

Divisions-N/A

COUNTY COUNCIL – 5 November 2024

REPORT OF THE CABINET

Cabinet Member: Deputy Leader with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations

1. Local Aggregate Assessment

(Cabinet: 15 October 2024)

Under the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2023 (NPPF), Mineral Planning Authorities should prepare an annual Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA). The NPPF stated that the LAA should ‘forecast future demand, based on a rolling average of 10 years’ sales data and other relevant information, and an assessment of all supply options.’

Cabinet had before it a report on the Local Aggregates Assessment (LAA) which set the level of mineral provision for the County Council as the Mineral Planning Authority, to ensure an appropriate supply for Sand and Gravel and Crushed Rock. This provision level, known as the Aggregates Provision Rate (APR) was based on an assessment between the supply and demand of aggregates in Oxfordshire and forecast demand.

Cabinet approved the Local Aggregate Assessment as presented.

2. Hyer Power project

(Cabinet: 15 October 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report on the Hyer Power Project, an initiative to develop hydrogen fuel-cell powered emergency vehicles, including a prototype fire engine and potentially other specialised vehicles including ambulances. The project was fully funded by a £3.9M grant from APC/Innovate UK, with Oxfordshire County Council receiving £1.56M to cover all its costs.

Cabinet approved the procurement of a hydrogen production and refuelling rig that will be fully funded by an external grant and will be installed on the Highways Depot at Drayton.

Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care

3. Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2023-24

(Cabinet: 15 October 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report summarising the work of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB) and its partners over the course of the year 2023-24

Members raised a number of issues covered in the report including recruitment and retention of staff within adult social care, partnership working, prison early release scheme and the voice of service users.

Cabinet noted the report.

Cabinet Member: Children, Education and Young People's Services

4. Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2023-24

(Cabinet: 15 October 2024)

Cabinet considered a report which highlighted the findings from the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board's annual report on the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Oxfordshire.

Members raised a number of issues covered by the report including the timely flow of information for children placed outside Oxfordshire, the effectiveness of multi-agency working, cultural support for families, school attendance, and elective home education.

Cabinet noted the report.

Cabinet Member: Community and Corporate Services

5. Workforce Report and Staffing Data - Quarter 1 - April to June 2024

(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)

Cabinet had before it a 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.

During discussion, a member referred to the apprentices who had won awards and emphasised the importance of recognizing 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.

Cabinet noted the report

Cabinet Member: Finance

6. Ethical Procurement Policy

(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)

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.

Cabinet approved the policy as recommended.

7. Business Management and Monitoring Report - July 2024

(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)

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.

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

Cabinet noted the report and approved the financial adjustments set out in the recommendations.

8. Treasury Management Quarter 1 Report 2024/25

(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)

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 set out the position at 30 June 2024.

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.

Cabinet noted the council's treasury management activity at the end of the first quarter of 2024/25.

9. Capital Programme Approvals - September 2024

(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)

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 October 2024.

Cabinet approved the following: -

- a) 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) an increase of £1.300m for Banbury Road Roundabout to be funded from the Housing and Growth Deal.
- c) a request to forward fund £15.300m for third party delivered projects at Oxford Rewley Road Fire Station and Oxford Grandpont Depot site.

Cabinet also noted 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.

10. Budget and Business Planning Report

(Cabinet: 15 October 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report on the budget and business planning process for 2025/26. It explained the process for developing and agreeing the budget for 2025/24 and the assumptions on which the Council's current medium term financial strategy (MTFS) was based. It also provided updates on information arising from government and other announcements plus the on-going impact of challenges apparent in 2024/25 and new or emerging financial issues for 2025/26 and beyond which would be incorporated into the new MTFS.

Cabinet endorsed the report and approved the budget and business planning process for 2025/26. Members also approved a three-year period for the medium-term financial strategy to 2027/28 and ten-year period for the capital programme to 2034/35 and noted the requirement for the council to set a sustainable balanced budget which shows how income will equal spending plans.

11. Capital Programme and Monitoring Report

(Cabinet: 15 October 2024)

Cabinet had before it the second capital programme update and monitoring report for 2024/25 which set out the monitoring position based on activity to the end of August 2024. The report also updated the Capital Programme approved by Cabinet on 16 July 2024 taking into account additional funding and new schemes. The updated programme also incorporated changes agreed through the Capital Programme Approval Reports to Cabinet during the year as well as new funding.

Cabinet noted the report and approved the following: -

- a) the submission of a bid for £2.800m to Sustrans T8 (pending potential funding from Active Travel England) for a number of schemes to improve the National Cycle Network and to note the total match funding of £0.355m required. Match funding will be met by a combination of Community Infrastructure Levy funds, S106 funding and corporate resources.
- b) the submission of a bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme: Phase 4 (PSDS4) to support the programme to implement decarbonisation measures across the corporate estate.
- c) the carry forward of £1.651m from the current Early Years Programme and include new funding of £1.286m received from the Department for Education Childcare Expansion Capital Grant to support the extension of early years childcare and wraparound provision for children in working families.

Cabinet Members: Infrastructure & Development Strategy & Transport Management

12. Sustainable School Travel Strategy 2024-25

(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)

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.

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, emphasizing 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.

Cabinet approved the draft Sustainable School Travel Strategy for adoption and publication on the County Council's website.

Cabinet Member: Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety

13. Community Wealth Building - Action Plan and Next Steps

(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)

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 entire budget would be spent.

Cabinet approved the project allocation of the existing budget for the Community Wealth Building Programme and agreed the principles laid out in the first iteration of the social value definition statement for incorporation into operational policy and strategy.

14. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Report for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

(Cabinet: 17 September 2024)

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.

The inspection of the Fire and Rescue Service had identified 26 areas for improvement and acknowledged 32 positive statements about the service's strengths.

Cabinet noted the report and approved the suggested approach of monitoring improvements.

LIZ LEFFMAN

Leader of the Council

November 2024