

## **CABINET**

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Tuesday, 21 December 2021 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 3.20 pm

### **Present:**

**Voting Members:** Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair  
Councillor Glynis Phillips  
Councillor Tim Bearder  
Councillor Duncan Enright  
Councillor Calum Miller  
Councillor Jenny Hannaby

### **Cabinet Members**

**Attending Remotely:** Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE (Deputy Chair)  
Councillor Neil Fawcett  
Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury  
Councillor Mark Lygo

### **Other Members in**

**Attendance:** Councillors David Bartholomew, Mark Cherry, Ian Corkin, Donna Ford, Andy Graham, Nick Field-Johnson, Kieron Mallon, Michael O'Connor

### **Officers:**

Whole of meeting Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive; Steve Jorden, Corporate Director Commercial Development, Assets & Investments; Bill Cotton, Corporate Director Environment & Place; Anita Bradley, Monitoring Officer; Lorna Baxter, Director for Finance; Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Committee Officer

*The Committee 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.*

## **122/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

(Agenda Item. 1)

There were no apologies. The following Cabinet Members attended remotely in order to minimise the possibility of Covid transmission:

Councillors Liz Brighthouse, Neil Fawcett, Mark Lygo and Pete Sudbury.

## **123/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

### **124/21 MINUTES**

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2021 were approved and signed as an accurate record.

### **125/21 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

(Agenda Item. 4)

The questions received from County Councillors and responses are set out in an Annex to these Minutes.

### **126/21 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda Item. 5)

The following requests to address the meeting had been agreed by the Chair:

Item 6: Business Management and Monitoring Report  
Councillor David Bartholomew

Item 7: Capital Programme Update and Monitoring Report  
Councillor David Bartholomew

### **127/21 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & MONITORING REPORT - OCTOBER 2021**

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet considered the report presenting the October 2021 performance, risk and finance position for the Council.

Councillor David Bartholomew, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance, addressed the financial aspects of the report:

- He was concerned about the increase in the variance against budget of £1.2m in the last month including a deterioration of £200,000 for children's social care.
- He was pleased to hear that the issue of the Memorandum of Cooperation in relation to agency costs was being revisited and looked forward to seeing the details.
- He noted a 10.8% increase in the average costs of residential home placements. Individual placements can cost over £250,000 per annum which the public would find hard to understand. He suggested cooperation with other councils to develop innovative solutions.
- There had been an overspend of £400,000 under Community Operations due to transport fleet services. An update was promised in the next report which he hoped would show an improvement.

- He expressed disappointment that the corporate debt collection rate and adult social care invoice collection rate had both fallen below target. He hoped that the Cabinet Member would be able to assist staff to improve these rates.

Councillor Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance responded and summarised the report as follows:

- It was expected that the Memorandum of Cooperation would be in place in time for the new financial year but a number of councils in special measures had indicated that they could not participate.
- He agreed that the increase in costs for external placements in children's social care was worrying but it was a function of the market. The Competition and Markets Authority reported on this in November and expressed concern that the market may be broken. The Cabinet will certainly add its voice to those who were seeking to improve the situation.
- Transport services across the country were experiencing increases in staffing and fuel costs. So there was a limit to what this Council could do to control costs.
- The Council will continue to pursue debts where they can be recovered but they would also continue to show sensitivity to those residents who have been negatively affected by the pandemic.
- There were two new red ratings in the report. One under Finance related to matters largely outside the Council's control regarding the High Needs Block and Adult Social Care. The other related to Infrastructure Delivery where there were delays conditioned by the outside environment.
- There was a new risk identified relating to Deprivation of Liberty Authorisations. The relevant Corporate Director and Cabinet Member were looking to do everything in their power to avoid being forced into this position.

Councillor Miller moved the recommendations and they were agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the October business management and monitoring report.**
- b) To agree virements set out in Annex C -2b which relate to the Covid-19 costs incurred by the directorates between July and September 2021.**
- c) To note virements set out in Annex C-2c**
- d) To approve the bad debt, write off in Annex C paragraph 48**
- e) To approve the use of the Transformation Reserve and COVID Reserve paragraphs 80 and 81.**

## **128/21 CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE AND MONITORING REPORT - OCTOBER 2021**

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet considered a finance report on capital spending against budget allocations, including any necessary capital programme approvals.

