

Divisions- N/A

COUNTY COUNCIL – 9 December 2025

REPORT OF THE CABINET

Cabinet Member: Leader

1. Local Government Reorganisation – Submission of Proposal to Government

(Cabinet, 13 November 2025)

Cabinet had before it a report presenting Oxfordshire County Council's proposal for local government reorganisation, recommending a single unitary authority for Oxfordshire. The proposal aims to create a streamlined, cost-effective local government structure for the County that meets government criteria and local needs.

On 5 February 2025, the government invited Oxfordshire councils to submit proposals for local government reorganisation by 28 November 2025, with interim plans due by 21 March 2025. The single unitary council aims to provide a unified front for services across Oxfordshire, enhancing strategic and economic planning, delivering value-for-money services, and supporting the county's economic potential.

The report outlined extensive public and stakeholder consultations, including over 2,000 responses, and engagement with businesses and voluntary organisations, shaping the proposal and planning further input during statutory consultation.

Cabinet members emphasised the advantages of a single unitary authority in financial resilience, service integration, and strategic planning, with projected financial savings.

Cabinet agreed on amendments to the submission including councillor numbers set at 99, enhanced financial risk analysis, refined stakeholder feedback representation, and further development of area committees, and approved the proposal for submission to government by the November 28, 2025 deadline.

2. Review of Member Champions

(Cabinet, 18 November 2025)

Cabinet received a report outlining proposed updates to the role, function, and appointment process of Member Champions within Oxfordshire County Council, aiming to clarify responsibilities and improve governance.

Member Champions support Cabinet Members and the Leader by focusing on specific interest areas, engaging stakeholders, and highlighting significant matters,

without decision-making powers or remuneration. Current roles cover areas like Active Travel, Public Transport, Mental Health, and Youth Justice.

Cabinet approved the recommendations and referred the required constitutional changes to the Audit and Governance Committee and Council.

Cabinet Member: Resources and Deputy Leader

3. HR and Cultural Change - Quarterly Employee Data Report - Quarter 2 2025-26

(Cabinet, 18 November 2025)

Cabinet received an update on the implementation of the Our People and Culture Strategy, noting minor changes in staffing, continued success with apprenticeships, and ongoing efforts to manage agency costs.

The report noted a slight increase in directly employed staff due to improved recruitment, a minor increase in agency costs in hard-to-recruit areas, and a commitment to reducing agency spend over time.

Cabinet noted the report.

Cabinet Member: Finance, Property and Transformation

4. Treasury Management Mid-Term Review 2025-26

(Cabinet, 18 November 2025)

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) 'Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021' requires that committee to which some treasury management responsibilities are delegated, will receive regular monitoring reports on treasury management activities and risks. Cabinet received the second report for the 2025/26 financial year which set out the position at 30 September 2025.

Cabinet noted the report which highlighted that the Council has received above budgeted investment returns due to higher cash balances and interest rates, had maintained a cautious approach to new debt, and continued to prioritise security and liquidity. The negative Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) balance was forecast to reach £153 million, resulting in a £6 million cost in lost interest, with the Council awaiting government action to address the deficit.

5. Budget and Business Planning Report 2026/27 - 2030/31

(Cabinet, 18 November 2025)

Cabinet had before it the Budget and Business Planning Report covering the period 2026/27 to 2030/31, with a capital programme extending to 2035/36. It outlined the council's financial strategy, budget assumptions, funding outlook, and the process for setting a balanced budget amid significant financial uncertainty and reform in local government funding.

Cabinet noted the report and initial position for the 2026/27 budget and approved a medium-term financial strategy covering five years (up to 2030/31) and a capital programme extending ten years (to 2035/36). Members acknowledged the budget and business planning timeline, next steps, and possible effects of a delayed Fair Funding Review 2.0 outcome.

