

## OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Tuesday, 10 December 2024 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at 4.00 pm

### **Present:**

Councillor Alison Rooke – in the Chair

### Councillors:

Mark Lygo (Vice-Chair)	Ted Fenton	Michael O'Connor
Brad Baines	Nick Field-Johnson	Glynis Phillips
Hannah Banfield	Donna Ford	Sally Povolotsky
David Bartholomew	Andrew Gant	Susanna Pressel
Tim Bearder	Stefan Gawrysiak	Eddie Reeves
Robin Bennett	Andy Graham	G.A. Reynolds
Liz Brighthouse OBE	Jenny Hannaby	Judy Roberts
Nigel Champken-Woods	Damian Haywood	David Rouane
Mark Cherry	Charlie Hicks	Geoff Saul
Andrew Coles	John Howson	Les Sibley
Yvonne Constance OBE	Bob Johnston	Nigel Simpson
Ian Corkin	Liz Leffman	Roz Smith
Imade Edosomwan	Nick Leverton	Ian Snowdon
Trish Elphinstone	Dan Levy	Dr Pete Sudbury
Duncan Enright	Dr Nathan Ley	Bethia Thomas
Mohamed Fadlalla	Kieron Mallon	Michael Waine
Arash Fatemian	Ian Middleton	Liam Walker
Neil Fawcett	Calum Miller	

*The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.*

### **121/24 MINUTES**

(Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2024 were approved.

### **122/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

(Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillors Ash, Bloomfield, Bulmer, Gregory, Hanna, van Mierlo, Murphy and Stevens.

## **123/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE**

(Agenda Item 3)

In relation to Item 2 on the Report of the Cabinet, Councillor Leffman declared that she was a Director of OxLEP and that Councillor Roberts would respond to any questions on that item. Councillors Graham, Rouane and Thomas declared that they were also Directors.

In relation to the petition taken under Item 6, Councillor Povolotsky declared that she was the Co-Chair of the Parent Teacher Association of the Europa School.

In relation to Item 14, Councillor Reynolds declared that he was a farmer.

## **124/24 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS**

(Agenda Item 4)

The Chair congratulated Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service members who raised an amazing £35,329.72 in aid of Children in Need.

A scheme to refurbish two bridges in University Parks had won a coveted [Oxford Preservation Trust Award](#) in recognition of its historically sensitive approach. The Chair congratulated all those involved.

The Chair invited all to attend coming events:

Oxfordshire County Council Chair's Carol Service. Hosted by the Chair and The Right Revd Gavin Collins, Bishop of Dorchester at 6.30pm on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December at St Michael and All Angels Church, Abingdon.

Oxfordshire County Council Chair's Charity Gala Dinner on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at the Mercure Oxford Hawkwell House Hotel, Church Way, Iffley, 7pm for 7.30pm. Details on how to order tickets were in the Schedule of Business.

A list of events attended by the Chair and Vice Chair since the last Council meeting was published in the Schedule of Business. The Chair highlighted two in particular. The Nomad AGM in Henley showcased the incredible work that the charity does for youth and the community in the area including running a foodbank. The Charity Fun Run in Oxford featured several members of staff and Councillors Lygo and Bearder. Well done to all involved.

Council was notified of the passing in October of former Councillor Rita Milne who represented the Wolvercote division as a Liberal Democrat member between 1993 and 1997. She was a member of the Museum, Arts, Libraries and Leisure Committee, Oxford City Divisional Youth Committee and the Southern Arts Ltd - Executive Committee.

Councillor Bob Johnston paid tribute to her work on the Council and recalled that she had been assiduous in her case work and had been a very popular councillor. Members stood for a minute's silence in her memory.

## **125/24 APPOINTMENTS**

(Agenda Item 5)

Council noted the formation of a Cabinet Committee called the Shareholder Committee under Terms of Reference detailed on Page 15 of the Agenda.

Council approved the following appointments:

Councillor Yvonne Constance to replace Councillor Felix Bloomfield on the Audit & Governance Committee.

Councillor Yvonne Constance to replace Councillor Nigel Champken-Woods on the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

## **126/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda Item 6)

### Petition

Aidan Reilly presented a petition with 870 signatures for a safe walking and cycling route from Abingdon and Sutton Courtenay to the Europa School and Culham Science Centre. The speech is published alongside the minutes of this meeting.

## **127/24 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

(Agenda Item 7)

Four questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions are recorded in an Annex below.

## **128/24 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

(Agenda Item 8)

Fifteen questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions are recorded in an Annex below.

## **129/24 REPORT OF THE CABINET**

(Agenda Item 9)

Council received the report of Cabinet covering the Cabinet meeting on 19 November.

