

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 22 October 2025

Committee members present:

Councillor Brown

Councillor Arshad

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Railton

Councillor Turner

Councillor Chapman

Councillor Munkonge

Councillor Linda Smith

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Caroline Green, Chief Executive

Nigel Kennedy, Group Director Finance

Tom Hook, Deputy Chief Executive - Citizen and City Services

Tom Bridgman, Deputy Chief Executive - Place

Rachel McKoy, Monitoring Officer (Interim)

Dave Scholes, Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead

Paula Redway, the Culture and Community Development Manager

Helen Bishop, Director of Communities and Citizens' Services

Megan McFarlane, Affordable Housing Supply Programme Officer

Pedro Abreu, Principal Air Quality Officer

Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager

Simon Manton, Community Response Team Manager

James Watkins, Housing Policy and Projects Officer

Nerys Parry, Director of Housing

James Barlow, Principal Flood Mitigation and Environmental Quality Team Leader

Courtney Bennett, Regulatory Services Manager

Liz Jones, ASBIT Manager and Domestic Abuse Lead

Ted Bowler, Corporate Asset Manager

Dr Brenda McCollum, Committee and Member Services

Also present:

Councillor Alex Powell, Chair of Scrutiny

Apologies:

Councillor Railton sent apologies for a late arrival.

63. Declarations of Interest

None.

64. Minutes of the previous meeting

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on **17 September 2025** as a true and accurate record.

65. Addresses by members of the public

Cabinet received two addresses from members of the public.

Address from Marta Lomza, former City Council employee.

My name is Marta Lomza, I am speaking tonight as a resident of Oxford and a former employee of the Oxford City Council (2018-2024), with some 15 years of experience working in the heritage industry. I was the Twinning Officer in charge of signing of the twinning agreement with Wroclaw, Poland; for 6 years after that I worked as the Community Engagement & Exhibitions Officer at the Museum of Oxford, and I had a secondment to act as deputy coordinator for a Central Oxford response hub during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. I'm saying this to stress my experience in culture & heritage and in working with the residents of our city, and my knowledge of and care for this council.

I'm here to present my serious concerns about the proposal regarding museum fees and to urge you to consider rejecting the proposal as it stands. I don't have time to present all my concerns so I will focus on four main points as submitted in my draft; I will illustrate each point with an example.

1) LACK OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Appendix 4, section 3, point 17 admits there has been no community consultation. As I said in my draft, this poses serious reputational and relational risks to the Council, as in the following example. One of the museum's key achievements is the strong partnerships it has built with incredibly diverse and often marginalised communities - East Timori, Iraqi, African families, LGBTQ+ groups and more. This has led to diversifying museum collections with objects generously donated or loaned by those communities. We now have a proposal which does not even list community partners on the concessions list, risking a situation where people will have to pay to see their own object on display. This **will** have a negative impact on the relationships between the museum staff and the community partners. The lack of consultation will also affect the staff morale when they'll have to communicate this to the people impacted by it. It might also affect your own Customer Service Excellence assessment, which the museum has made valuable contributions to over the years. Finally, at a time when there are strong community reactions regarding the County Council's congestion charge, there's an

increased risk this will add more arguments for those who think our local authorities ignore the opinions of the residents.

2) LACK OF EVIDENCE IN THE PROPOSAL

Except for the 2023 AIM (Association of Independent Museums) report from which it cherry picks quotes to support its recommendations, the proposal cites almost no evidence or research to back up its claims, with spurious points based on conjecture, such as in this sentence “it is *possible* that the free entry *may have had* a negative impact on visitors’ perception of the *potential* quality of the offer” - a sentence so vague it’s practically meaningless, and yet it’s used as the basis for an argument. This is just one example. It appears that you are being asked to vote on a draft of someone’s brainstormed ideas rather than research & evidence. Is this an example of ‘best practice’ that I know this Council prides itself on following?

3) POOR QUALITY OF THE ATTACHED Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 4).

