

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 18 November 2025 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 3.40 pm

Present:

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

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillors Dr Izzy Creed, Imade Edosomwan, Gareth Epps, James Fry, and Ian Snowdon

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) 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.

163/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrew Gant and Kate Gregory.

164/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

165/25 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2025 were approved as a correct record.

166/25 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

There were none received.

167/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

12 – OXRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail Strategy

Neale Coleman
Roger Blake
Phil Evans
Ian Baxter

Cllr Andy Graham

168/25 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item. 6)

There were no appointments to report to this meeting.

169/25 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet received the following Scrutiny reports and will respond in due course:-

Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on Business Management and Monitoring Report (with a focus on Children, Education and Families)

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Reports on

- a) Verge and Vegetation Management
- b) OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail Strategy

170/25 RESPONSE TO MOTION BY COUNCILLOR CREED ON CHILDREN'S CENTRES

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet received a report proposing a response to Councillor Creed's motion on supporting community-operated children's centres and the development

of family hubs which had been passed at the meeting of the Council on 9 September 2025.

Councillor Sean Gaul, Cabinet Member for Children's Services presented the report.

The Council had received £245,000 from the Best Start Family Hubs Development grant for 2025/26, with further funding expected, and had allocated an additional £1 million to support services for under-5s, aiming to improve early education and child development. A multi-agency programme board, including social care, health, education, and the voluntary sector, was guiding the development of family hubs, with a commitment to collaborate with community-run children's centres.

During discussion Councillor Dr Izzy Creed raised concerns about ensuring funding reached the most deprived wards. Councillor Gaul confirmed that officers had been tasked with using evidence and deprivation factors to guide the placement of family hubs.

Members highlighted the importance of funding existing children's centres, with the cabinet clarifying that government funding would have specific criteria but partnership with existing centres remains a priority.

Councillor Gaul moved and Councillor Roberts seconded the recommendation, and it was approved.

RESOLVED to agree the response to the motion passed at Council on 9 September 2025.

171/25 RESPONSE TO MOTION BY COUNCILLOR HANNA ON HEALTHWATCH OXFORDSHIRE

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet received a report proposing a response to a motion regarding the future of Healthwatch Oxfordshire passed at the meeting of the Council on 9 September 2025.

The response acknowledged the concerns raised about the abolition of Healthwatch and committed to working with Healthwatch to map services and maintain independent community engagement during the implementation of neighbourhood health plans under the Government's 10-year health strategy.

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

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

RESOLVED to note the response to the Motion by Councillor Jane Hanna on Healthwatch Oxfordshire at Council on 9 September 2025.

172/25 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE WASTE ACCEPTANCE POLICY (WAP) FOR OXFORDSHIRE'S HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES (HWRCS)

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet had before it a report which recommended changes to the Household Waste and Recycling centre policy, including minor adjustments to opening hours, introduction of booking systems, and new charges for out-of-county users and asbestos disposal, following a large public consultation.

Councillor Judy Reberts, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action presented the report and answered questions.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) Approve the adoption of the proposed changes to the Household Waste Recycling Centre Waste Acceptance Policy (Annex A).**
- b) Delay reduced opening hours and days of operation, for implementation through the new service in 2027.**
- c) Approve the introduction of the following new fees and charges commencing from January 2026**
 - o £5.50 per 1m x 1m volume for asbestos: and £15 per car visit for out of county customers.**

173/25 CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN RESIDUAL CARBON AND OFFSETTING POLICY

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet received a report on Oxfordshire County Council's Carbon Management Plan (CMP), which focussed on residual carbon emissions and the strategy for offsetting to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. It outlined the need for carbon credit purchases, the rationale for terminology, and the approach to local market development and governance.

Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, presented the report.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- (a) **Note the need for the purchase of carbon credits to offset the residual emissions in the Carbon Management Plan (CMP) to meet the council's commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030.**
- (b) **Note the improved clarity of terminology and use of 'carbon neutral' to refer to the council's 2030 target for estate and operations.**
- (c) **Adopt the policy outlined in Annex 1 to target high-integrity use of carbon credits that maximise local benefits.**
- (d) **Note the action plan outlined in Appendix 1 of Annex 1 to enable progress towards acquiring carbon credits and support growing the market for local carbon removal projects.**

174/25 OXRAIL 2040: PLAN FOR RAIL STRATEGY

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet received a report recommending approval of the OXRAIL 2040, a strategic rail transport plan for Oxfordshire covering the next 15 years. The plan is designed to integrate with the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and aims to improve rail connectivity, support economic growth, and address climate action and place shaping priorities within the county.

Key priorities include expanding capacity at Oxford station, electrification and freight decarbonisation, the Oxfordshire Metro concept, and new stations to improve access to jobs and housing.

Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, presented the report.

Cabinet was addressed by a number of speakers who spoke in favour of the report and its recommendations.

Following an address by Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council, and with regard to recommendation b, the Cabinet agreed to make the following changes to the plan proposed by Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council :-

*P37 - "we will continue to develop options for medium- to longer-term mass rapid transit (which may include rail) for this corridor to identify deliverable plans and financing mechanisms for its implementation **potentially within this plan period (P3.05)**"*

P80 text be amended to align with the P37 text and reads: "*We will **continue to explore** the case for a Carterton–Witney–Oxford Mass Rapid Transit system (P3.05), **to identify** the most suitable solution to enhance public transport access to the west of our County.*"

During discussion, members emphasised the need for innovative financing, such as land value capture and section 106 contributions, and building local authority capability for project delivery, rather than relying solely on the rail industry.

