

# **County Council**

**5 November 2024**

## **Agenda**



**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**

To: **Members of the County COUNCIL**

***Notice of a Meeting of the County Council***

**Tuesday, 5 November 2024 at 10.30 am**

**Council Chamber - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND**

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#). Please note, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Reeves".

Martin Reeves  
Chief Executive

October 2024

*Committee Officer:*

***Colm Ó Caomhánaigh***

*Tel: 07393 001096; E-Mail:*

*colm.oconomhanaigh@oxfordshire.gov.uk*

# AGENDA

**1. Minutes (Pages 1 - 10)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2024 (**CC1**) and to receive information arising from them.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

**3. Declarations of Interest - see guidance note**

Members are reminded that they must declare their interests orally at the meeting and specify (a) the nature of the interest and (b) which items on the agenda are the relevant items. This applies also to items where members have interests by virtue of their membership of a district council in Oxfordshire.

**4. Official Communications**

**5. Appointments**

To make any changes to the membership of scrutiny and other committees on the nomination of political groups and to note any changes to the Cabinet made by the Leader of the Council.

**6. Petitions and Public Address**

Members of the public who wish to speak on an item on the agenda at this meeting, or present a petition, can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection. Requests must be submitted no later than 9am one working day before the meeting i.e., 9am on Monday 4 November 2024. Requests to speak should be sent to [committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9am on the day of the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

**7. Questions with Notice from Members of the Public**

**8. Questions with Notice from Members of the Council**

**9. Report of the Cabinet (Pages 11 - 16)**

Report from Leader of the Council.

The report summarises the decisions from the Cabinet meetings on 17 September and 15 October 2024.

**10. Oxfordshire's Annual Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025 (Pages 17 - 62)**

Report by Director of Children's Services

Youth offending is a statutory and regulated service, and the local authority is required to produce an annual Youth Justice Plan. The local authority leads the provision and delivery of its youth justice service alongside key stakeholder partner organisations in supporting young people who are at risk of entering the youth justice system as well as those who are already in it.

**The Council is RECOMMENDED to adopt Oxfordshire's Annual Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025.**

**11. Calendar of Meetings 2025-26 (Pages 63 - 72)**

Report by Director of Law & Governance

The calendar of meetings for each civic year is presented to Council for approval.

**COUNCIL IS RECOMMENDED to approve the calendar of meetings for the 2025-26 Council year attached to the report as Annex 1.**

**12. Appointment of Independent Persons (Pages 73 - 76)**

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

The Council must seek the views of an Independent Person, and take them into account, before making its decision on any allegation investigated under the Member Code of Conduct and other disciplinary processes as outlined in the report.

**Council is RECOMMENDED**

- a) **To appoint Mr Nicholas Holt-Kentwell and Mr Andrew Mills-Hicks as Independent Persons for Oxfordshire County Council from 1 December 2024 to 30 November 2026. The appointments may be renewed once for a period of two years.**
- b) **To thank Mr Martyn Hocking for his service to the Council as an Independent Person from 14 July 2020 until 30 November 2024.**

**MOTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

*WOULD MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE THAT ANY AMENDMENTS TO MOTIONS WITH NOTICE MUST BE PRESENTED TO THE PROPER OFFICER IN WRITING BY*

9.00 AM ON THE FRIDAY BEFORE THE MEETING

**13. Motion by Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak**

In December Oxfordshire County Council removed seven beds from the Chiltern care home without any consultation with the GP's, Henley Town Council or the community of South Oxfordshire. This lack of consultation by the Council is unacceptable and must not be repeated.

These beds were originally provided as 'NHS beds'.

Following FOI requests to the Integrated Care Board Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire Berkshire West (ICB BOB) and the Council, it has been established that these beds are NHS beds funded by the ICB, this Council and the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. They should not therefore have been closed without full and proper public consultation.

Dr Broughton interim Chief Executive of the ICB BOB states 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 "The beds have not 'lost NHS funding', "The beds continued to be overseen by the Oxford University Hospital Hub team."

These beds are therefore NHS beds which cannot be removed without consultation.

This Council:

1. Deplores the beds' removal without said consultation.
2. Believes that a full and objective account as to why these beds, which serve a population of 140,000 of South Oxfordshire, were removed and what replacement measures have since been taken.

This Council requests that Cabinet:

3. Asks partners to seek to account for the reasons why the seven Chiltern Court Beds serving South Oxfordshire cannot be reinstated, bearing in mind the new measures that have since been in place and, in the absence of such an account, take steps to reinstate them.
4. Conduct all necessary public consultations.

*Note: The motion, if passed, would constitute the exercise of an executive function in which case it will be referred to the Cabinet together with any advice the Council may wish to give, in accordance with Rule 13.5.1 (i) of the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution.*

**14. Motion by Councillor Eddie Reeves**

This Council notes the government's decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments (WFPs). Age UK estimates that such changes could hit 2 million people across the country, some of whom badly need the money to stay warm this winter.

This Council resolves to:

1. Request that the Cabinet requests a report from officers with proposals for promoting a District awareness campaign working with our local NHS partners, Parish Councils and charitable, civic and religious groups, to encourage elderly residents who are eligible for means-tested benefits such as Pension Credit to register and claim them to ensure that they continue to receive WFPs this Winter and that those in need are sign-posted to the continuing Household Support Fund;
2. Request that the Leader of the Council writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging an impact assessment of the government's decision to means test WFPs and asking HM Treasury to examine transitional measures to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who are eligible for, but who do not – or cannot – claim, other benefits under current thresholds, are protected from fuel poverty.
3. Request that the Cabinet reprioritises monies within the Council's budget for 2024/5 held within the Budget Priority Reserve and/or within other relevant contingency funds or reserves, with a view to establishing an Oxfordshire Winter Fuel Payment Protection Fund, akin to the Oxfordshire Resident Support Scheme, to ensure that pensioners who are in genuine hardship, but who are not eligible for other government support, are helped through the Winter.

*Note: The motion, if passed, would constitute the exercise of an executive function in which case it will be referred to the Cabinet together with any advice the Council may wish to give, in accordance with Rule 13.5.1 (i) of the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution.*

## **15. Motion by Councillor Mark Cherry**

Council requests Cabinet to consider approving the Councils for Fair Tax declaration.

This commits Councils to

- Lead by example and demonstrate good practice in our tax conduct, right across our activities.
- Ensure IR35 is implemented robustly and contract workers pay a fair share of employment taxes.
- Not use offshore vehicles for the purchase of land and property, especially where this leads to reduced payments of stamp duty.
- Undertake due diligence to ensure that not-for-profit structures are not being used inappropriately by suppliers as an artificial device to reduce the payment of tax and business rates.
- Demand clarity on the ultimate beneficial ownership of suppliers, UK and overseas, and their consolidated profit & loss position, given lack of clarity could be strong indicators of poor financial probity and weak financial standing.
- Promote Fair Tax Mark certification especially for any business in which we have a significant stake and where corporation tax is due.
- Support Fair Tax Week events in the area, and celebrate the tax contribution made by responsible businesses that are proud to promote responsible tax conduct and pay their fair share of corporation tax.

Council also requests the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer supporting calls for urgent reform of UK procurement law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies.

*Note: The motion, if passed, would constitute the exercise of an executive function in which case it will be referred to the Cabinet together with any advice the Council may wish to give, in accordance with Rule 13.5.1 (i) of the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution.*

## **16. Motion by Councillor Jane Hanna**

This Council notes that Oxfordshire's High Needs Block deficit is estimated to be £21.3 million for 2023/24, while across England the deficit totals £3.16 billion. The statutory override currently in place allows local authorities to temporarily hold this debt off their balance sheets but this measure only delays addressing a growing financial crisis.

The reasons behind the High Needs Block deficit are complex and reflect deep, systemic issues within the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system. It is unrealistic to expect local authorities to manage such significant deficits in a short time frame without reform of the SEND system and baseline funding increases.

Current SEND funding is based on outdated need due to an inadequate funding formula. Education Health Care Plans have risen from 3000 in 2014 to more than 7000 in 2024. Without reform, if the statutory override were to be removed, a quarter of local authorities would be insolvent within one year and another quarter within three years.

This Council requests that the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Education to seek urgent clarity on the government's long-term plan for addressing the High Needs Block deficit. Council recommends that the letter should call for reform of the SEND system to ensure it is fit for purpose and provide appropriate baseline funding to ensure local authorities can sustainably manage their financial responsibilities without resorting to temporary fixes.

## **17. Motion by Councillor Ian Middleton**

In 2018 this Council passed a motion stating that it was opposed to the licensing of a badger cull in Oxfordshire.

When DEFRA announced that badger culling would be phased out by 2025, many people believed that the cull had ended. Sadly, culling in Oxfordshire intensified, seemingly with the intent of shooting as many badgers as possible before the deadline. Over 50% of the county is in the killing zones.

Numerous scientific reports show that epi-culling is ineffective as a control measure. However, DEFRA, Animal and Public Health Agenda, the TB Hub/NFU and British Cattle Veterinary Association, continue to advocate its use.

While it's welcomed that the new government has abandoned plans to allow up to 100% of badgers to be killed in some areas, there was a hope that they would cancel

the cull completely and focus on cattle based measures, including support for farmers over improved biosecurity, and a move towards testing and vaccination. However it seems likely that the cull will continue for at least the next 5 years meaning even more badgers in Oxfordshire will be senselessly slaughtered.

This Council therefore :

1. Re-affirms our opposition to badger culling which has been shown to be an ineffective control measure for Bovine tuberculosis.
2. Asks the Cabinet to consider a specific policy that badger culling will not be permitted on Council-owned land.
3. Requests that the Leader writes to DEFRA making clear our continued opposition to the cull and any extension of it in size and scope.

*Note: The motion, if passed, would constitute the exercise of an executive function in which case it will be referred to the Cabinet together with any advice the Council may wish to give, in accordance with Rule 13.5.1 (i) of the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution.*

## **18. Motion by Councillor Eddie Reeves**

This Council considered setting up a Congestion Commission as part of its last budget debate. This measure was not taken up at the time. However, this Council now considers that it is time for such a commission to be established.

This Council notes that its ambitious suite of traffic management measures is due to be rolled out, in large measure, before the next set of elections to Oxfordshire County Council in May 2025. These include Oxford's traffic filters and workplace parking tax, which are now largely enshrined in the Council's budget and will take place unless there is a change of administration next year.

If all such measures go ahead, Oxfordshire motorists could be hit by £57million in fines and charges over a five-year period broken down as follows:

- Expanded Zero Emissions Zone £25m;
- Traffic Filters (Four-sector Plan) £11m;
- Workplace Parking Tax £21m.

For clarity, the purpose of a Congestion Commission is not to water down or frustrate the administration's policies, for which there is budgetary provision. Rather, its object would be to assess the likely effectiveness of such measures and advise as to whether other measures might be given effect after next year's local elections as supplements or substitutes for such policies.

Council requests Cabinet to establish a Congestion Commission to comprise elected members, local businesspeople, public sector leaders from the Council's health, education and blue light partners, civil society and faith group leaders, and academics with relevant expertise in the field.



*Note: The motion, if passed, would constitute the exercise of an executive function in which case it will be referred to the Cabinet together with any advice the Council may wish to give, in accordance with Rule 13.5.1 (i) of the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution.*

## **19. Motion by Councillor Liam Walker**

This Council regrets that it has not historically managed the expenditure of section 106 and associated development agreements well.

Too often, monies destined for local facilities have been left dormant, with members and parish council colleagues being forced to make circuitous enquiries of Council officers and/or developers to ascertain the correct position in respect of funds, which have been allocated to local communities and yet have not been spent.

Following work undertaken by the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee and elsewhere at the Council's 'Localities' meetings, it has been suggested that as much as £278 million of public money has been unspent on improving local facilities.

This Council requests Cabinet to ensure that there is regular reporting of unspent development monies at all Localities meetings (such frequency to be determined by the relevant Chair) and requests that the Leader and relevant Cabinet Member produce a report for the Council's next appropriate Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings as to how such funds are to be more effectively spent.

*Note: The motion, if passed, would constitute the exercise of an executive function in which case it will be referred to the Cabinet together with any advice the Council may wish to give, in accordance with Rule 13.5.1 (i) of the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution.*

## **20. Motion by Councillor Michael O'Connor**

This Council notes:

- That Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) are designed to integrate health and care across geographical footprints;
- That ICSs rely on close collaboration between NHS bodies and local authorities with responsibility for social care and public health;
- That the Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (BOB) Integrated Care Board (ICB) is a critical partner within the ICS and is currently undergoing a restructuring process that has been met with extensive criticism from local authorities;
- That this restructuring has exposed differences between the status of health and social care bodies within the ICS;
- That the BOB Integrated Care Board (ICB) currently has only one representation from local authorities;
- That the BOB ICB constitution provides for only one local authority representative;
- That nearby ICBs have greater local authority representation, such as the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICS, which has four local authority

officers on its ICB.

This Council believes:

- That it is not possible for health and care bodies to be equal partners without fair representation;
- That the BOB ICB should have additional representatives from local authorities to ensure that health and care are treated equally within the broader framework of improving public health and wellbeing;

This Council resolves:

- To ask the Leader to write to the ICB requesting additional representatives for local authorities on the BOB ICB.

## **Councillors declaring interests**

### **General duty**

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

### **What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?**

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

### **Declaring an interest**

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

### **Members' Code of Conduct and public perception**

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

### **Members Code – Other registrable interests**

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships
- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.

- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

### **Members Code – Non-registrable interests**

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

# Agenda Item 1

## OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Tuesday, 10 September 2024 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at 3.25 pm

### **Present:**

Councillor Alison Rooke – in the Chair  
Councillor Mark Lygo – Vice Chair

### Councillors:

Mark Lygo	Ted Fenton	Michael O'Connor
Juliette Ash	Nick Field-Johnson	Glynis Phillips
Brad Baines	Donna Ford	Sally Povolotsky
Hannah Banfield	Andrew Gant	Susanna Pressel
David Bartholomew	Stefan Gawrysiak	Eddie Reeves
Robin Bennett	Andy Graham	Judy Roberts
Felix Bloomfield	Kate Gregory	David Rouane
Liz Brighthouse OBE	Jane Hanna OBE	Geoff Saul
Kevin Bulmer	Charlie Hicks	Les Sibley
Nigel Champken-Woods	John Howson	Nigel Simpson
Mark Cherry	Tony Ilott	Roz Smith
Andrew Coles	Bob Johnston	Ian Snowdon
Imade Edosomwan	Liz Leffman	Peter Stevens
Trish Elphinstone	Nick Leverton	Dr Pete Sudbury
Duncan Enright	Dan Levy	Bethia Thomas
Mohamed Fadlalla	Dr Nathan Ley	Michael Waine
Arash Fatemian	Ian Middleton	Liam Walker
Neil Fawcett	Jane Murphy	

*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.*

### **80/24 MINUTES**

(Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2024 were approved.

### **81/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

(Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillors Bearder, Corkin, Hannaby, Haywood, Mallon, van Mierlo, Miller and Reynolds.

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

**82/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE**

(Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Rouane declared that he was a director of OxLEP and was a member of the board of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, both of which were referenced in the papers for the meeting and he stated were non-pecuniary interests.

Councillors Graham, Leffman and Thomas also declared that they were members of the board of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

**83/24 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS**

(Agenda Item 4)

Council congratulated Oxfordshire students who have recently received their results for A levels, GCSEs and other specialist qualifications. The Chair also thanked all the teachers, schools and settings who have made it possible for students to achieve their goals.

Council was also notified of the passing in August of former Councillor Teresa Smith. She was first elected as the Labour Member for the then Oxford South Division in 1985 with a majority of 679 votes, returned again in 1989, and stood down ahead of the 1993 elections.

Councillors Brighouse and Howson paid tribute to former Councillor Smith's work on the Council and in particular on the issues facing disadvantaged children. Members stood for a minute's silence in memory.

The Chair thanked those who had attended the Chair's Charity Afternoon Tea at the Earth Trust, Long Wittenham, which raised £1,100 for Parkinsons UK, My Vision Oxfordshire and Earth Trust charities.

The Chair asked Members to take note of the following events:

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024 Carol Service with the Bishop of Dorchester, 6.30pm at St Michael's Church Abingdon

Friday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2025 Chair's charity civic dinner, 7pm in Oxford.

Events attended by the Chair of Council since the July Council meeting were listed in the Schedule of Business.

**84/24 APPOINTMENTS**

(Agenda Item 5)

Council approved the following change to the membership of the Audit & Governance Committee: Councillor Hicks to replace Councillor Baines

Council noted changes to committee membership given effect by the Monitoring Officer on 21 August 2024 under the delegated authority set out in the Constitution under Part 7.2, section 6.4 (I) using the functions under Section 16(1) and Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to give effect to the wishes of the political groups as regards membership of scrutiny committees and committees of the Council:

Pension Fund Committee - Councillor Stevens to fill the vacancy

Audit & Governance Committee - Councillor Johnston replaced Councillor Hanna.

