

Supplement for

Cabinet

On **Wednesday 17 April 2024** At **6.00 pm**

Agenda Item 7 - Scrutiny Reports

Contents

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<p>The Housing and Homelessness Panel met on 07 March 2024, the Climate and Environment Panel met on 20 March 2024, and the Finance and Performance Panel met on 26 March 2024. The Scrutiny Committee will meet on 11 April 2024. The following reports are expected, together with any other recommendations from those meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oxford City Council Annual Business Plan 2024-2025 and Progress of the 2023/24 Priorities• Adult Exploitation• Implementation of Selective Licensing• Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment• Integrated Performance Report Q3 2023/24• Biodiversity Net Gain• Citywide Retrofit Strategy• Energy Generation / Solar Potential on Council Buildings• Tree Planting	

The agenda, reports and any additional supplements can be found together with this supplement on the committee meeting webpage.

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Oxford City Council, Town Hall, St Aldate's Oxford OX1 1BX

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To: Cabinet
Date: 17 April 2024
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Oxford City Council Annual Business Plan 2024-25

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Lucy Pegg, Scrutiny Committee Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 11 April 2024 to consider a report concerning the Oxford City Council Annual Business Plan 2024-25. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 17 April 2024, recommends that Cabinet agrees the Annual Business Plan Priorities 2024-25 and notes progress made in delivery against the actions set out in the Annual Business Plan 2023-24.
2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Susan Brown (Leader of the Council), Mish Tullar (Head of Corporate Strategy) and Clare Keen (Policy and Partnerships Officer) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Councillor Brown, Leader of the Council introduced the report. There had been a significant amount of engagement in relation to the Annual Business Plan 2024-25,

alongside consultation on the draft Corporate Strategy 2024-28, all of which had been cross-party. The Annual Business Plan was not hugely different from previous iterations, as the Council was still working towards the same broad aims; the list of actions was shorter, however, following feedback from the recent Peer Review.

4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to local grid constraints and subsequent impact on the deliverability of zero carbon homes; robotic process automation; mid-year progress reporting against the action plan; and the absence of specific actions relating to social rent within the 'Good, Affordable Homes' priority.
5. In particular, the Committee was surprised that the overarching priority of 'Good, Affordable Homes' specifically mentioned an aim to 'increase the number of new homes for social rent', yet the year one actions did not contain any actions specifically working towards that aim.

Recommendation 1: That the Council includes specific year one actions within the 'Good, Affordable Homes' priority related to driving forward the Council's aim to increase the number of new homes for social rent.

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Appendix A
Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 11 April 2024 concerning the Oxford City Council Annual Business Plan 2024-25. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council includes specific year one actions within the 'Good, Affordable Homes' priority related to driving forward the Council's aim to increase the number of new homes for social rent.	Yes	Wording in the Business Plan 2024/25 will be amended to highlight that the delivery of new housing for social rent is central to the actions under the Good, Affordable Homes priority.

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To: Cabinet
Date: 17 April 2024
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Adult Exploitation

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Lucy Pegg, Scrutiny Committee Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Mark Lygo, Cabinet Member for Safer and Inclusive Communities
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 11 April 2024 to consider a report concerning Adult Exploitation. It was recommended that the Panel consider the report and agree any recommendations.
2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Mark Lygo (Cabinet Member for Safer and Inclusive Communities), Richard Adams (Community Safety Service Manager) and Nicola Bell (Anti-Slavery Coordinator Oxfordshire) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Cllr Lygo, Cabinet Member for Safer and Inclusive Communities introduced the report, which provided an update on the prevalence of adult exploitation and modern slavery and the range of partnership work being undertaken to address it.
4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the aftermath of brothel closure orders; the prevalence of 'repeat victims' of adult exploitation and modern slavery; concerns about particular groups which may be being exploited and work being done to engage with them; how Oxford compared to other areas nationally in terms of types of exploitation and nationalities of those exploited; local trends which did not match national trends; training; and communications.
5. In particular, the Committee queried whether there was training available for Members in relation to spotting the signs of adult exploitation and modern slavery and how to report it; and similarly whether there was an active social media campaign to raise public awareness.

