

Minutes of a meeting of Council on Monday 30 January 2023

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Council members present:

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

Also present for all or part of the meeting:

Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)
Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)
Stephen Gabriel, Executive Director (Communities and People)
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Susan Sale, Monitoring Officer and Head of Law & Governance

Alison Daly, Lawyer

Alice Courtney, Committee and Member Services Manager (Interim Acting)

Celeste Reyeslao, Committee and Member Services Officer

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Diggins, Hall, Humberstone, Landell Mills, Nala-Hartley and Roz Smith sent apologies.

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

72. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations.

73. Minutes

Council agreed to approve the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 28 November 2022 as a true and correct record.

74. Appointment to Committees

Council agreed to appoint with immediate effect:

- Audit and Governance Committee - Councillor Railton to stand down and Councillor Thomas to replace her.

75. Announcements

The Lord Mayor gave thanks to the Town Hall staff, the Civic Office and those who attended the Holocaust Memorial Service and commented that the service was wonderfully appropriate and moving. He gave a further thank you to Sharon Woodward, Filmmaker (Communications Team) for editing and producing a short video of a child of a survivor and urged the Council to watch the short film. He also expressed his pleasures in being invited to Chinese New Year celebrations and events in the city.

The City Rector addressed the Council on sombre anniversaries namely Mahatma Ghandi's assassination on this day in 1948 and the execution of King Charles I on this day in 1649. He reflected on the worldwide and historic search for fair governance and legitimate authority, and commented on the poignancy of the Holocaust Memorial Service.

The Leader of the Council thanked former Cllr Nadine Bely-Summers' on behalf of the Council and the people of Holywell and Littlemore wards for her service, particularly her work on chairing the Housing Panel, following her recent resignation from her councillor role. Cllr Brown also announced that Cllr Imogen Thomas was to stand down as Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice. She thanked Cllr Thomas for her good service and announced that Cllr Anna Railton was to take on the role.

The Lord Mayor invited Cllr Malik to address the Council and provide an update on the Pakistan Flood Relief fundraising. Cllr Malik advised that, through the generosity of the people of Oxford, £20,000 was raised and used to fund 1200+ medical kitted camps that treated 1,200 patients; build houses for 22 families; and provide food rations to 150 families. Cllr Malik thanked everyone who contributed.

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

There were no addresses or questions.

77. Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27

Council considered the report from the Executive Director (Communities and People) recommending that it is adopted as part of the Council's policy framework.

Cllr Lygo left the meeting.

Cllr Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture introduced the report, proposed the recommendation and answered questions.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Cllr Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport and put to the vote.

Cllr Lygo re-joined the meeting.

Council resolved to:

1. **Adopt** Oxford's Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27 as part of the Council's policy framework, including the following recommendations:
 - (i) Agree and adopt the Thriving Communities Principles across the Council's work and encourage our partners to do the same;
 - (ii) Explore opportunities to improve the inclusivity and sustainability of Oxford's community facilities, and review opportunities as they arise through business cases;
 - (iii) Continue to integrate Council services and seek out opportunities to better align our work with partners agencies, including co-location.

78. Flexible Working / Hybrid Working Policy

Council considered the report from the Head of Business Improvement requesting Council approve the Hybrid Working Policy.

Cllr Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services introduced the report and proposed the recommendation.

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

Council resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Hybrid Working Policy.

79. Disciplinary Policy

Council considered the report submitted by the Head of Business Improvement asking Council to approve the Disciplinary Procedure.

Cllr Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services introduced the report and proposed the recommendation.

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

Council resolved to:

1. **Agree** the Disciplinary Procedure and Guidance with immediate effect;
2. **Authorise** the Head of Business Improvement or their designated deputy to make revisions to the Disciplinary Procedure as required to correct any clerical errors or comply with changes to law;
3. **Authorise** the Head of Business Improvement or their designated deputy to make minor revisions to the Disciplinary Guidance to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.

80. Council and Committee meetings programme for May 2023 to May 2025

Council considered the report submitted by the Head of Law and Governance setting out a programme of Council, Committee and other meetings for the whole of 2023/24 and 2024/25 council years.

Cllr Brown, Leader of the Council introduced the report and proposed an amendment to the recommendations, to include the delegation of authority to the Head of Law and Governance to reschedule the February 2024 Council meeting date.