## **85/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda Item 6)

### **The following petitions were received by Council**

Lesley McCourt: Remove the traffic restrictions in Crowell Road – 152 signatures

Pete Nellist: SEND Services – 669 signatures

Ella Buckingham: SEND Services – 83 signatures

Hannah Pearce: SEND Transport Services – 154 signatures

### **The following members of the public addressed Council:**

Item 13 Motion by Cllr Povolotsky:  
Claire Brenner

Item 17 Motion by Cllr Sudbury:  
Dr Steve Smith

Item 19 Motion by Cllr Povolotsky:  
Anna Gurl

The texts of speeches that have been supplied to us by the speakers are published alongside the minutes.

## **86/24 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

(Agenda Item 7)

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

## **87/24 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

(Agenda Item 8)

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

## **88/24 REPORT OF THE CABINET**

(Agenda Item 9)

Council received the report of Cabinet covering the Cabinet meeting on 16 July 2024.

On Item 1 Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership - Board Appointments, Councillor Brighthouse asked for a full report on the transfer of the functions of OxLEP to the County Council and how it will relate to the newly established Skills England.

Councillor Leffman responded that Cabinet was reviewing what the structure of OxLEP will be going forwards and she believed they had until October to make that decision. The Skills Bootcamp had been very successful. The aim was to provide upskilling for people to have the opportunity for better jobs especially in the green economy and retrofitting homes for example.

On item 2, Treasury Management Annual Performance 2023/24, Councillor Bartholomew questioned whether further LOBO (Lender Option Borrowed Option) loans would be called-in and what impact this would have on the County Council's finances. Councillor Levy stated that he would ask officers for more details, but that with interest rates falling, the impact was expected to be positive.

On item 3, Business Management & Monitoring Report - May 2024, Councillors Baines and Povolotsky asked if the 20% increase in the charges for the Home to School Transport Spare Seats Scheme was a barrier to working class children getting the best education and if it was not higher than general inflation in the sector. Councillor Levy responded that he did not believe it was a class issue – all children had to get to school. The Council would not charge any more than it had to, given increased operating costs of the services. He stated that the Council would continue to work with the providers and schools to ensure they get best value for money.

Councillor Enright asked if the data on road defects could be broken down by locality and if Members could have the opportunity to provide feedback. Councillor Levy welcomed the suggestion and responded that he would take it up with officers.

Councillor Phillips asked about public support for Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and traffic filters and if the Cabinet will continue to implement them without public support. Councillor Levy responded that he believed that the policies being followed were popular and that the public will have an opportunity to express their views in the Council election in May 2025.

Councillor Bartholomew asked the Cabinet Member to provide details of the steps being taken to recover debt owed to the County Council. Councillor Levy promised to send a written response.



On item 4, Capital Programme Update and Monitoring Report- July 2024, Councillor Baines asked why the additional £4m SEN Capital Grant has not been used to meet growing SEN demand across the county. Councillor Levy responded that the money was put aside by this Council before the amount of the funding from the Government was known. When the Council receives money from the Government it is used as intended.

Councillor Cherry asked when work would start on the new library in Banbury. Councillor Levy responded that he understood fitting out was imminent and that the people of Banbury would have the long-awaited library in the near future.

Councillor Enright asked if there had been any update from Homes England on HIF2 (Housing Infrastructure Fund). Councillor Levy responded that the engagement with Homes England had been positive and it was close to the point where the Council would be able to commit.

Councillor Bartholomew asked how the Cabinet Member could justify the forecast £1m in-year increase in cost for Zero Emission Zones referred to in the report. Councillor Levy responded that a recent report to Oxford City Council demonstrated huge advances in air quality in the city and he looked forward to further clean air measures going forwards.

On item 5, Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF1) - Amendments to the Grant Determination Agreement, Councillor Hicks asked if Cabinet would take on board the vision-led approach advocated in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework which has gone out to consultation. Councillor Roberts confirmed that the Cabinet would respond positively to that aspect of the framework as it was consistent with this Council's LTCP5 (Local Transport and Connectivity Plan).

Councillor Reeves reflected upon the increases to the taxpayer because of the delay to the scheme and asked how much of this would affect local taxpayers in Oxfordshire. Councillor Roberts responded that she would provide a written answer.

Councillor Bennett asked if the Cabinet Member would commit to a review of the forecasts for HIF1 at the end of the process and if she could give him information on the S106 monies that will be available in his division. Councillor Roberts agreed that there would be a lessons-learned exercise for HIF1. She added that the Council was working towards a system whereby Members could check the Section 106 monies in their area online.

**89/24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL PERFORMANCE 2023/24**  
(Agenda Item 10)

Council had before it for noting the Treasury Management Annual Performance 2023/24 report - the final report for the financial year 2023/24 and setting out the position at 31 March 2024.

The report was moved by Councillor Dan Levy and seconded by Councillor Liz Leffman.

Following discussion, Council noted the report.

**90/24 PROPOSED LEADERSHIP RESTRUCTURING - TIERS 3 AND 4**  
(Agenda Item 11)

**RESOLVED: that the public be excluded for the duration of item 11 since it is likely that if they were present during that item there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and specified below in relation to those items and since it is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

The report was moved by Councillor Liz Leffman, Chair of the Remuneration Committee, and seconded by Councillor Pete Sudbury.

Following discussion in private, the recommendations in the exempt report were approved with 34 votes in favour, 13 against and 3 abstentions.

**91/24 URGENT MOTION BY COUNCILLOR SALLY POVOLOTSKY**  
(Agenda Item )

The Chair stated that she had decided to accept a proposed urgent motion for the Council meeting.

Under Council Procedure Rule 2.2. (xiii) Council will “consider any business which, by reason of special circumstances which shall be specified in the minutes, the Chair agrees should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.”

The motion proposed to respond to a decision by the Secretary of State on 4 September 2024 to approve the Thames Water Resources Management Plan. This was announced after the agenda for this Council meeting had been published. A period of 60 days has been given for feedback which will expire before the next Council meeting on 5 November 2024.

At the Council meeting on 9 July 2024, Council passed a motion of no confidence in Thames Water and reiterated its opposition to the planned design for SESRO (South East Strategic Reservoir Option) with 29 votes in favour; none against and 13 abstentions. Council Motions in November 2021 and December 2023 opposing the SESRO plans were passed unanimously.

The Chair believed that these reasons amounted to special circumstances that justified taking this motion as a matter of urgency.

The motion was proposed by Councillor Povolotsky and seconded by Councillor Gawrysiak.

Following debate, the motion was carried with 37 votes in favour; 14 against and 0 abstentions.

**RESOLVED:**

This Council notes that on Wednesday 4th September the Secretary of State approved the Thames Water Resources Management Plan (TWRMP) despite community and council opposition, technical data concerns and damning comments from the Environment Agency.

This Council has passed many motions of concern including a vote of no confidence in Thames Water and we continue to express our concerns that the TWRMP is not fit for purpose and its schemes need independent scrutiny and review, including Waste Management, leaks and the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) proposal.

This Council notes that Thames Water has 60 days to take into account feedback and we ask the Leader of the Council and the relevant Cabinet Member to urgently ensure that this Council's voice and that of our residents are heard and that our recommendations have been taken into account.

We reiterate our objection to the plan on the table and continue to call for a public inquiry into the plan, and ask the Leader to request an urgent audience with the Secretary of State to ensure Oxfordshire's voice is heard.

**92/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR KATE GREGORY**

(Agenda Item 12)

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Kate Gregory and seconded by Councillor Bob Johnston.

"The Two Child limit to benefit payments was introduced by the Conservative Government in 2017 and is supported by the current Labour Government. It prevents families from claiming Child Tax Credit or Universal Credit for more than 2 children in the household.

Council notes the recent research conducted by the End Child Poverty Coalition which has found that:

- 1.5 million children in the UK live in households subject to the two-child limit on benefit payments. That is roughly one-in-ten children in the UK.
- In 2023/24 the two-child limit cost families up to £3,235 per child each year.
- Scrapping the two-child limit would lift 250,000 children out of poverty overnight, and significantly reduce the level of poverty that a further 850,000 children live in.

- Scrapping the two-child limit would cost £1.3 billion, however it is estimated that child poverty costs the economy £39 billion each year.

In Oxfordshire 10,850 children in 3050 households are currently affected by the two-child limit to benefit payments.

Council believes that the two-child limit is a cruel policy that should be scrapped

Council resolves to:

- Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister expressing Oxfordshire County Council's strong belief that the two child limit to benefit payments should be scrapped.
- Ask the Leader to write to all MPs covering the Oxfordshire area, asking them to commit their public support."

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Baines and seconded by Councillor Charlie Hicks.

~~"The Two Child limit to benefit payments was introduced by the Conservative Government in 2017 and is supported by the current Labour Government. #~~  
**This legacy of 14 years of Conservative Government** prevents families from claiming Child Tax Credit or Universal Credit for more than 2 children in the household.

Council notes the recent ~~research conducted by the End Child Poverty Coalition which~~ has found that:

- 1.5 million children in the UK live in households subject to the two-child limit on benefit payments. That is roughly one-in-ten children in the UK.
- In 2023/24 the two-child limit cost families up to £3,235 per child each year.
- Scrapping the two-child limit would lift 250,000 children out of poverty overnight, and significantly reduce the level of poverty that a further 850,000 children live in.
- ~~Scrapping the two-child limit would cost £1.3 billion, however it is estimated that child poverty costs the economy £39 billion each year.~~

In Oxfordshire 10,850 children in 3050 households are currently affected by the two-child limit to benefit payments.

Council believes:

- **Reckless decisions by the former Government in supporting unfunded spending commitments has left a black hole in our nation's finances.**

- **Governments and political parties should never commit to unfunded spending commitments, this threatens the stability of our economy.**
- ~~T~~hat the two-child limit is a ~~cruel policy that~~ should be scrapped **once the fiscal environment allows.**

Council resolves to:

- Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the ~~Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister~~ **Minister for the Cabinet Office** expressing Oxfordshire County Council's strong belief that the two child limit to benefit payments should be scrapped **welcoming the establishment of a new child poverty unit and a ministerial taskforce to break down barriers to opportunity for every child.**
- Ask the Leader to write to all MPs covering the Oxfordshire area, asking them to commit their public support **for these measures."**

Following debate, the amendment was lost with 14 votes in favour; 35 against and 0 abstentions.

Following further debate on the original motion, it was lost with 22 votes in favour; 28 against and 0 abstentions.

#### **93/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR SALLY POVOLOTSKY**

(Agenda Item 13)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Sally Povolotsky and seconded by Councillor Eddie Reeves.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Eddie Reeves and seconded by Councillor Nigel Simpson. The amendment was accepted by the proposer of the motion.

Following debate on the motion as amended, it was carried with 50 in favour; 0 against and 1 abstention.

#### **RESOLVED:**

In September 2023, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission declared their judgment post inspection that the Local Area Partnership (LAP) had multiple systemic failures.

Despite the Priority Action Plan (PAP), the Council is failing to meaningfully engage with **elected members on a cross-party basis** or and capture the voice of **families affected and the user**, our young people.

Council calls on Cabinet to consider;

4. ~~M~~ **More** ~~M~~meaningfully involving young people and youth organisations throughout all policy-making processes within SEND improvement

and the PAP. ~~Co-management and co-creation structures are the best way to ensure direct participation.~~

- 2. Any consultations or engagement with young people by this council must have a visible public follow-up to the outcomes **and tangible metrics to ensure outcomes are delivered.**
- 3. All Council policies ~~and frameworks~~ that affect young people, must include an impact assessment, and ensure ~~there are~~ **that reasonable** mitigation measures **are put** in place ~~for those youth groups that might be negatively impacted by a new policy or framework.~~
- 4. Ensuring that where appropriate all future events, in person/online, run by or funded by OCC, especially those related to the PAP, LAP, and SEND improvement, are open to ~~all~~ **appropriate** young people with the attendance of their parent or carer.
- 5. Launching a rapid task force for the voice of the young person and SEND users, and task them to create a framework for a Youth Forum within ~~3~~ **three** months ~~of this meeting date.~~
- 6. The leader to appoint a SEND Champion **from an opposition group** to enable ~~seldom heard~~ **that a wider range of** voices in the SEND community ~~to are able to~~ feed into SEND improvement and services, and that **such** person ~~to sits~~ on the SEND Improvement board.

**94/24 ITEMS 14 TO 20 MOTIONS BY MEMBERS**

The time being close to 3.30 pm, the remaining motions were considered dropped in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....

**Divisions-N/A**

**COUNTY COUNCIL – 5 November 2024**

## **REPORT OF THE CABINET**

***Cabinet Member: Deputy Leader with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations***

### **1. Local Aggregate Assessment**

*(Cabinet: 15 October 2024)*

Under the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2023 (NPPF), Mineral Planning Authorities should prepare an annual Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA). The NPPF stated that the LAA should ‘forecast future demand, based on a rolling average of 10 years’ sales data and other relevant information, and an assessment of all supply options.’

Cabinet had before it a report on the Local Aggregates Assessment (LAA) which set the level of mineral provision for the County Council as the Mineral Planning Authority, to ensure an appropriate supply for Sand and Gravel and Crushed Rock. This provision level, known as the Aggregates Provision Rate (APR) was based on an assessment between the supply and demand of aggregates in Oxfordshire and forecast demand.

Cabinet approved the Local Aggregate Assessment as presented.

### **2. Hyer Power project**

*(Cabinet: 15 October 2024)*

Cabinet had before it a report on the Hyer Power Project, an initiative to develop hydrogen fuel-cell powered emergency vehicles, including a prototype fire engine and potentially other specialised vehicles including ambulances. The project was fully funded by a £3.9M grant from APC/Innovate UK, with Oxfordshire County Council receiving £1.56M to cover all its costs.

Cabinet approved the procurement of a hydrogen production and refuelling rig that will be fully funded by an external grant and will be installed on the Highways Depot at Drayton.

***Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care***

### **3. Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2023-24**

*(Cabinet: 15 October 2024)*

Cabinet had before it a report summarising the work of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB) and its partners over the course of the year 2023-24

Members raised a number of issues covered in the report including recruitment and retention of staff within adult social care, partnership working, prison early release scheme and the voice of service users.

Cabinet noted the report.

### ***Cabinet Member: Children, Education and Young People's Services***

#### **4. Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2023-24**

*(Cabinet: 15 October 2024)*

Cabinet considered a report which highlighted the findings from the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board's annual report on the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Oxfordshire.

Members raised a number of issues covered by the report including the timely flow of information for children placed outside Oxfordshire, the effectiveness of multi-agency working, cultural support for families, school attendance, and elective home education.

Cabinet noted the report.

### ***Cabinet Member: Community and Corporate Services***

#### **5. Workforce Report and Staffing Data - Quarter 1 - April to June 2024**

*(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)*

Cabinet had before it a report which provided the workforce profile for April to June (Q1) 2024/25 including an overview of headcount, agency spend, sickness, turnover and other relevant management information and performance indicators (set out in Appendix A). This report also provided an update on the Our People & Culture strategy which aimed to address the trends identified in this report, but importantly help the Council's ambitions to become an Employer of Choice.

During discussion, a member referred to the apprentices who had won awards and emphasised the importance of recognizing their achievements. He also commented on the need to distinguish between agency staff engaged for specific projects and those who were covering established posts which were vacant.

Cabinet noted the report



## ***Cabinet Member: Finance***

### **6. Ethical Procurement Policy**

*(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)*

Cabinet had before it a report on a proposed Ethical Procurement Policy. The purpose of the policy was to outline the Council's position on various aspects of ethics in procurement as well as to provide appropriate detail on how the Council approached such matters and how it expected its suppliers and potential suppliers to approach such matters. The policy included a large section on modern slavery and other areas such as expectations for suppliers, responsibilities of staff, fair employment practices in the supply chain, as well as reporting and whistleblowing.

Cabinet approved the policy as recommended.

### **7. Business Management and Monitoring Report - July 2024**

*(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)*

Cabinet considered a report presenting the July 2024 performance, risk, and finance position for the council. The business management reports were part of a suite of performance, risk and budget documents which set out the council's ambitions, priorities, and financial performance.

Members referred, in particular, to the forecast deficit in the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The timing of the general election had affected the announcement of the overall DSG, potentially impacting school budgeting cycles

Cabinet noted the report and approved the financial adjustments set out in the recommendations.

### **8. Treasury Management Quarter 1 Report 2024/25**

*(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)*

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) 'Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021' required that the committee to which some treasury management responsibilities are delegated, would receive regular monitoring reports on treasury management activities and risks. Cabinet had before it a report which set out the position at 30 June 2024.

The Council operated within its prudential indicators, with no new external debt taken or repaid during the quarter. The report indicated a strong financial performance in terms of investment returns, which helped offset some overspends in other areas.

Cabinet noted the council's treasury management activity at the end of the first quarter of 2024/25.

## **9. Capital Programme Approvals - September 2024**

*(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)*

Cabinet had before it a report setting out change requests requiring approval that would be incorporated into the agreed Capital Programme and included in the next update to the programme for Cabinet in October 2024.

Cabinet approved the following: -

- a) an increase in budget of £5.445m for the Tramway Accessibility Improvements scheme, to be funded from S106 developer contributions and reallocating funding from the Housing and Growth Deal.
- b) an increase of £1.300m for Banbury Road Roundabout to be funded from the Housing and Growth Deal.
- c) a request to forward fund £15.300m for third party delivered projects at Oxford Rewley Road Fire Station and Oxford Grandpont Depot site.

