

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 17 September 2024 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 3.35pm

Present:

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

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor 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), Stephen Chandler (Executive Director of People and Transformation), 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.

107/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Neil Fawcett.

108/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

Councillor Bearder declared an interest in Item 13 – Business Management and Monitoring Report- in relation to the Homes for Ukraine grant funding and did not vote thereon.

109/24 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2024 were approved as a correct record.

110/24 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

There were none received.

111/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

15 Capital Programme Approvals

Gill Bindoff
Steve Bolingbroke

112/24 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet noted that Cllr Sudbury had been appointed to the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN).

This was designated as a Category A (Strategic) appointment.

113/24 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 7)

There had been no recent Scrutiny meetings and, therefore, no reports for consideration at this meeting.

114/24 SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL TRAVEL STRATEGY 2024-25

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report on the proposed Sustainable School Travel Strategy for 2024-25. The report set out Oxfordshire County Council's strategy for promoting sustainable travel to and from school and college across Oxfordshire.

Local authorities had a duty to promote the use of sustainable travel on journeys to and from places of education in their area. This duty applied to travel to and from: schools, further education institutions, and 16-19 academies. It was a further requirement for local authorities to prepare a document containing their strategy each academic year and to publish it by such a time as may be described.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management and Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Development Strategy, presented the report. The strategy aimed to promote

sustainable travel choices among school children, integrating detailed data on school travel choices and preferences. It included comprehensive data on current travel modes and preferences for alternative sustainable options, emphasising the ambition to align with people's preferences for sustainable travel. The report also identified barriers to sustainable travel and outlined solutions, including improving infrastructure and providing more options for walking, cycling, and public transport.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- A member expressed concern about the lack of baseline data for assessing the impact of the strategy. He also suggested that the strategy might not be ambitious enough to achieve the target of reducing road trips by 25% by 2030 and highlighted the need for radical reforms in home-to-school transport, including potential digitalisation and better utilisation of resources.
- Another member emphasised the importance of maintaining primary schools within communities to facilitate active travel. He also expressed concern about the impact of tighter attendance regulations on bus services and the need for sufficient capacity on peak services.
- The importance of working with private schools and ensuring they are included in the strategy was highlighted
- It was suggested that the data by urban and rural areas should be broken down to better understand travel patterns and barriers.
- The importance of pedestrian crossings for safety and encouraging walking to school was emphasised
- A member highlighted the role of various stakeholders, including pupils, parents, headteachers, and bus companies, in promoting sustainable travel, and commended the efforts of bus companies like Stagecoach in supporting school travel during disruptions.

Councillor Gant addressed concerns about the strategy's ambition and baseline data. He emphasized the importance of integrating the strategy with other policies and ensuring that all schools, including private ones, were assessed for suitability for sustainable travel initiatives.

Councillor Roberts also addressed specific points raised during the discussion, including the need for better signage and enforcement around schools and the potential for 20 mph speed limits to facilitate safer crossings.

Councillor Roberts moved and Councillor Gant seconded the following amended recommendation, and it was approved.

RESOLVED, 8 voting in favour and 1 abstention, to approve the draft Sustainable School Travel Strategy for adoption and publication on the County Council's website by 25 September 2024

115/24 COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING - ACTION PLAN AND NEXT STEPS

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet had before it a report regarding policy approaches to tackling deprivation and financial inequality in Oxfordshire over the long term. Community Wealth Building (CWB) was an approach that sought to 'build wealth' in local communities by reimagining how place-based organisations could maximise the local benefit of their economic activities. The 2024/25 budget had allocated funding specifically for the development of a programme of CWB actions, and a CWB strategy. The report highlighted the progress of the programme, and the plans for how the budget would be spent.

Councillor Dr Nathan Ley, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety, presented the report. He emphasised that the focus of the Community Wealth Building Action Plan was on tackling economic inequality within the county by using resources strategically to maximise local benefits. The plan aimed to address deeper causes of deprivation through procurement, employment, and land use. Specific projects included developing the community wealth strategy, supporting business outreach in high deprivation areas, and exploring alternative models in social care delivery.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- Members welcomed the plan which addressed inequality and its associated deprivation, highlighting the importance of community cohesion in facing economic challenges and emphasised that the plan was vital for building resilient societies.
- The need to balance monetary returns with social value in decision-making processes.
- A member expressed concern about the plan being urban-centric and highlighted the challenges faced by young people in rural areas, particularly in accessing employment and education. He suggested focusing on apprenticeships and employment opportunities in rural areas to address these challenges.

Councillor Ley responded to members' comments and commented on the importance of aligning community wealth building principles with economic development, procurement, and employment strategies. He also highlighted the need for continuous engagement with local experts and stakeholders to shape and implement the approach effectively.

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

RESOLVED to

- a) approve the project allocation of the existing budget for the Community Wealth Building Programme**
- b) agree the principles laid out in the first iteration of the social value definition statement (at Annex 2), for incorporation into operational policy and strategy**

116/24 ETHICAL PROCUREMENT POLICY

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet had before it a report on a proposed Ethical Procurement Policy. The purpose of the policy was to outline the Council's position on various aspects of ethics in procurement as well as to provide appropriate detail on how the Council approached such matters and how it expected its suppliers and potential suppliers to approach such matters. The policy included a large section on modern slavery and other areas such as expectations for suppliers, responsibilities of staff, fair employment practices in the supply chain, as well as reporting and whistleblowing.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report emphasising its purpose to set out the Council's procurement principles in one place. He said that the policy aimed to ensure that suppliers and partners understood the Council's expectations regarding ethical practices, including the treatment of staff, environmental considerations, and social value. The policy consolidated existing practices and introduced new guidelines to enhance transparency and accountability in procurement processes.

