

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 11 September 2024

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Committee members present:

Councillor Brown	Councillor Turner
Councillor Arshad	Councillor Chapman
Councillor Hollingsworth	Councillor Munkonge
Councillor Railton	Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Upton	

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Mark Gibbons, Building Compliance and Safety Surveyor
Emma Gubbins, Corporate Asset Lead
Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)
Emma Jackman, Head of Law and Governance
Clare Keen, Policy and Partnerships Officer
Bill Lewis, Financial Accounting Manager
Emma Lund, Committee and Member Services Officer
Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy
James Viljoen, Technical Services Manager

Also present:

Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of Scrutiny

Apologies:

No apologies were received.

33. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

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

None.

35. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

36. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

37. Scrutiny Reports

The Scrutiny Committee had met on 3 September 2024 and the Finance and Performance Panel had met on 4 September 2024. The Climate and Environment Panel had met on 10 September 2024 and the recommendations from that meeting would be submitted to a future Cabinet meeting.

The Scrutiny Committee had made recommendations relating to the following items:

- Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Charter/Pledges – Annual Update
- Anti-Social Behaviour

The Finance and Performance Panel had made recommendations relating to the following items:

- Treasury Management Annual Report 2023-24
- Integrated Performance Report Quarter 1 2024-25.

Scrutiny had also considered, but had not made recommendations in relation to, the Annual Safeguarding Report 2023/24 and the Council Strategy 2024-28 Key Performance Indicators. It had also agreed the scope for the Budget Review Group.

All of the recommendations, together with Cabinet Members' responses, were included in the separately published supplement to the agenda.

One recommendation had been made in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour. This had related to ensuring that as part of budget-setting the Council conducts a review of future capacity challenges and resource implications of the complex anti-social behaviour cases which the Community Safety Service manages or is involved in with partners. The recommendation had been agreed.

Two recommendations had been made in relation to the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter/Pledges Annual Update. These had related to (i) reviewing the complete list of OIEP pledges and committing to additional pledges where it would advance practices or meet requirements of pledges not currently committed to, in order to ensure that the Council's pledge commitments were aligned to existing and advancing organisational practices; and (ii) the inclusion of quantitative data, including the use of disaggregated data, in future OIEP Charter/Pledges updates in order to evidence progress. The Leader – Inclusive Economy and Partnerships responded that the aims of these recommendations were accepted; however, there was a need to ensure that the additional information could be easily provided within existing resources.

One recommendation had been made in relation to the Treasury Management Annual Report. This had related to producing a benchmarking report which compared the Council's Treasury Management function with that of other local authorities over time, to be shared with the Finance and Performance Panel. The recommendation had been accepted, and a briefing note would be prepared for the next Finance Panel meeting.

One recommendation had been made in relation to the Integrated Performance Report for Q1. This had related to producing an analysis of the Council's inability to claim housing benefit subsidy in respect of Oxford residents living in supported accommodation provided by non-registered provider organisations and the options

available to address the related adverse variance within the Council finances. The Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Finance and Asset Management responded that this was already recognised by the Council as an issue, and the objective of better understanding the financial impact, as raised at Scrutiny, was shared. The recommendation had therefore been accepted and a briefing paper would be prepared for the next Panel meeting in December 2024. However, the Cabinet Member cautioned that mitigation was not something which could be achieved by the Council alone.

38. Replacement of Front Doors to Flats with Compliant Certificated Fire Doors

The Executive Director (Communities and People) had submitted a report to seek Cabinet approval and delegated authority to award contracts to enable the replacement of entrance doors to flats with compliant certificated fire doors for relevant properties in the portfolio as identified in fire risk assessments.

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, drew attention to the legislative framework relating to fire doors in residential buildings as outlined in the report. The Council was currently unable to evidence that all of the fire doors in Council-owned residential buildings met all of these requirements. A programme to replace all fire doors with new, certificated fire doors had therefore been initiated, in order to give full assurance that all safety standards were being met. The programme had been completed for the highest risk high-rise blocks: the next stage would involve the next priority risk blocks of temporary accommodation, housing for older people and Pound House.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Grant project approval** for the replacement of front entrance doors to flats in higher risk buildings with compliant certificated fire doors as described in the report; and
2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Communities and People) in consultation with the Head of Financial Services, the Head of Law and Governance and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to enter into a contract with ODS (subject to agreeing an appropriate price in line with previous similar works) or an alternative contractor in order to deliver the installation of certified fire doors across the housing portfolio.

39. Asbestos Surveying and Air Monitoring Contract

The Executive Director (Communities and People) had submitted a report to seek Cabinet approval to procure a new asbestos surveying and air monitoring contract across both the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund budgets for 2024-29, and to seek delegated authority for officers to enter into contracts.

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, highlighted the need for the procurement of the asbestos and air monitoring contract in order to ensure the safety of tenants and anyone visiting or working in Council-owned properties. The proposed contract would be for three years with an option for a further two extension periods of one year each.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Grant project approval** for the procurement of a new asbestos surveying and air monitoring contract across both HRA and General Fund budgets for 2024-29 as described in the report; and
2. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Housing in consultation with the Head of Financial Services; the Head of Law and Governance; and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to enter into all contracts required in order to deliver the asbestos surveying obligations under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

40. Sale of Additional Land at Redbridge and Hinksey to the Environment Agency

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to seek approval for the transfer of land as described in the confidential appendix.

The Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Finance and Asset Management highlighted that the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS) was an essential measure to protect residents across the city and beyond from flooding. Should it go ahead, it would require the Environment Agency to deliver a biodiversity net gain. The report before Cabinet proposed the granting of an option to the Environment Agency over land owned by Oxford City Council, on terms set out in the associated confidential appendix, in order to support the delivery of biodiversity net gain for the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with Head of Financial Services (Section 151 Officer), the Head of Law and Governance, and the Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management to agree the final terms and enter into the Option Agreement, Transfer and any associated documents required to complete the transaction.

41. Council Strategy 2024-28 Key Performance Indicators

The Head of Corporate Strategy had submitted a report to seek approval of the strategic key performance indicators for the Council Strategy 2024-28.

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader, highlighted that a significant amount of work had been undertaken in order to seek to ensure that the indicators addressed the recommendations of scrutiny and the LGA peer review challenge and input from Group Leaders; that they were specific to the Council (i.e. they addressed only those areas over which the Council had direct influence); and that they were not too numerous. The new indicators aimed to provide a clear measure of performance against the Council's overall aims and objectives as set out in the Council Strategy.

A Cabinet Member noted that the indicator 'Oxford greenhouse gas emissions measured by government tracking towards zero by 2024' showed a benchmark of 610.2kt and targets for 2024-25 of 453.7kt and for 2025-26 of 411.2kt. It was questioned whether the first year target was achievable, given the significant drop required.

Officers responded that it was thought that the data published by the government involved a two-year time lag; therefore the 2024-25 outcome would only be known in 2026-27. The Head of Corporate Strategy undertook to provide Cabinet Members with more detailed information relating to the calculation of this target, its achievability, and whether the targets covered the actual performance over the year or just the data which

was published in that year, in order to ensure there was clarity on what was being reported.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Agree** the draft Oxford City Council key performance indicators (KPI) at Appendix 1 as measures for the Council Strategy 2024-28;
2. **Note** the benchmarking and annual targets for each 2024-28 KPI; and
3. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Strategy in consultation with the Council Leader to make any further minor amendments to the draft KPIs 2024-28 before implementation and publication, provided that such amendments do not materially affect the substance of the KPIs.

42. Integrated Performance Report for Q1 2024/25

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to update the Cabinet on Finance, Risk and Corporate Performance matters as at 30 June 2024.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, drew attention to key points arising from the report. These included a forecast adverse variance of £2.132m on the General Fund, largely driven by the pressure associated with temporary accommodation. Whilst officers were working hard to mitigate the impact of these costs, it was highlighted that this budget would need to be considered carefully in the forthcoming budget setting process to ensure that it was realistic.

Other significant variances included insurance valuations and business improvement, although much of the latter was considered to be due to one-off costs.

Progress had been made in capital programme forecasting and anticipating slippage, and it was hoped that improvement in this area would continue to be made.

The HRA showed some areas of overspend, which would need to continue to be monitored.

It was noted that many of the areas of adverse variance, such as temporary accommodation costs and the inability of the Council to claim housing benefit subsidy in respect of residents living in supported accommodation provided by non-registered provider organisations, were not unique to Oxford, but were instead shared by many local authorities nationwide.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the projected financial outturn as well as the current position on risk and performance as at 30 June 2024.

43. Treasury Management Annual Report 2023-24

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to set out the Council's Treasury Management activity and performance for the financial year 2023/24.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, highlighted that the report showed a favourable variance of £1.5 million on net interest earned during the year, which was largely explained by interest rates and slippage on the capital programme, including lower loan requirements from the housing companies due to internal borrowing.

It was also noted that the Council fully complied with its Treasury Management Strategy in relation to both debt and investment management in 2023-24.

Cabinet resolved to:

- 1. **Note** the report.

44. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2024 as a true and accurate record.

45. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

- 16 October 2024
- 13 November 2024
- 11 December 2024
- 22 January 2025
- 5 February 2025
- 12 March 2025

All meetings start at 6.00pm.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.01 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 16 October 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.