

Minutes of a meeting of Council on Monday 7 October 2024

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Council members present:

Councillor Qayyum	Councillor Azad
Councillor Jupp	Councillor Max Morris
Councillor Regisford	Councillor Stares
Councillor Yeatman	Councillor Harley
Councillor Henwood	Councillor Robinson
Councillor Altaf-Khan	Councillor Arshad
Councillor Brown	Councillor Chapman
Councillor Clarkson	Councillor Corais (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillor Coyne	Councillor Diggins
Councillor Djafari-Marbini	Councillor Fouweather
Councillor Fry (Sheriff)	Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Hunt	Councillor Kerr
Councillor Latif	Councillor Lygo
Councillor Malik	Councillor Miles
Councillor Muddiman	Councillor Mundy
Councillor Munkonge	Councillor Pressel
Councillor Railton	Councillor Rawle
Councillor Rehman	Councillor Sandelson
Councillor Linda Smith	Councillor Roz Smith
Councillor Snowton	Councillor Turner
Councillor Upton	Councillor Waite
Councillor Goddard	Councillor Ottino
Councillor Powell	Councillor Rowley (Lord Mayor)

Also present for all or part of the meeting:

Caroline Green, Chief Executive
Emma Jackman, Head of Law and Governance
Gail Malkin, Head of People

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager
Celeste Reyeslao, Scrutiny and Governance Advisor
Uswah Khan, Committee and Member Services Officer
Amber Khaloon, Trainee Solicitor

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Gant and Jarvis sent apologies.

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

22. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

23. Minutes

Council agreed to **approved** the minutes of the ordinary meeting of Council held on 15 July 2024 as a true and accurate record.

24. Appointment to Committees

Council received a report from the Head of Law and Governance which notified Council of the amendments made to the membership of Committees since the initial appointments made at Council on 16 May 2024.

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working introduced the report.

On being seconded by Councillor Lois Muddiman, the recommendations were put to the vote and agreed.

Council resolved to:

1. **Agree** the appointments to Committees:

- Appointments Committee – Councillor Kate Robinson to replace Councillor Chris Jarvis.
- Standards Committee – Councillor Kate Robinson to replace Councillor Max Morris.

25. Announcements

The Lord Mayor noted today was the anniversary of the terrorist attack in Israel one year ago and acknowledged all those who had lost their lives since in Gaza and Lebanon. He announced he had attended a united peace vigin at Bonn Square on 6 October 2024, an event which gave witness to Oxford's desire for peace. He had also attended several events including the celebration of Oxford United promotion during his first week in office, a gathering in Botley with individuals providing free nutritious food across Oxfordshire together with former Cllr Paul Murray and Gary Smith, son of former Cllr Karen Smith. Finally, he expressed his pleasure in receiving a gift from the British section of the non-resident Indian Welfare Society which would remain in the Town Hall to serve as memento for cycling city, twice visited by Muhammad Ghandi.

Deputy Lord Mayor announced he had attended two events in the past two weeks, including a charity event organised by Play2Give to support Oxford Children's Hospital and the annual Nepalese Dashain Celebration bringing to light the city's diverse community.

The Sheriff went to roundup livestock in Port Meadow over a week ago and reported that no cattle tested positive for TB. He thanked Cllr Sandelson for joining. Noted it was a damp affair but that it should be honoured and hoped for a drier event in the next year.

The Leader of the Council announced that Cllr Mary Clarkson would continue as the Council's Heritage Champion, working with Cllr Louise Upton. Cllr Mark Lygo was appointed as the Council's Armed Forces and Veterans Champion and would work with Cllr Brown on the Oxfordshire Civilian Military Partnership and with Cllr Linda Smith on broader community work.

The Leader of the Council provided a statement on the delay to the Local Plan:

Since we last met, we have heard the devastating news that our Local Plan will have to be delayed. We are alarmed and extremely disappointed by the recommendation to withdraw our Local Plan 2040 from public examination. We are still digesting the information and deciding on next steps.

The planning inspectors have failed to grasp the seriousness of Oxford's housing crisis and the number of new homes we need to tackle this crisis – and don't appear to have heeded the clear message from government which requires all councils to up their housing delivery ambitions.

The logical outcome of the inspectors' conclusions will be a delay to proactively planning for the homes we need. The reality is that while the City Council are builders, there are others elsewhere who are blockers. Waiting for a situation where all councils in Oxfordshire are agreed on housing numbers and cross-boundary matters is just not realistic. That's why thankfully our new government is planning the reintroduction of mandatory housing delivery targets.

