

## OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Tuesday, 9 July 2024 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at 3.45 pm

### **Present:**

Councillor Alison Rooke – in the Chair

### Councillors:

|                      |                  |                  |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Juliette Ash         | Andy Graham      | Sally Povolotsky |
| Brad Baines          | Kate Gregory     | Susanna Pressel  |
| Robin Bennett        | Jane Hanna OBE   | Eddie Reeves     |
| Liz Brighthouse OBE  | Jenny Hannaby    | G.A. Reynolds    |
| Nigel Champken-Woods | Damian Haywood   | Judy Roberts     |
| Mark Cherry          | Charlie Hicks    | David Rouane     |
| Andrew Coles         | John Howson      | Geoff Saul       |
| Ian Corkin           | Tony Ilott       | Les Sibley       |
| Imade Edosomwan      | Bob Johnston     | Nigel Simpson    |
| Trish Elphinstone    | Liz Leffman      | Roz Smith        |
| Duncan Enright       | Nick Leverton    | Ian Snowdon      |
| Arash Fatemian       | Dan Levy         | Peter Stevens    |
| Ted Fenton           | Dr Nathan Ley    | Dr Pete Sudbury  |
| Nick Field-Johnson   | Kieron Mallon    | Bethia Thomas    |
| Donna Ford           | Ian Middleton    | Michael Waine    |
| Andrew Gant          | Michael O'Connor | Liam Walker      |
| Stefan Gawrysiak     | Glynis Phillips  |                  |

*The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.*

### **51/24 MINUTES**

(Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2024 were approved.

### **52/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

(Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillors Banfield, Bartholomew, Bearder, Bloomfield, Bulmer, Fadlalla, Fawcett, Lygo, van Mierlo and Miller.

Council on 16 April 2024 agreed a dispensation for Councillor Constance.

**53/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE**

(Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest relating to items for decision at this meeting.

**54/24 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS**

(Agenda Item 4)

The Chair announced that Burford on-call firefighter Steve Edginton had been awarded the British Empire Medal in the latest King's Honours list for his dedication to the town's residents over more than forty years and noted that a list of other Oxfordshire award recipients recently honoured by the King was attached to the Schedule of Business in Annex 1.

The Council's Banbury Community Support Service (part of the adult social care team) won the MJ Award for innovation in children's or adults' services. It was in recognition for their work to create an accessible, inclusive pub room – Cheers M'Dears! – at the day centre in Neithrop.

The Chair also highlighted some events she attended including a touching ceremony in Thame where thirty names were added to the war memorial and a most enjoyable visit to a care home to meet residents and see the excellent work by care staff.

**55/24 APPOINTMENTS**

(Agenda Item 5)

There were no committee appointments to report under this item as they were all included under Item 11 Committees and Review of Political Balance.

Councillor Leffman informed Council that Councillor Sally Povolotsky had been appointed as Champion for Water Resources.

**56/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda Item 6)

The following requests had been received by the Chair:

**Petitions**

Dan Glazebrook: Oxpens Bridge

John Hill: Agreements between the Council and Oxford United

Iain Johnson: Proposed stadium and road closures

**Public Address**

Item 14: Motion by Cllr Brighthouse

Katie Nellist

Terez Moore

Cathy McClelland

Item 16: Motion by Cllr Povolotsky

Derek Stork  
Sheenagh Broadbent  
Ashley Smith  
Stephen McKechnie  
Owen Sutcliffe  
David Marsh  
Wilcox Robert

Item 17: Motion by Cllr Reeves

Luke Ingram  
Ruth Trevitt  
Stuart Bartlett  
Terez Moore

Item 18: Motion by Cllr Gawrysiak

Robert Aitken  
Ian Reissmann

Item 21: Motion by Cllr Povolotsky

Pete Nellist

Item 28: Motion by Cllr Sudbury

Oxford City Cllr Lois Muddiman

There were difficulties in remote speakers accessing the meeting and then once in the meeting they were unable to be heard in the chamber. A number of their speeches were read out by Members who had received them by email.

