

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 11 February 2026



Committee members present:

Councillor Brown	Councillor Turner
Councillor Arshad	Councillor Chapman
Councillor Hollingsworth	Councillor Munkonge
Councillor Railton	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

Emma Jackman, Director of Law, Governance, and Strategy

Gail Malkin, Head of People

Laura Bessell, Local Taxation and Benefits Service Delivery Manager

Roo Humpherson, the Regeneration Manager

Pedro Abreu, Principal Air Quality Officer

Bill Lewis, Financial Accounting Manager

Dan Bond, Leasing & Letting Surveyor

Stephanie Nichols, People Operations Manager

Rocco Labellarte, Chief Technology and Information Officer

Dr Brenda McCollum, Committee and Member Services

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

Apologies:

No apologies were received

136. Declarations of Interest

None.

137. Minutes of the previous meeting

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on **21 January 2026** as a true and accurate record.

138. Addresses by members of the public

None received.

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

None received.

140. Councillor addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

Cabinet received a Councillor addresses on Neighbourhood Issues from Councillor Henwood:

I would like to speak on the inclusion of Littlemore as a Local Centre.

The initial assessment appears to have missed key frontage along Sandy Lane West, Ledgers Way, the Kassam Stadium and the Vue. When these are included, the scale and function of Littlemore are much clearer and more comparable to other designated Local Centres.

Littlemore is also strategically located. It sits close to Cowley Centre and stands to benefit from the proposed Cowley Branch Line. It is near significant employment areas, including R&D sites, and major community assets such as the Kassam Stadium. These connections strengthen its role as a sustainable local hub.

The area promotes healthy lifestyles. Littlemore has four allotment sites, important green spaces, and established cycling routes running parallel to Grenoble Road and the A34. County plans include improvements to cycling and pedestrian infrastructure along Oxford Road, Sandford Road and St Nicholas Road. A new pharmacy further supports access to essential services within walking and cycling distance.

When compared with Blackbird Leys, which has less frontage yet holds Local Centre status, it is reasonable to question why Littlemore should not be recognised in the same way.

Designating Littlemore as a Local Centre would not be symbolic. It would help guide investment, strengthen grant applications, and provide clearer planning protection for shops and services. Most importantly, it would recognise the role Littlemore already plays and support its long-term sustainability.

I urge Cabinet to reconsider Littlemore's designation as a Local Centre.

Thank you.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth provided the response from Cabinet to this address:

The content of the Regulation 19 Consultation version of the Local Plan is a matter for Full Council and was fully determined by the Full Council meeting on 26th January 2026. It is not possible for Cabinet to make amendments to the Local Plan as decided by Full Council.

Following the request of Scrutiny Committee Planning Officers reviewed their advice that Littlemore did not meet the specific and nationally set requirements for the technical term 'Local Centre'. This further review confirmed the judgement, as was set out in pages 25 and 26 of the *Briefing Note and Supplementary Papers* published for both Members and the public for the Full Council Meeting on 26th January 2026.

As this made clear, there are facilities and services in Littlemore, but these are dispersed across a wider area and do not form enough of a cluster of uses where a 'local centre' which would be suitable for town centre uses - as defined in the NPPF - or where an active frontage could be defined that has more than a neighbourhood significance.

Existing facilities would be protected and supported by other policies of the Local Plan. 'Local centre' status would not confer any additional benefits in terms of attracting investment or grants. The absence of a technical 'local centre' designation has no impact on the status or local pride in a community.

141. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

142. Reports from the Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee met on 03 February 2026 to consider the following items.

- Debt Recovery Procedure
- Noticeboards Update
- AI Strategy
- Budget Review Group Report

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager, presented Scrutiny's discussions and recommendations regarding the Debt Recovery Procedure.

- **Recommendation 1:** That a summary report on council debt recovery activities at all stages is provided to Scrutiny and Cabinet at a future meeting to ensure there is awareness in this area of the council's work.
- **Recommendation 2:** That Cabinet considers incorporating clear, plain language summary within letters issued to individuals in addition to links to further information online, given the prevalence of digital exclusion and unfamiliarity with local government terminology. This would reduce reliance on residents needing to follow online links to understand the purpose and implications of the letters.
- **Recommendation 3:** That the timescales of meetings with advice centres is revisited to ensure they correspond to their capacity and availability, noting that critical role of advice centres as both a key contact point for residents and a source of specialist advice and support.

