

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 8 July 2026

Committee members present:

Councillor Railton

Councillor Arshad

Councillor Chapman

Councillor Linda Smith

Councillor Rowley

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Uswah Khan, Committee and Member Services Officer

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

Alistair Rush, Interim Group Finance Director

Tom Bridgman, Deputy Chief Executive - Place

Mish Tullar, Transition Manager

Francesca Barr, Senior Rough Sleeping Officer

Courtney Bennett, Regulatory Services Manager

Stephen Cohen, Refugee and Resettlement Manager

Sarah Harrison, Team Leader (Planning Policy)

Nerys Parry, Director of Housing

James Watkins, Housing Policy and Projects Officer

Richard Wood, Housing Strategy and Needs Manager

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Brown, Turner and Lygo sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

11. Declarations of Interest

None.

12. Minutes of the previous meeting

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2026 as a true and accurate record.

13. Addresses by members of the public

None received.

14. Councillor addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda

None received.

15. Councillor addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

Cabinet received a Councillor address on Neighbourhood Issues from Councillor Henwood:

Is there or has there been any loan finance from Oxford City Council to OX Place/OCHL in respect of the land currently known as site SPS8 Land at Meadow Lane?

Allistair Rush provided the response from Cabinet to this address:

Yes, there has been loan finance provided by Oxford City Council to Ox Place/OCHL in respect of the land currently known as site SPS8 Land at Meadow Lane. This loan finance has been provided at a commercial rate so as not to distort the market, in line with other loan finance provided to other wholly owned companies.

16. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

17. Reports from the Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee met 30 June 2026 to consider the following items.

- Annual Review of the Council of Sanctuary Framework
- Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy

- HRA policies

Councillor Powell, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, presented Scrutiny's discussions and recommendations regarding Annual Review of the Council of Sanctuary Framework.

- **Recommendation 1:** The updated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be published as part of the updated report and circulated to the Scrutiny Committee
- **Recommendation 2:** Further, localised data and information regarding the refugees housed in Oxford, to be included within the report next year and to be shared with the Scrutiny Committee
- **Recommendation 3:** To include Community Associations within the updated Action Plan
- **Recommendation 4:** A bench-marking exercise against similar authorities to the City Council have succeed in positive housing outcomes, linked to government data
- **Recommendation 5:** The No Recourse to Public Fund (NRPF) protocol, once finalised with Oxfordshire County Council, to be returned to the Scrutiny Committee for review
- **Recommendation 6:** Measure the impact of the Council comms team regarding myth busting against misinformation

Councillor Smith responded to Scrutiny's recommendations and discussion, noting that the recommendations had been agreed to and thanked the Committee for helping to strengthen the report.

Councillor Powell, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, presented Scrutiny's discussions and recommendations regarding Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.

- **Recommendation 1:** Tenants Unions to be involved in the evaluation of the implementation of the policy
- **Recommendation 2:** Further and regular data to be provided regarding the enforcement of the policy to be shared with the committee and included within future reports brought to the committee
- **Recommendation 3:** For further information to be brought to Councillors regarding Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, including a briefing to be scheduled

Councillor Rowley responded to Scrutiny's recommendations and discussion, noting that he was happy to accept all the recommendations.

Councillor Powell, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, presented Scrutiny's discussions and recommendations regarding the HRA policies.

- **Recommendation 1:** Within the Voids Policy, for there to be consideration for the wider community and social impact
- **Recommendation 2:** Within the Lifting Equipment and Lifting Operations Policy, to ensure complaints for Oxford Direct Services (ODS) have a robust oversight procedure and to ensure the timescales within the policy are clearly defined
- **Recommendation 3:** Within the Complaints Policy, to ensure there is clarity on repeated complaints and tightening the wording for public clarity

Councillor Smith responded to Scrutiny's recommendations and discussion, noting that the recommendations had been agreed to and thanked the Committee for the support.

