

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 16 March 2022

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Cabinet members present:

Councillor Brown	Councillor Hayes
Councillor Aziz	Councillor Walcott
Councillor Clarkson	Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Rowley	Councillor Upton

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Stephen Gabriel, Executive Director for Communities and People
Caroline Green, Chief Executive
Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)
Susan Sale, Monitoring Officer and Head of Law & Governance
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services
Andrew Brown, Committee and Member Services Manager
Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer
Emma Lund, Committee and Member Services Officer
Ian Wright, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety
Becky Walker, Home Improvement Agency Team Manager
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy
Steve Weitzel, Regeneration Manager
Paul Wilding, Rough Sleeping & Single Homeless Manager

Also present:

Councillor Elizabeth Wade, Chair of Scrutiny Committee

Apologies:

Councillors Turner and Arshad sent apologies.

117. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hayes declared an interest in agenda item 8 ('Allocation of Preventing Homelessness Funds 2022/23') as Chief Executive of Elmore Community Services. Whilst Elmore Community Services did not provide housing or homelessness services, it was part of the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance.

118. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

Patricia Murphy had submitted a statement and questions relating to the Oxpens River Bridge design item to be considered later on the agenda. Her statement, and the

response given to it by Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, are attached to these minutes.

119. Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda

None.

120. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

121. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

122. Scrutiny reports

Councillor Liz Wade, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, introduced the reports which had been considered by scrutiny at its meetings on 2 and 7 March. The scrutiny recommendations relating to the Procurement Update and the Oxfordshire 2050 report would be brought to the April Cabinet meeting. Scrutiny was expected to consider the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 at its June meeting, when further information would be available.

Councillor Wade also provided an update to Cabinet that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership had recently recommended a further Regulation 18 consultation on housing numbers be undertaken.

Climate Emergency Review Group Update

Four recommendations had been made, of which three were fully agreed and one was partially agreed. The partially agreed recommendation had been to incorporate disability thinking into work on climate action from the outset, and the response had referenced the legal duties of Oxfordshire County Council in relation to delivery of transport initiatives. It was noted that the split of responsibilities with the County Council remained a significant factor in what was able to be delivered.

Responding to the recommendations later in the meeting, the Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford reported that of the four recommendations, two were ones which the Council had control over, and two were ones which the Council had influence over. The recommendation to evidence the allocated resources which were expected to move the Council towards each goal was agreed where this was possible. The recommendation to provide a clear definition of 'net zero' was also accepted, and in future reference would be made to the Cabinet report of December 2021 which had set out the definition. The remaining two recommendations relating to transport were reliant on partnership working with the County Council as the highways authority.

In relation to HGVs in the city centre, the Cabinet Member highlighted the benefit of partnership working. The Council was working with the County Council, the University of Oxford and other partners as part of Zero Carbon Oxford on greening last mile delivery and quiet delivery exploration. The next steps were to recruit expert and additional workforce which could look into plans for full freight consolidation and a small scale pilot. Whilst the Council did not have complete control to take measures against

heavy freight, it was using its influence alongside its partners to improve road safety for cyclists.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Five recommendations had been made, of which four were fully agreed and one was partially agreed. The partially agreed recommendation had related to the provision of community wi-fi in all of the Council's leisure and community centres which would be free to users. In response, the point had been made that the current 'free' wi-fi service from BT would expire shortly and a new business case would need to be made for its continuation.

There had been general agreement for scrutiny to review the progress of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy on an annual basis, to include taking evidence on how the strategy was working both from the Councillors point of view and that of the community and stakeholders.

Allocation of Preventing Homelessness Grant 2022/23

Two recommendations had been made, of which both had been agreed. One recommendation had been to monitor the grant of £25,000 per year to Greater Change, due to its nature as a crowd-funding platform. The other recommendation had been to include details in future allocations reports of the subsidy provided to Crisis and Arts and the Old Firestation through the provision of the Old Fire Station building.

Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy

One recommendation had been made, which related to increasing the support for tenants in private rented accommodation who required adaptations. The recommendation had been agreed, although it was noted that it would require the approval of a Selective Licensing framework.