Councillor David Bartholomew, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance, drew attention to the following:

- He hoped that the reduced spending on the Kennington Bridge due to revised timing of the detailed design stage did not indicate slippage on this important project.
- He noted the cap of £35m placed on spending on the Science Transit Phase 2 Scheme by the Department for Transport and asked if this meant that the Council was liable for any overspend on the project.
- He welcomed the provision by the Department of funding towards the provision of electric charging points in district council car parks across the county.

Councillor Calum Miller responded that he was not in a position to answer the question about liability for overspend on the Science Transit Scheme but would forward information on that. He also suggested meeting with Councillor Bartholomew to discuss ways of limiting the Council's liability on Kennington Bridge.

Councillor Miller highlighted the decrease in the latest outturn forecast spend for the capital programme for 2021/22 of £29.2m to £205.3m and the decrease in the total ten-year capital programme of £25.1m to £1,345.8m. He moved the recommendations and they were agreed,

### **RESOLVED to:**

- a) **Agree the increase in the budget for the following schemes:**
  - **£1.415m for the Lord Williams's School, Thame expansion by 1 form entry funded from basic need programme contingency.**
  - **£1.198m increase to the Kennington Bridge Maintenance Scheme funded from capital programme contingency.**
- b) **Approve the updated Capital Programme at Annex 2.**

## **129/21 WORKFORCE REPORT AND STAFFING DATA - QUARTER 2 - JULY-SEPTEMBER 2021**

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a quarterly staffing report providing details of key people numbers and analysis of main changes since the previous report.

Councillor Glynis Phillips summarised the report:

- congratulating staff on continuing to deliver services against a background of uncertainty.
- noting that over 700 managers will have trained in delivering one-to-one meetings with staff by the end of the financial year as part of the Delivering the Future Together programme.
- since Q2 managers can now record sick leave on the system on behalf of staff members who do not have access to the system. This has contributed to an increase in sick leave recorded from 2.74% in Q1 to 3.35% in Q2.
- during the pandemic stress, anxiety and depression has accounted for 29% of all sick leave compared to 19% pre-pandemic. It will be a focus for directorate leaderships to refer to Occupational Health and HR Business Partners as appropriate.
- It was hoped that restructuring in the Environment and Place Directorate will reduce their agency spend over time.

Cabinet Members echoed the thanks to staff for their continued work during the pandemic. They raised a number of points and Councillor Phillips responded as follows:

- There was some very good managerial support available to staff to reduce any feelings of isolation due to increased remote working.
- The restructuring of Environment and Place gave the opportunity for the development of job descriptions in order to directly recruit the staff needed.
- Much of the agency spend came from Adult Social Care where there was a real shortage of workers.

Councillors Liz Brighthouse and Jenny Hannaby added that both the children and adult directorates were working to train their own social workers and other specialists.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

## **130/21 INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT**

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet was recommended to approve the Infrastructure Funding Statement which is a statutory statement of fact to be reported annually on developer contributions secured, spent or received during the previous financial year.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Travel & Development Strategy, emphasised that developer contributions were a very important part of funding for the capital programme. He reminded Members that the Infrastructure Strategy was out for consideration and that would inform how this development money would be spent to move more towards a zero carbon economy.

Councillor Glynis Phillips asked that local Members be involved as early as possible in the decision-making process. Councillor Enright agreed that Members had valuable insights to bring to the process.

Councillor Calum Miller stressed the importance of managing monies received but not yet spent in order to ensure we can deliver on projects and make full use of these funds.

The recommendations were put and agreed.

**RESOLVED to:**

- a) **Consider the content of the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2020/21.**
- b) **Approve the publication of the report onto the Oxfordshire County Council website.**

**131/21 OXFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet was asked to note the report providing an overview of the work of the Safeguarding Board and its partners during 2020-21.

Councillor Jenny Hannaby, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, introduced Jayne Chidgey-Clark, Independent Chair, OSAB; Alison Chapman, Designated Nurse and Safeguarding Lead, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Karen Fuller, Deputy Director Adult Social Care.

