

# Minutes of a meeting of Council on Thursday 16 February 2023

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## Council members present:

Councillor Fry (Lord Mayor)	Councillor Lygo (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillor Rowley (Sheriff)	Councillor Altaf-Khan
Councillor Chapman	Councillor Clarkson
Councillor Coyne	Councillor Diggins
Councillor Djafari-Marbini	Councillor Dunne
Councillor Fouweather	Councillor Gant
Councillor Goddard	Councillor Hall
Councillor Hollingsworth	Councillor Humberstone
Councillor Hunt	Councillor Jarvis
Councillor Kerr	Councillor Malik
Councillor Morris	Councillor Muddiman
Councillor Mundy	Councillor Munkonge
Councillor Pegg	Councillor Pressel
Councillor Railton	Councillor Rawle
Councillor Rehman	Councillor Sandelson
Councillor Linda Smith	Councillor Smowton
Councillor Thomas	Councillor Turner
Councillor Upton	Councillor Waite
Councillor Walcott	

## Also present for all or part of the meeting:

Caroline Green, Chief Executive  
Susan Sale, Monitoring Officer and Head of Law and Governance  
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services  
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy  
Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)  
Stephen Gabriel, Executive Director (Communities and People)  
Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)  
Alice Courtney, Committee and Member Services Manager (Interim Acting)  
Lucy Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

## **Apologies:**

Councillors Arshad, Aziz, Brown, Corais, Hayes, Miles, Nala-Hartley and Roz Smith sent apologies.

The minutes show when Councillors who were absent for part of the meeting arrived and left.

## **87. Declarations of interest**

Cllr Malik declared that the decisions at agenda item 6 related to Licensing fees and charges for 2023/24 affected his declared disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI) and he would leave the meeting and take no part in the debate on this item.

## **88. Announcements**

None.

## **89. Budget debate procedure**

Council noted the procedure and times permitted for each stage in the budget debate.

## **90. Public addresses and questions that relate to matters for decision at this meeting**

There were no addresses or questions.

## **91. General Purposes Licensing and Licensing and Gambling Acts Committees - recommendations on fees and charges 2023/24**

*Cllr Malik having declared this item related to his disclosable pecuniary interest, left the meeting for the duration of this item and returned to the meeting at the start of the next item.*

Council considered the Licensing & Gambling Acts and General Purposes Licensing Committees' recommendations to approve fees and charges for the licensing functions falling within their remits as set out in agenda items 6a, 6b and 6c and repeated in the budget papers at item 9 Appendix 7. It was noted that the papers for items 6a and 6c had been transposed within the agenda pack.

Cllr Mundy, Chair of the General Purposes Licensing Committee moved the recommendation, noting the additional recommendation 2 below, as agreed by the GPL Committee. Cllr Clarkson, Chair of the Licensing & Gambling Acts Committee, seconded the recommendations from the two committees.

On being put to the vote these were agreed.

### **Council resolved to:**

- **Agree** the relevant licence fees and charges for 2023/24 as set out in Items 6a and 6b (and repeated in the relevant sections of Item 9, Appendix 7).

- **Agree** the relevant licence fees and charges for 2023/24 set out in Item 6c as amended, to include a new discounted fee of £62 for Private Hire Vehicles that are Low Emission and Wheelchair Accessible.

## **92. Report of the Council's Chief Finance Officer on the robustness of the 2023/24 budget**

*Cllr Humberstone joined the meeting.*

Council considered a report from the Head of Financial Services, as required under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations of the budget and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. The Head of Financial Services advised that scrutiny of the budget had been undertaken by the Finance Team, Directors and the Chief Executive, Cabinet Members and the Scrutiny Committee's Budget Review Group, and the figures presented were an estimate of factors at a specific time and therefore liable to change. He highlighted the uncertainty around key income streams, such as car parking and rents, and advised that the level of reserves were currently adequate to support the Council over the next four years.

Council **noted** the report in setting the Council budget for 2023/24 and the indicative budgets for 2024/25 – 2026/27.

## **93. Report of the Scrutiny Budget Review Group**

Council considered the report and recommendations of the Budget Review Group of the Scrutiny Committee to the Cabinet meeting on 08 February 2023 and the Cabinet's response.

Cllr Fry, Chair of the Scrutiny Budget Review Group, advised that all but one of the recommendations had been agreed. He thanked all the officers involved in the budget scrutiny process.