Recommendation 1: That the Council develops and delivers training for all Members related to spotting the signs of adult exploitation and modern slavery and how to report it.

Recommendation 2: That the Council rolls out a social media campaign related to spotting the signs of adult exploitation and modern slavery and how to report it.

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Appendix A

Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 11 April 2024 concerning the Adult Exploitation report. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council develops and delivers training for all Members related to spotting the signs of adult exploitation and modern slavery and how to report it.	Yes	Training is available for Members which can be delivered to councillors.
2) That the Council rolls out a social media campaign related to spotting the signs of adult exploitation and modern slavery and how to report it.	In Part	Social media campaigns are used for different types of exploitation at different times of the year. The campaigns include spotting the signs, how to report and support for victims.

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To: Cabinet
Date: 17 April 2024
Report of: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Title of Report: Implementation of Selective Licensing

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Cllr Lizzy Diggins, Panel Chair
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
Corporate Priority:	Deliver More Affordable Housing
Policy Framework:	Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Housing and Homelessness Panel met on 07 March 2024 to consider a report on the Implementation of Selective Licensing. It was recommended that the Panel consider the report and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing) and Gail Siddal, Regulatory Services Manager for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Cllr L Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report, which provided an update on the year one actions of the Selective Licensing scheme. She highlighted that Oxford's Selective Licensing scheme was one of the largest in

the country and Oxford City Council was the only authority where the whole city was covered by the scheme. Gail Siddall, Regulatory Services Manager provided an overview of the implementation processes and challenges across the first year of the scheme. The Selective Licensing scheme sought to help the Council address poor conditions in private rented housing stock within the city.

4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the estimates set out in the report; Rent Repayment Orders; plans for communications and engagement campaigns; inspection targets; Selective Licensing fees; evictions; and incentives to landlords to apply for a licence.
5. In particular, the Panel noted responses to questions that the initial Selective Licensing scheme plans included the rollout of a tenant communication and engagement campaign, however this work had not yet started. The Panel agreed that this campaign should be commenced as soon as possible to ensure tenants' awareness of the scheme and their rights. The Panel was also of the view that tenants unions should be actively engaged with as part of this work.

Recommendation 1: That the Council rolls out a Selective Licensing scheme communications campaign aimed at tenants to raise awareness of the scheme and tenants' rights; and actively engages with tenants unions as part of the campaign.

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Appendix A
Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of
the Housing and Homelessness Panel of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Panel on 07 March 2024 concerning the Implementation of Selective Licensing. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council rolls out a Selective Licensing scheme communications campaign aimed at tenants to raise awareness of the scheme and tenants' rights; and actively engages with tenants unions as part of the campaign.	Yes	This will be undertaken as part of the overall communications plan for the Selective Licensing Scheme.

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To: Cabinet
Date: 17 April 2024
Report of: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Title of Report: Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Cllr Lizzy Diggins, Panel Chair
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Housing and Homelessness Panel met on 07 March 2024 to consider a report concerning the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment. It was recommended that the Panel consider the report and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing) and Bill Graves (Landlord Services Manager) for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager introduced the report, which set out the Council's Landlord Function self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. The Panel had reviewed the previous self-assessment in October 2023 against the current standards, however changes were proposed to the self-assessment, which were set out in the report. Following correspondence received by officers earlier in the week, compliance with the broader organisation-wide self-assessment relating to the single complaint handling code would not be a requirement until 2025/26, with reporting commencing in 2026/27. Officers were seeking clarity on what this meant for the Council.
4. The Panel raised a number of points, including the need to ensure the use of correct language regarding governance and reporting throughout the document; and criteria which were currently marked as 'non-compliant' where the Panel felt the Council could state it was at least partially compliant.
5. In particular, the Panel noted the Housing Ombudsman's reference to 'Governing Body' throughout the self-assessment criteria. This was not terminology which the Council used, therefore the Panel felt it was important that the Council defined what the term 'Governing Body' meant in respect of the Council, to ensure clarity across the organisation.

Recommendation 1: That the Council sets out its definition of what the 'Governing Body' referred to in the complaint handling code is in respect of the Council, to ensure clarity across the organisation.

