

# **County Council**

**12 December 2023**

## **Agenda**



**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

To: **Members of the County COUNCIL**

## ***Notice of a Meeting of the County Council***

**Tuesday, 12 December 2023 at 10.30 am**

**Council Chamber - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND**

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#). Please note, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Reeves".

Martin Reeves  
Chief Executive

December 2023

*Committee Officer:*

***Colm Ó Caomhánaigh***

*Tel: 07393 001096; E-Mail:*

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# AGENDA

## 1. Minutes (Pages 1 - 20)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2023 (**CC1a**) and the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2023 (**CC1b**) and to receive information arising from them.

## 2. Apologies for Absence

## 3. Declarations of Interest - see guidance note

Members are reminded that they must declare their interests orally at the meeting and specify (a) the nature of the interest and (b) which items on the agenda are the relevant items. This applies also to items where members have interests by virtue of their membership of a district council in Oxfordshire.

## 4. Official Communications

## 5. Appointments

To make any changes to the membership of scrutiny and other committees on the nomination of political groups and to note any changes to the Cabinet made by the Leader of the Council.

## 6. Petitions and Public Address

Members of the public who wish to speak on an item on the agenda at this meeting, or present a petition, can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection. Requests must be submitted no later than 9am one working day before the meeting i.e., 9am on Monday 11 December 2023. Requests to speak should be sent to [committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9am on the day of the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

## 7. Questions with Notice from Members of the Public

## 8. Questions with Notice from Members of the Council

## 9. Cabinet Report (Pages 21 - 24)

Report from Leader of the Council.

The report summarises the decisions from the Cabinet meeting on 21 November 2023.

**10. Gender Pay Gap Report (Pages 25 - 40)**

Report from Executive Director: Resources

The report outlines the difference between the average earnings of men and women across the Council workforce. The Council is required to report on this annually.

**Council is RECOMMENDED to receive the Gender Pay Gap report and approve for publication.**

**11. Treasury Management Mid Term Review (Pages 41 - 54)**

Report by Executive Director: Resources

This report sets out the Treasury Management position at 30 September 2023. Throughout this report, the performance for the first half of the year is measured against the budget agreed by Council in February 2023.

**Council is RECOMMENDED to note the council's treasury management activity in the first half of 2023/24.**

**12. Future Council Governance Group - Final Report (Pages 55 - 66)**

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

The Audit and Governance Committee welcomed the findings and recommendations of the Future Council Governance Group. Although the only recommendation that needs to be formally presented to Council is the one relating to the formation of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, members of the committee requested that the group's full report be appended to the committee's report to full Council.

**Council is RECOMMENDED**

- 1. To establish an Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprising nine elected members. Terms of reference to follow.**
- 2. To note the work undertaken by the Future Council Governance Group including the findings and recommendations at paragraphs 35 to 40 of the report (please refer to the report at Annex 1).**

### **13. Electoral Review: Local Government Boundary Commission for England Draft Recommendations (Pages 67 - 74)**

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

The report recommends some amendments to the draft recommendations following discussions by the cross-party working group.

**The Council is RECOMMENDED to support the draft recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) relating to the boundaries for 69 single-member divisions with the exception of those divisions in Cherwell District covering the area in and around Banbury for which the following response is proposed:**

- a) **To request that the areas affected by the community governance review determined by Cherwell District Council on 17 October 2022 be included within the Banbury divisions.**
- b) **To request adoption of the boundaries included in the Council submission on 28 March 2023 relating to Cropredy and Wroxton, Adderbury, Bloxham and Bodicote, Deddington and Hook Norton, and Fringford and Heyfords.**
- c) **To request adoption of the boundaries included in the Council submission on 28 March 2023 relating to Banbury as they better reflect the identity of local communities, subject to one minor amendment: the area to the west of the railway line and to the east of the canal should become part of Banbury Calthorpe (rather than Grimsbury and Castle).**

### **14. Committees and Review of Political Balance (To Follow)**

### **15. Independent Remuneration Panel (Pages 75 - 80)**

Report by Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

The Council is required by regulation to have an Independent Remuneration Panel to assess councillors' allowances make recommendations, as appropriate, the Council. The report outlines the recommendations from the meeting of the IRP on 1 December 2023.

