

Agenda

Council

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Summons

A meeting of the City Council will be held to transact the business set out below on

Date: **Monday 18 March 2024**

Time: **5.00 pm**

Place: **Council Chamber - Oxford Town Hall**



Proper Officer

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

- may register in advance to speak to the meeting in accordance with the [public speaking rules](#)
- may record all or part of the meeting in accordance with the Council's [protocol](#)

Information about speaking and recording is set out in the agenda and on the [website](#)

Please contact the Committee Services Officer to register to speak; to discuss recording the meeting; or with any other queries.

This meeting can be viewed live or afterwards on the council's [YouTube channel](#).

For further information please contact:

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager,

☎ 01865 529117

✉ democraticservices@oxford.gov.uk

View or subscribe to updates for agendas, reports and minutes at mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk.

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

Membership of Council

Councillors: Membership 48: Quorum 12.

Lord Mayor Councillor Lubna Arshad

Deputy Lord Mayor Councillor James Fry

Sheriff Councillor Mark Lygo

Members	Councillor Mohammed Altaf-Khan	Councillor Sajjad Malik
	Councillor Shaista Aziz	Councillor Katherine Miles
	Councillor Susan Brown	Councillor Alistair Morris
	Councillor Nigel Chapman	Councillor Lois Muddiman
	Councillor Mary Clarkson	Councillor Edward Mundy
	Councillor Tiago Corais	Councillor Chewe Munkonge
	Councillor Barbara Coyne	Councillor Jabu Nala-Hartley
	Councillor Lizzy Diggins	Councillor Lucy Pegg
	Councillor Dr Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini	Councillor Susanna Pressel
	Councillor Dr Sandy Douglas	Councillor Anna Railton
	Councillor Paula Dunne	Councillor Rosie Rawle
	Councillor Laurence Fouweather	Councillor Ajaz Rehman
	Councillor Andrew Gant	Councillor Jo Sandelson
	Councillor Duncan Hall	Councillor Linda Smith
	Councillor Alex Hollingsworth	Councillor Roz Smith
	Councillor Rae Humberstone	Councillor Dr Christopher Smowton
	Councillor Jemima Hunt	Councillor Imogen Thomas
	Councillor Chris Jarvis	Councillor Ed Turner
	Councillor Emily Kerr	Councillor Louise Upton
	Councillor Tom Landell Mills	Councillor Naomi Waite
	Councillor Dr Amar Latif	Councillor Diko Walcott

Apologies will be reported at the meeting.

Agenda

The business to be transacted is set out below

	Pages
PART 1 - PUBLIC BUSINESS	
1 Apologies for absence	
2 Declarations of interest	
3 Minutes	19 - 38
Minutes of the ordinary meeting of Council held on 29 January 2024 and Budget Council held on 21 February 2024.	
Council is asked to approve the minutes as a correct record.	
4 Announcements	
Announcements by:	
1. The Lord Mayor	
2. The Sheriff	
3. The Leader of the Council (who may with the permission of the Lord Mayor invite other councillors to make announcements)	
4. The Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer	
5 Public addresses and questions that relate to matters for decision at this meeting	
Public addresses and questions to the Leader or other Cabinet member received in accordance with Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution relating to matters for decision in Part 1 of this agenda.	
Up to five minutes is available for each public address and up to three minutes for each question. Questions must be less than 200 words.	
The request to speak accompanied by the full text of the address or question must be received by the Head of Law and Governance by 5.00 pm on Tuesday 12 March 2024.	
The briefing note will contain the text of addresses and questions submitted by the deadline, and written responses where available.	

*A total of 45 minutes is available for both public speaking items.
Responses are included in this time.*

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

6 Appropriation of land at Railway Lane.

39 - 44

The Executive Director (Development) has submitted a report to Cabinet on 13 March 2024 which seeks approval to appropriate a parcel of land (change the statutory basis on which it is held by the Council from one function to another) at Railway Lane from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account in order that the land can be used for the development of new council housing, and to update Cabinet on certain aspects of the development.

The Cabinet minutes are available at Item 9b.

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing, will present the report and present Cabinet's recommendations.

Recommendation: Cabinet recommends that Council resolves to:

1. **Agree** the appropriation of the land owned by Oxford City Council that forms part of the development site for housing at Railway Lane from the General Fund (GF) into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) at the established red book valuation figure.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

7 Licensed Vehicles Emission Standards Amendment

45 - 52

The Executive Director (Communities and People) has submitted a report which sets out the decision of the General Purposes Licensing Committee to delay the introduction of new emission standards for Hackney Carriage Vehicles licensed by this Authority by one year.

Councillor Ed Mundy, Chair of the General Purposes Licensing Committee will present the Committee's report and present the recommendations.

Recommendation: The General Purposes Licensing Committee recommend that Council resolves to:

1. **Agree** on a delay to the introduction of new emission standards to Hackney Carriage Vehicles licenced by this Authority by **one year**, as agreed by the General Purposes Licensing Committee.

OFFICER REPORTS

8 Pay Policy Statement 2024

53 - 66

The Head of Business Improvement has submitted a report requesting that Council approve the Annual Pay Policy Statement.

Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focussed Services and Council Companies will present the report and recommendation.

Recommendation: That Council resolves to:

1. Approve the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 and the new 2 year pay agreement in Appendix 1.

QUESTIONS

9 Questions on Cabinet minutes

This item has a time limit of 15 minutes.

Councillors may ask the Cabinet Members questions about matters in these minutes:

9a Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 7 February 2024

67 - 72

9b Draft Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 13 March 2024

To follow with the briefing paper.

10 Questions on Notice from Members of Council

Questions on notice from councillors received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.11(b).

Questions on notice may be asked of the Lord Mayor, a Member of the Cabinet or a Chair of a Committee. One supplementary question may be asked at the meeting.

The full text of questions must have been received by the Head of Law and Governance by no later than 1.00pm on Wednesday 6 March 2024.

These, and written responses where available, will be published in the briefing note.

PART 2 - PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND SCRUTINY

11 Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision at this Council meeting

This item will be taken at or shortly after 7.00pm

Public addresses and questions to the Leader or other Cabinet member

received in accordance with Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution and not relating to matters for decision in Part 1 of this agenda.

Up to five minutes is available for each public address and up to three minutes for each question. Questions must be less than 200 words.

The request to speak accompanied by the full text of the address or question must be received by the [Head of Law and Governance](#) by 5.00 pm on Tuesday 12 March 2024.

The briefing note will contain the text of addresses and questions submitted by the deadline, and written responses where available.

A total of 45 minutes is available for both public speaking items. Responses are included within this time limit.

12 Outside organisation/Committee Chair reports and questions

As set out in the Constitution at procedure rule 11.16, Members who are Council representatives on external bodies or Chairs of Council Committees who consider that a significant decision or event has taken place, may give notice to the Head of Law and Governance by 1.00 pm Wednesday 13 March 2024 that they will present a written or oral report on the event or the significant decision and how it may influence future events. Written reports will be circulated with the briefing note.

12a Scrutiny Committee update report

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee has submitted a report which updates Council on the activities of scrutiny and the implementation of recommendations since the last meeting of Council.

Council is invited to comment on and note the report.

73 - 78

PART 3 - MOTIONS REPRESENTING THE CITY

13 Motions on notice 18 Marc 2024

This item has a time limit of 60 minutes.

Motions received by the Head of Law and Governance in accordance with the rules in Section 11 of the Constitution by the deadline of 1.00pm on Wednesday 6 March 2024 are listed below.

Cross party motions are taken first. Motions will then be taken in turn

from the *Independent Group, Labour Group, Liberal Democrat Group, Green Group, Oxford Socialist Independents Group* in that order.

Substantive amendments to these motions must be sent by councillors to the Head of Law and Governance by no later than 10.00am on Friday 15 March 2024 so that they may be circulated with the briefing note.

Minor technical or limited wording amendments may be submitted during the meeting but must be written down and circulated.

Council is asked to consider the following motions:

- a) Cancel divisive non-evidence-based transport policies including traffic filters and strengthen citizens trust in democracy (proposed by Cllr Ajaz Rehman, seconded by Cllr Shaista Aziz)
- b) Uniting to Tackle Oxford's Housing Crisis (proposed by Cllr Linda Smith, seconded by Cllr Nigel Chapman)
- c) In Support of Green Investment (proposed by Cllr Chris Smowton, seconded by Cllr Katherine Miles)
- d) Weight and emissions based parking charges (proposed by Cllr Emily Kerr, seconded by Cllr Lois Muddiman)
- e) The Cost-of-living crisis and local government funding (proposed by Cllr Ed Turner, seconded by Cllr Nigel Chapman)

13a Cancel divisive non-evidence-based transport policies including traffic filters and strengthen citizens trust in democracy (proposed by Cllr Ajaz Rehman, seconded by Cllr Shaista Aziz)

This council calls on the leader to write to Oxfordshire County Council and the transport minister to remove Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and cancel planned traffic filters.

LTNs have been introduced as part of schemes to reduce congestion and encourage active travel. They have failed to meet their stated objectives.

Congestion has increased and cycling remains a hazardous mode of transport.¹

Pollution has reduced in the streets where LTNs have been introduced, however the opposite has occurred on roads that are now heavily congested.²

The intention of congestion free bus travel has failed to materialise and Oxford's bus companies have expressed their disappointment at East Oxford LTNs being approved.³

¹ [Oxfordshire County Council will add traffic lights to 'dangerous' roundabout - BBC News](#)

² [Oxford air pollution falls by 8% in 2022, council report says - BBC News](#)

³ <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/23852089.oxford-bus-companies-disappointed-ltn-recommendation/>

Divisive transport policies are pitting people and communities against each other on class, social economic and racial lines in a way similar to the Tory Poll Tax, which was eventually scrapped. The most vulnerable in society have also been ignored with no amendments for the elderly⁴ or residents with disabilities.⁵

As democratically elected representatives it is our duty to find answers and develop and support policies that work and are fair. Imposing unpopular and seemingly failing strategies will not achieve behavioural change in encouraging active travel.

Residential neighbourhoods such as Littlemore have been left feeling isolated and cut off.⁶

80% of businesses and 60% of consultation respondents oppose the introduction of East Oxford LTNs.⁷

Independent businesses are part of the life blood of what makes East Oxford the vibrant, diverse place it is.

Cowley Road business owners have been vocally opposed to the LTNs.⁸

To reverse years of neglect of Oxford's transport infrastructure requires real investment from central government. In the meantime, this council agrees to propose to the County Council that they:

- Prioritise bringing in School Streets for all Private schools in the city.
- Ensure NHS staff and school teachers are excluded from any work place levy across the city.
- Lobby central government for major investment in infrastructure with safe clear segregated routes for pedestrians and cyclists and roads for motor vehicles.
- Scrap plans for divisive traffic filters - which are not evidence based.

13b Uniting to Tackle Oxford's Housing Crisis (proposed by Cllr Linda Smith, seconded by Cllr Nigel Chapman)

This Council notes with alarm the growing number of local households facing homelessness in Oxford and the increased pressure this has placed on our homelessness prevention services and on access to temporary accommodation.

⁴ [East Oxford residents who are pro- LTN share early doubts about LTN trial | Oxford Mail](#)

⁵ [Oxford LTNs: Council leaves 'most vulnerable' behind | thisisoxfordshire](#)

⁶ <https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/end-traffic-barriers-in-littlemore-and-cowley>

⁷ [aebhdfh \(oxfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.aebhdfh.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

⁸ [Oxford Cowley Road traders produce shock business survey on LTNs | Oxford Mail](#)

This Council had brought down the number of people in temporary accommodation to around 100 households. But over the past year, this number has increased to approximately 220 households, and the figure is projected to reach 315 by July.

The rapid rise means that the 120 units of temporary accommodation owned by the council are no longer sufficient and we need to increasingly rely on hotel rooms to meet our statutory duties. This is a miserable and difficult situation for the families being placed in hotels and it has a huge unbudgeted financial cost for this council which is being left to pick up the bill.

This Council has moved swiftly to mitigate the situation by buying and leasing more temporary accommodation, block-booking hotels, hiring new staff to prevent homelessness and using more of our council owned homes for temporary accommodation.

These efforts have saved Oxford taxpayers about £2m, but this Council is still projecting a hole in the budget of as much as £3m every year – equivalent to 12.5% of the Council's annual net budget.

This Council is also finding it increasingly difficult to help people in temporary accommodation and our non-statutory homeless services to find affordable long-term homes.

This Council is working hard on behalf of the people of Oxford to deliver the affordable high-quality homes our city needs. We have retained our 7,900 council homes and we set up OX Place, our wholly owned housing company, to build 2,000 new homes over the next decade. Working in partnership with housing associations, we have a four-year programme to deliver 1600 affordable homes, including over 850 for social rent.

We also fund over 400 beds in supported accommodation for adults not entitled to statutory support.