Annual Update of the Council's Business Plan

Eight recommendations had been made, of which the majority were agreed. Two recommendations relating to transport policy were not agreed on the basis that Oxfordshire County Council was the highways authority. However, assurance had been given that both councils were working with Oxford University and others to look at the 'last mile' delivery into the city. This should reduce HGV access and, hopefully, road traffic accidents. A recommendation for a Youth Council had been made but not agreed on the basis that there was already a very active Children & Young People's Partnership which was considered to meet the aim of engaging young people in the decision making process.

Recovery and Renewal Framework

Three recommendations had been made, which were all accepted. Two had related to ongoing monitoring (with a report requested in a year's time) and an update on how the framework was impacting the city's own strategy. The third recommendation had been to seek an amendment to clarify that the framework did not replace county wide strategies or override city / district level policies or strategies.

The Leader commented that whilst the scrutiny recommendations were very helpful, the column detailing a binary response as to whether a recommendation was agreed or not could be problematic given the complex nature of some recommendations. For example, the Council might strongly support the aims of a scrutiny recommendation whilst being unable to meet it if it was outside its remit or powers. Councillor Wade

undertook to consider the presentation of recommendation responses with the scrutiny committee.

With the agreement of the Scrutiny Committee Chair, it was noted that Cabinet Members would address the scrutiny findings during consideration of each agenda item.

123. Allocation of Preventing Homelessness Funds 2022/23

The Executive Director (Communities and People) had submitted a report to approve the Homelessness Prevention grant allocations for 2022/23. Authorisation was also sought to delegate authority to the Executive Director (Communities and People) to enter into a lease with St Mungo's in relation to Floyd's Row.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless drew attention to the work which had been done to prevent and alleviate rough sleeping. The report stated that 284 out of 355 people had moved on successfully from 'Everyone In'; this figure had now risen to 299. Thanks to the joint work of all providers of homelessness services, as well as Oxfordshire councils, local housing providers and health and social care and criminal justice partners, 126 units of Everyone In accommodation had been exited since May with no consequential increase in rough sleeping.

The Cabinet Member also drew attention to a forthcoming change to the way in which services were commissioned. This would include the commencement of a new Oxfordshire Homelessness service, involving the majority of accommodation and outreach services being delivered by an alliance of local providers. This was considered to represent a positive, beneficial and innovative approach, and had been well supported by council and partners across Oxfordshire.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the allocation of Homelessness Prevention funds to commission homelessness services in 2022/23 as outlined in paragraphs 27 to 28 and in Appendix 2 of the report.
2. **Delegate** to the Executive Director for Communities and People in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless the discretion to revise the intended programme within the overall budget if required.
3. **Delegate** authority to the Executive Director for Communities and People to grant of a 10 year lease on Floyds Row to St Mungo's with a 5 year rent review, and to note that the Council will provide grant funding to St Mungo's if there are any costs arising having taken into account income collected.

124. Oxford City Council Corporate Business Plan 2022/23

The Head of Corporate Strategy had submitted a report to approve Oxford City Council's Corporate Business Plan priorities for 2022/23.

The Leader advised that the recommendations from scrutiny relating to the Business Plan had been broadly agreed, and recommended textual changes had been made. This included adding wording around the river bathing status application (the outcome of which was awaited) and including a commitment to wild swimming in Oxford.

The recommendation that the Council should commit to the protection of parks and play areas from development was already set out within existing policies of the Council, which was considered more appropriate than inclusion within the Business Plan (as the latter was intended to set out progress against delivery of the Council's priorities). In relation to the recommendation to restrict HGV access to the city centre, this would continue to be discussed with the County Council as part of transport and 'last mile' feasibility work. Whilst the Council had a close working relationship with the County Council and sought to influence it in relation to transport issues and engagement with residents and business, the City Council was ultimately not the decision maker in relation to transport policy. The Local Plan also included a clear commitment to reducing traffic within the city.

