

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 9 September 2025 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at 3.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Mark Lygo – in the Chair

Councillors:

Ted Fenton (Vice-Chair)	Emma Garnett	Gavin McLauchlan
Thomas Ashby	Sean Gaul	Lesley McLean
James Barlow	Stefan Gawrysiak	Ian Middleton
Ron Batstone	Andy Graham	Toyah Overton
Tim Bearder	Tom Greenaway	Glynis Phillips
Will Boucher-Giles	Kate Gregory	James Plumb
Liz Brighthouse OBE	Jane Hanna OBE	Susanna Pressel
Mark Cherry	Jenny Hannaby	Leigh Rawlins
Andrew Coles	David Henwood	Judy Roberts
Dr Izzy Creed	Georgina Heritage	James Robertshaw
Andrew Crichton	Ben Higgins	Paul-Austin Sargent
Hao Du	Johnny Hope-Smith	Geoff Saul
Judith Edwards	Robin Jones	John Shiri
Gareth Epps	Emily Kerr	Roz Smith
Lee Evans	Liz Leffman	Ian Snowdon
Neil Fawcett	Dan Levy	Peter Stevens
Nick Field-Johnson	Dr Nathan Ley	Bethia Thomas
Maggie Filipova-Rivers	Diana Lugova	Liam Walker
Rebekah Fletcher	Saj Malik	Tony Worgan
James Fry	Kieron Mallon	
Andrew Gant	Emma Markham	

The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

62/25 MINUTES

(Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2025 were approved.

63/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillors Baines, Brant, Cotter, Edosomwan and Hingley. Councillor Gordon was on parental leave.

64/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

65/25 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

(Agenda Item 4)

The Chair announced that the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Marjorie Glasgow, will address Council at its next meeting on 4 November 2025 to speak about the role of the Lord Lieutenant in representing the Royal Family in the county. Her address will start at 10.30 and the Council meeting itself will commence at 11.00 am. The meeting may continue until 4pm if business has not been completed by 3.30pm.

A list of events attended by the Chair, Vice-Chair and past chairs since the last Council meeting was attached in Annex 1 to the Schedule of Business.

The Chair thanked everyone who came to the charity quiz held on 27 August which raised £997 for his charities: OXSRAD, Oxford United in the Community and Abingdon RDA.

Council had been notified of the passing in August of former councillor Peter Brennan who represented the Kidlington North division as a Labour Party member between 1985 and 1989. He served on the Public Protection Committee and Kidlington Traffic Advisory Panel. Councillor Brighthouse paid tribute to the work of former councillor Brennan.

The Chair also acknowledged the passing of the Duchess of Kent. Her Royal Highness was a remarkable figure who dedicated her life to public service and the betterment of our community. Her unwavering commitment to charitable causes and her compassionate spirit have left an indelible mark on all those who knew her.

Council stood for a minute's silence.

66/25 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item 5)

The following change of committee membership was agreed:

On the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee Councillor Fletcher to replace Councillor Shiri.

67/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item 6)

The Chair accepted the following requests to present a petition or speak on an item on the agenda:

Petitions

Siobhan Lancaster:

“Make the crossing by Abingdon Road (Oxford) Tesco safe.”

Siobhan Lancaster presented the petition which had over 440 signatures. She outlined how the junction of Abingdon Road and Weirs Lane had no pedestrian crossing. With a Tesco shop adjacent to the junction, housing all around and a park, schools and bus stops in the vicinity, the junction had the effect of cutting people off from local amenities. She felt that private traffic was being prioritised over pedestrian safety.

Councillor Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, thanked Ms Lancaster for the petition and for clearly stating her experiences of crossing the junction. He confirmed that officers were working on a project to provide a pedestrian crossing. This was part of a wider plan to use potential funds from the proposed Workplace Parking Levy to provide better facilities for active travel. He believed that it was necessary to reduce congestion to speed up bus times in order to provide opportunities to install better facilities for active travel.

The Chair accepted the following requests to speak on an item on the agenda:

Item 16 Motion from Councillor Hanna

Vicki Power

Barbara Shaw

Graham Shelton

Any speeches provided to the Council are published alongside these minutes.

68/25 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(Agenda Item 7)

Thirty eight questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions and responses are recorded in an Annex below.