**The Council is RECOMMENDED to adopt the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel:**

- 1. To increase councillor allowances by 5.7% with effect from 1 April 2023 in line with the percentage rise in overall employee costs for Oxfordshire County Council arising from the 2023-24 local government pay award.**
- 2. In future years, to increase all councillor, independent member and co-optee allowances in line with the percentage rise in overall employee costs**

**for Oxfordshire County Council arising from the local government pay award. This will be limited to the four-year term of each council.**

**16. Audit & Governance Committee Terms of Reference (Pages 81 - 90)**

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

The terms of reference have been updated at Annex A to the report to reflect the 2018 CIPFA guidance along with the latest 2022 CIPFA guidance on audit committees.

**Council is RECOMMENDED to make the changes to the terms of reference of the Audit and Governance Committee (Part 5.1A of the Constitution) as highlighted in Annex A to the report. This reflects the latest guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) - Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2022).**

**MOTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

*WOULD MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE THAT ANY AMENDMENTS TO MOTIONS WITH NOTICE MUST BE PRESENTED TO THE PROPER OFFICER IN WRITING BY 9.00 AM ON THE FRIDAY BEFORE THE MEETING*

**17. Motion by Councillor Sally Povolotsky**

Over the last 2 years the South East Strategic Reservoir (SESRO) has been placed by Thames Water into the Water Resource South East Strategy (WRSE), the new Thames Water Management Plan (TWMP) and is also entered into a National Infrastructure evaluation called Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID) run by OFWAT.

This Council under administrations involving Conservative, Labour & Cooperative, Liberal Democrat and Green parties has consistently stood with the local residents expressing our concerns and publicly stating our position against the SESRO scheme presented for consultation.

This Council notes that

1. Public consultations carried out in the last 18 months were for a scheme design 50% smaller than that now being taken to the Secretary of State for approval.
2. Vale of White Horse District Council also stands against the designs on the table for SESRO as the local planning authority
3. Despite thousands of responses by Oxfordshire residents on SESRO, none of the issues presented have been addressed comprehensively.

This Council resolves to

1. Ask the Leader to request an all party meeting with the current Secretary of State alongside GARD, CPRE and Political leaders in this chamber and the County Councillors in the proposed zone of development.
2. Ask the Leader request that OFWAT pause SESRO in the RAPID scheme given

flaws in the data already highlighted by this Council to Thames Water until formal questions are answered.

3. Investigate a Water Resource Task and Finish CAG option and create a Water Resource Champion.

## **18. Motion by Councillor Eddie Reeves**

The findings of the residents' survey, as more particularly revealed to councillors on 19 October 2023, are deeply troubling for the Council. They indicate that the Council's budget and strategic priorities are not aligned with residents' expectations.

Elsewhere there is further evidence of this administration's lack of sound financial management. The previous Conservative Independent Alliance administration achieved an average of 91% of ambitious savings targets, whereas the September Business Management Report projects just 71% achievement of savings for the current financial year.

Of particular concern is the projected overspend of £11.8m in Children's Services, taking the corresponding directorate spend to £180.9m.

Despite these issues, the administration often gives the impression that the Council's next budget will not require cross-party support for it to pass.

This Council:

- a) Resolves to ask the Cabinet to take the results of its residents' survey more seriously in its emerging budget plans; and
- b) Asks the administration's Cabinet to more fully engage with political group leaders and backbench colleagues, as appropriate, on the budget and the Council's strategic priorities.

## **19. Motion by Councillor Michael O'Connor**

This Council notes:

1. It was recorded in 2013 that 'operational capacity has already been reached or exceeded on much of [Oxford's] road network.' Most of Oxford's busiest roads have since seen significant further rises in motor traffic.
2. The Council has not effectively engaged Oxford's communities on transport. Too many feel their communities have been divided, their voices not heard, and concerns ignored.
3. The evaluation report for the East Oxford LTNs notes that there have been 'large increases in traffic near The Plain roundabout' as traffic is funnelled down three radial routes.
4. Now is the time for pragmatic and fair solutions to long-standing congestion problems, including those exacerbated by LTNs, and for listening to all our residents, building on the motion unanimously passed by Council on 7 November.