The assessment’s own introduction says it needs to be based on “sufficient information and data” on impact, mitigations and justifications; this assessment evidently does not do that. Instead, it contains generic text copied and pasted across all fields, both for the risk and the proposed mitigations. As one example, this leads to proposing that “free access for people in receipt of state benefits” is an adequate measure to mitigate the impact on asylum seekers; as we know, asylum seekers have no recourse to public funds so they could not claim state benefits. This lack of giving the specific impact on asylum seekers due consideration alone makes a dent in the council’s recently confirmed status as a Local Authority of Sanctuary. But again, this is just one example. The Assessment lumping all people with protected characteristics together and treats them a homogenous whole with exactly the same needs, and so is against the Council’s own ethos and recommended practice, thus posing a risk to its desire to be seen as a council which is “passionate about equalities”. Both from personal experience as a resident who has several of the characteristics on this list, and from professional experience of working with many diverse communities in Oxford, I am confident that when this is shared more widely, people *will* feel *offended* by this treatment, which, again, poses risks to the reputation of the council, its relationship with our city’s most marginalised communities, and third sector agencies that work with these communities.

4) NOT INCLUDING A PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT

In November 2024, an Income Generation Options Review, conducted by a reputable consultancy firm Revels, was published on commission from the City Council. That review used benchmarking, data from the museum, contextual evidence, and extensive research to make a set of recommendations, some of which go beyond this proposal and some of which contradict this proposal. For example, it makes it clear that any gains from introducing a charging model would be offset by the reduction in footfall, and that a preferable option in order to actually increase income would be to invest in staff training so the existing Pay as You Can model is used to its full potential. In other words, if you want to help the museum finances, this proposal is not the way to do it. The question is, why did the Council pay a professional, well informed consultancy firm to make a set of recommendations only to completely disregard it and replace it with a proposal based on hardly any research at all?

IN CONCLUSION

- This is a wholly inadequate proposal which includes little to no evidence, poor understanding of financial modelling, editorial errors and bad maths - the numbers

actually don't add up - and, most concerningly, displays an attitude towards Oxford's residents that can only be described as contemptuous.

- The decision you're facing tonight is this:

- Do you want to cause damage to both the finances and the reputation of the museum, the city council, and your own as individuals who are signing this off, as you will be tarnished by association to this exceptionally poor piece of work?

- Or do you want to make financially prudent decisions based on evidence, and support work which leads to more community cohesion, and a sense of belonging and pride in our city for all?

- If it's the latter, I kindly request, do not vote this through tonight; instead, follow best practice: read the Revels report, seek more advice, consult with the museum staff on the ground and museum audiences, and make your decisions based on evidence and informed, professional advice.

Address from David Juler, Chair of the Museum of Oxford Development Trust:

My name is David Juler, Chair of the Museum of Oxford Development Trust. I would like to speak to Item 9. Museum of Oxford Entry Fee. The Development Trust was established to support the Museum of Oxford and its educational activity - it was an incredibly important body in accessing funds for which the City Council is ineligible. During the redevelopment of the Museum spaces, philanthropy and grant fundraising was deemed essential for securing this important community asset. Although I am now a trustee and chair I was also a council employee for 10 years, working on the development of the current Museum of Oxford from inception to delivery. I understand the pressures on budgets and the aspiration for the Museum to be self-sustaining. However, I, and fellow trustees, believe the approach proposed is inadequate, does not take into account the unique context of Oxford and, more seriously in our view, is counter intuitive to the values and mission of not only the Museum but also Oxford city council. The Museum was not developed as a charged for attraction. This is not the Story Museum, this is not a space featuring large, show stopping exhibitions. This museum was designed to engage and represent communities. To welcome and open up the city's history to school children, families and all of the diversity this incredible city of ours has on offer. Early reports by the audience agency for the Museum demonstrated that visitor figures were more diverse than those for comparator sites - in fact, it directly reflected and represented the unique diversity of Oxford. Other museums can only dream of this type of engagement. The Museum was created and curated with those people. Have you used the object table interactive? Charging has the potential impact of creating a barrier to access and redirecting visitors to other, free to enter venues in the city who MOX must compete with for attention and patronage.

