

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 13 July 2022

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Cabinet members present:

Councillor Brown	Councillor Aziz
Councillor Chapman	Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Munkonge	Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Upton	Councillor Walcott

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)
Alice Courtney, Committee and Member Services Manager (Interim Acting)
Marcia Ecclestone, Legal Services Manager
Stephen Gabriel, Executive Director (Communities and People)
Caroline Green, Chief Executive
Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Douglas Kerrigan, Interim Development Manager
Hagan Lewisman, Active Communities Manager
Emma Lund, Committee and Member Services Officer
Ted Maxwell, Regeneration Manager
Carolyn Ploszynski, Head of Regeneration and Economy
Vikki Robins, Sustainable City Team
Alexander Sutton, Assistant Planner
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy

Also present:

Councillor Dr Christopher Smowton, Chair of Scrutiny

Apologies:

Councillors Turner and Thomas sent apologies.

21. Declarations of Interest

None.

22. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

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

None.

24. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

25. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

26. Scrutiny reports

Scrutiny Committee met on 5 July 2022 and had considered three Cabinet reports, as well as an update report on the Oxford Waterways project. The recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Panel in relation to Tenant Involvement and Empowerment, which had been endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee in April, were also presented.

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Report

Nineteen recommendations had been made; these mostly focused on formalising or regularising existing tenant involvement activity.

The Cabinet Member for Housing welcomed the recommendations and responded that they would, in particular, help to improve landlord services. The Cabinet Member highlighted the establishment of a Tenant and Leaseholder Board, and the recommendation that the Council works to develop a Housing identity which is distinct from its role as a district council, as particularly important.

Oxford City Council Safeguarding Report

The Scrutiny Committee had noted the positive work which had been undertaken in relation to increasing awareness of the importance of safeguarding. One recommendation had been made, which related to working with the County Council and other organisations to ensure that digital inclusion and digital safeguarding were covered within safeguarding training. The Cabinet Member responded that this recommendation was accepted.

Oxford City Council's Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy

Three recommendations had been made. These related to reviewing projections for future electric vehicle usage in the City; incentivising the reliability of electric vehicle infrastructure; and investigating whether targets could be set for large housing developments to have charging spaces which were allocated exclusively for car club electric vehicles.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Transport responded that the latter point would be looked at within the process of developing the next iteration of the Local Plan. The recommendation on reviewing usage projections was not accepted, as the existing modelling work had been undertaken by a specialist consultancy using internationally recognised formulae. However, the projections would continue to be monitored. In relation to the recommendation about incentivising the reliability of the charging infrastructure, the Cabinet Member responded that this recommendation was accepted, and was already being addressed through the dynamic purchasing process and other measures. It was hoped that there would be far fewer problems arising from unreliable electric charging infrastructure in the future.

Growth Fund Cycle Routes

Two recommendations had been made. These had related to the importance of clear and timely communications about the changes to the routes (and the reasons) and ensuring that Vision Zero was highlighted in public communications, where appropriate, in order to ensure awareness. The Cabinet Member for Health and Transport responded that both recommendations were accepted.

Waterways Update

At its meeting on 8 June, Scrutiny had received an update on recommendations made in November 2020. The Committee had noted that there had been some change in priorities during the intervening period, due to a number of important health and safety issues which had been identified.

Four recommendations had been made, which had related to working with adjacent landowners; producing communications for Councillors and residents; lobbying government to hold water regulators to account; and ensuring that the work of the Oxford Waterways Project was aligned with other work related to wildlife and wetland.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks responded that the recommendations were agreed, with the exception of that relating to the lobbying of government. This was because the Environment Agency was testing the newly Designated Bathing Water at the Wolvercote Mill Stream on a weekly basis, with any enforcement action to be led by the Environment Agency or OFWAT, as appropriate. The recommendation was therefore not required.

27. Oxford City Council Safeguarding Report 2021/22

The Head of Corporate Strategy had submitted a report on the progress made on the Oxford City Council Safeguarding Action Plan 2021-22.

Councillor Diko Walcott, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, presented the report and highlighted the key safeguarding achievements over the preceding year (which had been attained within the context of the pandemic), as well as the work streams, achievements and priorities of safeguarding partners as part of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements in place across the county.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the key achievements of the safeguarding work delivered through Oxford City Council during 2021 – 2022; and
2. **Approve** the Safeguarding Action Plan 2022 – 2023 as set out at Appendix 1.

28. Oxford City Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy

The Head of Corporate Strategy had submitted a report seeking Cabinet approval for the Oxford City Council Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Transport referred to the recent opening of the Energy Superhub at Redbridge Park and Ride, Europe's most powerful electric vehicle charging hub, and commended all those Councillors and officers who had been involved in bringing the project to fruition.

