

County Council

8 July 2025

Agenda



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

To: Members of the County COUNCIL

Notice of a Meeting of the County Council

Tuesday, 8 July 2025 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 black ink that reads "Reeves".

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

June 2025

Committee Officer: **Democratic Services**
E-mail: CommitteesDemocraticServices@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1. Minutes (Pages 1 - 8)

To approve the minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 20 May 2025 (**CC1a**) and the minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting also on 20 May 2025 (**CC1b**) 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 (Pages 9 - 12)

Report by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

This report notifies Council of nominations received from the political group leaders and given effect by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer on 28 May 2025 under a delegation in the Scheme of Delegation to Officers.

The Council is RECOMMENDED to note the appointments listed in paragraph 7 of this report to

- the Corporate Parenting Panel
- Oxfordshire County Council and Employees Joint Consultative Committee
- Oxfordshire County Council and Teachers Joint Committee
- Oxfordshire County Council Joint Consultative Committee for Uniformed Members of the Fire Service

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 three working days before the meeting i.e., 9am on Thursday 3 July 2025. Requests to speak should be sent to 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

The deadline to submit questions is 9am, five working days before the meeting i.e. 9am Tuesday 1 July 2025.

8. Questions with Notice from Members of the Council

9. Report of the Cabinet (Pages 13 - 20)

Report from the Leader of the Council.

The report summarises the decisions from the Cabinet meetings on 20 March 2025, 25 March 2025, 22 April 2025 and 17 June 2025.

10. Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2024/25 (Pages 21 - 50)

Report by Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

The Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is under a constitutional duty to prepare an annual report. That report is set out in Annex 1 and documents the breadth and depth of the Committee's work over the 2024/25 municipal year.

Council is RECOMMENDED to: -

- a) Receive and note the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee's (JHOSC) Annual Report set out in Annex 1.**

11. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2024/25 (Pages 51 - 82)

Report by Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Within the Council's Constitution at Part 6.2 paragraph 4 (viii) the overview and scrutiny committees are given the right to submit an annual report. This is given effect through an Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report.

The Council is RECOMMENDED to

- a) Receive the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report.**

12. Appointment of Independent Members of the Audit & Governance Committee (To Follow)

Report by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

At its meeting on 11 July 2023, Council approved the creation of the roles of two Independent Members of the Audit and Governance Committee. This report is to propose appointments to the two positions.

13. Appointments to and Formation of the Independent Remuneration Panel (To Follow)

Report by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

This report is to provide details of the arrangements for the forthcoming review of members' allowances to be completed in the current Council Year 2025/26 and implemented from 1 April 2026.

14. Councillors Parental Leave Policy (Pages 83 - 92)

Report by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

This report presents a policy outlining councillors' entitlements to Parental Leave, which includes maternity, paternity, shared parental, and adoption leave.

Council is RECOMMENDED to approve a parental leave policy for councillors, ensuring support for new parents and best practice in local governance. The policy includes provisions for temporary cover and reflects the council's commitment to promoting equality and diversity among elected officials.

15. Presentation of scroll to Alderman Bob Johnston (Pages 93 - 94)

Report by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

The Extraordinary Council meeting on 20 May 2025 approved the appointment of former Councillor Bob Johnston as Alderman. As Alderman Johnston was unable to attend on that day, Council agreed to defer the presentation of the scroll to this meeting.

Council is RECOMMENDED to note

- a) **the conferral of the title of Honorary Alderman, under section 249(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, on Mr Bob Johnston at the Extraordinary Meeting on 20 May 2025 in recognition of his significant contribution to the Council in particular and public service in general;**
- b) **that Alderman Johnston was unable to attend the conferral meeting due to holidays; and**
- c) **that Council agreed to defer the presentation of the scroll until its next meeting on 8 July 2025 so that Members would have the opportunity to pay tribute.**

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

16. Motion from Councillor Jane Hanna

Council notes with deep concern the failure of successive governments to address the crisis in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Provision.

Councils across the country are grappling with soaring high needs deficits, which the Local Government Association (LGA) predicts will exceed £5 billion nationally by next year.

