

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 17 March 2026 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 4.50 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Tim Bearder
Councillor Andrew Gant
Councillor Sean Gaul
Councillor Kate Gregory
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Dan Levy
Councillor Judy Roberts

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillor Brad Baines, Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE, Councillor Imade Edosomwan and Councillor Mark Lygo

Officers:

Whole of meeting Martin Reeves (Chief Executive), Lorna Baxter (Deputy Chief Executive) (Section 151 Officer), Anita Bradley (Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Paul Fermer (Director of Environment and Highways), 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.

30/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Neil Fawcett and Ben Higgins.

31/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

32/26 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2026 were approved as a correct record.

33/26 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

See attached.

34/26 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

7 - Reports from Scrutiny Committees – Road safety

Peter Barnett

9 - Local Transport Consolidated Funding Settlement - Local Transport Delivery Plan

Robin Tucker
Cllr James Fry

10 – Movement and Place Plans

Paul Finnemore
Robin Tucker
Richard Allen
Cllr Gareth Epps
Cllr James Fry

11 – Treasury Management Q3 Performance Report

Cllr Brad Baines

12 – Business Management and Monitoring Report – Performance and Risk - Q3 2025-26

Cllr Brad Baines

13 – Update on High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant

Cllr Brad Baines

14 - Capital Programme Update and Monitoring Report

Robin Tucker
Cllr Brad Baines

16 – Urgent decision regarding acquisition of property/lease in Oxfordshire

Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE

35/26 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item. 6)

Cabinet noted that Councillor Dan Levy had been appointed to the Thames Valley Fire Control Services Joint Committee.

36/26 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 7)

Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE, Chair of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the reports on:

- a) Local Area Partnership Monitoring and Priority Action Plan
- b) Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) Guidance

Councillor Liam Walker, Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the reports on:

- a) Road Safety initiatives in Oxfordshire
- b) Repairing of defects and Superusers

Cabinet to respond to the reports in due course.

37/26 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN OXFORDSHIRE: STATUTORY CONSULTATION RESPONSE

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before a report regarding the Council's draft responses to the Government statutory consultation on three proposals for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire. These were a single council for all Oxfordshire, two councils including West Berkshire, and three councils also including West Berkshire.

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, presented the report. Councillor Leffman referred to the Council's preferred option for a single unitary authority for the whole of Oxfordshire.

Councillor Leffman moved and Councillor Gant seconded the recommendations and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- (a) **approve the submission of three consultation responses (Annex 1, 2 and 3) to the Ministry for Housing Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG)'s consultation on local government reorganisation (LGR) in Oxfordshire as requested by the Minister of State for Local Government's letter on 5 February 2026.**
- (b) **delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer in consultation with the Leader to make any changes to the text/and or formatting of the submissions prior to submission to government whilst not materially affecting the overall content of the responses**

38/26 LOCAL TRANSPORT CONSOLIDATED FUNDING SETTLEMENT - LOCAL TRANSPORT DELIVERY PLAN

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet had before it a report on proposals for a Local Transport Delivery Plan. Oxfordshire County Council had received a funding settlement from the Department for Transport (DfT) and was required to produce a Local Transport Delivery Plan (LTDP) detailing how the allocated funds will be prioritised and spent. A draft LTDP, covering spending for 2026/27 and an outline for 2029/30, was required to be submitted by 20 March 2026, with a final version due by 18 September 2026.

Additionally, the Council was required to report on plans for forecasting carbon emissions as an outcome framework indicator and undertake whole life carbon assessments in transport decisions, in line with DfT guidance released in August 2025. Further reporting details would be provided later in 2026.

The report outlined recommended approaches for grant allocation and identifies the proposed programme for submission to the DfT.

Councillor Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, presented the report. Councillor Gant explained the consolidation of previous transport funding streams into the Integrated Transport Fund and Bus Services Fund, providing multi-year funding and greater flexibility. The allocations were detailed, with increases in active travel spending and a performance-related element for highways maintenance.