Cabinet also noted the latest estimated funding gap of £6.745m on the current balanced capital programme due which will be addressed through the annual business planning process and Capital Programme for Council approval in February 2025.

## **10. Budget and Business Planning Report**

*(Cabinet: 15 October 2024)*

Cabinet had before it a report on the budget and business planning process for 2025/26. It explained the process for developing and agreeing the budget for 2025/24 and the assumptions on which the Council's current medium term financial strategy (MTFS) was based. It also provided updates on information arising from government and other announcements plus the on-going impact of challenges apparent in 2024/25 and new or emerging financial issues for 2025/26 and beyond which would be incorporated into the new MTFS.

Cabinet endorsed the report and approved the budget and business planning process for 2025/26. Members also approved a three-year period for the medium-term financial strategy to 2027/28 and ten-year period for the capital programme to 2034/35 and noted the requirement for the council to set a sustainable balanced budget which shows how income will equal spending plans.

## **11. Capital Programme and Monitoring Report**

*(Cabinet: 15 October 2024)*

Cabinet had before it the second capital programme update and monitoring report for 2024/25 which set out the monitoring position based on activity to the end of August 2024. The report also updated the Capital Programme approved by Cabinet on 16 July 2024 taking into account additional funding and new schemes. The updated programme also incorporated changes agreed through the Capital Programme Approval Reports to Cabinet during the year as well as new funding.

Cabinet noted the report and approved the following: -

- a) the submission of a bid for £2.800m to Sustrans T8 (pending potential funding from Active Travel England) for a number of schemes to improve the National Cycle Network and to note the total match funding of £0.355m required. Match funding will be met by a combination of Community Infrastructure Levy funds, S106 funding and corporate resources.
- b) the submission of a bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme: Phase 4 (PSDS4) to support the programme to implement decarbonisation measures across the corporate estate.
- c) the carry forward of £1.651m from the current Early Years Programme and include new funding of £1.286m received from the Department for Education Childcare Expansion Capital Grant to support the extension of early years childcare and wraparound provision for children in working families.

## ***Cabinet Members: Infrastructure & Development Strategy & Transport Management***

### **12. Sustainable School Travel Strategy 2024-25**

*(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)*

Cabinet had before it a report on the proposed Sustainable School Travel Strategy for 2024-25. The report set out Oxfordshire County Council's strategy for promoting sustainable travel to and from school and college across Oxfordshire.

Local authorities had a duty to promote the use of sustainable travel on journeys to and from places of education in their area. This duty applied to travel to and from: schools, further education institutions, and 16-19 academies. It was a further requirement for local authorities to prepare a document containing their strategy each academic year and to publish it by such a time as may be described.

The strategy aimed to promote sustainable travel choices among school children, integrating detailed data on school travel choices and preferences. It included comprehensive data on current travel modes and preferences for alternative sustainable options, emphasizing the ambition to align with people's preferences for sustainable travel. The report also identified barriers to sustainable travel and outlined solutions, including improving infrastructure and providing more options for walking, cycling, and public transport.

Cabinet approved the draft Sustainable School Travel Strategy for adoption and publication on the County Council's website.

## ***Cabinet Member: Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety***

### **13. Community Wealth Building - Action Plan and Next Steps**

*(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)*

Cabinet had before it a report regarding policy approaches to tackling deprivation and financial inequality in Oxfordshire over the long term. Community Wealth Building (CWB) was an approach that sought to 'build wealth' in local communities by reimagining how place-based organisations could maximise the local benefit of their economic activities. The 2024/25 budget had allocated funding specifically for the development of a programme of CWB actions, and a CWB strategy. The report highlighted the progress of the programme, and the plans for how the entire budget would be spent.

Cabinet approved the project allocation of the existing budget for the Community Wealth Building Programme and agreed the principles laid out in the first iteration of the social value definition statement for incorporation into operational policy and strategy.

### **14. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Report for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service**

*(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)*

Cabinet considered a report which provided an update on the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue HMI report, focusing on areas required for improvement and the approach developed to ensure robust governance and performance reporting against the agreed action plan. This included the development of the fire improvement pipeline and the Fire Improvement Board.

The inspection of the Fire and Rescue Service had identified 26 areas for improvement and acknowledged 32 positive statements about the service's strengths.

Cabinet noted the report and approved the suggested approach of monitoring improvements.

**LIZ LEFFMAN**

Leader of the Council

November 2024

## Divisions Affected - All

### Full Council 5 November 2024

#### Oxfordshire's Annual Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025 Report by Director of Children's Services

#### RECOMMENDATION

1. The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to
  - a) Adopt Oxfordshire's Annual Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025

#### Executive Summary

2. Working to prevent young people away from entering the youth justice system, and to support those going through it towards change for more positive outcomes is critical, complex, and detailed work. The local authority leads the provision and delivery of its youth justice service alongside key stakeholder partner organisations in supporting young people who are at risk of entering the youth justice system as well as those who are already in it.
3. Youth offending is a statutory and regulated service, and the local authority is required to produce an annual Youth Justice Plan. This report requests the Council to consider for its approval and adoption of Oxfordshire's Annual Youth Justice Plan 2024- 025.
4. The Annual Youth Justice Plan is a statutory requirement, and therefore must be agreed by Full Council with comments from scrutiny and endorsement by Informal Cabinet that have occurred.
5. The Plan was discussed at a meeting of the Education & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 20 September 2024.

#### Oxfordshire's Annual Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025

6. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Plan 2024-25 was agreed following consultation by Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Management Partnership Management Board. It covers both strategic and operational delivery arrangements, and the agreed key strategic priorities for 2024/5.

## Corporate Policies and Priorities

7. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice plan aligns with delivery of the council's corporate strategy priorities to: Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire and create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.

## Financial Implications

8. The production of Oxfordshire's Annual Youth Justice Plan is a requirement of the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) grant terms and conditions. The grant is provided by the Youth Justice Board under its power in section 41 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Comments checked by:

Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer  
[Lorna.Baxter@Oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Lorna.Baxter@Oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## Legal Implications

9. Section 40(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 ("the Act") provides that: (1) It shall be the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the relevant persons and bodies, to formulate and implement for each year a plan (a "youth justice plan") setting out: (a) how youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded; and (b) how the youth offending team or teams established by them (whether alone or jointly with one or more other local authorities) are to be composed and funded, how they are to operate, and what functions they are to carry out.
10. In accordance with Regulation 4(1) and Schedule 3 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 the Plan is to be referred to Full Council for ultimate consideration and adoption.
11. There are no direct potential legal implications contained within this report.

Comments checked by:

Naomi Bentley-Walls, Head of Law – Childcare,  
[naomi.bentleylawson@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:naomi.bentleylawson@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## Staff Implications

12. There are no direct HR implications contained within this report.

Comments checked by:

Nazia Turley- HR Business Partner (Children's Social Care and Business Admin support- seconded)  
[Nazia.turley@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Nazia.turley@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## Equality & Inclusion Implications

13. Oxfordshire's youth justice services for children remains committed to addressing discrimination of minoritised children and being sensitive in its response to the protected characteristics of all children receiving Youth Justice Services in Oxfordshire.

## Sustainability Implications

14. There is no current sustainability implications associated with either the contents or recommendations of this report

## Risk Management

15. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Management Board's Risk Register is monitored at quarterly as set out in its Annual Youth Justice plan on page 19.

Lisa Lyons  
Director of Children Education and Families]

Annex: Oxfordshire's Annual Youth Justice Plan 2024-2025

Other Documents: Education and Young People's Scrutiny Committee minutes of meeting 20<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Contact Officer: Jennifer Sergeant  
Head of Youth Justice, Exploitation, Leaving Care and UASC&YP, [jennifer.sergeant@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:jennifer.sergeant@oxfordshire.gov.uk)  
07554 103424

October 2024

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# Youth Justice Annual Plan

<b>Service</b>	Oxfordshire Youth Justice and Exploitation Service (YJES)
<b>Head of Service</b>	Jennifer Sergeant
<b>Chair of YJ Board</b>	John Drew

## Contents

1. Introduction, vision and strategy
2. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements
3. Update on previous year
  - Progress on priorities
  - Performance over previous year
  - Risks and issues
4. Plan for forthcoming year
  - Child First
  - Resources and Services
  - Board Development
  - Workforce Development
  - Evidence-based practice and innovation
  - Evaluation
  - Priorities for the coming year:
    - I. Standards for Children
    - II. Service Development
5. National priority areas
  - Over-represented children
  - Policing
  - Prevention
  - Diversion
  - Education
  - Restorative approaches and victims
  - Serious violence, exploitation and contextual safeguarding
  - Detention in police custody
  - Remands
  - Use of custody and constructive resettlement
  - Working with families
6. Sign off, submission and approval

Appendix 1: Service structure

## 1. Introduction, Vision and Strategy

### Chair's Forward

I have great pleasure in presenting to you the updated 2024-2025 Youth Justice Plan for Oxfordshire which has been produced by the County's Youth Justice and Exploitation Service and has the approval of the multi-agency partnership that oversees the work of the service.

The plan constitutes a refinement on the previous years' plan. Our overarching priorities remain:

- reducing our First Time Entrants rate;
- tackling exploitation of children in Oxfordshire;
- tackling serious youth violence in Oxfordshire; and
- improving outcomes for children with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) in the criminal justice system in Oxfordshire.

Reflecting on these continuing challenges we have refined our plans in each of these areas, as well as in other parts of our work, in the light of our experience over the past year. At our recent away day with the staff team the Management Board reflected on these priorities and left the event with renewed enthusiasm to tackle these issues.

For now, I will just reflect on reducing our First Time Entrants rate, the proportion of children formally entering the youth justice system in Oxfordshire having committed an offence. Years of experience has taught us that this is a key performance indicator, one of only three principal issues. Diverting children away from crime and the criminal justice system was one of the founding ambitions of the youth justice system forty years ago and in recent times Oxfordshire's performance has been less impressive than that of comparable areas. Drawing on best practice from elsewhere we are determined to turn this position around, and our staff will be analysing in detail the question of whether we are missing opportunities to put children on a different pathway and with a different mindset and personal identity than their initial offending might be predicting.

Resourcing throughout public services is tight and something that the Board keeps under close review. We want to ensure that our staff have the best possible support to do this most challenging role. As well as proper training and supervision, this also means making sure that workloads are sustainable. I commend the plan to you and committed the Management Board to keep its progress under close review over the coming year.

*John Drew CBE*

*Independent Chair, Oxfordshire Youth Justice Management Board*

## Introduction

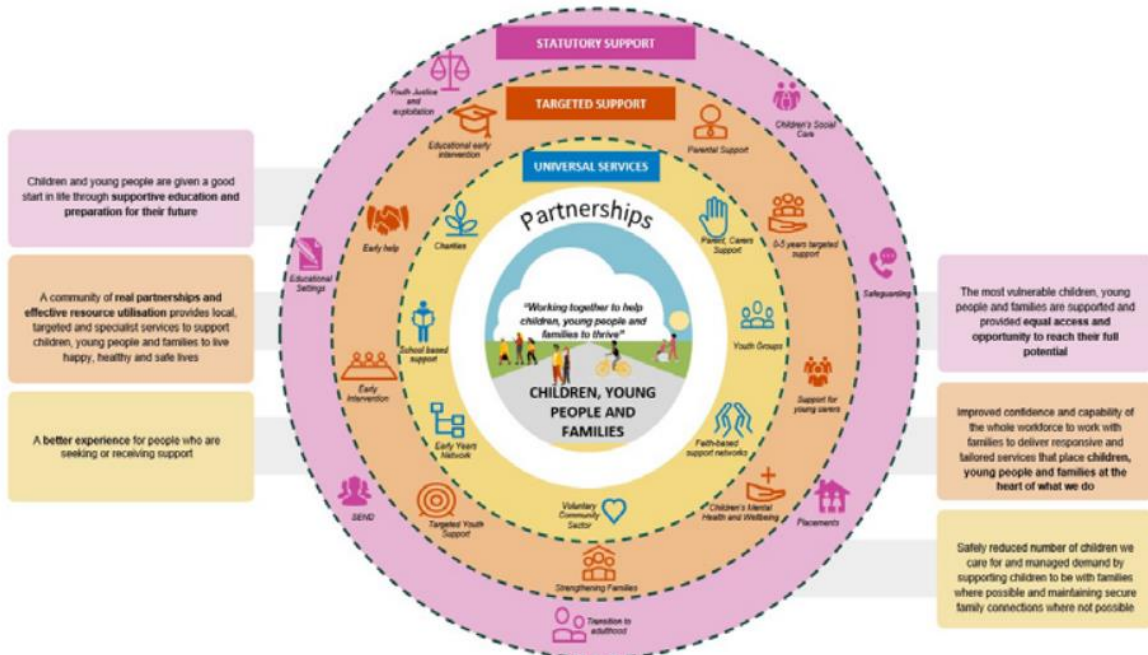
1. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice & Exploitation Service has the highest aspirations for Oxfordshire's children, and we will support them to achieve their full potential whilst protecting them, their families and the public from harm. We will achieve this by working in a restorative and relational way:
  - Listening to children, parents/carers, victims of crime and our communities and learning from their feedback
  - Providing solutions to youth justice issues at an individual and local level
  - Working in partnership to ensure the best possible outcomes for our children and victims of crime and to ensure that their holistic needs are met
  - Identify and address disparity and disproportionality within the youth justice system locally
2. This Youth Justice Plan 2024-25 has been developed in consultation with members of staff and members of Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Management Board. The plan reflects our 'Child First' thinking with ambitions to improve the life chances of children in all our communities through an integrated and effective partnership approach.
3. Children and their families/carers come from a wide range of diverse backgrounds with varied lived experience that shape their identity. We understand our responsibility in responding to diversity through inclusive, anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice. Improving our engagement with children and families/carers will support them to feel more empowered in their interactions with our organisations and build trust and confidence in our services. Our strengths-based and person-centred approach recognises the rights and needs of our children and families, balancing these with the rights and needs of victims of crime.
4. This plan represents our commitment in Oxfordshire to evaluate our values and beliefs about the quality of provision for children who offend in Oxfordshire and ensures that Child First principles are embedded in all that we do.

## Vision & Strategy

5. Our organisational values underpin everything we do and say. They mean we are:
  - Always learning
  - Kind and caring
  - Treating each other equally and have integrity in all we do
  - Taking responsibility
  - Daring to do things differently

'The Oxfordshire Way' for children's services sets out our strategic direction. Our vision is at the centre of everything that we do we do, in providing children and families with the right support at the right time.

## The Oxfordshire Way



6. We are committed to provide the right support by the right person at the earliest opportunity to intervene early and divert children away from the Criminal Justice System. We recognise the interdependencies of the youth justice agenda with safeguarding and early help strategies within our local Safeguarding Children's agenda and commit to ensuring alignment around prevention and diversion for children at risk of entering the criminal justice help that meets their needs at the earliest opportunity.

7. Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board vision and statement of intent is:

We will work together to help children, young people, and families to thrive. We will ensure children, young people and families are safe and feel safe, by working in partnership. We will:

- Ask, not assume what is happening in their life and what would help
- Act by seeking to understand their lived experiences and work with them
- Discuss with them their choices and how they can safely feel in control
- Respect and value them, and the people who care about them
- Work as a team – with them, their family and with each other as professionals – so that everyone's ideas and knowledge are used
- Be honest with them and communicate clearly in a way that they can understand
- Focus on who and what helps them feel safer, and where they feel safer
- Work with them at their pace wherever possible – but if things aren't improving fast enough, or if we need to immediately protect them, to act quickly and decisively.

