

Divisions-N/A

COUNTY COUNCIL – 9 July 2024

REPORT OF THE CABINET

Cabinet Member : Leader of the Council

1. Oxfordshire Councils Charter

(Cabinet: 14 May 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report on the proposed Oxfordshire Councils Charter. The County Council had been working in partnership with the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC), district and city councils, town and parish councils, and parish meetings to strengthen partnership working across local councils in Oxfordshire.

Through a multi-organisational working group, an Oxfordshire Councils Charter had been developed which set out the principles and commitments to achieve stronger partnership working and enhanced local democracy.

Cabinet approved the recommendations to endorse and be a signatory to the Charter.

2. Appointments 2024-25

(Cabinet: 18 June 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report recommending member appointments to a variety of bodies which in different ways supported the discharge of the Council's executive functions. The report reflected the basis on which appointments to the respective bodies have been made in the past and, subject to any adjustments that would be considered appropriate, invited the Cabinet to agree arrangements for filling the councillor places on those bodies.

Cabinet agreed to the recommended appointments for 2024-25.

3. Oxfordshire County Council's Productivity Plan

(Cabinet: 18 June 2024)

A report that recommended the approval of Oxfordshire County Council's productivity plan was received by Cabinet. The plan was a response to the DLUHC's request for councils to share their current plans to transform services, use technology and data, reduce costs and identify efficiency challenges. The plans were a requirement for all councils as part of the Government's 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement.

The Council had also produced a document which pointed out the areas where central government action could remove barriers to efficiency, such as inconsistent

and short-term funding, complex and overlapping rules, and lack of freedom and independence.

Cabinet approved the plan and extra document for submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

4. Oxfordshire County Council to become a Council of Sanctuary (Cabinet: 18 June 2024)

Cabinet considered a report recommending that the Council worked towards submitting an application to become a recognised Council of Sanctuary, as proposed in a motion passed by full council in November 2023. The report outlined what it meant to be a Council of Sanctuary, the policy implications, and the progress made against the other resolutions in the motion to Council.

Cabinet was addressed by three representatives of the Asylum Welcome charity who spoke in support of the proposals in the report.

Cabinet approved the recommendations in the report and agreed that the Council should work towards submitting an application to become a recognised Council of Sanctuary.

5. Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement (Cabinet: 18 June 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report recommending approval of a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement.

Cabinet approved the statement which outlined the council's commitment and actions to prevent modern slavery in its work and supply chains, as required by the Modern Slavery Act 2015 for commercial organisations with a turnover of over £36 million. The statement summarised the council's existing policies and procedures around pay and recruitment, safeguarding vulnerable children and adults, and procurement processes, as well as the training and awareness-raising activities for staff and suppliers.

6. Period Poverty Scheme Trial (Cabinet: 18 June 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report which updated members on the progress made on the period poverty motion passed by the Council in September 2023, and recommended a trial scheme to provide free period products to residents using £10,000 from the cost-of-living programme funding.

Cabinet approved the allocation of funding from the cost-of-living programme funding for a trial scheme of period products to support residents experiencing period poverty.

Cabinet Member: Community & Corporate Services

7. Customer Experience Strategy

(Cabinet: 14 May 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report on the proposed Customer Experience Strategy. Improving customer experience was a key area of focus for the organisation. A wide-ranging programme of work was in place to ensure that interactions with customers were of a consistently high standard and a customer-first approach was at the heart of everything the council does.

Cabinet approved the strategy the aim of which was to demonstrate to customers that the Council was putting them first and to ensure everyone across the council understood the importance of good and consistent customer service regardless of their role. The strategy would apply to all council employees.

8. Workforce Report and Staffing Data - Quarter 4 2023-24

(Cabinet: 14 May 2024)

Cabinet noted a report which provided the workforce profile for quarter 4 2023/24 including an overview of headcount, agency spend, sickness, turnover and other relevant management information and performance indicators. The report also provided an update on the Council's Our People & Culture strategy which aimed to address the trends identified in the report, but importantly help the Council's ambitions to become an Employer of Choice.