The Leader drew attention to key points of the Plan, which included work on the inclusive economy. This was particularly important given current cost of living pressures. The Plan included reference to the Council's commitment to encouraging the payment of the Oxford Living Wage, and to paying the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in full.

The priorities to Deliver more, affordable housing and Support thriving Communities included, amongst others, actions to provide adequate housing; support access to advice by providing grants to advice centres; and ensure that parks and green spaces were clean and welcoming.

The priority to 'ensure a zero carbon Oxford' sought to ensure that the Council led the way in committing to becoming a zero carbon city. Significant steps had been taken towards this in the past year, including investment in leisure centres to reduce carbon emissions; however, further work was needed both at County and City level to enable achievement of net carbon zero by 2040.

The Head of Corporate Strategy commented that although the document was smaller in size this year, this did not indicate a reduction in the amount of work which was planned. Instead, it was intended to allow a focus on the headline elements. The more detailed service plans underpinning the Plan were in development.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Agree** the draft Oxford City Council Corporate Business Plan priorities 2022/23, which set out the Council's priority work for the next financial year;
2. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Corporate Strategy in consultation with the Council Leader to make further minor amendments to the draft Business Plan priorities before implementation;
3. **Note** the progress made in delivery against the actions set out in the current year's Corporate Business Plan 2021/22.

125. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

The Head of Community Services had submitted a report to demonstrate how Oxford City Council would continue to meet the public sector Equality Duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between Oxford's citizens.

In presenting the report, the Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities highlighted that the report was a living document which would be central to the Council's work to

address inequalities within the city, which were considered to have increased as a result of the pandemic. The strategy involved ambitious targets, and challenged the Council in the work to be done. Development of the strategy had involved a significant amount of work, particularly in relation to organising focus groups and providing opportunities for residents to engage with the Council.

The scrutiny recommendations were considered to have been helpful, and the Chair and members of the scrutiny committee were thanked for their thorough review. The recommendation to provide community wi-fi in all community and leisure centres was agreed in principle; however, further work on the detail would need to be undertaken in order to determine feasibility. The recommendations to: (i) mitigate the potential exclusionary impact on relevant vulnerable residents of moving towards cashless provision; (ii) undertake additional engagement with faith communities to understand their needs and support their contribution towards asset based community development and (iii) explicitly reference the need for inclusive leisure provision were all accepted. A textual amendment had also been made in response to a scrutiny suggestion.

At the suggestion of a Cabinet Member, a further recommendation to the Cabinet report was proposed, to allow the Executive Director (Communities and People) to make minor and consequential amendments to the strategy as required.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Endorse** the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy;
2. **Review** the activities in the strategy when new insights or data (such as the census) become available, to ensure work remains evidence led; and
3. **Delegate** authority to the Executive Director (Communities and People) to make minor and consequential amendments to the strategy.

126. Update of Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety had submitted a report to present an updated Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy. The current policy had been approved in 2018 and had had minor updates since. The main changes in the proposed new update included an increase to the maximum amount of the Adapted Homes Grant; inclusion of a new Disabled Facility Grants Top-Up grant to assist applicants where works exceed the government's limit of £30,000 for a Disabled Facilities Grant; extension of the Relocation Grant to help disabled tenants who were not Oxford City Council tenants to re-locate to more suitable premises; and amendment to the criteria for Essential Repair Assistance, including removing the 10 year residency limit for repayment so that every grant became repayable on the sale of the property.

In presenting the report, the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless highlighted the value of enabling people living with a disability to continue to remain in their own homes and communities. In this way, the strategy contributed to the priorities highlighted earlier in the meeting within the Corporate Business Plan and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

In response to a question from a Cabinet Member about the scope for making adaptations to properties within the private sector, it was noted that it was open to either private landlords, housing associations or owner-occupiers to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant. However, it could be difficult to obtain the relevant permissions from private landlords. The scrutiny committee had recommended that

guidance be produced for landlords, and this had now been added to the Council's website. In addition, the government was looking into proposals to make it mandatory for private landlords to give permission for disability adaptations.

