

## **Divisions-N/A**

### **COUNTY COUNCIL – 16 April 2024**

#### **REPORT OF THE CABINET**

#### ***Cabinet Member: Leader***

#### **1. Future Council Governance Group - Final Report**

*(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)*

Cabinet had before it a report and recommendations from the Future Council Governance Group. The report had been presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 29 November 2023 by Cllr Stefan Gawrysiak, chair of the cross-party group. Members of the committee welcomed the findings and recommendations.

The group's recommendation relating to the formation of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee was supported at the full Council meeting on 12 December 2023. The terms of reference for the new committee were developed ahead of Council and were approved at the meeting.

The other recommendations made by the group, including the inter-relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny, participatory process, locality working and futures planning, would need to be taken forward by the Cabinet, Leader of the Council and individual Cabinet Members.

Cabinet approved the recommendations which included an evaluation of the cost and processes for a citizens' panel with a view, subject to budget, to selecting one topic in 2024-25 and to review its success or otherwise before committing to any future panels.

#### **2. Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Functions: Transition Arrangements**

*(Cabinet, 27 February 2024)*

Cabinet considered a report on the transfer of Local Enterprise Partnership core functions to the Council. The Government had announced that from 31 March 2024, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) would cease to have official recognition and that existing LEP functions would transfer to upper-tier local authorities or combined authorities, where they exist.

Cabinet approved the recommendations including the creation of a County Council controlling interest in the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP Ltd), subject to agreement by OxLEP Ltd's board and gave consent to a change to OxLEP Ltd's governance to amend the Articles of Association and By-Laws to enable the County Council to take a controlling interest, if agreed by the OxLEP board.

## ***Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care***

### **3. Award for All-Age Advocacy Contracts**

*(Cabinet: 19 December 2023)*

Cabinet had before it a report recommending an approach for the procurement of the future provision for the All-Age Advocacy contracts.

Advocates are independent professionals who are qualified to help people understand their rights, communicate their needs and preferences, and ensure that their voices are heard in decisions about their care and support. They provide help and guidance to people who are experiencing difficulty accessing or using social care services. Local Authorities had a duty to provide independent advocacy under the Care Act 2014, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and The Advocacy Services and Representations Procedure (Children) (Amendment) Regulations 2004.

Cabinet approved the recommendations and agreed the approach for the procurement of the future provision for the All-Age Advocacy contracts.

## ***Cabinet Member: Community & Corporate Services***

### **4. Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) 5G Innovation Region Funding**

*(Cabinet: 19 December 2023)*

A report regarding the successful bid for 5G Innovation Region funding was presented to the Cabinet.

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) is the central government department responsible for improving the nation's fixed and mobile connectivity. Under the broad category of the £5bn Project Gigabit, was a sub-section focussing on 5G Connectivity. As part of that, a competitive funding bid for setting up ten 5G Innovation Regions was submitted and for which Oxfordshire had been successful in being awarded the maximum grant of £3.8m. Oxfordshire County Council would be the lead authority with Buckinghamshire, Central Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, & all Berkshire councils forming the Region. 5G Innovation Regions focus on developing innovative commercial models within specific targeted sectors and 'England's Connected Heartland' will deliver outputs in two sectors - Rail Connectivity and Research & Development/Science Parks. The project would deliver outputs described in the report.

Cabinet welcomed the award of grant funding and the benefits that would be achieved for public services as a result of improved connectivity within Oxfordshire and across the country as a whole.

## **5. Workforce Report and Staffing Data - Quarter 2 - July to September 2023**

*(Cabinet: 19 December 2023)*

Cabinet had before it a report providing the workforce profile for quarter 2 including an overview of headcount, agency spend, sickness, turnover and other relevant management information and performance indicators set out in Annex A. The report also set out some of the actions being taken to address the trends identified.

Cabinet noted the report and highlighted that several of the statistics compared favourably with other similar local authorities.

## **6. People and Culture Strategy**

*(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)*

Cabinet considered a report introducing the “Our People and Culture Strategy” which set out the vision for developing and maintaining high performing, innovative, highly engaged, and agile teams, employing the best people, and reflecting the communities that the Council served. The strategy referred to the importance of nurturing an environment that supported diversity, equality, and inclusion, and allowed all employees to bring their whole selves to work to deliver great services for our Oxfordshire residents.

Cabinet approved the strategy and noted that the proposed KPI measurements would be subject to further development.

## **7. Report on the authority's policy for compliance with the Regulation of the Investigatory Powers Act 2000, the use of activities within the scope of this act and the recent inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office**

*(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)*

Cabinet had before it a report providing a summary of the covert activities undertaken by the council between April 2022 and March 2023 under the provisions of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and supporting Codes of Practice. The Council's existing Policy for Compliance with the Investigation of Regulatory Powers Act 2000 was updated annually but had not been subjected to a full refresh since 2017. The report provided Cabinet with an opportunity to review and approve the council's Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Policy. The policy required Cabinet approval in the absence of a delegation in the Constitution to another body or committee for approval.