The amended recommendations were agreed on being seconded by Cllr Smowton, Liberal Democrat Group Leader and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Approve** the programme of Council, committee and other meetings from 01 May 2023 to 31 May 2025 attached at Appendix A;
2. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to this programme in the event that there is any decision by Council to change the committee structure or committee remit which impacts on the programme of meetings; and
3. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Law and Governance to set dates for additional training and briefing sessions for Members.
4. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to reschedule the February 2024 Council meeting date.

81. Questions on Cabinet minutes

a) Draft Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 14 December 2022

Minute 99 - Cowley Branch Line local Funding for Full Business Case

In response to a question from Cllr Smowton, Cllr Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport expressed disappointment that the Council did not secure Levelling Up Fund money, but gave assurance that the Council had already put a package in place covering the whole costs required to proceed with the full business case. She confirmed that this funding would include connectivity studies particularly in providing proper access to stations for residents in Littlemore and Blackbird Leys, alongside the employment areas. It was clarified that the package in place was subject to contract.

Minute 104 - Integrated Performance Report Q2 2022/23

In response to a question from Cllr Smowton, Cllr Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services advised that the Council was in the final stages of negotiation on the lease of St Aldate's Chambers and assured Council that it was not being penalised for the delay as there was a rent-free period that the Council had to grant the tenant, so there was no penalty to the Council for the delay.

In response to a question from Cllr Smowton, Cllr Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services advised that the figures provided were provisional and that there was an expectation for the deficit to be less by year-end. He explained that the extra spend was due to the scope and scale of work undertaken by ODS particularly due to COVID-19 backlog and the replacement of fencing due to a number of storms in recent times, as well as general inflation of building material costs which had driven the cost uplift. Cllr Chapman gave assurance that a more realistic budget would be presented in the following year with consideration for the scale of work and undertakings required.

82. Questions on Notice from Members of Council

40 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 15 supplementary questions and responses asked and given at the meeting are set out in the minutes pack.

Cllr Gant joined the meeting.

Council agreed to consider items 14 and 16 next on the agenda before the 30 minute break and then return to the agenda as listed.

83. Outside organisation/Committee Chair reports and questions

a) Scrutiny Committee update report

Council had before it the report of the Scrutiny Committee Chair.

Cllr Smowton, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, introduced the report and thanked the Cabinet members and officers who had been generous with their time and continued to attend meetings regularly. Underlining a recommendation relating to the precision and accountability of specific actions, he requested clarity within all documents relating to partnership or collaborative working on whether the Council was in the driving seat or facilitating work that was fundamentally out of the Council's control, including where a lack of funding impacted what the Council was intending to do. In relation to the Scrutiny Committee meeting scheduled for 01 February 2023, Cllr Smowton commented on the exclusion of supporting materials to the Oxford Local Plan 2040 Focused Consultation on Housing Need report and requested that these be made available to the Committee as soon as practicable.

Cllr Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery confirmed that, background papers and supporting evidence to the Oxford Local Plan 2040, including all strategic plan consultation processes, were published and accessible on the Council website. He advised that officers would circulate reference links to the Scrutiny Committee.

Council noted the report.

84. Cowley Branch Line Local Funding for Full Business Case

Council considered a report from the Executive Director (Development) seeking approval for the funding package and to enter into all necessary contracts to undertake the Approval in Principle design and Full Business Case and local connectivity studies for the reopening of the Cowley Branch Line to passengers. This included the parameters for a financial contribution from Oxford City Council, including the ring-fencing of future Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions.

Cllr Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport presented the report and proposed the recommendation.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Cllr Hollingsworth, and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Approve** a capital budget of £4.56m to deliver the next phase of the project made up of:
 - Up to £289,000 up front contribution from Oxford City Council from already-secured Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds;
 - Up to £3.5m of the costs to be funded by local landowners and then be reimbursed from CIL paid for any future developments by those landowners that gains planning consent after the date that contracts are entered into;
 - At least £771,000 from local landowners and Oxfordshire County Council as a non-repayable grant contribution;
 - In the event that the submitted Levelling Up Fund 2 application seeking £4.0m is found to be successful in total or in part, the local funding arrangement described above would be reduced commensurately from one or more of the funding pots outlined above.