It was noted that paragraph 4 of the report stated 'The Council's national mandatory DFG programme had been expanded...to £505m in 2020/21'. Clarification was given that this was not the amount of funding provided to the Council, and the word 'Council's' should be deleted from the sentence.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy March 2022 attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

127. Covid-19: Oxfordshire System Recovery and Renewal Framework

The Head of Corporate Strategy had submitted a report to consider adoption of a countywide and system wide strategy for recovery and renewal in Oxfordshire following the Covid pandemic.

It was noted that the report would be presented to all of the other Oxfordshire councils for approval. Comment was made that this process meant it was difficult for individual councils to recommend changes following scrutiny, given that this would involve altering a report which may have already been agreed by other councils. However, the report before Cabinet at this meeting represented a broad framework which did not require the Council to commit to anything beyond adopting general principles which it already supported. In presenting the report the Leader commented that the report recognised the good work which had been done throughout the pandemic, and the value of a collaborative partnership approach. In particular, health inequalities had widened during the pandemic, and a commitment to work together to address this was supported. An example of partnership working in this area was the Food Strategy which was currently in development, which would seek to address inequalities in access to food; another area of partnership work was climate change. The Leader commended the work of Ansaf Anzhar, Director of Public Health for Oxfordshire County Council, in leading on partnership work to address health inequality.

With regard to the scrutiny recommendations, it was agreed that a recommendation should be made to the County Council to produce a report in a year's time for consideration by the Health and Wellbeing Board and this Council's scrutiny committee, detailing what had happened as a result of the establishment of the Framework. The Chief Executive was asked to progress this with other council Chief Executives. It had also been recommended that the Council produce its own update at the same time, and this was also agreed. The final recommendation from scrutiny had been to suggest amendment to the Framework to clarify that it did not replace countywide strategies or override city / district level policies and strategies. This was also agreed, although it was noted that any changes to the Framework, such as that above, which were suggested by councils would need to be agreed by all the Chief Executives. The Chief Executive was therefore asked to progress this request with other council Chief Executives.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Adopt** the Oxfordshire System Recovery and Renewal Framework, set out at Appendix 1 of the report, as the key partnership document guiding joint programme planning beyond the Covid-19 period; and

2. **Delegate** final revisions to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, as partnership organisations complete their engagement and decision making processes.

128. Oxfordshire Plan 2050: Statement of Community Involvement

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to provide an update on the Oxfordshire Plan Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in response to the recent lifting of Coronavirus restrictions.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery clarified that the proposed change comprised a relatively minor amendment to reflect the government's reversal of Covid regulations and changes in government guidance on engagement using social media. The SCI was a statutory document for planning policy-making; therefore all of the five councils which were hoping to adopt the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 would need to adopt the revised SCI.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Adopt** the revised Statement of Community Involvement.

129. Integrated Performance Report for Q3

The Head of Financial Services and the Head of Business Improvement had submitted a report to update the Cabinet on Finance, Risk and Corporate Performance matters as at 31 December 2021.

The report also included a recommendation in respect of a capital allocation for the purchase of hybrid audio-visual equipment.

The Head of Financial Services highlighted the key points of the report. It was noted that a slight adverse variance of £305,000 for the general fund at the end of the year, after making planned contributions from reserves of just over £5m, was forecast. Reasons for the adverse variances were included in the report. Favourable variances were shown in Community Services and Housing, including a grant of £500,000 relating to homelessness expenditure. The Housing Revenue Account was on track to achieve a surplus position of £388k as forecast at the start of the year. There had been further slippages on the capital programme of around £17m, which were largely in relation to the housing delivery programme. There remained three red risks on the Corporate Risk Register, and three red corporate performance indicators.

A Cabinet Member commented that there was a difference between capital schemes which involved the Council undertaking developments (either by itself or through a third party), and those which involved funding for schemes and involved borrowing (e.g. acquisition of properties by the HRA). It was requested that additional detail on the split between these be provided in future reports.

