

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 18 June 2024 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 4.35 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Andrew Gant
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Dan Levy
Councillor Dr Nathan Ley
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), Anita Bradley (Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Chris Reynolds (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

The Cabinet considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting, and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda, reports and schedule, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

76/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Bearder, Neil Fawcett and Kate Gregory.

77/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

78/24 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th May 2024 were approved as a correct record.

79/24 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

See annex.

80/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

Petition – Oxpens River Bridge Scheme

Dan Glazebrook

The Chair informed the petitioner that a Chief Officer of the Council would send a response to the petition within 10 working days.

10 Oxfordshire County Council to become a Council of Sanctuary

Mark Goldring
Agegnehu Mamo
Jugurta Chabane

81/24 APPOINTMENTS 2024-2025

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet had before it a report recommending member appointments to a variety of bodies which in different ways supported the discharge of the Council's executive functions. The report reflected the basis on which appointments to the respective bodies have been made in the past and, subject to any adjustments that would be considered appropriate, invited the Cabinet to agree arrangements for filling the councillor places on those bodies.

The Chair presented the report and referred to one vacancy which remained to be filled.

RESOLVED to agree the appointments to the bodies set out in the Annex to the report with correction to the title of the Deputy Leader of the Council with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment & Future Generations where applicable.

82/24 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 7)

Councillor Nigel Simpson presented the report of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Adult Social Care CQC Assurance Update

Councillor Kieron Mallon presented the report of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Circular Economy Strategy.

Cabinet received the Scrutiny reports and will respond in due course.

**83/24 OXFORDSHIRE BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (BSIP) -
UPDATE FOR 2024**

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report presenting an updated Oxfordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The updated BSP outlined the vision, aims and proposals for improving bus services in Oxfordshire from 2025 to 2030. It was a requirement for receiving the final instalment of BSIP funding from the Department for Transport and it was produced in collaboration with bus operators and stakeholders.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, presented the report. He emphasised the extensive level of bus service provision in Oxfordshire compared to other areas of the country and the work that had taken place in partnership with stakeholders which had resulted in the ambitious plan before members.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- The report had not addressed the “dwell” time at bus stops caused by ticketing issues and the fact there was only one point of entry and exit on the County’s buses
- The need to encourage independent and state schools to use buses to reduce car journeys
- The start time for concessionary bus passes should be reviewed
- The potential for tickets to be transferrable between bus operators and for connectivity with train services should be explored
- The needs of cyclists needed to be considered
- Aggregation of ticket fares should be investigated

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

RESOLVED to

- a) **approve adoption of the updated Oxfordshire BSIP**
- b) **delegate authority for sign off on future updates of the Oxfordshire BSIP to the Director of Environment and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport Management.**

84/24 OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S PRODUCTIVITY PLAN

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet received a report recommending the approval of the productivity plan for Oxfordshire County Council. The plan had been produced in response to the DLUHC's request for councils to share their current plans to transform services, use technology and data, reduce spend and identify barriers to efficiency. The plans were a requirement for all Councils as part of the Government's 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement

The Chair presented the report and outlined a number of the positive achievements of the Council including "Delivering the Future Together" the response to the SEND improvement plan and the "Oxfordshire Way" programme within Adult Social Care. The council has also prepared an additional document to be submitted to the DLUHC alongside the productivity plan. This document highlighted the areas where central government intervention could unlock barriers to efficiency, such as inconsistent and short-term funding, complex and overlapping regulations, and lack of flexibility and autonomy.

During discussion members referred to the anomalies concerning Government policy on Home to School transport.

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

RESOLVED to:

- (a) **approve the productivity plan for submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities**
- (b) **approve the additional barriers to efficiency document for submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities**

85/24 OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL TO BECOME A COUNCIL OF SANCTUARY

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet considered a report recommending that the Council worked towards submitting an application to become a recognised Council of Sanctuary, as proposed in a motion passed by full council in November 2023. The report outlined what it meant to be a Council of Sanctuary, the policy implications, and the progress made against the other resolutions in the motion to Council.

Cabinet was addressed by three representatives of the Asylum Welcome charity who spoke in support of the proposals in the report.

The Chair presented the report and referred to the collaborative work taking place with other councils in the county on providing the services needed by asylum seekers and refugees. The Council of Sanctuary status would provide a framework against which the services could be measured.