Councillor Turner responded to Scrutiny's recommendations. He said that Cabinet accepted the first and third recommendation and would accept the second recommendation in part.

The Committee and Member Services Manager presented Scrutiny's discussions and recommendations regarding the AI Strategy. He noted that no recommendations were raised from the Scrutiny Committee's consideration of this issue, but that the Committee was supportive of the adoption of a strategy.

The Committee and Member Services Manager presented Scrutiny's discussions and recommendations regarding the Noticeboards Update.

- **Recommendation:** Subject to the agreement that Council will commit to actively managing and operating the noticeboards as recommended in the budget review process, that clear guidelines are developed for the use of noticeboards, including how new items and updates are managed, and the responsibilities of key holders.

Councillor Chapman responded to Scrutiny's recommendations and discussions. He said that they'd had a good discussion on this issue at Scrutiny Committee. He noted that Cabinet had accepted the recommendation in part and that it would be dependent on the Council's budget discussions over the next few weeks. Cabinet discussed the importance of notice boards for communities and how locality working could address this matter.

The Committee and Member Services Manager presented Scrutiny's discussions and recommendations regarding the Budget Review Group Report.

- **Recommendation 1:** To freeze the garden waste concessionary rate in this year and instead raise the standard rate by 5.2% (an additional 0.2% on the consultation budget) in order to cover the income that would have been generated by the proposed concessionary rate rise.
- **Recommendation 2:** That cancellation form for garden waste collection and other paid Council services include reason-based tickboxes for discontinuing the service, to enable the Council to understand better whether a decline in usage is driven by costs, service performance, or other factors.
- **Recommendation 3:** To assess the cost of offering compost bins at a discounted rate to support residents in composting on their own site, particularly for those who find an offsite garden waste collection service unaffordable.

- **Recommendation 4:** That HMO licence fees incorporate a pre-payment (or a levy) to cover bulky waste disposal to help offset costs incurred by the Council to remediate flytipping, and that a mechanism be introduced where HMO licensing services notify ODS of forthcoming end-of-tenancy periods. This allows timely collection of bulky waste and reduce instances of fly-tipping of mattresses and other broken furniture.
- **Recommendation 5:** That the Council works jointly with the County Council (as the highways authority), neighbouring districts, and ODS to coordinate the gritting of well-used pedestrian and cycle routes when icy conditions are forecast, including the ring-road cycleway and southern bypass, and manage the associated costs through cross-authority cooperation.
- **Recommendation 6:** That the Museum of Oxford offer paying customers options to make entry more attractive. In particular, by offering joint MOX/Café tickets that provide a hot drink as well as entry to the Museum to have the added benefit of increasing the number of customers at the café; in addition, that paying customers receive a 10% discount on purchases in the MOX shop with a wider range of products to make gift purchasing in the shop cheaper than in souvenir shops.
- **Recommendation 7:** That the closure of the Oxpens and/or Worcester Street car parks is pushed back for one year to preserve revenue, unless development is imminent.
- **Recommendation 8:** That Council introduce a permitted long-stay parking option at Park & Rides, such as one or two weeks, designed to encourage parking outside the city centre such as for tourists staying for several days in city centre hotels, with pricing set above standard short-stay charges; and for this rate to be adjustable if there proves to be more demand to manage the spaces taken by long-term users, preventing displacement of spaces needed for regular Park & Ride users.
- **Recommendation 9:** That Council counteracts the loss of officer capacity for twinning by supporting voluntary groups maintaining vital twinning links by creating a £20,000 annual budget, managed by the Civic Office, to be used to support these links.
- **Recommendation 10:** To proceed with Option 3 (Continue with noticeboards, with City Council actively managing and operating the boards) as the preferred approach for the management and maintenance of community noticeboards costing at £75,000 one-off capital investment for the resurvey, installation, replacement or repair of noticeboards, and an annual budget of £35k for ongoing management and maintenance. In implementing this, existing arrangements led by parish councils or neighbourhood association should not be discouraged nor discontinued. Should Option 3 not be achievable due to budgetary constraints, it is recommended that no further action is taken (Option 1).