We call upon:

- Council, regardless of the political groups, to unite behind our Labour Cabinet led housing programme. With limited land available for development in the city, we need to ensure sites identified for housing development in the Oxford Local Plan are used for that purpose. It is not responsible to debate alternative uses or play politics by appealing to narrow sectional interests and NIMBYism.
- The Leader of the Council to write to our neighbouring district councils to request, on behalf of this Council, that they unite with us, honour their duty to co-operate, and deliver the over 100 homes per year until 2040 which Oxford needs but cannot accommodate within our tight city boundaries.
- The Council to support the Leader of the Council's request for a meeting with Michael Gove, SoS for DLUHC, to discuss the spiralling costs of providing temporary accommodation. The

extra £240,000 so far allocated is inadequate and the Tory Government needs to properly reimburse this council for the costs involved in picking up the pieces of their failures on housing and the economy.

13c In Support of Green Investment (proposed by Cllr Chris Smowton, seconded by Cllr Katherine Miles)

Council notes that:

- A report by the Office for National Statistics in 2022 noted that over 40% of dwellings in Oxford had wall insulation rated Poor or Very Poor. [1]
- Analysis by the Institute for Public Policy Research found that the government is falling short if its home retrofit investment target, that billions of pounds a year are required to fully realise the benefits, and that households could save hundreds of pounds a year on their energy bills if those benefits are realised.[2]
- National Grid's plan for energy decarbonisation over the next ten years indicates a need for a radical increase in investment in grid infrastructure, grid-attached storage, and enabling works for green generation. [3]
- The government's own road map for heat pump rollout suggests a need for billions of pounds more in investment. [4]
- Not only is the government failing to meet its investment in green infrastructure as noted above, but the Leader of the Opposition has slashed plans for major green investment. [5]

Council resolves:

- That the Leader should write to both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition expressing this council's support for a truly transformative green investment programme that will put the country on the path to net zero, place the UK as a world leader in green technology, and support hundreds of thousands of green jobs.
- That the Leader should further write to Oxford's MPs requesting that they in turn pressure both government and opposition to deliver large-scale green investment.

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/insulationandenergyefficiencyofhousinginenglandandwales/2022>

[2] <https://www.ippr.org/media-office/uk-is-falling-billions-short-of-investment-needed-in-current-parliament-for-energy-efficiency-and-clean-heat>

[3] <https://www.nationalgrid.com/document/149496/download>

[4]
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/649d690406179b000c3f751c/heat-pumps-investment-roadmap.pdf>

[5] <https://www.energyvoice.com/renewables-energy-transition/547408/starmer-to-announce-scaling-back-of-28-billion-a-year-green-pledge/>

13d Weight and emissions based parking charges (proposed by Cllr Emily Kerr, seconded by Cllr Lois Muddiman)

Council notes:

1. Larger cars cause more damage to our roads, are more likely to seriously injure or kill pedestrians, and take up more valuable public space. They're outgrowing the design of our cities, especially small medieval cities like Oxford.
2. Cars have been growing at an astonishing 0.5cm per year since 2000.⁹ The growth in size is very pronounced among luxury SUVs. For example, The Land Rover Defender grew by 20.6cm in just 6 years.¹⁰
3. Large SUVs are now around 2m wide, or 220cm with mirrors, compared to a minimum parking width of just 180cm. In typical off street parking spaces (240cm), large SUVs often leave too little space for occupants to get in and out of vehicles. Data published last month shows half of new cars are too wide for parking spaces.¹¹
4. Wider cars reduce the road space available to pedestrians, scooters, and cyclists: and creates more danger for all of them. As Transport & Environment has said: "Cars have been getting wider for decades and that trend is likely to continue until we set a stricter limit. Currently the law allows new cars to be as wide as trucks. The result has been big SUVs and American style pick-up trucks parking on our footpaths and endangering pedestrians, cyclists and everyone else on the road."¹²
5. Owners of larger and higher emitting vehicles cost the public purse more than owners of smaller and greener vehicles due to the higher number of fatalities and serious illnesses caused by pollution and accidents and the greater amount of damage to roads.¹³¹⁴

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/jan/22/cars-growing-wider-europe-report>

¹⁰ <https://airqualitynews.com/cars-freight-transport/suvs-leading-the-way-as-cars-found-to-be-getting-1cm-wider-every-two-years/>

¹¹ <https://airqualitynews.com/cars-freight-transport/suvs-leading-the-way-as-cars-found-to-be-getting-1cm-wider-every-two-years/>

¹² <https://airqualitynews.com/cars-freight-transport/suvs-leading-the-way-as-cars-found-to-be-getting-1cm-wider-every-two-years/>

¹³ <https://www.npr.org/2023/11/14/1212737005/cars-trucks-pedestrian-deaths-increase-crash-data>

6. Cities across the world are taking a stand:
 - a. Paris has recently tripled charges for SUVs parking inside the city¹⁵
 - b. Bath now charges higher-emitting vehicles more, having first considered it under the Tories in 2018.¹⁶
 - c. Lyon charges heavier vehicles more.¹⁷
 - d. London boroughs have long had emissions based parking fees, including Greenwich, Lewisham, Merton, Newham, Croydon, Lambeth, City of London. Westminster under the Tories launched a diesel parking surcharge in 2017.¹⁸

Council believes:

1. It would be relatively simple to introduce increased parking charges for higher emitting and/or heavier vehicles, as the DVLA holds all this information on every car based on number-plate. Enforcement of car parks could be managed using cameras.
2. While Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council work together to manage car parks, and residents parking is managed exclusively by County, a joint project between City and County to come up with a fairer and more equitable charging system that more accurately reflects the greater cost to the public purse generated by larger, higher emitting vehicles would be beneficial.

Council resolves:

- To request the Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities and the Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice work closely with the County to design a more equitable system of parking charges.
- To request that these Cabinet Members report back to this Council within 6 months on any proposals they have developed with County colleagues.

13e The Cost-of-living crisis and local government funding (proposed by Cllr Ed Turner, seconded by Cllr Nigel Chapman)

This Council believes that the English local government finance settlement proposed by the Tories for 24/25 is thoroughly

¹⁴ <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/01/world/suv-cars-emissions-iea-climate-intl/>

¹⁵ <https://news.sky.com/story/paris-votes-to-triple-parking-charges-for-some-suvs-13064477>

¹⁶ <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/emission-based-car-parking-charges>

¹⁷ <https://www.connexionfrance.com/article/French-news/French-first-as-city-brings-in-parking-charges-linked-to-car-s-weight>

¹⁸ <https://cities-today.com/more-uk-councils-adopt-emissions-based-parking-charges/>

inadequate and penalises our poorest citizens the most, who are least well equipped to face the continuing cost-of-living crisis.

Government pronouncements about increased funding are “smoke and mirrors” and do not reflect the reality that costs are rising faster than any increases in funding, and that increases in “core spending power” largely come from local residents, not government funding.

Council is very concerned that a one-year increase in local housing allowances (after years of freeze) will be eroded by the Government’s failure to increase the benefits cap and temporary accommodation housing benefit, thus offering support with one hand and then denying it with the other. That failure will be exacerbated by reintroducing the housing allowance freeze again in April 25. This will once again increase homelessness in areas like Oxford.

In addition, this Council is angry that the Conservative Government has abolished funding for the Household support grant from May 24 – denying poorer people a welcome source of cash support for household and fuel bills, and vital heating repairs. This comes in addition to the end of centrally provided fuel bill support for many who had been in receipt of it.

Overall, English local government faces a huge funding crisis and cannot close the gap without cutting front line services, especially those aimed at its poorest citizens. This is evidenced by the high-profile and very severe cuts forced upon councils in Birmingham and Nottingham.

More widely, Council believes households are feeling huge pressure because of substantial increases in taxes as well as, for many, higher mortgage costs and rents due to the chaos caused by Liz Truss’ mini-budget, and a sharp focus on the cost of living is urgently needed.

This Council calls upon the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government demanding:

1. A sustainable long term funding settlement for councils like Oxford, facing a funding squeeze due to inflation and the rising costs of homelessness.
2. A commitment to increasing local housing allowances annually in line with local housing costs and scrapping the benefits cap.
3. The re-instatement of funding for the Household Support Grant which provides a flexible and rapid response to people with urgent needs.
4. Support for councils like Oxford which retains a Council Tax reduction scheme for people struggling to pay these costs, and encouragement that other councils should instigate such schemes.

It also asks the Leader of the Council to contact our two local MPs, for Oxford East and Oxford West and Abingdon respectively, and ask them to write with the same demands to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

14 Matters exempt from publication and exclusion of the public

If Council wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any aspects of the preceding agenda items it will be necessary for Council to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 specifying the grounds on which their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act 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.

(The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Section 15 of the Council's Constitution – sets out the conditions under which the public can be excluded from meetings of the Council)

14a Exempt Appendix - Appropriation of land at Railway Lane

79 - 80

Updates and additional information to supplement this agenda are published in the Council Briefing Note.

Additional information, councillors' questions, public addresses and amendments to motions are published in a supplementary briefing note. The agenda and briefing note should be read together.

The Briefing Note is published as a supplement to the agenda. It is available on the Friday before the meeting and can be accessed along with the agenda on the council's website.

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 and Member 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 Councillors and members of the press and public 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 recordings 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.

Minutes of a meeting of Council on Monday 29 January 2024

www.oxford.gov.uk



Council members present:

Councillor Altaf-Khan	Councillor Arshad (Lord Mayor)
Councillor Aziz	Councillor Brown
Councillor Chapman	Councillor Clarkson
Councillor Corais	Councillor Coyne
Councillor Diggins	Councillor Djafari-Marbini
Councillor Douglas	Councillor Dunne
Councillor Fouweather	Councillor Fry (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillor Gant	Councillor Hall
Councillor Hayes	Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Hunt	Councillor Jarvis
Councillor Kerr	Councillor Latif
Councillor Lygo (Sheriff)	Councillor Malik
Councillor Miles	Councillor Morris
Councillor Muddiman	Councillor Mundy
Councillor Munkonge	Councillor Nala-Hartley
Councillor Pegg	Councillor Pressel
Councillor Railton	Councillor Rawle
Councillor Rehman	Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Roz Smith	Councillor Smowton
Councillor Thomas	Councillor Turner
Councillor Upton	Councillor Waite
Councillor Walcott	

Also present for all or part of the meeting:

Caroline Green, Chief Executive
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy

Emma Jackman, Head of Law and Governance
Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager
Celeste Reyeslao, Committee and Member Services Officer
Amber Khaloon, Trainee Solicitor

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Humberstone and Sandelson sent apologies.

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

79. Declarations of interest

Item 13a: Stop the Anti-Boycott Bill

Councillor Linda Smith stated she had an interest relating to this item; this declaration had been entered on her register of interest; she indicated that she would leave the room during the consideration of this item.

Item 10: Questions on Notice from Members of Council (CM6-8: New leisure provider)

Councillor Imogen Thomas stated she had an interest on items relating to the award of contact to Serco; she indicated that she would leave the room during the consideration of these items.

Item 10: Questions on Notice from Members of Council (CM4: Allotment sites asbestos contamination)

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth stated that he was the Chair of Cripsey Meadow Allotments association; he made the declaration for reasons of transparency; it was not a pecuniary interest and he was not required to leave the room during consideration of that item.

Councillor Roz Smith declared an interest relating to allotments and made the declaration for reasons of transparency; she was not required to leave the room during the consideration of this item.

Councillor Louise Upton declared an interest relating to allotments and made the declaration for reasons of transparency; she was not required to leave the room during the consideration of this item.

Cllrs Gant and Mundy arrived the meeting.

80. Minutes

Council agreed to **approve** the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 27 November 2023.

81. Announcements

The Lord Mayor announced that she had attended Prayers for Peace at Rose Hill Community Centre, which had been organised by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. She had also attended Oxfordshire Together for Humanity which was hosted by the Oxfordshire Civic Community.

The Leader of the Council announced that she had also attended Oxfordshire Together Humanity and noted that the event was very well-attended and extremely organised. She expressed her thanks to those involved. The Leader provided an updated on the Mayor of Ramallah's address to Council and stated that a Christmas video message was circulated during the Christmas period. A request for an updated video message was made and would be shared upon its receipt.

The City Rector addressed Council and shared his sombre reflections, having attended Together for Humanity and the Holocaust Memorial event. He conveyed appreciation for the efforts councillors give towards the welfare of the city and their ability to draw out the best in people. He concluded with a call for grace in serving and promoting humanity.

82. Public addresses and questions that relate to matters for decision at this meeting

There were no addresses or questions.

83. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Rent Setting Report 2024/25

Council considered the report from the Head of Financial Services which presented the outcome of Oxford City Council's annual rent review and associated rent setting proposal for 2024/25 in respect of all Council dwellings within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), including the setting of associated services and facilities charges.

Cllrs Diggins, Clarkson, Goddard and Djafari-Marbini arrived at the meeting.