Cllr Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, thanked the panel for its work.

Council resolved to **note** the report and Cabinet's responses to the recommendations.

## **94. Budget 2023/24**

Council had before it and considered:

- The report of the Head of Finance to Cabinet on 08 February 2023 setting out the outcome of the budget consultation and seeking agreement of the Council's Budget for 2023/24 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2024/25 to 2026/27.
- Cabinet's recommendations as set out in the minutes of its meeting on 08 February 2023.
- The Liberal Democrat group's submitted amendments published with the briefing note.
- The Green group's submitted amendments published with the briefing note.

- An individual amendment proposed by Cllr Pegg published with the briefing note. Cllr Turner, seconded by Cllr Munkonge, proposed agreement of the Budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the recommendations from Cabinet.

**a) Additional recommendations from Cabinet and corrections to the published budget**

There were no additional recommendations or corrections.

**b) Alternative budget proposals - Liberal Democrat Group amendments**

*Cllr Pressel left the meeting and did not return.*

*Cllrs Djafari-Marbini and Dunne joined the meeting.*

Cllr Snowton, seconded by Cllr Fouweather, moved the Liberal Democrat group amendments. Following debate, these were put to the vote.

With more Councillors voting against (24) than for (6), and 6 abstentions the Liberal Democrat amendments were not carried.

**c) Alternative budget proposals - Green Group amendments**

Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Kerr, moved the Green group amendments.

Following debate, these were put to the vote.

With more Councillors voting against (24) than for (12), the Green group amendments were not carried.

*The meeting broke for 30 minutes at the conclusion of this item.*

**d) Individual amendments to the budget**

Cllr Pegg, seconded by Cllr Rawle, moved the individual amendment.

After debate, this was put to the vote.

With more Councillors voting against (24) than for (6) and 6 abstentions, the individual amendment was not carried.

**e) Decision on the Cabinet Budget**

Following debate, the recommendations of the Cabinet as agreed at its meeting on 08 February 2023 including the details of the budget for 2023/24, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Housing Revenue Account, Capital Programme and other matters set out in the published agenda and briefing note for this meeting were put to the vote.

In accordance with legislative requirements, a recorded vote was then taken:

***For the Cabinet recommendations to Council as set out in the minutes of that meeting:***

*Councillors Fry, Lygo, Rowley, Chapman, Clarkson, Coyne, Diggins, Djafari-Marbini, Dunne, Hall, Hollingsworth, Humberstone, Hunt, Malik, Mundy, Munkonge, Railton, Rehman, Linda Smith, Thomas, Turner, Upton, Waite, Walcott (24)*

***Against the Cabinet recommendations to Council:***

*None (0)*

***Abstentions:***

*Councillors Altaf-Khan, Fouweather, Gant, Goddard, Jarvis, Kerr, Morris, Muddiman, Pegg, Rawle, Sandelson, Snowton (12)*

With more Councillors voting for than against, the resolution to approve the Cabinet recommendations was carried.

**Council resolved in accordance with the recorded vote to:**

1. **Approve** the 2023-24 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets and the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-9, noting:
  - a) the Council's General Fund Budget Requirement of £24.793 million for 2023/24 and an increase in the Band D Council Tax of 2.99% or £9.76 per annum representing a Band D Council Tax of £336.31 per annum;
  - b) the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2023/24 of £51.572 million and an increase of 7% (£7.51 per week) in social dwelling rents from 1 April 2023 giving a revised weekly average social rent of £114.73 as set out in Appendix 5;
  - c) shared ownership dwellings are increased in line with those of other social rents as discussed in paragraph 39 of the report;
  - d) the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme as shown in Appendix 6;
2. **Agree** the fees and charges shown in Appendix 7, subject to the amendment agreed at agenda item 6;
3. **Delegate** to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management, the decision to determine whether it is financially advantageous for the Council to enter into a Business Rates Distribution Agreement as referred to in paragraphs 20-22 of the report;
4. **Approve** the payment into the County Council Pension Fund of £5 million in 2023-24 as referred to in paragraph 28 of the report;
5. **Implement** the changes to Council Tax charges in respect of second homes and properties empty for more than one year as referred to in paragraphs 23-25 from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 when the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is enacted;
6. **Note** the application of the Council Tax Support Fund allocation as referred to in paragraphs 11-14 of the report.

