

Decision type: **Decision Specifically Delegated to Officers**

Decision date: 15 June 2026

Decision maker: Tom Bridgman
Deputy Chief Executive – Place
(former title Executive Director (Development))

Decision title: Award of Works Contract for Oxford Burial Meadow site works

Summary	
Decision being taken:	To appoint Blakedown Landscapes (SE) Ltd to carry out works to construct the burial meadow, subject to scheme approvals, for a contract sum of £1,194,300.87 ex VAT. The Cabinet report approved a budget for enabling the creation of the new greenspace and burial meadow which included a cost of £1,544,000.00 for construction costs to carry out the works including inflation, contingency, and additional highway works.
Key decision:	Yes
Source of delegation:	Item 49 Cabinet, on 13th September 2023, resolved to:- 3 <i>Delegate authority to the Executive Director Development, in consultation with the Council's Section 151 Officer and the Head of Law and Governance to enter into any related agreements and contracts to facilitate the scheme in terms of construction and operation; works details; and budget changes for this Council owned land.</i>
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for a Zero Carbon Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Oxford Local Plan

Deputy Chief Executive – Place decides as follows:

- To** appoint Blakedown Landscapes (SE) Ltd to carry out works to construct the burial meadow, subject to scheme approvals, for a contract sum of £1,194,300.87.

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Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	Confidential appendix: including tender report, scores summary and risk register	Yes This information is exempted from publication under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 since it is: Legally sensitive
Appendix 2	Equalities Impact Assessment	

Introduction and background

1. Though not a statutory duty, the provision of burial space is seen as an important civic function to ensure all Oxford residents, of all faiths, beliefs, and cultures, have continuity of access to burial space in their City. This is also a crucial community facility to have as Oxford promotes itself as an attractive City to live and work in.
2. Oxford's current cemeteries have been running out of space for the last 10 years, and there is now such an acute shortage of space that footpaths in existing cemeteries are being dug up to squeeze in more grave plots.
3. A search for new burial space got underway afresh 4 years ago, which has resulted in a scheme being developed for the Oxford Burial Meadow on land the Council owns at Horspath. This land has suitable soils, and is within easy access for Oxford residents, and in a tranquil peaceful location.
4. In September 2023 Cabinet approved the project, and budget to deliver the new burial meadow on this site, and authorised the Executive Director of Development to enter into the necessary property agreements and contracts to deliver the scheme.
5. Planning permission for change of use was granted on 1st April 2026 and so now approval is sought to award the works contract necessary for working with the Contractor to apply for the final consents such as the Construction Traffic Management Plan; dormice license, s278, and final drainage details. These consents and conditions are necessary for delivering the burial meadow works so it can be operational as soon as possible and first burials begin.
6. Due to the nature of the scope of works, and critical timescales for creating new burial space for Oxford, an open tender procurement process was used in order to procure a contractor with relevant recent experience of directly delivering the works elements efficiently, reliably, and capably, to industry best practice, and to market

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rates. This is in order to meet the key project aim of minimising gaps in continuity of burial plots for Oxford, given the acute shortage of current plot types.

7. The invitation to tender information detailed the standard preliminary questions, schedules of work to price, and the technical quality questions that the tenders would be assessed against. Quality questions covered relevant experience and capability, proposed methodology, programme and capacity, as well as social value. The project legal lead, and procurement advisor also checked and inputted into the final tender documents and JCT intermediate contract information provided to tenderers, and a conflicts of interest form was completed.
8. Evaluation was led by the Oxford City Council procurement advisor, who also chaired the moderation meeting, and has managed the tender portal communication with tenderers. All three evaluators were chosen due to being highly experienced technical specialists for the type of work involved with detailed knowledge of the site and project needs, design, and works. They comprised the burial meadow project manager, the multi-disciplinary technical lead designer for the burial meadow, and soft works specialist, and the multi-disciplinary lead engineer for the burial meadow highways and drainage works.
9. A large number of detailed questions and clarifications were received during the tender process which evidenced the high level of engagement from the market, and the care and consideration tenderers have given to the specifics of the scheme. Tender responses were received from 12 tenderers, which were checked for their compliance; and then scored on the quality questions. The procurement advisor chaired the moderation of the quality scores, ensuring consistency of scoring across the board, and then added these scores to the price scores. Due diligence and further checks were also completed.
10. It is recommended that the contract for the burial meadow site works is now awarded to the successful tenderer, subject to necessary approvals. The contract is for a 6 month contract period, with final start date to be confirmed but estimated to be August 2026, dependant on approval of the construction traffic management plan, dormice license, and other approvals in progress.

Reasons for the decision

11. The decision will achieve the construction of the new burial meadow and greenspace on the land owned by Oxford City Council.
12. The works contract comprises the reliable, capable, and efficient sequencing, management, and mainly direct delivery in line with industry best practice, of the works. These include drainage works, earthworks, woodland and meadow planting, utility connection, fencing, paths, and road and footway connections. The whole of the site will have works done that enable its use as a burial meadow, but accessways works drainage swales and tree planting, will only be carried out in the southern part of the site; with the northern section of the site having works done to lay it out as a wildflower meadow ahead of that area being needed for burial space in an estimated 20-30 years time. This works contract is necessary to construct the new operational burial meadow and public greenspace in the short timescales required to avoid both a gap in burial space availability for Oxford residents, and a gap in income to the burial service.

