

Agenda

Cabinet

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Wednesday 19 April 2023**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Long Room - Oxford Town Hall**

For further information please contact:

Emma Lund, Committee and Member Services Officer

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Members of the public can attend to observe this meeting and:

- may submit a question about any item for decision at the meeting in accordance with the [Cabinet's rules](#)
- may record all or part of the meeting in accordance with the Council's [protocol](#)

Details of how City Councillors and members of the public may engage with this meeting are set out later in the agenda. Information about recording is set out later in the agenda and on the [website](#)

Please contact the Committee Services Officer to submit a question; to discuss recording the meeting; or with any other queries.

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All public papers are available from the calendar link to this meeting once published

Cabinet Members

Councillor Susan Brown	Leader, Inclusive Economy and Partnerships
Councillor Ed Turner	Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management
Councillor Shaista Aziz	Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture
Councillor Nigel Chapman	Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services
Councillor Alex Hollingsworth	Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery
Councillor Chewe Munkonge	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks
Councillor Anna Railton	Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice
Councillor Linda Smith	Cabinet Member for Housing
Councillor Louise Upton	Cabinet Member for Health and Transport
Councillor Diko Walcott	Cabinet Member for Safer Communities

Apologies received before the publication are shown under *Apologies for absence* in the agenda. Those sent after publication will be reported at the meeting.

Decisions come into effect after the latest of the expiry of the post-meeting councillor call in period; reconsideration of a called-in decision; or Council's agreement of recommendations.

Oxford City Council, Town Hall, St Aldate's Oxford OX1 1BX

Agenda

Items to be considered at this meeting in open session (part 1) and in confidential session (part 2).

Future items to be discussed by the Cabinet can be found on the Forward Plan which is available on the Council's [website](#) .

	Pages
1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Declarations of Interest	
3 Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public	
4 Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda	
5 Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues	
6 Items raised by Cabinet Members	
7 Scrutiny reports	
There are no scrutiny recommendations to be reported to this meeting.	
8 Local Authority Housing Fund	9 - 36
Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Linda Smith)	
The Executive Director (Communities & People) has submitted a report to seek project approval and delegations to enable the Council to proceed with entering into the national Local Authority Housing Fund and make available the required budget provision.	
Cabinet is recommended to:	
1. Approve the Council becoming part of the Local Authority Housing Fund in order to deliver 6 new affordable homes;	
2. Recommend to Council the allocation of £2,330,320 capital budget from the Housing Revenue Account for the Council's investment to purchase the properties as part of Local Authority Housing Fund; and	
3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director (Communities and People) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing; the	

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Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer; and the Head of Law and Governance/Monitoring Officer, to enter into agreements and contracts to facilitate the purchase by the Council of housing (to be held in the HRA) within the identified budget and within the project approval.

9 Decisions taken under Part 9.3(b) of the Constitution

37 - 40

Lead Member: Leader - Inclusive Economy and Partnerships
(Councillor Susan Brown)

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

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. **Note** the decision taken as set out in the report.

10 Minutes

41 - 50

Recommendation: That Cabinet resolves to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023 as a true and accurate record.

11 Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

14 June 2023

12 July 2023

9 August 2023

13 September 2023

18 October 2023

15 November 2023

All meetings start at 6.00pm.

Matters Exempt from Publication

If Cabinet wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting

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during consideration of any of the items on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for Cabinet to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cabinet may maintain the exemption if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Part Two – matters exempt from publication

12 Local Authority Housing Fund - Appendix 3

51 - 60

Decisions come into effect after the latest of the expiry of the post-meeting councillor call in period; reconsideration of a called-in decision; or Council's agreement of recommendations.

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Information for those attending

Recording and reporting on meetings held in public

Members of public and press can record, or report in other ways, the parts of the meeting open to the public. You are not required to indicate in advance but it helps if you notify the Committee Services Officer prior to the meeting so that they can inform the Chair and direct you to the best place to record.

The Council asks those recording the meeting:

- To follow the protocol which can be found on the Council's [website](#)
- Not to disturb or disrupt the meeting
- Not to edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes not editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show a lack of respect towards those being recorded.
- To avoid recording members of the public present, even inadvertently, unless they are addressing the meeting.

Please be aware that you may be recorded during your speech and any follow-up. If you are attending please be aware that recording may take place and that you may be inadvertently included in these.

The Chair of the meeting has absolute discretion to suspend or terminate any activities that in his or her opinion are disruptive.

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your* employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". The matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

Members' Code – Other Registrable Interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing** of one of your Other Registrable Interests*** then you must declare an

interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code – Non Registrable Interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which ***directly relates*** to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests, then you must declare the interest.

You must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room, if you answer in the affirmative to this test:

“Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.”

Otherwise, you may stay in the room, take part in the discussion and vote.

*Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

** Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

*** Other Registrable Interests: a) any unpaid directorships b) any Body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority c) any Body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

How Oxford City Councillors and members of the public can engage at Cabinet

Addresses and questions by members of the public (15 minutes in total)

Members of the public can submit questions in writing about any item for decision at the meeting. Questions, stating the relevant agenda item, must be received by the Head of Law and Governance by 9.30am two working days before the meeting (eg for a Tuesday meeting, the deadline would be 9.30am on the Friday before). Questions can be submitted either by letter or by email (to cabinet@oxford.gov.uk).

Answers to the questions will be provided in writing at the meeting; supplementary questions will not be allowed. If it is not possible to provide an answer at the meeting it will be included in the minutes that are published on the Council's website within 2 working days of the meeting.

The Chair has discretion in exceptional circumstances to agree that a submitted question or related statement (dealing with matters that appear on the agenda) can be asked verbally at the meeting. In these cases, the question and/or address is limited to 3 minutes, and will be answered verbally by the Chair or another Cabinet member or an officer of the Council. The text of any proposed address must be submitted within the same timescale as questions.

For this agenda item the Chair's decision is final.

Councillors speaking at meetings

Oxford City councillors may, when the chair agrees, address the Cabinet on an item for decision on the agenda (other than on the minutes). The member seeking to make an address must notify the Head of Law and Governance by 9.30am at least one working day before the meeting, stating the relevant agenda items. An address may last for no more than three minutes. If an address is made, the Cabinet member who has political responsibility for the item for decision may respond or the Cabinet will have regard to the points raised in reaching its decision.

Councillors speaking on Neighbourhood issues (10 minutes in total)

Any City Councillor can raise local issues on behalf of communities directly with the Cabinet. The member seeking to make an address must notify the Head of Law and Governance by 9.30am at least one working day before the meeting, giving outline details of the issue. Priority will be given to those members who have not already addressed the Cabinet within the year and in the order received. Issues can only be raised once unless otherwise agreed by the Cabinet. The Cabinet's responsibility will be to hear the issue and respond at the meeting, if possible, or arrange a written response within 10 working days.

Items raised by Cabinet members

Such items must be submitted within the same timescale as questions and will be for discussion only and not for a Cabinet decision. Any item which requires a decision of the Cabinet will be the subject of a report to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

To: Cabinet
Date: 19 April 2023
Report of: Executive Director (Communities and People)
Title of Report: Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	The report seeks project approval and delegations to enable the Council to proceed with entering into the national Local Authority Housing Fund, and make available the required budget provision.
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
Corporate Priority:	Deliver more affordable housing and support thriving communities
Policy Framework:	Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 – 2028

Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the Council becoming part of the Local Authority Housing Fund in order to deliver 6 new affordable homes; 2. Recommend to Council, the allocation of £2,330,320 capital budget from the Housing Revenue Account, for the Council's investment to purchase the properties as part of Local Authority Housing Fund; 3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director (Communities and People) in consultation with; the Cabinet Member for Housing; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer; and the Head of Law and Governance/Monitoring Officer, to enter into agreements and contracts to facilitate the purchase by the Council of housing (to be held in the HRA) within the identified budget and within the project approval.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Local Housing Authority Fund Prospectus and Guidance
Appendix 2	Risk Register
Appendix 3 (Confidential)	Memorandum of Understanding

Introduction

1. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC) has launched a national £500m Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) to support local authorities in providing accommodation to Ukrainian and Afghan families settled in the UK legally under various government schemes following the respective conflicts that have occurred in their countries.
2. Oxford City Council has been identified as a Council in scope for this funding and was recently successful in a proposal to DLUHC to purchase 6 properties. As a condition of the fund, Local Authorities will need to meet part of the funding to purchase the properties, with the rest provided as grant from the fund.
3. The Local Authority Housing Fund will help the Council achieve its corporate priorities, to *deliver more affordable housing and support thriving communities*, and allow us to access funding to both address the immediate pressures of supporting refugee communities to find permanent accommodation, as well as adding to our stock of council housing for the future.
4. This report seeks Cabinet approval to join the LAHF and to recommend to Council approval of the necessary capital budget to purchase the homes, and the necessary delegated powers to complete the acquisitions.