Alison Chapman and Karen Fuller highlighted elements of the report:

- The Board was actually able to enhance its work during the pandemic utilising virtual media and has been able to respond to every need as it has arisen. This despite the government having suggested that the Board could step down services during the pandemic.
- Making Safeguarding Personal has been a success. 92.5% of respondents reported that risk to them had been reduced.
- Before the pandemic the Board was already focussed on early mortality among those with Learning Disabilities. Lessons were learned through studying each individual case. Oxfordshire has been one of the few areas that has not seen an increase in the number of deaths of people with Learning Disabilities during the pandemic.
- A Homeless Mortality Review Group has been set up to review deaths and advise the partnership groups and the Countywide Homelessness Steering Group of their findings.
- Processes have been put in place to have shared risk assessments for those with complex needs. Anybody in the partnership can refer a case into this system.

Jayne Chidgey-Clark added that it was a privilege to be appointed Independent Chair in November this year. The report pre-dated her but she reiterated that the priorities would continue to be people with Learning Disabilities, Autism, Homelessness and the complexity agenda.

Councillor Hannaby welcomed Jayne Chidgey-Clark and thanked officers for the report and for all the work of the wonderful team in safeguarding.

Councillor Pete Sudbury described the report as inspiring. He particularly welcomed the introduction of joint risk assessments. Throughout his professional career he had seen many reports say that the crisis could have been avoided if information had been shared.

The Chair asked the Independent Chair OSAB to take back the thanks of the Board to all staff who have worked so well in very difficult circumstances.

**RESOLVED: to note the content of the report, particularly the findings of the Vulnerable adults Mortality group (page 15), the merging findings from the Homeless Mortality Review group (page 16) and the overall summary of progress during the year including the outstanding work (page 24).**

## **132/21 OXFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21**

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet had before it for noting a paper highlighting findings from the Board's annual report on the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Oxfordshire.

Councillor Liz Brighouse, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services, introduced the Independent Chair of the Board, Derek Benson. She thanked all staff across the partnership for the work they do in safeguarding children and noted that many would probably be busier over the Christmas and New Year period while most people were winding down.

Derek Benson highlighted some of the strengths and achievements of the Board:

- The Board benefits from the continuing commitment of the police service, health partners, children's social care, the voluntary sector, fire service, probation service and the education sector.
- He recommended members to read the report into the case of Jacob which concluded that services needed to be more joined up.
- Training had been delivered to over 15,000 local practitioners.
- The move to online was done quickly and effectively.
- There will continue to be a focus on neglect and exploitation.
- His personal view was that children were better served by being in education. A lot of work has been done during the pandemic to ensure that vulnerable children were in school.

- There continued to be concern about the delays in accessing mental health services especially since the pandemic has seen an increase in anxiety particularly in young people.

Tan Lee, Strategic Safeguarding Partnerships Manager, summarised the case reviews and quality assurance work:

- Lessons learned across the reviews were the need to identify and intervene early as well as improving the whole-system approach.
- On neglect in the family home, they were working with a national expert and a review showed that, while the building blocks were in place, more needed to be done to embed the processes.
- On exploitation, work was focussed on being better at keeping children in school and how the whole system works together.
- Families involved in reviews have said that they want to continue engaging with services to support the learning from their cases.
- Surveys had shown that 75% of responding practitioners felt that the safeguarding leadership had been visible during the pandemic and 95% had undertaken safeguarding training in the last three years.
- There were key concerns from the pandemic around increases in mental health issues, access to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and domestic abuse.

Derek Benson concluded by drawing attention to the shortage of foster homes which was a national outrage. He had written to the government on this issue and still awaited a response.

Kevin Gordon, Corporate Director for Children's Services, thanked Derek Benson for being a fantastic Chair during a very difficult year.

Councillor Brighouse echoed concerns about the lack of appropriate placements – especially in-county – and stated that the Cabinet would be supporting the Independent Chair on that point. Leaders across the South East Region were starting to work together on this.

Councillor Calum Miller, as a Chair of School Governors, emphasised how teaching staff had worked beyond expectations in ensuring that vulnerable children were in school, and when they weren't, ensuring that they followed up with them.

