

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 21 January 2025 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 4.05 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Dr Pete Sudbury (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Neil Fawcett
Councillor Andrew Gant
Councillor Kate Gregory
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Dan Levy
Councillor Dr Nathan Ley
Councillor Judy Roberts

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Donna Ford

Officers:

Whole of meeting Martin Reeves (Chief Executive) Lorna Baxter (Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer), Stephen Chandler (Executive Director of People, transformation and Performance), Anita Bradley (Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Chris Reynolds (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

The Cabinet considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda, reports and schedule, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

5/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tim Bearder.

6/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

7/25 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2024 were approved as a correct record.

8/25 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

There were none received.

9/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

9 Citizens' Assembly Update

Robin Tucker

13 Local Flood Risk Management Strategy Update

Cllr Lois Muddiman (Oxford City Council)

14 Civil Enforcement Procurement

Danny Yee

Claire Hamlett

Robin Tucker

10/25 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item. 6)

There were no appointments to report to this meeting.

11/25 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 7)

Councillor Jane Hanna, Chair of the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the report on Healthy Weight

Councillor Nigel Simpson, Chair of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the report on Education other than at Home Strategy (EOTAS)

Councillor Liam Walker, Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the report on Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Cabinet received the reports and will respond in due course.

12/25 RESPONSE TO MOTION BY COUNCILLOR REEVES ON WINTER FUEL PAYMENTS

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report recommending a response to the motion agreed at Council on 5 November 2024, on the subject of recent changes to Winter Fuel Payments (WFP). The motion sought to ensure that the Council supported low income pensioners who were losing their WFP, and that this

support was communicated both to them and those who support them such as family and friends.

Councillor Dr Nathan Ley, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety, presented the report. He explained that the council had implemented several measures to support low-income pensioners. The Resident Support Scheme provided crisis payments for various needs, including broken appliances, in partnership with Age UK and other organisations. A communications campaign targeted low-income pensioners to raise awareness about available support. The cost-of-living programme included funding for energy vouchers, practical support with energy efficiency, and small community organization grants. The Low Income Family Tracker dashboard helped in the organisation of awareness campaigns for pension credit and identified those who might benefit from other support. A £90,000 contingency fund was set aside for expenditure on pensioners.

The council worked closely with district councils, NHS, and civic groups to promote available support and address fuel poverty among low-income pensioners.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- A member commended the work of district councils and organisations such as Citizens' Advice in providing assistance to those affected by the withdrawal of winter fuel payments.
- The importance of the partnership with district councils in addressing the cost-of-living crisis

Councillor Ley moved and Councillor Roberts seconded the recommendation, and it was approved.

RESOLVED to note that the actions set out in this report to respond to the motion relating to Winter Fuel Payments approved by Council in November 2024, the wording of which is set out in Annex One

13/25 CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY UPDATE

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet had before it a report providing an update on the citizens' assembly on future travel, transport and connectivity in Oxfordshire to be delivered by external agency MutualGain in February and March 2025.

Following the motion agreed at Full Council on 10 December 2024 the assembly would be extended from 30 to 45 hours to enable a dedicated focus to be given, within the wider assembly, to the council's suite of traffic

management measures in central Oxfordshire, including the traffic filters trial, the workplace parking levy, and the expanded zero emissions zone.

Robin Tucker from the Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel spoke in support of the citizens' assembly on transport in Oxfordshire. He emphasised the importance of gaining input through a democratic process with better evidence and less misinformation. He expressed scepticism about the motivations behind the motion for a congestion assembly but acknowledged the need to respond to it. He highlighted the various harms caused by motor vehicles, including congestion, decarbonisation, and traffic-related injuries, and stressed the need for a comprehensive approach rather than focusing solely on congestion. He also mentioned the long history of discussions and consultations on traffic solutions in Oxfordshire, emphasising the need for decisive action to reduce traffic and improve public health.:

The Chair thanked Mr Tucker for his input and acknowledged the importance of addressing the issues raised.

Councillor Leffman moved, and Councillor Gant seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) note progress being made on the citizens' assembly, which is being held in February and March 2025;**
- b) note that the actions set out in this report respond to the motion agreed by Council on 10 December 2024.**

14/25 CABINET RESPONSE TO MOTION ON CHANGES TO INHERITANCE TAX AND OTHER FARMING MATTERS

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet had before it a report which addressed the motion agreed by Council on 10 December 2024 that related to the impact on farm businesses and farming families of measures announced in the autumn statement of 30 October 2024. The report summarised the council's existing and emerging policy and programme support to rural businesses and set out how the council's approach would address the issues raised in the motion that are within the influence of the County Council.

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, presented the report.

During discussion, members highlighted the economic and business support provided to the farming community in the Oxfordshire. They mentioned the distribution of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Oxford Food Strategy, and the potential participation in the Oxfam to Fork scheme. The Leader had also

written to the Chancellor expressing concerns about the inheritance tax proposal.