Background to Local Authority Housing Fund

5. The UK has welcomed over 150,000 people from Ukraine through the Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine Scheme since the start of the war. In Oxford City, under the Homes for Ukraine scheme alone, there are approximately 400 guests across approximately 210 addresses including a large number of children (numbers as of March 2023).
6. These efforts come after welcoming around 23,000 Afghans nationally, of whom c. 9,200 are living in bridging hotel accommodation. Locally, Oxford City Council has supported 45 families under other refugee resettlements from Syria, Afghanistan and other countries and in doing so successfully making Oxford their home.
7. As the war in Ukraine continues and households continue to settle, there is a growing need to increase the housing options available. There is also need to support larger Afghan families in the bridging hotels to find settled family homes to move to.
8. Ensuring housing options for refugees moving to the City is aligned to the Council's broader goals of increasing affordable housing options for all those in housing need in Oxford. Refugee households face the same challenges as the broader

population of the City, with an expensive private rented sector and high demand for social housing with long waits for offers. As outlined in the Council's new Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy the Council has plans to tackle these challenges, and as part of this tailored plans for housing refugees.

9. Access into the private rented sector will be the most important option for many refugee households. Work across Oxfordshire is underway to support access into the sector with support with deposits and rent in advance, but the opportunity from LAHF is that it will allow the Council to purchase 6 properties to offer as affordable social housing for Ukrainian and Afghan refugees.

Local Authority Housing Fund investment

10. The Government announced the creation of the LAHF fund at the end of the last year. The objectives of the fund are to support areas with housing pressures which have welcomed substantial numbers of Ukrainian and Afghan refugees. This is so these areas are not disadvantaged by increased pressures from these arrivals on the existing housing and homelessness systems. It will also help to mitigate the expected increased pressures on local authority resources which arise from the eligible household's sponsorship/family placements/bridging accommodation arrangements come to an end, by increasing the provision of affordable housing available to support these groups.
11. Therefore the fund will help to reduce emergency, temporary and bridging accommodation costs. The fund also brings the benefit that once the household chooses to move on from the accommodation, the unit will return to the Council's housing stock for re-letting open to anyone in general need, so able to meet wider housing need into the future.
12. Following the invite to put forward a bid, the Council entered talks with DLUHC and drew up plans for what could be delivered. All properties delivered through the fund have to be exchanged on by 'best endeavours' November 2023 due to DLUHC funding conditions, and therefore officers have developed a plan that can be delivered by this pressing deadline. DLUHC is committed to funding any contract the Council enters into by November 2023, even if completion occurs after this date.
13. This has resulted in an agreed bid for 6 properties to be acquired from the local housing market. 5 of these properties will be 2-3 bedroom properties for Ukrainian households, and 1 property will be a 4+ bedroom and be used to house an Afghan family from a bridging hotel. All properties will be let on a social rent as a lifetime secure tenancy. DLUHC have approved this proposal and agreed to release funds, subject to the Council making the necessary part investment and meeting the terms of the fund.
14. As with other affordable housing provision, there is a requirement for Local Authorities or other registered provider to part finance a portion of the required capital. For the 'main element' housing (made up of the 5 units for our bid), government funding equates to 40% of total capital costs plus £20,000 per property. For 'bridging element' housing (the one property in our bid), government funding equates to 50% of total capital costs plus £20,000 per property. The Council's proposed investment will come from the Housing Revenue Account.

Options available

15. Recommendation - Oxford City Council to agree to join the fund and make budget provision so it can purchase 6 properties. This is the number of properties that can be acquired based on modelling from previous HRA acquisition programmes, data around available stock on the open market, conveyancing & refurbishment timeframes and that can meet the DLUHC deadline to deliver the properties by November 2023. They will be used to support eligible Ukrainian and Afghan households, as well as delivering a long-term investment for Oxford City Council that will help realise its corporate objective to deliver more affordable housing and support thriving communities.
16. Do nothing – Under this option, the Council would not accept the grant funding that has been made available and therefore not be able to purchase additional properties for the eligible cohort with substantial contribution by the government. Therefore, under the ‘do nothing’ option, the potential benefits referenced in this report will not be realised. The Council will need to consider other accommodation offers to support refugee groups.

Environmental

17. There are few environmental considerations arising directly from this report. Any property purchased into the HRA will comply with the Decent Homes Standard, Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and be of an EPC rating of C or above. If the EPC is not reached then it will result in an investment to ensure EPC C or above that would have a positive environmental impact.

Financial implications

18. As a requirement of the fund the Council is required to part fund or finance some of the required capital. For the 5 “main element” homes, 40% of capital costs are covered by grant, plus £20,000 per property. For the single “Bridging element” property, 50% of capital costs are covered by grant, plus £20,000 per property. This means the Council is forecast to invest up to a total of £2,330,320 on the purchase of the 6 properties, with £1,221,700 being funded from HRA borrowing, and the rest covered by grant of £1,108,620.
19. Payments from our grant allocation are due to be transferred as per the DLUHC payment schedule, and while profiled over 22/23 and 23/24 financial year by DLUHC (see Table 1 which details the grant allocation), in practice all completions will be made in 23/24. See Table 2 for the borrowing required.
20. As a prerequisite to enter into the fund, Council Officers were required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with DLUHC by the deadline of 15th March 2023, a copy of which can be found in appendix 3. This is a commercially sensitive document and as such is confidential and marked not for publication.
21. Financial modelling has been completed by the Council on the impact of schemes on the Individual Interest Cover Ratio and overall impact on the Housing Revenue Account. The impact of the bid on the HRA is positive due to the Council gaining more income from the rents from having these properties than lost in the interest charges on the debt to purchase them. They collectively achieve an initial ICR rating of the interim 1.10 minimum which will increase over time and has an overall negligible impact on the HRA.

22. All of the units purchased will need to meet decorative order standards confirmed by the property team. A budget has been set for all six properties to allow for identified refurbishment works contracted through ODS prior to the unit being ready to let in order to meet HRA standards. Whilst this may lead to increased voids work for ODS, we will seek to manage any operational impact. The Council will take steps to ensure all properties purchased are of a standard that would not require levels of investment beyond the budgeted envelope for the programme.

Table 1

	Year 1 allocation (22/23)	Year 2 allocation (23/24)	Total allocation
Properties for households that meet the eligibility criteria for this Programme	£231,000	£539,000	£770,000
4+ bed properties for households currently in bridging accommodation	£101,586	£237,034	£338,620
Total grant funding	£332,586	£776,034	£1,108,620

Table 2

Bids	LA Housing Fund		
	Main	Bridging	Total
No. of Units	5	1	6
Total Cost	1,711,080	619,240	2,330,320
Borrowing Required	930,300	291,400	1,221,700

Legal issues

23. The agreement with DLUHC is clear it does not create any legal or binding obligations on the Council. If we were to fail to acquire the properties by November 2023 for reasons such as market conditions, the only consequence we would face is to risk losing the grant funding.
24. Increased acquisitions from the open market will require conveyancing. If we are to continue to do this in-house at the Council additional burden will be placed on Legal Services, which has been made aware of this pressure.

Level of risk

25. See risk register at Appendix 2.

Equalities impact

26. The LAHF and proposal to purchase 6 homes is aligned to and forms part of the effort to deliver the Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which has been subject to a full equality impact assessment. There are no adverse impacts in undertaking this activity, with the potential to improve provision for persons in housing need through the provision of more affordable housing to better meet client needs.

Report author	Stephen Cohen
Job title	Refugee and Resettlement Manager
Service area or department	Housing Services
Telephone	01865 252569
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Background Papers: None

Appendix 1



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Local Authority Housing Fund

Prospectus and Guidance

December 2022

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

1. Introduction

Earlier this year the United Kingdom took the historic decision to welcome tens of thousands of Ukrainians fleeing the invasion of their homeland. Since then, and thanks to the generosity of the British public, more than 150,000 Ukrainians have been welcomed into homes and communities under the Homes for Ukraine and Ukraine Family schemes. We have also welcomed around 23,000 Afghans who worked alongside the UK Government and risked their lives alongside our Armed Forces, as well as people who assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan.

Local authorities play a vital and integral role in welcoming and integrating recent visa-scheme arrivals to the UK. It is thanks to the hard work of so many in local government, and the wider public sector, across all parts of our country that we have been able to welcome so many people to safety. The Government is introducing further support to help our guests from Ukraine and those who arrived from Afghanistan to find their feet, including local help to find suitable private rented accommodation; assistance via the Department of Work and Pensions to access benefits, skills training and gain employment; and signposting and access to charities and mental health providers. This is backed up by the tariff that authorities receive for each Homes for Ukraine guest arriving in their area; the Afghan Resettlement Schemes to support integration; and additional funding specifically for education and healthcare in the first year of arrival on the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

To assist local authorities further, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) is introducing a £500 million capital fund – the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) – for local authorities in England to provide accommodation to families with housing needs who have arrived in the UK via Ukrainian and Afghan resettlement and relocation schemes. Local authorities who have welcomed arrivals are facing challenges in securing settled accommodation for these households, which unless alleviated will further impact existing housing pressures. LAHF will help them to address these immediate pressures as well as build a sustainable stock of affordable housing for the future.

This prospectus sets out the objectives for the fund, what local authorities can spend the grant on, defines the cohort eligible, and the process we will follow for allocating grants to local authorities.