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report and proposed the recommendation.

Councillor L Smith responded to questions, stating that social and affordable rents in Oxford remained significantly below the local housing allowance rate. It was hoped that further government investments were made available to Councils like Oxford towards building more homes and preventing rent increases, however the Councillor pointed out that this was not the current situation.

In terms of council garage charges, Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, emphasised the need to

strike a balance between encouraging car use and reducing the number of cars on the road. Ultimately, the recommended figure was in alignment with the government guidance on rent increases.

The Committee and Member Services Manager clarified that the briefing note, which had been published on 26 January 2024 and available publicly, contained the updated figure of 7.7% applicable to garages.

In her summary, Councillor L Smith advised that tenant involvement and engagement consultation was in the process of being improved with additional staffing. The Council was reminded that the proposed recommendation pertained to the Housing Revenue Account, a ring fenced budget used solely for the Council's housing services, separate from the General Fund.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Councillor Ed Turner and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Approve** an increase of 7.7% for 2024/25 (subject to any subsequent cap on increases imposed by central government) in social dwelling rents from 1st April 2024 giving an average weekly increase of £9.27 per week, and a revised weekly average social rent of £129.72 as set out in the Financial Implications section of this report;
2. **Approve** an increase to rents for shared ownership dwellings as outlined in paragraph 15 of the Financial Implications;
3. **Approve** an increase to service charges by 7.7% (CPI + 1%) to enable the HRA to recover the associated cost of supply;
4. **Approve** an increase to the charge for a garage of 7.7%, equating to an increase of £1.37 per week for a standard garage with a revised charge of £19.22 per week, and an increase of £1.55 per week for a premium garage with a revised charge of £21.71 per week; and
5. **Approve** the option to exercise the Rent Flexibility option in respect of re-lets to new tenants as outlined in paragraph 6 below.

84. Project approvals, budget and delegations to develop five small sites for affordable housing, using spend from the Brownfield Land Release Fund

Cllr Pressel arrived at the meeting.

Council considered the report from the Executive Director (Development) seeking project and contract approval and delegations, budget and delegations in relation to affordable housing schemes across five small/garage sites. All sites had been allocated initial funding through the Brownfield Land Release Fund ("BLRF2") following a successful bid. The report sought approval for appropriation from General Fund ("GF") to Housing Revenue Fund, and to a planning purpose, where necessary; approval for the disposal of land as required; approval for the demolition of garages held in the GF and approval for demolition of vacant units currently held within the Housing Revenue Account ("HRA").

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report, proposed the recommendation and answered questions.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, and put to the vote.

Council resolves to:

1. **Allocate** of a £340,213 capital budget (which will be funded entirely by the BLRF2 grant) to carry out the demolition/enabling works on each site as detailed within the BLRF2 application (see table, paragraph 14).

85. Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024-25

Council considered the report from the Head of Financial Services seeking approval for changes to the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25.

Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, introduced the report, proposed the recommendation and answered questions.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Adopt** the new Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25.

86. Questions on Cabinet minutes

a) Draft Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 13 December 2023

Minute 98 – Equalities Update

In response to a question from Councillor Ed Turner, Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies agreed that investing in diverse workforce was central to the Council's vision for the city and belief in equality, diversity and inclusion, and stated he would not be deflected by the government in its recent audit of EDI spending in civil services.

Councillor Katherine Miles wished to put on record that this was the first Council meeting held where increased representations of women of significance to Oxford's political history were proudly displayed on the walls of the Council Chamber, reflective of the Council's ethos. She congratulated the women represented in the photographs, as well as the Council on progressing its work equality, diversity and inclusion.

b) Draft Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 24 January 2024

Minute 111 - Scrutiny Reports

In response to a procedural question from Councillor Christopher Snowton, Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks sought advice from the Monitoring Officer.

The Monitoring Officer clarified that the evaluation of bids submitted followed legal processes that Councillors should not be involved in the actual procurement process and in the evaluation of the bids. It was explained that the procurement process would be susceptible to challenges in the context of legality where they were further assessed by Councillors outside of the process with view to re-evaluate the outcome of the procurement.

87. Questions on Notice from Members of Council

49 written questions were asked of the Cabinet Members and the Leader, and these and written responses were published before the meeting. These along with summaries of the 20 supplementary questions and responses asked and given at the meeting are set out in the minutes pack.

Council agreed to consider items 12a and 12b next of the agenda before the 30 minutes break and then return to the agenda as listed.

88. Outside organisation/Committee Chair reports and questions

a) Outside Organisation Report: Future Oxfordshire Partnership

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships, introduced the report which updated Council on the work of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP).

Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel, spoke to expressed appreciation to Councillor Brown and FOP officers for their support in the work of the FOP Scrutiny Panel. Councillor Miles drew attention to some challenges of the panel, including delay in the availability of papers for adequate oversight, and an unclear expectation and scope of the panel's responsibilities in relation to the partnership. It was clarified that these challenges had not stopped the collaborative work between the scrutiny panel and the partnership, however it was hoped they were improved moving into the next Council year.

Councillor Brown acknowledged the concerns raised by Councillor Miles.

Cllr Latif arrived at the meeting.

Council resolved to:

1. **Note** the annual update report on the work of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and the Oxford Inclusive Economy Partnership.

b) Scrutiny Committee update report

Councillor Lucy Pegg, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, introduced the report and thanked the members of the Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Officer, Alice

Courtney, for their hard work and contributions. Councillor Pegg updated the Council on the activities of the committee from 01 October 2023 to 31 December 2023, highlighting some of the reports that had been considered during this period, including the Local Plan 2040 Regulation 19 Consultation Document, Equalities Monitoring report, and the Action Plan following the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Review.

Council **noted** the report.

89. Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision at this Council meeting

Council heard four addresses and Cabinet Members read or summarised their written responses. Both addresses and responses are set out in full in the minutes pack.

1. Address from Isabel Tucker – Operation of Gloucester Green Market
2. Address from Emma Jones – Oxford's Leisure Contract to Serco
3. Address from Maryam Firdous Ahmed – Anti-BDS Bill
4. Question from Chaka Artwell – Female Sanitary Products

The Lord Mayor thanked the speakers for their contributions.

90. Motions on notice 29 January 2024

Council had before it five motions on notice submitted in accordance with Council procedure rules and reached decisions as set out below.

Motions agreed as set out below:

- a. Stop the Anti-Boycott Bill (Proposed by Cllr Dr Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini, seconded by Cllr Chris Jarvis) [Amendment proposed by Cllr Chris Smowton, seconded by Cllr Laurence Fouweather]

Motions taken but lost:

- b. Moving Oxford City Council to a committee system of representation to increase residents' confidence in democracy (proposed by Cllr Amar Latif, seconded by Cllr Shaista Aziz)

Motions not taken as the time allocated for debate had finished:

- c. The Cost of living crisis and local government funding (proposed by Cllr Ed Turner, seconded by Cllr Nigel Chapman). [Amendment proposed by Cllr Andrew Gant, seconded by Cllr Katherine Miles]
- d. Scrap the two-child benefit cap (proposed by Cllr Christopher Smowton, seconded by Cllr Katherine Miles)

e. Disposable Vapes (proposed by Cllr Lucy Pegg, seconded by Cllr Rosie Rawle)

a) Stop the Anti-Boycott Bill (proposed by Cllr Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini, seconded by Cllr Chris Jarvis)

Cllr L Smith left the meeting, having declared an interest on this item.

Councillor Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini, seconded by Councillor Chris Jarvis, proposed the motion as set out in the briefing note. Councillor Djafari-Marbini proposed an amendment to the motion, replacing point 3 of 'this Council resolves' to "Write to the Right to Boycott campaign expressing Oxford City Council's opposition to the Anti-Boycott Bill."

Councillor Christopher Snowton withdrew his amendment as set out in the briefing note.

Council debated the amended motion. Following debate and on being put to the vote, the amended motion was **agreed**.

Council Notes

1. The Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons on 10 January 2024.¹ It will now continue its passage through the House of Lords.
2. The legislation has been dubbed the 'Anti-Boycott Bill' and seeks to stop public bodies from making any decisions around investment and procurement that aren't in line with UK government foreign or economic trade policies.²
3. The Anti-Boycott Bill is specifically designed to target the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement - an initiative launched by Palestinian civil society organisations. The BDS movement seeks to end international support for Israel's oppression of Palestinians and pressure Israel to comply with international law.
4. The only geographical areas that the legislation would prohibit the government making exemption provisions for are - as listed in the Bill - 'Israel', 'the Occupied Palestine Territories' and 'the Occupied Golan Heights'.³ The legislation would therefore explicitly prohibit public bodies - including local authorities - from engaging in any form of boycott of Israeli goods and services, including those produced or developed through an illegal occupation.
5. More than 60 charities, campaign groups, civil society organisations and trade unions have publicly opposed the legislation, including ASLEF, CWU, FBU, Friends of the Earth, Global Justice Now, Greenpeace, Jews for Justice for Palestinians, Liberty, Methodist Church in Britain, Muslim Association of Britain, Na'Amod, NEU, NUS, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, PCS, Unison, UCU, and War on Want.⁴

Council Believes

¹ <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3475>

² <https://righttoboycott.org.uk/>

³ <https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/53574/documents/4223>

⁴ <https://righttoboycott.org.uk/#signatories>

1. The Anti-Boycott Bill is an anti-democratic measure which restricts the ability of public bodies to take ethics and human rights into account in key parts of their decision making. It has profound implications on public bodies' ability to act upon human rights violations, slavery and environmental destruction.
2. Ethical boycotts from public bodies - including local councils - have played an important role in many historic campaigns for justice - most notably in the struggle against the Apartheid regime in South Africa.
3. Local authorities like Oxford City Council have a duty to speak out and resist such attempts to diminish democracy.

Council Resolves

1. To ask the leader of the council to:
 1. Issue a public statement condemning the Anti-Boycott Bill.
 2. Write to the secretary state for leveling up, housing and communities - Michael Gove - expressing Oxford City Council's opposition to the legislation and calling for him to withdraw the Bill.
 3. Write to the Right to Boycott campaign expressing Oxford City Council's opposition to the Anti-Boycott Bill.
 4. Write to Labour leader Keir Starmer, Liberal Democrat leader Ed Davey, and Green Party co-leaders Adrian Ramsay and Carla Denyer, encouraging them to ensure that their MPs actively oppose the legislation in parliament.
 5. Write to the leaders of the parliamentary groups in the House of Lords, encouraging them to ensure that peers within their groups actively oppose the legislation in the Lords.

Cllr L Smith and Hayes re-joined the meeting.

b) Moving Oxford City Council to a committee system of representation to increase residents' confidence in democracy (proposed by Cllr Amar Latif, seconded by Cllr Shaista Aziz)

Councillor Amar Latif, on being seconded by Councillor Shaista Aziz, proposed the motion.

Following debate and on being put to the vote, the motion was **lost**.

This Council notes:

Years of low voter turnout in local elections (less than 40% in May 2022)⁵ within Oxford would suggest that there is discontent amongst the electorate in the city.

⁵ https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20046/elections_and_voting/1521/oxford_city_council_election_results_-_5_may_2022

Low turn out has been suggested to disproportionately affect the more disadvantaged across communities and society who may find it more difficult to access elected politicians, find it challenging to access online consultations and be more disenfranchised with the political process.⁶⁷

That the Labour administration has lost 10 councillors since October 13th, 2023, which is almost a third of total Labour Councillors, yet continues as a minority administration.

Furthermore, despite Oxford having the third largest ethnic minority population, 29%⁸, within the Southeast of England, and being proud of its diversity and internationalist identity as a city, there is only one cabinet member from an ethnic minority background.

Prior to the racist murder of George Floyd in the USA in May 2020 and the reinvigoration of the Black Lives Matter and Rhodes Must Fall Movement in Oxford, the Labour lead Oxford City Council carried out internal work to ensure it has a racially diverse and representative Cabinet, the progress made has since been reversed.

That the decision-making process within the City Council leaves large numbers of decisions to individual cabinet members who cannot fully represent the diversity of views from residents across Oxford.

That other Councils, including Sheffield and Bristol, have moved towards a committee system of representation which better reflects views of residents across their respective cities.

This council believes that a committee system of representation:
Is a better and more transparent way for decisions to be made across Oxford, which will create a more equitable system ensuring residents voices are listened to and acted upon alongside a wider group of councillors.

Will allow a less centralised and more collaborative way of working.
Will better reflect the diversity of views and opinions from a wider demographic of society, including across the political spectrum.

Will allow individual Cabinet members to be replaced by Policy Committee Chairs who will have responsibility for different areas of Council policy.

This council agrees to:

Request the Officers assess the implications (financial, resource, legal and otherwise), negatives and positives of the Council moving to a Committee System of governance, including considering and developing plans as to how such a system of governance may work.