The Chair asked officers to pass on thanks to all those involved in keeping children safe across Oxfordshire.

**RESOLVED to note the annual report of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board senior safeguarding partners and to consider the key messages.**

**133/21 LIBRARIES AND HERITAGE SERVICES: A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: 2021 - 2026**

(Agenda Item. 12)



Cabinet considered the draft Libraries and Heritage Services Strategy.

Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Community Services and Safety, introduced the draft which took into account feedback from stakeholders, councillors and the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He thanked Lesli Good for her hard work in bringing the document to this stage.

Councillor Fawcett emphasised the importance of ensuring continued access to libraries as restrictions come into effect again due to Covid. He particularly thanked Councillor Kieron Mallon for his constructive engagement with the strategy. The next stage was to go out for public consultation.

Councillor Jenny Hannaby praised library staff for being so welcoming and had been delighted to see so many children using the library on a recent visit.

The Chair thanked officers for a very lively document that would encourage a lot of feedback.

Councillor Glynis Phillips proposed the recommendations.

**RESOLVED to:**

- a) **Agree the draft Libraries and Heritage Strategy and action plan as set out in appendices 1 and 2, developed following a programme of stakeholder engagement and feedback from the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**
- b) **Agree a period of 8 weeks for public consultation on the strategy on the Let's Talk Oxfordshire portal and taking place within libraries and heritage venues.**
- c) **Note the feedback provided by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that an annual review of the actions to deliver the strategy will be reported to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the future.**

**134/21 YOUTH OFFER UPDATE**

(Agenda Item. 13)

Cabinet received for information a report to share progress of the youth offer development, providing details about the structure for the Youth Services that the Children Education and Families Department were putting in place.

Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services, introduced the report. She stated that youth workers will be employed across the county for the first time in many years.

They will support the work of other professionals and the voluntary sector. The report was clear on the outcomes expected.

Kevin Gordon, Corporate Director for Children’s Services, hoped that in the new year Members could be involved in road show events in their own areas and play a role in how this was shaped.

Councillor Glynis Phillips noted that the new workers would be placed consistently across the county. After a year or so they would have more information on inequalities and she hoped the workforce would then be enlarged and additional staff allocated equitably.

Councillor Andy Graham noted that there was significant reliance on the voluntary sector and he thought that refresher training might be needed. He added that it should be on the agenda for each locality meeting how they can work with this great initiative.

Councillor Brighthouse responded that there was some magnificent training being delivered thanks to good infrastructure in the county to support voluntary work and the new workers will work alongside that system. She believed that there was already a lot of information available on inequalities and thanked Jessie Dobson in particular for her work on this.

Cabinet Members welcomed implementation of this election manifesto promise to reintroduce youth workers, noting how the pandemic restrictions had been particularly hard on young people.

**135/21 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS**

(Agenda Item. 14)

**RESOLVED:to note the items currently identified for forthcoming meetings.**

.....in the Chair

Date of signing .....

## ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

| Questions   | Cabinet Member   |
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| <p><b>1. COUNCILLOR MICHAEL O'CONNOR</b></p> <p>The priorities at the intersection of Bardwell Road and Dragon Lane were changed earlier this year as a preliminary to further works that were not in fact carried out. This has made the cycle route NCN 51 significantly more dangerous. ODS have indicated that they would be willing to restore these priorities in order to make the intersection safer—in line with the wishes of many of mine and Cllr. Howson's constituents. Could the Cabinet member please let me know that he has liaised with ODS and will ensure that this does in fact happen?</p> | <p><b>COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>As part of works to further improve the amenity for cyclists on the North Oxford Cycle Route, in 1994 a number of junctions – including the Bardwell Road / Charlbury Road / Dragon Lane crossroads – had 'give way' markings placed across every approach. Although contrary to Government regulations, these junction markings appear to have operated well from a safety point of view, although it is also true that the junctions had a very good safety record before the multiple give ways were provided. Recent government guidance on road markings more strongly emphasises that multiple give way lines are unlawful, and in the light of this, when resurfacing or lining maintenance works are being carried out, current practice is to only provide give ways complying with the regulations. Having said all that, the county council is assessing a request, on road safety grounds, to reinstate give way markings on all four arms of the Bardwell Road / Charlbury Road and Dragon Lane crossroads taking account of the regulations on road markings and the safety record of the junction since the resurfacing last year, which has seen no reported accidents involving cyclists, and other options to improve the junction.</p> |