69/25 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(Agenda Item 8)

Fifty two questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions and responses are recorded in an Annex below.

70/25 REPORT OF THE CABINET

(Agenda Item 9)

Council received the report of Cabinet covering its meeting for 15 July 2025.

On Item 1 Community Banking Hubs Motion

Councillor Fry asked that the British Banking Association and the Post Office be contacted to create badly needed joint community hubs. Councillor Fawcett responded that he concurred and would take the process forward and further responded that the system was too restrictive and a more flexible approach was needed to provide more help in more places.

Councillor Barlow asked that to make banking more accessible and to achieve climate change targets that residents be directed towards banks that prioritise climate performance. Councillor Fawcett responded that there was a limit to the role of the Council in this regard and that ultimately it was the decision of residents in terms of choice of banks. The councillor further responded that the proposal would nevertheless be given due consideration.

Councillor Middleton asked that a letter be written to Barclays to urge them to reconsider their decision to withdraw from the Exeter Hall banking hub, which also represented a disregard for customer needs. Councillor Fawcett responded that, if the contact details were provided, he will look into the matter, and that it was unfortunate that banks were not engaging with banking hubs.

Councillor Smith asked if an assurance can be given that urban areas like Headington and Quarry will also receive attention in terms of available banks and noted that the post office was also due to close. Councillor Fawcett provided reassurance that all communities where the services were disappearing would be given due attention.

On Item 3 EOTAS Policy (Education other than at School)

Councillor Filipova-Rivers asked that clarity be provided on the delivery of Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) policy and guidance. Councillor Gaul responded that a coproduced policy had been approved. He added that the EOTAS guidance was being reviewed by relevant groups, including carers and parents, and would be approved when ready.

On Item 4 Financial and land agreements relating to the conversion of Woodeaton Manor School to an academy

Councillor Hope-Smith enquired about steps to enhance the coproduction process, citing parental concerns about its effectiveness. Councillor Gaul responded that coproduction created a challenge due to its legislative and statutory nature and would welcome any Member that would be interested in the coproduction discussions currently being held.

On Item 5 Climate Action Programme update

Councillor Fry asked that the PM 2.5 (particulate matter up to 2.5 micro-metres) emissions be included in the future climate outcomes dashboard. Councillor Roberts said that the matter would be considered.

Councillor McLauchlan asked that in relation to the Climate Action programme, it would be useful to have regular updates on how the circular economy was being applied. Councillor Roberts agreed.

Councillor Lugova asked that an outline be provided of what will be included in the new Minerals and Waste Development Scheme (MWDS) to ensure that Oxfordshire was not only leading in this respect but can also achieve the goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2030. Councillor Roberts responded that Oxfordshire would become a member of the 100-Action Group across the UK and that Oxfordshire was already performing well.

Councillor Barlow asked if information could be sent showing if the recycling rates were increasing or decreasing as of the last council in July. Councillor Roberts responded that the recycling rates were complex, due to the fact that as people waste less, less was recycled.

Councillor Malik asked that, with most of the congestion occurring in Oxford Road and Church Cowley Road, cleaner air needs to be ensured in those areas. Councillor Roberts responded that a website was in place that allowed any individual to determine their carbon footprint and how they could improve it.

On Item 6 Update on Process of Producing the Minerals and Waste Local Plan

Councillor Fry asked, with the plan making system to be implemented this year, if the relevant secondary legislation was in place to ensure that work can resume on the work plan. Councillor Roberts responded that it was still awaited from national government.

On Item 7 Treasury Management 2024/25 Outturn

Councillor Phillips asked about the continuation of the Oxfordshire Green Bond and the assessment of its launch. Councillor Levy responded that it was a success, and it was oversubscribed. He added that the £500,000 that was raised was used to further the identified green projects.

Councillor Rawlins asked what impact would cuts to public expenditure have on the preparation of the budget and the scope for revenue expenditure considering the central government budget would be presented only in November 2025. Councillor Levy responded that the county council had written to MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government), and that the settlement would be announced late in December, which was after the budget. He added that the fair funding review had also been delayed. The process was therefore in flux.