2. Purpose of the fund

The Local Authority Housing Fund is a £500m capital grant fund in financial years 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 to support selected local authorities in England to obtain and refurbish property in order to provide sustainable housing for those unable to secure their own accommodation who are here under the following schemes: Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) (collectively referred to as the Afghan Schemes), Ukraine Family Scheme, the Homes for Ukraine and the Ukraine Extension Scheme (collectively referred to as Ukraine schemes). A full definition of the eligible cohort is at section 3.2.

As well as helping to fulfil the UK's humanitarian duties to assist those fleeing war, this fund will reduce the impact of new arrivals on existing housing pressures and ultimately create a lasting legacy for domestic households by providing a new and permanent supply of accommodation for local authorities to help address local housing and homelessness pressures. We expect up to 4,000 properties would be provided through this fund.

Local authorities will be allocated capital funding under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 on the basis of a formula. Delivery targets will be based upon this funding allocation, estimated by a blended grant per property model. Local authorities will determine the most effective means to deliver the fund objectives in their area.

The grants will be non-ringfenced and we will sign Memoranda of Understanding with all local authorities receiving funding to set out our shared expectations for how the fund should be delivered.

Local authorities in scope of the funding formula for this fund will be contacted with their indicative allocation and asked to return a proposal on how they would deliver this accommodation in line with fund objectives outlined below.

2.1 Fund Objectives

The fund aims to alleviate housing pressures on local authorities arising from recent and unforeseen conflicts in Afghanistan and Ukraine. As part of this government's humanitarian response to these crises, we have welcomed over 170,000 people to the United Kingdom. This act of generosity has unavoidably created additional demand for housing at a time when local authorities are already under strain.

The objectives of the fund are to:

- Ensure recent humanitarian schemes (Afghan and Ukraine schemes) which offer sanctuary, via an organised safe and legal entry route, to those fleeing conflict, provide sufficient longer term accommodation to those they support.
- Support areas with housing pressures which have generously welcomed substantial numbers of Ukrainian refugees so that these areas are not disadvantaged by increased pressures from these arrivals on the existing housing and homelessness systems.
- Mitigate the expected increased pressures on local authority homelessness and social housing resources which arise from the eligible cohort (as defined at section 3.2 of the fund's prospectus) as sponsorship/family placements/bridging accommodation arrangements come to an end by increasing the provision of affordable housing available to local authorities to support those in the cohort who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or in bridging accommodation;
- Reduce emergency, temporary and bridging accommodation costs;

- Deliver accommodation that as far as possible allows for the future conversion of housing units to support wider local authority housing and homelessness responsibilities to UK nationals (i.e. after usage by this cohort ends);
- Utilise accommodation solutions to enable effective resettlement and economic integration of the eligible cohort.
- Reduce impacts on the existing housing and homelessness systems and those waiting for social housing.

3. What the funding can be used for

Within the framework of the purpose and objectives of the fund set out above, we want to provide local authorities with as much flexibility as possible to shape local delivery according to circumstances in each area. The guidance provided in this document is intended to support this. Local authorities will need to be satisfied that their specific plans are lawful and deliverable.

This fund will pay capital funding in two tranches, to be spent in financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24. Local authorities cannot combine this fund with the Affordable Homes Programme or Right to Buy receipts. There is no revenue funding available. Local authorities will have their own processes in place to determine the accounting treatment of revenue costs directly attributable to capital works. It is for local authorities to determine whether it is appropriate to capitalise any revenue costs and their accounting teams should ensure that the accounting treatment adopted is deemed compliant with the code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting.

The basic model assumes stock acquisition. In practice this could include, but is not limited to:

- Refurbishing and/or converting local authority-owned residential or non-residential buildings, including defunct sheltered accommodation;
- Acquiring, refurbishing and/or converting non-local authority owned residential or non-residential buildings, including bringing empty or dilapidated properties back into use;
- Acquiring new build properties 'off-the-shelf', including acquiring and converting shared ownership properties;
- Developing new properties, including developing modular housing on council-owned sites, and;
- Working with and supporting other organisations who want to offer accommodation for this cohort.

Ultimately, local authorities may choose the most appropriate delivery mechanism to achieve the fund's objectives, and to bring on stream the accommodation as quickly as possible.

While local authorities will take the lead in their areas, this does not mean the above activities must be all be undertaken by local authorities. We expect local authorities to work closely with their housing association partners who stand ready to assist and, in

some cases, may be the most appropriate delivery vehicle to achieve the fund objectives. Housing association stock, development, and disposals pipelines could be instrumental in assisting local authorities to deliver this fund, as could their expertise and capacity for stock purchase, management and wraparound support.

Local authorities may choose to acquire properties in their own area or work with neighbouring authorities to acquire properties in their region; it is left to each local authorities' discretion whether collaboration of this kind would be an appropriate route although we would encourage collaboration where possible.

Local authorities should consider the needs of the cohort in their area when determining the size of properties to acquire. Our expectation is that the vast majority of properties acquired will be family sized homes (2-4+ bedrooms).

There are 182 local authorities, plus the Greater London Authority (GLA), eligible for funding. Eligible local authorities will receive an allocation email, which will set out the funding amount and the minimum number of units the LA needs to deliver with this funding. Local authorities or their partners are expected to fund the remainder of the costs, examples include but are not limited to funding from capital receipts, revenue, borrowing or funding by a partner.

Local authorities will be expected to manage this fund within their normal budgetary guidelines, with confidence that any budgeting decisions can be justified to their auditors. We will ask Section 151 officers to agree this with the department via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU); further details can be found at section 4.

It is expected that all homes delivered through this fund will be affordable/low-cost housing to support wider local authority housing and homelessness responsibilities for the remainder of their lifetime. If properties are disposed of, they will be subject to the Recycled Capital Grant regulations. Funding provided under this fund is for whole-life housing costs and local authorities are expected to use the funding in line with the fund objectives outlined in 2.1. It is up to local authorities to determine the precise rent level and tenure of homes in line with the fund objectives. This could include social rent, Affordable Rent, or a discounted private rent.

3.1 Ambition for housing those in bridging accommodation

There are around 9,200 people currently living in Home Office bridging accommodation who are being resettled via the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme. This fund aims to support local authorities to help move more households out of bridging accommodation. Each of the 182 local authorities, plus the Greater London Authority on behalf of London boroughs, in scope for grant funding will be expected to increase their number of pledges to support people under the Afghan resettlement schemes through the usual process (by notifying their Strategic Migration Partnerships) and will be set an ambition for the number of homes to acquire specifically for housing those currently in bridging accommodation. This will be for larger homes (four or more bedrooms), given the average family size of those in bridging accommodation, and the number of properties will be determined by the population size of the local authority. The funding allocation

includes a specific element for the acquisition of larger properties for this cohort. However, local authorities can also use the main element of their funding allocation to move smaller families out of bridging accommodation into smaller homes with fewer than 4 bedrooms in addition to their allotted target for larger homes.

For this fund, we expect all local authorities in scope for funding to deliver their allocation of 4+ bedroom homes for those in bridging accommodation, and local authorities will be asked as part of the validation process whether they are able to deliver those additional units.

If local authorities do not increase their pledges and do not commit to provide sufficient larger homes to this cohort (or if the GLA commits to provide fewer than its targeted amount within London), then their provisional allocation (both the bridging and main element) will be reallocated.

3.2 Cohort Definition and Eligibility

Given the objectives of the fund, those eligible for the housing are those who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or who live in unsuitable Temporary Accommodation (including bridging accommodation) and who also meet the below definition.

Those on the:

- Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (including eligible British Nationals under this scheme) (ACRS),
- Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)
- Ukraine Family Scheme (UFS),
- Homes for Ukraine (HFU),
- Ukraine Extension Scheme (UES)

For those not in bridging accommodation, the local authority does not have to have accepted a Housing Act 1996 Part 7 homelessness duty in respect of the household for the household to be eligible, but the local authority should satisfy themselves that the household is already or would otherwise be homeless or at risk of homelessness if this accommodation was not available.

3.3 Matching households with properties

It will be up to local authorities to decide how to deliver and manage this fund locally. The accommodation funded through this fund should increase the housing available for the cohort outlined in section 3.2.

In addition to the eligibility criteria above, the local authority should make reasonable endeavours to prioritise households based on who is most in need when matching eligible households with properties. Beyond this, local authorities may use any lawful route that allows them to deliver this fund to cater for the needs of their area. They may wish to use their experience from the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Fund or use the same assessment and prioritisation process as for mainstream social housing stock.

Some examples of options for matching eligible households to properties include:

- Using, amending or putting in place a Local Lettings Policy to allow homes to be allocated by local authorities, or nominated to housing associations, to eligible applicants of a particular description. This is allowed under the Housing Act 1996 (section 166A(6)(b))
- Letting accommodation through a local authority owned housing company.

This is not exhaustive and depending on how local authorities are delivering the fund, they may identify other legal ways for matching households with properties.