On Item 1, Including Everyone Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2025 – 2029, Councillor Phillips asked why there was no mention of young carers. Councillor Leffman thanked her for pointing that out and responded that she would make sure that it will be amended going forwards.

Councillor Pressel cited a number of examples of a lack of consideration of diversity in Council appointments and consultation, and asked if the Leader agreed that the practice fell far short of the policies. Councillor Leffman agreed that there was a long way to go but that the Council wanted to lead on this and there were Key Performance Indicators that will be monitored.

Councillor Brighouse asked that Looked After Children be included in the consideration of inclusion and expressed concern that much of the data available was not very useful. Councillor Leffman responded that officers were looking at ways to improve Council support for care leavers. With regards to data, she believed that there was a lot of data there but that the Council sometimes did not make the best use of it and this was something she knew that officers were examining.

Item 2, Local Enterprise Partnership Integration - Phase 2, Councillor Brighouse stated her surprise that Council was only being asked to note the formation by Cabinet of a Cabinet Committee and asked that any further decision on this be more inclusive of Council. Councillor Roberts responded that the decision was taken at a public meeting of Cabinet where Members could have asked to speak or put questions.

Councillor Smith asked for an update on progress and when the first Shareholder Committee meeting would take place. Councillor Roberts responded that the first meeting will be on 17 December 2024.

Councillor Baines asked if the Cabinet Member would agree that it would be beneficial to have cross-party representation on the Shareholder Committee. Councillor Roberts noted that the Committee had yet to meet to decide on the future approach so she could not give any commitment to that at this stage.

Councillor Bennett stated that he believed that OxLEP had paid more attention to the voices of larger businesses and asked if there would be a more inclusive approach to consultation. Councillor Roberts confirmed that it was the intention to have more broad representation on any advisory panel such as including the community and voluntary sector.

Councillor Enright asked if the important relationships with the City and District Councils will be retained in the new advisory structure. Councillor Roberts responded that discussions had already taken place with the other councils to ensure that.

On item 3, Climate Action Programme Six Month Update, Councillor Hicks asked the Cabinet Member to outline the plans to deal with the red indicator on Energy and the amber indicators on Transport. Councillor Sudbury responded that the red indicator resulted from the rejection of a bid for government funding and that the Council was working with low-carbon groups to amend the bid. The report to Cabinet included details on how the amber indicators were being tackled.

Councillor Pressel noted that it had been known for some time that LED lighting was more damaging to insects than sodium lighting and asked if this had been taken into account when deciding to switch to LED lighting. Councillor Sudbury responded that it was white LED lighting that caused the biggest problem. The decision to switch to LED had been taken by a previous administration but he had decided that all new lighting should use a yellower colour to reduce the harmful impact.

Councillor Snowdon asked the Cabinet Member's view on the fact that the Council had not acquired a single electric vehicle for the gritter fleet. Councillor Sudbury responded that that had not been his decision but that he had accelerated the decarbonisation of the fleet in his portfolio through acquiring second hand vehicles that can be obtained more quickly.

Councillor Johnston asked the Cabinet Member if he agreed that those who seek to obstruct progress towards net zero are amongst those endangering the future of the planet. Councillor Sudbury agreed that there was still a powerful lobby working to obstruct climate action but that the administration will continue to do everything that they can.

On item 4, Educational Psychology Assessment Service, Councillor Brighthouse asked what other options were looked at given the crisis in the service and Councillor Smith asked if there was a timescale envisaged on when the backlog would be cleared. Councillor Howson responded that there had been a particular backlog in processing Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) in one area and the Cabinet decision provided a framework to draw down educational psychologists from across the country to clear the backlog. The service was doing its best to have it cleared by the end of this financial year.

On item 5, Treasury Management Mid Term Review 2024/25, Councillor Baines asked what the administration's priorities were in relation to the surplus returns on cash balances generated by the Treasury Management team. Councillor Levy responded that the priorities were outlined in the budget papers that had been published.

On item 6, Business Management and Monitoring Report - September 2024, Councillor Baines asked how the Cabinet Member intended to bring the finances in Children's Services under control. Councillor Levy responded that he had confidence in the Director of Children's Services and her team's ability to do so but that the administration will always prioritise children over the need to stay exactly on budget.

On item 7, Capital Programme Approvals - November 2024, Councillor Smith asked what the unspent balance of Section 106 funds had been in 2021. Councillor Levy responded that the figure was £226m when the LibDem-Labour-Green administration took over in 2021. Since then, around £87m had been spent on such as libraries and schools. Another £172m has been collected. He stated that he was confident that the money was being spent effectively.