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Appendix A
Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of
the Housing and Homelessness Panel of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Panel on 07 March 2024 concerning the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council sets out its definition of what the 'Governing Body' referred to in the complaint handling code is in respect of the Council, to ensure clarity across the organisation.	Yes	<p>Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code is now a legal requirement, and this requires that performance on complaint handling relating to the landlord function is reported to the organisation's Governing Body, so this clarification that Council is the Governing Body will be helpful.</p> <p>On a similar vein, the Regulator of Social Housing also requires that the landlord performance against its Regulatory Standards is reported to the organisation's Governing Body (also now a legal requirement).</p>

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To: Cabinet
Date: 17 April 2024
Report of: Finance and Performance Panel
Title of Report: Integrated Performance Report Q3 2023/24

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor James Fry, Panel Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Finance and Performance Panel met on 26 March 2024 to consider the Integrated Performance Report Q3 2023/24. The report, which was considered by Cabinet on 13 March 2024, recommended that Cabinet noted the projected financial outturn as well as the position on risk and performance as at 31 December 2023.
2. The Panel would like to thank Nigel Kennedy (Head of Financial Services) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. The report provided an update on the Council's finance, risk and corporate performance matters as at 31 December 2023.

4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to capitalisation of spend on Responsive & Cyclical Repairs; Capital Programme slippage; key performance indicators; budget pressures; and corporate and service area risk.
5. In particular, the Panel noted that the report highlighted significant slippage in the Capital Programme, which had been a common theme over the years. The Panel recalled that a 40% 'optimism bias' reduction had been applied in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2024/25 to 2027/28 in order to better account for slippage within the Capital Programme. However, no comparisons had been undertaken between current slippage levels and how they aligned with the 40% optimism bias reduction assumed in the Capital Programme from 2024/25. The Panel agreed that such analysis would be helpful in understanding the extent to which the 40% optimism bias assumption was realistic.

Recommendation 1: That the Council undertakes a comparative analysis of the current overall slippage of the Capital Programme and how that aligns with the 40% optimism bias assumptions included in the MTFP 2024/25 to 2027/28, to understand the extent to which the 40% optimism bias assumptions from 2024/25 are realistic.

6. In addition, the Panel noted significant slippage within Council lettings, for example the letting of 1-3 George Street had been delayed compared to initial estimates. When questioning whether the Council factored delays in lettings into the budget as a matter of course, the Panel was informed that the Head of Financial Services relied on the expertise of officers within Corporate Property when factoring the estimated time taken to complete lettings into the budget. The Panel felt it would be a useful exercise for the Council to undertake an analysis of estimated time taken to let properties versus actual time taken to let properties, so that this information could be used to ensure more accurate assumptions regarding lettings in the budget going forward.

Recommendation 2: That the Council undertakes an analysis in relation to the letting of Council-owned property between estimated time taken to let properties versus actual time taken to let properties, with a view to being able to incorporate more accurate assumptions in the budget going forward.

7. During discussion related to risk, the Panel noted that there were two red corporate risks relating to climate change; the Panel felt that these were not separate risks and should be merged. In addition, the Panel was of the view that the red service area risk relating to Hinksey Heated Outdoor Pool was not so significant as to warrant it being a red risk; and that it should be reduced to an amber risk.

Recommendation 3: That the Council reassesses corporate and service area risks to ensure accuracy of the number and classification of risks, with particular consideration given as to whether the two corporate risks relating to climate change should be merged into one risk and whether the service area risk related to Hinksey Heated Outdoor Pool should be reduced to an amber risk.

8. The Panel also considered the Key Performance Indicator reporting set out in Appendix D to the report and noted that the document did not clearly set out the reporting period. It was not clear whether the reference to ‘December 2023’ referred to the month alone, the latest quarter (Q3), the year to date, or the revised estimate for the whole financial year. The Panel agreed that future iterations of the Integrated Performance report would benefit from clarity on the reporting period.

Recommendation 4: That the Council ensures clarity in future Integrated Performance reports in relation to the period covered by Key Performance Indicator reporting.