Our approach hasn't changed since our last successful local plan. Yet we are being told that there are no exceptional circumstances and we should now use the current 'standard method' - already rejected by the new government - for working out how many homes we need. This would mean fewer homes being built, and far fewer than we actually need. This is a U-turn from our Local Plan 2036, where

inspectors agreed Oxfordshire's exceptional circumstances justified the need for more homes.

The current standard method is not fit for purpose and flies in the face of the government's policy intention to overhaul a broken national planning system and deliver 1.5 million homes. The current standard method does not even take account of population increases that have already happened in Oxford and across Oxfordshire recorded in the census. Using this discredited method to calculate how many homes we need would make the city's housing crisis worse.

We also strongly dispute the finding we have not met the duty to cooperate. We have a longstanding history of working collaboratively with neighbouring councils and other stakeholders on planning issues affecting Oxfordshire - including during the preparation of this plan.

This finding relates to a single five-month period in 2022 after the collapse of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 that involved all five district councils. Let us not forget, that plan was collapsed because South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse chose to withdraw their co-operation. In the subsequent period, we were working with Cherwell District Council to commission the Housing and Employment Needs Assessment (HENA) as a joint evidence base for our respective plans.

Oxfordshire's other districts declined the invitation to take part in this project. However, they were offered the opportunity to engage with the findings of the work.

The duty to cooperate is not a duty to agree. Nor should it be a charter for those who object the loudest to be able to block the building of desperately needed homes.

While the Council strongly disputes the inspectors' findings as it is confident it engaged appropriately with neighbouring councils, the national planning framework gives no way for us to appeal the inspectors' findings.

We also think the inspectors have failed to read the room on planning reform. The new government intends to reintroduce mandatory housing targets and bring in a new way of calculating how many homes are needed. National consultation has just closed on proposals that would see a 59% increase in the number of homes that would need to be delivered in Oxfordshire which we welcome. This will help us get closer to building the new homes so desperately needed locally.

We will continue to explore all options open to us to ensure that we can build the houses that Oxford so desperately needs. We continue to wish to be builders of homes, not blockers and are proud of our record on building homes, particularly council and other genuinely affordable homes.

The Leader of the Council also gave a statement marking one year since the 7 October 2023 attacks:

We are meeting today on 7 October 2024. We are a year on from the attacks on 7 October last year which triggered such devastating loss of life across the region of the Middle East.

Last night we held our second peace vigil jointly with the Oxfordshire Council of Faiths. We came together in large numbers, as we did last November. Sadly, since that time, countless further lives have been lost, particularly in Gaza. And now conflict has spread, not ceased. Many, many families are mourning the loss

of loved ones. Terrible injuries have changed lives. Many families have lost their homes. The suffering is terrible.

Yesterday at the peace vigil, we came together to support each other - people of all faiths and none. We celebrated and recognised all of Oxford's many diverse communities. In Oxford we are rightly proud of our welcoming, multicultural and compassionate city.

The terrible loss of life in Israel, Gaza and now Lebanon has shocked and appalled us all. We need peace.

We are conscious that many people in our local communities are grieving for loved ones or are worried about friends and relations in Gaza, Israel, Lebanon and Iran, as well as other conflicts in the world such as Sudan and Ukraine.

A year on, I also want to say that nobody should experience fear in our city as a result of international events. No-one should feel worried to wear a symbol of their faith or culture whether that is a hijab or a star of David. Oxford City Council stands shoulder to shoulder with people from all communities in our city and county, coming together in peace and solidarity, irrespective of their faith or background.

Today we once again fly our city flag at half-mast to mark our sorrow at the war, destruction and loss of life in Gaza, Israel, Lebanon and elsewhere in the world and in the hope of peace.

I pledge to continue to work with all of our faith communities to ensure that hate and prejudice have no place here, and that people of all faiths and none, and of every background, feel safe, welcome and at home.

Cllr Roz Smith and Djafari-Marbini and Goddard joined the meeting.

Council held a minute's silence to pay tribute to all lives lost.

City Rector reflected on the significance of anniversaries, both good and bad, and the different ways they are handled or celebrated. He emphasised the importance of love, hope, and faith, thanking the Council for its strong commitment to public service.

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

There were no addresses or questions.

27. Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy

The Executive Director for Communities and People has submitted a report to agree the revised draft Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy following public consultation.

Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee, introduced the report and proposed the recommendation. She mentioned that the

Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee had considered and agreed the revised Statement at its meeting on 23 September 2024. The revisions included updates to the Licensing Authority addresses, an amended map of Oxford reflecting new ward names and boundaries, and minor textual changes. She thanked the Licensing Officers for their hard work and for organising the consultation, during which no adverse comments were received.

On being seconded by Councillor Chris Snowton, the recommendations were put to the vote and agreed.

Council resolved to:

1. **Agree** the revised draft Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy following public consultation.

28. Council Senior Management Structure

Council received a report from the Chief Executive relating the proposed Senior Management Structure.

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working introduced the report.

On being seconded by Councillor Chris Snowton, the recommendations were put to the vote and agreed.

Council resolved to **approve** the recommendations within the report; and **Approve** appointment of Nigel Kennedy as the Council's Section 151 officer and Emma-Louise Jackman as the Council's Monitoring Officer within the revised management structure.

29. Questions on Cabinet minutes

- a) **Draft Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 11th September 2024**

None.

Cllr Turner joined the meeting.

30. Questions on Notice from Members of Council

53 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 30 supplementary questions and responses asked and given at the meeting are set out in the minutes pack.

The meeting broke for 30min at the conclusion of this item.

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

Council heard six addresses. Cabinet Members read or summarised their written responses.

Both addresses and responses are set out in full in the minutes pack.

1. Address from Mr Greg Owen – Spindleberry Nature Reserve
2. Address from Chaka Artwell – Discrimination against non-internet users
3. Address from Georgie Steele – Support for Motion 13f (Protection of Carers from Exploitation)
4. Address from Sushila Dhall, Refugee Resource (deputised by David Waller) – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)
5. Address from Emma Jones, Asylum Welcome – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)
6. Address from Bill MacKeith, CKCC – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)

32. Scrutiny Committee update report

Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, introduced the report updating the Council on the Committee's activities between 1 July 2024 and 30 September 2024. She thanked Alice Courtney for her work as Scrutiny Officer and welcomed Celeste Reyeslao as the new Scrutiny and Governance Advisor. She advised that the Scrutiny Committee and its Panels submitted 12 recommendations to Cabinet, of which 6 were accepted and 1 agreed in-part, and that the Budget Review Group and its scope for December 2024 to January 2025 had been agreed by the Committee. She gave thanks to Cabinet Members and Officers who engaged with the Committee and its Panels during this period.

Council resolved to note the report.

33. Motions on notice October 2024

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

Motions agreed as set out below:

- a) Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr Chris Smowton, Seconded by Cllr Lawrence Fouweather) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr Ian Yeatman] [Amendment Proposed by Cllr Simon Ottino, seconded by Cllr Anna Railton]
- b) Keep Campsfield Closed (Proposed by Cllr Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr Dr Hosnieh Djarafi-Marbini)

Cllrs Pressel and L. Smith left the meeting and did not return.

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

- a) Zero Emission Zone (Proposed by Cllr David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr Ian Yeatman)
- b) Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr Ajaz Rehman, Seconded by Cllr Dr Amar Latif)
- c) Decent and Genuinely Affordable Housing for All (Proposed by Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Seconded by Cllr Ed Turner)
- d) Protection of Carers from Exploitation (Proposed by Cllr Jo Sandelson, Seconded by Cllr Theo Jupp)
- e) Bus travel for asylum seekers in Oxford (Proposed by Cllr Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr Dianne Regisford)

- a) **Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr Chris Snowton, Seconded by Cllr Lawrence Fouweather) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr Ian Yeatman] [Amendment Proposed by Cllr Simon Ottino, seconded by Cllr Anna Railton]**

Councillor Chris Snowton amended his motion. He proposed his amended motion and was seconded by Councillor Lawrence Fouweather.

Councillor David Henwood proposed an amendment to the motion and was seconded by Councillor Ian Yeatman. Following debate and on being put to the vote, the amendment was agreed.

Councillor Simon Ottino proposed an amendment to the motion and was seconded by Councillor Anna Railton. Following debate and on being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

Council debated the amended motion.

On being put to the vote, the amended motion was **agreed**.

Council notes the recent resolution by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.

Though many agree that universal Winter Fuel Payments are not necessary, Council is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower incomes, but not in receipt of Pension Credit, will now not receive the payments.

In Oxford the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 15,285. That means 88.9% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.[1][2]

Council further believes that the threshold for the receipt of any benefit should be staggered rather than immediate, so that any individual with means just above the threshold should not be relatively worse off.

Council is also concerned by the low uptake of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them — and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so.[3] Council recognises the role we have to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.

Council further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October (a rise from a cap of £1524 to £1717, compare the Energy Price Guarantee applied until end June 2023 which intended to keep a typical household’s energy bill below £2500 per year), which combined with the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

Council notes the good work already done by City Council officers to promote the take up of Pension Credit and calls on all Members to actively promote the take up of Pension Credit with any vulnerable constituents.

Council resolves to request that the Leader of the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be revised, attaching a copy of this motion, and both Oxford MPs requesting their support regarding the same.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023>

[2] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-benefits-statistics-february-2023>, (on Stat-Xplore), table “Pension Credit - Data from May 2018”

[3] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022>

b) Keep Campsfield Closed (Proposed by Cllr Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr Dr Hosnieh Djarafi Marbini)

Councillor Alex Powell, seconded by Councillor Dr Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini, proposed the motion as set out in the briefing notes.

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

Council Notes:

1. In November 2022, this council debated and passed a motion in response to reports that the then government was seeking to re-open Campsfield House for use as an immigration removal centre.¹
2. The motion passed in 2022 condemned the proposed re-opening of the centre and called for the city to be a safe space for refugees.
3. On 21 August 2024, the Home Secretary Yvette Cooper confirmed the current government’s plans to re-open Campsfield House.²

¹ <https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/g7379/Public%20minutes%20Monday%2028-Nov-2022%2017.00%20Council.pdf?T=11>

² <https://news.sky.com/story/immigration-detention-centres-to-re-open-in-removals-drive-13200380>

4. Cooper's announcement has been heavily criticised by numerous migrants' rights groups including Asylum Welcome,³ Detention Action,⁴ The Refugee Council,⁵ and Amnesty International UK.⁶
5. Summer 2024 saw violence and intimidation from far-right activists, some of which targeted - or threatened to target - organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers - including those within Oxford.
6. Both Oxford City Council⁷ and Oxfordshire County Council⁸ have committed themselves to the values of the City of Sanctuary programme, pledging to work for the creation of a safe and welcoming environment for those seeking sanctuary.

Council Believes:

1. Oxford and this council have a proud history of supporting and welcoming refugees and opposing detention. Maintaining our opposition to the re-opening of Campsfield House is an important part of this.
2. The recent steps to end the cruel Rwanda Plan and stop the state of permanent limbo⁹ created by the Illegal Migration Act 2023 are to be welcomed,¹⁰ but do not go far enough in restoring the legal right to asylum.
3. Expanding detention and increasing deportations represents a worrying indication as to the government's intended direction of travel, one which is not only incompatible with the promise this city has made to stand up for the rights of those seeking sanctuary, but also a cruel gimmick that multiple reviews by previous Tory governments have assessed to be inhumane, indiscriminate and wasteful.
4. The UK's asylum system needs major overhaul, including through the opening of safe and legal routes for people to claim asylum.
5. It has been extensively documented that immigration removal centers are sites of violence which have no place in a democratic, rights respecting, society.¹¹

³ <https://www.asylum-welcome.org/labour-campsfield/>

⁴ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/home-office-immigration-detention-migrant-b2599540.html>

⁵ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/home-office-immigration-detention-migrant-b2599540.html>

⁶ <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/james-cleverly-yvette-cooper-home-secretary-government-amnesty-international-b1177697.html>

⁷ <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/183/oxford-city-council-makes-commitment-to-city-of-sanctuary-status>

⁸ <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-is-a-county-of-sanctuary/#:~:text=Migrants%2C%20including%20refugees%20and%20asylum,as%20a%20place%20of%20sanctuary>

⁹ <https://www.ippr.org/media-office/home-office-chaos-leaves-up-to-55-500-asylum-seekers-stuck-in-perma-backlog>

¹⁰ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/815/made>

6. As such, Campsfield House should not be re-opened, and the government should be moving to shrink, not expand, the UK's detention estate.
7. Rhetoric and policies that demonise and stigmatise asylum seekers have a contributory role in driving division in our society and fuel the far-right.

Council Resolves:

1. To reiterate this council's opposition to the re-opening of Campsfield House.
 2. To request that the Leader of the Council write to the Home Secretary calling on her to:
 3. Abandon plans to re-open Campsfield House.
 4. Outline plans to reduce, rather than increase, the number of people held in detention.
 5. Begin to introduce a more humane migration policy - including through the establishment of safe and legal routes for people to claim asylum.
- c) Zero Emission Zone (Proposed by Cllr David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr Ian Yeatman)**
- d) Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr Ajaz Rehman, Seconded by Cllr Dr Amar Latif)**
- e) Decent and Genuinely Affordable Housing for All (Proposed by Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Seconded by Cllr Ed Turner)**
- f) Protection of Carers from Exploitation (Proposed by Cllr Jo Sandelson, Seconded by Cllr Theo Jupp)**
- g) Bus travel for asylum seekers in Oxford (Proposed by Cllr Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr Dianne Regisford)**

The meeting started at 5:00pm and ended at 9:00pm

Lord Mayor

Date: Monday 25 November 2024

Decisions on items of business take effect immediately:

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

Details are in the Council's Constitution.

¹¹ <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/04-05-2022-immigration-detention-is-harmful-to-health---alternatives-to-detention-should-be-used>; <https://www.rainbowmigration.org.uk/news/lgbtqi-people-still-at-serious-risk-of-harm-in-immigration-detention/>

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