| Questions   | Cabinet Member  |
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| <p><b>2. COUNCILLOR MICHAEL O'CONNOR</b></p> <p>Could the Cabinet Members please update us on the progress of Connecting Oxford and the ZEZ? And could they undertake to ensure that the resources are available to make sure it is rolled out on time?</p> | <p><b>COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT and COUNCILLOR DUNCAN ENRIGHT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRAVEL &amp; DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</b></p> <p>The ZEZ will be implemented in its pilot form in February 2022. The technical work required to develop and robustly assess the ZEZ and Connecting Oxford proposals continues, with details of the programme for engagement and formal consultation to be announced early next year (members will be briefed in January). Traffic measures across Oxford such as improvements to Botley Road and traffic measures in East Oxford and Cowley are in progress at the moment, and form part of the wider programme of works that, when integrated, will constitute a comprehensive programme as part of the Central Oxfordshire Transport Strategy implementation (COTS).</p> <p>It is currently anticipated that the broader city centre ZEZ and key next elements of the current Connecting Oxford programme will be implemented from 2023, subject to consultation, funding and political approvals.</p> <p>Final elements of the programme costs and funding will be identified through the development of a detailed business case which forms part of the technical work currently underway. At this stage it is assumed that funding sources will include central government investment and borrowing against future income raised by the ZEZ and a Workplace Parking Levy. The County Council has already made bids for central government funding for these schemes including via the Oxfordshire Bus</p> |

| Questions  | Cabinet Member  |
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|  | <p>Service Improvement Plan, Active Travel Fund, and the Department for Environment, Food &amp; Rural Affairs' Air Quality Grant. Outcomes of these bids should be known early next year and further bids for central government funding will be made should suitable opportunities arise.</p>  |
| <p><b>3. COUNCILLOR ANDY GRAHAM</b></p> <p>a) the strategy is a detailed referencing document for libraries and heritage putting people place and partnerships at the heart of the delivery under the umbrella of the council's stated priorities but partnership seems to lack detail of who these partnerships are apart from the clear intention to develop the voluntary network and as valuable as that is, can you give more precise details of the other partnerships being sought and their credentials to help us deliver a restored and first class service?</p> <p>b) the digital transformation of the service is an essential part of reaching out to new generations in terms of the content of delivery as well as the need to update records but can we have more detail how this ambition is to be realised and what resources will be put to it to ensure the strategy is effective and ambitious?</p> | <p><b>COUNCILLOR NEIL FAWCETT, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND SAFETY</b></p> <p>The strategy is meant to be exactly that, and not a detailed implementation plan. Here, though, is a bit more detail on the areas you raised:</p> <p>Oxfordshire's libraries and heritage service currently work with a number of partners including AgeUK Oxfordshire, Citizens Advice and the universities.</p> <p>The strategy recognises that effective partnership working can deliver improved outcomes in a number of ways. These include extending the reach of partners delivering services from the library network to increase local access to services, the opportunity for community and voluntary organisations to deliver activities and projects and attract investment to the service.</p> <p>Existing partnerships will be reviewed to ensure a match with our ambition to increase and widen participation and impact on health, well-being and community cohesion.</p> |