On Item 8 Budget & Business Planning 2026/27 - Fair Funding Review 2.0

Councillor Phillips asked what amount was being held back in reserves to meet the changes in national government funding and would the Cabinet's response to the consultation question be published as part of the budget papers. Councillor Levy responded by confirming that the consultation question would be published subject to guidance of the Section 151 officer.

Additionally, the councillor stated that Oxfordshire maintained robust financial reserves.

Councillor Epps asked that a letter be written to MHCLG and the Treasury to detail the impact that the national government delays would have on county council staff. Councillor Levy responded that senior officers were in consultation with national government and the relevant bodies.

On Item 9 Business Management & Monitoring Report - Revenue Update and Monitoring Report

Councillor Phillips asked if the Council would be updated on the current position in relation to saving targets being met. Councillor Levy responded that the next cabinet report would contain that information and would be made public. The councillor said the county council was exceeding its budget expectations.

On Item 10 Capital Programme Monitoring Report

Councillor Middleton asked, with the spiralling costs associated with major road building, what were the cost implications of such projects. Councillor Levy responded that the capital reports to Cabinet indicated where the capital schemes were proceeding and the cost of those schemes.

Councillor Gregory asked if schooling support would be provided consistently for children under five in all parts of the county. Councillor Levy responded that the county council was not responsible for this area and could not therefore make any guarantees. Further, the councillor responded that the Council was supportive of nursery education and that St Joseph's, Thame, for example, was paid for from Section 106 funds.

On Item 11 Proposed response to the 2025 Oxfordshire Travel and Transport Citizens' Assembly

Councillor Fry asked for an indication of the annual costs of implementing the Citizens' Assembly's request for free transport for young children and young adults. Councillor Gant said bus pricing was complex and that operators would be asked for more information.

Councillor Pressel asked about the absence of timescales on the Citizens' Assembly's four accepted recommendations. Councillor Gant responded that he would look into that matter.

Councillor Brighouse asked that free bus travel be made a priority for the poorest children and their families. Councillor Gant responded that all the Council's policies worked together to ensure that such priorities were acted upon.

Councillor Kerr asked how the on-going involvement of the Citizens' Assembly is likely to work. Councillor Gant responded that members of the Citizens' Assembly expressed their willingness to stay involved which was positive but it was not yet clear what form that would take.

Councillor Ley asked about the comments made by the Leader of the Conservative group to the media, that he would expect his Members to claim the congestion charge on expenses. Councillor Gant responded that the comment should be reversed. He added that he hoped the Council policy on expenses could be amended to prevent it.

Councillor Malik asked the reason for the lack of diversity in the Citizens' Assembly. Councillor Gant responded that the composition was undertaken by a third party according to best industry practice and he was satisfied that the job was done professionally.

Councillor Henwood asked why the Citizens' Assembly meeting on 16 July 2025 only included the steering group. Councillor Gant was unaware of the details being mentioned and would seek further information.

On Item 12 Future Civil Enforcement Contract Models

Councillor Pressel inquired about the procurement process for a contract related to parking enforcement and requested clarification on why a comparable system was not being used for the digital parking permits scheme. Councillor Gant responded that the permits system would be looked at.

Councillor Coles asked that the high standards achieved by the parking enforcement team in Witney not be compromised due to retention and recruitment challenges. Councillor Gant responded that he was grateful for the acknowledgement of the parking enforcement team's work and added that the contracts were being designed to increase the number of officers. The councillor further responded that he guaranteed there would be more and better enforcement.

Councillor Middleton asked that enforcement across Cherwell be improved. Councillor Gant responded that it was the intention to increase enforcement and the Automatic Number Plate Recognition system was designed to allow local authorities to ensure traffic enforcement was applied more efficiently.

Councillor Smith asked for assurance that the new contract would address the misuse of business parking permits. Councillor Gant stated that the matter would be reviewed.

Councillor Malik asked for assurance that after the contract was finalised that there would be some enforcement in his area. Councillor Gant responded that there was enforcement and he would like even more.

71/25 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25

(Agenda Item 10)

Council had before it a report setting out the Treasury Management position at 31 March 2025. Throughout the report, the performance for the

2024/25 financial year was measured against the budget agreed by Council in February 2024.

The report was moved by Councillor Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation and seconded by Councillor Leffman, Leader of the Council.