Council urgently requests Cabinet to:

5. Investigate opening a direct route for motor traffic between Iffley Road, Cowley Road and St. Clement's, such as Rectory Road and Marston Street, to facilitate traffic dispersion.
6. Investigate installing traffic lights on The Plain to improve traffic flow.
7. Investigate measures to reduce private school traffic on The Plain, such as a school street on Cowley Place.
8. Investigate opening the Littlemore Road filter to motor traffic outside school travel hours and provide traffic calming, segregated cycle lane, and pick-me-up service to key amenities.
9. Create a taskforce to work with local communities and councillors to make other targeted, meaningful improvements to tackle congestion.
10. Bring proposals to Cabinet within three months.

## **20. Motion by Councillor Mark Cherry**

Council requests Cabinet to consider approving the Councils for Fair Tax declaration.

This commits Councils to

- Lead by example and demonstrate good practice in our tax conduct, right across our activities.
- Ensure IR35 is implemented robustly and contract workers pay a fair share of employment taxes.
- Not use offshore vehicles for the purchase of land and property, especially where this leads to reduced payments of stamp duty.
- Undertake due diligence to ensure that not-for-profit structures are not being used inappropriately by suppliers as an artificial device to reduce the payment of tax and business rates.
- Demand clarity on the ultimate beneficial ownership of suppliers, UK and overseas, and their consolidated profit & loss position, given lack of clarity could be strong indicators of poor financial probity and weak financial standing.
- Promote Fair Tax Mark certification especially for any business in which we have a significant stake and where corporation tax is due.
- Support Fair Tax Week events in the area, and celebrate the tax contribution made by responsible businesses that are proud to promote responsible tax conduct and pay their fair share of corporation tax.

Council also requests the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer supporting calls for urgent reform of UK procurement law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies.

## **21. Motion by Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak**



Oxfordshire County Council has 97 Short Stay Hub Beds ('SSHBs'), which are widely distributed across the county. They are used to support Oxfordshire residents who are medically ready for discharge from acute hospital beds but who need a short period of bed-based reablement to help them get ready for living in their own home.

Currently, SSHBs in Henley have full occupancy and are supervised well by medical professionals at the Hart and Bell Henley surgeries.

SSHBs had been due to be cut by one-third to 63, with the Council removing Henley's SSHBs without consultation among local GPs, nor proper scrutiny by elected members before local intervention. This is unacceptable and must not be repeated.

This Council:

1. Deplores any future reduction in SSHBs without consultation and scrutiny; and
2. Requests that members be fully appraised of the reasons for removing Henley's SSHBs, which serve a population of c.140,000 across South Oxfordshire, without reasonable geographical provision being maintained across the county.

This Council further strongly disapproves of the words of Cllrs Leffman and Bearder, who have stated that the location of short stay hub beds would be based on market factors rather than geography when the beds are purchased as part of an open-market tender.

This Council requests that the Cabinet:

3. Takes executive action to ensure that the 34 SSHBs cut by the administration can be restored at short notice; and
4. Ensures that Adult Social Care, together with SEND improvement, is a key priority in the next budget cycle.

## **22. Motion by Councillor Donna Ford**

Councillors note the increasing number of vacant bank and building society buildings on our high streets, which are largely the result of technological change. The loss of community banking services is of concern to many residents, especially older constituents and those with disabilities and adaptive needs.

Buckinghamshire Council has set up a Banking Hub in Buckingham library for people to access banking services in the town centre.

Established in partnership with Buckinghamshire Council through its Buckingham and Villages Community Board, with the support of Buckingham Town Council and community representatives, the temporary Banking Hub provides local people with access to banking services. This offers a counter service operated by the Post Office,

where customers of all major banks and building societies can carry out regular cash transactions. It also offers a Community Banker service where customers can talk to their banking provider about more complicated issues. Community Bankers work on rotation, with a different bank or building society available on each day of the week, to ensure fair and equitable access to major banking and building society customers.

Council requests the relevant Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services and the Cabinet Member for Finance to take a lead from forward-thinking colleagues at Buckinghamshire Council and, working with its Town Council, and District Council partners, invite banks and building societies that have left – or are due to leave – our high streets to explore opportunities to work with this Council to set up similar banking hubs within appropriate Council libraries.

### **23. Motion by Councillor Eddie Reeves**

This Council recognises that the voice of small and medium-sized enterprises ('SMEs') have, too often, been overlooked.