| <b>Questions</b>  | <b>Cabinet Member</b>  |
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|   | <p>New partnerships will be identified, including from the learning and private sectors to increase the opportunity to deliver opportunities for residents to gain skills, including digital skills, and to access support for starting and sustaining new businesses.</p> <p>We will be open to working with any organisation that can help the County Council to deliver on our ambitious objectives.</p> <p>The council are investing in a new digital platform to enable improved access to the museum, archives and local history collection to go live in 2022. It is necessary to undertake some further research into audience take-up of the existing in person and digital offer prior to developing a detailed plan for digital transformation. We will want to ensure the council is able to secure resources from those external agencies funding digital developments in the cultural sector and potential partners. We will continue to offer digital services whilst we develop our new options.</p> |
| <p><b>4. COUNCILLOR LES SIBLEY</b></p> <p>Would the Leader of the Council agree that in April this year it was a fantastic engineering feat over 72 hours to install an under bridge and underpass through the railway embankment at Howes Lane Bicester. This scheme will facilitate the re -alignment of the A4095 Howes Lane and improve essential access links for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists across the 6,000 home</p> | <p><b>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b></p> <p>The delivery of the road bridge and bridleway underpass under the railway was an important step towards facilitating the road realignment we all want to see. It was also a considerable engineering achievement and it was down to the collaboration between Oxfordshire County Council Infrastructure Delivery teams, Network Rail, Stantec designers and Storey contractors. This was the first time that Network Rail has delivered two structures in one 72-hour possession. The design and construction methodology were also innovative and although was more</p>  |

| Questions  | Cabinet Member  |
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| <p>ECO development at NW Bicester.</p>   | <p>complex than traditional methods, shortened the construction programme reducing risk for the County. The delivery of the underbridge and underpass was the first and most risky step towards delivering the connections through the NW Bicester development site and will allow the road to come forward in the near future.</p>   |
| <p><b>5. COUNCILLOR LES SIBLEY</b></p> <p>Could the Leader of the Council explain the intention remove the Housing &amp; Growth Deal (H&amp;GD) allocated funding of £15.75m from the key infrastructure project of re-aligning Howes Lane will cause years of delay to other major housing and road projects in Bicester and put at risk the completion of the 6,000 home ECO development at NW Bicester, leaving us with several white elephants of bridges and roads going nowhere and why local members were not consulted on this very important key project.</p> | <p><b>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b></p> <p>The funding for the A4095 realignment scheme was allocated from the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal to support the accelerated house building at North West Bicester. Under the Deal signed by the previous administration, Oxfordshire County Council had responsibility for delivering the scheme using this Housing Growth Deal funding but was obliged to deliver this within very specific timescales and conditions or face losing the funding from central government.</p> <p>The first, and most complex, phase of the project was completed in summer 2021 with the delivery of the rail underbridge and underpass. This has taken a key risk, which was one of the key elements Developers said were stopping the housing coming forward.</p> <p>The second phase included the building of the realigned road through the North West Bicester housing development. This phase received £15.75m of growth deal funding and we agreed to take on its management to assist a developer to unlock the housing.</p> <p>Throughout the process of preliminary and detailed design work, the cost</p> |

| <b>Questions</b> | <b>Cabinet Member</b>   |
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|                  | <p>and timescales of the scheme were reviewed against the forecast housing delivery on the NW Bicester development site within the 5 years of the Housing Growth Deal. This was to ensure that the scheme continued to meet the funding criteria. Central government allocated funding for infrastructure (Housing Growth Deal funding) has strict criteria for its continued use linked to delivery of housing and spend.</p> <p>In the most recent, detailed review of projected housing numbers, scheme costs and timing of delivery, it was identified that phase two no longer meets the criteria for continued use on this scheme. Faced with the risk of losing the Growth Deal funding from Oxfordshire, phase two has been paused. The remaining growth deal funding has been rediverted to schemes that meet the criteria, in order to keep the funding for Oxfordshire.</p> <p>The decision to pause is very regrettable but we felt we had no choice. The County and District Council will now reflect on the best way to deliver the A4095 realignment and engage with the developers on North West Bicester to find alternative ways of funding and delivering infrastructure along with aligning the timing with delivery of housing.</p> <p>We should have been better at circulating and sharing the emerging issues and risks to losing the funding from the A4095 and regret that local members and the local community were not more fully informed. I have asked that the reasons for this oversight are examined. However, the fact that the scheme doesn't meet the strict criteria without housing and a funding pressure, still remains.</p> |



| <b>Questions</b> | <b>Cabinet Member</b>   |
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|                  | <p>We understand the disappointment this delay will bring to local residents. The realignment stays a key priority for the Council and we will continue to look for other funding solutions to support the housing including the normal route for new roads to be built by the developers whilst building houses.</p> |