In response to questions from public speakers regarding the importance of active travel schemes and the need for improved monitoring of PM2.5 emissions, Councillor Gant responded that monitoring and health benefits were priorities, and that all feedback was under consideration.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **approve the Local Transport Delivery Plan and its submission to the Department for Transport; and**
- b) **delegate authority to the Director of Environment & Highways, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport Management, to make changes to specific schemes and projects within the agreed programmes outlined in the Local Transport Delivery Plan.**

39/26 MOVEMENT AND PLACE PLANS

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet had before it a report recommending approval of the Bicester and Surrounding Villages Movement and Place (MAP) Plan. The plan was the second in a series under the MAP Plan programme. Its adoption would formally replace the 2016 “Area Strategies” from Local Transport Plan 4, with the MAP Plans taking their place as “Part 2s” of the Local Transport Connectivity Plan (LTCP), specifically supporting Policies 52 and 53.

Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, presented the report. Councillor Roberts explained that the plan provided a vision and guiding principles for the area, was intended as a living document to be updated annually, and aimed to balance the needs of growth, active travel, and public transport, while acknowledging the challenges posed by the scale of development.

A number of speakers raised concerns about the cumulative impact of multiple developments around Bicester, the need for a cumulative impact board, and the adequacy of the plan in addressing future growth and rural transport needs.

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

RESILVED to approve the adoption and publication of the Bicester and Surrounding Villages Movement and Place Plan (Annex A), and its subsequent supporting documents at A1-A4 (Delivery Plan, proposals map, people postcards, summary of plan).

40/26 TREASURY MANAGEMENT Q3 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2025-26

(Agenda Item. 11)

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 had before it the third report for the 2025/26 financial year, following previous updates in September and November 2025 and set out the position at 31 December 2025.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, presented the report. Councillor Levy confirmed compliance with prudential indicators, described the Council's debt and investment strategies, and reported on the performance of external fund investments, including the divestment from the Schroder's fund and ongoing dividend income.

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

RESOLVED to note the council's treasury management activity for the first three quarters of 2025/26.

41/26 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT & MONITORING REPORT - PERFORMANCE AND RISK - QUARTER 3 2025-26

(Agenda Item. 12)

The business management and monitoring reports are part of a suite of performance, strategic risk and finance documents which set out the council's ambitions, priorities, and financial performance.

Cabinet received a report setting out the Quarter 3 2025/26 performance and Strategic risk overview for the council.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, presented the report. The report detailed a forecast overspend of £14.1 million, offset by underspends elsewhere, resulting in a small net overspend. Councillor Levy emphasised the importance of achieving financial results in line with budgets, especially given future funding uncertainties. Councillor Levy responded to concerns expressed by a speaker regarding underperformance in some indicators and said that the report focused on exceptions and that directors were working to strengthen performance.

With regard to Section 106 funds, Councillor Levy explained that these were held until contractual conditions were met, particularly for education projects, and that holding these funds was a feature of the system rather than a failing.

During discussion, Councillor Gaul, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, referred to significant improvements in the timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments, rising from 18% to nearly 92%

within a year, attributing this to the work of the SEND Improvement Assurance Board.

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

RESOLVED to:

- a) **note the report and annexes.**
- b) **approve a supplementary estimate request of £0.9m relating to additional election costs and supplementary estimates of £0.5m for Bicester Motion and £2.2m relating to Woodeaton Manor Special School (Annex D paragraph 23).**
- c) **approve the write off of 2 corporate debts totalling £50k (Annex D paragraph 26)**
- d) **approve the write off of 12 Adult Social Care contribution debts totalling £270k (Annex D paragraph 29).**
- e) **note the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block 2025/26 forecast and accumulated deficit position ((Annex D paragraphs 36 - 40).**
- f) **approve the updates to Fees & Charges for Environment & Highways (Annex D – Appendix 5)**

42/26 UPDATE ON HIGH NEEDS DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) FUNDING AND DEFICITS

(Agenda Item. 13)

Cabinet received a report which explained the arrangements for funding High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant deficits up to the end of 2025/26 as set out by the Government as part of the Final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2026/27.

The report provided an update on the estimated share of the 2025/26 deficit that will need to be funded by Oxfordshire County Council, or relevant council(s), subject to Local Government Reform, when the statutory over-ride ends on 1 April 2028. While the government had not provided information about funding beyond 2025/26 at this time, the report set out scenarios showing the estimated share of forecast deficits for 2026/27 and 2027/28

that may need to be funded locally and how those compared to existing planned funding.

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

Councillor Levy explained that the government would write off 90% of the high needs block deficit, conditional on the Council submitting and having approved a SEND reform plan. The remaining 10% must be funded locally, and there was uncertainty about future arrangements beyond 2028.

