

Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Tuesday, 14 July 2026 at 3.00 pm or on the rise of Cabinet whichever is later

Room 1 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

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

Items for Decision

The items for decision under individual Cabinet Members' delegated powers are listed overleaf, with indicative timings, and the related reports are attached. Key Decisions taken will become effective at the end of the working day on 17 July 2026 unless called in by that date for review by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

Copies of the reports are circulated (by e-mail) to all members of the County Council.

These proceedings are open to the public



Dr Martin Reeves OBE
Chief Executive

July 2026

Committee Officer: **Email:**
committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Note: Date of next meeting: 4 August 2026

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, but please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.

Items for Decision

1. Declarations of Interest

See guidance below.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 7 - 10)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on **17 March 2026** to be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. Questions from County Councillors

Any county councillor may, by giving notice to the Proper Officer by 9 am three working days before the meeting, ask a question on an item on the agenda.

The number of questions which may be asked by any councillor at any one meeting is limited to two (or one question with notice and a supplementary question at the meeting) and the time for questions will be limited to 30 minutes in total. As with questions at Council, any questions which remain unanswered at the end of this item will receive a written response.

Questions submitted prior to the agenda being despatched are shown below and will be the subject of a response from the appropriate Cabinet Member or such other councillor or officer as is determined by the Cabinet Member and shall not be the subject of further debate at this meeting. Questions received after the despatch of the agenda, but before the deadline, will be shown on the Schedule of Addenda circulated at the meeting, together with any written response which is available at that time.

4. 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 to present a petition must be submitted no later than 9am ten working days before the meeting.

Requests to speak must be submitted no later than 9am three working days before the meeting.

Requests should be submitted 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.

5. Families First - Children's Social Care Reforms (Pages 11 - 16)

Report by Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to:

- a) **Approve the use of the Families First grant in Oxfordshire to support the delivery of Children's Social Care reform, in line with the grant conditions set by the Department for Education; and**
- b) **Delegate authority to the Director for Children's Services to undertake all necessary activity to utilise the grant funding in accordance with those conditions.**

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.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then 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.

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Agenda Item 2

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 17 March 2026 commencing at 3.00 pm and finishing at 3.10 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Sean Gaul– in the Chair

Officers: Lisa Lyons (Director of Childrens Services), Heavey, Louise (Pupil Place Planning Manager),Jaswinder Didiaily (Assistant Director SS Sufficiency), Jane Maharry (Service Manager - School Organisation),Jack Ahier (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

The Cabinet Member considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.

27 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** (Agenda No. 1)

There were none

28 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** (Agenda No. 2)

The Cabinet Member approved the minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2026, as an accurate record of the proceedings

29 **QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS** (Agenda No. 3)

There were none received.

30 **PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS** (Agenda No. 4)

There were no requests

31 **PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ACE NURSERY** (Agenda No. 5)

The Cabinet Member considered a report which indicated that under Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, a local authority could propose the closure

of all categories of maintained school. In this regard it was proposed to close the Ace Centre Maintained Nursery School.

The Ace Centre Nursery School was located on the Burford Road in the centre of Chipping Norton and was one of 7 maintained nursery schools across Oxfordshire. The proposal followed significant challenges faced by the nursery including a sustained and substantial reduction in pupil numbers, which had affected its financial and educational viability. There had been significant changes in leadership over the past four years with a new Headteacher and Governing body. The Headteacher also resigned during the Autumn term of 2025 and left on 31st December 2025.

The Council was also committed to ensuring that alternative early years' provision remains available locally to minimise any impact on families and the wider community.

Resolved to:

- a. Approve the proposed closure of The Ace Centre Maintained Nursery School.

32 DIDCOT VALLEY PARK SPECIAL SCHOOL - EDUCATION SPECIFICATION AND APPROVAL TO START LA PRESUMPTION PROCESS

(Agenda No. 6)

The Cabinet Member considered a report which indicated Oxfordshire's Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Sufficiency Delivery Strategy identified the need for two new special schools in the south-east of Oxfordshire, one for children with Social, Emotional & Mental Health and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder (SEMH/ASD) needs, and one for children with Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) or Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), and other associated needs.

Oxfordshire County Council would not run either of the new schools. The 2011 Education Act requires that all new schools are expected to be academies/free schools. This law meant that they are not run by the county council except in exceptional circumstances. Instead, academies were run by independent academy trusts.

Didcot currently had no special schools. The nearest maintained community special schools (primarily educating children with PMLD/SLD needs) were in Abingdon and Wantage. This meant children and young people with SEND faced long journeys to access suitable education provision. The purpose of this report was to provide information on the consultation outcome and seek Cabinet Member approval to move onto the next stage of the process

Resolved to:

- a. Approve the specification for the new special school serving the Didcot area, and for a competitive process to be launched to identify an academy sponsor to run the school.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 2026

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DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

14 July 2026

Families First – Children's Social Care Reforms

Report by Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to:
 - a) Approve the use of the Families First grant in Oxfordshire to support the delivery of Children's Social Care reform, in line with the grant conditions set by the Department for Education; and
 - b) Delegate authority to the Director for Children's Services to undertake all necessary activity to utilise the grant funding in accordance with those conditions.

Executive Summary

2. The Families First programme is a national reform programme focused on delivering earlier, more joined-up support to children and families. Oxfordshire has already begun implementation through pilot activity.
3. The programme is supported by ring-fenced grant funding of £6.4m (26-28), reducing to £5.5m for 28-29. Grant conditions of use are set by the Department for Education. This report seeks approval to utilise that funding to deliver the required reforms locally.