## **95. Council Tax 2023/24**

Council considered the report of the Head of Financial Services setting out the necessary calculations to enable Council to set the 2023/24 Council Tax for Oxford City.

Cllr Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, proposed and Cllr Munkonge seconded the recommendations in the report.

In accordance with legislative requirements, a recorded vote was then taken:

***For the resolution set out below:***

*Councillors Fry, Lygo, Rowley, Altaf-Khan, Chapman, Clarkson, Coyne, Diggins, Djafari-Marbini, Dunne, Fouweather, Gant, Goddard, Hall, Hollingsworth, Humberstone, Hunt, Jarvis, Kerr, Malik, Morris, Muddiman, Mundy, Munkonge, Pegg, Railton, Rawle, Rehman, Sandelson, Linda Smith, Smowton, Thomas, Turner, Upton, Waite, Walcott (36)*

**Against the resolution:**

*None (0)*

**Abstentions:**

*None (0)*

With all Councillors present voting for, the resolution was carried.

**Council resolved in accordance with the reported vote to approve for the financial year 2023/24 recommendations 1 to 5 and to note points 6 to 8:**

1. The City Council's precept and Council Tax requirement of £15,682,423 including Parish precepts and £15,415,353 excluding Parish precepts.
2. The average Band D Council Tax figure (excluding Parish Precepts) of £336.30, a 2.99% increase on the 2022/23 figure of £326.54. Including Parish Precepts the figure is £342.13, a 2.88% increase (see paragraphs 2 to 8).
3. A contribution of £10,000 to Old Marston Parish Council in recognition of the additional expenditure that the Parish incurs as a consequence of maintaining the cemetery (see paragraphs 11 and 12).
4. The amount of £666,093 to be treated as Special Expenses (see paragraph 16).
5. The Band D Council Taxes for the various areas of the City (excluding the Police and County Council's precepts) as follows:

Littlemore £367.52

Old Marston £369.96

Risinghurst and Sandhills £359.59

Blackbird Leys £341.16

Unparished Area £339.20

These figures include Parish Precepts and special expensing amounts as appropriate; in addition to the City Wide Council Tax of £321.77.

Council noted:

6. Oxfordshire County Council's precept and Band D Council Tax as set out in paragraph 19 of the report
7. The Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley's precept and Band D Council Tax as set out in paragraph 20 of the report, and
8. The overall average Band D equivalent Council Tax of £2,332.44 including Parish Precepts (subject to confirmation of the Band D figures for the County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner).

## **96. Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24**

Council considered the report of the Head of Financial Services, submitted to Cabinet on 08 February 2023, presenting the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 together with the Prudential Indicators for 2023/24 to 2026/27.

Cllr Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, presented the report and moved the recommendations, highlighting the minor typo in recommendation 2 of the report which should read 2023/24, rather than 2023/23. The amended recommendations were agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

### **Council resolved to approve:**

1. The Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24 as set out in paragraphs 29 to 78 of this report and the Prudential Indicators for 2023/24 – 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 2;
2. The Borrowing Strategy 2023/24 at paragraphs 52 to 54 of this report;
3. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement at paragraphs 55 to 57 which sets out the Council's policy on charging borrowing to the revenue account;
4. The Investment Strategy for 2023/24 and the investment criteria as set out in paragraphs 58 to 77 of this report and in Appendix 1; and
5. The Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation at Appendix 4.

*Cllr Hall left the meeting and did not return.*

## **97. Capital Strategy 2023-24 to 2026-27**

Council considered the report of the Head of Financial Services, submitted to Cabinet on 08 February 2023, presenting the Capital Strategy for 2023/24 – 2026/27 for approval.

Cllr Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, presented the report and moved the recommendations, which were agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

### **Council resolved to approve the Capital Strategy for 2023/24 to 2026/27.**

## **98. Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel and Draft Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2023-2027**

Council considered the report from the Head of Law and Governance which presented the recommendations of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) and a Draft Councillors' Allowances Scheme for 2023-2027.

Cllr Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, presented the report and moved the recommendations in the Leader's absence. The recommendations were agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

### **Council resolved to:**

1. **Thank** the Independent Remuneration Panel for its work.

