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OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

To:	**Council**
Date:	13 July 2026
Report of:	Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer)
Title of Report:	Urgent Key Decisions Since January 2026

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To update Council on key decisions taken in cases of special urgency since 26 January 2026.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working and Inclusive Economic Growth
Corporate Priority:	A Well Run Council.
Policy Framework:	None.

Recommendation(s): That Council resolves to:
1. **Note** the urgent key decisions taken in cases of special urgency as set out in the report.

Information Exempt from Publication	
N/A	N/A

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
N/A	N/A	N/A

Introduction and background

1. The Leader of the Council is required by regulations to report to Council at least annually on executive decisions taken under special urgency procedures. Special urgency rules apply to key decisions that have not been notified on the Forward Plan for at least 28 clear days. Such decisions can only be taken where the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee (or if there is no chair, the Lord Mayor) agrees that the making of the decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred. This report updates Council on executive decisions taken in cases of special urgency since 26 January 2026.

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

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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"

5. 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.

6. 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'.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

Approval of National Homelessness Property Fund 1 resolution

15. The decision, taken on 15 April 2026 was for the Director of Housing to approve the National Homelessness Property Fund 1 resolution, confirming the extension of the fund to 31 July 2026 to be signed by the Director of Housing Services on behalf of the Council as a limited partner of the Fund and to authorise the entering in to of any required agreements on behalf of the Council required to give effect to the resolution, subject to legal review.

16. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee was consulted to remove the requirement of the 28-day notice period under section 15.17 and call-in period under section 17.10 of the Constitution.

17. In July 2025 Cabinet approved the moving of the Council's investment of £10m in National Homelessness Property Fund 1 (HNPF1) which was due to expire, into a new "evergreen" property fund, and gave necessary delegations to the Director of Housing to enable this reinvestment.

18. The delegation granted is as follows:

    "Delegate to the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, the Deputy Leader (statutory) for Finance and Asset Management, the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer) and Group Finance Director (S151) the authority to enter in to such agreements as necessary to make the reinvestment in to the new "evergreen" property fund subject to reassurance from the fund that all or majority of the homes owned in Oxfordshire are retained through the reinvestment and satisfactory approval of the terms of the investment agreement."

19. Officers have been working with Resonance to facilitate the reinvestment since that date, working closely with other LA investors. In December, the new fund was not yet ready to launch, with legal work ongoing, so Resonance as managers of the fund asked all investors to support a resolution to extend the current fund until April 2026 to give more time. This was approved on 8 December 2025 via urgent officer decision.

20. Resonance have now approached the Council confirming that while progress has been made, the new fund is not ready to launch by the end of April, and have requested another short extension to the 31st of July 2026 to allow all preparatory work to be completed so the new fund can launch.

21. It is considered that the current delegation enables the resolution to extend NHPF1 falls within the delegation as, without taking this step, the Council will be unable to reinvest in line with the decision of Cabinet on the 9 July 2025, once a new fund is ready and established.

22. On this basis the report therefore recommends to the Director of Housing to support this resolution to enable the extension, agreeing to enter into any required agreements to facilitate it. Without an extension the fund would close, risking that the fund may sell its housing assets, which may not be at an optimal time to maximise the Councils investment return, and result in the end of us being able to nominate homeless households to this accommodation and prompt the eviction of the current tenants.

23. It is considered that the current delegation enables the resolution to extend HNPF1, without taking this step, the Council will be unable to reinvest in line with the decision of Cabinet on the 9 July 2025, once a new fund is ready and established.

24. On this basis the report therefore recommends to the Director of Housing to support this resolution to enable the extension, agreeing to enter into any required agreements to facilitate it. Without an extension the fund would close, risking the Councils £10m investment and the continued operation of the homes to house formerly homeless families.

25. Not supporting the resolution was considered but brings no advantages and would expose the Council to considerable risk if the fund was to close with no successor fund in place.

Implications of Local Government Reorganisation

26. There are no implications of Local Government Reorganisation arising from this report.

27. 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

28. There are no financial issues arising directly from this report.

29. Financial implications for each of the Urgent Key Decisions have been outlined above, and the Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer) was consulted before each decision was taken.

Legal issues

30. Regulation 19 of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 requires that the executive Leader submits a report to the authority at least annually on executive decisions taken in cases of special urgency (Regulation 11), including the particulars of each decision.

31. Legal issues for each of the Urgent Key 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	Decision - Entering into an agreement with Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government in respect to funding for Oxpens River Bridge | Oxford City Council
2	Decision - Approval of National Homelessness Property Fund 1 resolution | Oxford City Council

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