

To: Council

Date: 26 January 2026

Report of: Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer)

Title of Report: Urgent Key Decisions Since July 2025

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To update Council on key decisions taken in cases of special urgency since 14 July 2025.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working and Inclusive Economic Growth
Corporate Priority:	A Well Run Council.
Policy Framework:	None.

Recommendation(s): That Council resolves to:
1. Note the urgent key decisions taken in cases of special urgency as set out in the report.

Information Exempt From Publication	
N/A	N/A

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
N/A	N/A	N/A

Introduction and background

1. The Leader of the Council is required by regulations to report to Council at least annually on executive decisions taken under special urgency procedures. Special urgency rules apply to key decisions that have not been notified on the Forward Plan for at least 28 clear days. Such decisions can only be taken where the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee (or if there is no chair, the Lord Mayor) agrees that the making of the decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred. This report updates Council on executive decisions taken in cases of special urgency since 14 July 2025.

Approval of National Homelessness Property Fund 1 resolution

2. The decision, taken on 8 December 2025 was for the Director of Housing to approve the National Homelessness Property Fund 1 resolution, confirming the extension of the fund to 30th of April 2026 to be signed by the Director of Housing Services on behalf of the Council as a limited partner of the Fund and to authorise the entering in to of any required agreements on behalf of the Council required to give effect to the resolution, subject to legal review.
3. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee was consulted to remove the requirement of the 28-day notice period under section 15.17 and call-in period under section 17.10 of the Constitution.
4. In July 2025 Cabinet approved the moving of the Council's investment of £10m in National Homelessness Property Fund 1 (HNPF1) which was due to expire, into a new "evergreen" property fund, and gave necessary delegations to the Director of Housing to enable this reinvestment.
5. The delegation granted is as follows:

"Delegate to the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, the Deputy Leader (statutory) for Finance and Asset Management, the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer) and Group Finance Director (S151) the authority to enter in to such agreements as necessary to make the reinvestment in to the new "evergreen" property fund subject to reassurance from the fund that all or majority of the homes owned in Oxfordshire are retained through the reinvestment and satisfactory approval of the terms of the investment agreement."
6. Officers have been working with Resonance to facilitate the reinvestment since that date, working closely with other LA investors. As of December, the new fund is not yet ready, with legal work ongoing, so Resonance as manages of the fund have asked all investors to support a resolution to extend the current fund until April 2026 to give more time.
7. It is considered that the current delegation enables the resolution to extend HNPF1 falls within the delegation as, without taking this step, the Council will be unable to reinvest in line with the decision of Cabinet on the 9 July 2025, once a new fund is ready and established.
8. On this basis the report therefore recommends to the Director of Housing to support this resolution to enable the extension, agreeing to enter into any required agreements to facilitate it. Without an extension the fund would close, risking the Councils £10m investment and the continued operation of the homes to house formerly homeless families.
9. Not supporting the resolution was considered but brings no advantages and would expose the Council to considerable risk if the fund was to close with no successor fund in place.

Purchase agreement of land situated at The Bungalow Sandy Lane, OX4 6LL

10. The decision, taken on 18 December 2025 was for the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to approve the freehold purchase of the twelve (12) newly constructed affordable residential units to be constructed at the property known as The Bungalow, Sandy Lane, Oxford (OX4), for the sum of £2,820,000, and to be held in the Housing Revenue Account and provided as affordable housing at Social

Rent tenure and to approve entering into all necessary agreements to facilitate the acquisition of the Property, including the purchase agreement, transfer deed, and any ancillary documents with the Seller (freehold owner). The acquisition comprises of 12 newly constructed affordable residential units, which will be managed through Oxford City Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and delivered as Social Rent tenures.

11. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee was consulted on 8 December to remove the requirement of the 28-day notice period under section 15.17 and call-in period under section 17.10 of the Constitution.
12. A report was presented to Cabinet on the 17 April 2024 which provided delegation as follows:

“the Executive Director (Communities and People), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing; the Head of Financial Services; and the Head of Law and Governance to agree sites and enter into agreements and contracts relating to the spend of Retained Right to Buy Receipts, for the provision of additional affordable housing into the Housing Revenue Account, within this project approval”.
13. The report did not name this Property or provide certainty around the purchase details. This Property therefore falls outside the scope of the original approval and there is a need to have a decision in order to enable the agreements to be entered into.
14. The landowner wishes to deliver the housing on site directly, though the Council has asked if they would be willing to sell it undeveloped they have confirmed that they are not willing to do so and wish to undertake the construction themselves.
15. The site has planning permission and, under the s106 agreement relating to that permission, the site is restricted to be developed and provided as Affordable Housing only, with an indication therein that the Council may be the ultimate owner of the provided accommodation. The developed Property cannot be sold on the open market as a result of the permission, and the s106 sets requirement that the 12 newly constructed units must be held by the Council or a Registered Housing Provider.
16. The site provides an opportunity to increase the supply of one-bedroom homes, addressing an identified housing need and supply shortage. The Council has been collaborating with this developer for the past two years to achieve this outcome.
17. The land deal will secure the 12 homes being sold to the Council post upon the milestone of practical completion, however to ensure the necessary quality standards (in the design and construction) of the properties an external Employers Agent, and Clerk of Works has been contracted. They will oversee the contract and ensure the properties meet appropriate specifications. For this reason a procurement exemption is required. The procurement exemption is a separate process and has been agreed and approved as required in line with the Contract Rules.
18. The payment for the Property will be paid from an approved and secured additional RRTBR budget line.
19. The risk to not proceeding would be for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to not secure 12 x newly constructed units, at Social Rent to alleviate pressures from the