⁶ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277953623000746>

⁷ <https://www.democraticaudit.com/2019/10/11/have-we-all-underestimated-the-severity-of-socioeconomic-differences-in-electoral-participation/>

⁸ [Ethnicity | Ethnicity | Oxford City Council](#)

Present the final proposals to Cabinet and then Council for comments and consideration as to whether to commence the process to consider a formal change of governance arrangements in the Council, with a view to putting this to a City-wide referendum by May 2025.

c) The Cost of Living Crisis and local spending in England (proposed by Cllr Ed Turner, seconded by Cllr Nigel Chapman)

This motion was not taken as the time allocated for debate had finished.

d) Scrap the two-child benefit cap (proposed by Cllr Christopher Smowton, seconded by Cllr Katherine Miles)

This motion was not taken as the time allocated for debate had finished.

e) Disposable Vapes (proposed by Cllr Lucy Pegg, seconded by Cllr Rosie Rawle)

This motion was not taken as the time allocated for debate had finished.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 8.45 pm

**Lord Mayor
2024**

Date: Wednesday 21 February

*Decisions on items of business take effect immediately:
Motions may be implemented immediately or may require further budget provision and/or reports to Cabinet before implementation.
Details are in the Council's Constitution.*

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Minutes of a meeting of Council on Wednesday 21 February 2024

Council members present:

Councillor Altaf-Khan	Councillor Arshad (Lord Mayor)
Councillor Aziz	Councillor Brown
Councillor Chapman	Councillor Clarkson
Councillor Corais	Councillor Coyne
Councillor Diggins	Councillor Djafari-Marbini
Councillor Douglas	Councillor Dunne
Councillor Fouweather	Councillor Fry (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillor Gant	Councillor Hall
Councillor Hollingsworth	Councillor Humberstone
Councillor Hunt	Councillor Jarvis
Councillor Kerr	Councillor Landell Mills
Councillor Lygo (Sheriff)	Councillor Malik
Councillor Miles	Councillor Muddiman
Councillor Mundy	Councillor Munkonge
Councillor Nala-Hartley	Councillor Pegg
Councillor Pressel	Councillor Railton
Councillor Rawle	Councillor Rehman
Councillor Linda Smith	Councillor Roz Smith
Councillor Snowton	Councillor Turner
Councillor Upton	Councillor Waite

Also present for all or part of the meeting:

Caroline Green, Chief Executive
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)
Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy
Emma Jackman, Head of Law and Governance
Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager
Lucy Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Hayes, Latif, Morris, Sandelson, Thomas and Walcott sent apologies.

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

91. Declarations of interest

Cllr Malik declared that the decisions at agenda item 6 related to Licensing fees and charges for 2024/25 affected his declared disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI) and he would leave the meeting and take no part in the debate on this item.

92. Announcements

The Lord Mayor advised that she had met with the Duke of Edinburgh as he visited Oxford.

93. Budget Debate Procedure

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

94. Public addresses and questions that relate to matters for decision at this meeting

There were no addresses or questions.

Cllr Douglas arrived at the meeting.

95. General Purposes Licensing and Licensing and Gambling Acts Committees - recommendations on fees and charges 2024/25

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

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

Cllr Mundy, Chair of the General Purposes Licensing Committee moved the recommendation, and seconded by Cllr Clarkson, Chair of the Licensing & Gambling Acts Committee, from the two committees.

On being put to the vote Council resolved to **agree** the relevant licence fees and charges for 2024/25 as set out in Items 6a, 6b, 6c and 6d (and repeated in the relevant sections of Item 9, Appendix 7).

96. Chief Finance Officer's report on the robustness of the Council's 2024/25 budget

Council considered a report from the Head of Financial Services, as required under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations of the budget and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. The Head of Financial Services advised that scrutiny of the budget had been undertaken by the Finance Team, Directors and the Chief Executive, Executive Members and the Scrutiny Committee's Finance Panel, and the figures presented were an estimate of factors at a specific time and therefore liable to change. He highlighted that the estimated income was also subject to the Oxford Model delivering key income streams and as such were outside the control of the Council, however noted that he was confident that the figures provided demonstrated the best estimate and were robust.

Council noted the report in setting the Council budget for 2024/25 and the indicative budgets for 2025/26 – 2027/28.

97. Report of the Scrutiny Budget Review Group

Council considered the report and recommendations of the Budget Review Group of the Scrutiny Committee to the Cabinet meeting on 07 February 2024 and the Cabinet's response.

Cllr Fry, Chair of the Scrutiny Budget Review Group, advised that following detailed discussions at each of its meetings throughout January 2024, the Review Group made a total of 9 recommendations, of which all but one had been agreed. He thanked all the officers involved throughout the process, with particular thanks to Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services and to Alice Courtney, as Scrutiny Officer in drafting this report.

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

98. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2026/27 and 2024/25 Budget

Council had before it and considered:

- The report of the Head of Finance to Cabinet on 07 February 2024 setting out the outcome of the budget consultation and seeking agreement of the Council's Budget for 2024/25 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2025/26 to 2027/28.
- The Labour Group's submitted subsequent amendment published with the briefing note.

- The Liberal Democrat Group's submitted amendments published with the briefing note.
- The Green Group's submitted amendments published with the briefing note.
- The Independent Group's submitted amendments published with the briefing note.
- An individual amendment proposed by Cllr Snowton published with the briefing note.
- An individual amendment proposed by Cllr Miles published with the briefing note.
- The Green Group's alternative budget post Labour Group amendment tabled at the meeting.
- An individual amendment proposed by Cllr Mundy tabled at the meeting.
- A subsequent individual amendment proposed by Cllr Mundy tabled at the meeting.

Cllr Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, seconded by Cllr Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships, proposed agreement of the Budget and the Medium Term Strategy and the recommendations from Cabinet. He also moved his amendment to the Budget, published at Item 9a of the agenda, which was seconded by Cllr Brown.

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

Cllr Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, seconded by Cllr Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships, proposed the additional amendment from Cabinet.

b) Alternative budget proposals - Liberal Democrat Group amendments

The Liberal Democrat Group withdrew their amended Budget, following submission of the amended Labour Group Budget.

Council adjourned for 15 minutes.

c) Alternative budget proposals - Green Group amendments

Cllr Landell Mills arrived at the meeting.

Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Muddiman, moved the Green Group amendments.

Following debate, these were put to the vote.

With more Councillors voting against (21), than for (13), and 8 abstentions, the Green Group amendments were not carried.

d) Alternative budget proposals - Independent Group

Cllr Rehman, seconded by Cllr Aziz, moved the Independent Group amendments.

Council adjourned for 15 minutes.

Following debate, these were put to the vote.

With more Councillors voting against (8) than for (2) and with 30 abstentions, the Independent Group amendments were not carried.

Following agreement from Council, the meeting broke for 15 minutes at the conclusion of this item.

e) Individual amendments to the budget

Cllr Snowton withdrew the individual amendment that had been published with the briefing note.

Cllr Miles, seconded by Cllr Roz Smith moved their individual amendment.

After debate, this was put to the vote.

Cllr Gant declared that as a Cabinet Member for the controlling Authority, he would withdraw from voting on this amendment.

With more Councillors voting against (19), than for (17) and 1 abstention, the individual amendment was not carried.

Cllr Mundy removed the individual amendment that had been tabled earlier in the meeting.

Cllr Mundy, seconded by Cllr Nala-Hartley, moved the individual amendment that had been tabled during the break.

After debate, this was put to the vote.

With more Councillors voting against (21) than for (18) the individual motion was not carried.

f) Decision on the Cabinet Budget

Cllr Kerr left the meeting and did not return.

Following debate, the recommendations of the Cabinet as agreed at its meeting on 07 February 2024 including the details of the budget for 2024/25, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Housing Revenue Account, Capital Programme and other matters set out in the published agenda and briefing note for this meeting and the agreed amendment at Item 99a, were put to the vote.

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

For the Cabinet recommendations to Council as set out in the minutes of that meeting, and with the agreed amendment at Item 99a:

Councillors Arshad, Fry, Lygo, Brown, Chapman, Clarkson, Corais, Diggins, Douglas, Hollingsworth, Humberstone, Hunt, Munkonge, Pressel, Railton, Rowley, Linda Smith, Turner, Upton, Waite (20)

Against the Cabinet recommendations to Council:

None (0)

Abstentions:

Councillors Altaf-Khan, Aziz, Coyne, Djafari-Marbini, Dunne, Fouweather, Gant, Jarvis, Landell-Mills, Malik, Miles, Muddiman, Mundy, Nala-Hartley, Pegg, Rawle, Rehman, Roz Smith, Snowton (19)

With more Councillors voting for than against, the resolution to approve the Cabinet recommendations, with the subsequent amendment as set out at Item 99a, the recommendations were carried.

Council resolved in accordance with the recorded vote to:

1. Note the approval by Cabinet on 24 January and subsequently agreed by the Council on 29 January of an increase of 7.7% (£9.27 per week) in social dwelling rents from 1 April 2024 giving a revised weekly average social rent of £129.72 as set out in Appendix 5 based on a HRA budget as set out in Appendix 4, together with the comments in paragraphs 35-40;
2. Approve the 2024-25 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets for consultation and the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-9, noting:
 - a) the Council's General Fund Budget Requirement of £27.752 million for 2024/25 and an increase in the Band D Council Tax of 2.99% or £10.06 per annum representing a Band D Council Tax of £346.36 per annum; and
 - b) the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme as shown in Appendix 6;
3. Agree the fees and charges shown in Appendix 7;
4. Delegate to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Finance and Asset Management, the decision to determine whether it is financially advantageous for the Council to enter into a Business Rates Distribution Agreement as referred to in paragraphs 16-18 of the report; and
5. Note the changes to council tax charges in respect of second homes and properties empty for more than one year as referred to in paragraphs 19-22 from 1st April 2025 and 1st April 2024 respectively.

Cllr Nala-Hartley left the meeting and did not return.

99. Council Tax 2024/25

Council considered the report of the Head of Financial Services setting out the necessary calculations to enable Council to set the 2024/25 Council Tax for Oxford City.

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

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

For the resolution set out below:

Councillors: Arshad, Fry, Lygo, Ataf-Khan, Brown, Chapman, Clarkson, Corais, Diggins, Douglas, Fouweather, Gant, Hollingsworth, Humberstone, Hunt, Jarvis, Landell Mills, Miles, Muddiman, Mundy, Munkonge, Pegg, Pressel, Railton, Rawle, Rowley, Linda Smith, Roz Smith, Smowton, Turner, Upton, Waite (32)

Against the resolution:

None (0)

Abstentions:

Councillors: Aziz, Coyne, Djafari-Marbini, Dunne, Malik, Rehman (6)

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

Council resolved in accordance with the reported vote to approve for the financial year 2024/25 recommendations 1 to 5 and to note points 6 to 8:

1. The City Council's precept and Council Tax requirement of £16,277,802 including Parish precepts and £16,014,035 excluding Parish Precepts.
2. The average Band D Council Tax figure (excluding Parish Precepts) of £346.36, a 2.99% increase on the 2023/24 figure of £336.30. Including Parish Precepts, the figure is £352.07, a 2.91% increase (see paragraphs 2 to 8 of the report).
3. A contribution of £10,000 to Old Marston Parish Council in recognition of the additional expenditure that the parish incurs as a consequence of maintaining the cemetery (see paragraphs 11 and 12 of the report).
4. The amount of £692,280 to be treated as Special Expenses (see paragraph 16 of the report).
5. The Band D Council Taxes for the various areas of the city (excluding the Police and Crime Commissioner and Oxfordshire County Council's precepts) as follows:

Littlemore	£372.56
Old Marston	£380.03
Risinghurst and Sandhills	£371.41
Blackbird Leys	£350.78
Unparished Area	£349.34

These figures include Parish Precepts and special expensing amounts as appropriate; in addition to the City Wide Council Tax of £331.39.

The Council is also asked to note:

6. Oxfordshire County Council's precept and Band D Council Tax as set out in paragraph 19 below
7. The Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley's precept and Band D Council Tax as set out in paragraph 20 below, and
8. The overall average Band D equivalent Council Tax of £2,441.91 including Parish Precepts (subject to confirmation of the Band D figures for the Oxfordshire County Council).

Cllr Malik left the meeting and did not return.

100. Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25

Council considered the report of the Head of Financial Services, submitted to Cabinet on 07 February 2024, presenting the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25 together with the Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 to 2027/28.

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

Council resolved to approve:

1. The Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 as set out in paragraphs 12 to 60 of this report and the Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 – 2027/28 as set out in Appendix 2;
2. The Borrowing Strategy 2024/25 at paragraphs 34 to 36 of this report;
3. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement at Appendix 3 which sets out the Council’s policy on charging borrowing to the revenue account;
4. The Investment Strategy for 2024/25 and the investment criteria as set out in paragraphs 38 to 56 of this report and in Appendix 1; and
5. The Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation at Appendix 4.