It was noted that there remained a number of adverse factors which continued to affect the budget and the successful delivery of projects, including the ongoing impact of Brexit, effects of Covid on both workforce and supply chain, and the situation in Ukraine.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the projected financial outturn as well as the position in risk and performance as at 31 December 2021;
2. **Recommend** to Council the addition of £0.110 million into the Capital Programme for the purchase of hybrid AV meeting equipment as set out in paragraph 13 of the report.

130. Oxpens River Bridge Design

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to seek agreement to draw down an additional £150,000 from the existing £5.9m Growth Deal funding allocation held by the City Council to design and deliver the Oxpens River Bridge, subject to further agreement with the County Council. This would be in addition to the £300,000 previously approved by Cabinet for design work for the bridge and would allow the completion of design work to RIBA stage 4 by the end of June 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery presented the report and emphasised the comments he had made earlier in the meeting that the Council was essentially acting as a contractor for Oxfordshire County Council, which had been allocated the funds as part of the Oxfordshire Growth Deal. In 2020 the Council had agreed to take on the responsibility of helping the County Council to deliver some of its infrastructure projects (including this one); the project was currently at RIBA stage 2 and detailed design work was now needed in order to identify a preferred option and progress to a planning application.

It was noted that, whichever option was selected, the Growth Deal funding was unlikely to be sufficient to deliver the project. There was therefore likely to be a need for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, the County Council and this Council to decide whether or not to proceed, or identify additional funding.

The Leader commented that the development would provide segregated cycle tracks and therefore contribute towards providing a proper cycling network across the city, linking two important sites and improving connectivity.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve**, subject to agreement with Oxfordshire County Council and Future Oxfordshire Partnership (formerly Oxfordshire Growth Board), an amended funding agreement to allow additional design fees to be drawn down from the funding allocation and delegate to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, the Head of Law and Governance, and the Head of Financial Services, the detailed wording of an amended agreement to address the funding and programme issues;
2. **Approve** the spend of an additional £150,000 from the bridge Growth Deal funds to complete design work to RIBA stage 4, subject to agreeing the amended funding agreement with Oxfordshire County Council; and
3. **Delegate** to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, the decision on the preferred option for the bridge for consultation, and then the submission of a planning application if deemed appropriate.

131. Transgender Flag Flying

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report to seek Cabinet approval to fly the Transgender flag annually on 31 March for International Trans Day of Visibility, following the motion passed by Council on 29 November 2021 titled 'Becoming a trans inclusive Council'.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Authorise** the flying of the Transgender flag annually on 31 March for International Trans Day of Visibility.

132. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2022 as a true and accurate record.

133. Decision taken under Part 9.3(b) of the Constitution

The Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) had submitted a report asking Cabinet to note a decision taken by the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) using the urgency powers delegated in Part 9.3(b) of the Constitution for the reasons set out in the report.

The decision had involved increasing the available Additional Restrictions Grant budget by £208,367 and approving the use of the of the top-up funds for delivery of Omicron Additional Restrictions Grant.

Cabinet resolved to **note** the decision taken by the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) using the urgency powers delegated in Part 9.3(b) of the Constitution as set out in the report and **recommend** to Council to note the decision.

134. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

13 April 2022

15 June 2022

13 July 2022

10 August 2022

14 September 2022

All meetings start at 6.00pm.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.37 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 13 April 2022

Cabinet 16 March 2022

Address by Patricia Murphy:

“Oxford City Council and its development partners the University of Oxford have both declared a Climate Emergency. Why has OCC and its bid partners not sought to adapt the nearby existing Victorian Gas Works Bridge rather than construct a new bridge? There is little local demand for a new structure that represents embodied carbon and the loss of meadowland on one the few remaining stretches of river with green on both sides. The Thames wildlife corridor here includes the reclaimed Grandpont Nature Park and Oxpens Meadow, previously described by the Council as a major green asset.