18. Thames Valley Strategic Authority Proposal: Update and Implications for Oxford City

The Transition Director had submitted a report to request that Cabinet note Oxfordshire County Council's veto of the systemwide Expression of Interest to Government, which would enable the creation of a Thames Valley Strategic Authority with enhanced powers and funding for the region. Cabinet was further requested to reaffirm its commitment to working collaboratively with Thames Valley partners and Government to reassess devolution in light of the 'minded to' decision on Local Government Reorganisation, with the clear aim of advancing a renewed proposal that included Swindon and remained open to Buckinghamshire.

Councillor Brown attended the meeting remotely.

Councillor Brown presented the report and said the implications for the council and the whole of Thames Valley were significant. Work had taken place over almost two years and formerly 18 months with authorities across Thames Valley, but agreement on devolution proposal for government had not been secured after the leader of the County Council vetoed the proposal. She said discussions had continued with key stakeholders, council leaders and council chief executives to maintain progress. The report recommended noting the current position while agreeing to continue progressing the work. Councillor Brown suggested an additional recommendation to ask Council to endorse the recommendations from Cabinet and to ask the Leader to write to the Leader of the County Council to that effect.

Mish Tullar, Transition Director, stated that the change in government could alter the devolution landscape. The existing government had set out plans for all areas of England to adopt devolved governance, initially through foundation strategic authorities before progressing to elected mayors. While future arrangements remained uncertain, government support for devolution was expected to continue and work should continue without delay.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** Oxfordshire County Council's decision to veto the Thames Valley Foundation Strategic Authority proposal;
2. **Agree** that the Council Leader and Council officers to work with counterparts in other Thames Valley councils to review the position following the Government's decision on Local Government in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire;
3. **Note** that officers will work with counterparts in the other 12 councils to further develop the Expression of Interest proposal against any updated policy position around devolution set out by the new Prime Minister
4. **Agree** the commitment to continue to support Swindon's involvement as a willing partner in a Thames Valley Strategic Authority – and keep the door open for Buckinghamshire's inclusion too, if they change their position.
5. **Ask** Council to endorse the recommendations from Cabinet and to **ask** the Leader to write to the Leader of the County Council to that effect.

19. Local Development Scheme 2026-2031

The Director of Planning and Regulation submitted a report to request that Cabinet approve the Local Development Scheme 2026-2031, which set out the work programme for the Oxford Local Plan 2045.

Councillor Railton said the project plan set out the timetable for Oxford's Local Plan, which was more than five years old and therefore technically out of date. As it was important to minimise the time spent with an up-to-date plan, the report proposed taking the matter to the meeting. Although the draft Local Plan 2045 had been approved in January this year, an injunction had delayed submission until a hearing in October, creating a risk of missing the 31 December deadline under the current planning system.

Sarah Harrison, Planning Policy Team Leader, noted the proposed programme included two scenarios. One allowed for submission this month, subject to the decision at council the following week. The alternative provided for a new or partial Regulation 19 publication if required, delaying subsequent milestones by several months.

Councillor Railton proposed.

Councillor Chapman seconded.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Local Development Scheme 2026-2031;
2. **Authorise** the Director of Planning and Regulation Services to make any necessary minor corrections not materially affecting the document prior to publication.

20. Oxford Local Plan 2045 Next Steps

The Director of Planning and Regulation submitted a report to request that Cabinet recommend that Council approve the Proposed Submission Draft Oxford Local Plan 2045 for submission to the Secretary of State for formal examination.

Councillor Railton proposed.

Councillor Chapman seconded.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Recommend** Council to authorise submission of the Oxford Local Plan 2045 to the Secretary of State for examination, including the minor amendments made according to recommendation 3;
2. **Recommend** Council to approve all the supporting statutory documentation including the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulation Assessment, Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP), Policies Map, Regulation 18 Consultation Statement, Regulation 19 Consultation Statement and Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendices 2-7 & 9); 18 October 2019 .
3. **Recommend** Council to authorise the Director of Planning and Regulation, after consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member, to make any necessary minor editorial corrections to the Submission Draft Oxford Local Plan 2045, IDP, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment, Policies Map, and to agree the supporting evidence base prior to submission;
4. **Recommend** Council to authorise the Director of Planning and Regulation, after consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member, to invite the examining inspector(s) to recommend any modifications considered to be necessary in accordance with section 20(7C) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

21. Local Authority Housing Fund Round 4

The Director of Housing submitted a report to seek the required budget provision and the necessary project approval and delegations to enable the Council to proceed with entering into the national Local Authority Housing Fund Round 4.

