

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 27 February 2024 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 2.48pm

Present:

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

Other Members in Attendance: Councillors Neil Fawcett and Donna Ford

Officers:

Whole of meeting Martin Reeves (Chief Executive), Lorna Baxter (Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer), Anita Bradley (Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Ansaf Azhar (Corporate Director Public Health & Community Safety), Bill Cotton (Corporate Director Environment & Place) Karen Fuller (Corporate Director Adult Social Care), Jean Kelly (Deputy Director Children's Social Care), 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.

23/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Neil Fawcett and Andrew Gant.

24/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

25/24 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2024 were amended as follows:

“13/24 Freehold Disposal Chilterns End Former Care Home, Henley on Thames

Councillor Levy moved and Councillor Fawcett seconded the recommendations, and they were approved”

and approved and signed as a correct record.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 January were approved and signed as a correct record.

26/24 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

See Annex.

27/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

There were no requests received.

28/24 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item.)

Cabinet noted that the Leader of the Council had appointed Cllrs Andy Graham and Bethia Thomas as joint Water Champions.

29/24 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 6)

In the absence of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet noted the report and recommendations on Support for People Leaving Hospital; the Oxfordshire Way.

Councillor Brad Baines, Deputy Chair of the Performance and Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee, presented the report and recommendations on the Draft Customer Experience Strategy and answered a number of questions.

Cabinet received the Scrutiny reports and will respond in due course.

30/24 LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (LEP) FUNCTIONS: TRANSITION ARRANGEMENTS

(Agenda Item. 7)

(Nigel Tipple, Chief Executive, OxLEP attended the meeting for this item)

Cabinet had before it a report on the transfer of Local Enterprise Partnership core functions to the Council. The Government had announced that from 31 March 2024, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) would cease to have official recognition and that existing LEP functions would transfer to upper-tier local authorities or combined authorities, where they exist.

Following this announcement, it was important to establish a new governance framework to ensure local arrangements continue to meet government guidance. It was proposed that the County Council create a controlling interest in OxLEP Ltd. To enable this to happen the OxLEP Ltd Board would need to consider and approve a revision its Articles of Association and By-Laws whereby the County Council would become the sole 'member' of the company, exercising its membership functions through Cabinet.

Subsequent to the change of ownership, there would be an opportunity, in conjunction with the LEP and local stakeholders, to revise the local framework of economic planning and partnerships and the system's capacity and capability requirements for the future.

The Chair introduced the report and explained the background to the proposals which had been considered by the LEP Board and would be developed over a transition period of 6 months.

The Corporate Director: Environment and Place presented the report and explained how the transition proposals would be progressed in liaison with the LEP Board. Nigel Tipple said that there was a strong commitment by the LEP to work with the Council as a partnership to implement the transition proposals.

During discussion members made the following points:-

- The ways in which the Council's environmental policies could be progressed as a result of the integration of the LEP's functions into the Council
- The Council's response to the OXLEP Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) which had not made public previously, was read out at the meeting
- The opportunity to consider the whole structure of the organisation and reframe the economic functions following integration with the Council.

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

RESOLVED to

- a) **Note the government announcement on the transfer of Local Enterprise Partnership core functions;**

- b) **Approve the creation of a County Council controlling interest in the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP Ltd), subject to agreement by OxLEP Ltd's board**
- c) **Consent to a change to OxLEP Ltd's governance to amend the Articles of Association and By-Laws to enable the County Council to take a controlling interest, if agreed by the OxLEP board;**
- d) **Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Environment and Place in consultation with the Executive Director of Resources the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Infrastructure and Development Strategy to take such operational decisions as are required to conclude the integration process, including concluding the Articles of Association.**

31/24 WORKFORCE REPORT AND STAFFING DATA - Q3 OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2023

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report which provided the workforce profile for quarter 3 2023/24 including an overview of headcount, agency spend, sickness, turnover and other relevant management information and performance indicators (Appendix A). The report also set out some of the actions being taken to address the trends identified.

The Chair presented the report on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services. She referred, in particular, to the actions being taken to address the agency spend and other issues identified in the report.

During discussion, members made the following points:-

- The ongoing success of the Council's apprenticeship programme
- The need to investigate and address the amount of sickness absence attributed to stress and mental health

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

RESOLVED to note the report.

32/24 CAPITAL PROGRAMME APPROVALS - FEBRUARY 2024

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet had before it a report which set out changes to the Capital Programme requiring Cabinet approval that would be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next update to the Capital Programme in March 2024.

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

During discussion, members commented on the need to ensure that school buildings were built to environmental standards and in accordance the appropriate building regulations.

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

RESOLVED to approve the inclusion of a 3 Form Entry Primary School, located in Didcot, into the Capital Programme with capital budget of £2.19m, to be fully funded from secured S106 contributions.

33/24 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 10)

The Cabinet considered a list of items for the immediately forthcoming meetings of the Cabinet.

RESOLVED to note the items currently identified for forthcoming meetings.

34/24 FOR INFORMATION ONLY: CABINET RESPONSES TO SCRUTINY ITEMS

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet noted the following response to the Scrutiny item:-

Vision Zero

.....in the Chair

Date of signing

CABINET – 27 FEBRUARY 2024

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

<p>1. COUNCILLOR MARK CHERRY</p> <p>As the Member for Banbury Ruscote, schools (William Morris, North Oxfordshire Academy & Saint Joseph's) absence figures are of grave concern and I wanted to know what plans Oxfordshire County Council and the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services have to tackle the problem.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JOHN HOWSON, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council is keen to support all children and young people to attend school. With that in mind, we are working with the Department for Education on a range of actions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing our internal capacity to support parents, schools and children • Rolling out the DfE toolkit • Working across Childrens, Education and Families service to ensure a joined-up approach to supporting families who may be experiencing challenges in their children attending schools. • Analysing the locality element of attendance data, so that we focus on communities most in need. <p>Each of the schools raised have been offered and accepted a Whole School Attendance audit, they are scheduled as follows:</p> <p>St Joseph's: Monday 26th February 2024 William Morris: 4th March 2024 North Oxfordshire Academy: 4th March 2024.</p> <p>The whole school audit will identify good practice and areas for improvement which will then be formerly fed back to each school as part of an action plan with a view of improving attendance for children and young people, whilst ensuring appropriate support has been identified and implemented as part of targeted attendance plans.</p>
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	<p>William Morris and North Oxfordshire Academy are in contact with the County Attendance team on a regular basis.</p> <p>Oxfordshire schools have had some improvement with school attendance, however, data shows that children under CP/CIN and those with EHCP's are doing less well than their peers. The senior leadership in Children, Education and Families are aware of this and are working together to support attendance.</p> <p>We are also working with partners such as the Violence Reduction Unit and Oxford Brookes to develop schemes to support those young people at risk of non-attendance so that they are able to benefit from the outstanding learning opportunities available in Oxfordshire schools.</p> <p>Attendance figures from Terms 1 and 2 show absence rates in Oxfordshire schools running at 7% as compared with the national average of 6.6%. Absence rates are highest in our special schools (12.8% compared to the national average for special schools of 12.6%), our secondary schools absence rate is higher than the national average for secondary schools (9.3% compared with 8.3%) and the rate in our primary schools mirrors the national average for primaries of 5.1%.</p>
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