Councillor Leffman moved, and Councillor Sudbury seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **note the council's current and planned policy and programme activity in support of the rural economy;**
- b) **note the requests from Council to Cabinet made through the motion on Farming passed by Council on 10 December 2024 and how the council's approach will address these issues.**

15/25 WARM HOMES: LOCAL GRANT CAPITAL RETROFIT PROGRAMME

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet received a report regarding a funding application had been submitted to the Warm Homes: Local Grant through Department for Energy Security & Net Zero. The bid supported the Council's climate action and health agendas and followed on from a range of retrofit programmes delivered to low-income households in fuel poverty. This was a three-year scheme currently which might be extended to up to five years, subject to approval at the spending review.

Councillor Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations, presented the report. He emphasised the need for long-term funding to support retrofit in low-income households. He highlighted the success in securing grants and the importance of addressing fuel poverty.

Councillor Sudbury moved and Councillor Leffman seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **note the submission of a funding request to Department for Energy Security and Net Zero to support retrofit of low-income households in, or at risk of, fuel poverty.**
- b) **delegate authority to the Director of Economy & Place in consultation with the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, to consider and conclude any agreements upon notification of a successful application for the Warm Homes: Local Grant (WH:LG).**
- c) **delegate authority to the Director of Economy & Place in consultation with the Executive Director of Resources to issue**

an extension to the existing agreement for the Provision of Capital Retrofit Grant Distribution and Delivery Management Services (Home Upgrade Grant, Phase 2) for up to 24 months

16/25 FUNDING CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS A JOINTLY COMMISSIONED MENTAL HEALTH CONTRACT 2025-2035

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet had before it a report on proposals for a new mental health contract which would bring together several existing mental health contracts in one place for Oxfordshire residents aged 18+ years whose mental health fell into primary, core or enhanced need in the new framework for defining mental health need. These services aimed to ensure adults with poor mental health and serious mental illness received specialist support as part of their recovery, were supported to achieve good outcomes and could live in communities with support. Bringing these elements together into a single contract would simplify the management processes and reduce bureaucracy, creating greater flexibility and clearer oversight through a Performance and Assurance Oversight Board.

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, presented the report.

The Director of Adult Social Services and the Commissioning Manager (Improve Enable) explained the background to the new contract and referred to the importance of the collaborative approach between the NHS and Social Services in its development. The report emphasised the need for a comprehensive approach to mental health, including prevention, early intervention, and treatment. They highlighted the focus on recovery and integration into the community and the inclusion of various sub-contracts in the new proposals.

During discussion, members referred to the challenges faced in providing mental health services, including funding constraints and the need for collaboration with various stakeholders. Members acknowledged the efforts made by the public health team and other partners in addressing mental health issues. They commented on the importance of raising awareness about mental health and reducing the stigma associated with it. There was agreement on the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the mental health services to ensure their effectiveness.

Councillor Leffman moved, and Councillor Gregory seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) approve the direct award of a new mental health contract between Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (“BOB ICB”) and Oxford Health (NHS) Foundation Trust funded under the pooled fund arrangements of the S 75 Agreement (as defined at paragraph 30 below).**

- b) agree the Council's funding contribution under the S 75 Agreement to BOB ICB for mental health services under the new mental health contract to be entered by BOB ICB for the lifetime of the contract.
- c) delegate responsibility to the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) in consultation with the Executive Member for Adult Social Care for oversight of the approval process as it progresses towards final sign off (by the contracting authority).

17/25 LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE

(Agenda Item. 13)

Cabinet had before it a report on the revised Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS), an overarching framework developed by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) as the Lead Local Flood Authority. The strategy was a statutory document required by the Floods and Water Management Act 2010 and served to address flood risk within the county.

The LFRMS aimed to develop, maintain, apply, and monitor effective flood risk management practices across Oxfordshire. It encompassed flood risk from surface runoff, groundwater, and ordinary watercourses. The strategy outlined the roles and responsibilities of risk management authorities including statutory and non-statutory elements.

Councillor Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations, presented the report, highlighting the importance of flexibility, magnitude, complexity, and synergy in addressing flood risks. He emphasised the need for better communication, investment in flood prevention, and the integration of flood management with the local nature recovery strategy.

Councillor Sudbury moved and Councillor Gregory seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RECOMMENDED to approve the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy as set out in Annex 2 to the report.

18/25 CIVIL ENFORCEMENT PROCUREMENT

(Agenda Item. 14)

Cabinet had before it a report recommending a model for future civil enforcement delivery following the expiry of current contracts in March 2026.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, presented the report. He emphasised the importance of effective enforcement in achieving the county's transport goals. He addressed the points raised by the speakers, including the need for better enforcement of parking regulations, the potential use of new technologies, and the importance of recruiting and retaining civil enforcement officers.