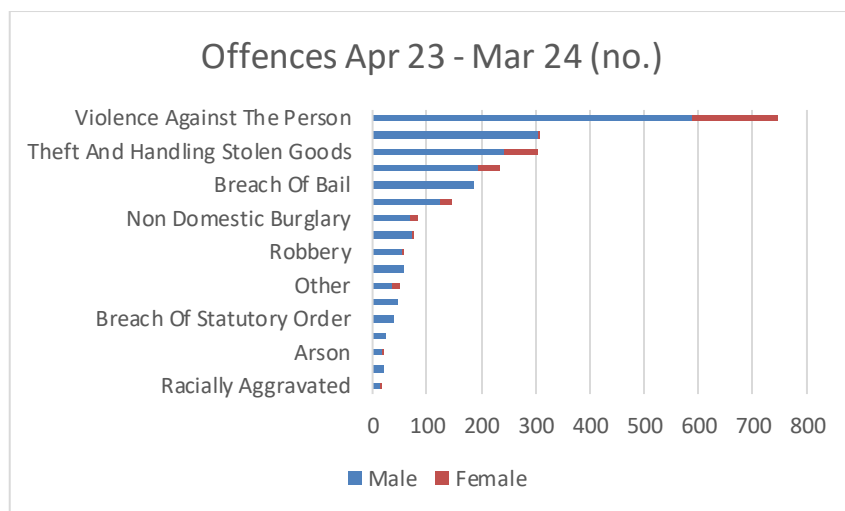
## Local Context

8. The Office for National Statistics mid-year youth population estimate for children aged 0-19 in 2022 was 168,300. The number of Oxfordshire children aged between 10 – 19, and, therefore, over the age of criminal responsibility, was 88,400 (Oxfordshire JSNA, 2023).
9. During 2023/24, 214 children received a caution or a sentence; 173 of these children were white, 19 of mixed heritage, 8 were Black, 7 Asian and 7 identified as having another ethnicity type. 163 of these children were male and 52 females. The increase in the population, especially numbers of young people, is connected to levels of house-building and rapid growth. Oxford City has seen an increase in youth population aged between 5-14 years old between the 2011 – 2021 census.
10. Similar to national trends, Oxfordshire has an increasing percentage of children with social, emotional, and mental health needs. The number of mental health referrals for young people has increased, especially for those aged between 10-19 years old.
11. Oxfordshire's central England location is the most rural county in the Southeast region. The majority (60%) of Oxfordshire's population are resident in Oxford City and main towns. The remaining 40% live in smaller towns and villages. Despite Oxfordshire's relative affluence there are wide inequalities in health and well-being. The cost of living in many cases are above the England average. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2019) Oxfordshire was ranked the 10<sup>th</sup> least deprived of 151 upper-tier local authorities in England. Oxfordshire has areas of deprivation, in parts of Oxford City and Banbury, the two largest urban centres in the county.
12. In 2021 there were 168, 000 (23%) people in Oxfordshire from an ethnic minority background, which has increased by 16% (107,000) since 2011. The Ethnic Disparity Toolkit from the Youth Justice Board (YJB) for the year ending March 2023, show's Oxfordshire over-representation of black and mixed heritage children in the offending population during 2023/4. The tool identifies where a particular ethnic group is over-represented in the youth offending cohort and the level of over-representation is statistically significant. The data excludes children where the ethnic group is not known. Due to small numbers the Youth Justice Board decided to aggregate data for children from the Asian, Black, Mixed and other ethnic groups into the ethnic minority group.

Ethnic group	2022/23 Offending Population	Share of total <sup>(1)</sup>	2021 Census 10-17 population by ethnic group	Share of total % <sup>(2)</sup>	% Point Difference	Over represented, offending pop >10 and statistically Significant
Asian	7	4%	4,930	7%	-3%	No
Black	12	7%	1,912	3%	4%	Yes
Mixed	21	12%	4,426	7%	5%	Yes
Other	2	1%	1,055	2%	0%	No
Ethnic minority groups <sup>(3)</sup>	42	23%	12,323	18%	5%	No
White	139	77%	55,391	82%	-5%	No

13. The over-representation of black young people in Oxfordshire's offending population remains unchanged since 2022, however over-representation of children of dual heritage children is a new pattern emerging for our focus to address and meet needs.

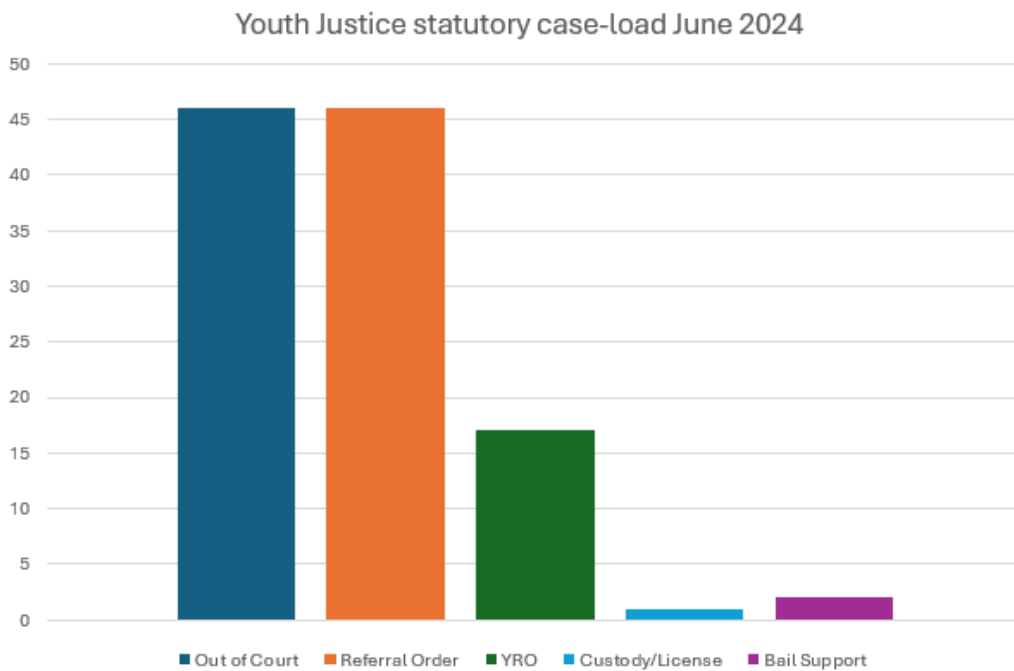
14. During 2023/4 the most common offence type was 'Violence Against the Person' followed by 'Drugs' and then 'Theft and Handling Stolen Goods', identical to last year's figures. Girls made up 21% of 'Violence Against the Person' offences, representing a decrease of 2% from the preceding year. 33% of all offences were committed by 16-year-olds, 31% by 17-year-olds. 15% were by 14-year-olds.



15. At the end of June 2024, Oxfordshire Youth Justice was working 112 with children in the statutory caseload.

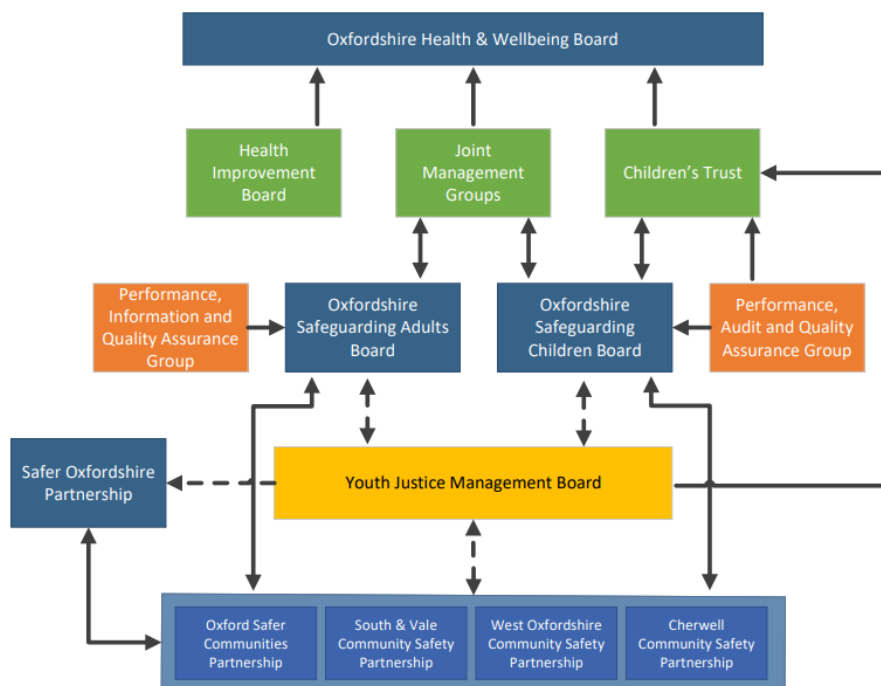
Intervention	Number of children
Out of Court (Community Resolutions, Youth Cautions, Youth Conditional Cautions)	46
Statutory Court Orders (Inclusive of Referral Orders, Youth Rehabilitation Orders, Custodial)	64

Sentences including post-custody licenses)	
Statutory Bail Support (Court ordered Bail intervention, where the child is not already on a youth justice disposal)	2



16. Boys made up 88% of the caseload, and girls 12%. Of these young people open to the service in May 2024, 27% were also open to Children’s Social Care. Of these children, 10 were subject to Child Protection Plans (CP), 14 had Child We Care for Status (CWCF) and 18 being subject of Children in Need (CIN) plannin

## 2. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements



### Service location

17. The service is located within Oxfordshire's Children Education and Families Directorate (CEF). The service is an integrated team undertaking exploitation social work as well as statutory youth justice.

### Strategic Partnerships

18. Oxfordshire Youth Justice Management Board is a multi-agency partnership and is currently chaired by an independent chair. Its membership comprises key stakeholders from: Children's Social Care, Thames Valley Police (TVP), Oxford Health NHS Trust, Education, the National Probation Service (NPS), Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Co-ordination Group (Community Safety), the voluntary & community sector (VCS) and Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunal Service (HMCTS). The service reports into the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Coordination Group (SOPCG).

19. The service and Board priorities are aligned with key strategic partnership priorities for reducing of crime and tackling exploitation in the county including the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Violence & Vulnerability strategy, OSCB's partnership response to tackling exploitation of children, and the Police and Crime Commissioners Plan 2021-25.



20. The service has operational and strategic representation on the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Coordination Group (SOPCG), which has oversight of the County's Violence and Vulnerability strategy and delivery plan, which Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Service is a statutory stakeholder in delivery of the County's Serious Violence duty.

#### Head of Service remit and responsibilities

21. The Head of Service portfolio includes the Youth Justice & Exploitation Service, Unaccompanied Children & Young People's Team, and the Leaving Care services. The Head of Service is the operational and strategic lead for Youth Justice, Exploitation, Missing Children, and Prevent in Oxfordshire's Children's Services. The Head of Service represents Children's Services at the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) strategic Board, and Safer Oxfordshire's Partnership Co-ordination group. The Head of Service key strategic roles in the cross-cutting youth justice agenda, includes vice-chair of the OSCB's Child Exploitation Sub-Group.

#### Operational partnerships

22. The County's Violence Reduction Coordinator, funded by the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC), Community Safety and YJES was co-located in the service until May 2024. The focus of the role being to align key strategic and operational plans across the local partnership around the youth crime and violence reduction agenda and supporting partnership readiness in implementation of the Serious Violence Duty. This role was temporarily funded between 2022 – 2024 by Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit and Community Safety; Oxfordshire now has a well-developed response under the Duty and the functions of this temporary role have now been mainstreamed into the work of our Community Safety partners for sustainability.

23. Thames Valley Police, Health, Children's Social Care, Education and Early Help are represented at the YJ Risk Management and Joint Decision-Making Panels supporting effective information-sharing, oversight, partnership-working and risk management of children and children in public protection, promoting wellbeing and reducing harm.

24. The Youth Justice and Exploitation Service sits on the Sexual Violence & Exploitation Network which is chaired by the voluntary sector organisation SAFE! The service has useful links to voluntary and community sector organisations in our Turnaround Programme, Reparation and Unpaid Work placements.

25. The service has representation at Oxfordshire's MARAC (multi-agency risk assessment conference) for domestic abuse. A range of 'champion' roles exist in the service across a range of themes including Domestic Abuse, Neglect, Housing & Immigration, Trauma-informed Practice and Harmful Sexual Behaviour.

26. Berkshire Health NHS Trust provide delivery of Liaison and Diversion services in Oxfordshire in providing assessment and some interventions to children at the point of contact in Police custody for diverting children into health or other services, as appropriate.

### 3. Update on previous year

#### Progress against our priorities

Priority Area	Progress/comments on 2023-24
Disproportionality	We reviewed of our Disproportionality Action Plan and functionality of the Task and Finish Group, which highlighted the need for improved partnership activity and input in addressing over-representation. In addition, challenges in Board representation have been escalated to the Board Chair for resolution.
	Staff report increased confidence in recognising and challenging disproportionality for children within the youth justice system and continue to use the Escalation Log to flag concerns to the Head of Service for intervention where appropriate.
	The service continues to receive positive feedback from Courts and defence solicitors about our Disproportionality statement in our Pre-Sentence Reports. It ensures that in decision making Courts account for the impact of structural discrimination and racism experienced by minoritised children.
Participation and Child Voice	The service collaborated with students from a local college who produced designs for a new service logo; as part of their college course work experience. The winning logo is due to be shared with the YJ Management Board in September 2024.
	Plans to progress improvements for participation and engagement of young people will be aligned with wider departmental approaches to participation and engagement. We

	<p>continue to receive feedback from children and their carers/parents about what has worked well in providing them support in interventions. The most common factor reported being the positive relationship with staff they are working with.</p>
	<p>The service commissioned 'Safety Box' as intervention for exploited children, providing a 'credible messenger' advocate for the child to improve engagement and outcomes and support desistance.</p>
Tackling Exploitation	<p>Oxfordshire's NRM devolved decision making pilot is in its second delivery year. Home Office feedback is the local pilot success in driving up numbers of NRM referrals across Oxfordshire. Between Jan – Dec 2023 56 children were referred to the pilot, and 24 have been referred to date since January 2024. Impacts of the pilot include changes in Police approach to decision-making (waiting for NRM decisions) and reducing delays in Court decision-making. Trends and patterns from the local pilot are reported into the OSCB Child Exploitation sub-group quarterly to inform the OSCB response to tackling exploitation.</p>
	<p>The service membership at the OSCB's neglect forum is in recognition of the impact of neglect as a factor contributing to children's vulnerability to exploitation and offending; learning is disseminated across the service to heighten staff awareness and build confidence in responding to signs of neglect.</p>
	<p>The contextual safeguarding framework for Oxfordshire is in development to reflect the development of approaches from within YJES. The service has led on developing and delivery of the OSCB Exploitation training this year, including specifically to schools, which has been well received.</p>

	<p>We have taken part four place-based partnership projects (Senior Management Groups – ‘SMGs’) to tackle violence and exploitation in localities, which yielded positive outcomes for children and local communities. The YJES Service Manager received Thames Valley Police commendation for contributions to partnership work disrupting exploitation in localities during 2023-24.</p>
	<p>The ‘One Step Ahead’ parenting group (based on learning from Parents Against Criminal Exploitation – PACE) continues to receive positive feedback from parents attending thematic sessions that support parents knowing their rights, and those for their children from information sharing and advice from Police, Health, Substance Misuse, DWP, Housing colleagues.</p>
Reducing First Time Entrants & Diversion	<p>Implementation of the Ministry of Justice Turnaround programme is now well embedded in Oxfordshire and delivering positive outcomes for children. We are confident that our plans to reach our target of 104 children by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2025 can be achieved.</p>
	<p>The Service’s Out of Court Joint Decision-Making Panel remains a strength for the service. Workshop delivery for all service staff highlighting practice implications of the implementation of the Child Gravity Matrix task ensured assessments are appropriately demonstrating mitigating factors for children in supporting robust and rigorous decision-making.</p>
Education and SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)	<p>Our ambition to achieve the SEND Quality Mark remains a priority for 2024-25. A focus on SEND at the June 2024 Board/Service Away Day secured partnership commitment to improving outcomes for children with unmet speech and language needs and SEND in the youth justice system in Oxfordshire.</p>
	<p>Data on children with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) and children</p>

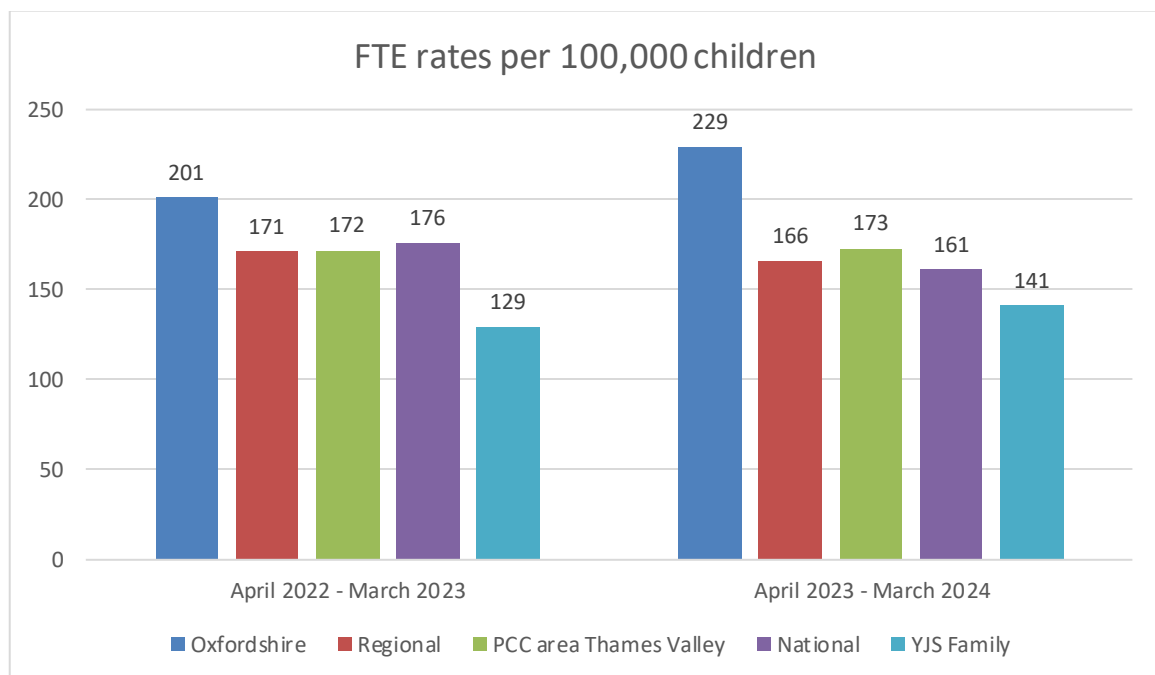
	who are NEET is collected and scrutinised by the Head of Service in monthly performance meetings and shared quarterly with the Board.
KPI (Key Performance Indicators) Readiness	We have recently successfully recruited to Information and Performance Analyst role to ensure service resilience in data collation and analysis for Board reporting and informing service improvements.
	In line with Youth Justice Board requirements for reporting on new KPI's the service has produced new KPI case-management recording guide that assists staff recording for effectiveness and efficiencies in data capture for collation and analysis.
	Updates on KPI developments are provided to the Board quarterly for key stakeholder organisations' understanding of partnership contribution to and compliance with YJB requirements.
Transition & Resettlement	Production of the service Resettlement Policy and practice guidance is for completion by the end of June 2024. This draws on the evidence-base and best practice from Constructive Resettlement and will be shared at the Board in Autumn 2024 for sign off.
	In collaboration with the National Probation Service, we have agreed funding for a Transitions Worker role for recruitment by the service. NPS 'launch' of the Transitions role is scheduled at a Probation Development Day in July 2024, in raising awareness of the role and the advantages of strong partnership-working around transitions.
Audits	Completion of YJB Self-Assessment for 'At Court' reported to the Board in October 2023; the resulting action plan is being implemented for Board monitoring in support and challenge.
Workforce Development	Staff have taken up a range of qualifications in meeting their learning and development needs. The range of qualifications include Social Work degree, ILM (Institute of Leadership and

	Management) 5, Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate and ILM 7.
	The Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate is afforded as learning and development opportunity for all new starters. A programme of learning and development includes Assetplus refresher training scheduled to take place during July - August 2024. 'Behind the Blade' knife crime intervention training provided to staff is supporting staff in interventions aimed at young people's desistance in knife carrying.
	In 2023 - 2024 2 Social Work students joined the service for placements and shared positive feedback on their learning experience, and in turn made significant contributions to the service.
	A whole service workshop delivered by the Youth Endowment Fund on their toolkit supported practitioners in thinking about 'best bets' in the evidence-base for reducing youth violence.
Evidence-Based and Effective Practice	The Relational Case Management Pilot is due to for refresh of implementation in 2024-25 with FCAMHS colleagues.
	Research on desistance shared with the staff team has supported service thinking about the AIRS model (Activities, Interactions and Roles) for children in their intervention plans.
Serious Youth Violence	The Violence Reduction Coordinator role co-location in the service helped the partnership readiness for Oxfordshire's implementation of the Serious Violence Duty. This role led on developing Oxfordshire's strategy aligning our priorities with those of partnership agendas with shared aims and objectives for reducing youth crime.

