the Chair

Date of signing