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Appendix A
Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of
the Finance and Performance Panel of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Finance and Performance Panel of the Scrutiny Committee on 26 March 2024 concerning the Integrated Performance Report Q3 2023/24. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That the Council undertakes a comparative analysis of the current overall slippage of the Capital Programme and how that aligns with the 40% optimism bias assumptions included in the MTFP 2024/25 to 2027/28, to understand the extent to which the 40% optimism bias assumptions from 2024/25 are realistic.	Yes	A briefing note will be prepared for finance panel once the year end figures are known for 2023-24.
2) That the Council undertakes an analysis in relation to the letting of Council-owned property between estimated time taken to let properties versus actual time taken to let properties, with a view to being able to incorporate more accurate assumptions in the budget going forward.	Yes	<p>This analysis is already undertaken. Some information can be provided now but a further briefing note can be provided if required.</p> <p>The rental income forecast for the Budget are now undertaken on a property-by-property basis over the four year term with an annual reforecast. On the base portfolio, they are accurate. Last year we saw circa £12k differential on £10.2m of income.</p> <p>Where we have more complex transactions, they do come with a higher risk and forecasting can be more challenging. In order to ensure the forecast is as accurate as possible we use market intelligence and also external advice where appropriate and the assumptions used to model the income are cautious.</p> <p>The Council is only ever in control of 50% of the</p>

		transaction and there are a number of external factors which can cause either an abortive or delayed transaction. The forecasts are reviewed quarterly to monitor this and any subsequent impact on the Budget.
3) That the Council reassesses corporate and service area risks to ensure accuracy of the number and classification of risks, with particular consideration given as to whether the two corporate risks relating to climate change should be merged into one risk and whether the service area risk related to Hinksey Heated Outdoor Pool should be reduced to an amber risk.	Yes	With the on boarding of the new Leisure contractor further mitigations have been put in place at the Hinksey Heated Outdoor pool. This will result in the risk being lowered to amber. The presentation of the climate change risks will be considered by the Head of Corporate Strategy for the next iteration of the risk register presented to Cabinet.
4) That the Council ensures clarity in future Integrated Performance reports in relation to the period covered by Key Performance Indicator reporting.	Yes	This amendment will be incorporated into future Integrated Performance Reports.

To: Cabinet
Date: 17 April 2024
Report of: Climate and Environment Panel
Title of Report: Biodiversity Net Gain

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Panel Chair
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice
Corporate Priority:	Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Climate and Environment Panel met on 27 February 2024 to consider a Scrutiny-commissioned item on Biodiversity Net Gain. It was recommended that the Panel receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Anna Railton (Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice) and Tristan Carlyle (Ecology Officer) for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Tristan Carlyle, Ecology Officer delivered a presentation which set out an overview of Biodiversity Net Gain, including the statutory regulations and

national guidance; monitoring arrangements; Biodiversity Gain Plans; and identification of Council land for Biodiversity Net Gain purposes.

4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the development of the offsite Biodiversity Net Gain market; monitoring guidance; responsibility for monitoring of offsite arrangements; 'stacking' of biodiversity and carbon offsetting on the same site; the scope of the project to identify Council land for Biodiversity Net Gain purposes; and the interaction of statutory credits with viability calculations during the Planning process.
5. The presentation highlighted that the monitoring arrangements in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain were not well established, with DEFRA and Natural England deliberately avoiding being prescriptive. The Panel was advised that a great deal of the monitoring arrangements would be left to the discretion of Local Planning Authorities (i.e. individual councils). During discussion on this matter, the Panel queried whether or not the Council intended to produce monitoring guidance and, if so, the timetable for producing such guidance.
6. In response, the Panel was informed that there was no requirement for the Council to produce guidance on monitoring and it could prove quite difficult as there was a need to ensure there was flexibility to account for different approaches to Biodiversity Net Gain. However, it was noted that there may be scope to produce limited guidance in relation to onsite Biodiversity Net Gain, which would be more beneficial if agreed on a countywide basis. In addition, the Panel sought clarity on responsibility for monitoring offsite Biodiversity Net Gain in terms of whether the local authority where the development was located was responsible for monitoring, or whether it was the local authority area which hosted the offsite biodiversity unit(s); the Panel suggested that this could be incorporated into guidance.
7. Following discussion, the Panel was of the view that, despite there being no formal requirement for the Council to produce monitoring guidance, it would be useful for guidance to be established. In order to enable consistency across Oxfordshire in terms of type and frequency of monitoring, the Panel agreed it would be of benefit for countywide guidance to be produced.