Over half the councils providing these services warned they would face effective bankruptcy when the statutory override for SEND deficits was to expire in 2026. The extension to 2028 has not solved the underlying problem.

Between 2020 and 2024, Oxfordshire County Council's deficit on the 'Dedicated Schools Grant' was £46 million. This increased to £85m at the end of financial year 2024-25 and is budgeted to reach £127m by the end of financial year 2025-26.

Oxfordshire saw a 27% increase in requests for Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) during 2023/24 with an increase of 18% of approved EHCPs. These increases continue upward.

The LGA says that the current SEND system is "not working for anyone in it". The Spending Review once again failed to provide clarity on how the Government will address these mounting deficits.

The announced increase in core school funding amounts to just a 1.1% uplift - insufficient to keep pace with inflation and rising pay costs in schools.

The Council asks the leader to write to the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves MP, urging her to set out urgently how the Government will eliminate high needs deficits and deliver a SEND system that works for children, families and councils alike.

17. Motion from Councillor Liz Brighthouse

The Children's Society notes that transport poverty exacerbates other inequalities, with children from low-income families potentially missing out on school trips, extracurricular activities, or suffering poor school attendance. A 2025 report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies similarly identified that young people's mobility is closely tied to long-term social and economic outcomes.

This Council, being aware of the levels of child poverty in this county and the effect this has on the ability of families and young people to travel by public transport, asks the Cabinet to set up a Cabinet Advisory Group to consider a scheme to provide free or significantly reduced bus travel for children and young people up to age of 18.

Such a scheme could be funded from fines from ANPR enforcement and would enable children and young people to get to school and college settings by enabling bus companies to develop routes to school that better meet the travel needs of families and children.

This Council notes West of England Mayor Helen Goodwin has funded free travel for children up to 16 this summer.

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 from Councillor James Plumb

Council notes the increasing pressures on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services across Oxfordshire, with rising demand, complex needs, and a need for stronger local support.

Previously, Oxfordshire County Council had a dedicated Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement, reflecting the importance of this area.

This role was recently removed, diluting specific leadership and focus on one of the most challenging areas of Council responsibility.

Council believes that:

1. Children and young people with SEND deserve a dedicated champion at the highest political level within the Council.
2. A single Cabinet Member with clear and focused responsibility for SEND would enhance decision-making, oversight, and transparency.
3. Reinstating this post would demonstrate a renewed commitment to improving outcomes for families who rely on these vital services.

Council therefore resolves to:

- a) Ask the Leader of the Council to reinstate the Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement as a standalone portfolio within the Cabinet.
- b) Ensure this role has clear responsibility for SEND policy, provision, and engagement with parents, carers, and stakeholders.
- c) Request that the Leader provides a written response to this motion, setting out the steps being taken to strengthen leadership and accountability within SEND services.

19. Motion from Councillor Ian Middleton

A well-functioning opposition is a vital part of our democracy. The recent elections returned the first majority controlled council at OCC for years along with 3 main opposition party groups. Labour were the largest single party, but the Conservatives alliance with some independents resulted in two groups of equal size. This led to

confusion over which group would be the 'Official Opposition'.

As this situation was not envisaged within our constitution, the Monitoring Officer advised that both groups should be considered as the official opposition with Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) available to both. It was also deemed that the Chairs of the 4 main overview and scrutiny committees should be split between them.

This has created a constitutional anomaly requiring urgent consideration. It's also an opportunity to consider how financial and operational support for all significant opposition groups could be provided given the changed political landscape of OCC.

We therefore request an urgent review of the constitution and allowances scheme in respect of opposition groups, to determine:

1. How a principal opposition group should be defined where groups have equal numbers.
2. If members of all opposition groups above a certain size should be entitled to SRAs from a single proportionally shared budget.
3. The possibility of providing a support officer for all opposition groups on a timesharing basis, reflecting the relative sizes of recognised groups.
4. If chairs of scrutiny committees should be available to any member of a recognised group outside of the controlling administration, based on proportionality.

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.