

From: [Councillor POWELL Alex](#)
To: [MALTON Jonathan](#)
Cc: [REYESLAO Celeste](#); [GRIFFITHS Emma](#); [BARKER Jenny](#)
Subject: Re: Removal of Call-In for Entering into an agreement with Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government in respect to funding for Oxpens River Bridge
Date: 31 March 2026 13:11:01
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Dear Jonathan,

Apologies for the delay in coming back to you on this. In the circumstances, it would seem the the only sensible step in the circumstances would be to remove the call-in period.

I would note that the situation here is far from ideal. But I appreciate that is beyond the council's control on this occasion.

I am therefore happy to approve the removal of call-in.

Best wishes,
Alex

From: MALTON Jonathan <JMALTON@oxford.gov.uk>
Sent: 30 March 2026 16:42
To: Councillor POWELL Alex <cllapowell@oxford.gov.uk>
Cc: REYESLAO Celeste <creyeslao@oxford.gov.uk>; GRIFFITHS Emma <egriffiths@oxford.gov.uk>; BARKER Jenny <JBARKER@oxford.gov.uk>
Subject: Removal of Call-In for Entering into an agreement with Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government in respect to funding for Oxpens River Bridge

Dear Councillor Powell,

I am writing on behalf of the Legal Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer) regarding the removal of the call-in for the Delegated Key Decision for the Deputy Chief Executive – Place, in consultation with the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer), Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer) and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Culture to enter into a funding agreement for Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for the Oxpens River Bridge. As you will be aware, as per part 17.10 of the Constitution, the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee is consulted for removing the call-in period of any key decisions taken by the Executive or Officers.

Background

The Council was notified last week that it had been awarded the grant funding from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The funding is described as Oxfordshire Growth Deal top up funding. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been provided by MHCLG that sets out that the funding is Growth Deal Funding and '.....should be spent by Oxford City Council by the end of the financial year 25/26 on activities relating to the aims of the Growth Deal – to deliver significant increases in the supply of new homes in Oxfordshire'. It is intended that the funding will be used for the Oxpens River Bridge project.

The funding is subject to two project milestones:

- March 2026: The Council will spend the funding on any activities relating to the terms of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.
- October 2026: Construction of the bridge will be completed.

The MOU sets out that it is not legally binding on the parties but that it is expected that the parties will honour the MOU and places obligations on the Council.

The OGD identified infrastructure to be, that would be funded to facilitate housing delivery. To date the proposal for the Oxpens River Bridge has been funded through the Oxfordshire Growth Deal (OGD). Costs have increased and the top up funding will enable the project to be delivered. The OGD identified infrastructure to be, that would be funded to facilitate housing delivery. Within the City, due to the nature of the housing sites, the housing delivery supported by the infrastructure was spread across the city. In the case of the bridge the housing delivery was in the central, southern and western parts of the city. The original housing numbers identified to deliver the bridge have been met and further growth is anticipated on allocated sites within the relevant parts of the city.

Justification for an urgent decision

The Cabinet delegated authority to the Deputy Chief Executive – Place on 13 August 2026 to enter into a funding agreement for Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for the Oxpens River Bridge. The making of the decision to accept the grant funding has been on the Forward Plan since 19 January 2026, which can be found here: [Issue details - Entering into an agreement with Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government in respect to funding for Oxpens River Bridge | Oxford City Council](#)

The Council was notified of the new MHCLG funding and received the MOU late on the 25 March, however the MOU referred to a grant letter that has only been received today.

The MOU seeks for the grant funding to be spent in the 25/26 financial year. The Council cannot allocate the funding until the decision has been made to accept the grant funding and enter into the MOU. The proposed decision to enter into an agreement with MHCLG to accept funding has been advertised on the Forward Plan for over 28 days awaiting receipt of the funding terms. The timing of the receipt of the MOU and grant letter and the need to have spent the funding by the 31 March 2026 makes the decision to accept the funding urgent. If the decision was taken today the two-day period to allow for call-in would have the effect of making the decision beyond the timescales set out by MHCLG in the MOU for spending the grant funds.

The Constitution at 17.10 allows for urgent decisions where:

- the decision to be taken is both urgent and reasonable and
- the delay caused by the call-in process would not be in the interests of the Council or the public.

In this case the two-day delay for call in would put the acceptance of the grant funding and expenditure of the funds outside of the current financial year. This would not be in accordance with the conditions in the MOU and could result in the Council being required to return the funds as they could not be used in accordance with the MOU. This would not be in the interest of the Council and therefore it is considered urgent to allow for the removal of call-in so that a decision can be taken with immediate effect.

Please can you confirm if we can remove the two-day call-in period for this decision.

Jonathan Malton

Committee and Member Services Manager

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