The AIM report used as evidence for the positive impact of charging should come with some caveats. The more detailed AIM admissions pricing policy research document highlights that on-site donations dropped, and around 45% (of a total of 17 museums surveyed in this category of going from Free admission to charged) saw an increase in visitor numbers, whilst a further 45% saw a decrease. The issue with these reports is that they include a small number of museums and provide no further context. One of the museums to introduce charging was the National Football Museum in Manchester which received between 400k and 450k visitors annually. Its initial pricing strategy at least gave free entry to local residents. Even with its greater appeal it reported "a reduction in the number of visitors, and a major reduction in donations". Context is

everything and in city with a small centre and several of the nation's largest, free to enter museums, MOX is in a considerably different setting.

Income via retail and on site donations has been on the rise, as has income through hiring spaces. MOX has also used consultancy firms to review developing income sources. One such report stated that visitor figures would drop by 50% and although we do not deny income would increase, the report states it does not fix the funding need and deficit and would impact other means of fundraising. The Development Trust is hoping to do more to raise funding support for the charitable activity of the Museum. We would ask all here to consider the greater impact of charging to Oxford's communities and to the staff of the Museum of Oxford. We believe that charging will not fulfil the stated ambitions and more negatively is setting the Museum up to fail.

Councillor Hollingsworth provided Cabinet's response to the two addresses from members of the public.

Thank you for the addresses to the Cabinet on this report in person and in writing; this response is to both.

The Museum of Oxford has been successful at the work that it has done as a place where the culture and history of this city's people, not just its buildings, can be celebrated. We should be proud of how ordinary lives of ordinary people have been made central to the Museum's work.

However we must not forget that the creation of the Museum in its new format was with an aspiration that it could be self-sustaining financially. That has never been achieved.

The Council has agreed to spend £152k a year on subsidising the Museum, but because costs have risen and hoped for sources of funding like the 'pay what you like' approach - which raised about £5k last year - have fallen far short of objectives. The last annual financial reports to Council show that the actual cost of the Museum is close to a quarter million pounds each year.

And it is important to be aware that does not take into account the potential revenue from this part of the Town Hall if it was used in a more commercial way.

This is therefore a very substantial sum of money that the Council could use on different services, or as grants to community organisations, but has chosen instead to use to support the Museum. But that support is not without limits.

It would be nice to imagine that a Museum that is free to enter and is subsidised by nearly £250k a year as a result is an option that is available.

It is not.

The choices available are to introduce a small charge alongside a wide range of ways in which visitors can reduce it, or not have to pay it all such as the 12 Free Days a year, and reduce the subsidy to the agreed level.

Or to close the Museum – as nearly 150 other local authority run museums have closed over the last two decades across the country because it is no longer possible to afford the subsidies to run them - and to use the money saved on supporting local community groups who are equally in need of it.

There are a great deal of places that attract visitors to our city, from all over the world. The Museum of Oxford will not be one of the best known of those, but it will have a clear attraction from the stories it tells to bring those visitors in as customers.

When charges were introduced some years ago for events in the Museum the same concerns were expressed that visitors would not come; in fact the opposite was true. Rather than have a free calendar invite which costs nothing to disregard, guests at paid for events and activities have attended, stayed longer, and are felt to have been better customers in the Museum shop.

As the Report sets out, the Arts Council has generously granted us a sum of £228k to spend on moving to a more financially sustainable approach to running the Museum. They – and other grant funding organisations – are quite clear that they have no interest in simply using their limited budgets to plug ongoing operational gaps in organisations not willing to do something to address those gaps. They instead want to work alongside forward facing organisations like the Museum of Oxford in making sure that they are managed in a way that is financially sustainable for the long term.