Councillor Baines asked if modal shift required the 'carrots' of attractive alternatives such as mini-Hollands rather than a 'stick' approach. Councillor Levy responded that he did not agree that the efforts to encourage people to switch to buses should be characterised as being a 'stick' approach.

Councillor Bartholomew noted that £6.646m was being spent on the East Oxford mini Holland and asked how such expenditure on such a small area could be justified when rural roads were in great need of repair. Councillor Levy responded that there were particular issues in East Oxford and he believed that the mini Hollands would be exemplar projects that the county could be proud of.

Councillor Enright noted that Members had been informed that the Shores Green Development had been delayed until 2026 and asked if this amounted to another pressure on the Capital Programme with projects being delayed again and again. Councillor Levy confirmed that there had been a misprint and that the notice should have read until 2025.

On item 8, Local Transport and Connectivity Plan Monitoring Report, Councillor Pressel noted that the report showed cycling had decreased while car trips had increased and asked if the poor state of paths and highways was a factor in this. Councillor Roberts agreed that the statistics across the county were disappointing and responded that Council was putting as much resource as it could into improving surfaces.

Councillor Hicks noted that the number of cycle trips would have to be doubled to reach the Council's target and asked the Cabinet Member if the proposed £2.5m funding in the budget papers was going to be enough to work towards that goal. Councillor Roberts responded that some of the funds under Highways Maintenance included work to improve active travel facilities as well.

On item 9, Outline allocation of cost of living and associated community wealth building funding for October to March 2024/25, Councillor Baines asked what engagement the Council planned to have with the Government's newly established Child Poverty Task Force. Councillor Ley advised that he would provide a written response.

Councillor O'Connor asked if the Council would be working with grass-roots community groups as well as established charities in the distribution of funds for cost of living support. Councillor Ley confirmed that this has been the case and progress will continue to be monitored.

Councillor Hannaby asked how many residents have been helped so far through the cost of living support. Councillor Ley responded that it was several thousand.

Councillor Hicks asked if social value could be taken into account when reviewing rent agreements with community organisations such as Flo's The

Place in the Park. Councillor Ley responded that he would have to consult with the Cabinet Member for Finance on that.

On item 10, Cabinet Response to Council Motion on SEND Services, Councillors Brighthouse, Waine and Corkin asked if the Council will continue with coproduction in the priority action plan and if the involvement of all parent groups will be real. Councillor Howson responded that coproduction was an important part but the Council also had certain legal responsibilities that could not be devolved to others.

Councillor Reeves noted that an Extraordinary Meeting of Council in October 2023 had agreed a cross-party approach and he asked the Cabinet Member if he was content that this was happening. Councillor Howson responded that he was not content in that he had received very little correspondence from the other parties outlining how they believe that should work.

Councillor Haywood asked for better metrics that indicate an improvement in the actual SEND services of the Council. Councillor Howson responded that the number of officers working on EHCPs had increased from 57 to 64 since July 2023 and 44% of EHCPs were rated good or outstanding compared to 21% in July 2023.

Councillor Reeves asked the Cabinet Member to rate SEND services out of a score of 10. Councillor Howson responded that services had improved since 2023 and he would give it a score of 5 out of 10.

### **130/24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID TERM REVIEW 2024/25**

(Agenda Item 10)

Council was asked to note the Treasury Management Mid Term Review 2024/25 which summarised the performance for the first half of the financial year, measured against the budget agreed by Council in February 2024.

The report was moved by Councillor Dan Levy and seconded by Councillor Liz Leffman. Following discussion, Council noted the report.

### **131/24 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

(Agenda Item 11)

Council considered the Scrutiny Annual Report which covered the activities of the scrutiny committees, other than Health, for the 2023/24 Council Year.

The report was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Simpson.

Councillor Reeves thanked the Chairs of the overview and scrutiny committees and Councillor Simpson thanked the scrutiny officers for their work throughout the year. Following discussion, Council received the report.

## **132/24 APPRAISAL PROCESS FOR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)**

(Agenda Item 12)

Council had before it a report establishing a procedure for an annual appraisal of the position of Chief Executive. The recommendations in this report had been endorsed by the Remuneration Committee for Council approval.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Liz Leffman, Chair of the Remuneration Committee and seconded by Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Deputy Chair.

Following discussion, the recommendations were approved with 48 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions.