The meeting broke for 40 min at the conclusion of this item.

Cllr Malik left the meeting and did not return.

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

Council heard one address and one question to which Cllr Turner, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management provided a verbal response.

The address, question and responses are set out in full in the minutes pack.

1. Address from Mr Ihor Terekhov, Mayor of Kharkiv – Oxford-Kharkiv relations
2. Question from Jennifer Stanton – Council banking

The Lord Mayor thanked the speakers for their contributions.

86. Motions on notice 30 January 2023

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) Opposing Voter ID (proposed by Cllr Gant, seconded by Cllr Smowton)
- b) Fixing Oxford's Water (proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Muddiman)
- c) End Tory Cost of Living Crisis (proposed by Cllr Aziz, seconded by Cllr Upton)

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

- d) Use Park and Ride Parking Sites for Solar Farms (proposed by Cllr Fouweather, seconded by Cllr Miles, amendment proposer Cllr Railton, seconder Cllr Hollingsworth)
- e) Plant-based Food and Sustainable Farming (proposed by Cllr Dunne, seconded by Cllr Hollingsworth)

a) Opposing Voter ID (proposed by Cllr Gant, seconded by Cllr Smowton)

Cllr Gant, seconded by Cllr Smowton, proposed the submitted motion as set out in the agenda and briefing note.

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

Voting at elections is the cornerstone of democracy at both local and national level.

Participation in elections should be encouraged in all those who are qualified regardless of age, ethnicity or income.

Unnecessary barriers to voting are likely to reduce voter participation in elections, proper representation of all parts of the community and so legitimacy of those elected to office.

Voter ID is a solution without a problem and as such insinuates barriers to voting which should be of great concern to anyone who supports an open and effective democratic system of government.

The specific details released at the end of 2022, showing that considerably more forms of ID will be accepted for older voters than for younger voters, is particularly concerning in that it risks disproportionately disenfranchising voters who tend not to support the current Government.

This Council therefore requests that the Leader should write to Minister for the Cabinet Office to convey:

- This council's opposition to mandatory voter ID.
- That the list of acceptable documentation should be reviewed at the earliest opportunity and its equalities impacts measured.
- That adequate funding for local advertising must be provided to minimise the risk of voter disenfranchisement due to unawareness of the new requirements.

b) Fixing Oxford's Water (proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Muddiman)

Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Muddiman, proposed the submitted motion as set out in the agenda and briefing note and immediately changed his motion without notice to reflect the amendment submitted as set out in the briefing note. The change was seconded by Cllr Muddiman and agreed by Council, in accordance with Oxford City Council's Constitution Part 11.20(h).

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

Council notes

1. On August 24, Thames Water introduced a hosepipe ban following the driest July on record.
2. Across England and Wales, 3 billion litres of water are lost to leaks in the water system every single day
3. According to analysis by the GMB union, Thames Water's infrastructure allows 635 million litres of water to leak out of the system every single day - equivalent to leaving a hosepipe on for 73 years. ¹
4. Failure to fix leaks has had a major impact on public infrastructure in Oxford - including the flooding of the Littlemore underpass for several weeks and the ring road for several days in October.
5. There has been a long delay in replacing the water pipe occupying the east bound cycle lane on Osney Bridge, which has endangered cyclists using Botley Road.
6. Between 2017 and 2021, Thames Water has accrued £32.4 million of fines over 11 separate incidents of water pollution - including a £4 million fine for sewage pumped into Oxford's waterways. ²
7. Since privatisation in 1989, shareholders of water companies have pocketed over £72bn in dividends.³ Thames Water paid out £392 million in profit to shareholders between 2013 and 2017. ⁴

Council believes

1. Thames Water is currently failing to deliver an adequate public service, is failing to invest in infrastructure, and has caused extensive environmental damage - all while putting the burden of water saving onto residents.
2. Serious questions have been raised as to Thames Water's performance - questions to which the public need answers. More accountability for the company is therefore necessary.
3. Going forward, the country's illogical privatisation of water must be reversed. Water is a basic need, a natural monopoly and a vital public service. Privatisation provides all the wrong incentives for running a water supply, and it should be returned to public hands, with democratic oversight. Only by bringing

¹ <https://www.gmb.org.uk/news/thames-waters-daily-waste-same-hosepipe-being-73-years>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thames-water-fined-4-million-after-30-hour-waterfall-of-sewage-discharge>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/aug/15/uk-water-boss-bonuses-reservoirs-built-leaks-fixed>

⁴ <https://weownit.org.uk/company/thames-water>

back water into public ownership can we guarantee the health and safety of Oxford's residents, of Oxford's cherished waterways, wildlife and the future of our water supplies.