This is a change in the way in which the Museum will be run, and I am aware that change is challenging, not least when while we have the evidence from the charges for events there is no absolute certainty about what the outcomes of this new approach will be. The research and the evidence seems to point in a positive direction, but we will not know until is tried.

But what we do know is that the current overspending of an already generous subsidy is not sustainable, and cannot continue.

Councillor Railton arrived during this item, at 18:08.

66. Councillor addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda

None received.

67. Councillor addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None received.

68. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

69. Reports from the Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee met on 14 October 2025 and reviewed the following items:

- Project Approval and Delegations for Westlands Drive and Halliday Hill
- affordable housing scheme
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

- Annual Safeguarding Report

The Finance and Performance Working Group met on 11 September 2025 to consider a range of reports:

- Optimism bias on sizeable commercial properties in the city centre
- Performance Integrated Report Q4 2024/25
- Performance Integrated Report Q1 2025/26

Councillor Alex Powell presented the Scrutiny Committee's discussions regarding the Project approvals and delegations for the Westlands Drive/Halliday Hill affordable housing development. He noted that no recommendations arose from the Committee's conversations about this report.

Councillor Alex Powell presented the Scrutiny Committee's discussions and recommendations regarding the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. He noted that the Committee had discussed the need for there to be a clear line in accountability and that questions had been raised regarding how they would make the information and guidance about this policy accessible to a diverse range of communities.

- **Recommendation 1:** For Officers to explore the feasibility of gathering and analysis of data on protected characteristics of both: individuals complained about through the ASB service, and individuals making complaints through the ASB service. Recognising that some data may be limited in validity, that findings from the collected and analysed data be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee at an appropriate time within the next two years.
- **Recommendation 2:** That officers set out within the Policy the work the Council is currently undertaking and plans to undertake in relation to proactive prevention of ASB, including actions such as working with youth groups, redesigning areas, and improving coordination between council services.
- **Recommendation 3:** That there is a clear commitment within the ASB Policy to work collaboratively with Registered Providers in addressing anti-social behaviour, including requesting information from local RPs on levels and types of ASB reports received within their housing stock. This information can then be used to identify patterns, overlaps and gaps between council and RP data, and reporting back on the efficacy of this partnership working and health of relationships with RPs as part of the Council's wider multi-agency approach to ASB management.

Councillor Arshad responded to the Committee's recommendations on the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. She welcomed the Committee's engagement with the policy. She noted that Cabinet accepted all three recommendations relating to this report.

Councillor Alex Powell presented the Scrutiny Committee's discussions and recommendation regarding the Annual Safeguarding Report 2024/25. He noted concerns that were raised by the Committee regarding the multiple organisations working in this area and how they could most efficiently work in a cooperative manner.

- That future Safeguarding reports provide comparisons with previous years data to allow monitoring of trends and assessment progress, particularly data in relation to modern slavery and exploitation, and severe weather emergency protocol (SWEPP). Where the data allows for trend analysis, that previous statistics be included to enable a year-on-year comparison and evaluation of changes overtime.

Councillor Arshad responded to the Committee's recommendation on the Annual Safeguarding Report 2024/25. She stated that Cabinet had accepted the recommendation on this report.

Councillor Alex Powell presented the Working Group's discussions and recommendations regarding the Optimism Bias on sizeable commercial properties in the City Centre, the Quarterly Performance Integrated Report - Q4 2024/25, and the Quarterly Performance Integrated Report – Q1 2025/26. He noted that no recommendations arose from the Working Group's discussions of these reports.

70. Museum of Oxford entry fee

The Director of Communities and Citizens had submitted a report to Cabinet to consider options for charging a small entry fee to visit the museum and consider options for eligibility for concessionary and free entry.

