

## **CABINET**

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Tuesday, 19 January 2021 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 4.00 pm.

**Present:**

**Voting Members:** Councillor Ian Hudspeth – in the Chair  
Councillor Mrs Judith Heathcoat  
Councillor Lawrie Stratford  
Councillor Steve Harrod  
Councillor Ian Corkin  
Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale  
Councillor Yvonne Constance OBE  
Councillor David Bartholomew  
Councillor Eddie Reeves  
Councillor Mark Gray

**Other Members in Attendance:** Councillor John Howson  
Councillor Liz Leffman  
Councillor Emily Smith  
Councillor Liz Brighthouse  
Councillor Glynis Phillips  
Councillor Emma Turnbull  
Councillor John Sander

**Officers:**

Whole of meeting: Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive; Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Deborah Miller; Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance.

Part of Meeting:  
Item 9 James Gagg, Environment & Economy  
Item 10 Rachel Wileman, Assistant Director for Strategic Infrastructure and Planning and Sam Thomas

*The Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda and additional budget papers 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.*

**1/21 MINUTES**

(Agenda Item. 3)

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 December 2020 were approved and signed as an accurate record.

**2/21 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

(Agenda Item. 4)

Four questions with Notice were asked. Details of the questions and answers and supplementary questions and answers are set out in the Annex to the minutes.

In relation to Question 1, (Question from Councillor John Howson to Councillor Eddie Reeves) Councillor Reeves undertook to talk to officers and provide Councillor Howson with a written response as to why it had taken five failed repairs before the real problem with the gully was spotted.

In relation to Question 2, (Question from Councillor Liz Leffman to Councillor Lorraine Lindsay-Gale) Councillor Corkin in consultation with Councillor Lindsay-Gale undertook to look at the issue of Children in households with poor connectivity or no access to broadband and provide Councillor Leffman with a written response.

**3/21 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda Item. 5)

The following requests to address the meeting had been agreed by the Chairman:

- Item 6 – Councillor Liz Brighthouse and Councillor Glynis Phillips
- Item 7 - Councillor Liz Brighthouse and Councillor Glynis Phillips
- Item 8 – Councillor Emma Turnbull
- Item 9 – Councillor Liz Brighthouse and Councillor John Sanders
- Item 10 – Councillor John Sanders

The addresses are recorded at the relevant items.

**4/21 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & MONITORING REPORT - NOVEMBER 2020**

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet considered a report which set out Oxfordshire County Council's progress towards Corporate Plan priorities and provided an update on the delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Plan, at 30 November 2020. The monthly business management reports were part of a suite of performance, leadership risk and budget documents which set out the Council's ambitions, priorities and financial performance. The Corporate Plan set out the Council's ambitions for the next two years, under the vision for Thriving Communities. It further set out the priority activities for the current business year.

Councillor Liz Brighouse, Chairman of the Performance Scrutiny Committee highlighted issues from the Performance Scrutiny Committee. She reported that the Committee had felt that it was vital that the Council set more serious targets for carbon reduction in line with the long-term ambition of being carbon neutral by 2030 because the current indicator of Green hardly reflected the amount of work that needs to be done to achieve that.

It was noted that the indicator for air quality was Amber in a year which has seen a large reduction in road traffic. The Committee indicated that it would like more information on why that was the case. There was a need to push more quickly for the installation of LED street lighting as part of our commitment to reduce carbon emissions and save money.

Regarding the new Home First programme, the Committee questioned whether care workers who are going into people's homes were being prioritised for COVID-19 vaccines?

Members wondered if the Click and Collect service was regarded as an essential service given that other similar services have been halted due to COVID.

Finally, the Committee looked forward to discussing the Outcomes Framework in the new financial year and reviewing the targets and tolerances.

In relation to the points from the Performance Scrutiny Committee around their Zero Carbon targets, Councillor Constance commented that they were doubling the target previously set and were expecting their own estate to be net zero by 2030, it was a very significant target and she did not understand the comments from the Performance Scrutiny Committee. In relation to air quality in the Risk Register being amber, despite the reduction in traffic last year, she reported that it had been noted by officers, and thought that perhaps it showed that the air quality in Oxford had already improved. The LED street lighting project was well underway with over 3,000 streetlights already replaced and there was negotiation underway for a new contractor. She undertook to go back to Councillor Brighouse on the non-reduction of air quality in the City.

Councillor Brighouse commented that their issue on the green indicator for zero carbon was that if you already had a green indicator, there wasn't much room for pushing further.

Councillor Constance gave an assurance that the green indicator did not mean that they would reduce the target and that OCC was the only Council to have set action in place.

Councillor Grey noted the Performance Scrutiny Committees comments around Equality, diversity and inclusivity. He suggested to Councillor Brighouse that they sit down with officers and discuss the situation.

