

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 27 January 2026 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 4.05pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Neil Fawcett
Councillor Tim Bearder
Councillor Andrew Gant
Councillor Sean Gaul
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Ben Higgins
Councillor Dan Levy
Councillor Judy Roberts

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillors Liz Brighthouse OBE, Imade Edosomwan, Glynis Phillips, James Robertshaw, Liam Walker and Tony Worgan

Officers:

Whole of meeting Martin Reeves (Chief Executive), Lorna Baxter (Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer), Anita Bradley (Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Paul Fermer (Director of Environment and Highways), 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.

1/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kate Gregory.

2/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

3/26 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 and 16 December 2025 were approved as a correct record.

4/26 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

See annex.

5/26 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

8 – Budget and Business Planning 2026/27 – 2030/31

Robin Tucker

9 – Oxfordshire Learning Disability Plan 2025-2035

Cllr Jane Hanna

10 – My Life My Choice Councillor Deal

Cllr Jane Hanna

11 – Movement and Place Plans – Science Vale

Robin Tucker

6/26 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item. 6)

There were no appointments to report to this meeting.

7/26 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 7)

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Chair of the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the following reports:-

- a) Budget and Business Planning
- b) Fix my street
- c) Business Management and Monitoring Report (Public Health Focus)
- d) Parking Permits

Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE, Chair of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the following reports:-

- a) The Virtual School
- b) Attainment
- c) Fostering

Cabinet noted the reports and will respond in due course.

8/26 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLANNING 2027/28 - 2030/31

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report which was the culmination of the Budget and Business Planning process for 2026/27 to 2030/31 and set out the Cabinet's revenue budget for 2026/27, medium term financial strategy to 2030/31, capital programme to 2035/36 plus supporting policies, strategies and information.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, presented the report.

Councillor Levy explained the impact of the Fair Funding Review, which resulted in a £24.1 million reduction in government grants, necessitating a 4.99% annual council tax rise and difficult choices to maintain a balanced budget amid rising demand and cost pressures.

Despite funding constraints, the budget included significant investments in Children's Services (£18 million increase), home-to-school transport, educational psychologists, and capital projects such as libraries and road maintenance, while also requiring savings and efficiency measures.

During discussion, members discussed the implications of the funding formula, the need for local flexibility, and the importance of strategic investments.

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

RESOLVED to:

1. In relation to the Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (Section 4);
 - a) approve the Review of Charges for 2026/27 (Annex A, page 1 - 58, 67) and in relation to the Registration Service, the charges for 2027/28 (Annex A, page 59 – 62) and 2028/29 (annex A page 63 – 66);
 - b) receive any recommendations and observations from Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
 - c) approve the Financial Strategy for 2026/27 (Section 4.5);
 - d) approve the Earmarked Reserves and General Balances Policy Statement for 2026/27 (Section 4.6), including the creation of a new Lane Rental reserve and the renaming of the Demographic Risk Reserve to the High Needs DSG Deficit Risk Reserve;

- e) approve the use of retained business rates from EZ1 Science Vale Growth Accelerator and EZ2 Didcot Growth Accelerator as set out in paragraph 169-172 and Annex B;
- f) note that following any funding changes as a result of the final Local Government Finance Settlement and information from the district and city councils in relation to business rates or council tax will be managed as set out in Paragraph 10; and
- g) delegate to the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, the authority to make any appropriate changes to the proposed budget not covered by Paragraph 10.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND Council to:

- h) approve a Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2026/27 to 2030/31 as set out in Section 4.1 (which incorporates changes to the existing Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Section 4.2);
- i) agree the council tax and precept calculations for 2026/27 set out in Section 4.3 and in particular:
 - (i) a precept of £567,372,274;
 - (ii) a council tax for band D equivalent properties of £2,006.78.