It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer will send a report on the problems and an apology to Members after the meeting as well as an apology to the speakers.

The speeches that have been sent to the Council are published alongside the minutes of the meeting.

**57/24 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

(Agenda Item 7)

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

**58/24 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

(Agenda Item 8)

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

**59/24 REPORT OF THE CABINET**

(Agenda Item 9)

Council received the report of Cabinet covering the Cabinet meetings on 14 May 2024 and 18 June 2024.

In response to questions on Item 1 Oxfordshire Councils Charter, Councillor Leffman responded as follows:

- The Charter focussed on the relationships between the Town and Parish Councils and the County Council. The Parish Councils' relationships with the City and District Councils were already robust.
- It had not yet been worked out how the un-parished areas of the city will be included but that will likely be through the Neighbourhood Forums.
- The Charter will be a living document and will be developed further over time.

On Item 2 Appointments, Councillor Leffman agreed to consider appointing a Small Business Champion, confirmed that Cabinet would shortly fill the vacant Public Transport Champion position and reported that she meets regularly with the Champions to discuss their roles.

On Item 3 Oxfordshire County Council's Productivity Plan, Councillor Leffman agreed that a multi-year funding agreement for local authorities would be very welcome and confirmed that she was working with the Chief Executive on a list of powers that they would like to request be devolved to the County Council.

In response to a question from Councillor Pressel on Item 4 Council of Sanctuary, Councillor Leffman confirmed that the Council was following the lengthy process to become a Council of Sanctuary and was keen to line up with Oxford City Council and the University of Oxford who have made similar applications.

On a question from Councillor Saul on Item 5 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement, Councillor Leffman agreed that it was important that Council staff be trained to identify possible cases and confirmed that the Council works closely with other organisations to tackle the problems.

On item 6 Period Poverty Scheme Trial, Councillor Leffman agreed to a request from Councillor Povolotsky to write to the Secretary of State for Education to urge the continuation of the schools period product scheme due to end in July 2024.

Councillor Leffman agreed to provide a written response to a question from Councillor Phillips on Item 7 Customer Experience Strategy as to what the key performance metrics will be.

On Item 8 Workforce Report and Staffing Data, Councillor Levy agreed to provide a written response to a question from Councillor Baines on the plans to save £4 million on staffing costs in 2024/25 and if he can avoid staffing cuts in the 2025/26 budget.

Councillor Leffman agreed to discuss with officers a suggestion from Councillor Phillips to include information on the transformation programme in future Workforce Reports including a running total on savings.

On Item 9 Financial Monitoring Report, in response to a question from Councillor Baines, Councillor Levy stated that the expectation was that investing in the pump priming reserve would give a higher return than treasury bonds as well as providing additional benefits in putting money into the economy.

On Item 12 Capital Programme Approvals, Councillor Levy responded to a number of questions around the time taken to complete projects and the effects of inflation on the funding of these projects. He stated that all projects proceed as fast as possible but had to be designed properly and had to go through planning processes. He hoped that the new government would help local authorities address this problem.

Councillor Levy agreed to provide a written response to Councillor Brighouse on the issue of the reducing demand for school places in some areas and the use of property that may be freed up.

Councillor Levy agreed to meet with Councillor Povolotsky regarding the A4130 Rowstock Roundabout to Steventon Lights and other projects to discuss costs.

On Item 13 Oxfordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan, in response to a question from Councillor Hicks, Councillor Gant committed to looking at the options for ownership of buses but stated that there was a question over whether that should be done now before the plans of the new government are known.

On Item 14 Cost of Living Programme, Councillor Ley agreed to meet with Councillor Elphinstone regarding applications for help purchasing white goods to ensure they are not incorrectly refused.

## **60/24 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OXFORDSHIRE JOINT HEALTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

(Agenda Item 10)

Council had before it for noting the Annual Report of the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee which documented the breadth and depth of the Committee's work over the 2023/24 Council year.