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance noted the report reflected the changing ways that the County Council was adapting to delivering its services with the majority of officers working from home and the closure of libraries, museums and trading standards. However not all staff could work from home and the report highlighted highway teams, carers, teachers and frontline health and social care staff who were still providing front facing services.

She commented that the report on page 16 described the benefits of the 'micro-surfacing' programme which was a cost-effective and convenient method which protected surfaces for around 10 years. Given its obvious benefits, she questioned why the method wasn't used routinely to surface all roads and why the method had only been used for specific programmes since 2016.

She noted that there was good news around school attendance figures at the start of December, but a worrying increase in the number of children who were electively home school educated. The Performance Scrutiny Committee had on 14 January, heard about the lessons learnt following a Serious Case Review involving a home educated child. More needed to be done to ensure that the County Council could carry out its safeguarding responsibilities and the Education Scrutiny Committee would look at this issue again.

She emphasised the importance of acknowledging the effectiveness of the Early Help Networks but noted that it was against the background of every increasing demand for children's social care services and the likely legacy of increasing number of children needing child protection plans. The report advised that the financial impact of Covid19 would not end on 31 March 2021 and the impact on children's lives would also go well beyond 2021.

She noted that the only change to the risk register was to reduce the risk levels associated with financial resilience from 3 to 2 in 2021/2022 because of the mitigations in place and the degree of certainty in the next financial year. There were financial uncertainties in the report including unrealised savings in this financial year being carried forward to next year, the financial impact of Covid 19 beyond March 2021, a RED rag rating for the Early Years dedicated Schools Grant and a forecast described as 'risky' in relation to packages of care for children with significant support needs. She questioned what the Cabinet Member for Finance's assessment was of the financial risk.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Hudspeth expressed his thanks to all the staff for their flexibility and adaptability of working from home and to those who continued to work from various locations. There was a very robust Health & Safety Plan to ensure that if people did have to work from a location, they had to go through a rigorous process to ensure that all the Covid preventions were in place. The safety of staff was a key concern and if any member of staff had a particular concern, they could raise it with their manager to deal with.

Councillor Bartholomew responding to the question from Councillor Phillips around the financial risk, commented that further detail on this area would be discussed under the Budget item, but that in all their financial projections and analysis they were fully cognisant of the fact that the risk did not end on 31 March and that there were sufficient contingencies in place and provisions within the Covid Budget to deal with the extension of the pandemic. The finances had always been managed prudently and the finances were robust, so in terms of risk for the forthcoming year, he was confident that they were managing all their risks in the best possible way.

Councillor Heathcoat, Deputy Leader of the Council, in introducing the report stated that the report before the Cabinet covered performance for November last year. The report continued to show the largely positive performance, despite the prolonged challenges caused by the ongoing pandemic. In December last year, the 27 performance indications were 12 rated green and 14 rated amber. She was pleased to advise, that despite the difficult challenges they faced, the performance indicators showed that 14 were now rated green and 12 amber and that they had no indicators that were red. There was one indicator that they were unable to report on due to Covid 19.

This continued steady performance was due (as recognised by other members of the Cabinet) in no small part to the workforce and their continued to give support and advice to communities and many undertaking their roles working from home not always in easy circumstances.

The second lockdown commenced on the 5 November to 2 December and had an impact on services such as libraries, museums and trading standards. In relation to her portfolio (Community safety) they continued to carry out safe and well visits in line with Covid 19 guidance and they ensure that priority was given to critical and high-risk households.

The trading standards team continued to work successfully on doorstep scams and crimes which were targeting the elderly using innovative techniques. Crimes such as taking money for shopping and never returning and charging for a fake Covid vaccine.

There had also been ongoing work in partnership with the Fire Cadets on test purchasing of e-cigarettes and vaping liquid, trading standards had also continued to some of its business intervention activities, particularly in traffic – weight restriction enforcement and business related Covid 19 compliance.

The Fire & Rescue Service continued to deliver their high standard of service by being only 3% below their stretched target of attending 80% of incidents within 11 minutes and were always seeking to improve the average response time of 8 minutes, 44 seconds reported in November which was very good for a service covering such a large rural area.

The leadership risk register was included in the report. All leadership risks had been assessed thoroughly and there had been one score change LR11

which was changed for 15 to 10. The report supports that they were facing the challenges well, but she stressed that they were not complacent.

Councillor Bartholomew in introducing the report, explained that the report set out the forecast position of the revenue budget as at the end of November 2020 and included an update on the MTFs savings, reserves and balances in Annex C.

He thanked Lorna Baxter, Hannah Doney and Emma Greenland for preparing those aspects of the report.

The Council had set a Revised Budget for 2020/21 in September in response to the financial impact of COVID-19, to ensure a balanced budget could be achieved in the current financial year and to ensure the Council remained financially sustainable. The Budget and Business Planning process for 2021/22 to 2025/26 was reaching its conclusion and the Cabinet's proposed budget for 2021/22 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2025/26 followed this agenda item. The Council would continue with its approach of responsible, measured and careful financial planning to ensure it could manage the pandemic response and recovery phases.