General Needs Housing Register and prevent delivery of a new affordable housing opportunity on a parcel of land that is not allocated in the Local Plan

20. To enable the purchase the Property, which will be for the freehold land with twelve (12) newly constructed affordable residential units for Social Rent.
21. Alternative Options Considered – the risk to not proceeding would be for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to not secure 12 x newly constructed units, at Social Rent to alleviate pressures from the General Needs Housing Register and prevent delivery of a new affordable housing opportunity on a parcel of land that is not allocated in the Local Plan.

Replacement of Chillers at Oxford Ice Rink

22. The decision, taken on 22 December 2025 was for the Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford to approve the proposal that Serco Leisure Operating Limited (incumbent operator) carry out the replacement of the chillers; at the Ice Rink, agree that the Director of Property & Assets, in consultation with the Group Finance Director, Director of Law, Governance and Strategy and the Lead Cabinet Member, approves and finalises the mechanism and documentation required to implement the replacement of the chillers at the Ice Rink within the approved budget and approve spend of up to £1.5m, to be vired from existing budget lines within the capital programme.
23. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee was consulted on 15 December 2025 to remove the requirement of the 28-day notice period under section 15.17 and call-in period under section 17.10 of the Constitution.
24. The Council entered into a new Leisure Operator Contract (“LOC”) with Serco in 2024. Under the terms of the contract 3 of the centres are let on a full repairing and insuring basis, with Serco picking up all repairs and maintenance and capital lifecycle replacement. In respect of the Ice Rink and Ferry Leisure Centre, Serco as operator are liable for the first £100k of the cost of capital lifecycle replacement with the Council responsible for anything over and above the £100k threshold.
25. The last full condition survey on the Ice Rink was undertaken in 2018 with an update undertaken as part of the dilapidations in 2023. While it was known that the chillers were approaching end of life, it had been anticipated they would last until 2032. Unfortunately, they have failed earlier and require replacement as they cannot be repaired. Without fully functioning chiller units the Ice Rink would not be able to operate. The Council has a legal obligation under the LOC to replace the failed chillers. The cost to replace is £1.5m. The Ice Rink is currently running on temporary plant at the cost of £1,600 per week. Although Serco have funded the first £100k of costs this will now fall to the Council; it is recommended that the chillers are therefore replaced as quickly as possible. The LOC provides that the Council can carry out the replacement itself or can agree with Serco as the Operator under the LOC to carry out the work on behalf of the Council.
26. It is intended that the replacement cost will be funded from underspends within the Property Services budget for the FY 25/26. It should be noted this may mean funds need to be brought forward from next year.
27. There are other items of expenditure likely to become due in the next few years. The ice rink roof is due for replacement in 2027 which has been considered in the budget. The boilers are approaching the end of their life with parts no longer being

manufactured. They may fall due for replacement and would be captured by the £100k clause in the LOC with any costs in excess of £100k falling to OCC.

28. The chillers will need to be designed and ordered, it is anticipated that this process will take 4-6 months before they are installed and able to service the Ice Rink. The cost of the temporary kit is not insignificant, and a Single Member Decision is sought to reduce the number of weeks the rink is dependent on temporary equipment.
29. Two alternatives were considered, the first being to continue running the Ice Rink on temporary kit until the outcome of the Ice Rink project is known. This has been discounted as is cost prohibitive.

Financial implications

30. There are no financial issues arising directly from this report.
31. Financial implications for each of the Urgent Key Decisions have been outlined above, and the Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer) was consulted before each decision was taken.

Legal issues

32. Regulation 19 of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 requires that the executive Leader submits a report to the authority at least annually on executive decisions taken in cases of special urgency (Regulation 11), including the particulars of each decision.
33. Legal issues for each of the Urgent Key Decisions have been outlined above, and the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer) was consulted before each decision was taken.

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Background Papers:	
1	<u>Decision - Approval of National Homelessness Property Fund 1 resolution Oxford City Council</u>
2	<u>Decision - Purchase agreement of land situated at The Bungalow Sandy Lane, OX4 6LL Oxford City Council</u>
3	<u>Decision - Replacement of Chillers at Oxford Ice Rink Oxford City Council</u>

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