For the larger homes acquired to enable households to move out of Home Office bridging accommodation, we would encourage local authorities to use their relationships with each other, their Strategic Migration Partnerships and with staff in bridging hotels to identify and match families to suitable properties. This is to increase the chances of successful matches, as we recognise that local resettlement leads are well-placed to use local intelligence on households in their regions to identify suitable matches and reduce the chances of refusals as much as possible. Local authorities can indicate a preference for a specific family to be matched to a property they have acquired on the ARAP/ACRS property offer form. Alternatively, if a local authority is unable to identify a specific family in a bridging hotel, the local authority can put forward properties (via their Strategic Migration Partnership) to be centrally matched by the Home Office. As mentioned above, we expect local authorities to increase their pledges for the Afghan resettlement schemes beyond their existing pledge amount to reflect the acquisition of these new properties.

3.4 Tenancy Duration and social housing legacy

Given this fund aims to create a lasting supply of affordable housing for the general population (see fund objectives at section 2.1), we expect this stock to become available to support wider local authority general housing and homelessness responsibilities after the immediate needs of the eligible cohort have been addressed.

As the housing landscape in each area and the circumstances of eligible households vary, we will not mandate local authorities to apply a fixed tenancy duration for housing funded through the fund, though in many cases this may be appropriate.

4. Funding Allocations and Delivery

4.1 Initial allocation of funding

The initial funding offer will be determined and offered to the 182 local authorities and Greater London Authority in England, who are deemed to have the greatest need for this funding based on a formula. A formula will be used to identify the total allocation to those local authorities in scope for funding across the duration of the fund.

Local authorities are given an overall ranking based on several sets of data. This combines their relative ranking in terms of the number of Ukrainian arrivals per 1000 population and their relative ranking in terms of the level of housing pressure (which includes Private Rented Sector rents in relation to income, unemployment rate, number of households in Temporary Accommodation (TA) per 1000 households and

number of households on local authority waiting lists per 1000). This data is used because in the areas of highest housing pressure, it will be most difficult for refugees/arrivals to find housing, and therefore the risk of homelessness will be higher. The capacity of local authorities to respond in these areas will also be more limited because of the shortage of housing and associated higher housing costs. The Ukrainian arrivals data is used in this ranking to reflect the sudden and additional pressure from a rapid increase in the number of arrivals of people fleeing war, which is a different magnitude to the number of refugee arrivals in recent years. Numbers in bridging accommodation in each local authority is not used because of the policy objective to move Afghans out of bridging accommodation into local authorities across the country.

An initial indicative allocation will then be offered to each local authority, working from the most pressured local authority down, on the basis of:

- A fair share requirement to accommodate families in bridging accommodation, based on a per capita distribution for those local authorities in scope of funding and a grant per property set at 50% of the estimated average lower quartile 4+ bed property price plus an allocation of £20k per property (to allow for refurbishment/other costs)
- Distributing the remaining budget based on a ratio of 1 home per 20 Ukrainian arrivals, which is then costed at a grant per property of 40% of the estimated average lower quartile property price (plus £20k per property for refurbishment/other costs)
- The model distributes funding down the list of local authorities (ranked based on Ukrainian arrivals and housing pressure) until the budget is expended, resulting in 182 local authorities (plus the GLA) being in scope for funding.

In addition, several caps are put in place for the initial allocation to help support deliverability, to minimise inflationary impacts and to ensure all parts of the country receive some support. These are:

- a. constraining the initial London allocation to reflect an achievable delivery target in the capital's highly constrained housing market;
- b. capping the allocation per region at 25% of the total fund spend; and
- c. capping the allocation to any single local authority at 30 homes.

4.2 Funding split between financial years

The local authorities who are identified by the formula as eligible for funding will be contacted directly with an indicative offer of their total allocation. Authorities will be asked whether they will be able to spend this allocation to deliver the outlined number of homes, in accordance with the details set out in this prospectus (and if not, what they could deliver). Local authorities will also be asked whether they can deliver more than the allocation using the same grant per property (detailed at 4.3).

Funding will be paid in two tranches representing 30% and 70% of the local authority's allocation agreed in the MOU. We expect that the first tranche of funding will be paid in February/March 2023 – depending on when the MoU is agreed.

The second tranche of funding will pay 'the balance' of the local authority's allocation. There will be two predetermined tranche payment dates; the first at three months and the second at five months from the tranche one payment. Dates will be confirmed as part of the MOU process. To receive the second tranche payment the local authority must have spent at least 60% of the tranche one payment delivering on the objectives of the fund, which we will ask the local authority to declare to us at progress 'checkpoints'. Local authorities do not need to wait until receiving the second tranche of payment before spending more than their tranche one payment given 'the balance' will be paid following the checkpoint when they have spent 60% of their tranche one payment.

We will also ask local authorities about the number of property purchase offers they have made, how many of those offers have been accepted, and how many contracts they have exchanged, for example. To monitor delivery, we will ask for these progress updates at each funding checkpoint, regardless of whether the local authority has reached the 60% spending threshold.

We anticipate that any additional funding agreed via the reallocations process will be paid at the same time as the second tranche payment, with an update to the MOU following the reallocations process to reflect this additional funding. Where there is no direct allocation already in place (eg London councils) new MoU arrangements may be created.

4.3 Grant Rate and Eligible Spend

Allocations to each council have been calculated as follows:

- For the "main element", the amount of grant per property is calculated as 40% of the average lower quartile property price in the council area (or for London, 40% of the average lower quartile property price in Greater London). A further £20k per property is then added to account for other costs (including refurbishment).
- For the "bridging element" (i.e. 4+ bedroom houses) the amount of grant per property is calculated as 50% of the estimated lower quartile property price for a 4+ bedroom property in the council area (or for London, 50% of the estimated lower quartile property price for a 4+ bedroom property in Greater London). A further £20k per property is then added to account for other costs, including refurbishment.

Grant rates and Eligible Expenditure for Main and Bridging Elements

It is expected that councils will use their best endeavours to acquire the target number of units and to achieve value for money. The average grant per property rate should not exceed the maximum described below but the grant per property for individual

purchases can be higher. It is recognised that the grant will not meet all of the acquisition costs and so there is an expectation that the council, or its partners, will provide the remainder of the funding required.

The maximum average grant per property rate (for the portfolio of properties, not individual purchases) for the “main element” is 40% of the costs the council charges to its capital budget plus £20k per property. Eligible costs funded by the 40% and the 20k per property could include the purchase price, stamp duty, surveying, legal and other fees, refurbishments, energy efficiency measures, decoration, furnishings, or otherwise preparing the property for rent and potentially irrecoverable VAT incurred on these items. Councils should ensure they comply with the Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting when deciding eligible costs.

The maximum average grant per property rate (for the portfolio of properties, not individual purchases) for the “bridging element” is 50% of the costs the council charges to its capital budget plus £20k per property. Eligible costs funded by the 50% and the 20k per property could include the purchase price, stamp duty, surveying, legal and other fees, refurbishments, energy efficiency measures, decoration, furnishings, or otherwise preparing the property for rent and potentially irrecoverable VAT incurred on these items. Councils should ensure they comply with the Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting.

In some cases, the amount of money provided by the grant per property may equate to an intervention rate higher than the maximum set out above - for example if the local authority is focussing on smaller homes, such as 2 bedrooms, because these better suit the needs of the eligible cohort in the area or constitute the majority of the available stock to purchase. If this means the grant rate equates to more than the maximum, the local authority is expected to acquire more units with this funding than the estimated minimum (or outline in the MOU process that less funding is needed to deliver the number of units outlined in their allocation) in order to ensure value for money and not exceed the maximum grant rate.

During the validation process, if local authorities ask to deliver fewer units than allocated, then their funding allocation will be reduced, maintaining the same grant per property rate.

Eligible Expenditure for Improvement Budget

The costs of obtaining a property are not the only costs councils may incur. They may also need to fund things like refurbishments, energy efficiency measures, legal costs, decoration, furnishings, or otherwise preparing the property for rent. We have included an un-ringfenced capital budget of £20,000 per property to account for this. This is a notional amount for the purposes of allowing for these costs in our formula. Councils can choose how much of the grant is to be spent on each individual property. For instance, it may choose to spend £10,000 on one property and £30,000 on another.

Example “main element” allocation

A local authority is allocated £380,000 to deliver 5 main element units plus £20k per unit nominally for refurbishment costs. In total it receives £480,000.

The local authority identifies 5 properties and the costs of obtaining and preparing them for rent:
Property 1: £220,000 capital cost
Property 2: £220,000 capital cost
Property 3: £240,000 capital cost
Property 4: £190,000 capital cost
Property 5: £230,000 capital cost
Total price: £1,100,000
The local authority uses the £100,000 it received nominally for refurbishment costs, leaving £1,000,000.
The £380,000 main element allocation equates to 38% of the remaining capital cost and is therefore within the 40% maximum average grant rate.
The council funds the remaining costs from other sources.

4.4 Validation forms

Eligible local authorities will have been emailed an indicative allocation offer email, a draft MOU, and a validation form. This email outlines the local authority's indicative allocation. Receipt of the initial indicative allocation email and completion the validation form is not a commitment to providing funding or a commitment by a local authority to receive and spend funding. Final allocations will be confirmed in writing following the department's review of the form(s) as outlined in this section. This does not prejudice a local authorities' right to not sign a Memorandum of Understanding.