In relation to 2020/21, based on expenditure to the end of November 2020, including the virements agreed by Council on 8 September 2020 and further virements agreed by Cabinet on 15 December to fund costs arising from COVID-19, there is a forecast business-as-usual underspend of -£1.1m within directorates and a net underspend on Corporate Page 2 of 3 Measures of -£0.7m. The underspend has increased by £0.2m since the last report due to an increase in the forecast for interest received on Treasury Management investments.

Annex C-5b set out the total COVID-19 funding the Council has received for 2020/21 of £64.1m. Of this, £36.3m has been allocated to the general fund. A further update on the Contain Outbreak Management Fund would be included in the next report. The Council continues to closely monitor the financial impact of COVID-19 and the forecast for additional costs and income losses for the remainder of 2020/21 and into 2021/22. The COVID-19 Budget for costs and income losses is a one-off budget that is available to fund these pressures. The profile and timing may mean that some costs may fall into a different financial year – it is expected that the financial impact of COVID-19 would extend beyond 31 March 2021 into the medium term. Further virements to move budget from the COVID-19 budget to the services where costs have occurred, or income losses are realised, would be requested in future reports before year end. The current forecast for general balances at 31 March 2021 is £30.5m, compared to the position at 1 April 2020 of £28.7m. This position assumed that forecast Directorate underspend of £1.1m and the Strategic Measures underspend of £0.7m are returned to balances. Of planned savings, 84.6% totalling £18.4m remain on track to be delivered in 2020/21. Savings of £1.6m that are not expected to be achieved in-year are reflected in the Directorate forecast outturn position. The majority of these savings

relate to income generation which has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and will be funded from the COVID-19 Budget for costs and income losses. All the £14.9m in-year savings agreed by Council on 8 September are on track to be fully delivered. Annex C provided further commentary on variations greater than £0.1m for each service. He urged Cabinet to agree to the recommendations set out at paragraph 1 to the report.

Councillor Harrod spoke in relation to page 14 report which referred to how they strived to give every child a good start in life. The average number of contacts into the MASH service each week was now 483 and the service was only staffed to deal with 350 contacts. This had been dealt with by appointing additional temporary staff to deal with the situation, but it indicated the pressure front line staff were working under. He thanked the staff for their hard work and dedication in dealing with the 30% increase in contacts since September last year and pointed out that at the same time, assessment and referrals were down by 5% on average, which showed the system was working by having a very robust front door at the MASH, avoiding unnecessary instances of cases being passed down the line. The Leader added his thanks to those staff.

Councillor Constance drew the Cabinet's attention to page 13 of the report and the near arrival of active travel improvements for Witney and Bicester, there would also be schemes in Oxford. She emphasised that although the vale of white horse had felt left out, they had just completed the first phase of the science vale cycle network which will connect Wantage with Didcot, Culham and Harwell. There was significant work being carried out in the County for cycling.

Councillor Lindsay-Gale responded to the comment made by Councillor Phillips regarding the increase in electively Home-schooled children. She noted that the increase was still below the national average. She reported that officers were working with families. One of the schools of thought was that perhaps parents had found that educating children at home was not as difficult as they thought it would be, but she came from the point of view that a child's place was in school, and they were working very actively with the families to ensure that they were coping and to try and encourage them that their children can come back to school education as and when allowed.

**RESOLVED:** to note this month's business management and monitoring report.

**5/21 BUDGET & BUSINESS PLANNING REPORT 2021/22 - JANUARY 2021**

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet had before it a report which was the culmination of the Budget & Business Planning process for 2021/22 to 2025/26 and set out the Cabinet's proposed Corporate Plan and supporting budget, medium term financial strategy, capital programme and supporting strategies.

The report was set out in three sections; the Corporate Plan; the revenue budget including the draft council tax precept for 2021/22 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2025/26; and the Capital & Investment Strategy and Capital Programme including the Treasury Management Strategy. Information outstanding at the time of the Cabinet meeting would be reported to Council when it considered the budget on 9 February 2021.

Cabinet's budget proposals took into consideration the latest information on the council's financial position outlined in the report; comments from the Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting on 18 December 2020 as well as 14 January 2021; and comments from the public consultation on the budget which closed on Wednesday 13 February.

As final notification of some funding streams was awaited, some further changes may be made to the budget proposals ahead of full Council on 9 February 2021.

Councillor Liz Brighouse, Chairman of the Performance Scrutiny Committee read out the statement by the Performance Scrutiny Committee included in the papers at Section 4. She added that Members of the Committee had also been concerned that local members should have been better engaged at an early stage when some of the proposals were being worked up.

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance noted that Cabinet was being asked to approve a complex set of papers which should support each other in achieving financial balance in 2021/2022 and provide valued services in efficient and effective ways.