6. Business Management & Monitoring Report - Performance and Risk Quarter 2 2025/26

(Cabinet, 18 November 2025)

Cabinet noted a report which provided an overview of the Council's performance and strategic risks for Quarter 2 of the 2025/26 financial year, highlighting key risk areas and performance measures. The report included 47 performance measures, with particular attention to areas requiring action.

7. Capital Programme Approvals - November 2025

(Cabinet, 18 November 2025)

Cabinet received a report requesting budget approval to increase funding for the A4130 Steventon Lights project within the council's capital programme for 2025/2026. Cabinet approved an increase to the budget from £10.8 million to £13.318 million, an increase of £2.518 million, to support accelerated utility works, enhanced contingencies, and updated construction cost estimates

Cabinet Member: Children and Young People

8. Response to motion by Councillor Creed on Children's Centres

(Cabinet, 18 November 2025)

Cabinet received a report proposing a response to Councillor Creed's motion on supporting community-operated children's centres and the development of family hubs which had been passed at the meeting of the Council on 9 September 2025.

The Council received funds from the Best Start Family Hubs Development grant for 2025/26, with further funding expected, and had allocated an additional £1 million to support services for under-5s, aiming to improve early education and child development.

A multi-agency programme board, including social care, health, education, and the voluntary sector, was guiding the development of family hubs, with a commitment to collaborate with community-run children's centres.

Cabinet approved the response to the motion.

Cabinet Member: Public Health and Inequalities

9. Response to motion by Councillor Hanna on Healthwatch Oxfordshire

(Cabinet, 18 November 2025)

Cabinet received a report proposing a response to a motion regarding the future of Healthwatch Oxfordshire passed at the meeting of the Council on 9 September 2025.

The response acknowledged the concerns raised about the abolition of Healthwatch and committed to working with Healthwatch to map services and maintain independent community engagement during the implementation of neighbourhood health plans under the Government's 10-year health strategy.

Cabinet approved the response to the motion.

Cabinet Member: Place, Environment and Climate Action

10. Proposed changes to the Waste Acceptance Policy (WAP) for Oxfordshire's household waste recycling centres (HWRCs)

(Cabinet, 18 November 2025)

Cabinet had before it a report which recommended changes to the Household Waste and Recycling centre policy, including minor adjustments to opening hours, introduction of booking systems, and new charges for out-of-county users and asbestos disposal, following a large public consultation.

Cabinet approved the recommendations which would improve environmental performance, operational efficiency, and financial sustainability of the HWRC network.

11. Carbon Management Plan Residual Carbon and Offsetting Policy

(Cabinet, 18 November 2025)

Cabinet received a report on Oxfordshire County Council's Carbon Management Plan (CMP), which focussed on residual carbon emissions and the strategy for offsetting to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. It outlined the need for carbon credit

purchases, the rationale for terminology, and the approach to local market development and governance.

Cabinet approved the recommendations and noted that the offsetting policy supported the council's climate emergency ambitions, promotes local business growth in carbon removal, addressed inequalities such as fuel poverty, and enhanced access to nature through nature-based projects.

12. OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail strategy

(Cabinet, 18 November 2025)

Cabinet received a report recommending approval of the OXRAIL 2040, a strategic rail transport plan for Oxfordshire covering the next 15 years. The plan is designed to integrate with the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and aims to improve rail connectivity, support economic growth, and address climate action and place shaping priorities within the county.

Key priorities include expanding capacity at Oxford station, electrification and freight decarbonisation, the Oxfordshire Metro concept, and new stations to improve access to jobs and housing.

Cabinet welcomed the proposals outlined in the plan and approved the recommendations.

13. Scrutiny Reports

(Cabinet, 18 November 2025)

Cabinet received the following Scrutiny reports:-

- a) Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on Business Management and Monitoring Report (with a focus on Children, Education and Families)

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Reports on

- b) Verge and Vegetation Management
- c) OXRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail Strategy

LIZ LEFFMAN

Leader of the Council

November 2025