Following discussion, the report was noted.

RESOLVED: to note the council's treasury management activity and outcomes in 2024/25.

72/25 REVIEW OF OUTSIDE BODIES

(Agenda Item 11)

The procedures and guidance around Council appointments to Outside Bodies had not been reviewed since 2013. Council considered a report summarising the procedures and proposed amendments to the way in which representatives are appointed to Category B (Non-strategic) and Category C (Local) Outside Bodies.

The Chair noted that there was one correction to Annex 3 Category A Outside Bodies: On the Corporate Parenting Panel, Councillor Gaul replaced Councillor Higgins.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Smith and seconded by Councillor Shiri, Chair and Deputy Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Following discussion, the recommendations were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- a) agree that appointments to Category B non-strategic Outside Bodies, useful to the Council's work, as they relate to Council functions, be made by the Audit and Governance Committee;**
- b) agree that appointments to Category C Outside Bodies that request Council representation or are of primary value to local councillors/the local community, as they relate to Council functions, be delegated to the Monitoring Officer;**
- c) approve the Constitutional Amendments in Annex 1 to reflect these changes;**
- d) approve the definition of a Strategic Outside Bodies in paragraph 14 of this report;**

- e) **note the Guidance for Members who are appointed to Outside Bodies adopted by the Audit & Governance Committee on 16 July 2025 (attached at Annex 2);**
- f) **endorse the list of 'Strategic' Category A Outside Bodies in Annex 3 as amended;**
- g) **confirm the appointments to Category B Outside Bodies in Annex 4;**
- h) **note the list of Category C Outside Bodies in Annex 5.**

73/25 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES - OPPOSITION GROUPS AND PARENTAL LEAVE

(Agenda Item 12)

The Independent Remuneration Panel had been asked by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to provide early recommendations on two specific matters:

- (i) The payment of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) to the Leaders and Shadow Cabinet Members of the two equally sized opposition groups recognised as the official opposition, following the May 2025 elections.
- (ii) The application of allowances for councillors taking parental leave, following the adoption of a new policy on 8 July 2025.

Council had the interim report on these matters for consideration.

Recommendations a) and d) were proposed by Councillor Leffman and seconded by Councillor Fawcett, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. Recommendations a) and d) were approved with 56 votes in favour, none against and 3 abstentions.

RESOLVED:

- a) **To adopt the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Special Responsibility Allowances for the recognised Opposition Group(s) as set out in Annex A to this report; and**
- d) **To agree the Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendation that basic and any Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) should continue to be paid to any councillor taking parental leave in accordance with the Parental Leave Policy approved by Council on 8 July 2025.**

74/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR IZZY CREED

(Agenda Item 13)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Creed and seconded by Councillor Brighthouse.

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The motion was carried unanimously and will be referred to Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

This Council welcomes:

1. The Government's announcement of a programme of new Best Start Family Hubs.
2. The adoption of a national target of 75% of five-year-olds having a good level of development by 2028.

Council notes:

1. The preceding Sure Start programme was developed under the last Labour Government to provide holistic support to families with children under the age of 5. By 2010 a network of over 3,000 centres had been established.
2. A recent report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies has found that Sure Start had significant positive impacts on children's educational attainment as well as physical and mental health.

Council further notes:

1. That cuts by the Coalition Government to Local Government funding resulted in the closure of 1,168 of these valuable council-run children's centres.
2. In Oxfordshire, many children's centres were saved by being taken over by local charities and community groups. These centres continue to pay rent to the County Council and face significant financial pressures.

This Council requests:

1. The Cabinet considers how it may support existing community-operated children's centres in Oxfordshire to continue to operate, providing specialist and financial support where possible.
2. The Cabinet considers the development of a strategy to increase the range of services offered by existing children's centres in line with Government plans for new Best Start Family Hubs – prioritising those areas of greatest need.
3. The Cabinet considers if existing children's centres can help extend the reach of the County's re-established youth service.

75/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES PLUMB

(Agenda Item 14)

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Plumb and seconded by Councillor Walker.

“Council notes the increasing pressures on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services across Oxfordshire, with rising demand, complex needs, and a need for stronger local support.