Councillor Smith noted that the report covered government funding available through the LAHF R4 scheme for both temporary accommodation and homes for refugees on government resettlement programmes. The funding presented an opportunity to meet housing needs, with grant passed to a registered provider of social housing to deliver the homes. As with previous funding rounds, once resettlement tenancies ended [after at least 3 years], the properties would become general social housing, with nominations rights retained for households on the local housing waiting list.

Councillor Rowley noted the Local Authority Housing Fund covered between 40-50% of the cost of acquiring the properties. Members were reminded that substantial borrowing for new temporary accommodation had been approved in March and that £808000 of grant funding reduced the borrowing requirement. Although the scheme did not deliver

additional properties beyond those already planned, it improved the councils financial positions by reducing borrowing.

Stephen Cohen, Refugee and Resettlement Manager, added that round four built on the success of rounds one to three, during which 22 properties had been delivered with government grant funding.

Councillor Railton proposed.

Councillor Rowley seconded.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** receipt of the Local Authority Housing Fund Round 4 (LAHF R4) funding of £1,719,354 to deliver 4 temporary accommodation units and 4 units for resettled Afghan families
2. **Recommend** to Council, to approve the allocation of £808,000 of the LAHF R4 grant funding in substitution of approved HRA borrowing for the delivery of the temporary accommodation element of LAHF R4.
3. **Recommend** to Council, to approve the allocation of £898,500 of the LAHF R4 grant funding to a new General Fund capital budget for the payment of a capital grant of 898,500 to a Registered Provider to deliver the 'resettlement' element of LAHF R4.
4. **Delegate** authority to the Director of Housing in consultation with; Cabinet Member for Regulation of the Private Rented Sector and Preventing Homelessness, the Group Finance Director and the Director of Law Governance and Strategy, to select a Registered Provider delivery partner and enter into a grant agreement with them to part fund the purchase of 4 units for resettled Afghan families.

22. Annual Review of the Council of Sanctuary Framework 2025-2028

The Director of Housing submitted a report and provided an update to Cabinet on the progress made in Year 1 of the Council of Sanctuary Framework 2025-28 and sought approval for the implementation of the Year 2 Action Plan.

Councillor Smith noted that she was proud of the councils Sanctuary status and noted that the report, framework, action plan and review demonstrated that the commitment extended beyond a slogan or ambition. She highlighted the scale of work undertaken across departments in the council to deliver the commitments and maintain Sanctuary status. She noted that the year 2 action plan included measures to tackle misinformation and hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers through myth busting, stressing the importance of addressing these issues alongside celebrating the work being carried out. She thanked officers for their work.

Councillor Chapman noted that there was significant hostility towards people seeking asylum and those granted the right to remain and said it was importance to do

everything possible to mitigate this. He welcomed the action plans holistic approach, highlighting that it extended beyond housing to include a broad range of support.

Councillor Railton proposed.

Councillor Arshad seconded.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the progress made in Year 1 to implement the Council of Sanctuary Framework and Action Plan and the emerging risks and challenges for delivery over the next year and beyond
2. **Approve** the adoption of the new Framework Action Plan for Year 2 (26-27); and
3. **Delegate** authority to the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, to update the Action Plan when required to respond to emerging risks and challenges.

23. HRA Policies

The Director of Housing submitted a report to request that Cabinet recommend that Council approve the following policies: complaints, lifting equipment and lifting operations, voids.

Councillor Smith said the policies formed part of a wider governance framework approved to ensure compliance with expectations and strengthen transparency and accountability. The policies set out what tenants, leaseholders and shared owners could expect from the landlord and provided a basis for holding the service to account.