This Council resolves to request the Leader of the Council to appoint a Small Business Champion to

- provide a single point of contact for local businesspeople, including those running co-operatives, and
- advise Members attending Cabinet and relevant scrutiny committees of the impact of Council policies on the county's SMEs.

### **24. Motion by Councillor David Rouane**

Pride in the appearance of the public realm is important to our residents. Ensuring that streets and pavements are accessible, level, without hazards, clear of weeds and vegetation is essential for preventing long term damage to the footways, improving accessibility for all, visibility, reducing the chances of accidents, and also allowing people to have pride in their neighbourhood.

Council resolves to:

1. Note the difficulties in maintaining weed clearance to a high standard in view of the expanding network of highways, and in the context of over a decade of budget cuts; and
2. Acknowledge the justified phasing out of glyphosate and herbicide-based methods based on health and environmental grounds; and
3. Recognise that the Council has a statutory duty to keep pavements free of weeds and hazards; and
4. Request the Cabinet Member for Transport Management to consider options for

alternative methods of weed removal, and scheduled maintenance that are both cost-effective and environmentally friendly, including supporting the work of towns and parishes, local groups and individuals, that can be developed and trialled around the county, and for ongoing consideration of other methods.

5. Request that the Cabinet Member for Finance give due consideration to the findings of this report as part of the 2024/25 budget setting.
6. Embrace collection of green matter from weeding and grass cutting and ask the Cabinet Member for Climate Change Delivery and Environment to consider the feasibility of a county owned Anaerobic digester facility.

## **25. Motion by Councillor Robin Bennett**

Oxfordshire is renowned for its music excellence and heritage. As well as being something many of us enjoy, live music is a major contributor to the local economy; a 2017 study found that in Oxford, the estimated total annual spend on live music was £10.5 million, supporting an estimated 350 FTE jobs.

This Council's excellent music service provides a vital introduction to music for many young people.

However, recent years have been extremely challenging for local music, with several venues closing because of development pressures, and a shortage of accessible spaces for young musicians to practice and learn.

The recent decision to remove the music course from Oxford Brookes University's curriculum will not only impact students and staff, but also local music more generally. Many previous graduates of Oxford Brookes music courses continue to work in the arts in Oxfordshire in a wide variety of fields, including teaching in our schools.

Taken together, these changes are damaging to Oxfordshire's standing as a place to embark on a music career, and risk leaving opportunities and facilities available only to those who can afford to pay for them.

Council asks the Leader to write to the Vice Chancellor of Oxford Brookes expressing Council's concern about the loss of the music course, and asks cabinet to:

- Consider how to promote wider access to music facilities and lessons for young people
- Review options, such as a heritage trail, for celebrating Oxfordshire music across the county
- Support efforts to establish community-led venues.

## **26. Motion by Councillor Michael O'Connor**

This Council notes that:

1. Housing is a human right.
2. This country is experiencing a housing crisis.

3. Oxfordshire is one of the most expensive places to live in the UK, with house prices in Oxford alone averaging £500,000 according to Land Registry figures.
4. Many of our staff find it hard to live in Oxfordshire due to the cost of housing, exacerbating difficulties in recruitment and retention.
5. Housing is one of the most significant influences on population health as it is a key 'building block' of health.
6. Demand for services such as social care is affected by lack of affordable and healthy housing.
7. The housing crisis has contributed to a sharp rise in the number of people who are homeless and people sleeping rough in Oxfordshire.
8. Every pound invested in homeless support generates an estimated £2.80 in wider savings and benefits according to PwC.

Therefore, this Council resolves to declare a housing crisis and requests that Cabinet:

9. Undertake a survey of Council-owned land to identify sites on which genuinely affordable housing could be built, including for council employees.
10. Investigate innovative methods of financing genuinely affordable housing, such as a Revolving Loan Fund for community housing projects.
11. Establish a Countywide Housing Commission aimed at developing pragmatic solutions to our housing crisis with partners.
12. Continue to resource homelessness prevention and efforts to support those who are homeless or sleeping rough, taking a housing-first approach.

## **Councillors declaring interests**

### **General duty**

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

### **What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?**

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

### **Declaring an interest**

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

### **Members' Code of Conduct and public perception**

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

### **Members Code – Other registrable interests**

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships
- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.

- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

### **Members Code – Non-registrable interests**

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.