

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 12 September 2023 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at 3.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Felix Bloomfield – in the Chair

Councillors:

Alison Rooke	Andrew Gant	Calum Miller
Brad Baines	Stefan Gawrysiak	Jane Murphy
David Bartholomew	Andy Graham	Michael O'Connor
Tim Bearder	Kate Gregory	Glynis Phillips
Liz Brighthouse OBE	Jane Hanna OBE	Sally Povolotsky
Nigel Champken-Woods	Jenny Hannaby	Susanna Pressel
Mark Cherry	Damian Haywood	Eddie Reeves
Andrew Coles	Charlie Hicks	G.A. Reynolds
Yvonne Constance OBE	John Howson	Judy Roberts
Ian Corkin	Tony Ilott	David Rouane
Imade Edosomwan	Bob Johnston	Geoff Saul
Trish Elphinstone	Liz Leffman	Les Sibley
Duncan Enright	Nick Leverton	Nigel Simpson
Mohamed Fadlalla	Dan Levy	Roz Smith
Arash Fatemian	Dr Nathan Ley	Dr Pete Sudbury
Neil Fawcett	Mark Lygo	Bethia Thomas
Ted Fenton	Kieron Mallon	Michael Waine
Nick Field-Johnson	Ian Middleton	Liam Walker
Donna Ford	Freddie van Mierlo	

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.

56/23 MINUTES

(Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023 were approved.

Councillor David Bartholomew asked if there had been a change in policy in how the item "Report of the Cabinet" was minuted, as the number of questions and responses being recorded had reduced over recent meetings. Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance, responded that an operational decision had been taken to only minute the responses from which a follow-up action was required. She agreed to discuss the matter with the Chair.

57/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillors Ash, Banfield, Bulmer, Snowdon, Webber and Bennett.

58/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Andrew Coles, declared an interest in Item 12, Motion from Councillor Charlie Hicks, in that he was employed as a bus driver. Having taken advice from the Monitoring Officer, he stated that he will remain in the chamber during the debate but will not speak or vote on the motion.

59/23 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

(Agenda Item 4)

The Chair announced that he will be supporting the following charities in his term of office:

Parkinson's Disease Oxford District Branch

Parkinsons.me

Cancer Research

Thames Valley Air Ambulance

Armed Forces – SSAFA Oxfordshire, Royal British Legion, Veterans Gateway, Veterans UK, Felix Fund

Sepsis

A list of events that he has attended and will be attending in the coming months as Chair of the Council

- BEM investiture ceremony – 24th July jointly hosted with Lord Lieutenant
- Agatha Christie statue unveiling – 9th September
- Unveiling of Blue Plaque, Roy Jenkins and Dame Jennifer Jenkins – 16th September
- The High Sheriff's Law Lecture – 10th October
- Long Service awards - November

The Oxfordshire Pension Fund has been accepted as a signatory to the UK Stewardship Code by the Financial Reporting Council.

The Chair announced the passing of two former county councillors:

Joan Sylvia Campbell, former Conservative Member for Oxford (Wood Farm) Division and Colin James, former Liberal Democrat Member for Hanborough.

A minute's silence was held in their memory.

60/23 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item 5)

Council approved the following changes to the membership of Committees:

Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Hannaby to replace Councillor Ley

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Ley to replace Councillor Gregory

Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire Berkshire West Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Hannaby to replace Councillor Ley

Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel: Councillor Constance to replace Councillor Walker

Audit & Governance Committee: Councillor Hannaby to replace Councillor van Mierlo

Remuneration Committee: Councillor Constance to replace Councillor Ford

People Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Hannaby to replace Councillor Thomas

Planning & Regulation Committee: Councillor Fenton to replace Councillor Bloomfield

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Constance to replace Councillor Fatemian

Council noted the following appointment notified by the Leader:

Councillor Povolotsky to replace Councillor Gregory as Public Transport Champion

61/23 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item 6)

Item 12 – Motion from Cllr Hicks
Zuhura Plummer

Item 16 – Motion from Cllr Gant
Reuven Ziegler
Mark Goldring
Jack Sanga

62/23 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(Agenda Item 7)

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

63/23 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(Agenda Item 8)

Twenty four questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions are recorded in an Annex below.

64/23 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

(Agenda Item 9)

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) 'Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021' requires that the Council and Audit & Governance Committee receives a report on Treasury Management activities at least four times per year. The report before Council was the final report for the financial year 2022/23 and set out the position at 31 March 2023.

Councillor Calum Miller presented the report and responded to a number of points raised by Members.

Following debate, the motion was proposed by Councillor Miller and seconded by Councillor Leffman.