Councillor Gant moved and Councillor Roberts seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) approve the commencement of work to explore and consider options for Civil Enforcement provision for the county council due to contracts coming to an end March 2026.**
- b) endorse the proposed approach and key stages as set out in this paper.**

19/25 AFFILIATION BETWEEN OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AND HMS DIAMOND

(Agenda Item. 15)

Cabinet had before it a report regarding an approach by the Royal Navy to propose an affiliation between Oxfordshire and His Majesty's Ship (HMS) Diamond. The proposed affiliation aimed to strengthen the bond and support between the Royal Navy and the local community in Oxfordshire by raising awareness of the Royal Navy and specifically of HMS Diamond. Affiliations with ships took many forms, but all aimed to provide mutual benefit. If the affiliation was pursued, a Memorandum of Understanding would be developed to outline the affiliation's intentions and commitments. Oxfordshire had a large armed forces community, and the council had a strong reputation for supporting the military and veteran communities in Oxfordshire. Therefore, it was recommended to build on this reputation by demonstrating support for the military beyond Oxfordshire's borders through the affiliation with HMS Diamond.

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, presented the report.

Councillor Leffman moved, and Councillor Roberts seconded the recommendation, and it was approved.

RESOLVED to agree to forming an affiliation between Oxfordshire and His Majesty's Ship (HMS) 'Diamond'.

20/25 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING REPORT - NOVEMBER 2024

(Agenda Item. 16)

Cabinet considered a report presenting the November 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.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report. He acknowledged the efforts made by the finance team in preparing the report and providing a comprehensive overview of the council's financial health.

During discussion, members referred to the importance of regular monitoring and evaluation of the council's activities to ensure alignment with strategic goals.

Councillor Levy moved and Councillor Leffman seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) note the report and annexes.**
- b) approve the virement requests in Annex B-2a and note the requests in Annex B-2b**
- c) approve the creation of a new reserve to support costs associated with Local Government Devolution and Reorganisation and the transfer of £5.0m to the reserve.**
- d) approve the transfer of £3.0m from Adult Services to the Budget Priorities reserve.**

21/25 CAPITAL APPROVALS REPORT - JANUARY 2025

(Agenda Item. 17)

The Capital Programme was approved by Council in February 2024 and updated during the year through the capital programme and monitoring reports. Cabinet had before it a report which set out change requests requiring Cabinet approval that will be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next update to the Capital Programme in March 2025.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report and explained the background to the changes to the capital programme and new schemes requiring approval.

Councillor Levy moved and Councillor Sudbury seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:

- a) approve the inclusion of 'The Greenwood Centre', an 11-bed accommodation block for 16–17-year-olds in need of supported accommodation, into the Capital Programme at an indicative cost of £1.932m, to be funded from £6.000m agreed by Council in February 2024 for additional Children's Homes.
- b) approve a budget increase of £6.39m for 'Great Western Park Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) School', to be funded from the High Needs Grant.
- c) approve a budget increase of £1.500m to the Energy Saving Measures Programme, to be addressed through the annual Budget and Business Planning process and approval by Council in February 2025.
- d) approve a budget increase of £11.516m to the Didcot to Culham River Crossing, part of the Housing Infrastructure 1 (HIF1) programme, to be funded through additional funds granted by Homes England and agreed by Cabinet in July 2024.
- e) approve a budget increase of £12.537m to Didcot Science Bridge, part of the Housing Infrastructure 1 (HIF1) programme to be funded through additional funds granted by Homes England and agreed by Cabinet in July 2024.
- f) approve a budget increase of £11.916m to the Clifton Hampden Bypass project, part of the Housing Infrastructure 1 (HIF1) programme to be funded through additional funds granted by Homes England and agreed by Cabinet in July 2024.

22/25 DELEGATED POWERS REPORT FOR OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2024

(Agenda Item. 18)

Under the Scheme of Delegation in the Council's Constitution (Part 7.2, paragraph 6.3 (c)(i)), the Chief Executive was authorised to undertake an executive function on behalf of the Cabinet. Cabinet received a quarterly report on the use of this delegated power in relation to such executive decisions; that is, decisions that might otherwise have been taken by Cabinet.

Cabinet had before it a report referring to executive decisions taken during the period October to December 2024 inclusive.

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, presented the report.

Councillor Leffman moved, and Councillor Sudbury seconded the recommendation, and it was approved.

RESOLVED to note the executive decisions taken under delegated powers, set out in paragraph 4 of the report.

23/25 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 19)

The Cabinet considered a list of items for the immediately forthcoming meetings of the Cabinet together with changes and additions set out in the schedule of addenda.

RESOLVED to note the items currently identified for forthcoming meetings.

.....in the Chair

Date of signing