Cabinet approved the recommendations including the revised Policy for Compliance with the Act set out in the report.

## **8. Workforce Report and Staffing Data - Q3 October - December 2023**

*(Cabinet: 27 February 2024)*

Cabinet considered a report which provided the workforce profile for quarter 3 2023/24 including an overview of headcount, agency spend, sickness, turnover and

other relevant management information and performance indicators. The report also set out some of the actions being taken to address the trends identified.

The report was noted.

## ***Cabinet Member: Infrastructure & Development Strategy***

### **9. Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23**

*(Cabinet: 19 December 2023)*

A report on the Infrastructure Funding Statement was considered by the Cabinet. This was a statutory statement of fact to be reported annually, by 31 December 2023 on developer contributions secured, spent or received during the previous financial year, 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

Cabinet approved the publication of the statement and welcomed the improved processes outlined in the report, including increased liaison with district council partners.

## ***Cabinet Member: Finance***

### **10. Capital Programme Update and Monitoring Report**

*(Cabinet: 19 December 2023)*

Cabinet considered the third capital programme update and monitoring report for 2023/24 which set out the monitoring position based on activity to the end of August 2023. The report also provided an update to the Capital Programme approved by Council in February 2023 taking into account additional funding and new schemes. The updated programme also incorporated changes agreed through the Capital Programme Approval Reports to Cabinet during the financial year as well as new funding.

Members highlighted the range of social, environmental and economic benefits for Oxfordshire arising from the initiatives within the capital programme and, in particular, the rollout of 20mph speed limit schemes across the County.

Cabinet noted the latest capital monitoring position for 2023/24 and approved the updated Capital Programme noting the return of £3.8m corporate funds from the 20mph Programme; a budget increase of £5.965m to £13.959m for the new primary school in Wallingford (St Nicolas Church of England Primary School); the inclusion of the capital grant of £17.330m towards the A34 Lodge Hill scheme and the inclusion of £3.8m from the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) 5G Innovation Region funding to implement a project to be known as 'England's Connected Heartland'

## **11. Business Management & Monitoring Report - October/November 2023**

*(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)*

Cabinet considered a report presenting the September 2023 performance, risk, and finance position for the council. The business management reports were part of a suite of performance, risk and budget documents which set out the council's ambitions, priorities, and financial performance.

Cabinet noted the report and the financial adjustments set out in the annexes.

## **12. Capital Programme Approvals - January 2024**

*(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)*

Cabinet had before it a report setting out requests for changes to the Capital Programme requiring Cabinet approval that would be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next quarterly update to the Capital Programme in March 2024.

Cabinet approved the recommendations including the inclusion of 'Great Mead', a Children's Residential Home, into the Capital Programme, releasing £3.1m of funding agreed by Council in February 2023; 'Willow Bank', a Children's Residential Home, into releasing £1.8m of funding agreed by Council in February 2023, and a new Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) School for Social and Emotional High Needs (SEMH) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), located in Didcot, with an indicative capital budget of £14.4m to be met by section 106 funds and High Needs grant 2021/22 to 2023/24.

## **13. Freehold Disposal Chilterns End Former Care Home, Henley on Thames**

*(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)*

Cabinet had before it a report on the proposed disposal of land comprising the former elderly persons' home at Chilterns End. The property had been considered for several uses within OCC since late 2019, but with no viable business case forthcoming. It had been allocated in the Henley on Thames Neighbourhood Plan for a mix of open market and affordable housing.

Cabinet approved the freehold sale of the property which supported the Council's Property and Asset Strategy agreed in November 2022.

## **14. Oxford City Centre Accommodation Strategy**

*(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)*

Cabinet considered a report regarding the options for the Council's office accommodation in Oxford City Centre which were being considered as part of the Property and Assets Strategy approved in November 2022. This strategy set out the Council's 10-year ambition for its property portfolio driven by the need to repurpose the estate to enable new ways of delivering services, support agile working and decarbonise existing buildings.

The Strategy had confirmed the continued need for a core central office and democratic facilities in Oxford city centre based on its central location, historical significance, strong public transport links, access to a larger workforce and the range of facilities in the city.

Members referred to the need for careful consideration of the future use of the County Hall site in view of its historic social and value and the benefits for residents and staff resulting from the move to a refurbished building more suited to present day needs. They also referred to the economic factors involved in the consideration of the options and the need to ensure that best value was taken into account.

Cabinet approved the recommendations to progress Option 2: 'Consolidation in Speedwell House and disposal of County Hall' as the preferred option and progress the project through the Council's capital governance and reporting processes, noting the financial position and to engage the market to assess interest in both New and Old County Hall to inform a final decision on Old County Hall's future.