James Watkins, Housing Policy and Projects Officer, thanked the members of the resident's policy review group and introduced the three policies in the report. The Complaints Policy was designed to ensure complaints were welcomed positively, managed without a defensive approach and used to identify lessons learned to improve services. Developed in partnerships with the Housing Ombudsman Service, it set response targets of 10 working days for stage 1 complaints and 20 working days for stage 2 complaints, with arrangements for monitoring service improvements arising from complaints. The second policy was the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Policy, which covered passenger lifts and lift adaptations for those with mobility issues. It committed to rescuing anyone trapped in a lift within one hour and responding to lift breakdowns within four hours, subject to parts availability. The policy also set out requirements for qualified, competent and regularly trained staff. The final policy was the Voids Policy which aimed to minimise the time properties remained empty to help meet housing demand. Target response times for contractors were 5 working days for minor voids, 15 working days for standard voids and 25 working days for major voids, exceeding industry standards. The policy also ensured properties were upgraded, including insulation improvements, where possible to support net zero ambitions before reletting.

Councillor Arshad asked whether 15 working days was the maximum timeframe for a standard void. James confirmed it was the target for properties requiring moderate works, such as basic rewiring and noted it was more ambitious than the standards typically adopted by other registered social landlords.

Councillor Chapman clarified that the contractor targets related only to the time taken to complete works, rather than the full period from a property becoming vacant to being re-let but welcomed the publication of transparent performance target.

Councillor Smith was pleased with the significant reduction in void times achieved during the year through work with ODS and the council, expressing hope that performance would continue to improve to meet or exceed new targets.

Councillor Railton proposed.

Councillor Chapman seconded.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Recommend** full Council to approve the draft Complaints Policy
2. **Recommend** full Council to approve the draft Lifting Equipment and Lifting Operations Policy
3. **Recommend** full Council to approve the draft Voids Policy

24. Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy

The Director of Planning and Regulation submitted a report to Cabinet to request approval of the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy for adoption.

Councillor Rowley noted that Renters Rights Act had come into force a couple of months earlier. The Act created new rights for private renters, consolidating existing landlord legislation into a single legal framework and placed a specific duty on local housing authorities to enforce it. As a result, private rented sector housing enforcement would no longer sit with generic enforcement policy but would instead have its own policy reflecting the new statutory duties. The proposed policy reflected national legislation and guidance, alongside experience gained since the introduction of city-wide selective licensing. Councillor Rowley added that the council's work had influenced provisions within the Act that had yet to come into force, including the creation of the National Landlord Database

Courtney Bennet, Regulatory Services Manager, added that the policy was based on a national model, which had been adopted by a number of local authorities. It provided more transparency for landlords and tenants through a publicly available framework and reduced the risk of successful first year tribunal challenges by ensuring decisions aligned with policy.

Councillor Railton proposed.

Councillor Rowley seconded.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy (at Appendix 1) for adoption.
2. **Delegate** authority to the Director of Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance and the Portfolio Holder, to approve future updates to the policy where such changes are consistent with the overall policy approach and reflect changes to legislation or relevant case law.

25. Park and Ride Charges

The Director of Regeneration, Economy and Sustainability submitted a report to request that Cabinet introduce temporary discounted combined ticket charge funded by Oxfordshire County Council.

Councillor Railton noted that changes to charges on three Park and Ride sites were required after the County Council decided to reintroduce charges following the end of the free parking deal, avoiding price inconsistencies across the city. She highlighted paragraph 8 which clarified that, although the proposal reinstated charges at £3 with a contribution from the County, it did not constitute an endorsement of the wider bus fare policy.

Carolyn Polanski, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Sustainability, added that the £3 charge was fully funded by the County Council and remained a promotional fare, as it was still lower than the previous combined ticket prices of £4 and £5.

Councillor Railton proposed.

Councillor Chapman seconded.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** amending the fees and charges schedule as it relates to the Park and Ride 16 hour combined bus and parking tickets as set out in Appendix 1 to be implemented as soon after this decision as practicable and to run until 31 March 2027.

26. Thames Valley Spatial Development Strategy (SDS)

The Director Planning & Regulation submitted a report to Cabinet to note the development of, and governance arrangements for, a Thames Valley SDS.

Councillor Railton noted that the same report was being presented to all councils in Thames Valley. The strategy covered around 30 years of spatial planning, compared with local plan and a strategic planning board through secondary legislations set out by MHCLG. Voting arrangements had yet to be determined, with only unitary and upper tier authorities currently expected to have voting rights. Councillor Railton added that lobbying would continue for successor authorities and a greater Oxford unitary to secure representation.

David Butler, Director of Planning and Regulation, added that this marked the start of an importance piece of work, providing an opportunity to help shape long term growth across a large area. With central government funding being held by Bracknell Forest Council, the framework would play a significant role in supporting Oxford's future development and contribution to the economy.

Councillor Railton proposed.

Councillor Smith seconded.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the governance and development of the Thames Valley Spatial Development Strategy
2. **Agree** to officer and member involvement in the early programme stages as outlined in this report, in particular with regards to the governance model and assisting in the development of the Thames Valley SDS.

27. Development and Governance Decision to Direct Award OCC's Water Supply and Wastewater Contract

The Director of Regeneration, Economy and Sustainability submitted a report to Cabinet to request that Cabinet Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive - Place to Direct Award the Council's Water Supply and Wastewater Contract to Anglian Water Business (National) Limited t/a Wave Utilities on a 2+1+1 contract term, subject to final contract price; and delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive - Place to make non-substantive changes to the framework should they become necessary.

Councillor Railton noted that the report concerned the procurement of water and wastewater services through a framework, enabling utility prices to be secured in advance. It recommended a 2+1+1 contract term, balancing price with avoiding long term commitment.

Carolyn Polanski, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Sustainability, added that the framework had been used previously following the deregulation of the water industry, while most costs remained payable to the infrastructure provider, the framework

allowed direct awards and operated in a competitive market, with only a small proportion of costs subject to competition.

Councillor Railton proposed.

Councillor Chapman seconded.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive - Place to Direct Award the Council's Water Supply and Wastewater Contract to Anglian Water Business (National) Limited t/a Wave Utilities on a 2+1+1 contract term, subject to final contract price; and delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive - Place to make non-substantive changes to the framework should they become necessary.

28. Procurement of a high-support service for accommodation for single homeless individuals

The Director of Housing submitted a report to Cabinet to request approval of the commencement of a procurement exercise for accommodation with high support in Oxford from 1st April 2027.

Councillor Rowley noted that the existing high support homelessness service, delivered from a single location, required re-procurement as the current contract would end at the end of the financial year. Although part funded by surrounding district councils, the service needed to continue regardless of local government reorganisation. The proposal was for an initial 2-year contract, covering 2027-28 and 2028-29 with an option to extend for a further 3 years.

Francesca Barr, Senior Rough Sleeping Officer, added that the demand for high support services remained high, with long waiting lists and limited provision across Oxfordshire, highlighting the need for the service.

Councillor Railton proposed.

Councillor Rowley seconded.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Give** project approval for the commencement of a procurement of an accommodation support service for individuals with multiple and complex support needs who are experiencing homelessness;
2. **Delegate** to the Director of Housing (following conclusion of the procurement) in consultation with the Group Finance Director, Director of Law Strategy and Governance and the Cabinet Member for Regulation of the Private Rented

Sector and Preventing Homelessness), the authority to award a contract within the relevant budget.

29. Appointments to Outside Bodies

The Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer) submitted a report to Cabinet to request that Cabinet agree appointments to Outside Bodies for the 2026/2027 Council Year.

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager, noted that the report listed appointments to Outside Bodies for 2026-27 and confirmed that details of all appointments would be circulated by email the following week.

Councillor Railton proposed.
Councillor Chapman seconded.

Cabinet resolved to:

- 1. **Approve** appointments to charities, trusts, community associations and other organisations as set out in Appendices 1A – 1D; and note the appointments to partnerships as detailed in Appendix 1E;
- 2. **Note** the guidance for appointees in Appendix 2;
- 3. **Delegate** authority to the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, and where appropriate with other group leaders, to make any changes to appointments to Outside Bodies as required during the council year 2026/2027.

30. Dates of future meetings

Cabinet noted the dates of future meetings.

The meeting started at 6pm and ended at 6.50pm

Chair **Date: Wednesday 19 August 2026**

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.