

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Thursday 4 December 2025

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Committee members present:

Councillor Brown

Councillor Chapman

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Munkonge

Councillor Railton

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Caroline Green, Chief Executive

Emma Jackman, Director of Law, Governance, and Strategy

Mish Tullar, Transition Director

Bill Lewis, Financial Accounting Manager

Dr Brenda McCollum, Committee and Member Services

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Turner, Arshad and Linda Smith sent apologies.

95. Declarations of Interest

None.

96. Addresses by members of the public

None received.

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

None received.

98. Councillor addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None received.

99. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

100. Reports from the Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee met on 2 December 2025 to consider the Cabinet report on Devolution. Cabinet took the report from Scrutiny as read and noted that no recommendations arose from their consideration of the report.

101. Devolution Expression of Interest for Oxfordshire within a Thames Valley Mayoral Strategic Authority

The Chief Executive had submitted a report requesting that Cabinet endorse the submission by Oxfordshire County Council on behalf of Oxfordshire councils of an Expression of Interest to Government for the inclusion of the Thames Valley area in the next wave of its Devolution Programme.

Councillor Brown presented the report. She said that this was the result of a significant amount of work for counties to come together to consider how they could form a mayoral authority across the Thames Valley. She noted that there was not currently a devolution program in front of them, but they were preparing for when the announcement would come on devolution. She said that this was collaborative, important work, to make sure that they take advantage of the opportunity from government to devolve power to regions of the country.

Caroline Green, Chief Executive, highlighted a few key points. She noted the importance of devolved power and the opportunities to see important strategic functions carried out at a more local level, such as a regional transport strategy. She said that there had been work commissioned over the last few months to see what this opportunity might be and evidence a case to put forward to government. She said that their proposal was presenting a case to government arguing that, given their priorities, it would make sense to devolve power in this way. She said that they hoped this work strengthened their case for a Thames Valley authority.

Councillor Hollingsworth endorsed the remarks from the Leader and Chief Executive. He asked about the Devolution Board mentioned in the report and how this Board would have oversight over devolution and reorganisation proposals. He asked what response the Leader and Chief Executive were getting at the Whitehall level on this issue and the timing of the reorganisation and devolution.

Councillor Brown responded that the Devolution Board would be an informal structure to bring together leaders of councils who are willing, to draw up the kind of authority they want to create. She said that they would be drawing information and lessons from existing mayoral authorities in other areas of the country. She clarified that the report was only asking for agreement of the letter and was not asking for any further approval for the formation of the mayoral authority. She said that would come back to Councils to formally agree at a later date. Councillor Brown said that they were making points regarding the strategic advantage of a mayoral authority for the Thames Valley to central government wherever possible.

The Chief Executive said that leaders and Chief Executives of Councils involved in this project had been having informal conversations to get to the point of putting forward an expression of interest. They want to turn those informal conversations into formal, informal meetings, so that they had clearer records of their conversations and debates.

Regarding the timetable, she said that they would next expect to receive a response from central government on their expression of interest and would then have ongoing conversations, culminating in development proposals. She said that they were making the case that it would be sensible for the development of a mayoral strategic authority to progress alongside Local Government Reorganisation. She noted that this approach would support the growth and development aims of the City and central government.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Endorse** the benefits from the proposed devolution of powers and functions to a future Thames Valley Mayoral Strategic Authority, and agrees to continue building on the collaborative approach across the region to date;
2. **Endorse** the Expression of Interest (EOI) to be submitted by Oxfordshire County Council as the upper-tier authority to Government, noting that the EOI is designed to proactively position our region for early consideration in the next wave of the Devolution Programme;
3. **Acknowledge** the EOI as an initial invitation to Government, opening further dialogue and engagement, and not a decision to establish a Strategic Authority;
4. **Agree** that a further report will be brought to Cabinet prior to any final decision by Oxfordshire County Council as upper-tier authority on the creation of a Strategic Authority; and
5. **Note** an informal Devolution Programme Board will oversee discussions with Government, ensuring robust governance and stakeholder engagement by elected members throughout this process.

102.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 17:35 and ended at 17:53

Chair
2025

Date: Wednesday 10 December

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.