

Addendum to Item 9 Urgent Key Decision End of Year Update 2025-2026

1. Since the publication of the agenda for the Scrutiny Committee on 26 March 2026, a further decision has been taken following consultation with the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.
2. As per part 17.10 of the Constitution, this will be reported to full Council at the next ordinary meeting on 13 July 2026.
3. The Scrutiny Committee are asked to note additional urgent decision taken since the publication of the agenda.

Entering into an agreement with Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government in respect to funding for Oxpens River Bridge

4. The decision, taken on 31 March 2026, was for the Deputy Chief Executive – City and Citizen Services to enter into an agreement with Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in respect to funding for Oxpens River Bridge.
5. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee was consulted on 30 March 2026 to remove the requirement of the call-in period under section 17.10 of the Constitution.
6. A report was presented to Cabinet on the 13 August 2026 which provided delegation as follows:

“Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive - Place, in consultation with the Council’s Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer), the Director of Law Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer) and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Culture to enter into legal agreements, or amend legal agreements, to secure the additional external funds required to meet the £3.7 m needed to deliver the Oxpens River Bridge and to enter an amended agreement with Oxfordshire County Council to enable the Growth Deal funding to be spent in 26/27”
7. Growth Deal funding was identified to deliver the Oxpens River Bridge in 2020. As the design of the project has been developed and delays have occurred, the cost of delivering the bridge has increased. This was reported to Cabinet 13th August 2025 and additional funding has been sought to enable the delivery of the bridge.
8. The MHCLG had identified additional funding and provided a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to accompany the funding. The MOU 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’.
9. The agreement was subject to two project milestones;
 - March 2026: The Council will spend the money on any activities relating to the terms of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.
 - October 2026: Construction of the bridge will be completed.
10. The agreement also required ‘full transparency open book working on all matters relating to the project, including project proposals, project expenditure, reporting and evaluation forms.’ The MOU also includes standard requirements re

participation in wider evaluation, assurance and risk and marketing and branding and due diligence and procurement.

11. 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.
12. The proposal for the Oxpens River Bridge was being funded through the Oxfordshire Growth Deal (OGD). The OGD identified infrastructure 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, south and western parts of the city. Since the original funding allocation costs have increased as the programme has been delayed and hence the need for top up funding.
13. The reason for using the urgent provisions as described in the Constitution was 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 was only been received on 30 March.
14. 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.
15. 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 made the decision to accept the funding urgent. If the decision was taken on 31 March, 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.
16. The alternative to taking this decision would be not to enter the MOU. The implication of this would be that the funding would not be available and it would be unlikely to be able to deliver the project.

Implications of Local Government Reorganisation

17. The decision to proceed with the bridge was taken prior to the Government's announcement and plans for Local Government Reorganisation. The budget is in place to enable the project to proceed.
18. Where appropriate, any implications relating to LGR were reviewed when considering the decisions using the linked guidance from Government: [Financial decisions before local government reorganisation - GOV.UK](#)

Financial implications

19. There are no financial implications arising from this addendum.
20. Financial implications for the urgent decisions have been outlined above, and the Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer) was consulted before each decision was taken.

Legal issues

21. There are no financial issues arising from this addendum.

22. Legal issues for each of the urgent 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 - Entering into an agreement with Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government in respect to funding for Oxpens River Bridge Oxford City Council</u>

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