

# CABINET

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Tuesday, 15 March 2022 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 4.00 pm

**Present:**

**Voting Members:** Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair  
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE (Deputy Chair)  
Councillor Glynis Phillips  
Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury  
Councillor Tim Bearder  
Councillor Duncan Enright  
Councillor Calum Miller  
Councillor Mark Lygo

Councillor Jenny Hannaby attended remotely

**Other Members in Attendance:**

Councillors David Bartholomew, Robin Bennett, Andrew Coles, Nick Field-Johnson, Donna Ford, Andrew Gant, Andy Graham, Charlie Hicks, John Howson, Nick Leverton, Ian Middleton, Freddie van Mierlo, Michael O'Connor; Sally Povolotsky, Eddie Reeves, Nigel Simpson, Bethia Thomas, Liam Walker, Richard Webber

**Officers:**

Whole of meeting Stephen Chandler, Interim Chief Executive; Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance; Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance; Colm Ó Caomhánaigh

*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.*

**25/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Neil Fawcett – attending a Local Government Association Fire & Rescue Service Conference.

Councillor Jenny Hannaby participated remotely due to isolating.

**26/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

(Agenda Item. 2)

Councillor Calum Miller declared a non-pecuniary interest on Item 15 as a coach with Gosford All-Blacks Rugby Club.

## **27/22 MINUTES**

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2022 were approved with two spelling corrections on page 5.

## **28/22 STATEMENT ON UKRAINE**

The Chair made the following statement:

Oxfordshire County Council condemns in the strongest terms the actions of the Russian military in Ukraine. The invasion of a sovereign state is an act of war. The deliberate bombing of civilian areas is a war crime. We call on all nations to play their part in bringing this conflict to an end.

Our nation and our county has a proud record of receiving refugees from conflict around the world. In recent years, we have welcomed those from Syria and Afghanistan. The response of the people of Oxfordshire, in common with others across the UK and EU, to the suffering of Ukrainians has been compassionate, generous and remarkable. Oxfordshire County Council stands shoulder to shoulder with the people of Ukraine and will welcome and support those refugees who seek shelter in our county. We call on the Government to accelerate the process of admitting Ukrainian refugees to the UK and to increase the routes available to those fleeing conflict in their home country.

The Council believes that economic activity and financial transactions may support the leadership of the Russian state and fund the war in Ukraine. The Council notes that officers have scrutinised existing contracts for goods and services and provided assurance that none are held with Russian economic entities. We have already requested that any funds held in Russian companies or financial instruments be divested with immediate effect. It welcomes confirmation that the county's pension fund is similarly divesting of any Russian assets.

The Council recognises the bravery of those who are resisting the invasion in Ukraine and who are opposing the war in Russia. People of both Ukrainian and Russian descent are appalled by the actions of the Russian government and personally affected by the conflict. We call on all residents of Oxfordshire to continue to show compassion, care and tolerance for each other, and we call on the Government to accelerate the process of admitting Ukrainian refugees to the UK and to increase the routes available to those fleeing conflict in their home country.

## **29/22 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

(Agenda Item. 4)

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

### **30/22 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda Item. 5)

The Chair had agreed to the following requests to speak:

#### Item 6: Plant Based Food

Cllr Ian Middleton  
Karl Franklin  
Linda Newbery  
Matilda Gettins  
Jimmy Pierson  
Cllr David Bartholomew  
Cllr Eddie Reeves  
Cllr Sally Povolotsky  
Cllr Bethia Thomas  
Cllr Donna Ford

#### Item 9: Strategic Plan 2022-2025

Cllr Michael O'Connor  
Cllr Donna Ford

#### Item 13: HIF1 – Amendments to the Grant Determination Agreement

District Cllr David Ruane  
District Cllr Emily Smith  
District Cllr Sam Casey-Rerhaye  
Katherine Foxhall  
District Cllr Jo Robb  
Antonia Jenkinson  
Robin Jones  
Nigel Tipple  
Parish Cllr Greg O Broin  
Parish Cllr Rita Atkinson  
Cllr Charlie Hicks  
Cllr Freddie van Mierlo  
Cllr Richard Webber  
Cllr Robin Bennett  
Cllr Ian Middleton  
Cllr Sally Povolotsky

#### Item 15: Land at Stratfield Brake

Niall McWilliams  
Paul Peros  
David Hipkiss  
City Cllr Liz Wade  
Suzanne McIvor  
Cllr Nigel Simpson  
Cllr Andrew Gant

Cllr Liam Walker  
Cllr Ian Middleton  
Cllr Charlie Hicks

Item 19: West Oxfordshire Civil Parking Enforcement

Cllr Andrew Coles  
Cllr Andy Graham

**31/22 PLANT BASED FOOD (RESPONSE TO MOTION FROM CLLR MIDDLETON AT COUNCIL ON 14 DECEMBER 2021)**

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet had before it a report setting out some initial measures to enable the council to meet its strategic priorities following an approved motion to Full Council on this matter in December 2021.

Before considering the report, the Chair had agreed to hear a number of speakers.

Councillor Ian Middleton, who proposed the motion to Full Council, responded to complaints that the motion limited free will, noting that climate-focussed limitations on our lives were now commonplace. Many organisations across the world were now recognising the part that food choice played. There was overwhelming scientific evidence that intensive livestock farming was one of the greatest contributors to global climate change.

The issue had never been about veganism which was a personal choice. The previous administration unanimously declared a climate change emergency and this was what climate action looked like. Councillor Middleton described the proposals as a positive outcome for local food producers, helping to inform a long overdue food strategy which prioritised sourcing from local producers.

He was concerned though that the recommendations did not clearly reflect aspects in relation to schools in his original motion and asked Cabinet members to clarify this in their comments.

Karl Franklin asked Cabinet to reject the proposal to serve only plant-based food and instead adopt a sustainable policy to promote balanced diets and help bolster the local economy. He said that the local agriculture sector can be part of the solution. By buying locally the Council would support growers, producers, processors, food manufacturers and distributors.

Karl Franklin quoted statistics to show that British beef had half the greenhouse gas emissions compared to the global average and the amount of antibiotics used on British farms had been reduced by over 50%. He called on the Council to back British farming.

Linda Newbury stated that Councils, schools and organisations must take a lead in demonstrating that food can be both nourishing and sustainable, and that meant a move away from meat as a priority choice. Farmers demonstrating outside County Hall last month carried placards asking Oxfordshire to support local food and farming. She said that the placard she brought with her carried an identical message. They were essentially on the same side.

Linda Newbury added that when school caterers shift towards plant-based meals, there will be an overall reduction of cost, but meat will still be served on three days each week which was a legal requirement. This saving can be used to ensure that the meat served is produced locally and sustainably. She believed that before this there had been no council specification that meat used in school catering should be locally sourced.

Jimmy Pierson, Director of ProVeg UK, a non-profit organisation whose main aim was to increase the health and sustainability of school food in the UK by increasing the quantity and quality of plant-based food in schools. He noted that if the recommendations were adopted, the Council would be joining many other councils across the country that were embracing the benefits of plant-based food for the health of their residents and the health of the planet.

Jimmy Pierson added that feedback from children and from parents had been overwhelmingly positive. He believed that the main driver for this shift was climate change with health coming second and the fact that it was also cheaper probably being a third driver. He described the proposal as an example of climate leadership.

Councillor David Bartholomew, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance, stated that he respected vegans and their belief, that he quite liked some vegan food but abhorred being commanded to eat it. Previously at council meetings, all food choices were respected, with vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, meat and dairy options readily available. The OCC Director of Law & Governance had advised that the Equality Act 2010 considers veganism a protected belief – but no such protection is in place for those wishing to eat meat and dairy products.

Councillor Bartholomew noted that the Cabinet report watered-down the proposals in the original motion and he believed that the wave of negative publicity and pleas from farmers had some impact. Paragraph 5.3 of the report said schools will now be compelled to have a vegan menu just once a week instead of twice a week but a 'graduated approach' referenced at paragraph 1 b) suggested this will increase.

He asked the Cabinet to think again and refuse to adopt the report, consider how a vegan would feel if the situation was reversed and Cabinet was instructing that only meat should be served at meetings. In his view, change was best brought about through education and encouragement.