Background

4. The Families First programme is a national reform initiative which seeks to improve outcomes for children and families by providing earlier, more coordinated support, and by strengthening arrangements for child protection decision-making. Local authorities are required to implement these reforms by March 2027.
5. The programme is supported by a specific grant allocation, with conditions that set out how funding must be used. These conditions include requirements to establish a single, integrated system of family help, implementing family-led decision-making, and to strengthen multi-agency arrangements for managing risk and making child protection decisions.

Progress to Date

6. Oxfordshire has already taken forward a programme of test and learn activity to begin implementation of the required reforms. This has included piloting integrated approaches to family help, changes to child protection decision-making arrangements, and increased use of family-led planning.
7. This activity has been undertaken using existing capacity where possible and has provided practical learning to inform full implementation. It has enabled the local authority and partners to test new ways of working, refine operational arrangements, and build readiness for wider rollout.

Next Phase of Implementation

8. The next phase is to move from pilot delivery to full implementation of the Families First reforms across Children's Social Care. This will bring together early support and statutory intervention into a single, coherent offer for families, deliver family-led planning, and establish strengthened multi-agency arrangements for child protection.
9. Alongside this, work will continue with partners across health, police, education and the voluntary sector to ensure that services are aligned and that families experience a consistent and joined-up response.
10. Implementation will also need to take account of wider system changes, including Local Government Reorganisation. The proposed model has been designed so that it can scale to different organisational configurations, ensuring that statutory responsibilities can continue to be met safely and consistently under any future arrangements.

Financial Position and Use of Grant

11. The programme is supported by a multi-year grant from the Department for Education, with funding of approximately £6.4m per annum over the next two years, reducing to approximately £5.5m by 2028-29.
12. The Families First model will be delivered through a combination of existing core-funded Children's Social Care provision and targeted investment from this grant.
13. Delivery of core implementation activity is expected to require investment of approximately £5.5m per annum, subject to final scope, implementation phasing and confirmation of developing elements.
14. Based on the underlying proposal, this comprises approximately:
 - £1.8m for integrated support for children and families (Integrated Family Help)

- £0.9m for strengthened child protection arrangements (Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams)
- £0.4 million for family-led decision-making
- £1.5 million for specialist and targeted support (including the interface with Family Hubs)
- £0.5 million for kinship care and reunification support
- £0.4 million in existing grant-funded commitments.

15. In addition, the programme includes further time-limited transformation and implementation costs and developing elements which are not yet fully costed but will be met from within the overall grant allocation.

16. The use of this grant is subject to national conditions, including requirements that it is used to support delivery of the Families First model. As a result, the local authority has limited discretion in how the funding is applied.

Governance and Decision

17. Although the grant is ring-fenced and its use is directed through national conditions, the council is required to formally approve its use through the governance framework for Key Decisions.

18. This report therefore seeks approval to utilise the Families First grant in line with those conditions, and to delegate authority to the Director for Children's Services to implement the required activity. This will ensure that the council is able to proceed at pace with delivery, including meeting the conditions attached to the grant and associated national implementation timelines.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

19. The proposals support the council's ambitions to improve outcomes for children and young people by providing earlier support, reducing escalation of need, and strengthening safeguarding arrangements.

Financial Implications

20. The decision sought is to approve the use of the ring-fenced Families First grant, provided through the Children, Families and Youth Grant, and to delegate authority to the Director for Children's Services to deliver activity in accordance with the grant conditions.

21. The proposed use of funding is expected to be contained within the confirmed grant allocation and does not, through this decision, create an additional ongoing commitment from the council's base budget.

22. The council is required to utilise the funding within the terms of the grant. As and when any financial benefits of preventative services are identified, they will be reflected in future medium term financial strategies.

Comments checked by:

Jane Billington, Strategic Finance Business Partner,
jane.billington@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

23. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 received royal assent on 29th April 2026. The act provides the legal mandate and statutory powers, while the Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme serves as the national delivery model and funding mechanism to implement the associated social care reforms. The council is required to meet programme requirements in full by end March 2027 and to comply with the conditions of the Families First grant. Failure to fully implement reforms or comply with grant conditions, risks financial penalties and/ or enforcement action via the Department for Education. The council is also required to ensure that any decisions relating to its use are taken in accordance with the council's governance framework.

Comments checked by:

Craig Cochrane, Principal Lawyer, Child Care Team, Law and Governance,
craig.cochrane@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

24. The proposals involve the reconfiguration of existing arrangements and the deployment of grant-funded activity to support service delivery. These will be progressed in line with the council's policies and procedures.

Comments checked by:

Amy Warner, Strategic People Partner, amy.warner@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality & Inclusion Implications

25. The proposals aim to improve access to support for children and families and to ensure that services are delivered in a more coordinated and inclusive way. An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed as and when required.

Sustainability Implications

26. No specific sustainability implications have been identified at this stage.

Risk Management

27. The main risks relate to delivery within required timescales, alignment with national guidance, and financial management over the lifetime of the grant. These will be managed through programme governance and ongoing oversight.

Consultations

28. Engagement has taken place with staff and partner agencies as part of the development and pilot phases. Further engagement will continue as implementation progresses.

Lisa Lyons
Director of Children's Services

Annex: Nil

Background papers: Nil

Other Documents: Nil

Contact Officer: Delia Mann, Deputy Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help

July 2026

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