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

RESOLVED to

- a) agree that the Council should work towards submitting an application to become a recognised Council of Sanctuary, as proposed in a motion passed by full council on 7 November 2023;**
- b) note the requirement for the development of a strategy or framework for migration for future decision making and integration into the Council's business and budget planning process;**
- c) delegate the submission of an application for Sanctuary Status to the Executive Director (People) in consultation with the Leader of the Council;**
- d) note the progress made against the other resolutions in the motion.**

86/24 MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATEMENT

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet had before it a report recommending approval of a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement. The statement outlined the council's commitment and actions to prevent modern slavery in its work and supply chains, as required by the Modern Slavery Act 2015 for commercial organisations with a turnover of over £36 million. The statement summarised the council's existing policies and procedures around pay and recruitment, safeguarding vulnerable children and adults, and procurement processes, as well as the training and awareness-raising activities for staff and suppliers.

The Chair presented the report and explained that, whilst it was not a requirement for local authorities to adopt this statement, it was considered appropriate in view of the Council's activities particularly with regard to procurement.

During discussion, members welcomed the adoption of the statement and, in particular, the inclusion of the whistleblowing policy through which any potential breaches of the legislation could be reported.

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

RESOLVED to approve the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement for Oxfordshire County Council as set out in the report.

87/24 PERIOD POVERTY SCHEME TRIAL

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet had before it a report which updated members on the progress made on the period poverty motion passed by the Council in September 2023, and recommended a trial scheme to provide free period products to residents using £10,000 from the cost-of-living programme funding.

The Chair presented the report and referred to the complex work that had taken place in developing the scheme to enable procurement and distribution of the various products appropriately in locations in the county.

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

RESOLVED to

- a) approve the allocation of the £10,000 from the cost-of-living programme funding for a trial scheme of period products to support residents experiencing period poverty.**
- b) note the update on progress made on the Period Poverty motion approved by Council on 12 September 2023.**

88/24 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT AND PROVISIONAL REVENUE OUTTURN 2023/24

(Agenda Item. 13)

Cabinet considered a report presenting the council's annual performance report and provisional year- end finance position for 2023/24. The annual report reflected the end of year position against the corporate priorities, and budget documents supporting the Council's ambitions and priorities. The Strategic Plan agreed by Council in February 2022 set out the Council's ambitions for 2023/24.

Councillors Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report. He referred to the considerable achievements of the Council against its strategic objectives but recognised that there were some areas in which improvement was needed. There had been significant improvement in the financial position in Children's and Adults services and he thanked all those who had contributed to the performance results detailed in the report. He also thanked the Executive Director of Resources and her staff for their advice and ongoing hard work in monitoring the Council's financial performance throughout the year.

During discussion, members referred to ongoing concerns regarding the deficit in the High Needs Direct Support Grant budget and the need for any future Government to consider ways to support the increasing costs of the education service.

The Chair emphasised the Council's achievements detailed in the report including 20 awards which had been received during the year and congratulated all the officers involved.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) note the annual Performance Report for 2023/24.**
- b) note the summary of the provisional year - end financial position for 2023/24 along with the year-end position on general balances and earmarked reserves as explained in Annex B.**
- c) agree that the £1.6m surplus on the On-Street Parking Account at the end of the 2023/24 financial year, that has not yet been applied to fund eligible expenditure in accordance with Section 55(4) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, can be carried forward to the 2024/25 financial year as set out in Annex B-3c**
- d) approve the creation of a new reserve to support the council's Commercial Strategy and initial contribution of £2.0m.**
- e) approve the addition of £2.8m to the IFRS9 Reserve.**
- f) approve the addition of £1.0m to the Budget Priorities Reserve.**
- g) To note the Digital Inclusion Action Plan progress update for 2023/24 – Annex C.**
- h) To note the Voluntary and Community progress update for 2023/24 – Annex D.**

89/24 CAPITAL OUTFURN REPORT 2023/24

(Agenda Item. 14)

Cabinet received a report on performance relating to the Capital Programme for 2023/24.

The ten-year Capital Programme set out the agreed capital investment to deliver the priorities identified in the council's Capital and Investment Strategy. This report updated members on the performance against the programme shown in the latest monitoring report for 2023/24 and also compared back to the capital programme agreed by Council in February 2023. Figures shown reflected those to be included in the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2023/24.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report. He summarised the main areas of expenditure including the Pupil Place Plan, Major Infrastructure, Highways Asset Management Plan, Property Strategy, IT, Digital & Innovation Strategy.