101. Capital Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28

Council considered the report of the Head of Financial Services, submitted to Cabinet on 07 February 2024, presenting the Capital Strategy for 2024/25 – 2027/28 for approval.

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

Council resolved to approve the Capital Strategy for 2024/25 to 2027/28.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 8.56 pm

Lord Mayor

Date: Monday 18 March 2024

Decisions on items of business take effect immediately:

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

Details are in the Council’s Constitution.

To: Cabinet – 13 March 2024
 Council – 18 March 2024

Report of: Executive Director (Development)

Title of Report: Appropriation of Land at Railway Lane

Summary and Recommendations	
Purpose of report:	The report seeks approval to appropriate a parcel of land (change the statutory basis on which it is held by the Council from one function to another) at Railway Lane from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account in order that the land can be used for the development of new council housing, and to update Cabinet on certain aspects of the development.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management
Corporate Priority:	More Affordable Housing and Meeting Housing Needs
Policy Framework:	Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2023 to 2028
Recommendation: That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	Recommend to Council the appropriation of the land owned by Oxford City Council that forms part of the development site for housing at Railway Lane from the General Fund (GF) into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) at the established red book valuation figure.

Supplementary valuation information (forthcoming)
Appendix 1 (Confidential) Red Book Valuation

Introduction and background

1. The Council continues to develop a supply programme to deliver more affordable housing through multiple work streams, including the delivery of homes through the Council's housing company – OCHL; direct delivery by the Council; joint ventures; regeneration schemes; acquisitions; and enabling activity with Registered Providers, Community-Led Housing groups, and other partners. The Council seeks to deliver

over 1,600 affordable tenure homes across the next four years (to March 2027), with at least 850 of those at the most affordable Social Rent level.

Scheme information

2. This report relates to one development in the OCHL programme, Railway Lane, which will be ready to enter into contract shortly. The scheme secured project approvals and delegations at Cabinet on 14 December 2022, and the Council's Planning Committee in July 2022 under planning reference 21/01176/FUL.
3. This is a 100% affordable housing scheme of 90 much needed affordable homes. There is a mix of unit types from 1-bedroom flats to a 5-bed house. 47 homes are to be let at Social (Council) Rents to households on the housing register, and the remaining homes are to be developed as Shared Ownership tenure. The scheme uses derelict brownfield land.
4. Accommodation schedule

Size	Social Rent	%	Shared Ownership	%	Totals	%
1b2pF	8	8.8			8	8.8
2b3pF			24	26.8	24	26.8
2p4bF	8	8.8			8	8.8
2b4pH	3	3.3	3	3.3	6	6.6
3b5pH	18	20	16	17.9	34	37.9
4b6pH	9	10			9	10
5b8pH	1	1.1			1	1.1
Totals	47	52%	43	48	90	100

5. The scheme is part of the Homes England Affordable Housing Programme 2021 – 2026 and has secured total grant of £6,165,000.
6. The majority of the Railway Lane development site is owned by W.E Black Limited. They have agreed terms for the sale of their land to Oxford City Housing (Development) Limited (OCHDL), and their subsidiary company (Cantay Estates Limited) will be appointed by OCHDL under the sale and development agreement to construct the development in accordance with planning. A small parcel of land comprised in the development site (by Thompson Terrace) is in the ownership of Oxford City Council. This parcel of land (identified below in Image 1, edged in blue) is currently held in the General Fund.
7. This report requests that Cabinet note the intention to commence the appropriation process for this land from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account, and requests that Cabinet recommends this to Council.
8. There will be no sale of the OCC land. Instead, the Council will grant the developer rights to implement the development on the Council's land under licence. The contract between OCHDL and the developer will oblige OCHDL to procure the grant of this licence.

Site location plan

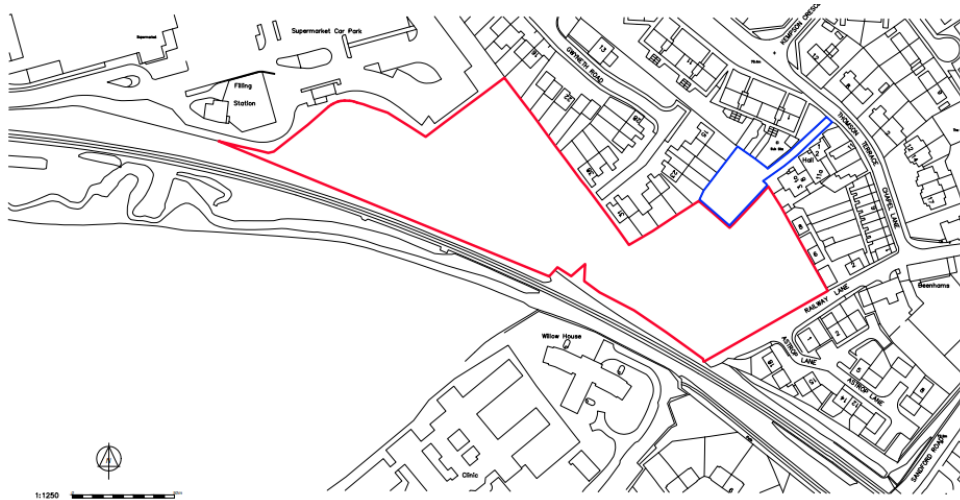


Image 1: OCC land identified in blue (wider site identified in red)



Image 2: Site plan to indicate development on OCC parcel of land

Financial implications

9. The land will be appropriated from the General Fund to the HRA at a value equal to that of a Red Book valuation.
10. The Red Book valuation is underway but the valuation figure is not yet available. The valuation figure will be circulated separately and confidentially in advance of Cabinet.
11. The appropriation will result in an increase to the HRA Capital Financing Requirements (CFR) of the valuation figure and a corresponding decrease in the General Fund CFR.

12. The development of the land will be completed in phases, and will involve stage payments being made by OCHDL to the developer at agreed intervals set out in the sale and development agreement (Contract 1). There will be a separate contract between OCHDL and the Council for the buy-back of the affordable homes (Contract 2), which will be entered into at the same time as Contract 1. Contract 2 will oblige the Council to make stage payments to OCHDL at the same intervals, to enable OCHDL to comply with their obligations under Contract 1.

Legal issues

13. The Council has the power to acquire and hold property for various statutory purposes to perform its functions, In order to use land for a purpose other than the one for which it was acquired the land must be “appropriated” for a different purpose. Appropriation is a statutory process which allows the Council to reallocate property within its ownership from one purpose to another.

14. It is entirely within the Council’s discretion to decide that a certain parcel of land or a certain property that has been acquired or held for one purpose should now be used or appropriated for another purpose. The Council is the sole judge of whether or not the land is still required for the purpose for which it is held and its decision cannot be challenged, other than by way of a judicial review if the decision is made outside the Council’s powers or the relevant procedural requirements have not been complied with.

15. The general power of appropriation is set out under section 122 of the LGA 1972. Under this section appropriation may be made where the land is no longer needed in the public interest of the locality for the purpose for which it is held immediately before appropriation. In this regard, a broad view of local need (taking account of the interests of all residents in the locality), has to be taken and officers consider that this test has been met. Officers are also satisfied that the use of appropriation would be in the public interest and proportionate to the objectives of the redevelopment scheme for the purpose of the Human Rights Act 1998.

16. Appropriation to the HRA (as proposed here) is specifically dealt with under Section 19 (1) of the Housing Act 1985, and gives the Council the power to appropriate for housing purposes any land for the time being vested in them or at their disposal. Consent of the Secretary of State is not required to appropriate land to the HRA, however once land is appropriated to the HRA any later appropriation or disposal for another purpose would require the consent of Secretary of State.

17. The Council minutes should show that the land is not currently held for housing purposes and that the Council intends to formally appropriate the land in accordance with s19 (1) HA 1985.

Level of risk

18. Any risks inherent in this programme are already identified elsewhere, with actions to mitigate these detailed in the OCHL and HRA Business Plans and the Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan.

Equalities impact

19. 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 and accessible housing to better meet client needs.

Carbon and Environmental considerations

20. There are no carbon or environmental considerations in relation to the appropriation.

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Background Papers:	None
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To: Council
Date: 18th February 2024
Report of: Executive Director for Communities and People
Title of Report: Licensed Vehicles Emission Standards Amendment

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To agree the General Purposes Licensing Committee decision to delay the introduction of new emission standards for Hackney Carriage Vehicles licensed by this Authority by one year .
Key Decision:	No
Committee Chair with responsibility:	Cllr Mundy, Chair of the General Purposes Licensing Committee
Corporate Priority	Enable Inclusive Economy, Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework	Air Quality Action Plan, Low Emission Strategy, Sustainability Strategy
Recommendations: That the Council resolves to:	
1. Agree on a delay to the introduction of new emission standards to Hackney Carriage Vehicles licenced by this Authority by one year , as agreed by the General Purposes Licensing Committee.	

Introduction and background

1. On 5th February 2024 the General Purposes Licensing Committee heard a report to:
 - a) **Consider** the request made by City of Oxford Licenced Taxicab Association to delay the introduction of ultra-low emission standards for Hackney Carriage Vehicles licensed by this Authority;
 - b) **Consider** the results of a public consultation and statements submitted;
 - c) **Consider** the contents of this report and options set out in it;
 - d) **Agree** any amendments to the current emission standards for Hackney Carriage Vehicles licensed by this Authority;
 - e) **Agree** that any such amendments be recommended to Council for adoption.

A full copy of this report can be found on the Council website at:
<https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=149&MId=7551>

Process and Decision

2. On 5th February 2024 the General Purposes Licensing Committee agreed to delay the introduction of emission standards for Hackney Carriage Vehicles licenced by this authority by:

Delaying the requirement for all Taxis to be ULEV by **one year** (January 2026)

*Recommended by Oxford City Council Environmental Sustainability Officers and City Cllrs for Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice and Taxi Licensing Portfolio Holder

Financial implications

3. None

Legal issues

4. None

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6 March 2024

Our Ref : CITO1627/24

Your Ref:

Dear Sirs,

RE: Emission Standards Proposals for Hackney Carriage Vehicles

We are instructed by the City of Oxford Licensed Taxicab Association ("COLTA") following the meeting of the General Purposes Licensing Committee ("GPLC") to consider the implementation of new emission standards for Hackney Carriages ("taxis"). We would be grateful if this letter and all of the papers considered by the GPLC can be provided to the members of the full Council meeting that is due to consider the formal adoption of the implementation programme.

Our client is grateful for the compromise that was suggested by the GPLC at its last meeting to consider the implementation but feel that additional latitude is required, given all of the circumstances that have been laid out.

COLTA accepts that there is a potential benefit in improving the emission standards of vehicles, not least by setting an example, and as a matter of principle has no objection to new criteria being brought into force, but there is an issue in relation to the speed of implementation.

A deferral until 2027 is sought for the new standard of ULEV vehicles to be introduced.

In common with a number of local authorities, the policy in the past has been that the maximum age for a Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle has been five years at the time of initial application. Once licenced, a vehicle could be used beyond the age of 5 years. In 2013, the arrangements for the maximum age of vehicle was amended, similar to arrangements in place with a number of other authorities. The proposals now seek to implement a significant change to the previous policies.

It is helpful to consider actions taken by other authorities. As a comparison, Transport for London have in place a policy that Euro 3, 4, 5 and 6 diesel taxis, as well as vehicles converted to operate on Liquid Petroleum Gas, have a maximum age of 15 years once they have been granted a licence. There are some exceptions, in the main those that held an exemption prior to November 2019. This includes vehicles that were of some form of classic or niche type. It is suggested that regard should be had to this example, not least because of the issues of pollution that exist within London might be anticipated in many parts to be significantly worse than in Oxford. What is currently proposed for Oxford is however a more stringent requirement.

As matters stood before 2014, a person could have purchased a vehicle and had no end date where it would be eligible for renewal. Between then and 2020, it is understood that the arrangements were that a new vehicle could be licensed and its life expectancy to operate under a licence would at that point be up to 12 years, ie expiring in 2032. At that point, there would be a need to invest in a new vehicle. It was further expected that by 2020 needed to meet Euro 4 by 2020. The trade met this requirement as a demonstration of co-operative working. The commitment of the trade has also been shown by the number of ULEVs which have been brought into service and the impact of this may not have been fully appreciated when the GPLC met to consider the proposals.

With the current proposals, there would be a need to purchase a vehicle much earlier and the initial calculations on viability would need to be re-worked. It could be that buying a vehicle with a 12 year life was viable, but not one that had a 6 year life. In implementing the ULEV standard at this stage, there would be a significant financial disbenefit to the trade with additional finance required to purchase a replacement vehicle earlier than originally anticipated. The margins of profit on operating a taxi would not necessarily permit this. The financial information presented to the GPLC would seem to support this proposition.

