

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 12 July 2023**

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### **Cabinet members present:**

Councillor Brown	Councillor Turner
Councillor Aziz	Councillor Chapman
Councillor Hunt	Councillor Munkonge
Councillor Railton	Councillor Rehman
Councillor Linda Smith	Councillor Upton

### **Officers present for all or part of the meeting:**

Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement  
Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)  
David Butler, Head of Planning Services  
Alan Chandler, Senior Refugee and Migrant Officer  
Emma Coles, Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Manager  
Rhian Davies, Interim Head of Law and Governance  
Vicki Galvin, Senior Programme Manager for Customer Experience  
Caroline Green, Chief Executive  
Emma Gubbins, Corporate Asset Lead  
Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)  
Laura Jones, Safeguarding Coordinator  
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services  
Peter Matthew, Interim Executive Director of People and Communities  
Alex Miller, Transactions Manager  
Nerys Parry, Head of Housing  
Carolyn Ploszynski, Head of Regeneration and Economy  
Paul Reid, Rapid Rehousing Manager  
Elaine Swapp, Principal Regeneration Officer  
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy  
Jane Winfield, Head of Corporate Property  
Richard Wood, Housing Strategy and Needs Manager  
Ian Wright, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety

### **Also present:**

Councillor Lucy Pegg, Chair of Scrutiny

### **Apologies:**

No apologies were received.

## **15. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public**

None.

## **16. Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda**

None.

## **17. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues**

None.

## **18. Items raised by Cabinet Members**

Councillor Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice, reported that it was the Council's intention to expand Oxford's smoke control area (SCA) to cover the entire city. The current SCA was a patchwork of areas which had been put in place over a period of some years: expanding it would enable air quality to be further improved, as well as remove confusion for residents about which areas were covered by the restrictions. A public consultation was planned, and it was hoped that the new arrangements would be in place in time for the burning season this winter. Councillor Railton highlighted that the aim was to improve air quality (rather than reduce carbon emissions), and drew attention to the significant dangers of particulate matter pollution and associated health risks.

Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, reported that the Rail Delivery Group and the Department for Transport had announced a consultation on their proposal to close the majority of railway station ticket offices across England. Councillor Upton highlighted that closing station ticket offices would be likely to have a negative impact on many groups: in particular those who were hard of hearing, blind or partially sighted, and older people. Services were provided by ticket office staff which were not able to be provided by ticket machines, and whilst some stations would continue to be staffed it was evident from the consultation documents that many stations would lose ticket station staff altogether. This would result in no meaningful assistance being available for those who needed it. Cabinet agreed that Councillor Upton should write to Mark Harper MP, the Secretary of State for Transport, to voice the Council's concerns about the proposal and the short length of the consultation period (21 days).

## **19. Scrutiny reports**

The Climate and Environment Panel had met on 27 June, Scrutiny Committee had met on 4 July, and the Housing & Homelessness Panel had met on 5 July. Councillor Pegg, Chair of Scrutiny, presented the reports and recommendations from those meetings relating to:

- (i) Draft Carbon Reduction and Sustainable Retrofit Guidance for Historic Buildings Technical Advice Note;
- (ii) Biodiversity Update;
- (iii) Safeguarding Report 2022/23 and Safeguarding Policy 2023-26;
- (iv) Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Charter / Pledge;
- (v) Citizen Experience Strategy;

- (vi) Future Resettlement Commitments for New Refugee Families; and
- (vii) Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

Cabinet Member responses had been provided and were included in a separate published supplement.

In relation to the Draft Carbon Reduction and Sustainable Retrofit Guidance for Historic Buildings Technical Advice Note, there had been 7 recommendations of which 5 had been accepted. Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, clarified that the work outlined in the remaining two recommendations (4 and 5) was expected to be undertaken in due course as part of other workstreams by the Planning Policy team; however a commitment to a definitive timescale could not be provided at the current time.

All of the recommendations relating to the Biodiversity Update had been accepted. Councillor Brown, Leader, reported that the suggestion to add a dedicated biodiversity workstream to the Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership's (ZCOP) existing workstreams had been made. However, ZCOP had considered that it would result in duplication of work being undertaken elsewhere. Instead, a meeting of biodiversity leads across the major institutions which formed ZCOP would be convened, to ascertain if there were ways to encourage or improve collaborative working.

A detailed discussion had taken place at the Scrutiny Committee on the Safeguarding Report 2022/23 and Safeguarding Policy 2023-26. This had covered: ensuring that the Safeguarding Policy was aligned with other Council policies; adult exploitation; Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation; and how the Council worked with the voluntary sector and community groups to ensure that they had adequate safeguarding policies in place. In response to the latter point Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, highlighted that the Council was not responsible for outside organisations' safeguarding policies. However, it was able to share its own policy in order to try to promote alignment.

Discussion at scrutiny on the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Charter / Pledge had included the rationale behind the pledges chosen. The recommendations had largely related to communication, and encouraging the Council to be as ambitious as possible in the pledges it was planning to meet. Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships, responded that the recommendations were accepted. However, with regard to the Council's ambitions, the partnership's emphasis was on participants signing up to acknowledge work which was already being done - and adding new pledges which could realistically be progressed during the year - rather than seeking to meet all the pledges at once. It was important that the pledges which the Council signed up to could be delivered. It was expected that further pledges would be added on an ongoing basis.

Discussion at scrutiny of the Citizen Experience Strategy had included language (and in particular use of the word 'citizen') and the wider context of the strategy. Two recommendations had been made, which were both accepted. In relation to the use of language, Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies clarified that the word 'citizen' was intended to denote those who lived, worked or visited Oxford - not to exclude any group - and emphasised that inclusivity was a pillar of the strategy.

All of the recommendations relating to Future Resettlement Commitments for New Refugee Families and the Tenant Satisfaction Survey had been accepted.

## 20. City Centre Land Regeneration Scheme

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to update Cabinet on the progress of the procurement of a development partner to regenerate a Council asset in the city centre; to recommend to Council to include an additional budget for the scheme; and to seek approval to enter into contracts with a preferred development partner and operator consortium to regenerate 38-40 George Street, Oxford.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, presented the report and explained that the lease of the Odeon Cinema at Gloucester Green, which was one of the Council's important commercial assets, was due to expire shortly. Officers had therefore proactively explored the options for the site, noting that there was a need to focus on bringing in income for the Council as well as making the city the best place it could be. It was important to optimise the use of the asset, which was owned on behalf of the city of Oxford, to support services for its citizens.

The result was a scheme which was both financially viable, as well as benefitting the city and immediate locality. Councillor Turner commented that the proposal represented an exciting and important project for the Council and for the city, which would bring economic and cultural benefits in addition to the financial return for the Council.

The proposal included an aparthotel, and Councillor Turner outlined the benefits of this, which included offering a direct alternative to Airbnb (which was important as Airbnb depleted the supply of family accommodation within the local housing market), and the benefit to the city economy arising from people staying overnight in Oxford. The ground floor would be for community use: the focus for that element of the scheme would not be to drive value, and engagement would be needed with the local community with regard to the use of the space. The proposal would also offer the opportunity to improve and enhance the external appearance of the building, as well as social value commitments throughout the lease term.

Whilst it would result in the loss of the cinema facility, it was noted that alternative cinema provision was available within walking distance.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the appointment of the preferred developer and operator as set out in the report for the reasons provided;
2. **Recommend to Council** the approval of an additional capital budget of £12.1 million for delivery of this regeneration scheme (see Confidential Appendix 1 for more details);
3. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with the Council's Head of Financial Services / Section 151 Officer; the Head of Law and Governance; and the Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management to: (i) agree the final terms of, and enter into, the relevant contracts; (ii) agree the final scheme and submission of any planning application; and (iii) authorise any spending within the allocated budget (see Confidential Appendix 1 for more details).

## 21. City Centre Land Transaction: St Aldate's Chambers

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to seek authority to let the whole or parts of St Aldate's Chambers.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management reported that a preferred offer for the lease of the building had been received. The consolidation of staff at the Town Hall had enabled the Council to reduce its costs and carbon footprint, and leasing the now vacant St Aldate's Chambers would provide a source of income to the Council which could be used to support the provision of services.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development), in consultation with the Head of Financial Services / S151 Officer, the Head of Law and Governance and the Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management to enter into lease(s) to let the whole or parts of St Aldate's Chambers to any tenant on terms which fulfil the requirements of S123 Local Government Act 1972.

## 22. Oxpens Road Car Park Lease Renewal

The Head of Corporate Property had submitted a report to seek approval to renew the lease of the car park at Oxpens Road.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, clarified that the car park was leased from OxWED and operated by the Council. It provided useful car parking for the city centre and an income stream to the Council, and authority was being sought to continue to lease it for that purpose.

A correction was provided that delegated authority was being sought for the Executive Director (Corporate Resources) to finalise terms and enter into the lease (not the Head of Corporate Property).

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** entering into a new lease with OxWED for the Car Park at Oxpens Road; and
2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Corporate Resources) in consultation with the Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management, the Head of Financial Services, and the Head of Law and Governance to agree the final terms and enter into the lease.

## 23. Future Resettlement Commitments for New Refugee Families

The Head of Housing had submitted a report to seek approval for future commitments for resettling new refugee families into Oxford, and to seek approval to go to tender to commission the provision of person centred support.

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing, reported that the resettlement of a minimum of 8 refugee families each year for the next five years was proposed. This would be fully-funded by government grant, and so involved no new pressure on Council budgets. The scheme would offer private rented accommodation for the families, and would use Home Office funding to provide support services to help ensure that they could successfully begin their new lives in Oxford. Based on previous

successful resettlement projects these services would comprise a holistic, person-centred trauma-informed support service to enable families to become fully independent in the community. This would include support and coaching to enable individuals to access education and employment.

Whilst the Council wished to provide sanctuary above the level set out in the report, there were limitations around the supply of affordable housing locally and the capacity of partner organisations to provide the support needed. Inclusion of more than 8 families per year in the scheme might be possible if the supply of suitable properties allowed. Additionally, participation in this scheme did not preclude the Council considering opportunities to participate in other refugee resettlement schemes.

Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, highlighted that the proposal was aligned with the Council's aim to become a City of Sanctuary.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the resettlement of a minimum of 8 refugee families per year from any of the resettlement schemes highlighted in the report for a period of 5 years from 2023 to 2028, on the condition that the requirements in paragraph 21 of the report are consistently met to ensure scheme viability;
2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Communities and People), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to agree the resettlement of additional refugees above this allocation (which will incur additional expenditure from Home Office grant funding for support provision) subject to sufficient grant funding;
3. **Approve** the use of Home Office grant funding of up to £1,313,840 (see Appendix 2) to procure the provision of 2 years of person centred support for each refugee family arriving in Oxford during the 5 year period between 2023 -2028;
4. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to approve the use of the Home Office grant funding to procure additional person centred support as required; and
5. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Housing in consultation with the Head of Financial Services/S151 Officer, the Head of Law and Governance and the Cabinet Member for Housing to allocate the approved budget and enter into contract(s) with a provider(s) for the provision of person centred support.

## **24. Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter/Pledge**

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to seek approval to participate in the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter and endorsement of a series of Oxford City Council pledges.

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships, highlighted the value of the OIEP which aimed to create a more equal region with opportunities and benefits for all, principally by focusing on education, employment, social value and procurement, and place shaping. 120 employers had already signed up to the Partnership. By participating in the Partnership, the Council aimed to show its commitment and support towards making the city a better place to

be, including by being an inclusive employer and having employment policies which were as inclusive as possible (including flexible working); ensuring that all staff were paid the Oxford Living Wage; and maximising opportunities for apprentices. Participation in the Partnership and commitment to the pledges would also have benefits for the Council in terms of its ability to recruit and retain staff.

Subsequent to the publication of the agenda a staff consultation had been undertaken, and a number of helpful suggestions and ideas had emerged through that process. These had been included in a separate published addendum to the report.

It was expected that future reports would be brought back to Cabinet providing monitoring against the pledges and suggestions for additional new pledges.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** Oxford City Council's participation in the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter; and
2. **Endorse** a series of Oxford City Council pledges that officers in respective service areas will deliver against, within existing committed budgets and for the duration of the current medium term financial strategy. Oxford City Council progress/performance against the pledges will be reported against annually and the results shared on Oxford City Council's website.

## **25. Oxford City Council Safeguarding Report 2022/23 and Safeguarding Policy 2023-26**

The Executive Director (Communities and People) had submitted a report on progress made on Oxford City Council's Safeguarding Action Plan for 2022/23 and which sought approval for an updated Safeguarding Policy for 2023-26.

Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, presented the report and drew attention to the main change to the Safeguarding Policy. This related to an update to reflect a new governance structure. The Executive Director (Communities and People) now held responsibility for safeguarding at the Council, and the safeguarding function had moved from the Corporate Strategy area to the Regulatory Services and Community Safety area with effect from 1 April 2023, with the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety holding responsibility for the delivery of safeguarding. The remainder of the strategy was largely unchanged.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the key achievements of the Safeguarding work delivered through Oxford City Council during 2022/23;
2. **Approve** the Safeguarding Policy 2023-2026;
3. **Note** the Safeguarding Action Plan 2023/24; and
4. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Communities and People), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, to make minor changes to the approved policy in order to continue its alignment with the Oxfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.

## 26. Review of the Street Naming and Numbering Policy

The Head of Planning Services had submitted a report to seek approval for a revised Street Naming and Numbering Policy.

Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, explained that the purpose of the policy was to ensure that each property had a unique and unambiguous address. The policy set out how street naming and numbering would be done and how it would be consulted on. It had also been updated to ensure compliance with the latest best practice national guidelines.

Councillor Upton also highlighted that responsibility for maintaining the policy had now moved to Planning Services (from Law and Governance).

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the draft Street Naming and Numbering Policy (at Appendix 1); and
2. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Planning Services to make any amendments to the draft Policy as a result of Cabinet's consideration of it.

## 27. Bus Shelter Infrastructure and Advertising Concession Contract

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to (i) seek approval for the tender of a contract to manage the bus shelter infrastructure; and (ii) seek delegated authority for the Head of Corporate Property to enter into a long-term contract with a selected supplier to maintain city bus shelters and manage advertising on the shelters.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, reported that the current contract for the cleaning and maintenance of bus shelters and management of advertising was due to expire and would require re-tendering. As part of this process, it was hoped that there would be an opportunity for the Council to acquire a new income stream by securing a proportion of the advertising profit from the bus shelters. There were a number of issues and options which would need to be considered during the procurement process, which were set out in the report, and so flexibility was sought to enable officers to finalise terms. Councillor Turner commented that the aim of the procurement will be to tender a contract which delivers for the city, but does so in a way which is compatible with the Council's values.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Grant project approval** to tender a contract to manage bus shelter infrastructure maintenance and advertising via a concession contract;
2. **Delegate authority** the Executive Director (Development) to finalise the tender documents; and
3. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Property in consultation with the Head of Law and Governance, the Head of Financial Services and the Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management to agree the final terms and enter into a contract with the preferred supplier.

## **28. Citizen Experience Strategy**

The Head of Business Improvement had submitted a report to seek approval for a new Citizen Experience Strategy 2023-25.

Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies, highlighted that the strategy was more wide-ranging than the previous Customer Contact Strategy, and also built on lessons learned during the Covid pandemic in that it did not diminish the importance of face to face contact to resolve difficult issues. Councillor Chapman reported that the Council had recently signed a three year agreement with Oxfordshire County Council and the Citizens Advice Bureau to extend and enhance the Council's customer service presence at the Westgate Library. This was particularly welcome as the Council received high customer satisfaction ratings from users of the service.

Councillor Chapman commented that the pillars of the strategy, and the associated action plans, were around its focus on citizens; inclusion; and getting things right first time. Progress against the strategy would be monitored by a suite of measures, and included the potential for feedback using the residents' survey.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Citizen Experience Strategy 2023-25 (at Appendix 1).

## **29. Future Oxfordshire Partnership Terms of Reference & Memorandum of Understanding**

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report to propose amendments to the Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships reported that the documents had been refreshed because the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (which was the period for which the body had been set up) was now entering its final phase. There was therefore a need for the Partnership to be re-constituted. The new Terms of Reference set out a way of working which continued to bring the councils in Oxfordshire together with the aim of working co-operatively on matters such as delivering housing, delivering infrastructure, and maximising investment from government to support these aims.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's revised Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding. These will take effect following approval by each of the six Oxfordshire councils.

## **30. Appointments to Outside Bodies for the 2023/24 Council Year**

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report to agree appointments to Outside Bodies for the 2023/24 Council year.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** appointments to charities, trusts, community associations and other organisations as shown in Appendices 1A – 1D and **note** the appointments to partnerships as detailed in Appendix 1E;
2. **Note** the guidance for appointees as detailed in Appendix 2; and
3. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Law and Governance, 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 may be required during the course of the Council year 2023/24.

## 31. Minutes

**Cabinet resolved to approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2023 as a true and accurate record.

## 32. Dates of Future Meetings

9 August 2023  
 13 September 2023  
 18 October 2023  
 15 November 2023  
 13 December 2023  
 24 January 2024

All meetings start at 6pm.

**The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.09 pm**

**Chair .....**

**Date: Wednesday 9 August 2023**

*When decisions take effect:*

*Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired*

*Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued*

*All other committees: immediately.*

*Details are in the Council's Constitution.*