Councillor Hollingsworth presented the report. He noted the positive work of the museum, as well as the difficulties it has faced to meet the necessary income levels. He said that the report in part emanated from a need for them to think more creatively about how they fund the museum. The report proposes an approach which is used by nearly a quarter of local authority run museums, and there are reductions in this fee and opportunities for free entry to support continued access to the museum for individuals from all backgrounds. The report will also allow the managers of the museum to make minor changes to fees, as it becomes necessary. Councillor Hollingsworth noted the challenges that are faced whenever change is made but also stated their optimism that this approach will be tenable.

Paula Redway, the Culture and Community Development Manager, reiterated the high quality of work and customer service provided by the museum's staff and the good work of the museum. Despite this, she noted that visitor numbers had not grown as needed since 2021. She noted the 'pay as you can' model that had been introduced to the museum, and although this did increase income over time, it did not meet the levels needed. In deciding on this approach, the Culture and Community Development Manager said that they drew information and research from across the sector to look at the impact of introducing a fee. She said that nationally, local authority run museums tend to be under threat, and they had been successful in securing a grant from the Arts Council to help them restructure the museum. This will help with their marketing, fundraising, and current deficit situation. She stated that the grant funding, combined with the fee, was the only option available for them to reach the financial position needed.

Councillor Brown expressed support for the proposals in the report and the work of the museum.

Councillor Munkonge said that the report could provide greater clarity to enhance assurances on the expected income. He asked if they had any benchmarking data to back up the projections in the report and asked what systems would manage the free and discounted entries to the museum.

Councillor Hollingsworth acknowledged that they did have limited data and one of the reasons for this was that they had not implemented a charging scheme. He noted the considerable amount of work they had done in the creation of the report and his confidence that this was the best way forward.

The Culture and Community Development Manager said that the charging model would help them to gather more data. She said that they would monitor the new charging model closely. The data that they gather through this model will allow them to better understand who does and does not visit the museum and help them to better engage with a broader range of communities in the city. The Culture and Community Development Manager highlighted the work of volunteers at the museum and their dedicated work to support the museum.

Councillor Turner noted the tight budget positions of the Council and that in this situation the Council had to make tough choices about funding things they wanted to fund and things they had to fund. He asked how individuals with no recourse to public funds would receive support to access the museum. Additionally, he asked if people who had contributed to a temporary exhibition would be able to receive a concession to visit the museum. Finally, Councillor Turner asked what timescale they would need to gain a sense of whether or not the approach was working.

The Culture and Community Development Manager said that they have partners they work with to provide support for individuals who have no access to public funds and their free access has already been considered and included.

Councillor Brown asked if the current recommendation was sufficient to cover the delegation to make minor changes to the charging model as needed.

Councillor Hollingsworth responded that in the event of an acute problem, they could reconsider the approach early on. However, with the funding they're receiving and the partnerships they intend to form, it would likely take at least twelve months in a normal year and ideally twenty-four or even thirty-six months to test to see if they'll be successful. Councillor Hollingsworth noted the pending changes that would be introduced by Local Government Reorganisation and the impacts these would have.

Councillor Chapman asked if they had needed to raise extra funds to help them win the Arts Council grant.

The Culture and Community Development Manager said that they had not been required to provide match funding. The Arts Council required them to provide a plan for how they would implement necessary changes to the museum's management.

Councillor Chapman said that the plan was reassuring. He asked that the team clarify what they mean by state benefits in their communications with the public about the new fee for the museum. He commended the officers for their work on the plan and report.

Councillor Linda Smith agreed that they needed to be explicit about what they mean by state benefits and suggested that they work with the Leisure Service team to ensure that their messaging and approach is clear, consistent, and fair.

Councillor Brown proposed a small addition to the final recommendation, to include the authority to make minor changes to the charging model for the museum, as needed.

With the change in the final recommendation:

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Charge** an entry fee for entry to the Museum of Oxford
2. **Approve** the standard entry fee charges as proposed in Appendix 1

3. **Approve** the concessions eligibility and concessionary charges as proposed in Appendix 1
4. **Approve** the eligibility for free access as proposed in Appendix 1
5. **Delegate** the implementation of charging from January 2026 and the authority to make minor changes to the charging model for the museum to the Director of Citizens and Community Services.

71. Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

The Deputy Chief Executive for City and Citizens had submitted a report to Cabinet to request that Cabinet approves the Anti-social Behaviour Policy 2026-29.

Councillor Arshad presented the report. She said that the Council is committed to tackling all forms of Anti-Social Behaviour. She said that this policy fulfils their duty to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour, requiring the Council to formulate and publish these types of procedures. She said that they would work with local partners to ensure that people feel safe and secure in their homes and that they are delivering their standard of care. Councillor Arshad said that the policy is reviewed every three years, with the existing policy expiring in 2025. This policy sets out the Council's responsibility as a landlord and sets out the Council's service standards. Councillor Arshad said that the policy outlines the Council's commitment to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour and the Council's principles in approaching this matter.

Richard Adams, the Community Safety Service Manager, thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their engagement and thanked their tenant panel for their views on the policy.

Councillor Brown asked how they connected with registered providers on this issue, as tenants often move between Council properties and properties owned by other providers.

The Community Safety Service Manager said that on a case-by-case basis they were good at working in partnership with registered providers. However, on the strategic level they were working to explore and develop this area further.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Anti-social Behaviour Policy 2026-29; and
2. **Delegate** authority to the Community Safety Service Manager to publish the Anti-social Behaviour Policy and to make any typographical amendments as may be required, before publication. To make minor changes in the future to reflect any relevant changes in legislation, guidance or practice.

72. Draft Air Quality Action Plan

The Director of Economy, Regeneration and Sustainability had submitted a report to Cabinet to seek approval of the draft Air Quality Action Plan 2026-2030 for public consultation.

Councillor Railton presented the report. She said that the report was a statutory document, due to historic and current levels of air pollution. She said that the current plan had a lower level than the national limit of nitrous oxide and that they had achieved this lower target. Councillor Railton said that the new plan builds on this progress, and lines up with the WHO's goals and EU's legal standards. The report lays out an action plan to achieve these goals. She said that the recommendation was to approve the action plan for public consultation, not to approve the plan itself.

Pedro Abreu, the Principal Air Quality Officer, said that this draft plan and commitment to pursue the new air quality target would continue their dedication to go above and beyond to deliver cleaner air and healthier lives for the people of Oxford.

Councillor Chapman congratulated the team on their achievements, including the level of particulates and level of nitrous oxide.

Councillor Hollingsworth asked what their reflections were on the impact that heavier private cars, and electric vehicles, were likely to have on particulate pollution.

Councillor Railton noted that there was an irony in the drive towards electric vehicles, as the anti-pollution benefits were undermined as cars got bigger. She said that some cities in the UK had considered different levels of parking charges, depending on car size and weight. However, she stated that these policy interventions were beyond the scope of the current action plan.

Councillor Brown noted the impact that Local Government Reorganisation would have on their approach to air quality improvement.

The Principal Air Quality Officer discussed the different factors which contribute to air pollution in the city. Notably, he presented a figure that helped contextualise the issue for Councillor Hollingsworth: while it is evident that we are witnessing a shift in particulate matter (PM2.5) emissions from tailpipe sources to road surface abrasion and tyre wear—largely due to the increased weight of electric vehicles: transport-related emissions as a whole account for no more than 17% of the total PM2.5 levels measured in Oxford. The largest contributor by far is the domestic sector, particularly the burning of solid fuels from open fires and wood-burning stoves.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Air Quality Action Plan 2026-2030 for Public Consultation

73. HRA Policies

The Director of Housing had submitted a report to Cabinet to seek the approval of the following policies: fire safety, damp and mould, asbestos and disrepair to ensure the maintenance of the housing stock.

Councillor Linda Smtih presented the report. She said that these policies were an important step to ensure they meet their obligations under the social housing act and make sure that they deliver a high quality of service to their tenants. She said that the policies had all had tenant engagement, which is a point of pride, and that their input was reflected in the policies.