RESOLVED (unanimously): to note the Council's treasury management activity and outcomes in 2022/23.

65/23 REPORT OF THE CABINET

(Agenda Item 10)

On item 4, Councillor Bartholomew, noted that the problems in education and learning, Home to School Transport and the special educational needs services were well known and asked why they were not allowed for in the budget. Councillor Miller responded that the demands and costs faced by the service had increased and were not predictable at the time of budget setting. He stated that he was working urgently with the Director of Children's Services and the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance to look at how this can be addressed.

On item 5, Councillor Howson asked how much of the increase costs in expanding schools was down to inflation in construction costs and how much to other factors. Councillor Miller responded that he had taken advice from officers on the Bloxham School project and was assured that the increase in cost was entirely due to inflationary factors, reflecting the considerable increase in costs of supplies and labour over the period of time since the budget was set.

Councillor Howson also asked whether academies affected by the RAAC concrete problem participated in the condition survey. Councillor Miller

replied that they were not included as academy trusts were accountable directly to the Secretary of State for Education

On item 7, Councillor Levy asked for information on the time scales for the HIF2 A40 scheme. Councillor Enright responded that the Access to Witney slip road scheme was programmed to begin construction at the end of this financial year, subject to the satisfactory conclusion of current discussions about land access and acquisition. The Oxford North project at the city end was largely complete. The remainder of the work on the A40 was still being discussed with Homes England as the main funding body. The construction of the park and ride – the Eynsham mobility hub – was progressing well.

Councillor Middleton asked for an update on work to the North Oxford Corridor scheme. Councillor Enright replied that the Council hoped to have the majority of the traffic management equipment removed in the following couple of weeks.

66/23 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

(Agenda Item 11)

Councillor David Bartholomew moved and Councillor Eddie Reeves seconded the following motion:

“Cabinet has approved the proposals for new infrastructure to support housing in Didcot and welcomes the millions of pounds offered by Government, but the Planning & Regulation Committee have rejected the proposals. This Council therefore welcomes the intervention by the Secretary of State to resolve the impasse.”

Councillor Liz Leffman moved and Councillor Liz Brighthouse seconded the following amendment:

Cabinet has approved the proposals for new infrastructure to support housing in Didcot and ~~welcomes the millions of pounds offered by Government~~ **using funding from central Government**, but the Planning & Regulation Committee have rejected ~~the~~ **current** proposals. This Council ~~therefore welcomes the intervention by~~ **notes the letter received from the Secretary of State to resolve the impasse.**

The proposers did not accept the amendment. Following debate the amendment was put to a vote.

The amendment was carried by 37 votes to 19 with no abstentions.

Following further debate the motion, as amended, was carried unanimously (56 in favour, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

RESOLVED (unanimously):-

Cabinet has approved the proposals for new infrastructure to support housing in Didcot and ~~welcomes the millions of pounds offered by~~

~~Government~~ **using funding from central Government**, but the Planning & Regulation Committee have rejected ~~the~~ **current** proposals. This Council ~~therefore welcomes the intervention by~~ **notes the letter received from** the Secretary of State ~~to resolve the impasse.~~

67/23 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR CHARLIE HICKS

(Agenda Item 12)

Councillor Charlie Hicks moved and Councillor Sally Povolotsky seconded the following motion which included an amendment from the proposer, accepted by Council, indicated in strikethrough:

~~“Years of Conservative cuts have eroded Oxfordshire’s bus network, especially in rural and deprived areas.~~

To improve bus services for Oxfordshire residents, Council and operators, via the Enhanced Partnership, are delivering a new fleet of electric buses and improvements at Park & Ride sites.

To build on these successes, Council wishes to explore options to bring buses back into public control, as other local authorities are doing, and to make further bus services improvements. Therefore, Council asks Cabinet to consider:

1. Funding in 2024/25 a detailed feasibility study into options of setting up:
 - (i) Oxfordshire bus franchising,
 - (ii) An Oxfordshire municipal bus company, and/or
 - (iii) A “Transport for Oxfordshire” public transport body (akin to Transport for West Midlands)
2. This study should be informed by an initial assessment of the public transport needs of Oxfordshire’s underserved and deprived communities, including isolated rural communities, shift workers, women, disabled, and young people. It should also assess community and on-demand bus services integration within these models.
3. Working with unions, public transport and taxi operators, police and other stakeholders to address gender-based violence on public transport and safe night-time travel for shift workers;
4. Improving communications highlighting the current and proposed new bus services to be introduced alongside the Oxford traffic filters (akin to the TfL Superloop comms);
5. ~~Piloting car-free Sundays with free bus travel in Oxford and Market Towns in 2024, where there is local support, to showcase how reduced congestion leads to better bus services.”~~

Following some debate on the motion, Councillor Judy Roberts moved that the question now be put. The Chair put this to a vote which was carried by 29 votes to 6 with two abstentions.