Members also noted that the plan aligned with the Growth Commission's objectives and the local transport and connectivity plan, aiming for joined-up planning across housing, employment, and transport, and ensuring readiness for future funding and strategic opportunities.

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

RESOLVED to:

- (a) **Approve for publication and adopt the OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail (the Plan) in Annex 1 to this report (as a daughter document to the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan), subject to the amendments minuted above**
- (b) **Delegate to the Director of Economy and Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, to make final amendments to the Plan as necessary following the meetings of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 November 2025 and this Cabinet.**

175/25 REVIEW OF MEMBER CHAMPIONS

(Agenda Item. 13)

Cabinet received a report outlining proposed updates to the role, function, and appointment process of Member Champions within Oxfordshire County Council, aiming to clarify responsibilities and improve governance.

Member Champions support Cabinet Members and the Leader by focusing on specific interest areas, engaging stakeholders, and highlighting significant matters, without decision-making powers or remuneration. Current roles cover areas like Active Travel, Public Transport, Mental Health, and Youth Justice.

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

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

RESOLVED to propose an update to the Council's Constitution (part 8.5, Member Champion Role) to Audit and Governance Committee (26th November 2025) and agreement at Council (9th December 2025).

176/25 HR AND CULTURAL CHANGE - QUARTERLY EMPLOYEE DATA REPORT - QUARTER 2 2025-26

(Agenda Item. 14)

Cabinet received an update on the implementation of the Our People and Culture Strategy, noting minor changes in staffing, continued success with apprenticeships, and ongoing efforts to manage agency costs.

Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Resources and Deputy Leader, presented the report. Cllr Fawcett said that there had been a slight increase in directly employed staff due to improved recruitment, a minor increase in agency costs in hard-to-recruit areas, and a commitment to reducing agency spend over time.

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

RESOLVED to note the report.

177/25 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-TERM REVIEW 2025-26

(Agenda Item. 15)

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) 'Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021' requires that committee to which some treasury management responsibilities are delegated, will receive regular monitoring reports on treasury management activities and risks. Cabinet received the second report for the 2025/26 financial year which set out the position at 30 September 2025.

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

Cabinet noted that the Council has received above budgeted investment returns due to higher cash balances and interest rates, had maintained a cautious approach to new debt, and continued to prioritise security and liquidity. The negative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) balance was forecast to reach £153 million, resulting in a £6 million cost in lost interest, with the Council awaiting government action to address the deficit.

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

RESOLVED to note the council's treasury management activity for the first half of 2025/26 and recommend Council to note council's treasury management activity in the first half of 2025/26.

178/25 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLANNING REPORT 2026/27 - 2030/31

(Agenda Item. 16)

Cabinet had before it the Budget and Business Planning Report covering the period 2026/27 to 2030/31, with a capital programme extending to 2035/36. It outlined the council's financial strategy, budget assumptions, funding outlook, and the process for setting a balanced budget amid significant financial uncertainty and reform in local government funding.

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

Cabinet noted the report and initial position for the 2026/27 budget and approved a medium-term financial strategy covering five years (up to 2030/31) and a capital programme extending ten years (to 2035/36). Members acknowledged the budget and business planning timeline, next steps, and possible effects of a delayed Fair Funding Review 2.0 outcome.

Councillor Levy moved and Councillor Fawcett seconded the recommendations and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:

- a) Note the report and the starting point for the 2026/27 budget;**
- b) Approve a five-year period for the medium-term financial strategy to 2030/31 and ten-year period for the capital programme to 2035/36; and;**
- c) Note the budget and business planning process timeline and next steps, including the late announcement of the outcome of the Fair Funding Review 2.0 consultation and the potential impact on funding over the medium term;**
- d) Note the requirement for the council to set a sustainable balanced budget for 2026/27 which shows how income will equal spending plans.**

179/25 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & MONITORING REPORT - PERFORMANCE AND RISK QUARTER 2 2025/26

(Agenda Item. 17)

Cabinet received a report which provided an overview of the Council's performance and strategic risks for Quarter 2 of the 2025/26 financial year,

highlighting key risk areas and performance measures. The report included 47 performance measures, with particular attention to areas requiring action.

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

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

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180/25 CAPITAL PROGRAMME APPROVALS - NOVEMBER 2025

(Agenda Item. 18)

Cabinet received a report requesting budget approval to increase funding for the A4130 Steventon Lights project within the council's capital programme for 2025/2026.

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

During discussion, members welcomed the progress made on this scheme,

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

RESOLVED to approve a budget increase of £2.518m from £10.8m to £13.318m to the A4130 Steventon Lights scheme, which is to be funded from a combination of funding sources.

181/25 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 19)

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.

**182/25 FOR INFORMATION ONLY: CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY
ITEMS**

(Agenda Item. 20)

Cabinet noted the following responses to Scrutiny items:-

Oxfordshire Employment Services
Our People and Culture
Part-night Lighting
Catering and Cleaning
Hire Bikes and Scooters
Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report
OXRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail Strategy

.....in the Chair

Date of signing