In presenting the report, the Cabinet Member highlighted that the very high costs involved in providing Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure meant that delivery needed to

be undertaken in partnership with private providers. The challenge lay in ensuring that provision was fairly distributed across the City, and not concentrated amongst early adopters of the technology. The Cabinet Member reported that the EV Infrastructure Strategy set out the framework for delivering the infrastructure, as well as the reasons (which included the aim to become carbon neutral by 2040, and achieving improvements in air quality). It required synergy with developing national policies and the countywide EV strategy; needed to cover a variety of different vehicle requirements, including private cars, delivery vehicles, commercial vehicles and buses; and needed to take account of both future behaviour and population change. There had therefore been many challenges within its development.

Several potential income streams and commercial opportunities had also been identified in developing the Strategy.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the draft Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy as set out at Appendix 1, confirming the principles for future decision making, and delegate authority to the Head of Corporate Strategy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Transport to make further minor amendments to the draft Strategy prior to its adoption;
2. **Note** that an implementation plan will follow for Cabinet approval in Autumn 2022;
3. **Adopt** the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy which links in a complementary way with the Oxford city specific policies and actions set out in the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy.

29. Variation to Allocation of Growth Funding to Cycle Routes

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report seeking Cabinet approval for variation to the schemes to be funded from the £1m Growth Deal funding previously approved in March 2020 and the return of funds to Oxfordshire County Council for the delivery of the Marston Road Crossing improvement.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Transport reported that c £1m of Growth Deal funding had been provided by the County Council in 2020 in order to provide four off-road cycle routes, which at that stage were very loosely scoped. On further investigation it had been identified that two of the four schemes would not be able to proceed. Alternative schemes had subsequently been found which would address the same need for off-road cycle routes, although in different locations. Approval was therefore sought to switch the funding from the schemes which could not be delivered to those which could. It was also proposed that a small amount of money should be returned to the County Council for a crossing improvement at Marston Road which would now be undertaken by the County Council as part of a larger scheme.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** a variation to the schemes to be funded from the £1m Growth Deal funding previously approved in March 2020 as set out at Appendix 2;
2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with the Head of Financial Services / S151 Officer, the Head of Law and Governance and the Cabinet Member for Health and Transport to make any further variations to

the schemes, and any amendments to the funding agreement that are within the approved budget and comply with the requirements of the Growth Deal Funding Agreement;

3. **Agree** the return of £140k to Oxfordshire County Council for the delivery of the Marston Road crossing improvement which has been absorbed into a larger scheme; and
4. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with the Head of Financial Services / S151 Officer, the Head of Law and Governance and the Cabinet Member for Health and Transport to appoint contractors and award contracts to deliver the Growth Deal cycle schemes in accordance with the contract rules contained in the Council's Constitution.

30. Oxford Playing Pitch Strategy 2022-2036

The Head of Community Services had submitted a report seeking approval for the Oxford Playing Pitch Strategy 2022 – 2036.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks reported that the Strategy was needs and evidence based, and aligned with the Local Plan. It sought to ensure that the City had a good supply of well-managed, well-maintained and efficient playing pitches and other outdoor sports facilities which would help to encourage residents to maintain and increase an active lifestyle. Whilst there was no legal requirement for a Playing Pitch Strategy, the Council had opted to develop one in order to promote healthier living and reduce inequality. It was also recognised as good practice by Sport England, and may help to increase the amount of future grant funding which the Council could achieve. The Strategy would be reviewed every year, and refreshed on a five yearly basis.

The Active Communities Manager highlighted that development of the Strategy had been collaborative, involving amongst others the Universities, the Playing Fields Association and the Grounds Management Association.

Cabinet Members highlighted that a large number of playing fields throughout the city were owned by University Colleges and were often rarely used or made accessible for any form of community use. The Leader undertook to raise this with the Conference of Colleges.

Cabinet Members highlighted the importance of future iterations of the Strategy focussing on reducing inequality, including gender inequality, in access to sport.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Oxford Playing Pitch Strategy 2022 – 2036 which will help enable residents to maintain active lifestyles on fit-for-purpose outdoor playing pitches.

31. Introduction of a local connection test to the self-build and custom housebuilding register

The Head of Planning Services had submitted a report to ask Cabinet to adopt a Local Connection Test to the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Register, following public consultation and updated government guidance.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery reported that there had been a legal obligation to maintain a planning and housebuilding register since 2016. The

proposal before Cabinet was to split the register into those with a local connection to the city and those without. This would enable the level of demand from people connected to Oxford to be known.

It was hoped that self-build plots would start to come forward as part of the delivery of sites within the Local Plan.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the implementation of a local connection test in order to determine whether an applicant has a local connection to Oxford;
2. **Approve** the criteria to be applied in considering applications for the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Register as set out at paragraph 11 of the report; and
3. **Approve** the splitting of the current Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Register into two parts which would differentiate between people with a local connection to Oxford and those who do not have a local connection.

32. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-24 to 2026-27

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report seeking agreement to the budget setting strategy for the forthcoming Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2023-24 to 2026-27. An update was also provided on the current budgetary position and expected future pressures.