Nerys Parry, the Director of Housing, said that the damp and mould policies were in line with their responsibilities as a landlord. For assurance, she noted that the policy included a series of procedures between OCC and ODS that are well understood by both organizations.

James Watkins, the Housing Policy and Projects Officer, said that these sets of policies were to ensure that they follow the lessons learned approach, following tragedies such as Grenfell. He said that the asbestos policy was very robust to ensure the safety of residents first and foremost. He said that the disrepair policy sets out the standards for residents and that there should be every step taken to ensure no property is ever in disrepair. He said that residents and tenants worked very hard to engage with these policies and give their feedback on these policies.

Councillor Hollingsworth asked if the policies covered empty properties with no current tenants. He also asked if communal areas in properties were covered by the policies. Finally, he asked if communal areas, accessible to HRA and private tenants, were covered by these policies.

The Housing Policy and Projects Officer confirmed that the policies covered empty properties and communal areas.

Councillor Brown thanked the tenants who participated in the review of the policies and officers for their work.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Damp and Mould Policy
2. **Approve** the Fire Safety Policy
3. **Approve** the Asbestos Policy
4. **Approve** the Disrepair Policy

74. Review of the Additional HMO Licensing Scheme - Approval to Consult

The Director of Planning and Regulation had submitted a report to Cabinet to seek approval from members to conduct a statutory consultation to renew the Additional HMO Licensing Scheme in 2026.

Councillor Linda Smith presented the report. She said that they should be proud of the fact that every privately let home needs a license in Oxford. She discussed the variety of schemes for different types of homes. She said that the scheme helps to drive up the standard of privately rented homes in the city. Councillor Smith noted that this was seeking approval to take the policy out for consultation, not to approve the policy itself.

Courtney Bennett, Regulatory Services Manager, said that this report was to approve the policy to go out to consultation, not to approve the policy itself. She said that the scheme had room for improvement as there were consistent issues that they would like to address through the consultation. She said that the consultation would involve a range of engagement approaches with tenant groups. She said that the outcome of the consultation would be back before Cabinet in the spring.

Councillor Hollingsworth expressed his support for the scheme, as it had delivered a much better stock of HMOs across the city. He said that he would be interested to know if they had a sense of how many properties had switched from HMOS to short term lets to avoid complying with the scheme.

The Regulatory Services Manager said that they did not have specific data. She noted that the short term lets were a priority for their planning enforcement team and last

months they issued 26 notices. She said that in September they'd had a successful case where they took a short let back to the private rental sector and would look for more data on that issue.

Cabinet discussed that a national policy limiting the number of short let properties in a city would be useful and Councillor Linda Smith said that they would continue to argue for that.

Cabinet also discussed the possibility that the scheme became so successful to the point where it was no longer necessary. Given the structural challenges facing housing in Oxford, Cabinet agreed that this was an unlikely outcome in the near future.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Agree** to proceed with a statutory 10-week consultation on the basis that it is necessary to renew the licensing scheme in its entirety for a further 5 years.

75. Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The Director of Economy, Regeneration and Sustainability had submitted a report to Cabinet to request that Cabinet agree that approval be given to the Oxfordshire County Council to publish the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Councillor Railton presented the report. She said that the Environment Act of 2021 requires all local authorities to produce such a strategy. She said that the County Council, with other partners, worked to develop the strategy they were considering. She said that the strategy had already been endorsed by the county and other authorities in Oxfordshire. She outlined the key objectives of the report and noted that this is a non-binding strategy, but the Council was encouraged to meet the strategy where possible. Councillor Railton emphasised that the strategy did not preclude or restrict development.

James Barlow, the Principal Flood Mitigation and Environmental Quality Team Leader, said that the strategy sought to encourage opportunities that already existed, rather than restricting anything.

Cabinet agreed to alter the recommendation to remove the final word 'by' and fix this typo.