2. **Agree** to include in the Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2023-27 the following provisions from the Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2019- 23, as recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel:

a) The following Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs):

i. Leader - 3 x basic allowance

ii. Deputy Leader – 1 x basic allowance

iii. Non-statutory Deputy Leader - 1 x basic allowance

iv. Lord Mayor –1 x Basic Allowance

v. Deputy Lord Mayor – 0.25 x basic allowance

vi. Sheriff - 0.25 x Basic Allowance

vii. Cabinet Members with particular responsibilities – 1.5 x basic allowance

viii. Chair of Scrutiny Committee – 1x basic allowance

ix. Chair of Audit & Governance Committee – 0.25 x basic allowance

x. Chair of a Planning Committee – 0.5 x basic allowance

xi. Leader of an opposition group – 1 x basic allowance with the additional clarification set out in paragraph 11

xii. Chair of Scrutiny Standing Panel – 0.25 x basic allowance (Maximum of 2 Standing Panel SRAs available. Panel must meet at least 5 times to qualify. If more Standing Panels are set up then 0.5 x basic allowance to be divided between the Panel Chairs)

b) The rule that councillors will receive a maximum of two special responsibility allowances (excluding civic office holders);

c) The rule that where a member of the Council is also a member of another council, that councillor may not receive allowances from more than one council in respect of the same duties;

d) The rule that a 15% reduction to a special responsibility allowance will be applied for councillors who attend less than two thirds of the scheduled meetings required within a special responsibility

e) The ability for councillors to elect to forgo any part of their entitlement to an allowance;

f) The rule that where allowances have been paid in advance for a period during which a councillor is no longer a councillor, those allowances should be repaid;

g) Allowances for maternity or adoption leave, with the extension to entitlement set out at paragraph 14;



- h) Allowances for travel to be paid for travel outside the City of Oxford boundary with the prior agreement of the Head of Law and Governance, with the additional reference to promoting green and public transport set out at paragraph 16;
- i) Reasonable adjustments for councillors with a temporary or permanent disability;
- j) The rule that all claims for repayment must be made on the forms provided and should be accompanied by receipts/invoices as appropriate before payment can be authorised;
3. **Agree** to increase the basic allowance to £5,471 for 2023/24, in line with the IRP proposal to increase the basic allowance by 4.5% in 2023/24.
  4. **Agree** to the indexation of the basic allowance to the local pay settlement for local government employees from 2024/25 onwards.
  5. **Agree** that the special responsibility allowance for 'Cabinet Member without particular responsibilities' be removed.
  6. **Agree** to include in the Scheme provision for allowances for co-opted members and Independent Persons at the rate of £75 for up to 4 hours and £150 for more than 4 hours but less than 24 hours in respect of any Committee, Sub-Committee or Panel meeting attendance of which they are a member.
  7. **Agree** to increase the maximum amount that any Member can claim for child and other dependants' care in any one financial year to £1,306 for 2023/24.
  8. **Agree** to increase the maximum amount that any Member can claim for child and other dependants' care in any one financial year in line with the rate of increase in the Oxford Living Wage.
  9. **Agree** to include the provision that 'Members' personal circumstances, including health, will be taken into account by the Head of Law & Governance in consultation with the Committee & Member Services Manager before any allowance reduction is applied' in respect of allowance reductions.
  10. **Agree** that councillors will forgo part of their future allowance payments in the following circumstances:
    - a. A 15% reduction to the basic allowance will be applied for:
      - i. Members who fail to attend more than four meetings of Full Council in any municipal year except when a serious medical condition is the reason for absence;
      - ii. Members who fail to attend the induction training for newly elected councillors. A newly elected Councillor is any Councillor who was not holding City Council office before the election in question.
    - b. A 10% reduction to the basic allowance will be applied for:

- i. Members who fail to attend compulsory planning and development control training (held every two years).
- ii. Members who fail to attend compulsory code of conduct training (held annually).
- iii. Members who are appointed to a Licensing Committee who fail to attend the compulsory licensing training (held annually).

11. **Adopt** the Draft Councillors' Allowances Scheme 2023-27 attached at Appendix B.

**The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 7.55 pm**

**Lord Mayor .....**

**Date: Monday 20 March 2023**

*Decisions on items of business take effect immediately:*

*Motions may be implemented immediately or may require further budget provision and/or reports to Cabinet before implementation.*

*Details are in the Council's Constitution.*