Recommendation 1: That the Council coordinates with the other Oxfordshire Districts to establish basic Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring guidance for certain habitats to ensure a consistent set of principles and processes across the county.

8. The presentation also highlighted the slow and patchy development of offsite biodiversity units, which was as a result of the nature of biodiversity offsetting model required under the statutory regulations. The regulations required that any offsite biodiversity offsetting must specify what the offsetting would provide at the point at which the money was paid for the biodiversity unit. The Panel noted that a project was underway to identify Council-owned land with the potential to provide biodiversity units. The Panel sought clarification of the scope of this project in terms of size of land being considered and current use (e.g. was wall and roof potential in scope, for instance) and was advised that, in theory, biodiversity units could be delivered on any type of land. Size of land was, however, an important consideration and the aim would be to first identify larger

sites as it would be more difficult to deliver biodiversity units across a large number of smaller sites. Land was currently being identified by the Corporate Assets team.

9. During discussion, the Panel agreed that the Council had a role to play in developing and being a key provider within the offsite biodiversity offsetting market locally, as this would help ensure that biodiversity units were available in Oxford or close to Oxford. Much of this could be done through the existing land identification project.

Recommendation 2: That the Council, through its project to identify Council-owned land with the potential to provide biodiversity units, seeks to identify sufficient sites so as to establish itself as a key provider of biodiversity units locally, thus strongly encouraging the uptake of biodiversity units in Oxford or as close to Oxford as possible.

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Appendix A
Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of
the Climate and Environment Panel of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Panel on 27 February 2024 concerning the Biodiversity Net Gain item presented at the meeting. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council coordinates with the other Oxfordshire Districts to establish basic Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring guidance for certain habitats to ensure a consistent set of principles and processes across the county.	Yes	There is no statutory requirement for the Council to produce guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring and this area of policy and practice is still in early stages of development. However, when resources allow, officers will seek to work with the other Oxfordshire local authorities to produce limited guidance on this.
2) That the Council, through its project to identify Council-owned land with the potential to provide biodiversity units, seeks to identify sufficient sites so as to establish itself as a key provider of biodiversity units locally, thus strongly encouraging the uptake of biodiversity units in Oxford or as close to Oxford as possible.	In Part	Officers are currently taking through internal project governance a proposal for funding that will assess the feasibility of using a number of Council-owned land assets to provide Biodiversity Net Gain units. This would involve baseline ecological assessments. If feasible, it is expected agreement will be sought to designate the land for this purpose, which would need to involve a conservation covenant or planning obligation for at least 30 years, to meet statutory requirements. However, the initial focus would be on demonstrating BNG delivery for the Council's own development needs and for that of its wholly-owned housing company OX Place. Only then would consideration be given to whether the Council should seek

		to expand the scale of its BNG work to establish itself as a provider of biodiversity units for other developers.
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To: Cabinet
Date: 17 April 2024
Report of: Climate and Environment Panel
Title of Report: Citywide Retrofit Strategy

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Panel Chair
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice
Corporate Priority:	Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Climate and Environment Panel met on 27 February 2024 to consider an item on the Citywide Retrofit Strategy. It was recommended that the Panel receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Anna Railton (Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice), Mish Tullar (Head of Corporate Strategy), Tina Mould (Environmental Sustainability Lead) and Vikki Robins (Carbon Reduction Team Manager) for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Tina Mould, Environmental Sustainability Lead delivered a presentation which set out an overview of work to date in relation to the development of a Citywide Retrofit Strategy and Action Plan and sought the Panel's feedback.
4. The Panel asked a range of questions and raised a number of points, including those relating to whether non-residential Council-owned buildings were in scope; the retrofit 'efficiency paradox'; the importance of having a trackable action plan to sit alongside the strategy; and whether the strategy focus should be on areas where the Council had control versus influence alone.
5. During discussion, the Panel noted that the Council's 2030 net zero ambitions included emissions relating only to non-residential Council-owned buildings where the Council paid the energy bill. This meant that non-residential buildings which formed part of the Council's commercial property portfolio were not in scope. Emissions relating to non-residential Council-owned buildings were in scope of the 2040 net zero ambitions for the City more broadly. The Panel agreed that any citywide retrofit strategy should incorporate all non-residential Council-owned buildings, even where the Council did not pay the energy bill.