Council resolves

1. To request that the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks requests that Thames Water's CEO Sarah Bentley attend a meeting open to all Councillors to ask questions on the company's performance.
2. To request that the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks writes to the water regulator - Ofwat - expressing the concerns laid out in this motion and requesting action be taken to redress it.
3. To request that the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks writes to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Thérèse Coffey, and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Grant Shapps informing them of the Council's view that the country's water system should be taken into public ownership.
4. To lobby government ministers on an ongoing basis to tackle the issues raised in this motion, and for a publicly owned water system.

c) End Tory Cost of Living Crisis (proposed by Cllr Aziz, seconded by Cllr Upton)

Cllr Aziz, seconded by Cllr Upton, proposed the submitted motion as set out in the agenda and briefing note and immediately changed the motion without notice to reflect the amendment submitted as set out in the briefing note. The change was seconded by Cllr Upton and agreed by Council, in accordance with Oxford City Council's Constitution Part 11.20(h).

After debate and on being put to the vote, the motion was agreed.

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

The cost-of-living crisis is deepening poverty, inequalities and insecurity, amongst thousands of people, families, and communities across our city.

Twelve years of Tory austerity and brutal central government funding cuts to councils such as ours continues to have a catastrophic impact on services and community support for working people.

The Covid pandemic has also pushed many people into further hardship along with independent and small businesses finding it impossible to survive.

Under a Tory government of millionaires, food bank use across the country and in our own city has rocketed, with more and more people in full time employment also dependent on food banks and food projects across Oxford. And now this government is wielding more cuts to services.

The Tories have shown over the past twelve years they have no desire to improve the lives of working people across our city and country. They need to go, now.

As winter continues, many are left to wonder how they will feed their families, heat their homes, pay spiralling energy bills and pay their rent and mortgages. People are terrified of becoming destitute and homeless.

Oxford City Council is working with people and communities, organisations and partners across the city including advice centres, food banks and food networks, the NHS, and others to provide information and support across Oxford's diverse communities.

We are proud of the many ways community groups are working together to support people and thank everyone for their tireless work.

This council condemns this out of touch government for the harm and devastation it is causing people and communities daily.

We condemn the increases in inequalities and specifically racialised inequalities that the cost of living crisis is exacerbating, as outlined in the recent Runnymede Trust report.

We reject this government's failed economic and social policies that have seen an increase in child poverty in our city that is creating a deepening mental health crisis, as the recent Marmot report highlights.

We demand an end to further cuts to local government budgets and services across our city and reject the Tories desire to wield austerity 2.0 against our city.

We call on the government to ensure benefit payments rise in line with record breaking inflation, so that people have a chance to survive the economic chaos created by a government of multi-millionaires and can make it through the winter.

We call on Universal Credit payments and Disability Cost of Living Payments to rise for everyone and for these payments not to be one off.

We call on the government to respect public sector workers' human rights to strike action and call on all workers to be paid wages enabling them to live lives of dignity and hope. We applaud those trade unions and workers who are currently taking industrial action to secure a pay rise that matches the cost of living.

We call on the government to implement urgently the energy windfall tax and follow the TUC's recommendation to take the big 5 energy retail companies into public ownership.

d) Use Park and Ride Parking Sites for Solar Farms (proposed by Cllr Fouweather, seconded by Cllr Miles, amendment proposer Cllr Railton, seconder Cllr Hollingsworth)

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

e) Plant-based Food and Sustainable Farming (proposed by Cllr Dunne, seconded by Cllr Hollingsworth)

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

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 8.24 pm

Lord Mayor

Date: Thursday 16 February 2023

Decisions on items of business take effect immediately:

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

Details are in the Council's Constitution.