The Head of Financial Services presented the report and outlined the process of service reviews set out at paragraphs 9 and 10 of the report, which would be undertaken using a set of principles developed by the Senior Management Team. It was noted that the financial climate remained very challenging, with high inflation rates and increasing borrowing rates and energy costs. For the General Fund, the deficit at year 4 of the Medium Term Financial Plan was forecast to be c £5.5m against a spend of £27m. This had been based on a number of assumptions as outlined in the report. An £11m use of reserves (approximately half of useable reserves) over the life of the MTFP was also projected.

No further spend was expected to become affordable on the Housing Revenue Account until 2025 – 2026.

The Head of Financial Services reported that the budget setting process was being started earlier than usual, in order to allow time for the additional work needed to enable a balanced budget to be delivered. Cabinet heard that the process would involve integrating future business planning for services as part of the 'Fit for the Future' programme with addressing the financial challenges.

It was noted in debate that the Plans which were integral to the MTFP, shown at paragraph 1 of the report, were very closely connected. Therefore, there was a need for awareness of the implications for other plans and the overall budget as a result of any proposed changes to individual plans.

It was also requested that the phasing of the savings be included when the report comes back to Cabinet later in the year, to enable monitoring of progress on delivery.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the budget setting strategy for the Medium Term Financial Plan 2023 – 2024 to 2026 – 2027.

33. Park and Ride Charges

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report seeking Cabinet approval for changes to the charging period at Oxford City Council Park and Ride sites, and to offer combined parking and bus tickets.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Transport reported that the aim of the proposals was to encourage use of the park and ride; leaving cars on the edge of the city brought a number of benefits, including improved air quality and reduced carbon emissions. The proposal also aimed to increase the Council's income from the sites.

The first element of the proposal was to introduce a combined ticket, which would avoid the need for the purchase of separate tickets for parking and for the bus, with the revenue to be divided between the bus companies and the City Council. This would initially be offered at a discounted rate of £5 for a family, or £4 for a single person.

The second element involved changing the 1 – 11 hour parking period to become 1 – 16 hours, and the 11 – 24 hour period to become 16 – 24 hours. This would address feedback from workers who, due to work patterns, often required a stay marginally longer than 11 hours, requiring the purchase of a costlier ticket.

The report outlined that a review would be undertaken after three months in order to assess the impact and allow a decision, before the expiry of the six month trial period, as to whether to continue the trial, amend elements and continue for longer, or cease to offer the discount. Given the time frame which would be required to collate the necessary data for presentation to Cabinet, it was proposed that the delegation under recommendation 5 should enable the Executive Director (Development) and Head of Finance to be able to extend the trial period from six months to twelve months.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Agree** the use of combined parking and bus tickets at Oxford City Council Park and Ride sites at a reduced price for a six month trial period from 30 September 2022 (subject to a review after three months);
2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with the Head of Financial Services / S151 Officer and the Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Finance and Asset Management to negotiate and finalise the terms of any agreement associated with this trial;
3. **Agree** that the ability to purchase combined parking and bus tickets at Oxford City Council park and ride sites will continue as a permanent change beyond the trial. This relates to the type of ticket and not the price paid;
4. **Agree** to amend the 1 – 11 hour parking period to become 1 – 16 hours and the 11 – 24 hour period to become 16 – 24 hours. This would commence on the same date as the trial but be a permanent change; and
5. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with the Head of Financial Services / S151 Officer, the Deputy Leader (Statutory) –

Finance and Asset Management and the Cabinet Member for Health and Transport to make amendments to the trial based on a review of the trial feedback and income generated and continue the trial beyond the initial six month period for a further six months if needed.

34. Additional loan finance to Oxford West End Developments (OxWED LLP)

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to seek an in-year budget increase to allow Oxford City Council to lend Oxford West End Developments (OxWED) LLP up to £600,000 to support the redevelopment of Oxpens.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery presented the report and clarified that the funding would be by way of a loan, on which interest would be payable.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Recommend to Council** that it increases the capital budget by £600,000 to allow the City Council to loan Oxford West End Developments (OxWED) LLP these funds;
2. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Financial Services / S151 Officer in consultation with the Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Finance and Asset Management to agree terms and draw down the up to £600,000 loan to OxWED.

35. Appointments to Outside Bodies 2022/23

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report to agree appointments to outside bodies for the 2022/23 Council year.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** appointments to charities, trusts, community associations and other organisations as shown in Appendices 1A – 1D and note the appointments to partnerships as detailed in Appendix 1E;
2. **Note** the guidance for appointees as detailed in Appendix 2;
3. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and where appropriate other group leaders, to make any changes to appointments to Outside Bodies as may be required during the course of the Council year 2022 – 2023.

36. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2022 as a true and accurate record.

37. Dates of Future Meetings

10 August 2022

14 September 2022

19 October 2022

16 November 2022

14 December 2022

All meetings start at 6.00pm

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.42 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 10 August 2022

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

*Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal
decision notice is issued*

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.