The benefit to be achieved by implementing the ULEV standard for Taxis is relatively low when compared to the volume of traffic in Oxford as a whole. Figures produced by Oxfordshire County Council (source Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006-11) identify the volume of traffic on the roads : For example, Botley Road was quoted as being used by 25,500 vehicles per day, Woodstock Road by 17,000 per day, Iffley Road by 19,000 vehicles per day. That situation is almost certainly worse today.

As was explained at the GPLC, there is currently a maximum of 107 Hackney Carriages that can be licensed in the city and this represents a miniscule proportion of the vehicles that are on the roads. This number is even smaller when it is considered that just 73 of the vehicles are at Euro 4 standards and 2 are at Euro 6 with the remainder being compliant. 34 vehicles are already electric.

The impact that has to be considered is that just of these 73 vehicles, out of what is likely to be somewhere approaching 100,000 that use Oxford's roads every day, are affected. The emissions by this small number of vehicles is comparatively tiny and it is suggested that removing them will have no measurable benefit on air quality. It is suggested that any impact

is less than 1% and could be argued to be less than 0.001%, having regard to the number of vehicles that use the roads of Oxford every day.

As mentioned, a limit is imposed on the number of taxis that may be licensed within Oxford. This is a positive move and prevents any increase beyond that limit and therefore restricts the potential impact of such vehicles. The greater issue is that of the uncontrollable numbers of other vehicles that may enter the city.

It is suggested that the benefit of implementing the ULEV standard for these vehicles is proportionally very low in scientific terms, as far as the emissions that are generated are concerned. Nevertheless, as a demonstration of principle it is agreed that such implementation does help to demonstrate good practice and this is why the implementation is not opposed in its entirety.

Given that the benefit in reducing emissions is likely to be low, the most significant advantage in introducing the standard is to make a public declaration as to the way forward with transport within the city. Put another way, the benefit is to educate the public on the advantage of ULEVs. Simply having the standard in force is not enough and to be successful, part of the implementation process should be to embark on a publicity programme so that the public is aware of the work that is being done by both the Council and the trade. There is significant scope for the Council and the trade to work together on this and by delaying the final implementation date gives a longer period for a public education scheme to be developed and implemented. There is already a waypoint that could be publicised in the number of vehicles that are already to the ULEV standard, but it appears that many opportunities to do this have been missed in the past.

We therefore suggest that in view of the work already done and the tiny proportion of vehicles that make up the trade, it would be better for all concerned to embark on a unified strategy to promote ULEVs. This is likely to yield more benefit than just implementing the scheme as currently proposed and if the Council is serious about reducing emissions within the City it presents an opportunity that did not exist before. For the trade, there would be an advantage in that the industry is promoted and for the residents of Oxford it may help to convince them to use a ULEV – whether their own or a taxi – in preference to petrol or diesel alternatives.

The matter of joint working is one that was promoted by the Council in the past and there was at one point a forum for officers to meet with the trade. It would be beneficial if this could be re-established to promote a better trade within the city.

The Council will of course recognise that there is a duty to act in a way that is proportional in its decision-making process and the law as set out in *Eastside Cheese Company & Anor, R (on the application of) v Secretary Of State For Health [1999] EWCA Civ 1739*, extolls the decision in *R v MAFF ex parte Fedesa [1990] ECR 1*: “when there is a choice between several appropriate measures recourse must be had to the least onerous, and the disadvantages caused must not be disproportionate to the aims pursued”.

In this instance, there is the ability of the Authority to firstly decide whether or not to implement the scheme. That decision has already been taken and significant progress made towards the introduction of ULEV vehicles. The next stage is the one that is presently under consideration, namely when that scheme should be applied.

It would seem that the disadvantages – namely the cost to the trade and the difficulty of obtaining and securing maintenance for the vehicles – are disproportionate to the small advantage of reducing the existing 73 vehicles out of the many thousands that use Oxford's roads every day. By extending the implementation to 2027, there could however be agreement from the trade that the approach is the correct one to take.

The report to the GPLC included the results of a public consultation, which overwhelmingly supported a deferral of the scheme for three years. The weight of opinion here should not be overlooked, otherwise the process of public consultation is entirely devalued and there is a risk of the accusation that public consultations are pointless and undermines the proposition of a democratic process. The response rate of over 82% in favour of a deferral for three years is weighty indeed.

It is noted that the resolution of the GPLC included a number of outcomes that relied upon others, particularly the cabinet members for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships and for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies. Some of those requests may well have financial implications upon the local authority and would require additional work to be undertaken. It is suggested that those requests may take some time to implement and because of budget and work-setting cycles could result in additional time being required. The provision of servicing and testing of low emission vehicles is a particular example that was cited and discussions to date have not managed to resolve the issue. This is fundamental to the scheme being implemented.

From the resolutions of the GPLC, it seems clear that additional work is therefore required before the requirement to meet the ultra-low emissions standard is implemented. An earlier implementation may well be set up the trade to fail in the aspiration of meeting the standard. The result could be a lack of availability of suitable licensed vehicles and this not just prejudices the operators of those vehicles but also the residents of and visitors to Oxford.

Finally, the Council will be acutely aware of some of the issues that have affected the viability of the trade over recent years. The COVID pandemic is of course one but there have been others, including the situation with road closures in Oxford, such as Botley Road, which has a major impact on the trade. The rise in interest rates and what has been described as the current financial crisis have also taken their toll on the trade and the availability of funding to purchase new vehicles that are compliant with the ULEV standard.

For all these reasons, it is suggested that the Council should resolve the following ;

1. That the introduction of the new ULEV standards should be implemented in January 2027 at the earliest.

2. That the Council should embark on a significant and sustained publicity campaign throughout the period leading up to the implementation date and should take every opportunity to engage the trade in such promotion.
3. That the Council should work with the licensed trade and service providers to ensure that there are sufficient service facilities and charging points that are available to the licensed trade within Oxford before the standards are implemented
4. That the Council should establish a regular forum with the licensed vehicle trade to promote joint working and collaboration on matters of joint interest.

Such an approach would still meet the objectives of reducing vehicle emissions and would demonstrate the Council's approach of working proactively with the trade to introduce best practice.

Yours faithfully,



Licensing Lawyers

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To: Council
Date: 18 March 2024
Report of: Head of Business Improvement
Title of Report: Pay Policy Statement 2024/25

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To approve the Annual Pay Policy Statement
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member with responsibility:	Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation(s): That Council resolves to:	
1. Approve the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 and the new 2 year pay agreement in Appendix 1.	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Annual Pay Policy Statement 2024/25
Appendix 2	Risk Register

Introduction and background

1. The Council is required by legislation to approve and publish a Pay Policy Statement annually.

Overview

2. The Pay Policy Statement in Appendix 1 reflects the Council's current agreements and arrangements with regard to pay.
3. The Council has completed union negotiations with Unison and Unite to agree a new two-year pay agreement providing a cost of living pay award of 6.5% on base pay points with effect from 1st April 2024 and 3% with effect from 1st April 2025. The

freeze on incremental pay progression will be lifted and employees will move up an increment unless already at the maximum pay point. Incremental progression covers National Joint Council (NJC) Grades 3 to 11 only. The paid leave entitlement will increase by one day (pro rata for part-time employees) with effect from 1st October 2024. The arrangements in the local pay agreement for the period from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2026 are reflected in the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25.

4. The previous pay agreement included a commitment to undertake a full review of pay, grading and progression looking ahead from 1st April 2024 onwards and this work will be completed in 2024.
5. The Living Wage Foundation announced the increase to the voluntary London and National Living Wage in November 2023. The Oxford Living Wage is set at 95% of the London Living Wage and, with effect from 1st April 2024 this will rise to £12.49 per hour. In comparison, with the exception of Apprentices, the lowest Council employee pay rate will be £12.67 per hour as at 1st April 2024. The Council's apprentices commence their apprenticeship below the Oxford Living Wage but progress to rates in excess of it.

Financial implications

6. The financial implications of this Pay Policy Statement and the new two year pay agreement have been included within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The estimated cost of this is around £2.2 million including national insurance and superannuation over the period of the 2-year agreement.
7. The Council's contract rules require that all contracts include the requirement on the contractor and its supply chain to pay their employees at least the Oxford Living Wage. The Oxford Living Wage is incorporated into the Council's contracts for temporary agency workers, and the requirement to pay the Oxford Living Wage as a minimum also covers its Leisure Services partner and both Oxford Direct Services Ltd and Oxford City Housing Limited, the latter two being Council-owned companies.

Legal issues

8. The Council has a legal obligation to produce and publish a pay policy statement annually. In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to approve its Annual Pay Policy Statement by 31 March each year and to publish its Annual Pay Policy Statement as soon as reasonably practicable after it has been approved. A failure to approve and publish a Pay Policy Statement by the required date would be liable to challenge by way of judicial review.

Level of risk

9. A risk register can be found in Appendix 2.

Equalities impact

10. All changes to pay arrangements are and will continue to be subject to consultation, appropriate approvals, and equality impact assessments.

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Background Papers: None

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Pay Policy Statement 2024/25

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1 Aim

- 1.1 To ensure the Council is competitive in the labour market and can attract and retain talented and motivated people committed to delivering service excellence, whilst providing value for money for our citizens. To achieve this, we need to:
- Offer competitive rates of pay for our sector
 - Be fair and consistent
 - Make sure the difference in pay between the lowest and highest paid is proportionate to levels of responsibility and knowledge and not unnecessarily large
 - Support the delivery of the corporative objectives in line with the organisation's values

2 Decision making

- 2.1 Whilst full Council sets the pay policy, it delegates to the Appointments Committee the setting of the Chief Executive and Director pay. The Appointments Committee is politically proportionate in that it represents all party groups on the Council. The Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service has delegated authority in respect of all other pay decisions.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This Pay Policy Statement covers all employees.

4 Definitions

- 4.1 This statement makes reference to the following:

'National Minimum Wage' – *the national minimum wage is determined by Government and sets minimum hourly pay rates for everyone under the age of 23.*

'National Living Wage' – *the national living wage is determined by Government and sets minimum hourly pay rates for everyone who is 23 or over.*

'Voluntary Living Wage' – *the voluntary living wage is a voluntary higher hourly pay rate, that employers are encouraged to pay everyone over the age of 18. The Living Wage Foundation has determined two rates: £13.15 in London, £12.00 in the rest of the UK.*

'Oxford Living Wage' – *Oxford City Council has adopted the voluntary 'Oxford Living Wage' to promote liveable earnings for all workers and runs an employer recognition scheme to encourage employers in Oxford, especially our suppliers, to pay this minimum hourly rate. The rate is set at 95% of the Voluntary Living Wage for London. The Oxford Living Wage is £12.49. It is reviewed annually.*

Employees are paid at the prevailing Oxford Living Wage rate as a minimum with the exception of apprentices.

'Pay multiple' - *the ratio between the highest paid employee and the median earnings calculated across the whole Council.*

‘Remuneration’ – *includes all pay elements and severance payments.*

5 Legislation

- 5.1 The Council is required by the Section 38-43 of the Localism Act 2011 having due regard to the associated Statutory Guidance including the Supplementary Statutory Guidance issued in February 2013 to prepare, approve and publish a Pay Policy Statement.
- 5.2 The Council must also have due regard to the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency which makes a commitment to follow three principles when publishing data: responding to public demand; releasing data in open formats available for re-use; and releasing data in a timely way. This includes data on senior salaries and the organisation’s structure.

6 Principles

Remuneration

- 6.1 The City Council currently remunerates all staff through the following elements:
- Salary – the Council has adopted an ‘Oxford Living Wage’. No employee or agency worker engaged through Temporary Agency Worker contracts will earn less than the ‘Oxford Living Wage’ of £12.49 per hour from 1 April 2024. The lowest Council employee hourly rate (except for apprentices) will be £12.67 per hour from 1 April 2024.
 - A two year pay deal has been agreed with effect from 1st April 2024. Under this agreement:
 - a) There will be an increase in basic pay points of 6.5% with effect from 1st April 2024 and 3% with effect from 1st April 2025.
 - b) The freeze on incremental progression will be removed and so employees will receive an increment which will take them to the maximum of the grade as there are only two pay points per grade. If an employee is already at the grade maximum they will receive the inflationary increase only. This applies to National Joint Council (NJC) Grades 3 to 11.
 - c) Employees will receive an additional day of paid leave (pro rata for part-time employees) with effect from 1st October 2024, the start of the leave year.
 - d) No home working allowance will be paid. Only those with protected rights, currently receiving the allowance on 31st March 2022 will continue to receive it.
 - Allowances are payable in addition to normal salary where additional duties are undertaken e.g. standby, call out and overtime. There are various rules regarding these payments such as earnings limits over which certain items cannot be claimed.