## Performance over previous year

### *First-Time Entrants (FTEs)*

27. Oxfordshire's FTE (First Time Entrants) rate has increased Between April 2022 – March 23, the FTE rate was 140 children (FTE rate of 207 per 100,000), and during April 2023 – March 2024, 159 children became First Time Entrants (FTE rate of 229 per 100,000). Oxfordshire's rate is higher than its 'family' average FTE rates of 141, the regional rate 173 and the national rate 161.
28. A specific improvement plan is now in place focused on lowering the numbers of Oxfordshire's First Time Entrants to the youth justice system. This is a significant and high priority for us in carrying out the activity set out in our improvement plan. Our target is to bring our FTE rate in line with the Thames Valley rate of 173 by March 2025.
29. A deep-dive audit is in progress for completion by end of June 2024. Its analysis and findings will inform planning in targeting interventions for increasing our prevention and diversion offer and reach of children at the cusp of crime.

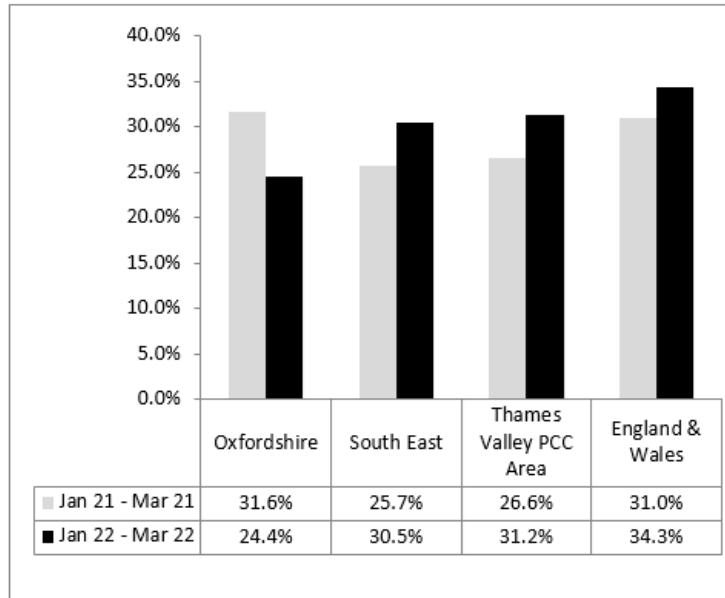


### *Reoffending*

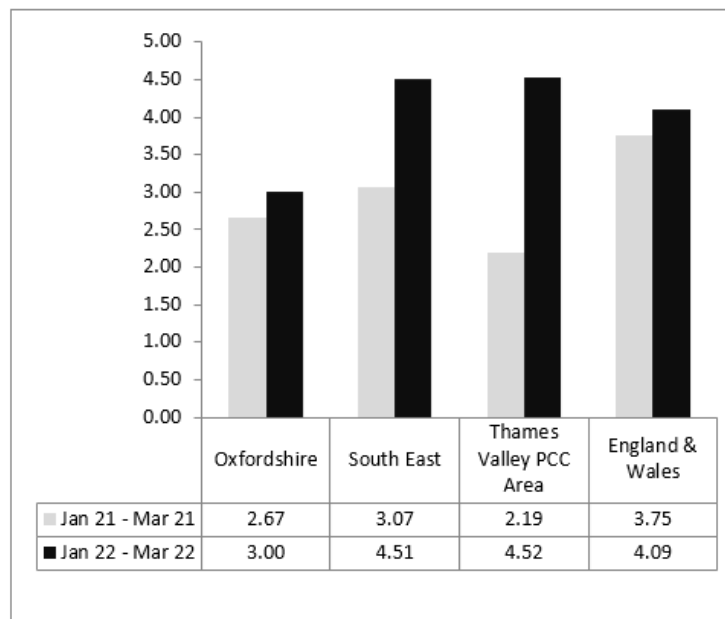
30. The binary reoffending rate (reoffenders/number in cohort) for the 3-month cohort has fallen to 24.4% compared to 31.6% in the previous year. This is below the regional (30.5%) and national (34.3%) rates. Frequency of reoffending (reoffences/reoffenders) has however slightly risen by 0.33 over the same period but remains lower when compared to regional and national performance. The success of our lower re-offending rates is testament to the tenacious and persistent

work of the staff in the service in engaging and supporting our children, using creative interventions and trusting relationships to support future desistance.

**Quarterly cohort - year on year comparison - Reoffenders/Number in cohort**



**Quarterly cohort - year on year comparison - Reoffences/Reoffenders**



*Timeliness offence to outcome date*

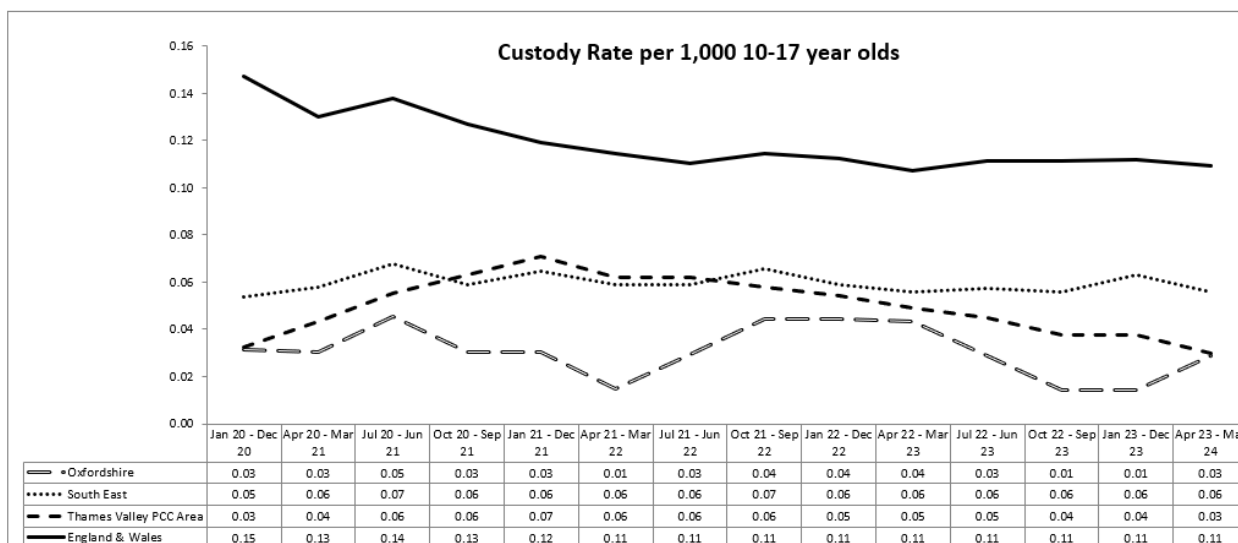
31. The average number of days children are subject to Bail or Released Under Investigation (RUI) waiting times between an offence and outcome remains of concern across England and Wales, as in Oxfordshire. It remains a priority for the Youth Justice Partnership Management Board for scrutiny and oversight. The Turnaround Programme currently offers ongoing support to children who receive a



No Further Action (NFA) outcome and who are on bail or released under investigation.

### Use of Custody

32. The rate of children sentenced to a custodial sentence remains very low and better than that of comparative groups. 2 children in Oxfordshire received custodial sentence between April 2023 – March 2024 for offences linked to serious violence (Attempt Murder, Drug Supply and Possession of Offensive Weapon).



### The 10 new YJB Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

33. Oxfordshire has prepared its readiness for submission of data returns to the YJB in compliance with grant conditions. In January 2024, the YJB released Version 1 of a KPI Tableau Dashboard which reflects headline measures of the new KPIs. Version 2 released in April 2024 informed error correction. Headline measures:

1. Proportion of children in suitable accommodation at the end of their order.
2. Proportion of children in suitable ETE at the end of their order.
3. Number of children with a formal plan in place as a proportion of children with identified SEND/ALN.
4. Number of children with a screened OR identified need for a MH or EW intervention at the end of their order as a proportion of number of children with an order ending in the period.
5. Number of children with a screened OR identified need for intervention/treatment to address substance misuse at the end of their order as a proportion of number of children with an order ending in the period.
6. Number of children who completed intervention programmes in the quarter as a proportion of the number of children with an OOCN ending in the period.

7. Proportion of children connected to/supported by wider care and support services at end of order.
8. Number of senior partners attending Youth Justice Management Board meetings out of five.
9. Number of proven serious violence offences as a proportion of 10-17 population (2021).
10. Number of victims engaged with on Restorative Justice opportunities as a proportion of total number of victims who consent to be contacted.

34. YJB Communications report of issues with the KPI Tableau Dashboard means that KPI data does not yet accurately represent data submitted. Oxfordshire will continue to monitor updates on YJB progress on dashboard solutions and will continue to report figures to quarterly management Board meetings.

35. Analysis of KPI information will further inform the narrative for our deeper understanding of needs of our cohort of children, in better targeting our interventions for meeting their support needs. Stakeholder partner organisations provision of information will be invaluable in contribute to our collective and shared understanding about our children so that we respond effectively and efficiently in our service delivery and provision.

Risks and issues

36. In review of the Youth Justice Management Board Risk Register the following service risk issues and action in mitigation have been identified for 2024-25, for monitoring at the quarterly Board meetings.

Risk	Mitigation	Action	Outcome Sought
FTE rate higher than regional and national rates	Immediate implementation of reducing FTE Action Plan to narrow the gap between national and regional rates by March 2025.	Reporting and monitoring for the progress in activity aimed at reducing Oxfordshire's FTE rates.  Youth Justice Board oversight of progress in implementation of FTE Action Plan.	Lowered rates between Oxfordshire's FTE rate (229) and the regional rate (173) by March 2025.
Partnership funding reduction	Horizon-scanning to identify funding opportunities for the service and pro-active approach to bid-writing.	Applications submitted for Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) funding and other funding opportunities	New funding opportunities are identified and where appropriate applied for to contribute to resource in 2024/25.

		identified during 2024/25.	
Workforce capacity	Prioritise recruitment activity and ensure learning from retention issues is understood and mitigated.	Use learning from staff survey to inform service planning and improvements.	Service establishment is in place.
Serious Incidents	Use of YJB Serious Incident Notification processes.	Critical Learning Reviews inform partnership response and improvements.	Partnership trust and confidence in Youth Justice response to serious incidents.  Learning is used to mitigate future incidents occurring.
Inspection Readiness	Inspection Readiness meetings scheduled to commence service and partnership Board planning.  Share learning with staff and partners around new HMIP inspection framework when it is made available.	Service policies and partnership/service-level agreements reviewed for update/refresh.  Audit activity against YJB Standards for Children.	Service and partnership Board readiness for HMIP new inspection framework and programme from 2025.
Business continuity	Plans in place for business continuity in line with organisational policies and procedure.	Implementation of business continuity in the event of disruption taking account of environment i.e. Pandemic or other threats.	Service business continuity plan in place to mitigate risks to service delivery.

#### 4. Plan for forthcoming year

##### Child First

37. We will continue to champion children's needs, abilities, strengths, and potential. All children subject to community orders are offered a full health assessment with

a specialist nurse. Regular case-formulation provided to the service by Forensic CAMHS ensures all our work is developmentally informed and that interventions are designed and sequenced to each child's individual needs.

- 38. Our 'whole family' approach means that children's needs are seen within the context of their wider family dynamics as well as their socio-environmental contexts using our contextual safeguarding approach. Strong relationships with colleagues across wider children's services, includes joint-supervision arrangements makes sure that our children are always at the centre of planning to achieve positive outcomes.
- 39. Intervention plans focus on developing and understanding the child's identity, creating space to reflect on their lived experience and find opportunities to build on their strengths and potential. Our practitioners encourage children to learn about their strengths, skills and abilities exploring ways for them to achieve and build confidence and self-esteem.
- 40. Our use of language is important to ensure children are seen and treated as children within the criminal justice system. We challenge language that is labelling or stigmatising to children whether as victims or perpetrators of crime; it has a significant impact on children's self-identity and future outcomes.

The Child First principle is made up of the following four tenets (Youth Justice Board, 2022):

<b>As children</b>	Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
<b>Building pro-social identity</b>	Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
<b>Collaborating with children</b>	Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
<b>Diverting from stigma</b>	Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

### Resources and Services

- 41. The service benefits from two seconded Police Officers from Thames Valley Police. The National Probation Service are funding a newly developed Transitions role for effective transition of our older adolescents to adult services. It is an example that demonstrates the partnerships' innovation in finding solutions to address the

service gap of the National Probation Service (NPS) seconded probation officer role.

42. Enhanced access arrangements from Forensic CAMHS and Liaison and Diversion ensures children’s swift and timely access to mental health services. Partnership arrangements with Health facilitate comprehensive support to our practitioners with clinical supervision, case formulations, oversight of specialist clinical assessments and direct work with children identified where children’s emotional and/or mental health needs are identified as being unmet.
43. Oxford Health NHS provision of nurses in the Phoenix Team provision offers all our children health screening and assessment in care planning. This facilitates swift and timely referral in access to other key health professionals and health services.
44. Cranstoun ‘Here4Youth’ deliver the Drug Diversion Scheme for children charged with drug possession offences.

*Youth Justice Budget 2024 – 2025*

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Youth Justice Board	£711,391	Salaries
Police and Crime Commissioner	£113,712	Salaries and overheads
Local Authority	£1,078,239	Salaries, activity costs, accommodation, overheads and equipment
Probation	£26,783	Probation secondee (up to October 2023)
Police	£74,000	2.0 Seconded Police Officers
Health	In kind	Access to Phoenix Nurses and FCAMHS

Board Development

45. Key stakeholder organisation representation in attendance, engagement, and participation at the Youth Justice Management Board supports delivery and quality of service delivery and its provision. All new members of the Board are provided a Board induction handbook, due for refresh in Autumn 2024 to better reflect the YJB’s governance and leadership guidance.
46. Support for the development of the Board’s knowledge and experience of the service takes place through an annual Board/Service away day. Staff are encouraged to attend Board meetings in sharing best practice case studies, themes, and service developments. We continue to deliver workshops to key

stakeholder organisations promoting the Youth Justice agenda that ensures awareness and understanding our work in our shared objectives in reducing and tackling youth crime in Oxfordshire.

47. In 2024-25 the Board chair's commitment is the offer of an annual meeting with every Board member in support of key stakeholder organisation's contribution for accountability and responsibility of quality and service delivery of youth justice provision in Oxfordshire.