The motion as amended was carried by 52 votes to 0 with 1 abstention:

RESOLVED (unanimously):

Years of Conservative cuts have eroded Oxfordshire's bus network, especially in rural and deprived areas.

To improve bus services for Oxfordshire residents, Council and operators, via the Enhanced Partnership, are delivering a new fleet of electric buses and improvements at Park & Ride sites.

To build on these successes, Council wishes to explore options to bring buses back into public control, as other local authorities are doing, and to make further bus services improvements. Therefore, Council asks Cabinet to consider:

1. Funding in 2024/25 a detailed feasibility study into options of setting up:
 - (i) Oxfordshire bus franchising,
 - (ii) An Oxfordshire municipal bus company, and/or
 - (iii) A "Transport for Oxfordshire" public transport body (akin to Transport for West Midlands)
2. This study should be informed by an initial assessment of the public transport needs of Oxfordshire's underserved and deprived communities, including isolated rural communities, shift workers, women, disabled, and young people. It should also assess community and on-demand bus services integration within these models.
3. Working with unions, public transport and taxi operators, police and other stakeholders to address gender-based violence on public transport and safe night-time travel for shift workers;
4. Improving communications highlighting the current and proposed new bus services to be introduced alongside the Oxford traffic filters (akin to the TfL Superloop comms);
5. ~~Piloting car-free Sundays with free bus travel in Oxford and Market Towns in 2024, where there is local support, to showcase how reduced congestion leads to better bus services.~~

Councillor Jane Hanna moved and Councillor Jenny Hannaby seconded the following motion:

“This Council notes:

- That a new rail station north of Grove was estimated in an independent opinion in 2018 to become the fifth busiest station in Oxfordshire, attracting at least one million users, and was subsequently included in the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study, the County Council Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, and has safeguarded sites under the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan. An estimated ‘high value for money’ of £2.48 for each £1 expended means the scheme has a strong economic case.
- National campaigning to win support from government for small funding allocation to progress plans for the station failed in 2022, despite this area experiencing a 34% population increase.
- That the Council budget and the Cabinet commitment of new funding in 2022/23 and 2023/24 supports investment through project development work. As a result, a Strategic Outline Business Case for the new Oxford–Eynsham–Witney–Carterton ‘Windrush Line’ has recently been completed successfully.
- That project development work on Wantage and Grove Station would build on this example and would fit with ambitions of increased investment in an inclusive, integrated, county-wide active and sustainable travel network fit for the 21st century, to improve choice and reduce car journeys.

Council therefore calls on Cabinet to consider building on the 2018 Statement of Opinion by commissioning, before the end of this financial year, while funding resources remain available, a DfT-compliant Strategic Outline Business Case, and an initial assessment of financing options for a new rail station for Wantage and Grove.”

After debate the motion was put to a vote. The motion was carried with 51 in favour, none against and no abstentions.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

This Council notes:

- That a new rail station north of Grove was estimated in an independent opinion in 2018 to become the fifth busiest station in Oxfordshire, attracting at least one million users, and was subsequently included in the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study, the County Council Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, and has safeguarded sites under the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan. An estimated ‘high value for money’ of £2.48 for each £1 expended means the scheme has a strong economic case.
- National campaigning to win support from government for small funding allocation to progress plans for the station failed in 2022, despite this area experiencing a 34% population increase.

- That the Council budget and the Cabinet commitment of new funding in 2022/23 and 2023/24 supports investment through project development work. As a result, a Strategic Outline Business Case for the new Oxford–Eynsham–Witney–Carterton ‘Windrush Line’ has recently been completed successfully.
- That project development work on Wantage and Grove Station would build on this example and would fit with ambitions of increased investment in an inclusive, integrated, county-wide active and sustainable travel network fit for the 21st century, to improve choice and reduce car journeys.

Council therefore calls on Cabinet to consider building on the 2018 Statement of Opinion by commissioning, before the end of this financial year, while funding resources remain available, a DfT-compliant Strategic Outline Business Case, and an initial assessment of financing options for a new rail station for Wantage and Grove.