The report was moved by Councillor Jane Hanna, Chair of the scrutiny committee and seconded by Councillor Jenny Hannaby.

Following discussion, Council noted the report.

## **61/24 COMMITTEES AND REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE**

(Agenda Item 11)

Council was requested to approve committee appointments based on revised political balance calculations following a by-election and other group membership changes.

The recommendations were proposed by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Leffman. The proposals were approved unanimously.

### **RESOLVED:**

- a) To note the review of political balance of committees to reflect the election of a new councillor, Peter Stevens, at the Sutton Courtenay and Marcham by-election on 20 June 2024 and the resignation of two members, Cllr Kevin Bulmer and Cllr Jane Murphy, from the Conservative Independent Alliance.**
- b) To appoint members to the committees of the Council as listed in the revised Annex 1 of the report in the Schedule of Business.**

## **62/24 INDEPENDENT PERSONS**

(Agenda Item 12)

Council received a report requesting the extension of the period of office of two Independent Persons. The report summarised the role of Independent Persons.

The report was moved by Councillor Roz Smith, Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee, and seconded by Councillor Brad Baines, Deputy Chair.

Following discussion, the recommendation was approved unanimously.

### **RESOLVED:**

**to extend the appointments of Mr Martyn Hocking and Mr Nicholas Holt-Kentwell in the role of Independent Persons for Oxfordshire County Council until 30 November 2024.**

## **63/24 SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS**

(Agenda Item 13)

Council had before it a report on the number of decisions taken under urgency provisions in the last three months and a summary of the matters in respect of which those decisions were taken.

The report was moved by the Leader of the Council and seconded by the Deputy Leader.

**Following discussion, Council noted:**

- a) **the use of Special Urgency for a Key Decision on 23 May 2024 and**
- b) **the exemption from Call-in of a Key Decision made by Cabinet on 14 May 2024.**

**64/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR LIZ BRIGHOUSE**

(Agenda Item 14)

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Liz Brighouse and seconded by Councillor Brad Baines.

This Council no longer has confidence in the Leader of the Council.

There have been repeated failures allied to a persistent sense that her administration refuses to engage in meaningful dialogue with elected members, trade unions, other Councils and public sector partners, as well as the residents, businesses and community groups that are increasingly subjected to decisions taken by the minority administration in the Council's name.

This Council records its particular failure to:

1. Keep members and parents abreast of improvements to its SEND provision following last year's Ofsted-CQC determination;
2. Its stance towards the Housing Infrastructure and Growth ('HIF') deals that have eventuated in an expensive and unnecessary public enquiry; and
3. Its perceived conflict of interest on the lease of 'the Triangle' to OUFC.

The Council is extremely concerned by the view of the Leader that there has "been enough consultation" regarding major transport changes in Central Oxfordshire. Public consent for these schemes is absolutely essential. This requires an inclusive process to engage residents on congestion, including a Citizens Assembly, to inform future changes.

Where concerns have been raised in connection with delivering the democratically agreed 2024/25 budget, upholding the code of conduct, a failure to maintain cabinet responsibility, protecting the spare seats scheme, processing EHCPs and cuts to Autism Family Support over the last 12 months, the administration has been far too ready to engage in deflection tactics and victim-blaming, rather than engage with solutions.

This Council resolves that the current Leader of the Council is removed.

Following debate, the motion was lost with 12 votes in favour; 19 against and 16 abstentions.

**65/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON**

(Agenda Item 15)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Ian Middleton and seconded by Councillor Robin Bennett.

Following debate, the motion was carried with 30 votes in favour; none against and 10 abstentions.