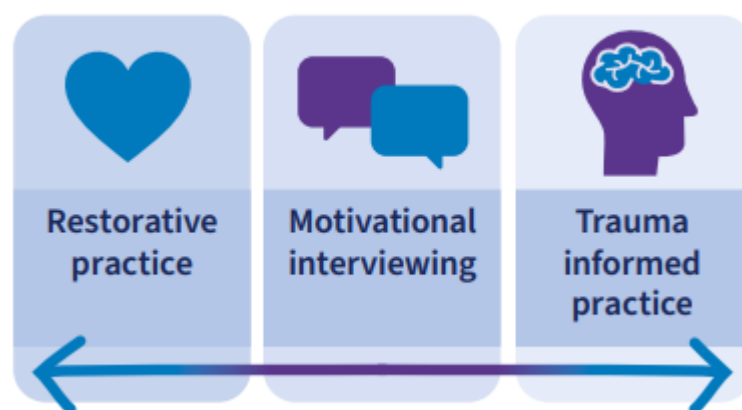
### Workforce Development

48. During 2024/25 we will develop refresh of learning and development opportunities required for each level of youth justice practice. This will be informed by the YJB 2023-25 Workforce Development Strategy and the Youth Justice Skills Matrix, aligning it with the YJB's strategic approach to 'promote sector-led practice development, strengthening our local approach in the dissemination of learning about what is known about working with children across the youth justice sector and beyond.'
49. Staff inductions include a combination of academic learning, shadowing and observation, training, and reflective supervision. Members of staff are funded to undertake the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate; all case-holding staff have either completed or are in the process of completing this.
50. The service has access to OSCB's training and development offer and that of Oxfordshire County Council's Children's Services. These provide a wide and varied learning and development offer that includes safeguarding, exploitation, motivational interviewing, restorative approaches, trauma-informed practice, working with children with mental health difficulties and thematic practice areas such as domestic abuse and neglect.
51. Monthly service-wide meetings provide staff opportunities for presentations, workshops and briefings for practice development and learning. Over the past year themes and topics have included: domestic abuse, the climate emergency, the cost-of-living crisis and its impact on children, and their families, special educational needs, the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and Education Safeguarding Team.
52. A series of workshops to support staff has covered best practice in case recording, the YJB Child First principles and Standards for Children, out-of-court practice, and the new Child Gravity Matrix. Outcomes from our findings in completion of the YJB "Court" Self-Assessment has resulted in an action plan that includes scheduled learning activity during July 2024 focused on increasing excellence in Court practice.
53. Quarterly meetings take place for all our volunteers' attendance. Thematic presentations from guest speakers from across the partnership support the learning and development of our volunteers and feedback is they welcome these opportunities for keeping abreast of service and practice developments.

54. The service relates to wider national learning and development opportunities, connecting with other YJS' via practice forums. National and local training opportunities are shared regularly, and staff encouraged to take up in attendance.

#### Evidence-based practice, innovation, and evaluation

55. Oxfordshire's children's services have three components to our evidence-based practice, complementing each other, emphasises the importance of building relationships, listening, empowering people, understanding need and capacity to change, building on strengths and "doing with."



- **Restorative Practice** is at the heart of what we do, it is how we interact with children, families, each other, and partner agencies. It incorporates respect, honesty, kindness, and empathy. Restorative practice promotes the importance of building relationships and resilience and sees all behaviour as an unmet need. Restorative practice can be used to ensure people are heard and to repair relationships.
- **Trauma-informed practice** is our strengths-based approach which understands and responds to the impact of trauma on people's lives and the trauma we can cause when we intervene. The approach emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone and aims to empower individuals to re-establish control of their lives.
- **Motivational Interviewing** is our person-centred communication approach to behaviour change, designed to focus on understanding and working with resistance. Motivational interviewing can be a powerful tool to strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to change.

56. We are committed to using strengths-based models of practice and raising the awareness of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and the devastating impact on children's ability to reach their potential. Our use of trauma-informed practice and restorative approaches to build stronger, positive relationships encourage

desistance. In recognition that forming trusting relationships is at the heart of our approaches, relationship-building is often the first objectives to be included in our intervention plans.

57. We promote children's individual strengths and capacities as a means of developing their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance from offending behaviours. Non-compliance is considered within the context of the child's experiences of trauma and additional needs. Practitioners use joint reflective supervision to think with partners and the child/family about the ways in which interventions and approaches can be adapted to engage the child more effectively.
58. Our use of restorative approaches support children to take responsibility and make amends for their actions. We recognise that many of the children we work with have also been harmed by others and that acknowledging their own experiences of being a victim provides opportunity for them to move forward. Motivational Interviewing (MI) an evidence-based approach to changing behaviours, focuses on exploring and resolving ambivalence and centres on motivational processes within the individual that facilitate change.
59. Clinical oversight and support from Forensic CAMHS remain a strength of our service; its benefits are its provision of case-formulation, and assistance with completion of specialist assessments. Taking a psychological and developmentally informed approach is part of the fabric of our work in Oxfordshire.
60. We have continued strong and positive relationship with Courts. The service has delivered presentations at Youth Panel meetings on a range of topics and themes. During the year these have included: referral Orders in practice, neurodiversity in children, restorative justice and the National Referral Mechanism local pilot positively welcomed by our HMCTS colleagues.
61. Oxfordshire Youth Justice attended Oxford Magistrates Court formed the greeting of a delegation of Ukrainian representatives learning about youth justice in England. The delegation included the Ukrainian Deputy Prosecutor General, the Head of Department for the Protection of Children's Interests and the Head of Unit for International Cooperation.
62. Feedback from Court colleagues said *"The Ukrainian delegation's visit to Oxford Magistrates Court such a success. Your explanations of youth justice work clearly had a strong impact and impression on our guests from Ukraine today. I was so glad you were able to join us to explain the vital work that you do for the children in Oxfordshire and for our guests to gain that insight and to be as impressed as we are at Oxford Magistrates Court."* (Senior Legal Manager).
63. We look forward to learning from the national Ministry of Justice evaluation on the Turnaround Programme to inform planning in next steps for our prevention and diversion practice. Early indications of our Turnaround programme suggest positive outcomes in meeting children's and families' needs at an earlier opportunity and diverting them from entry into the criminal justice system.



64. The service is working alongside a local business to identify opportunities for children to access apprenticeship opportunities, and to explore how the service can better utilise the social value responsibilities of local business and organisations.

### Priorities for the coming year

#### *i. Standards for Children*

#### **Standard 1: Out of Court**

65. The national issue on the delay for children remaining Released Under Investigation (RUI) remains a priority for Board scrutiny and oversight in 2024-25. We understand the challenges for Police of investigatory timescales, however, the impact on children of delays is well documented as being detrimental. We will continue our scrutiny and oversight of this issue so that we can take collective action where delays are significantly impacting on children through partnership working with Thames Valley Police.

66. We are aware of the impact of the absence of Outcome 22 as an available disposal in 2023-24 for Oxfordshire's children. Our hypothesis is that it has been a contributory factor impacting on our high First Time Entrant rates. We are pleased that partnership working with Police has recently shifted in progressing its implementation locally for decision-makers to divert children away from the criminal justice system. The Director of Children's Services has raised the issue with the County Strategic Safeguarding Partnership and with the Assistant Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, where there is commitment to joint work around this issue. We will be monitoring its impact in tracking children's outcomes this year as a key priority.

67. Our Joint Decision-Making Panel (JDMP) is an area of strength for the service. We plan to improve our reporting on JDMP to better evidence outcomes achieved for children in relation to proportionality and diversion.

68. Our Turnaround programme exit plan and learning from the programme will also inform our developing partnership robustness in its early help offer in rigour of our approach, aim and ambition to divert children away from crime at the earliest opportunity.

#### **Standard 2: At Court**

69. Partnership completion of the YJB's "Court" Self-Assessment was rated overall as being 'Good.' An action plan detailing improvements is being progressed. New systems guidance for staff were developed and have been implemented, and further work is taking place in July 2024 to embed learning via staff workshops.

### **Standard 3: In the Community (Court Orders)**

70. We are committed to reviewing our Referral Order practice to ensure our approach remains child-focused and accessible for children. In ensuring the same for delivery of Youth Rehabilitation Orders, we will continue to ensure that at all available opportunities children are empowered and supported to take ownership in active participation.
71. Breach rates in Oxfordshire remain low. In making compliance decisions, the service takes great care so that every available step is taken to consider the child's needs and address barriers to engagement. Where children assessed as being posing a high risk of harm to others, we ensure that enforcement action is expedited without delay. This approach means that only children where there are the highest risks are returned to Court and our focus is on the engagement skills of staff mitigating this wherever possible.

### **Standard 4: Secure Settings**

72. The number of children in custody from Oxfordshire is low. However, we remain vigilant in ensuring the safety of our children within the secure estate.
73. Presentation to the Board on learning from HMIP and OFSTED Remand Thematic (November 2023) in May 2024 resulted in actions for increased rigour in senior leadership and Board chair oversight of safeguarding arrangements for Oxfordshire's children serving sentence or remanded in the youth custodial estate. This is in recognition and acknowledgement of the vulnerability of our children in the youth custodial estate.
74. We are committed to improve data reporting to the Youth Justice Management Board to include the demography of remanded children, offence type, establishment and some key background information about professional involvement and steps taken to avoid the child entering custody.
75. Following the practice recommendations from the Remand Thematic, we are looking to improve the training available for Social Workers on their statutory responsibilities to children who become Cared For by virtue of their remand status, and to Children We Care For who are sentenced.

### **Standard 5: Transition and Resettlement**

76. We are in the process of finalising refresh of our local Resettlement Policy and practice guidance for staff. We are working with key partners in Children's Services and Education to ensure there is an expedited referral pathway and response for children who enter custody for prompt and rigour in coordination and in planning for children's resettlement in line with Constructive Resettlement principles.

ii. Service Development 2024-25

Service Priorities 2024-25	Action required	Timescales/lead
Disproportionality	Refresh of the Disproportionality Action Plan and partnership commitment and accountability is a planned outcome of the Board/Service away day in June 2024. Revision of membership of the Task and Finish Group responsible for driving activity is planned to ensure Board membership involvement and participation alongside staff.	Head of Service/Board Chair  Autumn 2024
First Time Entrants	Delivery of Improvement Plan to reduce FTE rate to Thames Valley rate by March 2025	Head of Service/Board  March 2025
Participation and Child Voice	Align Participation and Engagement activity with wider Children's Services approach	Head of Service/Children's Services  December 2024
Tackling Exploitation	Report on impact of local Devolved NRM decision making pilot to OSCB	Head of Service  December 2024
	Embed National Working Group (NWG) tools within Harm outside the Home processes	Head of Service and Exploitation Team Manager  Autumn 2024
Education and SEND	SEND Quality Markassessment launch	Head of Service and Board  September 2024
	Partnership work with Education in developing offer of alternative education through ASDAN/AQA education programmes	Education Board member /Head of Service /Youth Justice Team Manager / Education  December 2024

	Develop and embed referral pathway for children remanded or sentenced in planning for resettlement	Head Of Service/Children's Services/ Education
Policing	Work with TVP to improve awareness and consistent application of thresholds around overnight remand in Police custody and to support TVP in identification of appropriate support for bail conditions.	Youth Justice Team Manager
	Deliver OPCC (Office of Police and Crime Commissioner) 'Act Now' as early intervention response for to children in Police custody for knife possession.	Head of Service /Police /Targeted Youth Support manager/AD Early Help and Prevention /Youth Justice Team Manager  Timescales are to be confirmed awaiting delivery detail from OPCC.
	Embed Outcome 22 provision for children in Oxfordshire using (June 2024) guidance for Thames Valley Police	Head of Service/Board/Thames Valley Police  In progress
	Ensure effective interface with the new TVP Harm Reduction Units (HRU) in child-centred decision making	Head of Service/YJ Team Manager and Thames Valley Police  October 2024
Workforce Development	Undertake a skills audit of youth justice staff using YJ Skills Matrix to inform new Workforce Development Plan.	Head of Service/Youth Justice Team Manager  Summer 2024
	Ongoing recruitment campaign for diverse range of volunteers	Head of Service/Senior Practitioner
Evidence-Based and Effective Practice	Learning from Turnaround best practice, and FTE Audits build on our learning around effective	Head of Service / Youth Justice Team Manager

	prevention and diversionary practice informing targeted approach of interventions to reduce FTE's.	In progress
	Implement Relational Case Management.	Youth Justice Team Manager/Health January 2025

## 5. National priority areas

### Over-represented children

77. Ethnicity data for children detained in Police custody, including those who are subject to strip-searches, is now subject to service and Board reporting for scrutiny and monitoring for over-representation of black and mixed heritage children.
78. Police supply data on Stop and Search rates in Oxfordshire to the Board, to include the number of 'positive' searches compared to 'negative' searches in its scrutiny and oversight.
79. Staff continue to use the Escalation Log to raise concerns about disproportionality and discrimination to the Head of Service for action and response for escalation to Board chair where appropriate.
80. The partnership Disproportionality Task and Finish Group and Action Plan is due refresh in Autumn 2024. We aim to widen our action plan to better reflect our response to minoritised children impacted and affected by structural discrimination.

### Policing

81. Regional partnership working has taken place with our Thames Valley Police colleagues in response to their force-wide review, to ensure the seconded Police Officer role's continuation to meet statutory requirements in delivery of its accountability and responsibility for Oxfordshire's youth justice services.
82. We will continue to support Thames Valley Police transition from Youth Justice Units to Harm Reduction Units, in help to newly appointed Policing staff provision of information and training on Child First principles for their consistency of approach and in mitigating any adverse impact on decision-making and outcomes for children.

## Prevention & Diversion

### Community Resolutions

83. In 2023-24 the number of Community Resolutions (CRs) issued by Thames Valley Police on the street, including those referred to the Drug Diversion Scheme, was 654. This is a small reduction from 691 in 2022-23.

84. The number of cases that came through to the TVP Youth Justice Decision-Making Unit for pre-Court consideration and who went on to receive a Community Resolution was 88, an increase from last's year which was 66. The total number of Community Resolutions given to children both through 'street' deliveries and through a triage process was 751. Data provided by Thames Valley Police shows the following:

<b>Total crimes disposed of by way of a Community Resolution for children in Oxfordshire</b>	
2021-22	466
2022-23	753
2023-24	751

85. The rise in the use of Community Resolutions has been a direct consequence of the introduction of the Drug Diversion Scheme and changes in Police decision-making toward use of informal disposals to avoid criminalisation of children.

86. The consequences are that the service has identified the need to scope prevention and diversion support to the children given Community Resolutions following discussion at JDMP and to review whether support can be offered for all Community Resolutions with aims to:

- To reduce the number of first-time entrants in Oxfordshire, diverting children from the criminal justice system
- To provide timely support to children involved in low level offending behaviour
- To identify children and families in need of further support e.g. from other services

87. This approach is already informing our local delivery of the Ministry of Justice Turnaround programme in our identification of children for diversionary support away from the youth justice system in Oxfordshire.

### Turnaround

88. Children are offered Turnaround if they have contact with the police but are not on the statutory youth justice caseload. Our focus has been offering Turnaround to children who have received a Community Resolutions or Youth Cautions. We also respond to referrals from our partners (Police, MASH team, Family Help Front Door, Targeted Youth Support Service and CAMHS Liaison and Diversion and

schools) to accommodate children who are Released Under Investigation, on Bail, repeatedly coming to services' attention for Anti-Social Behaviour, or have received a police No Further Action outcome.

89. Our Turnaround programme will support children eligible for Outcome 22, and we are pleased that this option is now agreed for consideration in decision-making locally. Board reporting on implementation of Outcome 22 in Oxfordshire will ensure support and challenge for its impact for improved performance of our FTE rates.
90. Our Youth and Family Practitioners engage children in one-to-one support focusing on social and emotional support including work on peer influence; emotional regulation; managing conflicts; appropriate use of social media; knife crime; resilience to exploitation; emotional well-being; building self-esteem; managing self-harm; and engaging in education and training opportunities. Our practitioners have strong links with partners and community resources and can support children to access mental health assessments via Liaison and Diversion (CAMHS); participate in positive activities in the areas of sport, music and leisure; or access longer-term mentoring programmes.
91. We have particularly strong links with Project PT (fitness and boxing) and Inspire Sounds (music and mentoring) and have also benefited from work with the Gold Seal Service (online entrepreneurship and music mentoring). Our practitioners are also using bespoke resources for our children which are local to their community and specific to their interests. Examples of this is a child interested in motor sport spending a day as a VIP guest at the Williams Factory to learn about careers in motorsports, and another young person in a rural area being supported to start learning to drive to improve self-esteem and employability. This work fits the ethos of Turnaround which focuses on strengths and positive opportunities to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of the children in the cohort.
92. The Turnaround cohort are achieving a range of positive outcomes following work with our team including desistance from offending, improved family relationships, being at home more and spending less time with other children on the cusp of offending, increased conflict and emotional management skills, access to more appropriate education provision, increased attendance at school, referral for first initial screening for neurodiversity and progress with obtaining Education and Help Care Assessments and Plans, developing new hobbies and positive activities, improved self-esteem and mental health. Some recent feedback from children and their families demonstrates how valued the work is.
93. 'T' was referred to programme following receipt of a Youth Caution for Assault and Criminal Damage and Community Resolutions for Arson and Attempted Arson. Police concerns included repeated anti-social behaviour in the community and association with older children and adults of concern.