Previously, Oxfordshire County Council had a dedicated Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement, reflecting the importance of this area.

This role was recently removed, diluting specific leadership and focus on one of the most challenging areas of Council responsibility.

Council believes that:

1. Children and young people with SEND deserve a dedicated champion at the highest political level within the Council.
2. A single Cabinet Member with clear and focused responsibility for SEND would enhance decision-making, oversight, and transparency.
3. Reinstating this post would demonstrate a renewed commitment to improving outcomes for families who rely on these vital services.

Council therefore resolves to ask the Leader of the Council to:

- a) reinstate the Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement as a standalone portfolio within the Cabinet.
- b) ensure this role has clear responsibility for SEND policy, provision, and engagement with parents, carers, and stakeholders.
- c) provide a written response to this motion, setting out the steps being taken to strengthen leadership and accountability within SEND services.”

Following discussion, Councillor Walker called for a named vote and was supported by at least six other councillors as required under Council Procedure Rule 17.4.1.

The motion was lost with 29 votes in favour, 31 against and no abstentions.

Councillors voted as follows:

For the motion:

Councillors Ashby, Barlow, Brighouse, Cherry, Coles, Creed, Crichton, Du, Evans, Fenton, Field-Johnson, Fry, Garnett, Henwood, Jones, Kerr, Lygo, Malik, Markham, McLauchlan, Middleton, Philips, Plumb, Pressel, Robertshaw, Sargent, Saul, Snowdon, Walker.

Against the motion:

Councillors Batstone, Bearder, Boucher-Giles, Edwards, Epps, Fawcett, Filipova-Rivers, Fletcher, Gant, Gaul, Gawrysiak, Graham, Greenaway, Gregory, Hanna, Hannaby, Heritage, Higgins, Hope-Smith, Leffman, Levy,

Lugova, McLean, Overton, Rawlins, Roberts, Shiri, Smith, Stevens, Thomas, Worgan.

There were no abstentions.

76/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON

(Agenda Item 15)

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Middleton and seconded by Councillor Jones.

“Oxfordshire hosts military air bases and training facilities, some of which are used by international forces.

Media reports have suggested that Oxfordshire air bases have been used to support Israeli Air Force actions in Gaza and that Israeli military personnel may have received training at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham.

Oxfordshire residents, faith groups and humanitarian organisations have expressed concern about the UK's potential complicity in war crimes in Gaza and the West Bank and this has already attracted demonstrations by protest groups around some Oxfordshire military bases.

Residents deserve transparency about the use of such facilities within the County and the local resources required to protect and police them given the likelihood of further protests in response to increasing evidence of war crimes and potential genocide in Gaza.

We therefore ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner requesting information on any increased costs and resource requirements for protecting facilities in Oxfordshire that are being accessed by the Israeli military.”

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The motion was lost with 19 votes in favour, 34 against and 2 abstentions.

77/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR JANE HANNA

(Agenda Item 16)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Hanna and seconded by Councillor Epps.

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The motion was carried unanimously (56 votes in favour, none against, no abstentions) and will be referred to Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

Council notes with concern that Oxfordshire Healthwatch and local Councils of Governors of Oxfordshire hospitals are to be abolished within a new

Health and Social Care Act, and integrated into existing local departments, with queries diverted to the NHS App.

The Council endorses the work of Healthwatch Oxfordshire for listening and helping thousands of patients each year, recognising that many vulnerable residents do not use the NHS App. Their team shared patient and carer experiences in thirty eight reports influencing local improvements through the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Place Based Partnership and contributions to the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

As part of the ten year NHS plan, Health and Wellbeing Boards are required to develop neighbourhood plans with NHS partners to shift more resource to prevention and from hospitals to a neighbourhood health service model. The financial, workforce and integration challenges are significant. Patients and the public will need

- A trusted and credible local body, to speak for patients, offering constructive challenge and supporting communities' engagement
- their elected members and lower tier councils with relevant local knowledge engaged
- Safe public spaces, including scrutiny, to speak up

Council calls on the Leader and Cabinet to urgently consider how the Council working with NHS partners can safeguard and develop the Healthwatch function and engage and meaningfully consult with all local stakeholders to ensure the local delivery of national reforms at neighbourhood level best meet patient and community need.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing