

**County Council
Tuesday, 8 July 2025**

SPEECHES

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Annex

My name is Kimberly Morgan. I am a SEND parent (virtually) here today to call for the reinstatement of a dedicated Cabinet Member for SEND at Oxfordshire County Council.

OCC previously recognised the importance of this role and rightly so! The decision to remove the position was a significant step backward for accountability and strategic leadership. It has left one of the most vulnerable groups that this council is meant to serve without a Cabinet Member to oversee the SEND agenda across the various departments involved and ensure that OCC's services are effective, legal, and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. How can OCC ever be held accountable for the decisions they make in relation to these service users without the appropriate oversight?

The impact has been real and measurable: worsening outcomes for SEND children and young people.

These include:

- EHCP delays and frequent refusals to assess, inappropriate placements when schools have already been clear about not being able to meet needs, refusals to amend anything in an EHCP following on from an Annual Review whilst at appeal to SENDIST
- Families being pushed into crisis, with many feeling forced to home educate or pursue costly legal action to get anything done
- Under-resourced EOTAS packages, only ever obtained after a long battle and/or years out of formal education, which then lack oversight, structure and accountability to the law

Let me be frank, it's not a good look for OCC to have a complete lack of visible political leadership on SEND at a time when reform is so urgently and desperately needed.

By abolishing the dedicated SEND portfolio, this council sent a clear message to parents and other stakeholders: that SEND is no longer a priority. Remember that every case has a SEND child or young person at the heart of it. They matter and yet how easily they are dismissed and deemed not important enough to have their own specific Cabinet Member to represent their interests. What they need is to know that it changes now: let their voices be heard and vote for a SEND-specific Cabinet position today.

The current status quo simply cannot continue. A dedicated Cabinet Member for SEND is not a luxury; rather, it is a minimum requirement for a council claiming to meet its statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014. SEND is a specialised,

high-need, and legally protected area that demands focused oversight, especially in light of increasing demand, growing complexity of need, and the well-documented failings in the system both locally and nationally. OCC can do better and should do better as it's our children who suffer from the council's inadequacies amidst the ongoing lack of Cabinet-level oversight.

Thank you.