Councillor Sally Povolotsky stated that she was saddened that the part of the Council motion about 'food waste' being used in Members' catering had been removed and requested that this be placed back into the decision being taken by Cabinet. She had just started a community larder in her division based on food waste and it had already distributed 750kg in just three sessions.

Councillor Povolotsky advocated thinking globally and acting locally to make this food motion work as part of the contribution to reducing climate impact. As a council, and a procurement body, it often felt like the policy was cheapest first, with little or no regard for the product lifecycle of the item. Sustainable farming was a major contributor to the climate objectives, and local provision was key at all levels

School meals not only supported parents with the provision of nutritionally balanced sustenance for their children, but also fostered local jobs along the supply chains and community wealth building on the path towards a green recovery from COVID-19. This was an opportunity to work collaboratively with our farming community and landowners to make a change, to feed our residents and make health and our climate key factors in decision making.

Councillor Bethia Thomas expressed concerns about the item, including how it was labelled on the agenda as 'plant based food' which she believed was a misnomer as it misappropriated much of what was discussed in the report.

She advocated sustainability throughout the lifecycle of the food that we eat – not just production, but also distribution and disposal, and cited the network of Community Larders run by town and parish councils and a network of volunteers.

Councillor Thomas welcomed the fact that Cabinet was slowing the introduction of food reform in schools to make sure it was done correctly and asked that they similarly have a re-think about food at events, to consider the approach to waste food and excess packaging, promote the 30% reduction in meat and dairy that was set down in the food strategy and create a balanced and sustainable food offering at council meetings, and other events, with a wide range of food from local and sustainable sources.

Councillor Donna Ford, Shadow Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, stated that, for her, the school element of the report was the most important. She believed that an awards-based approach would be more effective just as schools already do for rewarding good choices. Children do not appreciate being told what to do and the result is often that they rebel.

Councillor Ford asked for clarity around the graduated approach advocated in the report. She cited paragraph 5.3 which referred to introducing a dedicated plant-based day, once a week. That was not incorporating options but was dictating a plant-based menu for 39 meals a year. She asked that they be allowed the option of choosing what they eat.

The Chair thanked the speakers and noted that there was a lot of agreement, for example on issues such as the quality of food, local sourcing, seasonality and food waste. These were all issues that will be addressed in the Oxfordshire Food Strategy.

The report was not about imposing plant-based food on anyone but it was about leading by example. It was based on advice from health experts and climate scientists on the importance of reducing the amount of meat and dairy produce that we consume.

Councillor Duncan Enright thanked Councillors Middleton and Povolotsky for bringing the original Council motion and welcomed the discussion that it had generated. It had shown the widespread agreement on the importance of locally based and sustainable food sources. He looked forward to the discussions around the broader Food Strategy which will include issues such as sustainable meat production.

Councillor Mark Lygo spoke about ensuring that food plays a positive role in our lives and he wanted to ensure that the voice of the child was heard in schools which he believed was happening with a lot of discussion about food and food waste. Healthy and sustainable food must be affordable and accessible for everyone. It was also important that our food choices should have a less negative impact on the planet.

Councillor Calum Miller noted that Cabinet had recently passed a Social Value Policy which will allow the Council to give a weighting to local suppliers and local sourcing. He hoped that this discussion would be reflected in the implementation of that and that the Council can work with smaller suppliers in order to make it easier for them to engage with Council procurement.

Councillor Tim Bearder noted that he represented a rural division in which farmers were key members of the community and countryside stewards. He believed that they had been let down by government policies and left reliant on supermarket food prices. The recommendations here were advocating for more locally produced and sustainably produced food and he supported them.

Councillor Liz Brighthouse noted that they were talking about food waste in a county which had families in poverty where there was no food waste and that needed to be taken into account in the coming Food Strategy. An important issue with school meals was the level of uptake among those entitled to free school meals and the level of uptake among others.

Councillor Brighthouse stated that only 14% of schools availed of the Council's service and they were all smaller primary schools. She asked that they agree these proposals and move on to the bigger issues of food justice and supporting farmers within a circular economy.

Councillor Pete Sudbury emphasised firstly that nobody was forcing anything down anyone's throats. There were two main justifications for the proposals:

the health of this planet, and the health of the people of Oxfordshire. What was good for people, was good for the planet and vice versa.

He stated that three quarters of farmed land was devoted to meat and two thirds of all plant-based food grown was fed to animals. That was not sustainable. Oxfordshire farmers were part of the solution not the problem. Meat-eating should be a treat, not a staple, but it should be Oxfordshire meat, reared in climate-positive conditions.

Councillor Sudbury added that they were acting on this, working with National Farmers Union representatives to put in place a "Food Hub" to promote Oxfordshire-grown food to our supply chains, and the wider community. Acceptance of this paper and the follow-through actions demonstrated their intent to lead from the front.

The Chair thanked all speakers for their contributions. She said that the discussion had brought Oxfordshire into the spotlight and drawn a lot of attention to the importance of locally produced and sustainable food. She put the recommendations which were agreed.

**RESOLVED to**

- a) **Ensure that food provided at full Council meetings and all civic events is entirely plant based and, where possible, sustainably and locally sourced.**
- b) **Endorse a graduated approach to incorporating plant-based options for school meals provided by the council, in partnership with schools who buy this service and in line with School Food Guidelines.**
- c) **Agree to the development of an Oxfordshire County Council food policy to support the delivery of sustainable food provision and its disposal within the Council.**

**32/22 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & MONITORING REPORT - JANUARY 2022**

(Agenda Item. 7)

Cabinet received a report for approval presenting the January 2022 performance, risk and finance position for the Council.

Councillor Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance, drew attention to continuing concerns around increased demand on children's services reflected in the risk register where the top three risks all related to this area. The other red-rated risks were in demand management in adult services and costs and shortages in the construction sector.

There was an expected underspend on the current year's budget of £1m. It was proposed to transfer £3.7m from the Covid reserve leaving £5m in that reserve. A resolution had recently been reached in nationwide negotiations



on the pay agreement and the cost of £2.8m will be taken from the contingency budget.

Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Young People's Services gave more details on the risks in that sector. There was a high rate of referrals of children to mental health services and it was necessary to ensure that the resources were in place, to look at Early Help and how families can be helped to support them.

The Council was tackling the workforce issues by looking to 'grow' its own social workers. The Council was already committed to providing its own homes for children and reduce the need to use private providers out of county.

Councillor Duncan Enright welcomed the fact that Oxfordshire was top of the recycling league despite not hitting its own ambitious targets. He also welcomed the opening of a joint advice centre in the Central Library with the City Council and hoped similar facilities could be put in place with the district councils.

#### **RESOLVED**

- a) **To note the January 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 October 2021 and January 2022.**
- c) **To note virements set out in Annex C-2c**
- d) **To note virements for 2022/23 set out in Annex C-2d**
- e) **To approve the bad debt, write off in Annex C paragraphs 25 (Adult Services) and 84 (CDAI)**
- f) **To approve the use of the COVID Reserve in paragraphs 29, 35, 79, 85, 91, 94 and the use of the corporate contingency for the estimated cost of the pay award in paragraph 101**
- g) **To note the Review of Charges 2022/23 set out in Annex C-5**

#### **33/22 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING REPORT - JANUARY 2022**

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it the Financial Report on capital spending against budget allocations.

Councillor Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance, highlighted a number of points:

- There was a reduction of £5.5m in the predicted spend for the current financial year, the majority of which related to rescheduling of infrastructure projects.
- There was a £2.6m increase in the budget funds for the full ten-year period.

- Cabinet was asked to approve an allocation from S106 contributions towards the cost increase in the building of a new SEND school in Bloxham.

The Chair put the recommendations.

**RESOLVED to:**

- a) **Endorse the latest capital monitoring position for 2021/22 set out in Annex 1.**
- b) **Agree that the following scheme should be added to the capital programme:**
  - **Sustainable Warmth Fund: £1.187m grant funded project to support the retrofitting of energy efficiency measures in homes in fuel poverty in Oxfordshire.**
- c) **Agree a contribution of £0.998m, funded by S106 contributions, to the Department for Education (DfE), towards the new Bloxham Grove SEND Free School.**
- d) **Approve the updated Capital Programme Summary (Annex 2) incorporating the changes set out in this report.**

**34/22 STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025: OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK 2022/23**  
(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet was asked to approve the Outcomes Framework 2022/23 supporting the Strategic Plan and which represented a high-level overview of the Council's priorities.

Before considering the item, the Chair had agreed to a number of requests to speak:

Councillor Donna Ford, Shadow Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, criticised the format of the report saying that it was not very user-friendly. She was concerned that using numerical metrics did not take into account expected population growth.

Councillor Ford noted that counting only new things – for example new kilometres of cycleways – did not take account of any existing kilometres of cycleways that had become unusable. She asked that statutory services be distinguished from discretionary services so that comparisons could be made with other authorities. She welcomed the introduction of a 'one-stop-shop' public portal where all the data can be accessed by the everyone.

Councillor Michael O'Connor, Deputy Chair, Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee, summarized the feedback from the Committee. They suggested a number of improvements to the layout

including identifying the Cabinet Member responsible and having benchmarks against other councils comparable over time.

The Committee asked that the metrics reflect the Council's priorities and provide a unified picture. Qualitative measures should be provided where possible. It was suggested that there should be metrics on complaints and complaints procedures. The final list of recommendations from the Committee will be sent to the Cabinet Member.

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, introduced the report. Cabinet was asked to note that this was still work in progress with a number of target details still being developed. The Cabinet meeting in July will be the first populated report in this reporting cycle to assess progress.

Alongside the bi-monthly reporting to Cabinet, there will be the annual report in June, quarterly workforce reports, and six-monthly reports on the climate action plan and the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. There will also be 'exception reporting' to alert Cabinet to any significant changes mid reporting cycle.

Councillor Phillips thanked the scrutiny committee for their recommendations and for the time taken to read and comment on this report. She committed to responding in writing and incorporating the recommendations that she feels will enhance and improve this report.

**RESOLVED to:**

- a) **Adopt the outcomes framework as set out in annex 2.**
- b) **Agree the revised reporting schedule as set out in paragraph 9 (table 2).**
- c) **Note that the measures reflect a combination of pre-existing service measurements and progress measures for the council's strategic priorities and that as such the framework is a 'living document'. Additions and amendments will be appropriate from time-to-time reflecting policy development or contextual changes. In the event of any amendments to the framework they will be clearly identified in a Cabinet report setting out the changes and rationale behind them.**
- d) **Receive and consider any feedback on the outcomes framework from the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and delegate to the Corporate Director for Customers, Organisational Development and Resources, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holders, the ability to make amendments to the outcomes framework following discussion and feedback.**

- e) **Request officers prepare a 'strategy map' setting out how key thematic and service plans link into the corporate strategy and its priorities, a timeframe during which key policies and strategies will be reviewed, and the identification of new outcome measures resulting from the review.**
- f) **Note the progress to date developing a public performance portal with a planned go-live in the second quarter of the year.**

**35/22 WORKFORCE REPORT AND STAFFING DATA - QUARTER 3 - OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2021**

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet was asked to note the quarterly staffing report providing details of key people numbers and analysis of main changes since the previous report.

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, summarised the report. Covid restrictions were now diminishing and the Council was working towards defining the new normal. The Health & Safety Team were supporting managers to review their risk assessments in line with current guidance.

Work that will inform the approach to agile ways of working will be completed by the end of the month and the next workforce report will include more detail on these developments. Concerns remained about the number of staff experiencing stress, anxiety and depression but there was a comprehensive employee assistance programme and the team continued to advise staff about what support was available.

Councillor Phillips added that the report included the 2021 Gender Pay Gap Report. As at 31 March 2021, the mean hourly rate for men was £17.35 per hour and for women £17.04 - an improvement on the March 2020 figure where the gap was 53p per hour. Although 50% of the senior management team, which includes the extended leadership team, were women, this did not reflect the fact that two thirds of the total workforce were women.

Councillor Miller noted the increase in agency spend which remained a concern. This was driven by labour force pressures particularly in the areas of social workers and Environment & Place. However, Cabinet was enthusiastic about efforts at the strategic workforce level to pursue innovative ways of recruiting and retaining staff.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

**36/22 COVID 19: OXFORDSHIRE SYSTEM RECOVERY AND RENEWAL FRAMEWORK**

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet considered a recovery and renewal framework setting overarching common ambitions for system partners for the issues and themes that will be

worked on together as organisations and the community learn from the pandemic.

The Chair introduced the report which was based on the assumption that the community was coming out of the pandemic – although infection numbers continued to fluctuate. The framework was based on learning from the pandemic, including how voluntary and community groups stepped in to play an important role. It will be shared with the city and district councils and other partners and was aimed at guiding recovery, addressing inequalities that were exacerbated by the pandemic and improving resilience whatever the challenges faced. For example, following the invasion of Ukraine there could be an influx of refugees.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Councils had already endorsed the aims of the document but had some concerns about its implementation and how the framework would relate to existing frameworks that operate very well. The Chair invited Cabinet to similarly endorse the aims but allow discussions to continue with partners on the implementation.

Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Deputy Leader, emphasised that much of the report dealt with inequalities in the county. Oxfordshire was one of the wealthiest counties but some in the community did not see the benefits, showing that the so-called ‘trickle-down’ economy did not work.

Councillor Brighthouse stressed the importance of working with the colleges and other organisations who have a lot of money to invest to ensure that they invest it in activities that add social value - for example, investing in local young entrepreneurs. The Council had an important role to play in how the economy worked.

Councillor Calum Miller stated that the framework was attempting to continue the new ways of working and collaborating, that were developed during the pandemic, into business as usual going forward. He paid tribute to the hard work of Council staff and those working for our system partners that helped people throughout the pandemic.

Councillor Miller added that it was clear that many people would face a new emergency with the cost of living increases known to be coming in on 1 April. He was confident that the Council would play its part in helping people through this latest emergency.

The Chair put the recommendations on the understanding that this was a working document and that further discussion will take place with the District and City Councils on the implementation.

**RESOLVED to:**

- a) **Adopt the Oxfordshire System Recovery and Renewal Framework, as set out in Annex 1, as the key partnership**

**document guiding joint programme planning beyond the COVID-19 pandemic period;**

- b) Delegate final revisions to Oxfordshire System Recovery and Renewal Framework to the Interim Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, as partnership organisations complete their engagement and decision-making processes;**
- c) Note the summary of utilisation of COVID Programme grants for the immediate COVID response, as set out in Annex 2.**

### **37/22 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS**

(Agenda Item. 21)

It was agreed to take the Forward Plan item at this point of the meeting. The Cabinet considered a list of items for the immediately forthcoming meetings of the Cabinet.

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

### **38/22 OXFORDSHIRE PLAN 2050: STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

(Agenda Item. 16)

It was agreed to take the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 item at this stage. This report provided an update on the Statement of Community Involvement in response to the recent lifting of coronavirus restrictions. The statement set out how we will consult with people and local organisations in the preparation of this plan.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Travel & Development Strategy, stated that the Plan demonstrated how closely the councils worked together to tackle the challenges of climate change and inequalities. Agreeing this Statement of Community Involvement was a relatively procedural part of the process and the big debates on housing and growth were yet to come.

Councillor Calum Miller noted that long-term plans such as this can seem quite remote to people and that Members had a role to play in ensuring that there was good engagement from the community and that people understood how this plan could deeply affect their lives.

**RESOLVED to note the revised Statement of Community Involvement.**

**39/22 EXEMPT ITEM**

(Agenda Item. 12)

It was agreed that there was no requirement to exclude the public as there was no request to discuss the information in the exempt Annex.

**40/22 HIF1 - AMENDMENTS TO THE GRANT DETERMINATION AGREEMENT**

(Agenda Item. 13)

Cabinet was asked to approve of the amendment to the grant determination agreement (GDA) with Homes England and the delegation to officers and to note:

- progress made and changes to the scheme programme; and
- requirement for CPO process to follow GDA changes.

Before considering the report, the Chair had agreed to a number of requests to speak:

Councillor David Ruane, Leader, South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), stated that he mainly wanted to address paragraph 17 of the report, the 'Do Nothing' Option which he maintained was not really an option. He voted along with the rest of his cabinet to withdraw the Local Plan, knowing full well that this would mean the loss of the HIF funding and the end of this scheme. However, following the intervention of the Secretary of State, South Oxfordshire now had an adopted Local Plan which contained housing sites which were dependent on the delivery of HIF1.

In North East Didcot much of the site had already been built. According to traffic surveys 8,300 people already commuted from the Didcot area to Oxford for work. This road, and in particular the additional bridge over the Thames, was required to meet current need. Arguments will be made that these journeys should be made in a more environmentally friendly way, by bus for example, but even buses needed a clear road to run reliably.

Councillor Ruane added that no Local Plan could withstand the loss of over 8,000 homes from its delivery schedule. In order to maintain housing delivery rates, other sites would have to come forward, sites determined by developers rather than by the council. There were suggestions to 'pause and review' but the timescales on this project were such that to pause was to stop. The suggestion that one can pause and then go back to government with an alternative scheme which they will then finance was not realistic.

District Councillor Emily Smith, Leader, Vale of White Horse District Council, stated that she recognised the difficult situation the Cabinet found itself in with an inherited infrastructure scheme. However, the HIF scheme was deeply entwined with other plans and commitments, including her main concern, the Vale Local Plan and its ability to demonstrate a 5 Year Housing Land Supply.

The Vale corporate plan was focused on climate action, healthy communities and providing homes that local people can afford to rent and buy. It was already hard to achieve these things within the national planning system but without being able to demonstrate a housing land supply, the council would again have its hands tied behind its back.

Councillor Smith was aware that the County Council had successfully secured some flexibility from government on the timeframe for delivery, which will allow the opportunity to rethink the design of the HIF infrastructure to identify ways of reducing the carbon impact and look again at ways to make this infrastructure more accessible for public transport and active travel. She asked Cabinet to accept the officers' recommendations and to redesign the scheme to make it as sustainable as possible.

District Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye, SODC, stated that she wished to address this issue in light of the Council administration's principle: 'a resilient local democracy, where decisions are devolved to the lowest possible level and residents are meaningfully involved in the decisions that affect their lives'. With regard to the route options presented for the Thames bridge to A415, in early 2020 and a new single route option was presented for online consultation only during the first strict lockdown in 2020. A key consultee, the Europa school, did not know about it. It was incredible that such a change in a massive road project should have never had a live exhibition.

Councillor Casey-Rerhaye added that the changes in administration in local councils was a result of this out-of-date vision of car-based growth, centrally determined, and its impact on local communities, nature and climate. She asked Cabinet to pause and consult on alternative ways forward.

Katherine Foxhall, Chair of South & Vale Greens, gave examples where decisions had been reversed on road building in Wales, Herefordshire and Greenwich. Locally, the Expressway had been cancelled and the OxCam Arc was being backpedalled. Nationally and globally, the world had changed radically through COVID, ever bleaker warnings about the climate crisis and now the situation in Ukraine which had shown just how dangerous our fossil-fuel addiction was.

This decision might be relatively minor in the grand scheme of this process, but it all counted. At the very least, the HIF1 scheme for Didcot needed to be paused, reviewed and reconceptualised, so that it proudly represented the start of a new, hopeful era for Oxfordshire.

District Councillor Jo Robb, SODC's River Thames Champion, accepted the importance of connectivity for the current and future residents of Didcot but she had concerns about this project in its current form. She had been working hard to stop sewage discharge into the river by Thames Water but nationally one of the most serious sources of river pollution has been road runoff.



This scheme would increase traffic volumes and have a major impact on water quality in the river and on the flood plain. The proposed bridge will increase the impermeable area and impact an area of particularly high amenity. She asked Cabinet to ensure that whatever scheme goes ahead enhances the amenity of the river, its setting, ecology and water quality.

Antonia Jenkinson, representing the Board of Didcot First, which fully supported the entire package of four schemes, which need to be taken together to deliver the integrated travel routes from the A34 through to Culham and beyond. Culham was known in the international nuclear fusion community for its unique facilities, skills and scientific results. The Canadian company – General Fusion - had chosen Culham for their new fusion reactor and in October, the government published its UK fusion strategy reinforcing its commitment and investment into fusion in the UK and setting out the importance of the Culham site.

Future investment was predicated on the key infrastructure improvements which would be delivered by the Housing Infrastructure Fund. The HIF infrastructure underpinned their ability to operate, attract and retain staff and to develop the fusion cluster and ancillary employment that this will bring.

Robin Jones, resident of the area affected, stated that we already emit obscene amounts of greenhouse gas which was inextricably tying us in to a near-certain future of runaway climate chaos unless we change the way we live now, creating ways of living which respected the biological limits of the planet immediately.

We needed re-localisation – meeting our core needs for food, energy and materials locally – and regenerative development which reduces our reliance on scant resources and meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their needs. A late 20<sup>th</sup> Century concrete ‘behemoth’ to induce energy inefficient transport was insufficient to the task. He requested a pause and review in order to re-calibrate and re-prioritise.

Nigel Tipple, Chief Executive, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP), noted that this had been identified as a strategic transport corridor since 2012. It would provide a critical connection between communities and employment at existing and proposed sites. There were opportunities for alternatives to the car such as shuttle buses. Its focus was on connectivity whether by public transport, cycling, walking or vehicle movement.

The sites being connected provided opportunities for about 20,000 new jobs as well as significant national investment in the development of sustainable energy generation. OxLEP’s Board had allocated £14.4m to the Didcot Garden Town scheme and remained very supportive of this infrastructure project.

Greg O’Broin, Chair of Appleford Parish Council and the Neighbouring Parish Council Joint Committee which comprised 5 Parish Councils along the HIF1

route who all oppose it. The scheme was defective and should be withdrawn to allow the new Advisory Group sufficient time to assess alternatives and consult with local communities. He believed that the risks listed in Paragraph 17 of the report were simply scare tactics. His Committee did not believe the HIF1 road was necessary to deliver the needed housing required. The traffic analysis ignored "induced traffic", was based on outdated data and pre-Covid behaviours.

He advocated looking at better use of existing infrastructure and overseas examples for a modal shift to create a vibrant net-zero Oxfordshire with less traffic congestion and pollution. He also invited the Council Leader and the new Cabinet Advisory Group to come to Appleford and meet the Neighbouring Parish Councils.

Rita Atkinson, Sutton Courtenay Parish Councillor, stated that the HIF1 proposal as currently presented will undermine many policies and plans, in particular the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, and will seriously impact the ability to ensure significant reduction in carbon emissions.

Her Parish Council first submitted a query on the inclusion of a junction between the new road and the B4016, located between Sutton Courtenay and Appleford, in July 2019 which had never been addressed. They were seeking more detail on assumptions, data and information, used in the traffic modelling, that will enable them to make a judgment whether the inclusion of a junction will improve, or worsen traffic flow through Sutton Courtenay. She asked Cabinet to keep in mind the huge impact this proposal will have on the wellbeing of the residents of Sutton Courtenay, Appleford and the wider area.

Councillor Charlie Hicks thanked Cabinet and officers for their incredibly hard work on this project and for the changes and recommendations in this paper - namely, commitments to a Cabinet Advisory Group and to an area-wide transport strategy approach.

He identified five remaining issues: the financial risk of up to £137m; the traffic modelling information on which the whole project was based was unreliable; road building did not solve the problems we want it to; the current road route even with a bus lane went against the administration's policies on climate and transport; and the Council was left wide open to legal challenge on the basis of the current Environment Statement and for not having done a sufficient optioneering process.

Councillor Hicks urged Cabinet to follow the example set by Wales and Herefordshire, to pause and review and re-assess the options.

Councillor Freddie van Mierlo, Chalgrove & Watlington, stated that he wanted to speak specifically to item 17, d. Nowhere was it stated that HIF1 was needed to deliver the Chalgrove airfield development. This administration should not support the construction of an east-west corridor, effectively linking the A34 to the M40 - either by design, as appeared to be referred to in this paper, or by accident.

HIF, if it must go ahead in its current form, needed to be deliberately designed for local use only, and not encourage rat running or drive traffic in an eastward direction across rural South Oxfordshire.

Councillor van Mierlo noted that Chalgrove airfield was home to a company that was facilitating the defence of NATO skies from Russian aggression. He asked officers and cabinet to question whether it was wise, at this time, to suggest we should be building homes, on an active airfield, rather than prioritizing strategic defence assets.

Councillor Richard Webber, Sutton Courtenay & Marcham, stated that he had been initially persuaded of the benefits of the HIF1 scheme but had become steadily more concerned that, even if the scheme as currently proposed were to deliver benefit, all such benefit would have been eroded within 5 to 10 years and that was before induced demand was taken into account.

He had come to the conclusion that it would be better to suffer further pressure in the short term by delaying for a short period while alternative solutions were properly considered - those more in line with current 21st century thinking and with this administration's stated ambitions.

Councillor Webber urged Cabinet to withdraw the application to prevent any further unnecessary and costly work by hard working and hard-pressed Parish Councils.

Councillor Robin Bennett, Berinsfield & Garsington, stated that he had initially been undecided on this scheme and then was persuaded by some of the arguments in favour. However, he was no longer convinced. The Council was going to have to borrow money to part-fund it and that meant funds coming off services for the most vulnerable people.

As a district councillor he had voted in favour of the Housing Infrastructure Fund but did not sign up to this specific type of infrastructure. He believed that Cabinet could open up negotiations on this. He said that he was tired of shepherding projects from the previous administration. He was elected to oppose this project.

Councillor Bennett added that the government had recently said that certain schemes could be reconsidered in the interests of decarbonisation, including if they no longer complied with local policies. Nobody was saying do nothing. He would like to see a report that included more alternative options.

Councillor Ian Middleton stated that this project was at odds with the Fair Deal Alliance aspirations. He asked if they wanted to be remembered for spending £300m on another road whilst saying they want to cut car journeys. He believed that the administration cannot continue to be carried along by the inertia of poor decision making of the previous administration.

The contingency was probably going to be spent due to cost overruns. Infrastructure projects always overrun and costs always spiral. This will essentially stymie other important projects that the administration might want to see happen on its watch.

Councillor Middleton added that the project will create more problems than it could ever fix. There was a need to unlock the housing in the south and so simply not providing the transport infrastructure is not an option but there were other options. Light Rail in particular, which provided the same travel infrastructure in a genuinely sustainable way.

Councillor Sally Povolotsky, Hendreds & Harwell, stated that she was in support of the officers' recommendations but with a word of caution. Firstly, travel patterns between men and women were vastly different, and this modelling needed to be taken into account as well as the Transport Assessments in a post-Covid world. However, modelling was just one part of design and people and place must come first. Her division had been plagued by vast over development. HIF1 had the capability of being an exemplar scheme for the country. She did not see this as a road, but more a pathway to unlocking what was needed locally.

Councillor Povolotsky welcomed the CAG and engagement with all the affected parishes. Rethinking the network, incentivising residents out of cars and into public or personal zero carbon transport was a key to the success of HIF1. This was a chance to provide a streamlined route that was not focused on cars by design.

The risks of HIF1 underspend and timeline creep would come from the reliance we have on agency staff and the fragility of that dependability. She hoped that the Major Infrastructure team would get the resources needed. She asked Cabinet to vote in favour of the recommendations and prioritise the CAG urgently and Parish / Resident engagement.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Travel & Development Strategy, thanked all the contributors to the debate and responded to a number of points made:

- Agreed that residents should be involved in the design of infrastructure
- Must find a way of improving this scheme to meet our priorities
- Designers were working on ways to ensure no run-off into waterways
- The high-tech firms in places such as Culham will be important partners in ensuring a modal shift in travel
- Providing more goods and services locally will be an important part of reducing fossil fuel use
- The CAG will be happy to receive the input of Parish Councils
- He was very aware of the financial risk in this scheme

- Infrastructure development must be public transport and active transport led
- This was a route for local use and will not form part of an east-west corridor
- There was no need to pause the project because they can do something better now
- This was not a case of bringing in a scheme from the previous administration – it will be completely rewritten
- Light rail was not an option in terms of finances, timescale or the powers of this Council.
- The existing infrastructure around Didcot was completely inadequate for today's demands and the coming developments
- Investment would be lost to the area if the infrastructure plans do not progress

He concluded by adding that it was up to the Council to make this an exemplar scheme providing for public transport and active travel and avoiding any induced traffic. He urged Cabinet to approve the scheme with the conditions included in the amended recommendations.

Councillor Pete Sudbury, Cabinet Member for Climate Change Delivery & Environment, stated that the primary problem was the "Growth Deal" and the related South Oxfordshire Local Plan brought in by previous administrations at district and county level. Failure to deliver some form of connectivity in the HIF-1 area may well cause an extreme collapse in Housing Land Supply. Wallingford, Wheatley and Watlington would then be in the sights of unscrupulous developers and greedy landowners.

He was disappointed in the report's narrow focus on a road with the potential for different lines to be painted on it. He thanked Councillors Enright and Miller for reworking and greatly strengthening the recommendations with the negotiating points around financial de-risking and freedom to amend the design to reduce car use.

Councillor Sudbury wanted Members and officers to ask "what would we do?", rapidly examining all of the options at high level. He also believed that the very significant criticisms of the environmental statement needed to be addressed. This transport corridor should be used to close down current through routes, holding total traffic capacity down and improving residents' lives whilst smoothing traffic flow.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Highway Management, stated that he was astonished at the number and scale of poor decisions the previous administration had made. He believed that this project was one of the worst of them. Not only did it fly in the face of our climate aspirations, it committed this council to building a £300m network of major roads at full risk to the council.

The new Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, which was currently out for consultation, had a target by 2030, four years after we cut the ribbon on this massive £300m road network, to replace or remove 1 out of every 4 current car trips in Oxfordshire. These were simply incompatible and unless that number could be operationalised before this scheme was given the go-ahead we should adopt the precautionary principle and start again.

The previous administration signed off on this scheme believing Government and local developers were going to pay for the whole thing. The contract was so poorly written that the Council was now liable for any cost overrun. It was already 26% over budget and that was before a spade had even hit the ground.

We have so far been told by Government that we will carry the full risk for any further overruns and that it had to be completed by 2026. If we overrun the costs rocket to something like £137m! The annual cost of borrowing just £29.9m outlined in this paper over 25 years was £1.8m each year. That was money that would have to be taken out of other critical services.

Councillor Bearder noted that the whole list of points in paragraph 17 only applied if you were suggesting doing nothing. He was suggesting doing something different - in line with National and OCC policies and also likely to be cheaper. He wanted a sustainable alternative to a £300m network of major roads. He supported the amended recommendation to go back to the Treasury and ask them to allow us to pause and rethink the project to create an alternative that helps them, us and the environment.

Councillor Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance, emphasised that it was important to get agreement from Homes England that there was flexibility to take the time to re-design infrastructure to reduce carbon impact and car dependency in line with this administration's priorities and current government policy.

He highlighted the fact that the Council will be undertaking up to £30m of prudential borrowing to support costs of the scheme and the very tight timeline involved, noting that any overrun might leave the Council unable to take up the full £240m of funding from Homes England. In light of that, there was a crucial need to retain and recruit officers to ensure that the work was completed within the timeline.

The Chair thanked all contributors to the discussion. She cautioned about saying too much about any light rail option as this Council did not have the

authority to say that it wanted light rail. It was clear there was general agreement that nobody wanted a car-based scheme. The amendments to the recommendations would provide an opportunity to revise this scheme in line with the priorities of the new administration and they will seek to make the necessary changes. She stated that Cabinet would not sign this agreement unless there were assurances that the Council will not end up with a half-completed road and massive debt.

The Chair put the amended recommendations and they were agreed,

**RESOLVED to**

- a) **Authorise the Corporate Director Environment and Place, in consultation with the Director of Law & Governance, Director of Finance, Cabinet Member for Travel and Development Strategy and Cabinet Member for Finance to negotiate an amended Grant Determination Agreement (GDA) with Homes England. The amended GDA will need to include:**
  - **an extension to the availability period to 31st March 2026 and assurance that risks to the delivery timeframe caused by exceptional circumstances outside the Council's direct control will be mitigated**
  - **confirmation of an increase in funding to £239,816,437**
  - **confirmation that the Council has flexibility, subject to timescale and costs, to design and deliver infrastructure that will reduce the carbon impact and reduce the need to travel by car**
- b) **The draft of any amended GDA should be presented to Cabinet for consideration and potential approval.**
- c) **Establish a Cabinet Advisory Group (CAG) to oversee the detailed design and development of HIF1.**
- d) **Instruct officers immediately to commence the development of designs for the scheme consistent with this Council's strategic priorities.**
- e) **Authorise the development of a new Didcot area transport strategy and masterplan to meet the corporate priorities and agree to provide appropriate resources to support the development of the plan.**

**41/22 EXEMPT ITEM**

(Agenda Item. 14)

It was agreed that there was no requirement to exclude the public as there was no request to discuss the information in the exempt Annex.

**42/22 LAND AT STRATFIELD BRAKE, KIDLINGTON - PROPOSAL FROM OXFORD UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB TO OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AS LANDOWNER**

(Agenda Item. 15)

Cabinet received a report on the public engagement exercise it agreed at the January Cabinet meeting and considered recommendations on how to proceed.

The Chair had agreed to requests from a number of speakers:

Niall McWilliams, Managing Director, Oxford United FC, stated that this opportunity was not just about football, it was much wider than that. It was about providing international class community facilities for the Kidlington area and our county; not just for sport but for music, theatre, drama and education.

Oxford United has been at the heart of the Oxfordshire community for over 127 years - it was arguably our most important community asset. Its custodians wanted to see it thrive for centuries to come. A new stadium under the control of the club and not a third party, will allow this to happen.

The current licence agreement expires in 2026. There was no possibility to purchase the current stadium nor extend the licence agreement post 2026. The club had explored other land options but no other viable alternative sites were available to them.

Niall McWilliams addressed some of the concerns:

- A Green barrier between Oxford and Kidlington will not only be maintained but enhanced
- The stadium can be built to net zero carbon principles, with excellent public transport links
- The club will endeavour to work with all local stakeholders to ensure a sympathetic design

He hoped members would decide to take this important step forward to enable the club to protect the livelihoods of all of those associated with Oxford United - an institution that belonged to the people of Oxfordshire.

Paul Peros, Chairman of the independent supporters' trust OxVox, stated that the club now had owners with the vision, resources and experience to develop, not only a home for the club, but a hub for the whole county. The



club planned to provide up to 15% positive net carbon gain by partnering with progressive local companies to pioneer the latest green technologies.

He noted that 80% of those who took part in the survey supported leasing the land to Oxford United and OxVox had provided a petition of support signed by well over 5,000 locals. Every local sports club connected to Stratfield Brake actively supports this project and their members alone number in the thousands.

Paul Peros added that the local community deserved the chance to see detailed plans of a project that would provide infrastructure, jobs and vitality to the area. A community hub that would not only free up brownfield space elsewhere in the county for much needed housing, but form part of a strengthened green belt around Kidlington. The club must be allowed to commit its vision and promises to public scrutiny so that informed decisions can be made.

David Hipkiss, Chair of Gosford All Blacks RFC, outlined their support in principle for the relocation of Oxford United to Stratfield Brake. This was based on the core assumption that they will see the replacement and significant enhancement of the facilities they currently enjoyed to allow them to widen community participation.

The rugby club had over 500 players across all ages and genders and provided volunteer-led outreach programs in local primary and secondary schools. The vast majority of members were from the OX5 postcode area and surrounding villages. With the planned housing development, it was not unreasonable to expect that GAB needed to plan to double its rugby provision by 2030 and this cannot be achieved at Stratfield Brake as currently provided.

The rugby club was delighted with United's offer to pay for both the establishment of new and enhanced facilities and their expert long-term maintenance. It was their opinion that the proposed relocation was an opportunity that should not be missed and one which could yield huge long term multiple benefits for all local stakeholders.

City Councillor Liz Wade stated that this proposal had caused more concern for residents in Wolvercote Ward than any other issue in the last 3 years. If this stadium, hotel, conference centre and other facilities were built, there will be a hole in the Green Belt which can never be repaired.

Currently there was the possibility of the green spaces of Stratfield Brake being sandwiched between vast housing estates and a golf course open only to members.

Councillor Wade noted that the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 provided an opportunity this summer to assess Oxfordshire's overall Green Belt strategy. It would make sense for the County's initial decision on Stratfield Brake to await the outcome of the review.

Suzanne McIvor, secretary of the Harbord Road Area Residents' Association, stated that the engagement exercise for Stratfield Brake had come out of the blue and did not allow enough time for local groups to gather information, summarise and distribute locally. She had tried to get the 4-week period extended.

Oxford United already had established lines of communication with a large number of supporters. Local groups had to start from scratch, with very few resources and other important consultations going on at the same time. She said that the reality was that out of the 3,740 who responded, 80% were football club supporters. The clear majority of local residents who responded were opposed to the proposal.

Suzanne McIvor believed that the report was heavily biased in favour of the proposal. There was no acknowledgement that the local plan had already defined new Green Belt boundaries which were supposed to be long term. There had undoubtedly been undue haste. She did not think that the Council had really thought this through. She urged Cabinet to vote against this proposal.

Councillor Nigel Simpson, Kirtlington and Kidlington North, described what Oxford United Football Club and football in general meant to him. Over the years of supporting them he had experienced a rollercoaster of emotional highs and lows. He said that the modern-day football experience was a real family affair.

With regards to the proposal, football will only be a small percentage of the actual use of the site. It will provide a much-needed community hub and updated facilities for the residents of Kidlington. These can be incorporated within the stadium footprint under the stands to fully maximise every inch of space and reduce over-development of the site.

Councillor Simpson added that for too many years Kidlington had lacked any significant investment in important areas, schools, sports, health facilities and leisure. This proposal will provide exciting new hubs for local football, rugby and cricket at no cost to the public purse. The Woodland Trust Nature Reserve, neighbouring the site, was protected from any development plans but there was an opportunity to improve the access for local residents including the many dog walkers that use the site on a daily basis.

From his discussions with local residents there were 3 main concerns: parking, traffic and loss of green space. He said that he will be paying close attention should this get approved to see what plans were put forward to alleviate these concerns. It would be important to undertake a matchday parking enforcement plan for the whole of Kidlington to prevent unacceptable parking when a game was taking place.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Wolvercote & Summertown, stated that Cabinet needed to be clear what it was deciding and should use its position to safeguard the administration's principles in this project. For example, active

travel should be central and could be encouraged through ticketing initiatives.

There were commitments to improving access to nature. He and local residents will hold the Council to those. There needed to be a commitment to active travel in the wider area compatible with LTN 1/20 and Vision Zero. This had not happened with other developments in the area. There was an opportunity now to join them up.

Councillor Gant added that the views of the planning authority, Cherwell District Council, on a range of critical issues were unknown. The County Council needed to make its position clear that there should be minimal loss of green space with a minimum net gain of 10% for biodiversity and buildings should be constructed to net-zero or better. He asked that, if Cabinet decided to go ahead with this, they take full account of the concerns of local residents going forward.

Councillor Liam Walker, Hanborough & Minster Lovell, said that he spoke as someone who was in favour of the plans and someone who was excited to see the future of football in Oxfordshire continue. The site at Kidlington really did tick all the boxes for building not just as a sustainable stadium and sports complex but also ensuring a sustainable future and long-term home for Oxford United.

The new proposed site was a stone's throw from the well-connected Oxford Parkway station along with two Park & Ride sites with regular bus services connected to Oxford and beyond. With less parking spaces being made available at the new site, fans would be encouraged to make the switch to public transport to get to match days at Stratfield Brake.

Councillor Walker accepted that there were a lot of concerns from local residents and said it was absolutely vital these were addressed as part of that planning process. He applauded the Cabinet for running a consultation on this process which he said highlighted an overwhelming support from fans right across Oxfordshire. The future of Oxford United and sport in Oxfordshire was at stake, and he urged the Cabinet to support the recommendation and work closely with club and Cherwell District Council to develop the plans for the site.

Councillor Ian Middleton, Kidlington South, represented the area that Stratfield Brake was located within. While he was grateful for the public engagement exercise, he felt it was rushed and the aims were unclear. There had been misleading claims in the press and suggestions in the Cabinet report that there was strong local support for these proposals. That was simply not true.

By far the biggest issue was the fact that this site was in one of the last remaining vestiges of green belt in the area. The removal of green belt protection was a long process that can take many years. If OUFC have only four years to get this done, then he thought they were already out of time. There were supposed advantages being claimed for local sports provision

which had garnered some support from local clubs but much of that was already going to be provided for by developers' contributions.

Councillor Middleton added that if Mr Kassam was keen to redevelop the site of the current stadium, surely a deal could be done with the new even wealthier owners of the club. If that site were redeveloped, there would be far more scope for biodiversity enhancement of a brownfield site than on one that already has green spaces and wildlife habitats. The Cowley branch line extension would give the same advantages to the existing site along with the same sustainable transport proposals suggested here.

As the local Member, he will expect to be kept informed and involved in any talks with the club if they go ahead. He would also like to see further significant engagement with local residents. The Council's responsibility must be to local residents first.

Councillor Charlie Hicks, Cowley, stated that he was supportive of the recommendations in the paper but wanted to make a few points. It was clear that there should be continued high involvement of local people throughout this process. The Council should also listen to the voices of grassroots football and rugby across the city and county.

It was important to ensure there was as much money as possible invested into active travel routes in the surrounding area and to resist any calls to increase car road capacity as part of any transport improvements. Fans who lived around Littlemore and Blackbird Leys and in East Oxford more generally must be able to get to the new stadium sustainably. He advocated a renewed focus on the Cowley Branch Line, looking at options for faster delivery of this passenger route and additional financing options such as land value uplift.

Councillor Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance, stated that he was glad to have taken the time to hear more from those affected by the proposal before considering how to proceed. He thanked the speakers and noted that their views reflected the diversity of opinion about the proposal that was captured in the engagement exercise. He emphasised that the exercise was one input but not a single determinant of the Cabinet's approach.

The supporters of Oxford United were desperate for a new stadium and in the public engagement 80% of them favoured the start of negotiations. Building such a significant new venue – especially if it were to include many ancillary buildings – was a major concern to local residents and 62% of them opposed negotiations or were unsure about them.

However, there was broad support for the six principles proposed and Councillor Miller believed that they should be more specific in the environmental goals. The Woodland Trust had suggested amendments which he proposed to adopt in the recommendations.

He supported the recommendation from officers that they should start more detailed discussions including the scale of the proposals, the support to local sports clubs, access to the site, parking proposals, biodiversity gain and the enhancement of the surrounding natural environment.

He believed it was important that the County engaged directly with the City Council and seek to establish what steps they have taken to support the club in remaining at the Kassam. Also they should seek further detail from the club on the other sites they have explored and why these were not suitable.

Councillor Miller emphasised that the County Council does not have the power to agree to a lease. The agreement of current tenants, Cherwell District Council and their sub-tenants the parish councils, was also needed. He proposed that OUFC and CDC open a process akin to a pre-application process in which they can start to explore CDC's views about any proposal in the Green Belt.

The Council was not at a point to start formal negotiations with OUFC. However, many of the key stakeholders had questions about the detail of the plans that should now be explored. As the proposers of the scheme, it was on OUFC to provide answers and he welcomed their commitment to doing so.

Other Cabinet Members noted the arguments in favour and against and made the following additional points:

- The Council was well positioned to be a critical friend in the process.
- The idea of zero carbon buildings had come from the engagement process showing how the club was responding to feedback.
- There had always been skepticism about the Kassam stadium whereas these proposals were realistic.
- Many local residents cannot see the benefits and the club needed to respond to that.
- Cherwell District Council as the planning authority and tenant needed to give its views on the matter to ensure the process was as transparent as possible.

The Chair emphasised that the Council was not proposing to enter negotiations at this stage but to continue the discussion. She put the recommendations with the amendments to 2 a) I. and 2 a) II. proposed by Councillor Miller. This was agreed.

1. **RESOLVED to**

- (a) Authorise Officers to enter into detailed discussions as requested by Oxford United Football Club (OUFC) on the use of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) owned land for the development of a new football stadium, subject to approval of detailed plans and undertakings and to planning permission.

- (b) Instruct Officers to ensure that any In Principle Agreement resulting from discussions with OUFC satisfies the objectives set out in (2a) below.
- (c) Authorise Officers to explore lease surrender discussions with OCC's current tenants, and where appropriate with sub-tenants, subject to planning permission.
- (d) Instruct Officers to maintain open dialogue with stakeholders with interests in the project, in particular Cherwell District Council (CDC), the relevant Parish Councils, the community sports clubs who make use of Stratfield Brake, the Woodland Trust and neighbouring landowners.
- (e) Instruct officers to provide regular updates on progress to the Cabinet Member for Property and, as appropriate, Cabinet as a whole.
- (f) Require Officers to bring back to Cabinet for further discussion any detailed proposals that are made, and to bring to Cabinet for decision any In Principle Agreement that may be reached in due course.

2. **RESOLVED that:**

- a) Officers ensure that any proposal by OUFC is consistent with the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance's priorities, by achieving the following objectives for the use of the OCC's land:
  - I. maintain a green barrier between Oxford and Kidlington and protecting and enhancing the surrounding environment including biodiversity, connecting habitats and supporting nature recovery
  - II. improve public access to high-quality nature and green spaces
  - III. enhance facilities for local sports groups and on-going financial support
  - IV. significantly improve the infrastructure connectivity in this location, improving public transport to reduce the need for car travel in so far as possible, and to improve sustainable transport through increased walking, cycling and rail use
  - V. develop local employment opportunities in Oxfordshire
  - VI. increase education and innovation through the provision of a sports centre of excellence and facilities linked to elite sport, community sport, health and wellbeing

- VII. support the County Council's net zero carbon emissions pledge through highly sustainable development
- b) Officers pursue detailed discussions with a view to agreeing terms that achieve community benefit, meet OCC's aspirations, retain OCC's reasonable long-term control over the size and scale of OUFC's proposed scheme, and comply with S.123 of the Local Government Act 1972 (and any other applicable legal requirements).
  - c) Officers continue to explore any opportunities with neighbouring landowners that might enhance the delivery of a community sports hub at Stratfield Brake in line with OUFC's commitment to replace and enhance the existing sports facilities and to develop sustainable operation models with the community clubs to protect their long-term future, prior to the commencement of any new stadium related development.
  - d) Officers to return to Cabinet if further detailed proposals are made by OUFC and, in due course, if an In Principle Agreement with OUFC is reached, so that financial and lease terms can be discussed at a Special Cabinet Meeting.

**43/22 OXFORDSHIRE S75 NHS ACT POOLED COMMISSIONING BUDGET**

(Agenda Item. 17)

Cabinet was asked to agree an extension to the s75 NHS Act 2006 agreement between Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) and the Council to pool health and social care commissioning budgets, as the latest agreement was to expire on 31 March 2022.

Councillor Jenny Hannaby, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, introduced the report and thanked its author, Ian Bottomley, for an excellent report. There has been an agreement in place to pool health and social care budgets since 2013. In 2020/21 the partners developed the Health, Education and Social Care Integrated Commissioning Team.

A joint commissioning executive was put in place in March 2021 to provide strategic direction and accountability and includes senior executives from OCC and OCCG. The partnership had worked well and Councillor Hannaby had every confidence that it would continue to do so. She noted that none of the pooled budgets may be spent without all of the partners' agreement. She put the recommendations to Cabinet.

**RESOLVED to:**

- a) **Approve the agreement of a s75 NHS Act 2006 pooled commissioning budget with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group from 1 April 2022.**

- b) **Approve a single, fully integrated Pool Budget and Risk Share for Live Well and Age Well services**
- c) **Delegate to the Interim Corporate Director of Adult Services in consultation with the Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) to finalise and sign the agreement**

**44/22 COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (CRMP) 2022-26 - PUBLIC RELEASE**

(Agenda Item. 18)

Cabinet had before it a new Strategic Community Risk Management Plan to cover the period from April 2022 to March 2026. Cabinet was asked to approve it for public release.

The Chair introduced the report in the absence of Councillor Neil Fawcett who was attending a Local Government Association conference on Fire & Rescue. She noted that there had been a 12 week consultation period on the Plan and feedback from that had been included.