Councillor Turner presented Cabinet's response to the recommendations from Scrutiny. He said that Cabinet agreed the second, third, fifth, and ninth recommendations. He said that Cabinet agreed in part the first, seventh, and tenth recommendations. Councillor Turner noted that Cabinet did not agree the fourth, sixth, and eighth recommendations. He said that the recommendations would be picked up in full in the Council budget discussion to come. He thanked the officers for their work in the review of the budget.

143. Pride in Place Programme

The Deputy Chief Executive - Citizen and City Services submitted a report to request that Cabinet accept grant funding of up to £20m and to accept role as accountable body for the Greater Leys Pride in Place programme.

Councillor Smith presented the report. She outlined how local areas would receive money from central government to improve disadvantaged areas from the proposed scheme. She noted that there was a preapproved list in the funding program which the money could be invested into. She said that these investments would have a significant positive impact on the Greater Leys area. She emphasised the importance for the investment to be led by the voices and needs of local residents. Councillor Smith outlined how local residents would lead the decision-making process of allocating these investments into their area.

Roo Humpherson, the Regeneration Manager, added that whilst this is a community led program, the Council would have a role as the accountable body. He said that in accepting the role of accountable body, the Council accepted responsibility related to the management of scheme funds, as well as legal responsibilities. He noted that the program would last for over ten years and that over the duration of the scheme the position of accountable body could change.

Councillor Brown welcomed the report and said that this was a fantastic opportunity for the community.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. Approve proposals to support the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) Phase 2 Pride in Place Programme (Greater Leys) (PiPP (Greater Leys)), accept receipt of MHCLG funding of up to £20m for the same, and accept role as accountable body for the PiPP (Greater Leys) funds.
2. Delegate authority where not already delegated under the Council's constitution to the Director of Communities and Citizens' Services and Director of Economy, Regeneration and Sustainability, in consultation with the Council's Section 151 Officer and the Director of Law, Governance, and Strategy, and the Cabinet member for Housing and Communities to work with the PiPP (Greater Leys) Chair and Neighbourhood Board to:
 - a. Enter into the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as required by MHCLG on behalf of the Council as accountable body;
 - b. Make all necessary arrangements to receive the funding as provided by MHCLG under the MoU;
 - c. Agree with MHCLG any extensions to the 'default' area boundary of PiPP;
 - d. Allocate the funding to third parties as required by the PiPP (Greater Leys) and enter into any necessary agreements to enable this;
 - e. Undertake the necessary procurements; and
 - f. Enter into contracts as required to support the PiPP (Greater Leys).

144. Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The Group Finance Director submitted a report to request that Cabinet delegate responsibility for the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2026/27 to the Section

151 Officer. To note that the current 2025/26 scheme has been through a public consultation and the report sets out the proposed changes with an Equality Impact Assessment.

Councillor Turner presented the report. He said that this was a scheme to lower council tax fees for people on lower incomes. He discussed the increasing cost of living and why they were keeping this scheme in place to support lower income residents of the city. He outlined their engagement with advice agencies concerning this scheme and how this influenced their approach to hardship funding.

Councillor Brown said that she was delighted that they were able to maintain this scheme. She thanked the officers for their work on the report.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. Recommend to Council to agree the change to the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme to the income bandings in accordance with Option 2 listed at paragraphs 32-37 within the report.
2. Recommend to Council to delegate authority to the Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer) to draft the details of the new Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2026/27.

145. Air Quality Action Plan 2026-2030

The Director of Economy, Regeneration and Sustainability submitted a report to request that Cabinet approve adoption of Oxford's Air Quality Action Plan (2026-2030, as amended) following public consultation.

Councillor Railton presented the report. She outlined how the report had progressed through consultation and the positive feedback they had received. She discussed how air quality had improved through the previous Air Quality Action Plan and how the proposed plan would continue this work. Councillor Railton presented the list of measures which they would be undertaking and noted that some of the measures in the report were outside of the control of the City Council. She said that this was a fantastic piece of work and thanked the officer for their excellent work.

Pedro Abreu, Principal Air Quality Officer, said that the public consultation responses had shown strong support for the plan. He noted that 71% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the new targets and that 69% of respondents fully endorsed the priority areas of interventions. He said that they had received very positive feedback from the public consultation.

Councillor Brown acknowledged the successes they had in this area already and those measures in the plan which were outside of the control of the City Council. She said that the work of air quality in the city was one of significant success thus far.