**RESOLVED:**

**Many people in Oxfordshire who live in flood prone areas watch the skies with trepidation. In some communities even moderate amounts of sustained rainfall can cause significant flooding that overwhelms outdated flood relief infrastructure. This is often poorly maintained and constructed with no central plan for water management. Sewers are also regularly overwhelmed with infiltration from surface water, causing sewage to leak: putting public health at risk as well as properties.**

**As the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), the Council has a responsibility to respond to these risks and work with other local authorities to develop flood management plans. We also assess how any new developments will impact on flood prone areas. That role is now more crucial as climate change increases the likelihood and frequency of heavy downpours and flooding across the county.**

**In the face of these urgent pressures, our powers of intervention are limited by out of date and inadequate guidelines set by central government. These include developers only having to prove that they won't make flooding worse, rather than helping to alleviate the problem in known flood risk areas.**

**Council calls on the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and other responsible agencies to work with us to :**

- 1. Urgently review national planning guidance and legislation on flood prevention.**
- 2. Provide more powers to LLFAs to prevent or limit developments in known flood risk areas**
- 3. Require developers to contribute to reducing existing risks in flood prone areas as part of any new development.**

**66/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR SALLY POVOLOTSKY**

(Agenda Item 16)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Sally Povolotsky and seconded by Councillor Nick Field-Johnson.

Following debate, the motion was carried with 29 votes in favour; none against and 13 abstentions.

**RESOLVED:**



This council notes that:

- **Thames Water (TW) has been releasing untreated sewage into Oxfordshire rivers and chalk streams for 20+ years.**
- **TW's sewerage service is beyond inadequate. With illnesses on the rise, bringing serious risk of death, administrative change is needed, these failures are a public health issue.**
- **TW is not sustainable without direct intervention and renationalisation by government.**
- **TW's request to increase consumer bills at 44% over the next 5 years is extortion and a clear show of poor business management after decades of collecting payments and connection fees and neglecting to use them to maintain and improve the network.**
- **TW's Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP) isn't fit for purpose and needs urgent scrutiny by this government and the regulator.**

This council resolves that:

- **This chamber, its members and residents have no confidence in Thames Water's competence as a sewerage undertaker or maintainer of infrastructure for the current and growing population of this county.**
- **Requests the Leader writes to the Secretary of State (DEFRA), urging His Majesty's Government to urgently place full regulatory and administrative limits on Thames Water, suspending bonuses, bringing charges for polluting the eco system and urgently evaluate the pros and cons of the renationalisation of Thames Water. We call for an urgent public inquiry into the WRMP 2024.**
- **This council reaffirms its objection to the design for SESRO (South East Strategic Reservoir Option) given the ambiguity of the costs, environmental and human impacts to this county.**

**67/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR EDDIE REEVES**

(Agenda Item 17)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Eddie Reeves and seconded by Councillor Nigel Simpson.

Following debate, the motion was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

**This Council has not historically run its Spare Seats scheme for school bus places in an optimal way. Parents and carers have too often been left in an unenviable position further to changes, with elected members often left in the dark about changes affecting schools in their divisions.**

**According to the Oxford Mail (22 May 2024), there is a record low number of buses and coaches being used on Oxfordshire's roads.**

**Parental choice remains an important principle of the current education settlement and will remain so unless changed by an incoming government. Whilst such a principle remains, it is important that this Council does all it can to facilitate transport to preferred schools at a reasonable cost or on a revenue-neutral basis.**

**The Council's Spare Seats scheme has aimed to do just this. However, there appears to be increasing uncertainty as to whether it will continue in the same form. Indeed, letters to parents from this Council cancelling services have been sent as recently as 11 June 2024.**

**The Council requests a briefing for elected members on the current Spare Seats settlement and requests that the Leader and relevant Cabinet Member(s) bring a report to Cabinet (such report being subject to pre-scrutiny) to address how existing numbers of school bus places can be maintained and, where possible, increased. In the meantime, this Council requests Cabinet to work with parents, schools and bus companies to ensure continuing provision of affordable school bus places.**

**68/24 ITEMS 18 TO 29 MOTIONS BY MEMBERS**

The time being after 3.30 pm, these Motions were considered dropped in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....