The Labour Group were mindful of the amount of time and effort that officers had devoted to this suite of documents. There was a tangible change to the strategic direction being taken in relation to the property and investment strategies. She further noted the renewed energy to revisit the property and investment strategies as a way of maximising assets to fund services, meet climate emergency targets and as well as considering the implications for staff and residents.

She expressed the importance of member involvement in discussions about changes to building use and this was a clear concern from members of the Performance Scrutiny Committee. Members not only knew about issues in their division, but also needed to be able to discuss any proposals with local residents, community groups and town and parish councils. One line in the



Corporate Plan was 'to listen to residents and improving what we do' and this needed to be extended to listening to local councillors as well.

She noted that the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy had been discussed at Audit & Governance as well as Performance Scrutiny and there was broad support for the decision to increase long term lending as well as seeing a reduction in cash balances to £185m by 2024/2025 to meet the Capital Programme.

She noted that the Capital Programme was now in balance and the gap of £18m had been addressed. There had been concern that the capital programme was drifting away from balance over the last couple of years and they welcomed the return to a better grip on this budget given the large sums involved.

On the Revenue Budget Strategy, they remained concerned about the reduction in staff numbers for example reduction in management by combining Early Years Teams across Education. In principle this sounded like the right approach but questioned why the implementation had resulted in lower staff numbers. Similarly, the amalgamation of management structures in Children with Disabilities Service would result in fewer people being responsible for supporting larger staff teams. There were other staffing reductions in the Commercial Development Assets and Investments Directorate, and they sought an assurance that Local Union officials were involved in those discussions which would obviously affect staff and service delivery.

She finished by thanking all the staff involved in putting together the documents and looked forward to the discussion on the final version at full Council on 9 February.

Councillor Bartholomew, Cabinet Member for Finance thanked Councillor Phillips for her comments. He welcomed the fact that she had noted the reinvigoration within the property team. They had an excellent leadership and support team in place and the property issues were now being got to grips with, it had been a very complex, inter-related matter to deal with, but he was now confident that they were moving forward and over the next 12 months they would see significant advances in 2 or 3 key areas. He furthered endorsed the comments in relation to the Treasury Management Strategy and the increase in long term lending.

He welcomed the comments around the more robust nature of the Council programme and noted that there had been weaknesses in terms of programming and delivery in the past. The new way of approaching the Council programme, looking at firm and projected definitely funded items and provisionally funded items was a big step forward.

Councillor Bartholomew, in moving the recommendations of the report emphasised that the Budget before the Cabinet was the culmination of the Budget & Business Planning process for 2021/22. He thanked officers across

all directorates for their hard work and in particular the Finance team for their exceptional contribution.

The report set out the Cabinet's proposed Corporate Plan, the revenue budget for 2021/22, the medium-term financial strategy to 2025/26, and the ten-year capital programme and supporting strategies. In addition, Cabinet was asked to approve the Review of Charges for 2021/22 and 2022/23, and the Dedicated School Grant allocations for 2021/22. He was pleased to present a budget for 2021/22 that provided high levels of protection and new investment in frontline services shaped by the priorities set out in the proposed Corporate Plan. This had been strengthened to reflect local priorities and the national context.

A total of £19.6m of savings were proposed across all services. Of these, £14.6m of savings were already planned and were centred on the transformation of services to make them more efficient while protecting the frontline. The proposed budget included investment in services that would have a positive long-term impact for local communities. More than £25m of additional funding was included of which £9.5m was newly proposed for 2021/22 to help meet additional demands, including within adult social care.

Proposed investments included:

- A total of £1m long term funding to expand the youth offer in Oxfordshire. (Plus, an additional £500,000 of one-off accelerator funding would also be provided for the first year.)
- An extra £4m for the adult social care budget for 2021/22, including £750,000 to support expenditure on assessed care needs from 2021/22.
- Extending £1.2m of extra funding for the Better Care Fund to be used to support measures to help people be discharged from hospital and enable new ways of working and better outcomes for residents.
- On-going support during the period of the MTFS for the partnership managing services for single homeless people in Oxfordshire.
- An extra £400,000 for highway maintenance focused on additional resource for vegetation and drainage clearance plus supporting the roll out of a trial currently being undertaken enabling parish councils to implement 20mph schemes in their villages.
- A £300,000 fund to support innovative community-developed projects and activities that improve people's health and wellbeing in Oxfordshire.
- An extra £330,000 for children's early intervention services, increasing the skill base of children's social care workers and special educational needs related services.
- £100,000 to address issues of digital exclusion.
- £81,000 in domestic violence services; and
- £150,000 into supporting apprenticeships.