Councillor Smith said that she welcomed the report. She said that it was right for the report to evaluate measures by other authorities and their impacts on air quality in the city. She emphasised that by supporting the report, they were not voting for the measures which were outside of the control of the City Council.

Councillor Hollingsworth noted the plan's reference to the Local Plan. He asked if there was any work beyond 2045 in the action plan that they would need to reconsider in light of the new local plan which was undergoing consultation.

The Principal Air Quality Officer responded that there was no significant impact and that he would amend the dates in the covering report to reflect the dates of the new local plan.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. Approve the adoption of Oxford's Air Quality Action Plan 2026-2030

146. Capital Strategy

The Group Finance Director submitted a report to present the Capital Strategy for recommendation to the Council for approval.

Councillor Turner presented the report. He said that the council had gotten better at avoiding items of slippage over time and this was because of their pipelines and good work streams. He said that any changes between the new and former report were minor and that this was primarily an update.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. Recommend that Council approves:
The Capital Strategy attached at Appendix A.

147. Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27

The Group Finance Director submitted a report to request that Cabinet approve the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/27 together with the Prudential Indicators for 2026/27 to 2029/30 for recommendation to full Council for its approval.

Councillor Turner presented the report. He said that the report was largely unchanged from the previous version of the report. He said that the report sets out the Council's approach to investment and risks. He noted the other policies, including the ethical investment policy, which formed part of the report.

Bill Lewis, Financial Accounting Manager, said that the report ties into the budget and sets out what officers can do in terms of borrowing and investments. He said that they tend to do a lot of internal borrowing, so that they can avoid more expensive external borrowing.

Councillor Munkonge said that he was happy with what they had achieved on treasury management. He discussed the transparent investment policy and how this showed a responsible approach to treasury management. He said that he hoped a similar approach would be taken by the future authority which would result from Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor Turner discussed how they had progressed to their current position and the positive impacts that their approach had for the city's residents.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. Recommend that Council approves:

- a. The Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27 as set out in paragraphs 11 to 56 of this report and the Prudential Indicators for 2026/27 – 2029/30 as set out in Appendix 2;
- b. The Borrowing Strategy 2026/27 at paragraphs 32 to 33 of this report;
- c. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement at Appendix 3 which sets out the Council's policy on charging borrowing to the revenue account;
- d. The Investment Strategy for 2026/27 and the investment criteria as set out in paragraphs 37 to 55 of this report and in Appendix 1;
- e. The Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation at Appendix 4

148. Long Leasehold Disposal of 16-17 Turl Street, Oxford

The Director of Property & Assets submitted a report to seek Cabinet's approval for the disposal of a long leasehold in 16-17 Turl Street, Oxford.

Councillor Turner presented the report. He thanked the officers for their work in actively managing the Council's property portfolio. He noted the commercial sensitivity of the decision and the importance of the property.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. Approve the disposal of a long leasehold interest in 16-17 Turl Street, as set out in the report.
2. Delegate authority to the Director Property & Assets in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management, the Director of Law, Governance & Strategy and the Group Finance Director the agreement of the detailed terms for the disposal and to enter into all necessary documentation to effect the disposal on the basis that the terms comply with s.123 of the Local Government Act 1972, where powers are not already delegated within the constitution.

149. Procurement of a new HR and Payroll System

The People Operations Manager submitted a report to Cabinet to request that Cabinet approve the procurement of a new HR and Payroll management system to replace the Council's current iTrent platform provided by Midland HR.

Councillor Chapman presented the report. He outlined the need for the Council to procure the management system and that another paper would come to Cabinet at a later date to award a contract to a supplier. He noted the impacts that Local Government Reorganisation could have on this and how this had influenced the approach they were taking.

Stephanie Nichols, People Operations Manager, said that they had built in flexibility to account for the impacts of Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor Hollingsworth noted the context they were facing with Local Government Reorganisation. He asked at what point they would draw together a brief statement of principles for the authority as they approach Local Government Reorganisation.

