

# CABINET

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Tuesday, 24 February 2026 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 2.50pm

**Present:**

**Voting Members:** Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair  
Councillor Neil Fawcett  
Councillor Tim Bearder  
Councillor Andrew Gant  
Councillor Sean Gaul  
Councillor Kate Gregory  
Councillor Ben Higgins  
Councillor Dan Levy  
Councillor Judy Roberts

**Other Members in Attendance:** Councillors Glynis Phillips and Ian Snowdon

**Officers:**

Whole of meeting Martin Reeves (Chief Executive), Anita Bradley (Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Lisa Lyons (Director of Children's Services), Robin Rogers (Director of Economy and Place) 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.*

**18/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jenny Hannaby.

**19/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

**20/26 MINUTES**

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2026 were approved as a correct record.

**21/26 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

(Agenda Item. 4)

See attached.

**22/26 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda Item. 5)

There were none.

**23/26 APPOINTMENTS**

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet noted the following appointments:-

Cllr Ben Higgins had been appointed to the Music Service Hub Board.

Cllr Gareth Epps had been appointed to the Children's Trust Board.

**24/26 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

(Agenda Item. 7)

Councillor Ian Snowdon, Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the report on Oxfordshire Unpaid Carers Strategy.

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Chair of the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the report on Social Value Policy.

Cabinet received the reports and will respond in due course.

**25/26 SOCIAL VALUE - NEW IN-HOUSE APPROACH**

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report recommending approval of a new Oxfordshire County Council Social Value Policy and transfer of the council's social value work in-house, ending reliance on external platforms. This shift aimed to streamline processes, reduce costs, and better align social value activity with the council's Strategic Plan 2025–2028.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation presented the report.

Councillor Levy highlighted the benefits of the proposals such as flexibility, alignment with local priorities, and minor financial savings from not using third-party assessors. The policy defined five priorities: early careers opportunities, supported employment, local area regeneration, youth engagement, and healthy lives, with procurement tenders above £100,000 required to address at least two priorities. Suppliers would be required to

submit a social value delivery plan with specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound commitments, and exemptions are provided for certain contracts, such as those under 12 months or limited to voluntary, charity, or social enterprise organisations.

During discussion members

- expressed support for the with Scrutiny Committee recommendations to embed social value holistically, link with economic strategy and community wealth building, and collaborate with local anchor institutions such as the Oxford Inclusive Economy Partnership.
- highlighted the role of the Business Intellectual Property Centre in supporting small and start-up businesses, aligning with the policy's aim to encourage local employment and support smaller contracts.

Councillor Levy moved and Councillor Roberts seconded the recommendations and they were approved.

**RESOLVED to:-**

- a) approve the Oxfordshire County Council Social Value Policy (Annex 1).**
- b) agree to move the council's social value approach in- house, transitioning away from third- party delivery and/or platforms, to enable a more streamlined approach that better aligns to the council's Strategic Plan 2025–2028 priorities.**

## **26/26 CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK 2026-2030**

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet had before it a report on the Oxfordshire Climate Action Framework (CAF) 2026-2030 which outlined the council's vision for achieving a greener, fairer, and healthier county. The framework built on previous work and aimed for carbon neutrality in council operations by 2030 and net zero emissions countywide by the 2040s, integrating emissions reduction, resilience, nature recovery, and waste reduction with a collaborative approach.

Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, presented the report.

The Head of Climate Action and the Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Policy and Project Lead gave a presentation on the main aspects of the framework.

The framework emphasised collaboration with businesses, anchor institutions, community groups, and the Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership, aiming for a holistic programme benefiting residents and supporting sustainable growth. It was organised around eight themes,

including green skills, sustainable transport, energy and buildings, nature recovery, and waste, with delivery priorities such as skills boot camps, retrofit programmes, EV charging expansion, and landscape-scale nature projects.

During discussion, Cabinet members referred to the challenges in meeting climate targets, particularly in transport and housing, the need for more robust action and influence over external stakeholders, and the importance of continued lobbying for national funding. Examples of progress included the introduction of electric buses, commitments to zero-carbon developments, and the use of policy tools such as congestion charges and traffic filters to support climate goals, but members acknowledged the need for further action.

Councillor Roberts moved and Councillor Gregory seconded the recommendation, and it was approved.

**RESOLVED to approve the Oxfordshire Climate Action Framework 2026-2030.**

**27/26 HR & CULTURAL CHANGE - QUARTERLY EMPLOYEE DATA REPORT- QUARTER 3 2025-26**

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet had before it a report which provided an overview of the progress towards delivering the Our People and Culture Strategy (as measured by the achievement of its key performance indicators). The report summarised the main employee-related trends for Q3 2025/26 and reviewed trends over the last four quarters.

Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Resources and Deputy Leader, presented the report. Councillor Fawcett referred, in particular, to improvements in recruitment processes. There had been a slight increase in agency spend because of ongoing challenges in recruiting to hard-to-fill roles including legal staff and educational psychologists.

The Council continued to maintain a high percentage of apprenticeship levy spending, particularly in adult and children's social care. Stress and mental health remain the leading causes of staff sickness, reflecting a national trend, and the Council was continuing efforts to support staff well-being.

During discussion, Cabinet members noted the need for deeper analysis of agency staff data by department and anticipated challenges in recruitment as local government reorganisation approached.

Councillor Fawcett moved and Councillor Higgins seconded the recommendation.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

**28/26 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS**

(Agenda Item. 11)

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.**

**29/26 FOR INFORMATION ONLY - CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY ITEMS**

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet noted the following responses to Scrutiny items:-

Infrastructure Funding Statement s.106  
Movement and Place Plans

.....in the Chair

Date of signing .....