Cabinet Member: Finance

9. Financial Monitoring Report (updates on funding and any other budget changes for 2024/25 since February 2024)

(Cabinet: 14 May 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report which set out updates to funding notified since the 2024/25 budget was agreed as well as updates and risks which would need to be managed in 2024/25 and the arrangements for monitoring progress with investments and the achievement of savings.

Cabinet approved the financial adjustments and noted the anticipated reduction in business rates funding of £0.7m in 2024/25 compared to the assumptions in the budget, and the proposed use of additional business rates income notified in late 2023/24 to replace this.

10. Annual Performance Report and Provisional Revenue Outturn 2023/24

(Cabinet: 18 June 2024)

Cabinet considered a report presenting the council's annual performance report and provisional year- end finance position for 2023/24. The annual report reflected the end of year position against the corporate priorities, and budget documents supporting the Council's ambitions and priorities. The Strategic Plan agreed by Council in February 2022 set out the Council's ambitions for 2023/24.

Members referred to the considerable achievements of the Council against its strategic objectives but recognised that there were some areas in which improvement was needed. There had been significant improvement in the financial position in Children's and Adults' services, in particular.

Cabinet noted the annual performance report and the summary of the provisional year - end financial position for 2023/24.

11. Capital Outturn Report 2023/24

(Cabinet: 18 June 2024)

The Council's ten-year Capital Programme set out the agreed capital investment to deliver the priorities identified in the Capital and Investment Strategy. This report updated members on the performance against the programme shown in the latest monitoring report for 2023/24 and also compared back to the capital programme agreed by Council in February 2023.

The report summarised the main areas of expenditure including the Pupil Place Plan, Major Infrastructure, Highways Asset Management Plan, Property Strategy, and IT, Digital & Innovation Strategy.

Cabinet noted the report and approved the creation of a new reserve to support the development of green financing and to make an initial contribution of £1.0m funded from the interest released at the end of 2023/24. This was to help the council achieve its climate action goals and invest in low-carbon projects.

12. Capital Programme Approvals - June 2024

(Cabinet: 18 June 2024)

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 June 2024.

Cabinet approved the inclusion of the additional schemes for the A4130 Rowstock Roundabout to Stenton Lights, the Abingdon National Cycle Network Route 5 (NCN5) Missing Link, Grove Church of England Primary School Expansion and Union Street Phase 1.5 & 2.

Cabinet Member: Transport Management

13. Oxfordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) - Update for 2024

(Cabinet: 18 June 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report presenting an updated Oxfordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The updated BSIP outlined the vision, aims and proposals for improving bus services in Oxfordshire from 2025 to 2030. It was a requirement for receiving the final instalment of BSIP funding from the Department for Transport and it was produced in collaboration with bus operators and stakeholders.

Cabinet approved adoption of the updated BSIP and delegated authority for sign off on future updates to the Director of Transport and Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport Management.

Cabinet Member: Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety

14. Cost of Living programme for 2024/25

(Cabinet: 14 May 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report setting out the intended approach to support those residents who were most negatively impacted by cost-of-living pressures over the current financial year, assigning additional funding provided by national government after local 2024/25 budget setting processes, in the context of locally assigned funding. It provided the latest position on the impact of the cost of living, as well as providing a summary outturn report on the 2023/24 support programme. In March 2024 the government announced a fifth round of the Household Support Fund running for the first six months of 2024/25.

Cabinet approved the support package for 2024/25 and delegated authority to the Programme Director (Partnerships & Delivery) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety, to amend the programme during the year in response to changing and emerging need, within the overall programme budget.

15. Reports received from Scrutiny Committees

(Cabinet: 14 May and 18 June 2024)

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

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on s106 and Infrastructure Funding Update

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Adult Social Care CQC Assurance Update

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Circular Economy Strategy.

LIZ LEFFMAN
Leader of the Council

July 2024