Officers were developing a robust SEND reform plan, with support from the Department for Education. The plan's acceptance was crucial for securing the deficit write-off and ensuring ongoing improvements in SEND provision.

The Council had taken a prudent approach by allocating budget to manage the gap between government support and actual SEND expenditure and had emphasised the importance of maintaining trust and confidence among parents and carers during this period of change.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **note the update on the treatment of High Needs DSG Deficits up to 31 March 2026 set out in the Final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2026/27.**
- b) **note the changes to High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding and approve the mid and worst case forecast deficits for 2026/27 (paragraph 26 and Table 1).**
- c) **note the funding that is planned to be available to meet the residual element that the council will need to fund following the end of the statutory override.**

43/26 CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE AND MONITORING REPORT

(Agenda Item. 14)

Cabinet had before the fourth capital programme update and monitoring report for 2025/26 which set out the monitoring position based on activity to the end of January 2026.

The report also updated the Capital Programme approved by Council in February 2026 taking into account additional funding, new budget priorities 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.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation presented the report. The Milton Heights Bridge had been added to the capital programme, with funding from Section 106 contributions,

Council resources, and retained business rates. The bridge would improve walking and cycling connections and was seen as a key piece of infrastructure for the area. The capital programme also included new schools and classroom expansions in response to population growth, with most funding sourced from Section 106 contributions.

Councillor Levy responded to comments made by a speaker concerning delays and cost overruns in major projects by highlighting examples of projects delivered ahead of schedule and emphasised the complexity of funding and delivery.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **note the capital monitoring position for 2025/26 set out in this report and summarised in Annex 1.**
- b) **approve the updated Capital Programme at Annex 2 incorporating the changes set out in this report.**

Additions to the Capital Programme

- c) **approve the inclusion of Milton Heights Bridge into the capital programme, with a budget of £8.608m, to be funded from a variety of funding sources. (see paragraph 65-66)**

**44/26 HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES (HWRC) -
MANAGEMENT REPROVISION**

(Agenda Item. 15)

RESOLVED: that the public be excluded for the duration of this item since it is likely that if they were present during the item there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and specified below in relation to this item and since it is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information

Cabinet had before it a report on a proposal for the procurement of a new management contract for Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs). The contract was intended to cover the management of HWRCs across Oxfordshire for an 8-year period starting 1 October 2027, with flexibility provisions related to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The report included background information, options appraisal, financial and legal considerations, and outlined key dates for the procurement process.

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

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **approve the preferred approach to the reprovision of the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) management as set out in paragraphs 5 and 31.**
- b) **authorise Officers to prepare and commence the procurement of a new 8-year HWRC management contract to start on 1 October 2027 (following a mobilisation period) with options to support flexibility in Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).**
- c) **endorse exploration and feasibility of the capital purchase of HWRC plant and equipment during the tender bidding, with a view to having an agreed final revenue and capital cost of the contract at the final tender stage.**
- d) **delegate the decision to award the contract, and any extension to that contract to the Director of Environment and Highways in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action.**

45/26 URGENT DECISION RELATING TO THE ACQUISITION OF A PROPERTY/LEASE IN OXFORDSHIRE.

(Agenda Item. 16)

RESOLVED: that the public be excluded for the duration of this item since it is likely that if they were present during that item there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and specified below in relation to that item and since it is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information

Cabinet had before it a report on the proposed acquisition of three leases on a property in Oxfordshire to support place shaping and regeneration aligned with its economic ambitions and corporate priorities.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, presented the report. He outlined the financial due diligence undertaken, the expected income return, and the potential for capital appreciation. The acquisition was seen as an opportunity to regenerate a

neglected area, improve connectivity, and support the Council's place-shaping ambitions.

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

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **agree to the acquisition of three leases, on the terms set out in exempt Annex 1 and 2.**
- b) **delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation to negotiate and agree the final acquisition terms which will be substantially in accordance with the details set out in exempt Annexes 1,2,3,4 and 5.**
- c) **delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Director of Property & Assets and the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, to conclude negotiations and complete all necessary legal documentation (subject to the completion of all due diligence exercises) to implement the acquisition.**

46/26 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 17)

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.

47/26 FOR INFORMATION ONLY: CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY ITEM

(Agenda Item. 18)

Cabinet noted the response to the Scrutiny item on The Virtual School.

.....in the Chair

Date of signing