## **15. Budget & Business Planning Report - 2024/25 - January 2024** (Cabinet: 30 January 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report setting out the Cabinet's revenue budget for 2024/25, medium term financial strategy to 2026/27, capital programme to 2033/34 plus supporting policies, strategies and information.

This report included the budget engagement and consultation 2024/25 findings the Cabinet's proposed Revenue Budget Strategy and the Capital & Investment Strategy (Section 5). Alongside this, the report also set out the Review of Charges for 2024/25 and the High Needs budget changes for 2024/25 to 2026/27

The Cabinet's revenue budget proposals took into consideration the latest information on the council's financial position outlined in this report. In finalising the proposals, Cabinet had taken into consideration feedback from Phase 1 of the public consultation on the revenue budget proposals and council tax increase. Feedback from Phase 2 was broadly consistent with Phase 1 and would be used to develop plans for 2025/26 onwards.

Cabinet recommended that Council adopt the proposed strategies and financial measures detailed in the report and annexes.

## **16. Capital Programme Approvals - February 2024** (Cabinet: 27 February 2024)

Cabinet considered a report which set out changes to the Capital Programme requiring Cabinet approval that would be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next update to the Capital Programme in March 2024.

Cabinet approved the inclusion of a 3 Form Entry Primary School, located in Didcot, into the Capital Programme with capital budget of £2.19m, to be fully funded from secured S106 contributions.

## **17. Commercial Strategy**

*(Cabinet: 19 March 2024)*

Cabinet had before it a proposed Commercial Strategy which set out the Council's commercial ambition and pathway to embedding commercial thinking as part of its culture and governance.

The strategy set out the vision to leverage Oxfordshire's unique assets and strengths to optimise organisational efficiency, generate sustainable revenue, support the development of a more inclusive local economy and enhance public services through innovative and responsible commercial activities.

Cabinet approved the strategy as set out in the report.

## **18. Treasury Management Quarter 3 Performance Report (2023/24)**

*(Cabinet: 19 March 2024)*

Cabinet considered a report on the Council's Treasury Management performance at the end of the third quarter of the year 2023-24 (measured against the budget agreed by Council in February 2023). The report covered the management of the organisation's borrowing, investments, and cash flows, including its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities, and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.

The report was noted.

## **19. Business Management & Monitoring Report - January 2024**

*(Cabinet: 19 March 2024)*

Cabinet considered a report presenting the January 2024 performance, risk, and finance position for the council. The business management reports were part of a suite of performance, risk and budget documents which set out the council's ambitions, priorities, and financial performance.

Members welcomed performance improvements in a number of areas including the library service; the number of Education and Health Care plans completed in the SEND service (where performance had exceeded the national average) and the increase in the number of residents satisfied with the service provided by the customer service centre.

Cabinet noted the report and approved a number of financial adjustments.

## **20. Capital Programme Update and Monitoring Report**

*(Cabinet: 19 March 2024)*

Cabinet had before it the fourth capital programme update and monitoring report for 2023/24 which set out the monitoring position based on activity to the end of January 2024. The report also provided an update to the Capital Programme approved by Council on 20 February 2024 taking into account additional funding and new schemes. The updated programme also incorporated changes agreed through the

Capital Programme Approval Reports to Cabinet during the year as well as new funding.

Cabinet approved a number of budget changes including the inclusion of a programme of work to replace prefabricated classrooms with permanent provision at North Hinksey CE Primary School into the Capital Programme, at a cost of £1.443m to be funded by s106 developer contributions, the remaining cost of the scheme will be met by the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust; the expansion of Mabel Prichard Special School into the capital programme with an indicative budget of £2.230m to be funded from the Special Educational Needs (SEN) High Needs capital allocation 2021/22-2023/24; an increase in budget of £3.6m from £6.897m to £10.497m for the Tramway Road Accessibility Improvement scheme funded through the Housing & Growth Deal and the inclusion of Redbridge Household & Recycling Centre (HWRC) stabilisation works into the capital programme at a cost of £1.400m to be funded by corporate resources.

Cabinet also noted the release of an initial development budget of £1.813m to redevelop Speedwell House and approved the inclusion of the £3.1m Decarbonisation Grant into the capital programme and the release of a total budget provision of £8.2m to commence carbon reduction measures in the Council property portfolio to progress measures towards the 2030 Climate Action Framework.

## **21. Reports received from Scrutiny Committees**

*(Cabinet: 19 December 2023, 23 January 2024 & 27 February 2024)*

Cabinet received reports on, and will respond formally to, the following:

Reports of the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on:-

Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health of Children  
Support for People Leaving Hospital; the Oxfordshire Way

Report of the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee report on the Oxfordshire Education Commission report.

Report of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee report on the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23.

Reports of the Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee on:-

Employee Engagement Survey  
Capital Asset Disposal Process  
Social Value Policy  
City Centre Accommodation Strategy  
Draft Customer Experience Strategy

**LIZ LEFFMAN**

Leader of the Council

April 2024