During discussion, a member highlighted the importance of the policy in promoting fairer and healthier working conditions. He emphasised that ethical treatment of staff contributed to their psychological and physical well-being, aligning with the Council's core objectives.

The Chair clarified that while the Council was not legally required to address modern slavery, it has chosen to do so voluntarily.

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

RESOLVED to approve the Ethical Procurement Policy (attached at Annex 1 to the report).

117/24 HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) REPORT FOR OXFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet considered a report which provided an update on the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue HMI report, focusing on areas required for improvement and the approach developed to ensure robust governance and performance reporting against the agreed action plan. This included the development of the fire improvement pipeline and the Fire Improvement Board.

Councillor Dr Nathan Ley, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety, presented the report. The inspection of the Fire and Rescue Service had identified 26 areas for improvement and acknowledged 32 positive statements about the service's strengths. The service has already addressed 6 of the 26 recommendations, including improvements in fire survival guidance, risk information, and building inspections. 8 recommendations were currently being addressed through existing service delivery plans. The remaining areas for improvement had been integrated into the Fire Improvement Pipeline, a dynamic document prioritising work based on risk and capacity. The new Fire Improvement Board would scrutinise all work areas within the improvement pipeline, focusing on HMI recommendations. The board would report regularly to the Place Scrutiny Committee and provide annual progress updates.

Councillor Ley highlighted the importance of addressing the identified areas for improvement to maintain public trust and confidence in the Fire and Rescue Service.

Councillor Ley moved and Councillor Howson seconded the recommendations, and they were approved.

RESOLVED to note the report and approve the suggested approach of monitoring improvements.

118/24 WORKFORCE REPORT AND STAFFING DATA - QUARTER 1 - APRIL TO JUNE 2024

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet had before it report which provided the workforce profile for April to June (Q1) 2024/25 including an overview of headcount, agency spend, sickness, turnover and other relevant management information and performance indicators (set out in Appendix A). This report also provided an update on the Our People & Culture strategy which aimed to address the trends identified in this report, but importantly help the Council's ambitions to become an Employer of Choice.

The Chair, on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services, presented the report. She referred, in particular, to the more detailed presentation of statistics on employed and agency staff. The report also highlighted an increase in the employment of non-white and disabled members of staff, reflecting the Council's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

During discussion, a member referred to the apprentices who had won awards and emphasised the importance of recognising their achievements. He also commented on the need to distinguish between agency staff engaged for specific projects and those who were covering established posts which were vacant.

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

RESOLVED to note the report

119/24 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING REPORT - JULY 2024

(Agenda Item. 13)

Cabinet considered a report presenting the July 2024 performance, risk, and finance position for the council. The business management reports were part of a suite of performance, risk and budget documents which set out the council's ambitions, priorities, and financial performance.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report. He referred, in particular, to the performance indicators requiring specific attention and the work taking place to ensure the Council achieved its financial targets set out in its budget.

Members referred, in particular, to the forecast deficit in the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The timing of the general election had affected the announcement of the overall DSG, potentially impacting school budgeting cycles.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) note the report and annexes.**
- b) approve the virement requests in Annex B-2a and note the requests in Annex B-2b.**
- c) approve the use of Homes for Ukraine grant funding as set out in Annex C and authorise the Executive Director of Resources to update funding agreements with the City and District Councils accordingly**

120/24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTER 1 REPORT 2024/25

(Agenda Item. 14)

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) 'Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021' required that the committee to which some treasury management responsibilities are delegated, would receive regular monitoring reports on treasury management activities and risks. Cabinet had before it a report which was the third for the 2024/25 financial year and set out the position at 30 June 2024.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report, The Council operated within its prudential indicators, with no new external debt taken or repaid during the quarter. The report indicated a strong financial performance in terms of investment returns, which helped offset some overspends in other areas.

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

RESOLVED to note the council's treasury management activity at the end of the first quarter of 2024/25.

121/24 CAPITAL PROGRAMME APPROVALS - SEPTEMBER 2024

(Agenda Item. 15)

Cabinet had before it a report setting out change requests requiring approval that would be incorporated into the agreed Capital Programme and included in the next update to the programme for Cabinet in June 2024.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, presented the report. He explained the need for adjustments to the capital programme due to various factors, including the reallocation of funds from the Housing and Growth Deal.

Gill Bindoff and Steve Bolingbroke, representing Watlington Parish Council, addressed the Cabinet. They expressed concerns about the reallocation of funds from the Watlington Relief Road project. They emphasised the long-standing need for the road, the community's expectations, and the lack of communication regarding the funding changes.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, gave assurances that the Watlington Relief Road remained a priority project for the Council. He explained the necessity of reallocating funds due to the inability to meet the March 2025 deadline set by Homes England. He said that the Council was committed to finding alternative funding sources and ensuring the project's continuation.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **approve an increase in budget of £5.445m for the Tramway Accessibility Improvements scheme, to be funded from S106 developer contributions and reallocating funding from the Housing and Growth Deal.**
- b) **approve an increase of £1.300m for Banbury Road Roundabout to be funded from the Housing and Growth Deal.**
- c) **approve a request to forward fund £15.300m for third party delivered projects at Oxford Rewley Road Fire Station and Oxford Grandpont Depot site.**
- d) **to note the latest estimated funding gap of £6.745m on the current balanced capital programme due which will be addressed through the annual business planning process and Capital Programme for Council approval in February 2025.**

122/24 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.

123/24 FOR INFORMATION ONLY: CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY ITEMS

(Agenda Item. 17)

Cabinet noted the responses to the Scrutiny items on:-

ASC Assurance Update
Vision Zero Strategy and Action Plan

.....in the Chair

Date of signing