Recommendation 1: That the Council incorporates all non-residential Council-owned buildings within the scope of the Citywide Retrofit Strategy and includes an approach within the strategy and associated action plan to ensure improvements in energy efficiency of all non-residential Council-owned buildings regardless of whether or not the Council pays the energy bill.

6. In addition, the Panel discussed the limited amount of resource within the Environmental Sustainability team to directly deliver and provide expertise on the range of projects and actions that the Council was driving forward. The Panel was of the view that specialist expertise should exist within specific service areas where the Council had control over those projects and actions (e.g. Housing Services should have its own expertise in relation to decarbonisation of social housing, for example), rather than being drawn from the expertise of the Environmental Sustainability team. The Panel agreed that this approach would free-up some capacity within the Environmental Sustainability team to drive forward areas of work where the Council had influence, but not direct control. This would enable the Environmental Sustainability team to continue shaping and enabling collaboration across the City in the interests of achieving net zero ambitions.

Recommendation 2: That the Council ensures appropriate internal expertise in relevant service areas to drive forward projects and actions to achieve the Council's net zero ambitions where it has direct control in order to release additional capacity and resource within the Environmental Sustainability team to enable the continuation of its transition towards driving forward areas of work where the Council has influence and can shape and enable collaboration across the City to facilitate the achievement of the City's broader net zero ambitions.

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Appendix A
Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of
the Climate and Environment Panel of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Panel on 27 February 2024 concerning the Citywide Retrofit Strategy item presented at the meeting. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That the Council incorporates all non-residential Council-owned buildings within the scope of the Citywide Retrofit Strategy and includes an approach within the strategy and associated action plan to ensure improvements in energy efficiency of all non-residential Council-owned buildings regardless of whether or not the Council pays the energy bill.	In Part	Officers are currently assessing the value in creating a Citywide Retrofit Strategy, incorporated under the Council itself or the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership. Action planning associated with such a strategy would need to include all non-residential Council-owned buildings regardless of whether or not the Council pays the energy bill. However, the significant uncertainty over the retrofit methodologies, financing and timelines for works – in particular those required for the Council’s commercial and community assets - mean it will be some time before such an action plan could be developed.
2) That the Council ensures appropriate internal expertise in relevant service areas to drive forward projects and actions to achieve the Council’s net zero ambitions where it has direct control in order to release additional capacity and resource within the Environmental Sustainability team to enable the continuation of its transition towards driving forward areas of work where the Council has influence and can shape and enable	Yes	Officers in Environmental Sustainability, Corporate Property, Property Services and OX Place – are working closely together and with other teams to ensure retrofit is built into the Council’s ‘business as usual’ maintenance and property improvement works, and that zero carbon approaches will be applied where possible across new build.

collaboration across the City to facilitate the achievement of the City's broader net zero ambitions.		
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To: Cabinet
Date: 17 April 2024
Report of: Climate and Environment Panel
Title of Report: Energy Generation/Solar Potential on Council Buildings