We will ask all local authorities to submit the validation form no later than 25 January 2023 to confirm if they are willing and able to participate. This helps us understand which local authorities do not wish to take up this funding, how many units local authorities are willing to deliver and allows us to begin reallocating funding.

The validation form will ask local authorities to cover the key details of their delivery proposal; this will then be assessed and validated by the department.

In the validation form we will ask for information on:

- The number of homes that the local authority plans to acquire as part of this fund including the number of 4+ bedroom homes for families in bridging accommodation
- Delivery approach
- Project milestones
- Risks and barriers to delivery

A copy of the validation form questions is attached at Annex A. Validation forms must be submitted via [this page](#) no later than midday 25 January 2023. These will be reviewed and responded to as they are received, and we intend to respond to all forms by 15 February 2023.

After submitting your validation form, please send your completed and signed Memorandum of Understanding by email to the Local Authority Housing Fund Team via LAHF@levellingup.gov.uk <mailto:LAHF@levellingup.gov.uk>. The template MOU is [here](#), which are the standard terms that will be agreed with every local authority, and

the text of which is non-negotiable. If you are delivering the full allocation, complete the MOU using the numbers from your allocation email. If you are agreeing to deliver a lower number of units than your allocation, to complete your MOU, calculate the funding amount for your specified number of units, using the grant per property rate set out in your allocation email – further detail is included in the blank MOU.

We encourage local authorities to return their validation form and MOU as soon as they can as we may be able to work faster with those who agree to the terms of the programme and return their validation forms and MOU earlier. Any reallocations will be calculated and communicated by the end of March 2023.

Given that this is not a bid-based fund, proposals will be assessed acknowledging that accountability for delivery rests with the local authority. The questions have been designed to identify local authorities who would be unwilling or unable to deliver the fund. The assessed section of the validation form will consider responses regarding:

- The proposed scale of delivery relative to the indicative allocation
- Whether delivery plans meet fund objectives
- Confirmation that the local authority is content with formal reporting requests every 2 months
- Confirmation that the Section 151 Officer or Deputy Section 151 Officer has signed off the proposal

We will confirm by end of March 2023 any additional funding available to the local authority following a reallocations process based on validation form data.

If we have any queries on the answers provided in the validation form, we will contact the local authority directly.

4.5 Reallocation

During the validation process, local authorities will be asked whether they can deliver more than their initial allocation.

If in the validation form stage local authorities state they are unable to deliver the units allocated to them across the duration of the fund, the funding for the units they say they will be unable to deliver will be reallocated to other local authorities (including directly to London councils). This reallocation will be based on a process aligned with the fund objectives in 2.1, taking into account need and deliverability. If additional funding is available for local authorities who have told us they can deliver more than their initial allocation, we will contact them to confirm any further funding offer and to agree an update to the MOU to reflect this additional funding.

If a local authority misses the deadline for submitting their validation forms, they are unlikely to receive funding at tranche one. Whether it is still possible to provide them with any funding will depend on when we receive the necessary details from them and the progress of the reallocations process (including the amount of money left to reallocate). We ask that local authorities who foresee a difficulty in working to the

communicated deadlines get in touch with the Local Authority Housing Fund Team as soon as possible.

If money remains after allocating additional funding to the local authorities that have said they can deliver more across the two years of the fund, then the list of local authorities may be expanded beyond those in receipt of initial allocations.

If a local authority is allocated additional funding as part of the reallocation process, this will be paid together with the baseline funding amount for year two (agreed as in the original signed Memorandum of Understanding). As with the tranche two payment, this additional funding will be subject to the local authority having spent at least 60% of their tranche one payment at the 'checkpoint' before the tranche two payment. Where there is no pre-existing direct agreement (as would be the case with individual London councils), new agreements would be made.

The allocations for the "main element" and "bridging element" will be treated separately for reallocations, and so "bridging element" funding will not be reallocated to deliver more 'main element' properties. This is to avoid undermining the number of properties delivered for those in bridging accommodation.

4.6 How grants will be delivered

This fund will operate only in England and funding will be allocated direct to local authorities under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

The funding will be allocated to the appropriate district council or unitary authority. Initial allocations for London will be made via the Greater London Authority. Further allocations may be made directly to London councils.

We will contact local authorities directly with their indicative allocation based on the formula outlined above.

4.7 Payment process

Payments will be made in the form of grants under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 and paid as two instalments, on agreement of an MOU between the local authority and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Once we have contacted local authorities to confirm their final allocation, we expect local authorities to obtain any further necessary clearances to enter into a MOU with the Department based on the information they provided in the validation form. Funding will then be distributed to the local authority following the signing of the MOU.

For local authorities allocated any additional funding via the reallocations process, prior to payment of any additional funding there will be an update to the MOU agreed to reflect this additional amount, and this will be paid alongside the tranche two funding.

Tranche one payments will be made in February/March 2023 depending on the date the MOU is agreed. Payments for tranche two will be paid in May and July 2023 respectively, dependent on when the local authority's spending on this fund surpasses 60% of their tranche one payment.

Given the urgency of delivery we expect all local authorities to show flexibility in how they apply their approvals processes in order to participate in this fund. All MOUs should be signed ahead of the first tranche of payments. Local authorities will ultimately be responsible for delivery and ensuring value for money of the allocation they have received.

4.8 Fraud Risk Assessments

Local authorities shall be responsible for ensuring that fraud is a key consideration in all spend activity and that the following minimum standards are met:

- Follow the [Grants Functional Standards on Fraud Risk Assessment](#) (FRA) – pages 15-19;
- Undertake FRAs at an appropriate level to each individual project dependent on risk;
- Ensure that this spend is undertaken in accordance with effective authority fraud prevention policy and procedure, and via engagement with your organisations' specialists in this area;
- Ensure that relevant evidence and data to prevent fraud is gathered as part of due diligence undertaken ahead of releasing funds;
- Implement reporting and monitoring requirements that will identify irregularities or issues in use of funds which can be investigated further;
- Store and file all work undertaken on FRA in the event of any issues or audit requirements.

4.9 Due Diligence

Local authorities shall be responsible for ensuring that proportional due diligence is applied to all this fund spend and that the following minimum standards are met:

- Follow the [Grants Functional Standards on Due Diligence](#) – pages 20-24;
- Undertake due diligence at an appropriate level to each individual project dependent on risk;
- Ensure that due diligence is undertaken in accordance with effective authority rules and procedures through authorities' teams specialising in this area;
- Ensure that key areas of due diligence identified for projects in which local authorities invest are reported on and monitored throughout the term of delivery;
- Store and file all work undertaken on due diligence in the event of any issues or audit requirements.

4.10 How we will monitor performance and delivery

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be detailed in MOUs with local authorities and will be based on the fund objectives outlined at section 2.1.

Every two months, local authorities will provide a mix of quantitative and qualitative summary updates to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to track against agreed delivery milestones. The reports will be due every two months until delivery is completed, with the dates specified in the MOU.

We will ask for the following information either as part of ongoing monitoring and/or as part of evaluation of the fund:

- Offers accepted, including bedroom size and whether these are part of the “main” or “bridging” element of the funding;
- Number of properties where contracts exchanged, including bedroom size;
- Number of properties occupied, including bedroom size;
- Number of families housed, including which resettlement programme they belong to;
- Number of individuals housed, including which resettlement programme they belong to;
- Total expenditure (including grant and other funding);
- Total committed spend (including grant and other funding);
- Government grant used;
- Overall assessment (RAG rated) of whether delivery is on track.

Future evaluation requests

We will conduct an evaluation of the fund near the end of the monitoring period. To understand how the fund is being delivered in further detail, we will ask local authorities for the following information:

- How properties have been sourced (e.g. through stock acquisition or another delivery route);
- Breakdown of households housed by previous housing situation, e.g. emergency accommodation/temporary accommodation;
- Tenancy duration;
- Rent levels;
- Number of additional pledges made to provide housing for those in bridging accommodation;
- Number of properties obtained outside the local authority’s area, if applicable, and where these are located.

We expect that local authorities will respond to any reasonable additional requests from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to support any retrospective assessment or evaluation as to the impact or value for money of the fund. We will expect the authority to, at minimum, monitor spend, outputs and outcomes against agreed indicators and keep this information for at least 5 years.

We may also ask for details about how the acquired properties are being used, for example if they are still publicly owned and if they have become part of the social housing or affordable stock. This will require local authorities to maintain address-level data. This is for us to examine the legacy impacts of the fund.