### **RESOLVED to:**

- a) Approve the proposed changes to the appraisal process for the Chief Executive (Head of the Paid Service) as set out by the South East Employers (SEE) review report (Annex 2).**
- b) Delegate authority to the Remuneration Committee to constitute the Appraisal Panel and undertake the appraisals for the Chief Executive.**
- c) Approve amendments to the Constitution to include acting as an Appraisal Panel and undertaking Chief Executive's appraisals to the terms of reference to Remuneration Committee at Part 5.1C and to delegate to the Director of Law and Governance and the Monitoring Officer to make any consequential amendments to the Constitution.**

## **133/24 FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

(Agenda Item 13)

Council was recommended by the Audit & Governance Committee to approve amendments to the Financial Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations in the Council Constitution.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Ted Fenton, Chair of the Committee and seconded by Councillor Roz Smith, Deputy Chair.

Following discussion, the recommendation was approved unanimously.

### **RESOLVED to:**

**Approve the amendments to the Financial Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations, as recommended by the Audit and Governance Committee.**



**134/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR EDDIE REEVES - FARMING**

(Agenda Item 14)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Field-Johnson. Following debate, the motion was carried with 36 votes in favour, 14 against and 0 abstentions.

**RESOLVED:**

This Council considers that the government's changes in its Autumn budget to Inheritance Tax treatment of farmland, increases to employers' National Insurance and introduction of a new fertiliser tax on key agricultural imports will have a detrimental cumulative impact on family farms across Oxfordshire.

This Council notes with concern that these family farm taxes risk:

- Adversely affecting local farmers' potential to employ people in Oxfordshire's rural economy;
- Damaging the ability for family farmers to pass on their farms to their children; and
- Making food production at competitive prices more difficult for us as a county.

This Council requests Cabinet to ensure that:

1. Its own policies are as supportive of local farmers as reasonably possible;
2. The newly integrated Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership ('OxLEP') prioritises the local rural economy in its governance structure and ongoing development of its strategic plan;
3. The Cabinet Member for the Environment organises a meeting with local farmers and elected members of all political groups to listen to their concerns with a view to informing the Council's and OxLEP's ongoing policy development.

This Council requests the Leader to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to ask that introduction of these family farm taxes be reconsidered for the sake of environmental protection and food security.

**135/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR CHARLIE HICKS - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORT IN CENTRAL OXFORDSHIRE**

(Agenda Item 15)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Hicks and seconded by Councillor Enright.

Amendment 1 was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Bartholomew and was accepted by the proposer and seconder of the original motion and by Council.

The following Amendment 3 was proposed by Councillor Haywood and seconded by Councillor Bennett:

**“This Council considered setting up a Congestion Commission and agreed to set up a Citizens’ Assembly as part of its last budget. With the formulation of this assembly underway this council reiterates that the assembly must take into consideration the main areas of congestion in Oxfordshire, especially the congestion that occurs travelling into, out of and around Oxford, and asks the cabinet to communicate this request to facilitators.**

~~This Council considers that it is time to establish a Citizens’ Assembly of local residents or a Congestion Commission including businesspeople, public sector leaders, civil society and faith group leaders, and academics with relevant expertise, to ensure a greater democratic say in key decision-making.~~

~~This Council notes that its ambitious suite of traffic management measures is due to be rolled out in the very near future. These include Oxford’s traffic filters and workplace parking levy, which are now largely enshrined in the Council’s budget and will take place unless there is a change of administration next year.~~

~~If all such measures go ahead, Oxfordshire motorists could be hit by £57million in fines in fines and charges, broken down as follows:~~

- ~~• Expanded Zero Emissions Zone £25m;~~
- ~~• Traffic Filters £11m;~~
- ~~• Workplace Parking Tax £21m.~~

~~For clarity, the purpose of a Citizens’ Assembly or Congestion Commission would be to assess the effectiveness of such measures, provide recommendations on existing proposals and advise as to whether other measures might be given effect after next year’s local elections as supplements or substitutes for such policies, putting residents’, businesses’ and civil society groups’ voices at the heart of local decision-making.~~

~~Council requests Cabinet to establish a Congestion Commission or Citizens’ Assembly ensuring in so doing that the voices of elected members, businesspeople, public sector leaders and civil society and faith groups are properly heard.”~~

Following debate, amendment 3 was lost with 19 votes in favour, 28 against and 1 abstention.

Following further debate, the motion as amended was carried with 29 votes in favour, 20 against and no abstentions.

**RESOLVED:**

This Council **considered setting up a Congestion Commission** and agreed to set up a Citizens' Assembly ~~on the Future of Transport in Central Oxfordshire~~ as part of its last budget. This Council considers that it is time **to establish** ~~for such a Citizens' Assembly~~ **of local residents or a Congestion Commission**, ~~focused on reducing congestion, to be established. It should happen this financial year.~~ **including businesspeople, public sector leaders, civil society and faith group leaders, and academics with relevant expertise, to ensure a greater democratic say in key decision-making.**

This Council notes that its ambitious suite of traffic management measures is due to be rolled out in the very near future. These include Oxford's traffic filters and workplace parking levy, which are now largely enshrined in the Council's budget and will take place unless there is a change of administration next year.