As there were no questions on the report, the Chair put the recommendations which were agreed.

**RESOLVED to approve the CRMP 2022-26 for public release.**

**45/22 WEST OXFORDSHIRE CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

(Agenda Item. 19)

Cabinet considered a proposal to terminate the s101 Agency Agreement in respect of the management of highway parking enforcement within the district of West Oxfordshire.

The Chair had agreed to hear a number of speakers before discussing the proposal:

Councillor Andrew Coles, Witney South & Central, was unable to attend but had sent some comments that Councillor Duncan Enright read out. Staff of West Oxfordshire District Council had not been able to provide the necessary cover particularly at weekends and evenings. As a bus driver in the area Councillor Coles was very aware of the problems illegal parking caused. He noted that there was general agreement that there should be no charge for on-street or off-street parking in Witney unless there was widespread support for it from businesses and the general community.

Councillor Andy Graham, Woodstock, welcomed the termination of the agreement which would end confusion in the district over who was responsible for on-street parking. It will mean that any proposal for permits or charges will be consulted upon in its own right. It will ensure that West Oxfordshire District Council can retain free parking in its car parks.



The report noted that there was a plan for Woodstock about to be consulted upon. The town had suffered from a lack of enforcement and the previous administration had ignored the problem. He noted that the proposal was cost-neutral and he thanked officers and Councillor Bearder for their work in partnership with the local community.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Highway Management, introduced the report. He stated that the proposal would bring West Oxfordshire into line with the rest of the county so that there was greater clarity and consistency. There would also be improved economies of scale and greater efficiency.

Councillor Bearder confirmed that off-street parking would still be under the control of the district council and that on-street measures would only be considered where there was a community demand for them.

Councillor Enright noted that there was relatively little on-street parking in towns like Witney but a lot of parking infringement. He emphasised that there was no blame associated with WODC enforcement officers – the problem was with the management of enforcement.

The Chair welcomed the proposals and put the recommendations which were agreed.

**RESOLVED to approve notice being given to West Oxfordshire District Council to terminate the s101 Agency Agreement in respect of the management of highway parking enforcement within the district of West Oxfordshire.**

#### **46/22 WATER RESOURCES - REGIONAL PLAN CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

(Agenda Item. 20)

Cabinet's agreement was sought for the content of a response to the consultation draft Water Resources South East (WRSE) Regional Plan.

Councillor Pete Sudbury, Cabinet Member for Climate Change Delivery & Environment, thanked Lynette Hughes for her work on the report and Derek Stork, Chair of GARD (Group Against Reservoir Development), for sense-checking the arguments, though the arguments were those of the Cabinet Member.

He criticised the plan as being developed behind closed doors by WRSE, lacking any independent or democratic scrutiny. Examining the evidence, the underlying assumptions included a level of population increase that would require the entire growth in England's population to 2060 to occur in the South-East.

Councillor Sudbury believed that the customers will pick up the bill. There had been no democratic oversight to protect the bill-payer. He noted that the

Consultation stated that those schemes in the first 15 years were required across all future scenarios. That was absolute predetermination. There was no consultation on the Abingdon reservoir, not long ago rejected after a public inquiry.

Looking at the other options - fixing leaks, recycling and transfers of water from less water-stressed regions - they accounted for nearly 3000MI while reservoirs accounted for 332MI. At least one of the alternatives, Severn-to-Thames transfer, could deliver 5 years earlier than the reservoir.

Councillor Sudbury added that Thames Water wanted to do almost nothing with recycling and spend £1.4 Bn on a reservoir instead. He believed that would be an abuse of monopoly power and a misuse of the public's money. The RAPID process, informed by WRSE, was irremediably flawed and highly likely to come out with an answer that was not in the interests of local people or the citizens of the Thames Valley.

The Chair agreed to a request to speak from Councillor Sally Povolotsky.

Councillor Povolotsky, Hendreds & Harwell, stated that the way of life of communities in her area was under huge threat by the privatised water companies putting profits before people. She listed questions being asked by residents:

- Why tell GARD, OCC and the Regulators that flooding studies are immature and will be completed later, while telling local developers that extensive studies have been done and flooding is not an issue?
- After 20 years of planning, do they really have no diagrams of what this reservoir will look like from the local area?
- Given their inability to even fix leaks, how do we trust them with building a reservoir safely?
- Given how much sewage was repeatedly discharged from waterworks around Oxford, much of this will end up extracted and in the reservoir. How will this be treated to make the water safe?

Councillor Povolotsky concluded by saying that none of these questions had been answered and the reservoir must be stopped. She thanked officers for their work on the excellent response.

The Chair put the recommendations and they were agreed.

**RESOLVED to:**

- a) Consider the content of a response to the consultation on the emerging Water Resources South East regional plan - the draft is Annex 1 to this report.**
- b) Delegate the final written response to the Corporate Director for Environment and Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change Delivery and Environment.**

.....in the Chair

Date of signing .....

## CABINET – 15 MARCH 2022

### ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions	Cabinet Member
<p><b>1. COUNCILLOR MICHAEL O’CONNOR</b></p> <p>In light of the recent fatal crash at The Plain, could the Cabinet member let us know what they are doing to make meaningful change? This is the second cycle death in Oxford as a whole this year. The Plain was ranked the second most dangerous intersection in the UK in 2017 and hasn’t improved much since. Indeed, there were more serious accidents 2015-19 than 2009-15 – 55 to be precise according to Crash Map–despite re-designs and tweaks. I know that a lot of people felt anxious about cycling on The Plain. Even more feel this way now.</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>Thank you for this question and I want to put on record that I share your frustration and the pain of the wider community that we keep reading about the deaths of vulnerable road users on our roads.</p> <p>I understand that Cyclox are very keen that the County adopts Vision Zero.</p> <p>Transport for London have already adopted this policy structure and in doing so have joined an increasing number of major cities around the world who are taking a stand to end the toll of deaths and injury seen on their roads. They have committed to eliminating all deaths and serious injuries on their transport network by 2041 and we must do the same and probably sooner.</p> <p>We have the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan out for consultation now and I would personally like to see Vision Zero adopted for Oxfordshire in that policy framework.</p>

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>
	<p>But I also understand that there is a strong consensus that we need to take some immediate actions and the County's Cycle Champion, Cllr Gant, has led the way on this with the Corporate Director of Environment and Place, Bill Cotton. Together they have instigated two site visits to the Plain and Oxford Parkway to be held in the next couple of weeks where we will examine again, with our Highway Officers and Cyclox representatives what can be done.</p> <p>I think we need to accept and tolerate the fact that safety measures might slow down and or possibly restrict other modes of transport, but we must believe that fundamentally it is neither inevitable nor acceptable that anyone should be killed or seriously injured when travelling in Oxford. All our residents should be able to leave their homes each day feeling safe and confident about the journey ahead.</p> <p>Oxfordshire's Fair Deal alliance will prioritise that above trip numbers, flow rates or any other metric that might otherwise determine a 'successful' road.</p>
<p><b>2. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON</b></p> <p>A recent consultation in my Division on the redesign of the A44 between Cassington and the Loop Farm Roundabout appears to be flawed and incomplete.</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR DUNCAN ENRIGHT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRAVEL &amp; DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</b></p> <p>We will investigate the issues you have raised and provide you with an explanation as soon as possible.</p>

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>
<p>The project includes the provision of a bus lane as part of a proposed 'rapid transit system' that was a fundamental element of the Cherwell local plan partial review. However, restrictions at two 'pinch points' along the route - a canal bridge and a railway bridge – brought the viability of these proposals into question.</p> <p>Briefings prior to the consultation included proposals to deal with these problems by means of a bus gate on at least one of these bridges, but these are not shown on the plans attached to the public consultation, nor are they mentioned in the description.</p> <p>This would seem to be a fundamental omission. If these bus gates are to be included in the design, respondents to the consultation should have had the opportunity to comment on them. I have asked officers why the bus gates we omitted but have been unable to get a clear answer.</p> <p>As the consultation has now closed, can the cabinet member please undertake to investigate this matter and revert to me with an explanation as soon as possible, preferably before any works connected with this consultation are programmed?</p>	