We were told that adapting the existing bridge would be “too difficult”. Could you explain why it would be more difficult than constructing an expensive new bridge that will create pinch points under the railway bridge and reduce the area of green by introducing hard landscaping for structure and extensive footings. Has the Council investigated if the money could be switched to adapting the existing bridge, given that value for money is a major criterion and enhancement is also covered by the funds? Furthermore, the Osney Mead Masterplan, published by the University of Oxford in 2016, acknowledges this. I quote: “A bridge would be a large, high and very expensive new structure. The towpath underpass which links to the existing bridge crossing to the east, could provide a more viable solution.”

The funding under the Marginal Viability Funding Scheme is to “unlock housing”. So how the bridge will do this, given that the flood adjacent Osney Mead is currently not zoned for housing, nor has planning permission yet to be applied for? Why has the Council previously claimed the bridge was to “unlock housing” but in its recent press release justifies it as providing off-road cycle routes, which already exist?

The terms of the Funding state that it “...is not to be used when developers, or others, are able to pay for the infrastructure themselves.” Does this mean the University of Oxford is unable or unwilling to pay for the infrastructure, and what is the evidence that the Osney Mead housing development for university staff and students is contingent upon this bridge? What is the evidence base that the economic benefit of the bridge is genuinely additional: that is, that the development would not occur without this intervention? Is the intention to open up more land for housing?

Does the Council intend to recoup the money from the university, given that it is so well resourced? How has the Council demonstrated “evidence of involvement of local communities”, which is one of the criteria to the fund? Particularly, as it has been reported in the Oxford Mail that the contract was signed by a senior Council officer as an urgent decision, taken without approval from Councillors.”

Response from Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery

“I would preface my remarks by saying that quite a substantial number of the assumptions in the questions are not correct.

Oxford City Council is acting as the agent for Oxfordshire County Council on this project. The project is being funded from Growth Deal funding, which was provided to the County Council for the sole purpose of providing a new crossing for the predicted increase in pedestrian and cycle traffic due to new developments in the West End. If it is not used for that purpose – a new crossing - it would need to be returned to the County Council.

The question quotes the terms for the Home England administered Housing and Infrastructure Funding (HIF); this is NOT the source of the funding for the proposed bridge.

The proposed bridge has been identified as a potential improvement to connectivity for active travel for several years. It was first proposed in the West End Area Action Plan, which was adopted in June 2008. The need for the bridge was reviewed again as part of the Local Plan 2036 and was confirmed in that Local Plan as being a means to improve walking and cycling connectivity, particularly between the proposed developments at Osney Mead and at Oxpens and the city centre beyond. Osney Mead Industrial Estate was allocated for development in the Oxford Local Plan 2036 for a mixed use development that includes residential use. The policy identifies the need for a new pedestrian and cycle bridge over the river to support this allocation.

The use of the Gasworks Rail Bridge as an alternative to a new bridge has previously been explored by the County Council and rejected by them, as it would require the alteration of the bridge parapet and of the northern access, and the widening and reducing of the gradient of the connecting path. The route along the Castle Mill Stream has limited width and is not suitable to be designated for cycling, and therefore a further route over the Stream and through the Meadows would need to be created, which would need to be raised to avoid flooding, causing harm to the Meadows themselves. The resulting route would not provide a direct and convenient connection between Osney Mead and Oxpens and the City Centre beyond for existing and future use predicted by the County Council.

The proposed bridge would allow the Meadow and the Nature Park to be enjoyed by more people, while providing a new, convenient and secure route for active travel. The impact on the Meadow and the Nature Park to accommodate the bridge construction is minimal.

The Growth Deal funding is expected to be a revolving fund ('expected' in the sense that that is what it is set up to do). Future development at Osney Mead will be expected to contribute to the costs of infrastructure that facilitates that development. The mechanism for this will depend on what system is in force at the time (government reforms are still pending), but could include contributions through CIL, s106, s278 or through another form of voluntary undertaking.

When the bridge scheme reaches the appropriate stage, expected to be in early summer 2022, formal public consultation will take place in advance of seeking planning permission.

To reiterate my words at the beginning, the City Council is acting as the agent for the County Council here. It is not in our gift to transfer the money to somewhere else; it is not our money, it is theirs.”

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