If all such measures go ahead, Oxfordshire motorists could be hit by £57million in fines in fines and charges, broken down as follows:

- Expanded Zero Emissions Zone £25m;
- Traffic Filters £11m;
- Workplace Parking Tax £21m.

For clarity, the purpose of a ~~Congestion~~ Citizens' Assembly **or Congestion Commission** would be to assess the ~~likely~~ effectiveness of such measures, provide recommendations on existing proposals and advise as to whether other measures might be given effect after next year's local elections as supplements or substitutes for such policies, putting residents', **businesses' and civil society groups'** voices at the heart of **local** ~~the~~ decision-making process.

Council requests Cabinet to establish a Congestion **Commission or** Citizens' Assembly ~~of Central Oxfordshire citizens, with an advisory group to comprise~~ **ensuring in so doing that the voices of** elected members, local businesspeople, public sector leaders ~~from the Council's health, education and blue light partners,~~ **and** civil society and faith groups ~~leaders are properly heard,~~ **and** academics with relevant expertise ~~in the field.~~

**136/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON - BADGER CULLING**  
(Agenda Item 16)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Middleton and seconded by Councillor Johnston. Following debate, the motion was carried with 30 votes in favour, 8 against and 7 abstentions.

**RESOLVED:**

In 2018 this Council passed a motion stating that it was opposed to the licensing of a badger cull in Oxfordshire.

When DEFRA announced badger culling would be phased out by 2025, many people believed that the cull had ended. Sadly, culling in Oxfordshire intensified, seemingly with the intent of shooting as many badgers as possible before the deadline with over 50% of the county in the killing zones.

Numerous scientific reports show that culling is ineffective as a control measure, yet DEFRA, the NFU and British Cattle Veterinary Association and others continue to advocate its use.

While it's welcomed that the Labour government has abandoned plans to allow up to 100% of badgers to be killed in some areas, there was a hope that they would cancel the cull altogether and focus on cattle based measures, including support for farmers over improved biosecurity, and a move towards testing and vaccination.

However it now seems likely that the government will permit the cull to continue for at least the next 5 years meaning even more badgers in Oxfordshire will be senselessly slaughtered.

This Council therefore :

1. Re-affirms our opposition to badger culling which has been shown to be an ineffective control measure for Bovine tuberculosis.
2. Asks the Cabinet to consider a specific policy that badger culling will not be permitted on Council-owned land.
3. Requests that the Leader writes to DEFRA making clear our continued opposition to the cull and any extension of it in size and scope.

**137/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR EDDIE REEVES - CONGESTION COMMISSION**

(Agenda Item 17)

The motion fell as the issue had already been discussed under item 14. [Council Procedure Rule 11.5(iii)].

**138/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR LIZ BRIGHOUSE - DARK SKIES**

(Agenda Item 18)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Brighouse and seconded by Councillor Phillips.

The amendment proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Mallon was accepted by the proposer and seconder of the original motion and by Council.

Following debate, the motion as amended was carried with 39 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions.

**RESOLVED:**

This Council, being **extremely** concerned about the lack of political governance in relation to ‘Dark Skies’, the **administration’s** plan to switch off many of the county’s streetlights between 11pm - 6.30am, **which could have had significant adverse consequences for public safety across parts of our county, especially our urban centres, had it proceeded.**

**Recognising the need for the Council to safeguard public money, support our rural parishes in their aspirations to curtail unwanted light pollution and protect and local wildlife in our villages, this Council calls on the Cabinet to:**

- (i) carry out a full consultation before bringing this back for delegated decision-making by the Cabinet Member, such consultation to include all county councillors alongside community groups and particularly those working with women, and girls, and shift workers in our hospitality and other key sectors, who the Council’s own report recognises may have been disproportionately affected by this decision;**
- (ii) ensure that all county councillors are fully briefed, whether through their locality meetings or by way of an all-member briefing, before any street lights are switched off; and**
- (iii) ensure that a fuller Equalities Impact Assessment takes place in connection with future decision-making on such matters of public safety, the previous one in Annexe 5 being lacking.**

**In future, this Council asks that Cabinet consult elected members more fully on matters of public safety in future.**

**This Council further notes that pre-scrutiny of such important matters would be beneficial to ensure greater democratic oversight.**

..... in the Chair

Date of signing .....