69/23 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR SALLY POVOLOTSKY

(Agenda Item 14)

Councillor Sally Povolotsky moved and Councillor Kate Gregory seconded the following motion:

“This Council notes:

- In 2022 a survey commissioned by Action Aid UK found nearly one in eight women in Great Britain had recently struggled to buy menstrual products — either for themselves or for a dependent.
- The survey found, of those who has struggled to afford menstrual products, 75% had needed to prioritise spending money on food and 49% needed to prioritise spending money on gas/electric.
- A number of Councils across the UK have already set up or agreed to schemes to provide free period products, including Oxford City Council.
- 35% of teenage girls said they had taken time off school because of their period which is a 7% increase since 2019.
- A YouGov survey showed two thirds of Britons supported making it a legal requirement for local authorities to provide free period products.

Council strongly believes:

- The cost-of-living crisis has forced many women to prioritise other household essentials such as food, clothes and heating over menstrual products.
- No one should ever have to experience period poverty.

Council resolves to ask Cabinet to:

- Look into a period pant scheme, akin to reusable nappy schemes, to help with the costly purchase of more climate friendly products for all ages.

- Promote the national school period product scheme to *all* Oxfordshire schools and monitor gaps in uptake.
- Make free Menstrual products accessible in every council owned building in the county.”

Councillor Ted Fenton moved and Councillor Eddie Reeves seconded the following amendment:

This Council notes:

- In 2022 a survey commissioned by Action Aid UK found nearly one in eight women in Great Britain had recently struggled to buy menstrual products — either for themselves or for a dependent.
- The survey found, of those who has struggled to afford menstrual products, 75% had needed to prioritise spending money on food and 49% needed to prioritise spending money on gas/electric.
- A number of Councils across the UK have already set up or agreed to schemes to provide free period products, including Oxford City Council.
- 35% of teenage girls said they had taken time off school because of their period which is a 7% increase since 2019.
- A YouGov survey showed two thirds of Britons supported making it a legal requirement for local authorities to provide free period products.

Council strongly believes:

- The cost-of-living crisis has forced many women to prioritise other household essentials such as food, clothes and heating over menstrual products.
- No one should ever have to experience period poverty.

Council resolves to ask Cabinet to:

- Look into a period pant scheme, akin to reusable nappy schemes, to help with the costly purchase of more climate friendly products for all ages.
- Promote the national school period product scheme to *all* Oxfordshire schools and monitor gaps in uptake.
- Make free ~~M~~menstrual products accessible in every **appropriate** council owned building in the county.

The proposers did not accept the amendment. Following debate the amendment was put to a vote.

The amendment was lost by 13 votes to 35 with no abstentions.

Following further debate Councillor Calum Miller moved and Councillor Duncan Enright seconded that the question be put. The motion was carried with 39 votes in favour, 3 against and no abstentions.

The motion was carried with 46 in favour, none against and no abstentions.

RESOLVED (unanimously):-

This Council notes:

- In 2022 a survey commissioned by Action Aid UK found nearly one in eight women in Great Britain had recently struggled to buy menstrual products — either for themselves or for a dependent.
- The survey found, of those who has struggled to afford menstrual products, 75% had needed to prioritise spending money on food and 49% needed to prioritise spending money on gas/electric.
- A number of Councils across the UK have already set up or agreed to schemes to provide free period products, including Oxford City Council.
- 35% of teenage girls said they had taken time off school because of their period which is a 7% increase since 2019.
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Council strongly believes:

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- Look into a period pant scheme, akin to reusable nappy schemes, to help with the costly purchase of more climate friendly products for all ages.
- Promote the national school period product scheme to *all* Oxfordshire schools and monitor gaps in uptake.
- Make free Menstrual products accessible in every council owned building in the county.”

Councillor Ted Fenton moved and Councillor Eddie Reeves seconded the following amendment:

This Council notes:

- In 2022 a survey commissioned by Action Aid UK found nearly one in eight women in Great Britain had recently struggled to buy menstrual products — either for themselves or for a dependent.
- The survey found, of those who has struggled to afford menstrual products, 75% had needed to prioritise spending money on food and 49% needed to prioritise spending money on gas/electric.
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Council strongly believes:

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- No one should ever have to experience period poverty.

Council resolves to ask Cabinet to:

- Look into a period pant scheme, akin to reusable nappy schemes, to help with the costly purchase of more climate friendly products for all ages.
- Promote the national school period product scheme to *all* Oxfordshire schools and monitor gaps in uptake.
- Make free Menstrual products accessible in every council owned building in the county.

70/23 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR BOB JOHNSTON

(Agenda Item 15)

The time being 3.25 pm, this Motion was considered dropped in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2.

71/23 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT

(Agenda Item 16)

The time being 3.25 pm, this Motion was considered dropped in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing