

## **Minutes of a meeting of Council on Monday 25 November 2024**

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### **Council members present:**

Councillor Qayyum	Councillor Azad
Councillor Max Morris	Councillor Regisford
Councillor Stares	Councillor Yeatman
Councillor Harley	Councillor Henwood
Councillor Robinson	Councillor Arshad
Councillor Brown	Councillor Chapman
Councillor Clarkson	Councillor Corais (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillor Diggins	Councillor Djafari-Marbini
Councillor Fouweather	Councillor Fry (Sheriff)
Councillor Gant	Councillor Jarvis
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  
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services  
Tom Hook, Executive Director for Corporate Resources  
Tom Bridgman, Executive Director of Development  
Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

Dr Brenda McCollum, Committee and Member Services Officer  
Hannah Carmody-Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

### **Apologies:**

Councillor(s) Jupp, Altaf-Khan, Coyne, Hollingsworth and Hunt sent apologies.

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

### **34. Apologies for absence**

Councillor(s) Alex Hollingsworth, Jemima Hunt, Theo Jupp, Barbara Coyne, and Altaf-khan sent apologies.

### **35. Declarations of interest**

Councillor Gant declared interest in items 19 a, b, c, d, e, and f, due to his role on the county council. He agreed that he would leave the room for these items.

Councillor Brown declared interest in item 19 c. She is an employee of Oxford University hospitals but does not have a pecuniary interest in this item. She agreed she would leave the chamber for discussion of that item.

*Councillor Harley arrived during the discussion of this item.*

### **36. Minutes**

Council agreed to approve the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 07 October 2024 as a true and correct record.

### **37. Appointment to Committees**

No appointments were received.

### **38. Announcements**

**The Lord Mayor** noted that it had been an honour to present the remembrance service and to welcome representatives from Oxford's twin cities to this event. He reflected on this event and stated that the best thing they can do to remember those who gave their lives is to safeguard the peace they had won. The Lord Mayor also informed the

chamber that during the evening there was an open evening being held at the Oxford Town Hall Museum and encouraged people to take part in the event.

**The City Rector** thanked those who had helped to organize the Remembrance Day events and service. He reflected on the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday and encouraged those in the chamber to practice gratitude for those things which they had to be thankful for.

The Lord Mayor moved item 11 up to the beginning of the meeting, to follow item 5 announcements.

*Councillor Djafari-Marbini arrived during the discussion of this item.*

### **39. Honorary Recorder - Appointment**

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report asking Council to appoint the Honorary Recorder of Oxford.

Judge Pringle, the current Honorary Recorder of Oxford, presented a statement. He reflected on his time in this position and said that it had been an honour and a privilege to serve in this role. He specifically noted his memories of the Remembrance Sunday event. He stated his support for his successor, Judge Maria Lamb, and encouraged the chamber to vote for her.

Councillor Brown, after noting the significance that Judge Maria Lamb will be the first female Honorary Recorder, moved the report to be voted upon. After being seconded by Councillor Jarvis, the recommendations were put to a vote and agreed.

Council resolved to:

1. **Appoint** Her Honour Judge Maria Lamb to the post of Honorary Recorder of Oxford for as long as she holds the position of resident Judge at the Crown Court.
2. **Thank** His Honour Judge Pringle for his services as Honorary Recorder.

### **40. Public addresses and questions that relate to matters for decision at this meeting**

There were no addresses or questions.

### **41. Local Authority Housing Fund - Round 3**

The Executive Director (Communities and People) had submitted a report to make available 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 3.

Councillor Linda Smith presented the report to Council. She detailed the report's recommendations and the way that the report will allow the city to purchase properties as part of the Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3. She said that the report presents a good deal for the HRA and would allow them to further their work to support refugees and become a council of sanctuary.

Although he lamented that these recommendations should have come sooner, Councillor Malik expressed his support for the report's recommendations.

On being seconded by Councillor Louise Upton the recommendations were put to the vote and agreed.

Council resolved to:

**Approve** an allocation of £1,910,000 capital budget from the Housing Revenue Account, for the Council's investment to purchase the properties as part of Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3, with up to £1,061,000 being funded from HRA borrowing, and the rest covered by grant of up to £849,000.

## **42. Decisions taken under Part 17.9 of the Constitution**

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report which noted the decision taken by the Executive Director (Development) under the provisions in Part 17.9 of the Constitution.

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

Councillor Henwood expressed his support for the report's recommendations.

Councillor Fouweather asked why an urgent decision was needed in the instance recorded by the report.

Councillor Brown responded that this is an issue being examined by the team and they are working to ensure decisions are taken in a timelier manner.

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

Council resolved to:

**Note** the decision taken as set out in the report.

## **43. Extension of term for appointments of Independent Persons**

The Monitoring Officer had submitted a report asking for authorisation to extend the terms of office of the council's independent persons for a further four months to 31 March 2025.

Councillor Diggins, Chair of the Standards Committee, presented the report and moved that it be voted upon.

On being seconded by Councillor Linda Smith the recommendations were put to the vote and agreed.

Council resolved to:

**Authorise** the Monitoring Officer to extend the terms of office of the Council's Independent Persons for a further four months to 31 March 2025.

*Councillor Goddard arrived during the discussion of this item.*

#### **44. Urgent Key Decisions Taken Since July 2023**

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report which updated Council on key decisions taken in cases of special urgency since July 2023.

Councillor Brown presented the report and moved for it to be voted upon. Upon being seconded by Councillor Linda Smith, the recommendations were put to a vote and agreed.

Council resolved to:

**Note** the urgent key decisions taken in cases of special urgency as set out in the report.

#### **45. Updates to Constitution**

The Head of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) had submitted a report which sought Council's agreement to amend the Constitution to reflect changes to the Contract Rules.

Councillor Brown presented the report. She noted that the report's recommendations bring the constitution in line with current legislation and address matters regarding different delegations in relation to financial matters.

Councillor Snowton flagged a concern that the recommendations and report had been amended at the last minute, just before the meeting. He said that there is concern that this was changed last minute and said that there are still some problems that need to be resolved. He noted that the delegated powers will need to be used to fix these issues after the meeting.

The Head of Law and Governance confirmed that typographical and wording amendments can be made using the delegated powers. However, any substantial changes would have to come back to a future meeting of Council.

Councillor Brown moved for the report to be voted upon. Following a second from Councillor Henwood, the recommendations were voted upon and approved.

Council resolved to:

**Approve** the updated Contract Rules and other changes consequential to them.

## **46. Questions on Cabinet minutes**

### **a) Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 16th October 2024**

Councillor Fouweather asked about the topic of procurement of a new planning system and asked what steps had been taken to ensure that a good system was found. He also asked how learning from previous procurement experiences was being implemented in this instance.

Councillor Chapman responded that he and Councillor Upton had jointly proposed this. He said that they have learnt lessons from previous experiences and that there would be a strengthening of procurement and implementation policies. He added that in this instance they ensured that IT were more involved than in previous instances. He stated that a demonstration of their implementing learnings is seen in the fact that none of the issues that arose in QL have arisen in the systems since.

Councillor Miles mentioned the lessons that had been learnt with relation to Foxwell Drive. She said that they had had a Scrutiny meeting where this was discussed. Out of this, she mentioned that there is an opportunity for Cabinet to invite members from the opposition, who may be relevant for a particular decision, to come to the relevant Cabinet meeting. She asked if that be explored at future Cabinet meetings, to help resolve any questions that lead to callins in the process going forward.

Councillor Brown responded that she is always happy to have discussions with any members of the chamber. She said that they have the opportunity at Group Leaders meetings to discuss these types of issues and that there are opportunities on the Cabinet agenda for individuals to address Cabinet in relation to items on the agenda. She stated that she would be happy to discuss this further with Councillor Miles following the meeting.

### **b) Draft Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 13th November 2024**

Councillor Snowton asked about the Corporate Debt Policy paper. He said that the paper is not explicit but suggests that one of the goals of its recommendations is to reduce debt arrears. He asked if this could be confirmed. If this is the case, he asked which category of individuals will be facing more vigorous debt enforcement. He then asked about the Furnished Tenancies Report. From the report it seems that if someone takes advantage of this policy, they can pay an additional service charge indefinitely, or pay a lump sum. He asked if there is any consideration given to a hire purchase situation to help people to get out of this cycle of paying an additional service charge.

Councillor Linda Smith responded that this is not how the scheme works at the moment. She offered to discuss with Councillor Snowton how the options are explored as they go through the procurement process, following the meeting.

Councillor Chapman said that the Corporate Debt Policy paper made a clear distinction between those who can't pay and those who won't pay. Those who can't pay will be treated differently from those who won't pay. Those who can't pay will be worked with very closely to put in place debt repayment programs, that work for them, and they will work to avoid evictions.

*Councillor(s) Ed Turner, Roz Smith, and Emily Kerr arrived during the discussion of this item.*

## **47. Questions on Notice from Members of Council**

72 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 32 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.*

*Councillor(s) Amar Latif and Dianne Regisford arrived during the discussion of this item.*

*Councillor Gant left the meeting at the end of this item.*

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

Council heard 5 addresses and Cabinet Members read or summarised their written responses.

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

1. Address from Margaret Simpson – support for Motion 19a (Making Oxford a Truly Walkable City)
2. Address from Colin Aldridge – support for Motion 19g (Drug Consumption Rooms)
3. Address from Kaddy Beck – Support for Bertie Place
4. Address from Chaka Artwell
5. Address from Chaka Artwell

#### **49. Petition submitted in accordance with Council procedure rules - Establish a Children's Playground in Oxford City Centre**

Josie Proctor, the Petitioner, thanked the Lord Mayor and Council for their time. She presented a petition asking for a children's playground to be built in the city centre. She said that the city of Oxford is currently not good for families, demonstrated by the lack of children's play areas in the city centre. She stated that at the beginning of the month, they had asked the County Council to take this petition forward and the County Council have been supportive of this petition. She emphasized that other, similar cities have found ways to become more family friendly, by inputting play areas, benches, and other infrastructure in the city centre which benefit families. She added that building a play area in the city centre would benefit Oxford, by bringing more business into the city. She presented the opinions of other petitioners who support the petition to build a children's play area. She noted that today was not about finding the funds for the play area, but she noted that corporate partnerships could be a way forward. She finished by stating that the most significant feedback that came from citizens regarding this matter was that the play area should be accessible to children of all abilities.

Councillor Upton responded that her day job places her particularly well to discuss how important a child's surrounding is to their development. She said that living in a city and looking after children is stressful. Although the city does have a lot of great green spaces, she noted that there are very few in the city centre. She said that it is important that children with families are able to come into the city centre. She added that they are working with the County Council to find a way to introduce a play area to the city centre.

Councillor Miles proposed that the Council, agree in principle, that they develop a children's play area in the city centre. She said that they are aware that children and residents want this to be introduced to the city. She stated that having a place for children to play would benefit the city and the families that visit the centre of Oxford. She noted that Oxford has had falling numbers of children in the city and as a Council, they want to be attracting families to live in Oxford. She said that by creating a space for children in the city centre, it would make the city more family friendly and safer for families. Creating a play area in the city centre would also make this area more inclusive, as well as having commercial and economic benefits. She urged the Council to support this report.

Councillor Kerr seconded the motion and expressed her support for the recommendations. She said that creating a play area would make the city centre more family friendly.

Councillor Djafari-Marbini said that many of the residents in her ward avoid coming into the city centre. She said that this is because there is not a place to walk around in the city centre for families. Building a city centre play area could help to address these issues and make the city centre more inclusive and accessible. Additionally, she stated that this could help to address health inequality in the city and the county. She noted that there is a town and gown divide in this issue, as colleges own large tracts of land that are not accessible to the public. She emphasized that this should stop, and the university should use their resources to help address health inequality in the city.

Councillor Arshad expressed support for the children's play area in the city centre. She said that this was something she had long noted that would be beneficial for Oxford and the city's residents. She noted that with the ongoing crises of mental health and cost of living in this country, implementing this play area could benefit children from across the city and county.

Councillor Munkonge said that the motion proposed by Councillor Miles is in line with the recommendations of the report. He said that they are doing a lot as a Council, to support children's ability to safely be in the city centre and to address health inequality.

The motion proposed by Councillor Miles was put to a vote and approved.

The recommendations of the petition were put to a vote and approved.

The Council resolved to:

1. Note the contents of the report;
2. Hear the debate by the petition organiser;
3. Debate the proposal contained within the petition and any relevant motions/recommendations submitted by Members by the deadline;
4. Agree the action it wishes to take.



## **50. Outside organisation/Committee Chair reports and questions**

### **a) Outside Organisation Report: Children's Trust Board**

Councillor Munkonge presented the report. He said that this report provided an update on the work being done for young people in Oxford. The report outlined most of the things that the Council does for young people, and it was done in consultation with the Council's partners.

Council resolved to:

Note the report.

## **51. Scrutiny Committee update report**

No update was given for this item.

## **52. Motions on notice November 2024**

Council had before it 8 motions on notice submitted in accordance with Council procedure rules and reached decisions as set out below.

Motions agreed as set out below:

- a) Making Oxford a Truly Walkable City (proposed by Cllr. Max Morris, Seconded by Cllr. Emily Kerr)

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) Promoting Free Shuttle Buses for Oxford (proposed by Cllr. Edward Mundy, Seconded by Cllr. Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini)
- c) Impacts of Traffic filter on small businesses in Oxford (Proposed by Cllr. Saj Malik, Seconded by Cllr. Mohammed Azad)
- d) Keep Oxfordshire's Street Lights On (Proposed by Cllr. Lubna Arshad, Seconded by Cllr Jemima Hunt)
- e) A City Centre Play Park for Children (Proposed by Cllr. Katherine Miles, Seconded by Cllr. Emily Kerr)
- f) Drug Consumption Rooms (Proposed by Cllr. Chris Jarvis, Seconded by Cllr. Max Morris)

- g) Decent and Genuinely Affordable Housing for All (Proposed by Cllr. Linda Smith, Seconded by Cllr. Ed Turner)

**a) Making Oxford a Truly Walkable City (Proposed by Cllr. Max Morris, Seconded by Cllr. Emily Kerr)**

Councillor Morris presented his motion and was seconded by Councillor Kerr.

Council debated the motion.

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

**Council notes** that Oxford was recently named as the UK's most walkable city, due to the small distances between key tourist attractions.<sup>[1]</sup> The 2021 Census showed that 22% of Oxford residents walk to work, making walking the modal choice for more commuting residents than cycling at 17% or bus at 15%.<sup>[2]</sup> Studies show walking significantly improves both physical and mental health outcomes, and promotes longer and higher quality lives.<sup>[3]</sup> Research suggests lower income households - over-represented by 'female heads of house, children, young and older people, black and minority ethnic (BME) and disabled people' - rely on walking more often due to not owning a car.<sup>[4]</sup> There are inexpensive walking-related initiatives across Oxfordshire which have been successful, such as Oxford's health walks and Bicester Blue Lines.<sup>[5]</sup> Whilst some things which improve the pedestrian experience are County responsibilities there are others which the City Council has sole or joint responsibility for, such as new benches, water fountains, public toilets, and wayfinding. The City Council could require residential dropped kerbs to be "Dutch style" entry kerbs, which keeps pavements flat and easier for wheelchair users. Mapping work in London has provided councils with excellent dynamic local maps, allowing residents and visitors to walk more easily.<sup>[6]</sup> Pavement Parking is frequently named as one of the key issues facing pedestrians and wheelchair users. Government commissioned a report into this in 2020, and despite written questions and a debate, the results have not been published.<sup>[7]</sup> Lambeth has pioneered an innovative "Kerbside Strategy" which prioritises walking, street trees, benches, and local businesses and will reallocate 25% of kerbside space to people.<sup>[8]</sup>

**Council further believes** that despite Oxford being a relatively small city with strong walking potential, the experience of walking or wheeling around the city needs urgent improvement. Council believes they could build on Oxford's small size and strong reputation for walking to have a cohesive strategy to improve the pedestrian experience for everyone - and this would be relatively inexpensive to do with enormous health and wellness benefits.

**Council resolves** to request the Cabinet Member for Healthy Oxford:

1. *Noting that there could be financial and resourcing implications, meaning that implementation would be subject to a cabinet report setting out those implications,*

1. discuss with officers the designing of a plan for improving walking in Oxford, based on local knowledge and existing research.
  2. Works with the Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon and the Cabinet Member for Culture and officers to create a walkable map of Oxford for tourists and locals alike.
  3. Writes to the new Transport Minister on behalf of Oxford City Council, urging rapid release of the 2020 pavement parking consultation
  4. Proposes the idea of a “Kerbside Strategy for Oxford” to the County Council.
2. To request the Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management reviews opportunities to invest in public infrastructure to improve the city’s walkability to enable bids in the budget process.
  3. To request the Cabinet Member for Planning reviews mandating Dutch entry kerbs for residential drop kerb conversions planning conditions and considers this through the Equality Act 2010.

**The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 8.41 pm**

**Lord Mayor .....**

**Date: Monday 27 January 2025**

*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.*

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