OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Maker:	Director of Economy & Place
Decision Title:	Sponsorship of Business Guardians
Decision date:	19 December 2025
Source of delegation:	At its meeting on 21st October 2025, Cabinet approved a conditional allocation of funding for economic development of £0.700m in 2025/26, and £1.254m in both 2026/27 and 2027/28 for economic development; and delegated authority to the Director of Economy & Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Future Economy & Innovation to oversee the preparation of business cases
What decision was made?:	To provide £150,000 grant funding (£50,000 per annum in each of 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28) for Oxfordshire Youth's Business Guardians programme.
Purpose:	The decision enables the signing of a grant agreement to provide the above funding.
Reasons:	Oxfordshire County Council has identified the Business Guardians programme delivered by Oxfordshire Youth as a key deliverable as part of *Oxfordshire Works* (the county's Local Get Britain Working Plan). It is intended that grant funding will enable Business Guardians to reach 500 of the most disadvantaged young people in the county, who are most at risk of exclusion from the labour market, by the end of the third year. The grant funding will enable Oxfordshire Youth to work with employers to tackle youth unemployment, pursuant to the aims and objectives of *Oxfordshire Works* (the local Get Britain Working Plan). It will further enable Oxfordshire Youth to provide industry-specific workshops, events, work placement and work experience offers; to organise CEO mentorship programmes including 1-1 mentoring for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds; and form a CEO Leadership Council, contributing 2 days annually to advance strategic impact. In addition, Oxfordshire County Council will join the programme as principal sponsor and strategic

	partner. The programme delivers a range of outcomes aligned with OCC's priorities (including reducing youth unemployment and those not in employment, education or training; supporting care leavers; and closing identified skills gaps), will enable OCC to provide strategic leadership, promotes data integration and insight, and future proofs Oxfordshire's workforce.
Other options considered:	1. Do nothing. Given the challenges for young people identified in *Oxfordshire Works*, this was not considered viable. 2. Increase resource at Oxfordshire County Council. OCC could directly employ staff to create a similar programme, working with Enterprise Oxfordshire. Given the existence of Business Guardians, which already has significant buy-in from the private sector, this option was rejected as it would create unnecessary competition and fragmentation. 3. Identify a market solution. As above, it would be possible to identify a market solution but this was rejected as it would create unnecessary competition and fragmentation.