With this slight alteration:

Cabinet resolved to:

1. That Cabinet agrees to give approval to the Oxfordshire County Council to publish the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

76. Domestic Abuse Policy for Council Staff

The ASBIT Manager and Domestic Abuse Lead had submitted a report to Cabinet to request that Cabinet approve the Domestic Abuse Policy for Staff.

Councillor Arshad presented the report. She said that the report sets out the Council's commitment to employees, particularly those impacted by Domestic Abuse. She said

that the policy looks at how issues can be raised so that support can be provided to staff impacted by domestic abuse. She noted that several different stakeholders engaged with the policy and provided their feedback.

Liz Jones, The ASBIT Manager and Domestic Abuse Lead, said that this policy complimented the Domestic Abuse Policy for service users as well.

Councillor Turner asked how the recruiting and training of champions was progressing.

The ASBIT Manager and Domestic Abuse Lead said that they had 24 champions across the Council, mainly in frontline teams. She said that when someone wants to do the training to become a champion they put them into the course after they receive managerial approval.

Councillor Brown welcomed the policy and congratulated them on their training of champions.

Councillor Arshad noted that the Domestic Abuse Champions had access to contact details of champions in other local authorities and have access to further specialised trainings.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Domestic Abuse Policy for Staff (Appendix 1)
2. **Delegate** authority to the Domestic Abuse Lead, to make minor changes in the future to reflect any relevant changes in legislation, guidance or practice.

77. Project Approval and Delegations for Westlands Drive/ Halliday Hill affordable housing scheme

The Director of Economy, Regeneration and Sustainability had submitted a report to Cabinet to seek project approval and delegations to progress the development of affordable homes at Westlands Drive/ Halliday Hill. This includes delegated authority to enter into build contracts and other necessary agreements and associated development costs, and the virement of capital funds in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Councillor Linda Smith presented the report. She said that Oxford needed homes and encouraged Cabinet to vote to support the building of 15 more affordable homes.

Councillor Chapman expressed his support for the scheme and noted the importance of the development.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Grant project approval** to finalise agreement to enter into build contracts and any other necessary agreements or contracts and incur associated development cost spends, as set out in this report, and within the allocated HRA capital budgets and business plan, for the purpose of delivering more affordable housing in Oxford;
2. **Delegate authority to the Director of Housing**, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer; and the Council's Monitoring Officer, to enter into build contracts and any

other necessary agreements or contracts to facilitate the development within the identified budget, for the provision of additional affordable housing;

3. **Grant approval** for a virement within the HRA capital budget for scheme costs of £5,693,000. The virement will be from the “Properties purchased from OCHL” (Oxford City Housing Limited) purchase line into a new scheme line to be profiled to match the build programme across the four years from 2025/26 to 2028/29.

78. Contract for Annual Real Estate Asset Valuations

The Group Finance Director had submitted a report to Cabinet to request that Cabinet provide Project Approval and delegate authority to officers to enter into a new contract or contracts with suitably qualified firms to undertake real estate valuations.

Councillor Turner presented the report. He said that Oxford needs accurate real estate valuations for accounting purposes. As they do not have that expertise in house, he said that they need to go out and procure the services.

Councillor Hollingsworth asked if the valuations would include things which are difficult to value, such as things like heritage properties or the museum.

Ted Bowler, the Corporate Asset Manager, confirmed that difficult to value items would be included in the programme.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Give Project Approval** to approve the procurement of a suitably qualified firm of real estate valuers to undertake valuations of council-owned properties recorded within the General Fund and Housing Revenue Accounts
2. **Delegate** authority to the Deputy Chief Executive – Place in consultation with the Group Director of Finance, the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer), and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Assets to determine the form of the procurement, contract, and award and enter into the final contract with the preferred supplier

79. Dates of future meetings

Cabinet noted the dates of future meetings.

Matters Exempt from Publication

If Cabinet wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for Cabinet to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cabinet may maintain the exemption if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The meeting started at 18:00 and ended at 19:53.

Chair

Date: Monday 10 November 2025

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.