T's feedback: *"It is a brilliant idea and really helps you to stop getting into trouble and to understand what is going on... I understand now that police are not the enemy and have a job to do... It's made me understand some of the negative*

*influences that made me act different... and that there are consequences to your actions...J listened to everything I had to say and helped me understand things.”*

T's parent: *“The Turnaround Practitioner has been amazing. A great balance of support, listening and setting boundaries. ‘T’ is home on time, is smiling, is calmer, and integrates more at home and at school.”*

94. Monitoring and tracking of children for re-offending and qualitative feedback will inform our planning for sustainability of our preventative and diversionary work, to positively impact Oxfordshire's current FTE rates.

#### Drug Diversion Scheme

95. Between April 2023 – March 2024 Thames Valley Police made 145 referrals into the Diversion Scheme. Contact was made with 100% of these children, 35 declined the intervention and 110 children entered the Drug Diversion Scheme. At the time of writing 98 children have completed the Drug Diversion intervention and the rest remain open and support is ongoing. As of March 2024, only 2 children out of the 98 who completed the DDS were re-referred by Thames Valley Police for further drug possession offences.

#### **Education**

96. Improving outcomes for children with SEND remains a partnership strategic priority in the forthcoming year. Our plans to commence the SEND Quality Mark will contribute to improving outcomes for our children with SEND needs, including those affected by unmet speech and language needs. The assessment will help us to identify what is required for partnership improvements, and it will also contribute to Oxfordshire's wider SEND improvement activity. Planning for 2024-25 is for close collaboration with Education colleagues to establish AQA/ASDAN awards as alternative education opportunities for our children.

#### **Restorative Approaches and Victims**

97. The YJES continues delivery of restorative justice interventions with children who offend, and the people harmed by their crimes. During 2023-2024 192 victims were identified for support, of whom 102 engaged in restorative work. 92 completed an indirect restorative process and 14 engaged in a direct restorative meeting with the child who harmed them. Over the same period 235 restorative justice/victim awareness sessions were conducted with young people under youth justice supervision.
98. During the year, the restorative justice team shared 13 letters of explanation/apology written by young people to victims of their offences. Below is one example, well received by its recipient:

*“We hope you are well. We have one thing that we'd like to say to you, and that is that we are really sorry for what happened. If we could go*



*back in time, we would undo what we did to you. You didn't deserve any of this and we didn't mean to harm you. We really want you to feel safe and not to worry about going out. We miss being your friend and we really hope you enjoy your summer. We wish you all the best."*

99. 22 victims provided feedback following their involvement in restorative approaches during 2023-24, of which 100% said that they were given enough information to understand the role of the service and kept up to date with what was happening with the child who harmed them. The average score out of 10 for satisfaction with the service was 8.5.

100. The service lead is involved in research being undertaken by the Restorative Justice Council and the Youth Endowment Fund in measuring the impact of restorative justice, including how it relates to the YJB Child First principles. In consultation for the YJB's new KPI's, Oxfordshire highlighted the absence of a KPI related to victim contact and restorative justice work. This was acknowledged and recognised through its inclusion in the YJB new KPI's. The service lead continues work with the YJB in its further refinement of the victims KPI.

101. We are proud of our delivery of restorative practice and approaches in youth justice. This was shared with the YJB during its visit to the service in April 2024 for learning about our best practice. Feedback from the YJB Chief Operating Officer was: *"It was a pleasure to meet the team at Oxfordshire YJS (Youth Justice Service) and learn about the incredible practice at the service to improve outcomes for children and support those affected by crime. Oxfordshire takes its responsibility to all children affected by crime seriously – by listening to them, supporting them, mitigating the impacts on them and their communities and working together to promote positive outcomes, prevent further crimes and victimisation."*

102. The YJB intends sharing of Oxfordshire's Restorative approach as best practice nationally on their Youth Justice Board's Resource Hub. The service continues to hold Registered Service Provider status with the Restorative Justice Council. The service lead for Restorative Justice is a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Restorative Justice and illustrates our ongoing dedication and commitment to improve restorative justice in the criminal justice system.

103. Oxfordshire's Children's Services adoption of restorative practice as one of its core practice approaches is being spear-headed by its Principal Social Worker and departmental senior leads in embedding the approach through delivery of a programme of training, dissemination of resources, toolkits, and a community of practice for children's services staff and volunteers. We look forward to learning from evaluation evidence of impact in embedding the approach in Children's services.

### Reparation

104. In the past year, the service delivered 203 reparation sessions with children. Children's feedback about Reparation activity told us that they feel safe, and value being treated with respect and fairly in activity placements. Their views, coupled

with feedback from victims and placements, helps the service develop creative Reparation opportunities in support of skills-building and community integration for our children.

Feedback example: *“I just wanted to say thank you so much for all the support I was given by everyone and thank you so much for making sure I got the support because you’re the first people who really understand me and got along really well with thank you so much again for all the support I was given it was noticed. It’s very well appreciated by me.”*

## Serious Violence, Exploitation & Contextual Safeguarding



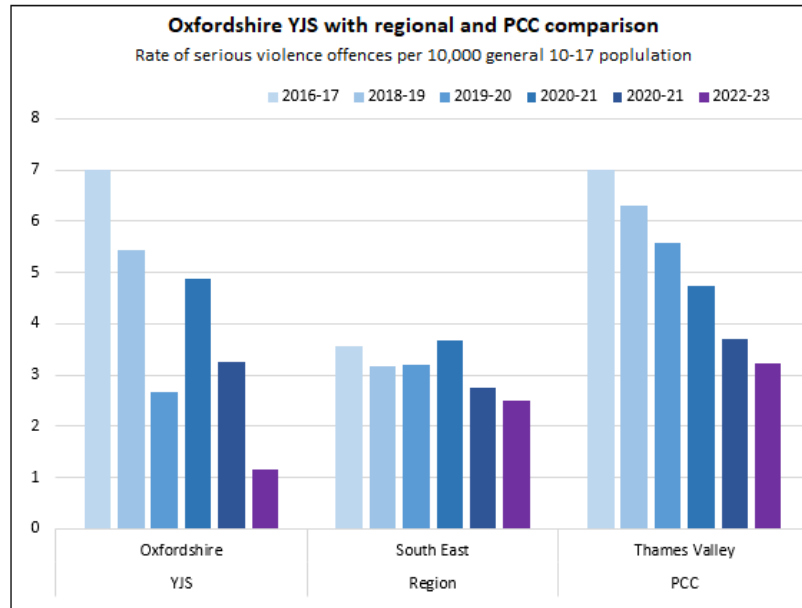
Oxfordshire	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number of SYV offences	43	34	17	32	22	8
Rate per 10,000 of the general 10-17 population	7.0	5.4	2.7	4.9	3.2	1.2
% SYV comprise of total offences	8%	7%	4%	7%	7%	2%

Change from previous year (2021-22) to latest year (2022-23)
-14
-2.1
-5 pp

pp = percentage points

105. The number of serious violence offences committed by children per 10,000 has decreased and is now at a rate of 1.2, with 8 serious violence offences being committed by children in 2022-23. This is a reduction of 5% from 2021-22 and remains lower than the regional rate (2.5) and Thames Valley rate (3.2).

106. In 2022-23 Violence and Drugs made up the greatest proportion of serious violence offences by children, with Robbery offences reducing by 50% from 2021-22. 72% of serious youth violence offences were by white children, 28% by ethnic minority groups, with over-representation of ethnic minorities by 9%. Most serious violence offences are by male children.



107. The service sits alongside a statutory social work exploitation team, who lead on contextual safeguarding within Children’s Services in Oxfordshire. Its benefits are swift multi-agency responses to serious youth violence and exploitation risks focusing on contextual, place-based interventions.

108. Strategic Management Groups (SMGs) form our local partnership framework and place-based approach to tackling serious violence and exploitation. The framework has achieved positive results in tackling and reducing emerging crime and exploitation risks in communities in Oxfordshire. As a multi-agency response, it provides focused coordination of partnership and community resources, flexible to meet local circumstances in addressing the risks of concern. The approach applies the well-established problem-solving triangle in recognising interconnections between victims, perpetrators, and locality, using neighbourhood-level interventions to reduce risk and in providing sustainable, legacy actions for the community.

109. Using the ‘4 P’s’ approach (Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Pursue) partners undertake mapping exercises of the children and adults involved to ensure effective safeguarding measures are in place. We work closely with schools to support them to safeguard children on and off-site and coordinate the delivery of suitable training and interventions for schools in key violence and exploitation hot spots. We work very closely with Police and Community Safety to look at environments and places and have utilised CCTV, additional Police patrols, engagement of community and faith leaders and the use of civil orders to help communities feel safer.

Examples of success in the past year include:

- Disruption of exploitation and debt bondage of a group of 15 – 16-year-olds.

- Mediation and problem-solving between rival groups of young people from different areas; mitigating and reducing risk of serious violence incident at a community event through pro-active engagement and diversion of these young people.
- Significant reduction in anti-social behaviour and missing episodes in relation to a group of 15 children in a locality.

110. In response to the prevalence of knife carrying by children, the service renewed its 'Behind the Blade' intervention license and commissioned refreshed training for case-managers. We will continue developing our evidence-base for reducing youth violence to ensure our practice remains proportionate and informed.

111. Since Oxfordshire's establishment of its National Referral Mechanism (NRM) devolved decision-making pilot, NRM referrals rates have increased locally. For those children awaiting charging from Police for Possession and Supply offences, we are seeing an increase in the Police waiting for an NRM outcome before making charging decisions. This is being also mirrored in the Youth Court where the Youth Bench are consistently requesting updates on NRM outcomes. With the increased awareness and successful of this local process we hope to see less children progressing to Court or being charged where their offending has been within a context of exploitation. We will continue to monitor and track evidence of the pilot's impact in bi-annual reports for the Board and in annual reporting to the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board.

### **Detention in Police Custody**

112. During the last year collaboration with Police has led to improvements in information-sharing about children, resulting in increased Police efficiency and effectiveness in meeting children's needs in custody by being more informed in decision-making and planning for children's safe release and issue of proportionate bail conditions.

113. The YJES delivers an Appropriate Adult service for children who are detained in custody for the purposes of interview who are then released, and for those who are held overnight. The YJES has a team of 28 volunteers, of which 19 are trained Appropriate Adults. All have received in-house training to ensure compliance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) and NAAN guidelines. The volunteers receive safeguarding training, regular supervision, access to support group meetings to raise any concerns / issues regarding their role, hear relevant service updates and receive specific training to enhance their skills and knowledge in the role. Refresher Appropriate Adult training is available, and Appropriate Adult full-day training is offered to Children's Services staff and Adult Social Care staff. We now also deliver an Appropriate Adult Awareness course twice yearly, open to all Oxfordshire County Council staff including partner agencies working with children and vulnerable adults to help them to understand this vital role. Experienced volunteers provide shadowing for new volunteers wishing to experience custody before working independently.

114. In the year 2023 – 2024 our Appropriate Adult volunteers supported children in custody on 132 instances, which is a 28% increase from last year when Appropriate Adults attended on 103 occasions. The average time a volunteer spends in custody is 3 hours 6 minutes, but depending on the circumstances, volunteers can spend large amounts of time in custody. The maximum amount of time spent by volunteers in custody has been six hours, for example when there is more than one detained person to see, or the wider processes have been slow. When they leave custody, the volunteer is offered a de-brief with a member of staff which is vital particularly if the offence was serious or concerns were raised during their time in custody.
115. The YJES monitors the number of strip-searches that a volunteer Appropriate Adult attends, including the ethnicity of the children who are strip-searched. In 2023 – 2024 there were 5 strip-searches where the YJES provided an Appropriate Adult. 3 of the young people were White British, of the remaining 2, 1 identified as Asian and the other White & Black African. Nothing was found on the young people in 3 of the 5 strip searches.
116. There has been a national change to how police forces define a strip search under PACE (Code C, Annex A) so we now send out Appropriate Adults to custody if a young person is required to removed tracker-bottoms with cords. This year we provided Appropriate Adults to attend for this change in clothing for 3 children.
117. The YJES also provides volunteers who act as Appropriate Adults for children and vulnerable adults out-of-hours up to 11pm. These out-of-hours requests are managed by the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) with use of our YJES volunteers. In the year 2023 – 2024 we provided volunteers for 155 call outs for vulnerable adults, supporting our colleagues in Adult Social Care.

## **Remands and Use of Custody**

118. Our data for the last year shows that we have had low numbers of children remanded into youth detention accommodation, and this has been for the most serious offences. 5 children were remanded between April 2023 – March 2024, 2 to youth detention accommodation and 3 into local authority accommodation. All 5 children were male, 4 were White British and 1 was White and Black African. For the children who were remanded in local authority accommodation there were high levels of concern around persistent offending and parental neglect. Oxfordshire's performance in use of custody for children is better than that of our comparative groups.
119. A May 2024 report to the Youth Justice Management Board outlined the findings and recommendations of HMIP and OFSED Joint Thematic Use of Remand and implications for Oxfordshire. As a result, quarterly briefings on Oxfordshire children subject of remand are provided to Children's services leadership team and the elected council member portfolio-holder for oversight in safeguarding these children.

120. Where Oxfordshire children appear in Court ‘out of area,’ or ‘out of area’ children appear in Oxfordshire’s Courts, collaboration with the child’s local Youth Justice Service ensures clear and informed planning for safe and proportionate Court decision-making. We have received positive feedback from other Local Authorities in recognition of our help where the best desired outcomes for children are achieved, particularly where remand to custody has been a risk and appropriately avoided.

### **Constructive Resettlement**

121. Our local Resettlement Policy and practice guidance in line with the YJB case-management guidance is due completion in July 2024, for ratification at the Board meeting in the Autumn. It will ensure continuation of our best practice in assisting children’s resettlement from custody. Joint working with Children’s Services, Education and accommodation providers will ensure suitable provision is identified at the earliest opportunity supporting robust resettlement plans for our children. Due to the gap in resource of a seconded Probation Officer, innovative partnership problem-solving has yielded agreement for recruitment to a newly developed ‘Transitions Worker’ role by the Youth Justice Service, funded by Probation.

### **Working with families**

122. Oxfordshire YJES is committed to whole family working and ensuring that assessments and plans are responsive to the needs of the family, to best support desistance and reduce vulnerabilities to exploitation. We have continued to run the ‘One Step Ahead’ parenting groups for parents of children open to our service and have received positive feedback from parents and partners.

123. The service inclusion of siblings in assessments ensures consideration of the holistic impact to all family members where criminogenic risks and needs are identified. This approach strengthens our prevention and diversion offer for children and aims in reducing First Time Entrants locally through the identification and our response in supporting the needs of siblings at the earliest opportunity. We committed to ensuring system wide access in existing parenting provision supports parents of children we are working with.

### **Climate Change**

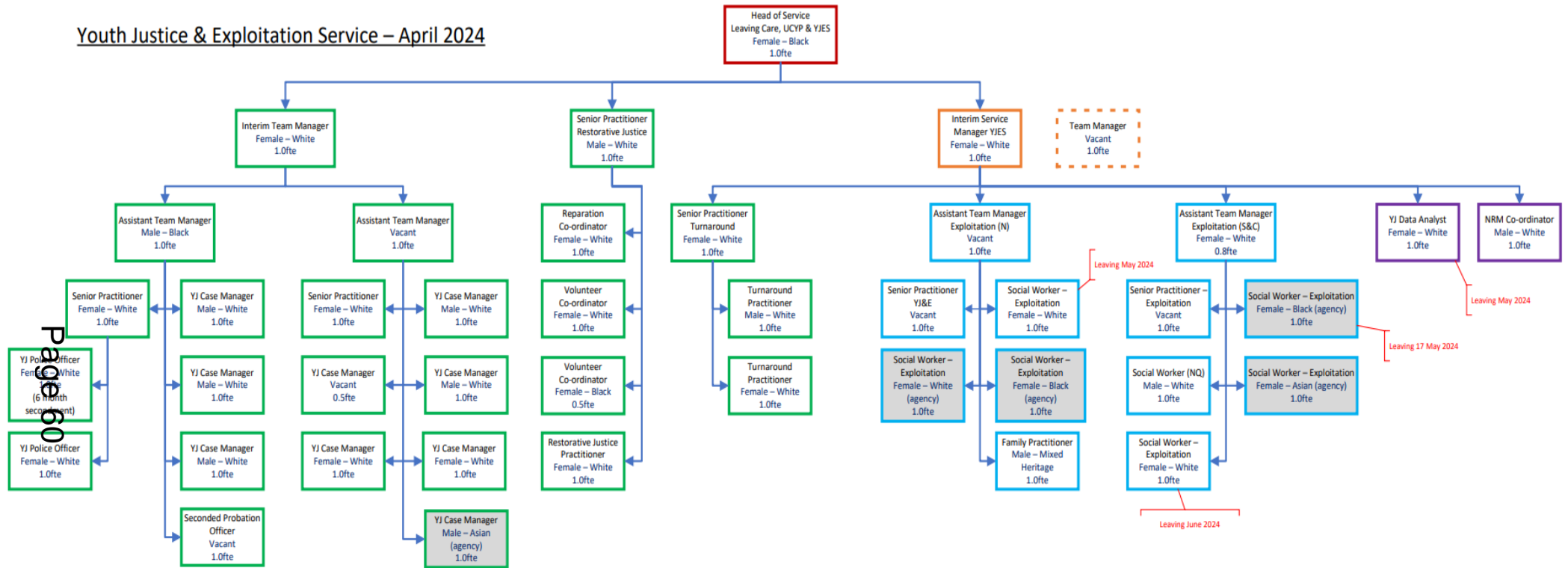
124. The 2023/4 Director of Public Health Annual Report on climate change and health identified the most deprived neighbourhoods in the county most likely to be affected by extreme heat, air pollution and flooding. Climate action is a regular topic at service meetings, with recent input from the council’s Climate Action Team on retrofitting grants and in reducing Oxfordshire’s carbon footprint. ‘Small wins’ in climate action are planned for delivery for the service in Autumn 2024.