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Taking this decision to construct the new burial space means Oxford residents can continue to have somewhere local to Oxford to be buried, and visit graves of their loved ones, as well as providing burial spaces which is recognising the importance of burial in religious beliefs. Alternative Options Considered

13. The option to do nothing and not provide new burial space was considered, but was discounted because of:
 14. the risks outlined in the report below.
 15. The cradle to grave' function of a Council. A cemetery is an important place of civic pride, and community cohesion, where families and communities gather to remember their loved ones
 16. The lack of capacity in neighbouring areas for burials and reliance on such would require people to be buried away from their home city.
 17. The likelihood a lack of local burial provision would undermine the City's status, and growth agenda promoting Oxford as being an attractive place to live and settle, for all the reasons above. The do nothing option, not making this decision to construct a new cemetery was also discounted because it undermines the City's status, and growth agenda promoting Oxford as being an attractive place to live and settle. In addition, the cemeteries of
 18. The contract could have been let following the discharged was considered, but discounted of planning conditions, however this was discounted as:
 19. It will be far more cohesive to arrange for the developer to discharge planning conditions as many documents are required to be developed before they can be applied for, such as the dormice license application; and construction environmental management plan.
 20. It will minimise any gap in burial plot provision which is reliant on the normal development process of running works streams in parallel not series. While finalising contract documents, and gearing up, a contractor normally assists with smooth discharge of conditions and final construction details for example. Risks to project delivery would be greater by not progressing to apply for consents as these items are on the critical path and need doing.
 21. The contractor can help overcome programme delay from seasonal ecological constraints while appointed;
 22. delay in tendering would increase budget pressure from higher prices.

Implications of Local Government Reorganisation

23. This project ensures continuity of essential services for residents of Oxford City; has Cabinet approval to be delivered, and is in progress and underway within the Oxford City Council capital delivery programme. This contract will be awarded before decisions are made on the successor Council.

Equalities Impact

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24. As well as an important civic function and choice for all residents; burial is important for many residents due to their religion or belief. Taking this decision will have a positive impact on people with religions, beliefs and cultures that require burials.
25. To ensure good access to grave plots by people with greater accessibility needs, all burial plots will be within circa 30m, to accessways, as per the existing cemeteries, and grass paths around operational burial zones will also be mown short to allow easy access.

Risks

26. The risks if this decision is not taken are:
27. that residents will not have anywhere local to Oxford to be buried as there is already such an acute shortage of plots in existing cemeteries. This would not align with Oxford being a 'world class City', or its growth aspirations including promoting Oxford as an attractive place to live and settle.
28. Likely adverse impacts on residents of certain religions, beliefs and cultures who require burials.
29. Reduction and potential loss of the income stream from burials.
30. The key risks associated with this project and how they are being managed are shown below. The risk register is shown in the Confidential Appendix.

Numbered Risk / Issue	Mitigation / Strategy -	
Acute shortage of 'new greenfield' burial plots from now til new site open.	Progress delivery of new burial space site works asap. Note: reclaimed graves available, and PM and ODS managing plot types, & comms	
Difficulty obtaining planning, and therefore programme risk	Planning approval obtained on 1 st April 2026. The one pre com condition – the Construction Traffic Management Plan requires Site Works award form signing	
Difficulty of highway approval / s278	Highways removed all objections. Still s278 to do	
Ensuring site works delivered efficiently, on budget, and to quality	Successful open market tender process completed to ensure procuring best value, and high quality works	

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

31. This key decision will assist delivery of the Council's priority to pursue a zero carbon Oxford. The proposed new burial meadow will encourage sustainable transport for visitors; minimise new hard structures; prioritise sustainably sourced materials; and include additional tree planting on the land.

Implications of making the decision

Financial implications	<i>No Financial Implications of making the decision as there is sufficient Budget Capacity for this Project within the existing Capital Programme.</i>	Completed by: Paul Swaffield Date: 28/04/2026
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	<i>Risk of not making decision is reduced Revenue stream.</i>	
Legal implications	<p><i>There are no legal implications arising from the proposed decision to award the works contract.</i></p> <p><i>The proposed works contract has been competitively procured in accordance with the Council's Contract Rules. The works contract will be in the form of unamended JCT Intermediate Contract, 2024 edition. The unamended form of JCT Intermediate Contract together with the detailed works specifications (setting out, amongst others, standards for works and materials and safety requirements) is considered to provide adequate provisions and protections for the nature of the works (i.e. no building construction). Moreover, design for the works is being carried out under a separate contract, removing the need for contract amendments relating to matters including design liability, duty of care or Professional Indemnity insurance requirements.</i></p> <p><i>As set out in the Cabinet Report of 13th September 2023, a number of legal agreements relating to the land earmarked for the development of burial meadow in Shotover were required to be entered into to ensure vacant possession and that there were no third party rights preventing implementation of the project. All the relevant legal agreements have now been either entered into or secured (to be entered into at the Council's option).</i></p> <p><i>There is no legal requirement to appropriate the land to the specific burial meadow purpose as the project has been designed in a way that does not conflict with but enhances the land as public open space.</i></p> <p><i>The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 in the exercise of its</i></p>	<p>Completed by: Iwona Defer</p> <p>Date: 03/06/2026</p>

