

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday, 13 November 2025 commencing at 1.00 pm and finishing at 2.15 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Tim Bearder
Councillor Andrew Gant
Councillor Sean Gaul
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Ben Higgins
Councillor Dan Levy
Councillor Judy Roberts

Other Members in Attendance:

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), Lisa Lyons (Director of Children's Services), Robin Rogers (Director of Economy and Place) Helen Mitchell (Programme Director: Local Government Reorganisation) 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.

158/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

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

159/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

160/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 3)

5 – Local Government Reorganisation – Submission of Proposal to Government

Councillor Ian Middleton

161/25 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 4)

Cabinet received the report of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Local Government Reorganisation – Submission of Proposal to Government and approved the response to the recommendations.

162/25 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION – SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL TO GOVERNMENT

(Agenda Item. 5)

Cabinet had before it a report presenting Oxfordshire County Council's proposal for local government reorganisation, recommending a single unitary authority for Oxfordshire. The proposal aimed to create a streamlined, cost-effective local government structure for the County that met government criteria and local needs.

On 5 February 2025, the government invited Oxfordshire councils to submit proposals for local government reorganisation by 28 November 2025, with interim plans due by 21 March 2025. The single unitary council aimed to provide a unified front for services across Oxfordshire, enhancing strategic and economic planning, delivering value-for-money services, and supporting the county's economic potential.

The report outlined extensive public and stakeholder consultations, including over 2,000 responses, and engagement with businesses and voluntary organisations, shaping the proposal and planning further input during statutory consultation.

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, presented the report.

The recommendations from Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee were all accepted

During discussion, Cabinet members emphasised the advantages of a single unitary authority in financial resilience, service integration, and strategic planning, with projected financial savings.

With regard to recommendation E below, the Cabinet agreed the following changes to the submission to Government: -

(i) Expanded narrative on neighbourhood committees

(ii) Change council size to 99

- (iii) Amendment to stakeholder feedback to be clearer where some respondents rather than all gave a view*
- (iv) Add in the bespoke CIPFA resilience index risk assessment in the options appraisal*
- (v) Remove Annex 2 (Metro Dynamics work for MSA) when submitting*
- (vi) Add paragraph on SEND once the inspection visit outcome is known*

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) note all three proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (Annex 1, 2 and 3)**
- b) agree that One Oxfordshire, the single county unitary proposal is a “robust and sustainable unitary proposal that is in the best interests of the whole area” as requested by the then Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution in his letter of 5 February 2025 attached as Annex 4.**
- c) approve the One Oxfordshire proposal for submission to government in accordance with their deadline of 28 November 2025.**
- d) delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources and S151 Officer in consultation with the Leader to make any changes to the text and/or format of the One Oxfordshire proposal prior to submission to government whilst not materially affecting the overall content of the proposal.**
- e) delegate to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader, the formal submission of the proposal to government to meet the 28 November 2025 deadline, following any changes agreed at Cabinet and any subsequent changes made under the delegation at Recommendation D above.**

.....in the Chair

Date of signing