- A travel concession is available for all staff travelling to work by public transport and purchasing a season ticket – at a rate of 20% of the cost of the ticket or £150 per year, whichever is lower.
- Other payments and allowances as appropriate in accordance with the conditions for the particular payment including:
 - Honoraria/Acting Up Allowances – where an employee has taken on additional duties or responsibilities for a defined period.
 - Market Supplements – used to supplement pay for certain roles where market conditions mean that standard pay rates are not sufficient for recruitment and retention. Any additional pay is subject to review.
 - Pay protection – where an employee has had a reduction in pay due to a change in responsibilities, or a new role through the Council's Organisational Change process. The employee receives stepped pay protection over a period of 3 years following the change.
 - Weekend and bank holiday working pay enhancements for staff who are required to work on these days as part of their normal working week.
 - Reimbursement of professional fees.

6.2 All staff are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme. They are automatically enrolled and are required to opt out should they so wish unless their contract is for less than three months when they must opt to join.

6.3 Expenses such as work travel costs are reimbursed. The Council seeks to minimise the use of private vehicles for work purposes through encouraging the use of public transport, pool cars and bicycles. As well as reducing the cost to the Council, use of alternative methods of transport supports the organisation's corporate priority to pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford. Where the use of private vehicles is necessary mileage is paid at the current HMRC approved rates. It should be noted that no claim may be made in respect of journeys from or to an employee's home for the sole purpose of going to or returning from a place of duty during normal working hours.

6.4 There is a range of benefits such as flexible working, leisure concessions, cycle scheme, employee assistance programme and various discounts on high street goods and services.

Variations in remuneration

6.5 Apart from the differences identified in paragraphs 6.6 and 6.7, there are no other distinctions made in terms of remuneration. Severance payments are made in accordance with the Council's Organisational Change Policy which applies to all staff employed by the Council.

Current pay schemes

6.6 Two pay schemes are operated (in agreement with trade unions) as follows:

- 1) National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services, Grades 3 – 11, using a set of standard pay points. This covers the majority of staff (Scheme 1)

2) Senior Management Grades for certain senior positions (Scheme 2)

6.7 The schemes in more detail are as follows:

Scheme 1 – the principal scheme was introduced as a result of the nationally-agreed scheme on local government single status and in agreement with Trade Unions. It consists of 9 grades (3 to 11) and was based on the national spinal column points at the point the Council entered into a local pay agreement. It is based on an analytical job evaluation scheme.

Scheme 2 - there are separate grades for senior officers above Grade 11, as follows:

Chief Executive

Executive Directors

Heads of Service (2 different grades according to level of responsibilities and market factors)

Business Lead (in corporate leadership roles or areas of major staff and budget responsibilities)

Service Manager + (to reflect increased responsibilities over grade 11 but less than Business Lead)

6.8 Appointments to roles on the Service Manager+ through to Head of Service are to a fixed or 'spot' salary point on taking up the role, with subsequent inflationary increases to the salary point subject to the same terms as those for Scheme 1 detailed in 6.1 a) above. Chief Executive and Executive Directors' salaries are set by the Appointments Committee on taking up the role (as set out in paragraph 2.1) with subsequent increases to the salary point also subject to the same terms as those for under Scheme 1.

Returning Officer

6.9 The Council's appointed Returning Officer and its Deputy Returning Officers for elections and referenda are entitled to receive and retain the personal fees arising from performing such duties, in addition to normal salary in accordance with the prescribed fee for each election.

6.10 Fees for national polls are set by the Cabinet Office, under a Statutory Instrument and fees for local government elections are determined in accordance with the scale of fees agreed by Oxfordshire County Council each year and adopted by the Returning Officer under a delegation granted by the Council.

6.11 The Council's Returning Officer also acts as Deputy Returning Officer for Oxfordshire County Council elections, fees for which are determined by Oxfordshire County Council. These appointments are independent of the Council.

Pensions and severance payments

- 6.12 The Council's Pensions and Retirement Options Statement, including the Council's policy in relation to the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations, applies to all staff. In accordance with this policy the Council does not augment pensions.
- 6.13 Severance payments are made in accordance with the Council's Organisational Change Policy which details the Council's redundancy scheme.
- 6.14 All payments are subject to an authorisation process involving Senior Officers including the Chief Executive, S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer. Severance packages in excess of £20,000 must be approved by the Leader of the Council. In cases where the severance package exceeds £100,000 they are also subject to the approval of full Council.
- 6.15 In accordance with the Council's normal arrangements regarding termination and severance payments, no employee leaving under a settlement agreement with a redundancy payment can be re-employed by the Council within a period of 36 months.
- 6.16 The same arrangements apply to ex-employees seeking engagement through an agency or under a contract for services.

Lowest paid employees

- 6.17 The Council adopted an 'Oxford Living Wage' in 2009 which is now £12.49 per hour. The Council's apprentices commence their apprenticeship below the Oxford Living Wage but progress to rates in excess of it. The lowest spinal column point for Council staff is £12.67 per hour from 1 April 2024.

** No agency worker employed through Temporary Agency Worker contracts will be paid less than the Oxford Living Wage usually implemented from 1 April each year.*

Pay multiple

- 6.18 As at 30 November 2023 the highest paid officer received £168,847 per annum including all elements of pay. The bottom point of Grade 3 is the lowest rate paid by the Council (except for apprentices) at £22,970 per annum. The Council's current median salary is £37,498 per annum. This makes Oxford City Council's pay multiple 1:4.5.
- 6.19 The highest salary is 7.4 times more than the lowest salary.

Equal pay

- 6.20 Gender Pay Gap information will be reported annually in compliance with legislation and the organisation will also publish Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap information.

7 Communication and data publication

- 7.1 The Council will publish its Annual Pay Policy Statement on its website as soon as reasonably practicable following approval.

- 7.2 Any changes to the Pay Policy Statement may be made by resolution of the Council (including during the financial year to which it relates). Any changes will be publicised on the Council's website as soon as possible after revision.
- 7.3 The Council will also publish data annually relating to senior officer remuneration as outlined in the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency.
- 7.4 The following information is available on the Council's Website:-
- Senior Officer Pay
 - Pay scales for all schemes
 - Severance pay information contained in the Annual Statement of Accounts.

8 Monitoring/review

- 8.1 The Chief Executive, as the Head of Paid Service, has overall responsibility for employees and therefore annual publication of the Pay Policy Statement and pay data produced in relation to it.
- 8.2 This policy statement will come into effect on 1st April 2024, superseding the 2023/24 statement and will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis.

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Appendix 2

Employment Policies and Procedures: Pay Policy Statement - Risk Register

Title	Risk description	Opp/ threat	Cause	Consequence	Date Raised	Owner	Gross		Current		Residual		Comments	Controls				
							I	P	I	P	I	P		Control description	Due date	Status	Progress %	Action Owner
Employment Policies and Procedures	Failure to provide a suite of policies that comply with employment legislation and that are fit for purposes of improving performance and managing risk	T	Managers not equipped with revised policies and procedures	Effective employment policies not implemented consistently and fairly applied	01.11.22	Helen Bishop	3	3	3	2	2	2	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	ongoing	open	80	Helen Bishop
Employment Policies and Procedures	Loss of opportunity to have a suite of policies that implement good practice	O	Manages not equipped with revised policies and procedures	Effective employment policies not implemented consistently and fairly applied	01.11.22	Helen Bishop	3	3	3	2	2	2	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	onging	open	80	Helen Bishop
Employment Policies and Procedures	Damage to Council's reputation	T	Failure to comply with legislative requirements	Required Statement not published	01.11.22	Helen Bishop	3	3	3	2	2	2	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	ongoing	open	80	Helen Bishop

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Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 7 February 2024



Committee members present:

Councillor Brown	Councillor Turner
Councillor Chapman	Councillor Hunt
Councillor Lygo	Councillor Munkonge
Councillor Railton	Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Upton	

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)
Caroline Green, Chief Executive
Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)
Emma Jackman, Head of Law and Governance
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Emma Lund, Committee and Member Services Officer
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy

Also present:

Councillor James Fry, Chair of the Budget Review Group

Apologies:

No apologies were received.

121. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

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

None.

123. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

124. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

125. Scrutiny Reports

The Budget Review Group had met on four occasions during January 2024. Councillor James Fry, Chair of the Group, presented its report and summarised its nine recommendations.

Councillor Fry highlighted that the Group had expressed some concern as to how the savings proposed in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme would be achieved. This had led to a recommendation that several alternative scenarios for achieving the savings should be modelled and included in the next public consultation.

The Group had also recommended that the Council should reconsider its involvement in the Fibre to Homes initiative, with a view to exploring whether this represented an 'unnecessary extra' given the internet speeds already available in the properties in question.

A further recommendation of the Group had been that the Council should continue to pursue a conversation with the owner of Golden Cross to negotiate the opening of their gate to enable access to the Covered Market from Cornmarket during late night opening. Evening opening at the Covered Market appeared to be very successful, and the lack of access from Cornmarket currently meant that many people were likely to be unaware of it.

The Group had also considered that the Council should seek to introduce a charge for 0-1 hours of parking at park and rides and analyse the income which this might generate.

The remaining recommendations - which had related more to process than to the budget directly - had focused on ensuring democratic participation and engagement in the Strategic Review of Services Provided across Community Services; improving data on domestic abuse and homelessness; compiling information to share with the future government about the issues faced by local government as a result of a lack of co-ordination between Central Government departments; and lobbying the Home Office to engage with this Council and local authorities more broadly in relation to asylum dispersal hotels.

Councillor Fry thanked officers for their work in supporting the Group, and the members of the Group for their time and deliberations. The Leader, and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, both thanked the Group for its comprehensive review.

Response to the recommendations of the Budget Review Group were provided in the separately published supplement to the agenda.

The Scrutiny Committee had met on 6 February 2024, and the following reports had been considered:

- (i) Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25
- (ii) Capital Strategy 2024/25

One recommendation had been made on each report.

On the Capital Strategy, the Committee had asked for clarification on whether the capital schemes which pre-dated the Council's net zero targets (and therefore were not subject to the same zero carbon criteria) might jeopardise the Council's ambition to reach net zero by 2030. Clarification had been provided by the Cabinet Member and was included in the separately published scrutiny supplement.

On the Treasury Management Strategy, a recommendation had been made that the Council review its investments in light of the conflict in Israel and Palestine with a view to assessing alignment with the Council's Ethical Investment Policy. The recommendation had been accepted, and the Cabinet Member's response was included in the separately published scrutiny supplement.

126. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2026/27 and 2024/25 Budget

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to present the outcome of the budget consultation and agree the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2025-26 to 2027-28 and 2024-25 Budget for recommendation to Council.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management presented the report and drew attention to the major challenges involved in setting the budget. He highlighted that whilst significant pressures remained from utility costs; pay costs; capital programme project costs; and demand for homelessness and temporary accommodation, the government had not taken account of calls for the need for increased funding for local authorities. The additional money (above the finance settlement) which was to be made available to this Council was a one-off payment of just c £243,000 (against a gross general fund budget for the Council of c £80m). This small gain had effectively been 'cancelled out' by a technical change by the government to Council Tax for second homeowners, which meant that the second home premium which the Council had agreed to implement in February 2023 could not now commence until 1 April 2025 (described in paragraphs 19 – 22 of the report).

Councillor Turner reported that a gain had been achieved through the re-procurement of the Leisure Services contract, which was better over a five-year period than had been forecast.

Since the consultation budget had been published, a pay deal had been reached with the Unions: this was welcome given the current difficult financial climate.

Councillor Turner highlighted concerns around the increasing pressure of temporary accommodation costs. Whilst officers continued to work very hard to find solutions and bring forward options for future consideration, this was likely to remain a significant area of concern in the budget for some time to come.

The Head of Financial Services summarised some of the challenges to the budget setting process, which had included utilities pressures of c £1.2m per year; dividend shortfalls from the Council's companies, which were experiencing very difficult trading conditions; and pay increases which would generate a cost pressure of an additional c £5m. These pressures had had to be considered in the context of a very limited finance settlement from the government, plus the additional c £243k outlined above.

Despite these pressures and issues, a balanced budget over the next five years had been achieved in a climate where increasing numbers of councils were unable to accomplish this, and many were in a position of having to issue a S114 notice. It was therefore moved that it be recommended to Council.

Cabinet resolved to **recommend** to Council to:

1. **Note** the approval by Cabinet on 24 January and subsequently agreed by the Council on 29 January of an increase of 7.7% (£9.27 per week) in social dwelling rents from 1 April 2024 giving a revised weekly average social rent of £129.72 as

set out in Appendix 5 based on a HRA budget as set out in Appendix 4, together with the comments in paragraphs 35-40;

2. **Approve** the 2024-25 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets for consultation and the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-9, noting:
 - a) the Council's General Fund Budget Requirement of £27.752 million for 2024/25 and an increase in the Band D Council Tax of 2.99% or £10.06 per annum representing a Band D Council Tax of £346.36 per annum; and
 - b) the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme as shown in Appendix 6;
3. **Agree** the fees and charges shown in Appendix 7;
4. **Delegate** to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Finance and Asset Management, the decision to determine whether it is financially advantageous for the Council to enter into a Business Rates Distribution Agreement as referred to in paragraphs 16-18 of the report; and
5. **Note** the changes to council tax charges in respect of second homes and properties empty for more than one year as referred to in paragraphs 19-22 from 1st April 2025 and 1st April 2024 respectively.