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	<p><i>functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it; religion or belief is one of the protected characteristics. This requires the Council to consciously consider the impact of its decisions on people sharing a protected characteristic. The main body of this Officer Decision Notice suggests that implementation of the burial meadow project will have an important positive impact on people of different religions or beliefs.</i></p>	
Member declared interests	None	Completed by: Carri Unwin Date: 15 June 2026


Background Documents
Item 49 Cabinet, on 13th September 2023

Report author	Carri Unwin
Job title	Regeneration Manager
Service area or department	Regeneration and Economy
Email contact	cunwin@oxford.gov.uk

Consultee checklist

Consultees	Name and job title	Date
Senior officer e.g. the relevant service manager / Director where the decision maker is the	Carolyn Plozynski Director of Regeneration, Economy and Sustainability	04.06.26

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Chief Executive or a Deputy Chief Executive.		
Group Finance Director Where required by the Constitution or conditions of the delegation	Alistair Rush Group Finance Director	11.05.26
Director of Law, Governance and Strategy Where required by the Constitution or conditions of the delegation	 Emma Griffiths (Legal Services Manager) for and on behalf of the Director of Law, Governance & Strategy	11.06.26
Cabinet Member(s) Where required by the conditions of the delegation	N/A	
Ward Members Where required by the Constitution or conditions of the delegation	N/A	

Decision Maker Approval

Name and job title	Date
Tom Bridgman Deputy Chief Executive - Place	11.06.26

This form must be completed and sent to Committee and Member Services **on the date that the decision maker signs it. This must be only done once all consultees have given their approval. The decision shall be effective from the date of publication; therefore, it is important that you send to Committee and Member Services as soon as it is completed and dated by the decision maker. Please note that it is not effective until it is published and the call in period has passed.**

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NOTES

The law¹ requires the Council to record executive and non-executive decisions taken by officers under delegated powers and to publish them on the Council's website.

These requirements apply to decisions that would have been taken by Council or the Cabinet if delegated powers had not been given to an officer:

- under an express delegation granted at a meeting of Cabinet, Council or a Committee.
- in accordance with Part 4.4 of the Constitution as follows:
 - Awarding a contract where authority has been specifically delegated to officers by Cabinet or a Cabinet Member (regardless of value)
 - Acquiring or disposing of freeholds or leaseholds granting new leaseholds (excluding assignments and rent reviews) where authority has been specifically delegated to officers by Cabinet or a Cabinet Member (regardless of value)
 - Making a regulatory order which affects a number of people, for example a Public Space Protection Order or a Parking Place Order
 - Where the effect of a decision is to grant a licence or permission or it affects the rights of citizens
 - Discharging any other express delegation from Cabinet or a Cabinet Member a committee or Council.

These requirements **do not** apply to:

- planning and licencing matters where there are established arrangements for recording decisions: or
- decisions which are purely administrative or operational in nature

All other officer decisions should be recorded on an officer decision form but do not need to be published. They must though be stored so as to ensure that they are not lost should an officer leave the authority.

Exempt or Confidential information

Information relating to a delegated officer or single member decision does not have to be made public if it is exempt or confidential. Summary information from this decision sheet (excluding all exempt or confidential information) will be published on the Council's website.

¹ the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012/2089 (Regulation 13(4)) and The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014/2095 (Regulation 7)

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Key or Non Key Decision

A key decision is an executive decision which is likely to:

- Have a significant effect on people living or working in a least two wards or
- Involve spending, income, or saving a significant amount – whether an amount is significant depends on the Council's total budget for the service involved. For this Council 'significant' in budgetary terms is:
 - Expenditure, income, or savings of £750,000 or greater in the context of the medium term financial strategy,
 - Acquiring or disposing of freeholds with a consideration over £750,000 in the context of the medium term financial strategy except for disposals pursuant to right to buy legislation
 - Acquiring or disposing of leaseholds where either the rental value is in excess of £250,000 per annum and/or the premium is £750,000 except for statutory lease renewals under Part 2 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 and disposals pursuant to right to buy legislation and disposals pursuant to right to buy legislation.
 - Acquiring or disposing of easements with a value over £750,000 and/or rental value over £250,000 each year

A key decision can only be taken and recorded here if notice of it has been published on the Forward Plan for at least 28 clear days. Key decisions taken by officers may be "called in" by any four councillors or the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee within two days of the notice of decision being published.

All key decisions are subject to a two-day call-in period which starts the day after the decision has been published (i.e. if a decision was published on a Monday, then call-in starts on Tuesday and expires at the end of Wednesday). No action can be taken until Committee and Member Services have confirmed the call-in period has expired.

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