This balanced budget for 2021/22 recognised that the hard hand of Covid was squeezing many residents' household budgets, so it was based on a basic Council Tax increase of 1.99% plus a 1% Precept for investment in

Adult Social Care – not the 3% Precept allowed under Government rules – making a total Council Tax rise of 2.99%. The draft Medium Term Financial Strategy included a proposal for the remaining 2% Adult Social Care Precept to be included in 2022/23 budget, if needed.

Ho noted that feedback from the public consultation showed general support for the proposals, including the proposed Council tax increase. The proposed Financial Strategy provided a framework for financial sustainability. The Council would continue to manage the impact of rising need through demand management approaches, more effective pathways and delivering better value for money. The Council would also respond to the medium to long term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our ways of working, our workforce, our residents and the economy.

The proposed ten-year Capital Programme totals £1.4bn and was fully funded. Changes included additional investment of £44.2m over the period of the programme. New investments included £16.7m in Major Infrastructure Schemes, of

which £9.7m was allocated for improvements to the Banbury Road Corridor, and an additional £5.0m investment in Supported Living Accommodation for people with Learning Disabilities. The proposed changes also closed the funding gap of £18.2m on the programme agreed in February 2020 and the funding gap of £11.1m on

Kennington Bridge replacement scheme which was identified in year. He urged the Cabinet to agree to the recommendations set out at paragraph 1 of the report.

Councillor Heathcoat noted that front line services were being protected and that investment in services would support and ensure positive, long term impact for the communities. This had been recognised by the good interaction and response by the public during the consultation. The budget had sought to protect the fire service as a blue light Service. The proposals would not compromise the safety of either the dedicated fire fighters or that of the general public. In general, the new proposals were around the provisioning of new skills and equipment for whole time fire fighters to complete a wider range of prevention and protection work, which would reduce the need in demand met by specialist teams. By reviewing the ways of working and the way the fire service was supported and by re-designing the front door activities, they would be able to take forward plans for a new business support structure.

Within trading standards, they would increase income from chargeable services and recover costs from consultant type work provided to businesses. With a range of efficiency savings to reflect changing working practices and an increase agile working profile, together with new working techniques, taking advantage of improved IT service delivery for the general public.

Her portfolio also covered the regulatory services which sat within Human resources. They would be looking at a redesigning of staffing structures,

whilst the new ways of working were studied and evaluated. Covid 19 had given a distortion to work delivery and this would allow for a detailed examination to take place.

She noted that the Corporate Plan was being refreshed and not reviewed. She believed that the aims and objectives of the plan supported the budget proposals and that the priorities would be met. She thanked Lorna Baxter and her team and commended the reports before the Cabinet.

The Leader added his thanks to the Director for Finance for preparing the report in such a challenging year.

Councillor Corkin expressed the importance of the partnerships in the County, especially in the last year. He thanked the NHS, Police, Probation Service, Business Partners and the Voluntary sector for their contributions which had been crucial in the response to the Pandemic. The innovation with CDC had achieved £1 million pounds in Savings, with joint management teams and IT teams. The Digital position within the County had been achieved by the close working with the Districts Councils, enabling 98% access to superfast Broadband which had unpinned everything achieved over the last 12 months. He commended the work undertaken by the paid service.

Councillor Constance endorsed the remarks from Councillor Corkin. She welcomed and commended the review of charges by third parties undertaken, for the first time this year. This had been a significant piece of work which would contribute significantly to revenue next year.

Councillor Gray expressed his delight with the extension to the Youth offer for the young people of the County. He further welcomed the money going into Community based projects, which was a fantastic innovation to give residents control over their local areas and a sense of belonging. He endorsed and added his thanks to the comments made by Councillor Corkin on the work of the Voluntary Sector.

Councillor Reeves endorsed the comments by Councillor Corkin and Councillor Constance on the success of partnership working. He commended the work that had been undertaken remotely, whilst protecting frontline services. He further paid tribute to Councillor Walker on his work to secure an extra £400,000 towards vegetation clearance and Highways work.

**RESOLVED:** (nem con)

In relation to the Corporate Plan (Section 2);

Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to RECOMMEND Council to:

(a) approve the Corporate Plan (Section 2.1).

In relation to the Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (Section 4);

Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:

- (b) approve the Review of Charges for 2021/22 and in relation to the Registration Service, charges also for 2022/23 (Annex A);
- (c) approve the final funding formula for schools for 2021/22 subject to the decision by the Secretary of State for Education (Annex B);
- (d) approve the Financial Strategy for 2021/22 (Section 4.5);
- (e) approve the Earmarked Reserves and General Balances Policy Statement 2020/21 (Section 4.6), including the creation of a new COVID-19 Reserve; and
- (f) to note that the Leader of the Council will, following consultation with the Director of Finance and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property, make any appropriate changes to the proposed budget.

Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to RECOMMEND Council to:

- (g) a Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2021/22 to 2025/26 as set out in Section 4.1 (which incorporates changes to the existing Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Section 4.2);
- (h) the council tax and precept calculations for 2021/22 set out in Section 4.3 and in particular:
  - (i) a precept of £407,954,239;
  - (ii) a council tax for band D equivalent properties of £1,573.11.
  - (iii) approve a budget for 2021/22 as set out in Section 4.4

## **6/21 FUNDING FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS**

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report which set out the background to how SEND (High Needs) top-up funding currently operated for special schools in Oxfordshire and how, with Cabinet's approval, a transfer of Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs funding would help support an increase in top-up funding in line with that agreed in September for mainstream schools, in order to better meet the needs of children in these schools.

Councillor Emma Turnbull, Shadow Cabinet Member for Education & Cultural Services welcomed the recommendation for one off top of Funding Services. The Special Schools had done an excellent job of continuing to provide excellent support throughout the pandemic but were under immense strain due to extra costs created by Covid on already highly strained budgets. These additional costs would not be met by the Governments Covid Support packages.

She expressed deep concern for the longer-term funding environment schools faced, the one-off uplift did not address the systemic under funding of special schools. She further noted with concern that Oxfordshire funding of special was below the national average. She requested to see the full

comparative analysis that had been undertaken by officers and indicated that she would wish for the data to be considered by the Education Scrutiny Committee.

Young people with SEND had experienced a significant inequity in terms of the Covid response and the report had highlighted that disadvantage was baked into the system of funding of the special schools.

Councillor Lindsay-Gale thanked Councillor Turnbull for her comments and support of the one-off funding. She agreed that the funding for the special schools was inadequate and expressed her regret that over the years OCC had allowed the level of funding to slip below the national average. The proposal today was the start of addressing the issue to get back to being better than average. This was against a huge deficit, which was a national issue and was due to be reviewed nationally.

A new management structure had been put in to place to reorganise how the SEND service was funded, with a paper coming forward shortly. She undertook to make the analysis available and for the issue to be discussed at Education Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Lindsay-Gale, in introducing the report and moving the recommendations commented that the proposal would bring in-line the special schools with the secondary and primary schools and was in essence a 16% uplift of Funding. She commended the report to the Cabinet.

**RESOLVED:** to approve a one-off increase in top-up funding for Special Schools for 2020/21 funded through the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), in line with the increase provided for mainstream primary and secondary schools in September 2020.

## **7/21 LOCAL TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIVITY PLAN - VISION AND OBJECTIVES DOCUMENT**

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet had before it a report which updated Members on development of the new Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan - called the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. The report outlined the context and key points included in a proposed Vision Document (Annex 1), on which it was proposed to undertake public consultation. It further included a summary of the engagement exercise undertaken in Spring 2020 (Annex 2), and a summary of key evidence that had been reviewed to support development of the Vision (Annex 3). The Cabinet were asked to endorse the 3 documents as basis for public consultation commencing in February 2021.

Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Chairman of the Performance Scrutiny Committee highlighted the issues raised by the Committee. The Committee felt that the reduction of inequalities needed to be more strongly reflected, and that the public health team should be engaged in LTCP development to ensure it was in line with the Director for Public Health's emphasis on reducing inequalities.

For example, a person's employment prospects might be seriously limited by poor public transport connections where they live.

In relation to Consultation, the Committee questioned how the consultation was going to work if Covid restrictions remained in place for a long period. The Committee felt that there was a need for an equality impact assessment on the consultation itself to ensure that it reached all communities and questioned whether the consultation would include AONBs.

In relation to public transport, the Committee noted that there were specific challenges in rural areas, including connectivity into and between main towns. Nearly all the money for buses seemed to be going to Oxford or for services to and from Oxford. There was support for develop delivery hubs to reduce the number of large lorries in built-up areas.

The Committee felt that congestion on the Oxford Ring-Road needed to be tackled and it was noted that much of the congestion took place in areas experiencing deprivation. Concern was expressed about HGV rat running and the need for more access control. There was also concern about tree removal by the A40 when more need trees were needed by main roads to assist in air quality.

In relation to electric vehicles, the Committee noted that there was also the challenge of electric vehicle 'switch' and the need to provide for this in terms of charging points for those who do not have a garage or driveway. Concern was also expressed that school transport would be the last to get electric buses given that they always seem to have the oldest vehicles.

On planning, the Committee noted that there was an issue with out of town retail undermining local connectivity and disadvantaging people. They sought assurance that there would be connectivity improvements to those new locations.

The Committee questioned how it could be ensured that existing new development proposals reflected new policy priorities. Development needed to have more mixed use and to move away from large housing-only estates. Look more at place shaping, including better designed streets.

The Committee also questioned whether there was a funding strategy in place for all the plans or whether they would end up being delayed due to lack of funding.

Councillor John Sanders, Cabinet Shadow Member for Environment spoke in relation to the context diagram on page 113 of the Vision Statement. He raised concern about securing 'buy in' from other than the usual interest groups on such a key priority for the County. He asked how the Cabinet were going to approach and interest a wider public on the issues. He believed that providing a short vision proposal with cross references to lengthy online documents could be daunting to any member of the public.