The report proposed the creation of a new reserve to support the development of green financing and to make an initial contribution of £1.0m funded from the interest released at the end of 2023/24. This was to help the council achieve its climate action goals and invest in low-carbon projects.

During discussion, members welcomed the funding for Zero Emissions Buses Regional Area project where 75 buses had been delivered in total with 65 buses operational on routes around Oxford. An additional 84 buses would be delivered by August 2024. In addition to County Council funding, the project had drawn in a considerable amount of inward investment. Members also referred to the investment in Children's homes which would help reduce the costs of outplacement to areas outside the County.

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

RESOLVED to:

- a) note the performance against the capital programme for 2023/24 as set out in the report.**
- b) approve the creation of a new reserve to support the development of green financing and to make an initial contribution of £1.0m funded from the interest released at the end of 2023/24 (as set out in paragraph 65 of the report)**

90/24 CAPITAL PROGRAMME APPROVALS - JUNE 2024

(Agenda Item. 15)

Cabinet had before it a report which out change requests requiring Cabinet approval that will be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next update to the Capital Programme in June 2024.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report and explained details of the four schemes which were recommended for approval.

During discussion, members welcomed, in particular, the scheme to enhance the walking and cycling infrastructure in Abingdon which was a missing link on the National Cycling Route 5 and thanked officers for their hard work in bringing this scheme forward.

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

RESOLVED to:

- a) **approve the inclusion of the A4130 Rowstock Roundabout to Steventon Lights scheme into the Capital Programme with an indicative budget of £1.041m to be fully funded from S106 developer contributions.**
- b) **approve the inclusion of the Abingdon National Cycle Network Route 5 (NCN5) Missing Link scheme into the Capital Programme with an indicative budget of £1.474m funded from the Active Travel Fund Tranche 4 Extension.**
- c) **approve a budget increase of £4.657m from £4.763m to £9.420m, to progress the expansion of Grove Church of England Primary School, funded by S106 contributions (£5.620m), Basic Need (£1.000m) and Basic Need Contingency (£2.800m).**
- d) **approve the inclusion of Union Street Phase 1.5 & 2 into the Capital Programme, with an indicative budget of £1.450m, to be partly funded by the Asset Rationalisation Programme agreed by Full Council in February 2022, with an initial budget of £4.700m (increased in February 2024 by £2.300m) and the Decarbonisation Programme where £8.200m funding was agreed in March 2024.**

91/24 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.

.....in the Chair

Date of signing

CABINET – 18 JUNE 2024

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

<p>1. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON</p> <p>"A controlled crossing across the A44 near to Begbroke has been something the village has been calling for for over 30 years. 2 years ago this administration finally approved the proposals and allocated funding. The Parish Council were extremely impressed that we'd at last taken their concerns seriously and they would have their crossing very soon.</p> <p>Some 2 years on from that point we have approved drawings and completed a consultation on the project, yet we still have no idea when the crossing will be installed. Proposed start date after start date has been missed and during a recent meeting I attended with Paul Fermer it appeared that the works had still not been programmed.</p> <p>Villagers' eager anticipation about the crossing and positive view of the council has now soured into distrust and annoyance that we seemingly don't want to commit to actually getting the job done. There is now a belief that they are being fobbed off and a concern that funding may be pulled, leaving them back where they started 2 years ago. I have assured them that this is not the case, but their faith in those promises is starting to wear thin.</p> <p>Could the cabinet member now</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>I have discussed with officers and can confirm that the scheme to install a crossing at Begbroke has funding allocated and is within the councils' minor improvements programme. Unfortunately, the work has not progressed as quickly as hoped or communicated, and I appreciate the frustration around this. I have asked officers to ensure effort is made to meet delivery commitments made and that any delays are communicated.</p> <p>I can confirm that detailed design is nearing completion. I have asked officers to provide you with the remaining steps and likely timeframe for remaining work, this will be provided by the end of the month.</p>
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<p>provide me with a firm date for the start of works and his personal assurances that this date will not be missed? Preferably a date before the end of this administration as I'd like to see the project through before the next County Council election".</p>	
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