4.11 Next steps and important dates

- Local authorities who have been identified as eligible for funding will be sent a link to a validation form, to confirm their interest in participating, and to set out how they intend to deliver this fund. Submissions will be reviewed as they are received and therefore forms submitted earlier may receive an earlier response.
- Local authorities must submit their validation form by 25 January 2023 via this [link](#). Forms will only be accepted submitted by the link above. After submitting their validation forms, we encourage local authorities to email their signed MOU as soon as possible.
- In the event we have any clarification questions about the contents of a validation form, we will contact the local authority directly for further detail.
- If a validation form is accepted, we will make best endeavours to contact the local authority to confirm their allocation by 15 February 2023. We will be prepared to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with local authorities as soon as they have received the appropriate internal clearances. We expect local authorities to have signed this no later than 1 March 2023 but will work flexibly with local authorities.
- Tranche one of funding is due to happen in February/March 2023 (depending on the date the MOU is agreed), tranche two is due to happen in May or July 2023, dependent on when the local authority's spending on this fund surpasses 60% of their tranche one payment as reported during the monitoring and evaluation windows.
- Local authorities will be asked to complete a monitoring return every two months on the basis as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding and we will discuss any concerns about delivery with local authorities directly. The final monitoring return is scheduled to take place in November 2023, however we will expect monitoring returns to be completed until delivery is complete. We expect to carry out an evaluation from December 2023.
- For any questions about this fund please contact LAHF@levellingup.gov.uk.

Annex A – Validation Questions

Overview

The Local Authority Housing Fund will provide up to £500 million in capital grants to help councils obtain additional housing to accommodate the defined eligible cohort at risk of homelessness or living in bridging accommodation.

Councils' funding offer has been allocated on the basis of a formula, taking into account housing pressures and the number of recent Ukrainian arrivals.

This form applies to eligible councils in England only.

The validation form will be split into two parts, assessed and non assessed additional questions.

If you need to edit or revisit any sections of the validation form you will need to use the browser back button. Be aware that if you use the browser back button, the screen that you are currently viewing will not be saved.

Once you have submitted your validation form you will not be able to edit your response.

Please keep a copy of your answers for future reference.

After submitting your validation form, please send your completed and signed Memorandum of Understanding by email to the Local Authority Housing Fund Team via LAHF@levellingup.gov.uk.

Validation Questions

1. Are you willing and able to participate in the Local Authority Housing Fund programme?
 - Yes (form proceeds to question 3)
 - No (form proceeds to question 2)
2. Please provide further details of why you are not willing or able to participate in the programme (form proceeds to end).
3. Does the proposal you outline in this form meet the fund objectives outlined below? (Please note this is requirement of the fund and if not agreed you will not be able to participate in the fund.)
4. For the "main element" of the fund, how many homes can you acquire by 30th November 2023 (this is a target date, payments will be honoured assuming delivery within financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24)?

Note: if you can deliver fewer than your initial allocation, your funding will be scaled down proportionally to reflect the number of homes, based on the grant per property outlined in your allocation email. If you state you can deliver more homes at this grant rate than your initial allocation, we will progress with the MoU using your initial allocation and following reallocation process, we will

confirm whether any additional funding is available to enable you to deliver more than your initial allocation.

All delivery proposals in this section should be based on the policy in section 2.1 of the prospectus and the grant per property set out in your allocation email.

5. For the "bridging element" of the fund, how many 4+ bedroom homes can you acquire by 30th November 2023 (this is a target date, payments will be honoured assuming delivery within financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24)?

Note: if you can deliver fewer than your initial allocation, your funding will be scaled down proportionally to reflect the number of homes, based on the grant per property outlined in your allocation email. If you state you can deliver more homes at this grant rate than your initial allocation, we will progress with the MoU using your initial allocation and following reallocation process, we will confirm whether any additional funding is available to enable you to deliver more than your initial allocation.

All delivery proposals in this section should be based on the policy in section 2.1 of the prospectus and the grant per property set out in your allocation email.

6. Do you agree to provide progress reports every 2 months until delivery is completed including Management Information (MI) and reporting against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as detailed in the prospectus?

(Please note this is requirement of the fund and if not agreed you will not be able to participate in the fund.)

7. Has your Section 151 Officer or Deputy S151 Officer approved this submission?

(Please note this is requirement of the fund and if not agreed you will not be able to participate in the fund.)

Additional non-assessed questions

The next set of questions are not assessed and will be used by the department to aid policy development and evaluation design only.

1. If the number of "main element" properties you can deliver is fewer than your allocated number, please outline the reasons for this.
2. If the number of 4+ bedroom "bridging element" properties you can deliver is fewer than your allocated number, please outline the reasons for this.

3. How do you plan on delivering your proposed/target number of homes?
Please provide details of the type of stock you plan to acquire, noting the non-exhaustive list of examples provided in section 3 of the programme prospectus.
4. If your chosen delivery plan will add to existing housing in your area, please provide an estimate of the number of new homes.
5. Please provide your key milestones for delivery, including decision making timelines.
6. Based on the indicative approach(es) identified in your delivery plan above, please provide a brief overview that shows a financial projection of how and when the budget will be spent versus the timescales / number of homes to be acquired.
7. How do you intend to fund your contributory share required to secure your proposed/target number of homes? (e.g. from capital receipts, revenue, borrowing or funded by a partner?)
8. What are the key risks for delivery and how do you intend to mitigate them?
9. If this programme continued into future years using the same or a similar approach, (e.g. assuming launch in late 2023 and running for the following 12 months), how many homes could you deliver in this time period?

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Risk Register

Local Authority Housing Fund

As at: 06.04.23

Ref	Title	Risk Description	Opp / Threat	Cause	Consequence	Risk Treatment	Date Raised	Owner	Gross		Current			Target		Comments	Control / Mitigation Description	Date Due	Action Status	% Progress	Action Owner
									P	I	P	I	Score	P	I						
	Under performance to specification	Under deliver of target of 6 properties and conversation to lettable dwellings	Threat	Inability to source and purchase suitable properties from open market by deadline	Not meeting the terms of the funding prospectus, as well as reputational damage.	Reduce	21/03/23	Stephen Cohen	3	3	2	3	6	2	2		Established team to deliver properties who have been involved in planning for fund application.	30/11/23	Not yet started	0%	
	Insufficient capital	Additional pressure on Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	Threat	Inability to fund capital element to purchase properties.	Inability to purchase properties, as well as reputational damage	Avoid	21/03/23	Stephen Cohen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		Financial modelling completed in consultation with Council's financial services team and HRA provision planned for.	21/03/23	Ongoing	80%	
	Market fluctuations	Property market increases substantially	Threat	Property price rise	Local property prices increase beyond budgeted allowance	Accept	21/03/23	Stephen Cohen	3	3	3	2	6	3	2		Financial modelling builds in contingency allowances for market increases. Properties are to be delivered by November 2023	21/03/23	Not yet started	0%	
	Adverse public opinion/media intervention	Negative publicity generated from investing in properties	Threat	Negative publicity from OCC entering into Fund	Reputational damage	Avoid	21/03/23	Stephen Cohen	2	3	2	1	2	2	1		National awareness of Ukraine & Afghan issues & positive financial gain	21/03/23	Not yet started	0%	
	Not entering into fund	Decision to not enter into the fund	Opportunity	Deciding not enter fund	Not realising benefits of property acquisition & reputational damage	Avoid	21/03/23	Stephen Cohen	4	3	3	3	9	1	1		Report sets out rational for entering into fund	21/03/23	In Progress	50%	

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To: Cabinet
Date: 19 April 2023
Report of: Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive)
Title of Report: Decisions taken under Part 9.3(b) of the Constitution

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	Council is asked to note the decision taken by the Head of Paid Service using the urgency powers delegated in Part 9.3(b) of the Constitution.
Recommendation: That Cabinet resolves to:	
1. Note the decision taken as set out in the report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction and background

1. This report updates Cabinet on a decision taken by the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) using the urgency powers delegated in Part 9.3(b) of the Council's Constitution.
2. Where urgency powers are used the Constitution requires the Head of Paid Service to report, in writing, as soon as practicable to the body which would otherwise have been required to give the necessary authority to act.

9.3 Role of Head of Paid Service

...

(b) The Head of Paid Service is authorised to take any urgent action necessary to protect the Council's interests and assets where time is of the essence and it is impracticable to secure authority to act where such authority would otherwise be required.

The Head of Paid Service, in so acting, will be guided by budget and the policy framework, will consult the other Statutory Officers before acting and will report, in writing, as soon as practicable to the body which would otherwise have been required to give the necessary authority to act.

Key decision procedures and call in procedures (Parts 15 & 17) will apply to any key decisions taken under this authorisation.

Decisions taken using urgency powers

3. The following decision has been taken using urgency powers for which Cabinet would otherwise have been required to give the necessary authority to act. Cabinet is responsible for giving project approval for projects of £500,000 or over (£1,000,000 for contract awards). Cabinet is asked to note the decision.
4. This report does not include decisions taken using urgency or emergency powers that have previously been reported to Cabinet.