2. In relation to the Capital and Investment Strategy and Capital Programme (Section 5);

RESOLVED to recommend Council to:

- j) approve the Capital and Investment Strategy for 2026/27 – 2036/37 (Section 4.1) including:
 - (i) the Minimum Revenue Provision Methodology Statement (Section 5.1 Annex 1);
 - (ii) the Prudential Indicators (Section 5.1 Annex 2) and
- k) approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2026/27 (Section 5.2); and
 - (i) continue to delegate the authority to withdraw or advance additional funds to/from external fund managers to the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer);
 - (ii) approve that any further changes required to the 2026/27 Treasury Management Strategy be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation;

- (iii) approve the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators; and
- (iv) approve the Specified Investment and Non - Specified Investment instruments as set out in Section 5.2.
- l) approve the changes to the capital programme and new capital proposals for inclusion in the Capital Programme and proposed pipeline schemes (Section 5.3)
- m) approve the capital programme (Section 5.4)

9/26 OXFORDSHIRE LEARNING DISABILITY PLAN 2025 - 2035

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet had before it a report on the Oxfordshire Learning Disability Plan, a 10-year strategy for adults, including the transition into adulthood. The Plan focused on four key themes and four cross-cutting areas. Planned reviews at regular intervals would ensure its effectiveness and adaptability, with any necessary revisions applied based on needs and demands at that time.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Adults, presented the report.

The Head of Joint Commissioning – Live Well described the year-long co-production process involving My Life, My Choice, Oxfordshire Family Support Network, and experts by experience, resulting in a ten-year plan with regular reviews and dynamic action plans monitored by a co-chaired improvement board.

Extensive engagement included focus groups, surveys, world café events, and story sharing, with over 160 participants (including people with learning disabilities, carers, staff, and professionals) contributing to the plan's content and priorities.

The plan was structured around four themes—having a good life, health and wellbeing, having a place to live, and homes not hospitals—and addressed transitions, employment, technology-enabled care, and inclusion, with subgroups ensuring ongoing input from lived experience.

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

RESOLVED to acknowledge the development of the new co-designed Oxfordshire Learning Disability Plan 2025 – 2035 for adults, the co-produced Dynamic Work Plans and progress on work so far.

10/26 MY LIFE MY CHOICE COUNCILLOR DEAL

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet had before it a report on “County Councillor Deal” created by a team of learning-disabled people (Campaign Champions) focusing on three key areas of life they want the council’s work to focus on. The My Life My Choice Campaign requested that the Leader of the Council endorsed the three

pledges of the Campaign Champions. MLMC asked the County Council to concentrate its efforts on these commitments to support individuals with learning disabilities. T

he three pledges were:

Pledge 1: Social Care – Workforce and Support

Pledge 2: Education and Employment

Pledge 3: Good Places to Live.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Adults, presented the report.

My Life, My Choice representatives presented their priorities and expectations for partnership, focusing on empowerment, inclusion, and co-production.

The Cabinet formally acknowledged and endorsed the compact, agreeing to work with My Life, My Choice on the three pledges aligned with the Learning Disability Plan, and noted that the commitment may be reviewed depending on local government reorganisation outcomes.

Councillor Bearder moved and Councillor Leffman seconded the recommendations and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **Acknowledge and endorse this report developed with My Life My Choice (MLMC) Campaign Champions.**
- b) **Confirm the council's commitment to work with the MLMC Community Champions on the three pledges that they have set out as part of the Councillor Deal where these fall within the council's remit and where they are within the scope of the Oxfordshire Learning Disability Plan 2025-2035 (see annex 1a and 1b).**

Following endorsement, the Cabinet agreed to a short break to sign the compact and take a commemorative photograph, marking the formalisation of the partnership.

11/26 MOVEMENT AND PLACE PLANS - SCIENCE VALE

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet had before it report seeking Cabinet approval for the Science Vale Movement and Place (MAP) Plan. These Plans will replace the current "Area Strategies" as adopted in 2016, as part of Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4).

Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, presented the report. Councillor Roberts explained the plan's shift towards integrating transport and place-making, connecting employment and housing, and repurposing infrastructure to benefit local communities, with a commitment to ongoing community and locality engagement.

Councillor Roberts moved and Councillor Higgins seconded the recommendations and they were approved.

RESOLVED to: -

- a) **Approve the adoption and publication of the Introduction Chapter (Annex A) providing overarching and context information for all Movement & Place Plans, which supports all specific Movement & Place Plans.**
- b) **Approve the adoption and publication of the Science Vale Movement and Place Plan (Annex B), and its subsequent supporting documents at B1- B4) (e.g. summary, delivery plan etc).**

12/26 LTCP MONITORING REPORT 2024-2025

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet had before it a report summarising the delivery and performance for the year 2024-2025 against the Council's ambition as set out in the Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP).

Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, presented the report.

Councillor Roberts explained the main points outlined in the report including progress against key performance indicators and areas identified for improvement, particularly in rural cycling infrastructure and data interpretation. The monitoring report was revised for clarity and accessibility, tracking headline targets such as car trips, vehicle miles, emissions, and digital connectivity, with mixed results due to post-pandemic behavioural changes.

Councillor Roberts noted difficulties in interpreting trends due to pandemic effects, with car trips up but vehicle miles down, and highlighted positive trends in emissions reduction and digital connectivity.

During discussion, a member raised concerns about rural cycling infrastructure, urging the use of the report to identify opportunities for new cycle tracks.

The Director of Environment and Highways referred to forthcoming national metrics and guidance that might further enhance monitoring.

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

RESOLVED to:

- a) **Approve the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan Monitoring Report 2024-2025, as detailed in Annex B, for formal publication.**
- b) **note the progress made on delivering the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (“LTCP”) to date.**

13/26 REVENUE UPDATE AND MONITORING REPORT (NOVEMBER 2025)

(Agenda Item. 13)

The budget for 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2027/28 was agreed by Council on 11 February 2025. £53.6m new funding to meet inflationary and demand pressures in 2025/26 was included as part of the budget along with £6.9m investments and £30.3m savings.

Cabinet had before it a report setting out the current revenue forecast as at end of November 2025 and expected outlook for the financial year and included updates on:

- financial risks which are being managed in 2025/26;
- savings and investment position; and
- funding notified since the budget was agreed in February 2025.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, presented the report.

Councillor Levy reported a £2 million underspend for 2025–26, with pressures in adult social care, children's placements, and fire and rescue, offset by central budget underspends and higher interest income. The Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Deficit remained a significant concern.

Councillor Levy moved and Councillor Lefman seconded the recommendations and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **Note the report and annexes.**
- b) **Note that £1.2m funding for investments relating to Rail and Flood planning agreed as part of the budget in February 2025 will be transferred to the Budget Priorities reserve for use in 2026/27 (paragraph 22).**
- c) **Note anticipated supplementary estimate requests to be funded from General Balances relating to:**
 1. **c£0.5m Bicester Motion (paragraph 14)**
 2. **c£2.2m Woodeaton School deficit balance write off due to transfer to academy status (paragraph 34)**
- d) **Approve the write off of 16 Adult Social Care contribution debts totalling £0.477m as detailed in paragraph 31.**

- e) **Note the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block 2025/26 forecast and accumulated deficit position (paragraphs 35 - 39).**
- f) **Approve the creation of a new Budget Reserve and the addition of £5.5m forecast additional interest on balances in 2025/26 (paragraph 40).**
- g) **Note Local Government Re-organisation and Devolution update (paragraph 41 -42)**

14/26 CAPITAL PROGRAMME APPROVALS - JANUARY 2026

(Agenda Item. 14)

The 2025/26 Capital Programme was approved by Council in February 2025 and is updated during the year through the quarterly capital programme and monitoring reports. Cabinet had before it a report setting out change requests requiring Cabinet approval that will be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next update to Cabinet.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation presented the report. Councillor Levy said that the inclusion of £5 million for the Dukes Cut Bridge project was essential for the A40 improvements and future transport schemes

During discussion, members acknowledged the importance of the scheme for the county's future development.

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

RESOLVED to approve the inclusion of £5.0m funding into the capital programme for Duke's Cut Wolvercote Bridge Works.

15/26 DELEGATED POWERS REPORT FOR OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2025

(Agenda Item. 15)

There was no use of delegated powers during this period.

16/26 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 16)

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.

17/26 FOR INFORMATION ONLY: CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY ITEM

(Agenda Item. 17)

Cabinet noted the responses to the following Scrutiny items:-

Business Management and Monitoring Report (Children, Education and Families Focus)

Budget and Business Planning

.....in the Chair

Date of signing