He further expressed concern about the lack of space given to ICT connectivity, given that it was called the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, but that most of it was LTP5. There was some reference to Broadband in the document, but the Government target of full fibre, together with 5G by 2025 was for the whole Country, and there seemed to be little else that the Council were considering in addition. He would like to see Business ICT support and advice for small businesses, enabling business to relocate out of the city and town centres, to take advantage of ICT connectivity and for educational use of ICT to be explored, including further education application and support.

Councillor Constance, Cabinet Member for Environment thanked Councillor Brighthouse and Sanders for their comments. She emphasised that the vision statement had been prepared for consultation and that all comments would be built into the new document. Officers had given her an assurance that there would be an opportunity to strengthen the points made in the document before it went out for consultation, which would not be until February. She agreed that being more descriptive and definitive on the issues around the ambitions for broadband would strengthen the document considerably and undertook to liaise with Councillor Corkin to achieve it.

She welcomed the comments from the Performance Scrutiny Committee around equality. There was a section of deprecation, but she undertook to add to the section to demonstrate that transport could offer a way out or lesson did inequality. She would also strengthen rural connectivity, particularly by cycle which was a central part of the consultation and strategy.

She introduced the report and commended the report to the Cabinet.

Councillor Corkin agreed with the comments by Councillor Sanders that Connectivity did not appear in detail in the consultation document at the moment, but this did not mean that they were not actively pursuing a vigorous second programme. Having closed out the Better Broadband for Oxfordshire earlier in the year, they were now actively engaged in ensuring that they reached out with full fibre to those that were still hard to reach; to businesses in rural Oxfordshire; in working with the Commercial sector in deliver. They were also actively pursuing DCMS for funding to build a spine of full fibre public sector buildings, off the back of which they would be able to bring on lots of other premises. They were a partner organisation with the department of digital culture, media and sport for the development of the implementation of the outside in programme (which was the gigabit) and they were totally engaged and at the forefront of it. He wanted world class digital infrastructure which meant digital 5G for the County and undertook to project that message in the Consultation.

Councillor Bartholomew expressed his thanks to Councillor Constance for the consideration of motorcycles which had in the past had been seen as a nuisance and dangerous to other road users. Motorcycles were in fact, when driven properly, not only low polluters, but were a very efficient way of



utilising road space. It was a small minority who gave motorcycles a bad name and there was a strong way forward of connectivity in this area, particularly as electric motorbikes were becoming better developed and more advanced.

Mr John Disley endorsed the comments made by Councillor Corkin and undertook to ensure that the document would cross reference the Council's Digital Infrastructure Strategy which in turn would need to be updated to reflect the statement.

Councillor Constance in moving the recommendations, proposed an amendment to recommendation (c) to allow officers to make changes to the document after the cabinet meeting and before going out to consultation as follows:

- (c) to delegate the decision ***on the final version of the Vision Document, including graphical format*** to the Corporate Director for Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport.

**RESLOVED:** to

- (a) note progress on the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and the timetable leading to Plan adoption set out in Annex 1;
- (b) endorse the content of the Vision Document in Annex 1, and the supporting engagement summary and baseline evidence base documents in Annex 2 and 3 as the basis for public consultation, commencing in February 2021 for a period of 6 weeks; and
- (c) to delegate the decision on the final version of the Vision Document, including graphical format to the Corporate Director for Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport.

## **8/21 OXFORDSHIRE MINERALS & WASTE DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (11TH EDITION)**

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet had before them a report which sought approval of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Development Scheme (Eleventh Revision) 2021, in order to have effect from 19 January 2021 and to delegate final detailed amendment and editing to the Corporate Director of Place and Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment.

Councillor John Sanders, Shadow Cabinet Member for Environment noted that the additional preferred options consultation had added yet another necessary delay to more than a decade of delays, during which the Council had been at risk of exploitation by developers pushing to exploited the mineral reserves of the County to a potential inappropriate cost to the County and to residents. The fact that this had not happened yet, was due to the

diligent efforts of officers who had successfully discouraged such exploitation and partly due to luck.

He noted that the final completion date was now December 2023. He had been on the Minerals and Waste working party for most of the past 16 years and that he had been given an assurance by officers that he would be invited to any celebrations when the final plan was adopted.

Councillor Constance, Cabinet Member for Environment, commented that it was deeply regretful that they had not had an up to date Minerals & Waste Strategy since 1995. They had agreed the Strategy in 2017, the report before the Cabinet today was concerned with the site allocation. Not only were they not happy with the sites from the first iteration of the scheme, they were concerned that the estimates of the gravel capable of being extracted was less than expected and they had received a lot of push back about many of the sites. Therefore, they had decided to stand back and review the allocation.