ITEM 1	SUPPLIER CONTRACT AWARD FOR MICROSOFT SOFTWARE LICENCES
	<p>Following a regular procurement exercise, a successful bidder was identified. The outcome is the award of a three-year contract to the supplier Phoenix for the provision of all Microsoft software licences used across the Council and associated companies. The offer of a 3-year award with the associated discounts was only made during the week of 13th March 2023 - given the timescales for implementation, which must be by the 31st March 2023, which is what has generated the need for an urgent decision.</p> <p>In order to obtain a £40,000 discount on the pricing, we have to sign the agreement in the coming days. Otherwise we will pay the full cost for an annual deal.</p> <p>The value of the contract amounts to £1,107,123.21 over a three-year period. This is in line with the existing capital (C3044) and revenue (CA70) budgets for the provision of the licences. No additional capital or revenue funding is required, nor is there a requirement to vire funds or to adjust annual budgets.</p> <p>Time is of the essence, to protect the Council's financial interests, by securing the discount of £120,000 over the three year period, and the discount will not be available if the decision awaited the next scheduled Cabinet meeting. For this reason, the use of the Chief Executive's delegated authority to take urgent action is appropriate and justified.</p>
Date of decision:	24 March 2023
Decision taker	<p>Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive)</p> <p>Decision taken in consultation with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services • Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement • Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services • Susan Sale, Head of Law and Governance
Was the decision taken under emergency or urgency rules?	<p>Constitution 9.3(b):</p> <p><i>The Head of Paid Service is authorised to take any urgent action necessary to protect the Council's interests and assets where time is of the essence and it is impracticable to secure authority to act where such authority would otherwise be required.</i></p> <p><i>The Head of Paid Service, in so acting, will be guided by budget and the policy framework, will consult the other Statutory Officers before acting and will report, in writing, as soon as</i></p>

	<i>practicable to the body which would otherwise have been required to give the necessary authority to act.</i>
Is this a Key Decision?	<p>Yes – contract award with a value of £1,000,000 or greater [Constitution 15.14]</p> <p>The matter was not able to be included on the forward plan for 28 days in accordance with the Local Authority (Executive Arrangements) Regulations. The matter was included on the Forward Plan on 16th March 2023 and a special urgency notice served on the Chair of Scrutiny on the same day.</p> <p>The decision may not therefore be made by the Chief Executive until 24 March 2023.</p> <p>The decision is subject to the usual call-in rules and so the contract with the supplier may not be entered into until 29 March 2023 at the earliest.</p>
Reasons for decision	If a decision is not taken with urgency, Microsoft will apply the April pricing, which has a 9% uplift on 2022/3 values. If an annual contract is taken out, the increase in cost will be in the region of £40,000 compared to the three-year cost, plus an uplift of 9%.
Alternative options considered:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Follow the regular process – this would cost the Council upwards of £120,000 (circa 10% of the contract value) over three years. 2. Approve an annual contract through the Head of Service (as the value would be below £500,000) – this would cost an additional £40,000 to the Council.
Wards significantly affected	None

Financial issues

5. The decision was made in order for the Council to take advantage of a £120,000 saving over the life of the three-year contract, when compared to awarding an annual contract only.
6. The expenditure of £1,107,123.21 was accounted for in the budget agreed by Council on 16 February 2023.

Legal issues

7. Decisions reserved to Cabinet are set out in Part 4.5 of the Council's Constitution. The urgency and emergency powers of the Head of Paid Service are set out in Part 9.3 of the Council's Constitution. The responsibilities for budget decisions are set out in Part 18.8 of the Council's Constitution.

Report author	Alice Courtney
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Background Papers: None	

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 15 March 2023



Cabinet members present:

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

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)
Tristan Carlyle, Ecology and Biodiversity Officer
Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer
Marcia Ecclestone, Deputy Monitoring Officer
Stephen Gabriel, Executive Director (Communities and People)
Caroline Green, Chief Executive
Emma Gubbins, Corporate Asset Lead
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Emma Lund, Committee and Member Services Officer
Nerys Parry, Head of Housing
Amie Rickatson, Strategy & Service Development Manager
Dave Scholes, Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy
Jane Winfield, Head of Corporate Property
Christopher Wood, Corporate Asset Manager
Richard Wood, Housing Strategy and Needs Manager

Also present:

Councillor Dr Christopher Smowton, Chair of Scrutiny
Councillor Jemima Hunt, Chair of the Climate & Environment Panel

Apologies:

No apologies were received.

123.Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

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

None.

125. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

126. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

127. Scrutiny reports

Councillor Dr Smowton, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, presented the reports and recommendations of Scrutiny Committee and the Housing & Homelessness Panel which had met on 13 March.

The Scrutiny Committee had made three recommendations in relation to the Corporate Business Plan 2023, which were all accepted. These related to including higher level key performance indicators; monitoring of progress and implementation of the Urban Forest Strategy; and including explicit reference to working with Thames Water in seeking to improve the situation with water in the City.

The Scrutiny Committee had made five recommendations in relation to the Integrated Care Strategy Draft Strategy Update, which had been mostly accepted. These included recommending that the Council should use its influence via the Integrated Care Board and Strategy action plan to: ensure that the risks and dangers of vaping were emphasised; seek to combat vaccine hesitancy and misinformation; and broaden work on air quality, including indoor air quality and indoor sources of pollutants. There had also been a recommendation that specific attention should be paid to the relevant needs of particular demographic groups (including LGBT communities and minority ethnic communities) and the impact of certain strategies and factors on those groups in particular.

The Scrutiny Committee had made one recommendation in relation to the Integrated Performance Report for Quarter 3. This had related to including the specific categories of work which were proposed to be suspended and the associated financial implications in paragraph 10 of the report. This had been accepted.

The Housing & Homelessness Panel had made one recommendation in relation to the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy. This related to working with OX Place to consider how it might move towards having a higher percentage of new homes let at social rent level than a simple majority. The recommendation had been partially accepted, for the reasons set out in the Cabinet Member's response within the scrutiny report supplement. The Cabinet Member provided clarification, in relation to the figures provided, that the Local Plan 2016 – 2036 stipulated that any new development over 10 units was required to have 50% affordable units, of which 80% must be social rented. Following changes to the National Planning Practice Guidance, this requirement was amended to 70% Social Housing, 25% First Homes and 5% Intermediate. This policy requirement for social rented units was one of the highest in the country, demonstrating the priority to provide more homes at social rent.

The Chair invited Councillor Jemima Hunt, Chair of the Climate and Environment Panel, to present the Panel's recommendations under agenda item 12 ('Development of a Biodiversity Strategy for Oxford').

128. Delivery of Affordable Housing

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to seek further project approvals and delegations to enable the continued delivery of more affordable housing in Oxford.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Linda Smith, highlighted that the proposal (subject to the necessary planning consents) concerned the purchase of 111 new affordable homes within the Oxford North development and 16 affordable homes at an adjacent site at Goose Green (owned by the Council and with access to be improved as part of the Oxford North development). Approval was also sought for the purchase of 32 affordable homes at Meadow Lane (subject to planning consent) and the adjustment of the HRA capital budgets for a number of other schemes. The latter included increasing the available budgets for the planned developments at Northfield Hostel, Lanham Way; reducing the budget for East Oxford Community Centre, and closing the Juniper Close scheme.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Give project approval** for the acquisition of affordable dwellings developed by Oxford City Homes Ltd (OCHL) for which budgetary provision has been made in the Council's Housing Revenue Account in respect of:
 - a) Oxford North (referenced in paragraphs 9 to 18 of the report), and
 - b) Goose Green, Wolvercote (referenced in paragraphs 19 to 34 of the report), and
 - c) Meadow Lane, Iffley (referenced in paragraphs 35 to 49 of the report);
2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development), in consultation with the Executive Director (Communities and People); the Cabinet Member for Housing; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer; and the Head of Law and Governance/Monitoring Officer, to finalise the scheme design and financial appraisals and enter into agreements and contracts to facilitate the agreed purchase by the Council of the affordable housing (to be held in the HRA) and any associated land, within the identified budget, for the provision of the affordable housing (111 affordable homes) on the Oxford North development, within the project approval;
3. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Communities and People) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery; the Cabinet Member for Housing; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer and the Head of Law and Governance/Monitoring Officer to finalise the scheme design and financial appraisals and enter into agreements and contracts to facilitate the purchase by the Council of the social rent and shared ownership homes (to be held in the HRA) and any associated land, within the identified budget and within this project approval for Goose Green, Wolvercote (16 affordable homes);
4. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer; and the Head of Law and Governance/Monitoring

Officer, to approve the final terms and enter into the transfer in relation to Goose Green from the General Fund to OCHL;

5. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development), in consultation with the Executive Director (Communities and People); the Cabinet Member for Housing; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer; and the Head of Law and Governance/Monitoring Officer, to finalise the scheme design and financial appraisals and enter into agreements and contracts to facilitate the agreed purchase by the Council of the affordable housing (to be held in the HRA) and any associated land, from OCHL, for the provision of the affordable housing on the Meadow Lane, Iffley development (32 affordable homes), and within the identified budget and this project approval; and
6. **Recommend to Council** that it approves a revision to the HRA capital budget of an additional £825,000, with the realignment of budgets and schemes within the HRA new build programme, in order for the schemes listed below to be delivered within the capital programme funded predominantly from borrowing. This additional spend to be profiled into 2024/25.
 - a) Increase Northfield Hostel budget by £3.25m (see report paragraph 52)
 - b) Increase Lanham Way budget by £361k (see report paragraph 53)
 - c) Reduce East Oxford Community Centre budget by £700k (see report paragraph 54)
 - d) Close Juniper Close scheme (see report paragraph 55).

129. Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28

The Executive Director (Communities & People) had submitted a report to seek approval for the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Linda Smith, reported that the Strategy had been subject to a comprehensive consultation. 107 responses had been received, and 60 individuals representing 27 organisations had attended the two workshops which had been held. The responses had been broadly positive: those issues which had been raised had largely related to things over which the Council had little or no direct control, such as private sector rents or support for those without recourse to public funds. The Strategy had been updated following the consultation to explain this.

Councillor Smith highlighted that the action plan accompanying the strategy would be updated annually, and would enable progress to be monitored.

In discussion, it was questioned whether there were ways in which strategic engagement with registered housing providers across the city might be improved. The Executive Director (Communities and People) undertook to give consideration to this, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the progress made to develop the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan for Oxford following feedback from the statutory public consultation;
2. **Recommend to Council** the adoption of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28 and its associated appendices;

3. **Recommend to Council** the adoption of the Strategy's Action Plan for 23-24; and
4. **Recommend to Council** that authority be delegated to the Executive Director (Communities and People), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to update the Action Plan when required.

130. Commercial Tenant Rent Arrears Write-Offs

The Head of Corporate Property had submitted a report to seek approval for the write-off of commercial rent arrears above the limit which officers could approve under the Scheme of Delegation.

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management, Councillor Ed Turner, drew attention to recent difficult trading conditions, including the pandemic, which had affected businesses. Two of the traders owing arrears to the Council had entered liquidation: there was therefore no prospect of the Council being able to recover these debts. In other cases, agreements had been reached with businesses regarding their commercial rent arrears. The Cabinet Member highlighted that whilst the Council sought to maximise income from its commercial properties, there was also a need to balance future income streams, minimise void periods, and maintain a broad offer of businesses in the city centre. It was also noted that the Commercial Rent (Coronavirus) Act 2022 prevented landlords taking action in respect of rent relating to lockdown periods (i.e. protected rent) and introduced an arbitration process for situations where landlords and tenants had been unable to reach agreement on rent arrears. The Council had to therefore enter into negotiations with its commercial tenant debtors to try and reach negotiated settlements and avoid reference to an arbitrator.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the write-off of arrears relating to Edinburgh Woollen Mill (141 High Street) as detailed in the report;
2. **Approve** the write-off of arrears relating to Nosebag Restaurants Limited (6 St Michaels Street & 6-8 St Michaels Street) as detailed in the report; and
3. **Approve** the write-off of arrears relating to the properties identified in the exempt Appendix 1.

131. Integrated Care System Draft Strategy Update

The Head of Corporate Strategy had submitted a report to present information on the production of a new Integrated Care Strategy by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Transport, Councillor Louise Upton, reported that newly created Integrated Care Boards had replaced Clinical Commissioning Groups as the NHS bodies which received government funding to plan and buy services. The ICB had been mandated to work in partnership with local authorities, GPs and voluntary groups to create an integrated care strategy focused on ensuring that everyone is able to get a good start in life and to live and age well, with support when needed.

Councillor Upton outlined the five key principles underpinning the strategy, which included Preventing Ill Health and Tackling Health Inequalities. The Strategy would be

delivered through a series of priorities, in some of which the Council had a role and in others it did not.

The Head of Corporate Strategy reported that a Health and Wellbeing Strategy was also being developed for Oxfordshire this year, to come into effect at the start of 2024.

In discussion it was noted that representation on a number of bodies, as well as effective co-ordination and links, would be key to translating the strategies into a meaningful plan for Oxfordshire. These included the Place Based Partnership and the Oxfordshire Systems Leaders' Partnership (which involved leaders of local authorities as well as leaders in the health service). There were also discussions at district council leaders' and chief executives' group meetings and with the Local Enterprise Partnership as well as work by the Active Communities Team.

In response to a question the Head of Corporate Strategy confirmed that the draft document had been approved by the Integrated Care Partnership on 27 February 2023; however the final strategy document had not yet been issued.

Cabinet Members welcomed the strategy and endorsed its principles; however, it was considered that it would only be once actions and measurable outcomes were delivered that its value could be assessed.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the contents of the report for information.

132. Development of a Biodiversity Strategy for Oxford

The Head of Corporate Strategy had submitted a report to present Cabinet with a proposed approach to the development of a Biodiversity Strategy for Oxford.

Councillor Jemima Hunt, Chair of the Climate and Environment Panel, presented the seven recommendations of the Panel relating to the Biodiversity Strategy Development report, and a recommendation arising from a report on fleet decarbonisation which the Panel had also considered. Four recommendations were accepted, and four were partially accepted. One recommendation had related to ensuring that the Council prioritised the protection of mature trees, wherever possible. The Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice, Councillor Anna Railton, responded that there was a balance which needed to be reached in preserving mature trees whilst still being able to deliver on the Council's priority to provide more, affordable housing: it was the role of the planning process and the planning committee to determine where that balance was.

Councillor Railton summarised that the first key step in developing the strategy would be to establish a steering group involving stakeholders, and noting the recommendation of scrutiny to include Oxford University's Biodiversity Network and Healthy Ecosystem Restoration in Oxfordshire (HERO). There would then need to be an exercise to evaluate a baseline and identify the most pressing issues. The report set out suggested key areas of focus, which included maximising the biodiversity value of land under the Council's control; supporting other organisations to do the same; and improving public access to nature within the city. Work would also include auditing the eight sites of special scientific interest (SSSI) and 66 other sites protected by various local designations.

Cabinet heard that the intention was for the strategy to become an inspiring vision for the city as a whole which would go beyond the Council's own land ownership to include other landowners and their biodiversity aspirations for their land.

In discussion it was suggested that biodiversity of waterways; tree planting strategies and the planting of trees providing food; and the implementation, maintenance and monitoring of biodiversity net gain sites might also be included within the work.

Correction was also provided in respect of paragraph 11, which erroneously referred to glyphosate as a pesticide rather than a herbicide. In response to a question as to how information about improving biodiversity in domestic settings might be provided to residents, the Head of Corporate Strategy reported that the Council participated in the Climate Action Oxfordshire website, which could provide a mechanism for an organised programme of pro-active communications.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the report and the proposed establishment of steering group in connection with the preparation of the Biodiversity Strategy.

133. Annual Update of the Council's Business Plan

The Head of Corporate Strategy had submitted a report to approve Oxford City Council's Corporate Business Plan priorities for 2023/24.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships highlighted some of the significant progress which had been made in delivery of the current year's business plan. This had included: adding social value to the procurement process; becoming a signatory to the Inclusive Economy Charter; securing planning permission for the re-provision of affordable work space at Standingford House on Cave Street; securing a funding package for the Cowley Branch Line; increasing the supply of affordable housing and delivering the greenest council homes to date; commencement of the citywide selective licensing scheme; and use of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding to reduce the carbon impact of Oxford's leisure centres and seasonal outdoor pool.

The Leader reported that this was the final year of the Council Strategy 2020-24; a report would be brought to Cabinet later in the year setting out the process for work on a strategy to cover the next four years.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Agree** the draft Oxford City Council Corporate Business Plan priorities 2023/24, 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; and
3. **Note** the progress made in delivery against the actions set out in the current year's Corporate Business Plan 2022/23.

134. Integrated Performance Report for Q3 2022/23

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to update Cabinet on finance, risk and corporate performance matters as at 31 December 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management, Councillor Ed Turner, clarified that the areas of suspended work referred to in paragraph 10 related to pre-painting joinery works.

The Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management highlighted a number of key points arising from the report. It was noted that the outturn position forecast an adverse variance of £0.718 million against the net budget agreed by Council in February 2022, after a £2 million transfer from the COVID reserve. The financial climate remained challenging. There were some adverse variances in the HRA and this had led to some works being paused: there had also been an increase in fencing work due to storm damage. Options for the future approach towards these works would need to be further looked at.

There had been some slippage on the capital programme: this was in part linked to the unprecedented level of construction cost inflation which had meant that a number of schemes had had to be paused in order for costs to be re-assessed. This was a national and international issue, and was not unique to this Council.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the projected financial outturn for 2022-23 as well as the current position on risk and performance as at 31 December 2022; and
2. **Note** the change in timing of the insurance contract procurement exercise for the new contract to commence from 1st January 2024 as outlined in paragraph 18.

135. Flag Flying and Bell Ringing Arrangements

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report to seek agreement of the lists of annual flag flying and bell ringing commitments and approval for a minor amendment to the Oxford City Council Protocol for Flag Flying and Bell Ringing.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Agree** the List of Annual Flag Flying Commitments attached at Appendix A to the report;
2. **Agree** the List of Annual Bell Ringing Commitments attached at Appendix B to the report; and
3. **Approve** the minor amendment to the Oxford City Council Protocol for Flag Flying and Bell Ringing set out in Appendix C to the report.

136. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2023 as a true and accurate record.

137. Dates of Future Meetings

19 April 2023

14 June 2023

12 July 2023

9 August 2023

13 September 2023

18 October 2023

All meetings start at 6pm.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.33 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 19 April 2023

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.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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