The Chief Executive responded that the Council and officers were applying that sense check to their discussions and decision-making. She said that they were balancing the need to continue work for the next few years and which may be needed in the future authority. She said that they do have questions they consider to ensure that their decisions are sensible, given the current context. She noted that they would have further clarity once they had received the decision from central government later in the year.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. Approve the initiation of a competitive procurement process for a modern HR and Payroll management system to replace the existing platform, noting that final contract details (including duration and value) will be confirmed in a future report and will take account of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
2. Note a further 'Recommendation to Award' report will be presented to Cabinet following the conclusion of the procurement process, detailing the proposed supplier, confirmed contract duration, contract value, and award rationale, for approval prior to entering into any contract.
3. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer) to:
 - a. Determine the final form and content of the procurement exercise;
 - b. Determine the duration of the contract; and
 - c. Delay or halt the procurement, if necessary, due to developments in respect of Local Government Reorganisation.
4. Note the anticipated financial commitment and resource implications associated with the procurement and implementation of a new HR and Payroll system, as set out in this report and approve the inclusion of an additional £250k to cover implementation costs in addition to the £75k already approved.

150. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2027-28 to 2029-30 and 2026-27 Budget

The Group Finance Director submitted a report to Cabinet to present the outcome of the budget consultation and agree the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2027-28 to 2029-30 and 2026-27 Budget for recommendation to Council.

Councillor Turner presented the report. He noted that they had received their funding settlement from government at a late stage. He said that the settlement proved beneficial to the city and that they would be receiving additional funding to address areas such as homelessness. He said that they had reflected on where best to invest the additional funds which had been released and that the changes they were proposing would have significantly positive impacts on the lives of people in the city, including investments to tackle anti-social behaviour and additional gritting. He thanked the officers for their work on the budget. He invited opposition members to discuss their proposed changes and amendments to the budget in cooperation with officers and himself.

Nigel Kennedy, the Group Finance Director, said that the three-year settlement was good for their financial planning. He noted the difficulties they had faced due to the late receipt of information from central government. He noted the changes in funding made possible through the settlement and the positive aspects of the budget.

Councillor Brown thanked Nigel and his team for their work on the budget. She noted that they welcomed the three-year settlement, which they had advocated for several years. She said that it was good news that they had been given additional allocation to address areas such as homelessness.

Cabinet considered the outcome of the public consultation, agreed the amendments to the Consultation Budget and recommended that Council resolves to:

1. Note the approval by Cabinet on 21 January 2026 and subsequently agreed by the Council on 26 January of an increase of 4.8% i.e. CPI+1% in line with the recent Government announcement referred to in paragraph 28 from 1st April 2026, giving an average weekly increase of £8.47 per week, and a revised weekly average social rent of £143.40 as set out in Appendix 5 based on a HRA budget as set out in Appendix 4;
2. Approve the 2026-27 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets and the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-9, noting:
 - a. the Council's General Fund Budget Requirement of £32.185 million for 2026/27 and an increase in the Band D Council Tax of 2.99% or £10.66 per annum representing a Band D Council Tax of £367.38 per annum; and
 - b. the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme as shown in Appendix 6;
3. Agree the fees and charges shown in Appendix 7;

151. Award of Contract for the Provision of Microsoft Enterprise Licensing

The Chief Technology and Information Officer submitted a report to Cabinet to request that Cabinet approve the procurement of a three year contract for the provision of Microsoft enterprise software licensing for Oxford City Council, by calling off under Lot 3 (Software) of the Crown Commercial Service Framework Agreement ref RM6098 - Technology Products & Associated Services 2 , to ensure continuity of core digital, productivity, and cyber security services.

Councillor Chapman presented the report. He outlined the Council's need for the contract and their need for the services outlined in the report. He noted the positive implications of their approach to procuring the contract. He noted that they were pursuing a three-year contract, despite Local Government Reorganisation, because the new authority would need this contract and services as well and this would give support to the new authority.

Rocco Labellarte, Chief Technology and Information Officer, said that Microsoft was the de facto standard for authorities across Oxfordshire. Regardless of the outcome of Local Government Reorganisation, he noted that the future authority would need such a contract and that it was more financially responsible to do it in this way. He said that the licensing would include all of the cyber security licenses that the Council requires and would allow them to enhance their security stature.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. Approve the procurement of a three-year contract for Microsoft enterprise software licensing called-off under Lot 3 (Software) of the Crown Commercial Service Framework Agreement ref RM6098 - Technology Products & Associated Services 2.
2. Approve an initial contract value of up to £1.8m, with an additional allowance of £400,000 over three years, for inflationary uplifts and controlled licence growth.
3. Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive - City and Citizens' Services, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer and Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies, to award the contract and finalise contractual arrangements.

152. 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 19:13.

Chair

Date: Wednesday 18 March 2026

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.