They had now engaged Northamptonshire County Council who had recently completed their Minerals and Waste Strategy and so had recent relevant experience with the Inspectorate, to assist them in shaping their allocations. They needed to revise their timetable, which was now out of date, but upon the advice of the advisory group, they had decided that it was better to take their time and get it right.

Councillor Lindsay Gale commented and paid tribute to the diligence of her community which had picked up the discrepancy in the amount of gravel that was expected to be extracted.

Councillor Gray commented that the important thing was to get it right and get it right the first time for their communities.

Councillor Constance moved the recommendation set out in the report.

**RESOLVED:** to approve the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Development Scheme (Eleventh Revision) 2021 at Annex 1, in order to have effect from 19 January 2021 and to delegate final detailed amendment and editing to the Corporate Director of Place and Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment.

Recommendations Agreed.

**9/21 GREEN HOMES GRANT, LOCAL AUTHORITY DELIVERY FUND 1B**  
(Agenda Item. 11)

In support of the council's climate action and healthy place shaping agendas, as well as national commitments to a green recovery, a funding application in relation to the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery 1b has been submitted. If successful, the project would deliver home energy efficiency

retrofits to 150 households living in energy inefficient properties and fuel poverty.

Cabinet had before it a report (CC11) which outlined the bid, and, in the event that the bid was successful, sought to delegate authority to the Corporate Director Communities to proceed, subject to the terms and conditions of the grant offer letter.

Councillor John Sanders, Shadow Cabinet Member for Environment wished the Council well for its bid for the grant. However, he expressed concerned that the proposal did not go far enough with only 150 houses to be upgraded out of a need for over 4,000 houses to be upgraded every year.

His understanding was that this was a part of a wider government scheme which had seemed to be going for quite some time, he questioned whether this proposal was just for those people who could not afford to improve their home's insulation. He expressed concern that not only had the builders to be trust marked accredited, but also accredited to publicly available specification standards which very few contractors were signed up to.

The Green Homes Grant was designed to create skilled jobs and cut household emissions and was muted to help 600,000 homes become energy efficient by March 2021. The scheme had a complex structure that required homeowners to choose primary measures such as installing a heat pump or loft insulation, before they could access value adding secondary measures like double glazing. The structure had led to adverse incentives that had pushed people to install specific measures, even if that was not what their home most needed. Additionally, householders nationally had experienced considerable delays in getting approval. In a survey by the Environmental Audit Committee, 86% of people rated the grant as poor or very poor. He hoped that the government had learnt from that and that the current scheme becomes a success. He questioned how they would find the households or whether they were expecting households to contact the Council. He urged the Council to take great care to ensure the proper take up of the scheme.

Councillor Constance, Cabinet Member for Environment, thanked Councillor Sanders for his well-informed comments.

Ms Rachel Wiley, Assistant Director for Strategic Infrastructure and Planning confirmed that the bid was specifically for the local authority programme to deal with 150 homes in fuel poverty. It was important to be aware that they were already working on the better homes better health programme that was delivered by NEFF, so this was the County Council working in collaboration with the districts and the City to fund this programme, to ensure that those homes that are worse performing for energy efficiency were identified and to work with those households in fuel poverty to improve health.

Councillor Constance commended the report to Cabinet and moved the recommendations.

**RESOLVED:** to

- (a) note the submission of a funding bid to support retrofit of homes in fuel poverty under Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery 1b (GHG LAD 1b);
- (b) Support the recommendation to delegate authority to the Corporate Director Communities in conjunction with S151 Officer, and Lead Member for Environment to review and conclude legal agreements should the application be successful.

**10/21 DELEGATED POWERS - JANUARY 2021**

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet noted a quarterly report on executive decisions taken under the specific powers and functions delegated under the terms of Part 7.2 (Scheme of Delegation to Officers) of the Council's Constitution – Paragraph 6.3(c)(i). It is not for Scrutiny call-in.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Reasons for Exemption</i>
2 December 2020	Request for exemption from tendering under Contract Procedure Rule ("CPR") 20 in respect of the award of a contract for body removal services	Approved an exemption from the tendering requirements under OCC's Contract Procedure Rules in respect of an exemption from the tendering requirements under OCC's Contract Procedure Rules in respect of the award of a contract to Homewoods for body removal services.	To ensure business continuity for the Coroner's Service and to ensure a seamless service for key stakeholders i.e., Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance but more importantly, bereaved families.

**11/21 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 and tabled at the Meeting as follows:

Delayed until further notice:

*Adult Social Care  
& Public Health*

**Director of Public Health – Annual Report**  
(Ref: 2020/167)

Cabinet

An Annual Report is a statutory duty of the Director of Public Health and it is a duty of the County Council to publish the report.

The Corporate Director of Public Health & Wellbeing for Oxfordshire will present his Annual Report for 2020/21.

**RESOLVED:**  
meetings.

to note the items currently identified for forthcoming

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....