127. Capital Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to present the Capital Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28 for approval.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, highlighted that the Strategy explained how the capital programme worked and the principles which were followed. Whilst it had been revised and updated over the years, the changes this year were minimal and mainly involved updating the Strategy to reflect new legislation.

Councillor Turner reported that the cost of capital schemes was rising substantially, and this needed to be taken into account within the Council's processes; for example, by ensuring that there was sufficient flexibility to re-consider or value engineer schemes in the event that projected costs were too high. There was a need to be realistic and ensure that schemes progressed appropriately through the gateway process before they were added to the capital programme. It was also important to work to keep slippage to a minimum and avoid optimism bias around projects which might not be feasible.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Recommend to Council** the approval of the Capital Strategy 2024/25 – 2027/28 attached at Appendix A.

128. Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to present the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25 together with the Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 to 2027/28.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, reported that the Strategy had been updated to reflect changes to Minimum Revenue Provision rules. It was considered that the risks of, and types of, investments outlined in the Strategy remained appropriate, and no changes were envisaged to these for the coming year. The Ethical Investment Policy had been retained, and a new Environmental, Social and Governance Policy had been added (at Appendix 4).

The Head of Financial Services highlighted that the Strategy was an important document for the Finance Team and was underpinned by rigorous operational controls. Performance against the prudential indicators was reported to Cabinet on a regular basis.

Cabinet resolved to **recommend** that Council approves:

1. The Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 as set out in paragraphs 12 to 60 of the report and the Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 – 2027/28 as set out in Appendix 2;
2. The Borrowing Strategy 2024/25 at paragraphs 34 to 36 of the report;
3. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement at Appendix 3 which sets out the Council’s policy on charging borrowing to the revenue account;
4. The Investment Strategy for 2024/25 and the investment criteria as set out in paragraphs 38 to 56 of the report and in Appendix 1; and
5. The Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation at Appendix 5.

129. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2024 as a true and accurate record.

130. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

- 13 March 2024
- 17 April 2024
- 12 June 2024
- 10 July 2024
- 14 August 2024
- 11 September 2024

All meetings start at 6.00pm.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.35 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 13 March 2024

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.

To: Council

Date: 18 March 2024

Report of: Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Scrutiny Committee Update Report

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update Council on the activities of the Scrutiny function
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Lucy Pegg, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That Council resolves to note the update report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction

1. This report provides an update on Scrutiny activity during the period from 01 January 2024 to 29 February 2024.
2. During this reporting period the Committee met twice, on 16 January 2024 and 06 February 2024. In addition, there have been two Panel meetings (Finance and Performance Panel – 22 January 2024; Climate and Environment Panel – 27 February 2024). A summary of each meeting is set out below.

Scrutiny Committee: 16 January 2024

3. At its meeting on 16 January 2024, the Committee considered four substantive reports:
 - Leisure Services Contract Award (*Cabinet report*)
 - Draft Corporate Strategy 2024-28 for Consultation (*Cabinet report*)

- Private Rented Sector Regulation Policies – Results of Consultation (*Cabinet report*)
 - DAHA Accreditation and Domestic Abuse Review Group Update
4. The Leisure Services Contract Award report sought approval for the award of a 10-year contract (with 5-year extension option) for the management and development of the Council's three leisure centres, Hinksey Outdoor Pool and the Oxford Ice Rink to Serco Leisure Ltd, subject to officers completing necessary due diligence and pre-contract negotiations; various delegations of authority to facilitate the contract award and smooth transition period; and agreement for Cabinet to receive annual reports on the performance of the leisure services and the contractor. Overall, the Committee wished to record the fact that it had grave concerns about the award of the contract to the proposed provider. However, the Committee noted that there was no real alternative option given the risk of legal challenge (and associated financial risk) if the Council did not award the contract to the winning bidder. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to why the Council's in-house proposal for the provision of leisure services was exempt from publication; the Council's process for assessing reputational risk; the opportunities for input afforded to Members during the procurement process; the arrangements which would be established to manage and monitor the contract; proposed fees and charges for leisure services; the contractual implications in the case of any under-performance by the provider; the impact of the management fee on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy; social value; and the financial viability of the Council providing leisure services in-house. Eight recommendations were agreed.
 5. The Draft Corporate Strategy 2024-28 for Consultation report sought delegated authority for the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any changes to the draft Corporate Strategy 2024-28 as may be required following its consideration by the Scrutiny Committee and then publish the draft Corporate Strategy 2024-28 for public consultation. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to whether the Council's targets around housing were ambitious enough; prioritisation; how the different priorities interconnected; community wealth building; and the Council's work with anchor institutions. Five recommendations were agreed.
 6. The Private Rented Sector Regulation Policies – Results of Consultation report sought approval of three policies: Fit and Proper Person; Banning Orders & Rogue Landlord Database Entry; and Civil Penalties in Relation to Residential Enforcement. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to what happened to money received by the Council in respect of Civil Penalties; whether an individual could be on the Rogue Landlord Database without having a Banning Order as the policy seemed to suggest; whether the national Rogue Landlord Database was being properly utilised and working in the way it was intended; the Council's plans to ensure proper scrutiny of housing for asylum seekers; and whether the Council could include any requirements relating to domestic abuse within its private rented sector regulation policies. Two recommendations were agreed.
 7. The DAHA Accreditation and Domestic Abuse Review Group Update report was a Scrutiny-commissioned report which provided an update on the Council's progress towards the DAHA Accreditation and progress made against the recommendations

arising from the Domestic Abuse Review Group in 2021. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the condition and suitability of safe accommodation; the Council's statutory duty to provide safe accommodation; housing needs; Temporary Accommodation; support for those fleeing domestic abuse; domestic abuse training; and funding for the DAHA Accreditation. Four recommendations were agreed.

Cabinet Responses to Recommendations: January 2024

8. The following reports were submitted to Cabinet in January 2024:
 - Leisure Services Contract Award (*Cabinet report*)
 - Draft Corporate Strategy 2024-28 for Consultation (*Cabinet report*)
 - Private Rented Sector Regulation Policies – Results of Consultation (*Cabinet report*)
 - DAHA Accreditation and Domestic Abuse Review Group Update
 - Biodiversity Action Plan for Oxford City Council Parks and Nature Areas – September 2023 Review
 - Retrofit
9. Of the twenty-six recommendations submitted across the six reports, thirteen were agreed, three were agreed in part and four were not agreed; one recommendation was marked 'not applicable' by Cabinet in relation to the publication of the principles of social value weightings in procurement exercises, as it stated the Council already published this information within its Procurement Strategy 2022-25, which was available on the Council's website. The relevant Cabinet Member did not indicate whether or not recommendations were agreed in relation to five recommendations – providing a written commentary only.

Scrutiny Committee: 06 February 2024

10. At its meeting on 06 February 2024, the Committee considered two substantive reports:
 - Capital Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28 (*Cabinet report*)
 - Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 (*Cabinet report*)
11. The Capital Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28 report sought a Cabinet recommendation to Council for the approval of the Capital Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to whether the Council's investments in assets had been tested by any external bodies to verify that they were not made primarily for financial return; the impact on any capital schemes which commenced prior to the new rules being implemented by the Public Works Loan Board in 2022; the Council's net zero ambitions; Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP); and capitalisation related to the ODS transformation work. One recommendation was agreed.
12. The Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 report sought a Cabinet recommendation to Council for the approval of the Treasury Management Strategy

2024/25, the Borrowing Strategy 2024/25, the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, the Investment Strategy 2024/25 and the Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the reasoning for the significant transfer of funds from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) set out in the financial implications section of the report; prudential indicators; structures of borrowing; risk associated with the large increase in external borrowing set out in the report; the Council's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Policy; passive investments; whether the limit for non-specified investments had been changed following a recommendation made by the Finance and Performance Panel on 06 December 2023; and the Council's Ethical Investment Policy. One recommendation was agreed.

13. In addition, the Committee considered the report and recommendations of the Budget Review Group 2024/25. The Budget Review Group met four times in January 2024 to scrutinise the budget, which led to the culmination of a comprehensive report and the formulation of nine recommendations. The recommendations sought to challenge assumptions in the context of the Council's limited resources and ensure that active, timely and meaningful Member involvement remained at the forefront of Council decision-making. The Committee approved the report and recommendations for submission to Cabinet in February 2024.

Cabinet Responses to Recommendations: February 2024

14. The following reports were submitted to Cabinet in February 2024:

- Capital Strategy 2024/25 to 2027/28 (*Cabinet report*)
- Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 (*Cabinet report*)
- Report of the Budget Review Group 2024/25

15. Of the eleven recommendations submitted across the three reports, nine were agreed, one was agreed in part and one was not agreed.

Housing and Homelessness Panel

16. The Housing and Homelessness Panel has not met during the reporting period.

Finance and Performance Panel

17. The Finance and Performance Panel met once during this reporting period, on 22 January 2024.

18. At its meeting on 22 January 2024, the Panel considered four substantive items:

- Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25 (*Cabinet report*)
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Rent Setting Report 2024/25 (*Cabinet report*)
- Corporate Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Review [presentation]
- Draft Report of the Budget Review Group 2024/25

19. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25 report sought Cabinet approval for changes to the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25 following public consultation. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to income bands; consultation responses; and the impact of moving to a non-banded system. There were no recommendations.
20. The HRA Rent Setting Report 2024/25 presented the outcome of the Council's annual rent review and associated rent setting proposal for 2024/25 in respect of Council dwellings within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), including the setting of associated services and facilities charges. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to any financial return to the Council as a result of investment in energy efficiency measures in HRA stock; and the different percentage rent increase proposed for garages versus social housing rents. There were no recommendations.
21. The Corporate KPI Review presentation item set out an overview of the development of corporate KPIs, which was in the very early stages. The Panel's views on the initial proposals were sought. The Panel raised a number of points across the five proposed priority areas within the draft Corporate Strategy 2024-28 and made suggestions for inclusion within the finalised corporate KPIs. Seven recommendations were agreed, which will be submitted to Cabinet in March 2024.
22. The Draft Report of the Budget Review Group was the culmination of a series of four meetings of the Budget Review Group in January 2024. The report set out the findings and recommendations of the Review Group; Panel agreement was sought to submit the report to the Scrutiny Committee for endorsement before it was submitted to Cabinet in February 2024. Nine recommendations were agreed, which were submitted to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in February 2024 (see *paragraphs 13, 14 and 15 above*).

Climate and Environment Panel

23. The Climate and Environment Panel met once during this reporting period, on 27 February 2024.
24. The following reports, considered by the Climate and Environment Panel at its meeting on 29 November 2023, were submitted to Cabinet in January 2024 (see *paragraphs 8 and 9 above*):
 - Biodiversity Action Plan for Oxford City Council Parks and Nature Areas – September 2023 Review
 - Retrofit
25. At its meeting on 27 February 2024, the Panel considered four substantive items:
 - Heat Network & Zoning [presentation]
 - Citywide Retrofit Strategy [presentation]
 - Biodiversity Net Gain [presentation]
 - Net Zero Masterplan
26. The Heat Network & Zoning presentation was commercially sensitive; commercial confidentiality prevents the provision of a summary report. There were no recommendations.

27. The Citywide Retrofit Strategy presentation set out an overview of work to date in relation to the development of a Citywide Retrofit Strategy and Action Plan and sought the Panel’s feedback. The Panel asked a range of questions and raised a number of points, including those relating to whether non-residential Council-owned buildings were in scope; the retrofit ‘efficiency paradox’; the importance of having a trackable action plan to sit alongside the strategy; and whether the strategy focus should be on areas where the Council had control versus influence alone. Two recommendations were agreed, which will be submitted to Cabinet in March 2024 for response.
28. The Biodiversity Net Gain presentation set out an overview of Biodiversity Net Gain, including the statutory regulations and national guidance; monitoring arrangements; Biodiversity Gain Plans; and identification of Council land for Biodiversity Net Gain purposes. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the development of the offsite Biodiversity Net Gain market; monitoring guidance; responsibility for monitoring of offsite arrangements; ‘stacking’ of biodiversity and carbon offsetting on the same site; the scope of the project to identify Council land for Biodiversity Net Gain purposes; and the interaction of statutory credits with viability calculations during the Planning process. Two recommendations were agreed, which will be submitted to Cabinet in March 2024 for response.
29. The Net Zero Masterplan set out Oxford City Council’s actions over the next two years to achieve its two carbon targets: a Net Zero Estate and Operations by 2030 and a Net Zero City by 2040. There were no recommendations.

Companies Scrutiny Panel

30. The Companies Scrutiny Panel has not met during the reporting period.

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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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