Sign off, submission and approval.

<p><b>Signed by Chair of Board:</b></p> <p><b>John Drew</b></p>	<p><i>John Drew</i></p>
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## Appendix 1: YJES Staffing Structure

### Youth Justice & Exploitation Service – April 2024



The service has 34 volunteers of which 24 are female and 10 are male. The diversity of the volunteers is an ongoing focus to ensure reflection of the diversity of the communities we serve. The breakdown of ethnicity of our volunteers is:

- 29 White British
- 1 Black Caribbean and White
- 1 Black British
- 1 Black African
- 2 White Other



## Minutes of Education and Young People Scrutiny Committee 20<sup>th</sup> September 2024

### Apologies for absence and Temporary Appointments

Apologies were sent from Cllr Povolotsky, who was substituted by Cllr Haywood, and Cllr Smith. Cllr Corkin and Cllr Waine both apologised that they needed to leave before the end of the meeting.

Chandler and Gregory online

Toby and Fraser Long absent

#### 1. Declaration of Interests

There were none.

#### 2. Minutes

The minutes of the 22 July 2024 meeting were **AGREED** as a true and accurate record.

### 6. Youth Justice Annual Plan

Cllr John Howson, Cabinet Member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services, Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, and Jennifer Sergeant, Head of Service Leaving Care, were invited to present the Youth Justice Annual Plan.

The Cabinet Member introduced the agenda item, highlighting the four strategic priorities: reducing the number of first-time entrants into the youth justice system, tackling the exploitation of children in Oxfordshire, addressing serious youth violence, and enhancing outcomes for children. Additionally, the Cabinet Member praised the notably low reoffending rates among children who had entered the system.

*Cllr Graham left part way through the following discussion.*

After the brief introduction to the Youth Justice Annual Plan, Members posed several questions and provided comments such as the following:

- There were inquiries regarding the actions being taken to resolve the issue of the delayed budget decision, and what measures were in place to address it.

The delay in the budget had been a persistent problem for several years, well recognised by those managing it. This issue hampered the service's ability to plan effectively. There was always the risk of receiving less funding than anticipated, necessitating decisions to cut back on services. An assurance was given that officers would continue to advocate at the national level with partners and the Youth Justice Board to secure timely budget allocations.

- The plan highlighted the importance of collaborating with partners, including local authorities, police, health services, probation, schools, community groups, and district councils to tackle youth justice issues holistically. District councils were updated on the Youth Justice Plan's report and priorities through the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Group, ensuring they contributed to reducing crime and supporting young people.
- There was interest in what the statistics in the report, especially rural versus urban offending rates, said about the environments and settings where offences occurred.

The Head of Service Leaving Care outlined that youth crime was not just driven by environment or location. Factors like SEND needs, speech and language gaps, poverty, and children's characteristics also play key roles. Tackling it demanded a collaborative approach, focusing on each child and considering various influences beyond their surroundings.

- Members inquired about how mental health services affect youth justice and what measures are being taken to address mental health issues within this system.

The partnership benefited from direct CAMHS access, enabling swift mental health assessments for young people in the justice system as well as the Phoenix Team, the multi-disciplinary team at Oxford Health who worked with children and young people at risk of exploitation as well as under a court order. This ensured trauma-informed and developmentally sound interventions. This robust mental health support has been a major strength of the partnership's approach to youth justice.

- The discussion stressed the need to keep most children in school for their safety and to lower criminal activity risks. Schools were almost always a safe environment, and efforts were being made to reintegrate children and maintain their attendance.

The partnership was also focused on reducing youth risk outside the home by addressing exploitation and serious youth violence, influencing offending rates.

The link between school exclusions and offending rates was emphasised, which highlighted the need for schools to collaborate with police and other partners to prevent exclusions and support educational reintegration.

*Cllr Waine left at the conclusion of item 6.*

Division(s): N/A

## **COUNCIL – 5 November 2024**

### **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2025-26**

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

COUNCIL IS RECOMMENDED to approve the calendar of meetings for the 2025-26 Council year attached to the report as Annex 1.

#### **Executive Summary**

1. The calendar of meetings for each civic year, from one Annual Council meeting to the next, is presented to Council for approval.
2. On this occasion, it is proposed to move back by one week the date set by Council last year for the 2025 Annual Council meeting.
3. There is an established pattern of meeting dates that is generally followed, although adjustments are made to reflect known events that clash with certain meetings. For example, efforts are made to avoid meetings during the main school holidays. On this occasion and going forwards, important religious dates for the main religions represented in the UK, have also been taken into consideration.
4. The Chair and Vice Chair of Council, Group Leaders, Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Committees, Cabinet Members and the Strategic Leadership Team have been consulted regarding the dates proposed and have raised no objection.

#### **Annual Council**

5. The Constitution (Part 3.1) recommends:

“1.1.1 In a year when there is an ordinary election of councillors, the annual meeting will normally take place on the second Tuesday after the day of retirement of councillors or on such other day as the Chair may determine after consultation with Group Leaders but within twenty-one days of the day of the retirement of the outgoing councillors”

6. Outgoing councillors will retire on the fourth day after the election. That will be Monday 5 May 2025 and the date for Annual Council was therefore set for Tuesday 13 May 2025. However, Monday 5 May 2025 is a Public Holiday and the agenda would therefore have to be published on Friday 2 May 2024 – the day on which votes will be counted.
7. The Chair of the Council and the Group Leaders have agreed that it would be prudent to move the Annual Council meeting to 20 May 2025. This will allow more time for the formation of an administration and the allocation of committee places.

### **Financial Implications**

8. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

Comments approved by: Drew Hodgson, Strategic Finance Business Partner – Resources, [Drew.Hodgson@Oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Drew.Hodgson@Oxfordshire.gov.uk)

### **Legal Implications**

9. Section 7 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that councillors “shall retire.... on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of county councillors” save for the Chair of Council who remains in position until their successor is appointed by virtue Sections 3(2) and 3(3) of the Local Government Act 1972  
“(2) The chairman shall, unless he resigns or becomes disqualified, continue in office until his successor becomes entitled to act as chairman.  
(3) During his term of office the chairman shall continue to be a member of the council notwithstanding the provisions of this Act relating to the retirement of councillors”.
10. S101 of the Local Government Act permits the Council to arrange for the discharge of its functions by a committee or sub-committee. Executive functions are undertaken by the cabinet or a single member as established under the Local Government Act 2000.
11. Constitution sets out the rules relating to the frequency of meetings:  
Full Council - Council Procedure Rule 2  
Cabinet - Cabinet Procedure Rule 1.5  
Overview and Scrutiny Committees - Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8  
Audit and Governance Committee, Pension Fund Committee and Planning and Regulation Committee – Regulatory and Other Committees Procedure Rule 3

Comments approved by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer, [anita.bradley@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:anita.bradley@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

### **Equality and Inclusion Implications**

12. In setting out the dates, the school holidays have been avoided as far as possible as many Members have extra child-minding responsibilities during the holidays.
13. Important religious holidays for the main religions represented in the UK population have also been taken into consideration, that is Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish.
14. This should ensure that meetings of the Council are more inclusive.

### **Sustainability Implications**

15. There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report

### **Risk Management**

16. There are no direct risk management implications arising from this report.

**Anita Bradley**

**Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer**

Annex: Annex 1 2025-26 Calendar of Meetings

Contact Officers: Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Democratic Services Manager  
Email [colm.oocaomhanaigh@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:colm.oocaomhanaigh@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

October 2024

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Oxfordshire County Council Calendar of Meetings 2025/26<sup>1</sup>

Council	Cabinet	Cabinet Member Decisions for Leader and Community & Corporate Services	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Decisions for Climate Change, Environment & Future Generations	Cabinet Member Decisions for SEND Improvement	Cabinet Member Decisions for Children, Education & Young People's Services
Tuesday 10.30am	Tuesday 2.00pm	Tuesday 3.00 pm or on the rise of Cabinet	Thursday 2.30pm	Wednesday 1pm	Wednesday 2pm
<b>2025</b> 20 May – Annual Council 8 Jul 9 Sept 4 Nov 9 Dec <b>2026</b> 10 Feb 24 Mar 12 May – Annual Council	<b>2025</b> 17 Jun 15 Jul 16 Sept 21 Oct 18 Nov 16 Dec <b>2026</b> 27 Jan 24 Feb 17 Mar 21 Apr	<b>2025</b> 17 Jun 15 Jul 16 Sept 21 Oct 18 Nov 16 Dec <b>2026</b> 27 Jan 24 Feb 17 Mar 21 Apr	<b>2025</b> 22 May 19 Jun 17 Jul 4 Sept 9 Oct 13 Nov 11 Dec <b>2026</b> 22 Jan 26 Feb 26 Mar 23 Apr	<b>2025</b> 14 May 11 June 9 July 10 Sept 8 Oct 5 Nov 10 Dec <b>2026</b> 7 Jan 11 Feb 18 Mar 15 Apr	<b>2025</b> 14 May 11 June 9 July 10 Sept 8 Oct 5 Nov 10 Dec <b>2026</b> 7 Jan 11 Feb 18 Mar 15 Apr

**Oxfordshire County Council Calendar of Meetings 2025/26<sup>1</sup>**

Cabinet Member Decisions for Infrastructure & Development Strategy	Cabinet Member Decisions for Adult Social Care	Cabinet Member Decisions for Public Health, Inequalities & Community Safety	Cabinet Member Decisions for Transport Management	Cabinet Member for Finance
Thursday 2.00pm	Tuesday 9.00am	Tuesday 1.00pm	Thursday 10.00am	Friday 10.00am
<b>2025</b> 22 May 19 Jun 17 Jul 4 Sept 9 Oct 13 Nov 11 Dec <b>2026</b> 22 Jan 26 Feb 26 Mar 23 Apr	<b>2025</b> 17 Jun 15 Jul 16 Sept 21 Oct 18 Nov 16 Dec <b>2026</b> 27 Jan 24 Feb 17 Mar 21 Apr	<b>2025</b> 3 Jun 1 Jul 2 Sept 7 Oct 11 Nov 2 Dec <b>2026</b> 6 Jan 3 Feb 3 Mar 14 Apr 6 May	<b>2025</b> 22 May 19 Jun 17 Jul 4 Sept 9 Oct 13 Nov 11 Dec <b>2026</b> 22 Jan 26 Feb 26 Mar 23 Apr	<b>2025</b> 16 May 13 June 11 July (2pm) 12 Sept (2pm) 10 Oct 7 Nov 12 Dec (2pm) <b>2026</b> 9 Jan 13 Feb 13 March 10 April



**Oxfordshire County Council Calendar of Meetings 2025/26<sup>1</sup>**

People Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Education & Young People's Scrutiny Committee	Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Thursday 10.00 am	Friday 10.00am	Wednesday 10.00am	Friday 10.00am	Thursday 10.00am
<b>2025</b> 26 Jun 18 Sep 6 Nov <b>2026</b> 15 Jan 19 Mar	<b>2025</b> 18 Jul 12 Sept 5 Dec <b>2026</b> 16 Jan 17 Apr	<b>2025</b> 25 Jun 24 Sept 12 Nov <b>2026</b> 4 Feb 22 April	<b>2025</b> 11 July 26 Sept 21 Nov <b>2026</b> 27 Feb 27 March	<b>2025</b> 5 Jun 11 Sept 20 Nov <b>2026</b> 29 Jan 16 Apr

**Oxfordshire County Council Calendar of Meetings 2025/26<sup>1</sup>**

Audit & Governance Committee	Planning & Regulation Committee	Pension Fund Committee	Health & Wellbeing Board
Wednesday 1.00pm	Monday 2.00pm	Friday 10.00am	Thursday 2.00pm
<p><b>2025</b></p> <p>16 Jul</p> <p>17 Sept</p> <p>26 Nov</p> <p><b>2026</b></p> <p>14 Jan</p> <p>11 Mar</p>	<p><b>2025</b></p> <p>2 Jun</p> <p>14 Jul</p> <p>1 Sept</p> <p>13 Oct</p> <p>24 Nov</p> <p><b>2026</b></p> <p>12 Jan</p> <p>23 Feb</p> <p>13 Apr</p>	<p><b>2025</b></p> <p>6 Jun</p> <p>5 Sept</p> <p>12 Dec</p> <p><b>2026</b></p> <p>6 Mar</p>	<p><b>2025</b></p> <p>26 Jun</p> <p>25 Sept</p> <p>4 Dec</p> <p><b>2026</b></p> <p>12 Mar</p>

## Oxfordshire County Council Calendar of Meetings 2025/26<sup>1</sup>

Teachers Joint Consultative	Employees Joint Consultative	Fire Service Joint Consultative	Local Pension Board
Thursday 2.00pm	Thurs 2.00pm	Friday 10.00am	Friday 10.30am
<b>2025</b> 10 Jul 6 Nov  <b>2026</b> 5 Mar	<b>2025</b> 12 Jun 2 Oct 27 Nov  <b>2026</b> 5 Feb	<b>2025</b> 20 Jun 19 Sept 28 Nov  <b>2026</b> 20 Mar	<b>2025</b> 4 Jul 17 Oct  <b>2026</b> 23 Jan 24 Apr

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Dates are subject to change. The website will be updated and Members notified accordingly.

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**Divisions affected – All**

## **COUNCIL**

**5 NOVEMBER 2024**

### **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS**

#### **Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Council is RECOMMENDED
  - a) to appoint Mr Nicholas Holt-Kentwell and Mr Andrew Mills-Hicks as Independent Persons for Oxfordshire County Council from 1 December 2024 to 30 November 2026. The appointments may be renewed once for a period of two years;
  - b) to thank Mr Martyn Hocking for his service to the Council as an Independent Person from 14 July 2020 until 30 November 2024.

#### **Background**

2. The Council must seek the views of an Independent Person, and take them into account, before making its decision on any allegation investigated under the Member Code of Conduct.
3. As part of the 'arrangements for dealing with complaints against members' adopted by Council on 16 April 2024, the Monitoring Officer reviews complaints received. Following consultation with the Independent Person, the Monitoring Officer makes a decision on the action to be taken which can be to refer the complaint for local resolution, refer the complaint for investigation or to take no further action.
4. In the event that the Council was to consider the dismissal of the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer, it must consult a panel of at least two Independent Persons. There is an expectation that such Independent Persons will, if possible, be those appointed by the Council. The panel gives full Council any advice, views or recommendations relating to a proposed dismissal.

#### **Present arrangements**

5. The Council currently has two Independent Persons one being Mr Nicholas Holt-Kentwell, who were appointed by Council on 14 July 2020 for a two-year term. These appointments were renewed for a further two years and, at Council on 9 July 2024, their appointments were extended until 30 November 2024. The

extension allowed a recruitment campaign to be undertaken over the Summer months.

## **Appointments**

6. A recruitment campaign was undertaken over the Summer months that reached out to community groups, sports clubs, as well as other local authorities, including parish and town councils. The role was advertised on the Council's website with coverage through social media channels.
7. Interviews with those people who had expressed an interest in the role were undertaken by the Monitoring Officer and the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee on 24 October 2024.
8. The interview panel was impressed by all the candidates, most of whom were already serving as Independent Persons.
9. Following the interviews, Mr Nick Holt-Kentwell and Mr Andrew Mills-Hicks were identified as the strongest candidates and are recommended for appointment as Independent Persons. They both demonstrated that they are experienced, impartial and evidence-based decision makers along with an understanding of the importance of high standards of conduct in public office.

## **Legal implications**

10. The Council is required under Section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 to appoint Independent Persons to fulfil key aspects of the Council's governance as outlined in this report. An Individual cannot be appointed as an Independent Person if they are:
  - a) An elected member, co-opted member or an officer of the Council, or any other council within the county area, or have been so within the past five years.
  - b) The relative or close friend of a member, co-opted member or office of the Council, or any other council within its district.
  - c) A member of a political party or politically active
11. The role of Independent Persons in relation to the dismissal of the Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer arises from the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.  
*Comments checked by – Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer*

## **Financial implications**

12. Whilst the roles are voluntary and are not remunerated, an Independent Person is entitled to claim a nominal allowance of £500 per annum.

*Comments checked by – Lorna Baxter, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer)*

## **Equality and diversity implications**

13. The recruitment campaign sought to draw interest from a wide-range of people living and working in Oxfordshire and neighbouring areas.

**Anita Bradley**

**Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

Contact officer:

Colm Ó Caomhánaigh

Democratic Services Manager

[colm.oconomhanaigh@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:colm.oconomhanaigh@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

November 2024

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