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Panel Chair
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice
Corporate Priority:	Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Climate and Environment Panel met on 20 March 2024 to consider a Scrutiny-commissioned item on Energy Generation/Solar Potential on Council Buildings. It was recommended that the Panel receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Anna Railton (Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice), Mish Tullar (Head of Corporate Strategy), Vikki Robins (Carbon Reduction Team Manager) and Juliet Nicholas (Energy and Sustainability Manager) for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy delivered a presentation which provided an overview of energy generation and solar potential on Council buildings.
4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to local grid constraints; the optimal scale of solar installations (i.e. a small number of large sites versus a larger number of small sites); the scale of solar potential on Council assets; solar canopies on Park & Rides; and opportunities for innovation.
5. During discussion, the Panel noted the operational and commercial constraints in relation to the installation of solar canopies at Park & Rides, however highlighted that other areas had overcome those challenges and managed to install the solar canopies on car parks. The Panel noted capacity constraints within the Council to look into this in great detail, however agreed that a high-level briefing setting out the challenges would be useful, along with a commitment that the Council would continue to horizon scan and take note of any developments which could support deliverability of solar canopies at Park & Rides locally.

Recommendation 1: That the Council produces a high-level summary of current challenges and constraints impacting on the deliverability of solar opportunities at Council car parks and keeps a watching brief on how similar issues have been overcome in other areas so that any learning could be identified to support delivery in Oxford.

6. In addition to the Panel's first recommendation and recognising the limited financial and human resources across the Council to take projects forward, the Panel agreed that there should be a focus on allocating resources to projects which were the most deliverable and would have the most impact.

Recommendation 2: That the Council prioritises projects on the basis of deliverability and impact when allocating financial and human resources.

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Appendix A
Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of
the Climate and Environment Panel of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Panel on 20 March 2024 concerning the Energy Generation/Solar Potential on Council Buildings item presented at the meeting. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council produces a high-level summary of current challenges and constraints impacting on the deliverability of solar opportunities at Council car parks and keeps a watching brief on how similar issues have been overcome in other areas so that any learning could be identified to support delivery in Oxford.	Yes	Officers will produce a high-level summary of current considerations, challenges and constraints impacting on the deliverability of PV canopies at Council car parks. Officers will keep a watching brief on such developments in other areas and over time will seek learnings as appropriate.
2) That the Council prioritises projects on the basis of deliverability and impact when allocating financial and human resources.	Yes	

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To: Cabinet
Date: 17 April 2024
Report of: Climate and Environment Panel
Title of Report: Tree Planting

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Panel Chair
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice
Corporate Priority:	Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Climate and Environment Panel met on 20 March 2024 to consider a Scrutiny-commissioned item on Tree Planting. It was recommended that the Panel receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Anna Railton (Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice) and Mish Tullar (Head of Corporate Strategy) for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy delivered a presentation which provided an update on tree planting, specifically in relation to the planting of new trees.

4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the availability of guidance on the process for planting new trees; how various Council strategies and policies aligned and avoided duplication or inconsistencies; the Council's 'Treemail' campaign; urban heat island effect; the costs of planting and maintaining new trees; how the Council could incentivise tree planting; the locations of existing empty tree pits; and the definition of a tree (i.e. did it include hedges).
5. In particular, the Panel highlighted that the process surrounding tree planting was complicated and difficult; the need to ensure a clear and easily understandable process for Members, community groups and individuals was emphasised, so that they could get involved in the process. The Panel agreed that it would be useful for the Council to produce guidance documents in relation to tree planting which set out the process from start to finish, including the identification of existing empty tree pits, costings and how organisations, groups and individuals could contribute towards costs and/or ongoing maintenance. The Panel agreed that having two sets of guidance would be appropriate – one in relation to public land and in relation to private land.

Recommendation 1: That the Council produces a guidance document and accompanying flow chart which clearly sets out the process for the planting of new street trees on public land, including but not limited to the mapping of existing empty tree pits within the City; responsibility for the replacement of dead or damaged trees; and a breakdown of the costs for planting and maintaining new street trees, with information as to how those costs might be met by different organisations, groups and/or individuals.

Recommendation 2: That the Council produces a guidance document for the planting of new trees, and associated costs, on private land which is aimed at a diverse audience, including community groups, schools, private landowners and landlords.

6. In addition, the Panel noted that the Council, through its policies, should look to incentivise tree planting, retention and renewal. During discussion, it was agreed that particular attention should be paid to how this could be facilitated through Planning and Licensing policies, as these were areas where the Council had more direct influence.

Recommendation 3: That the Council, when it reviews its policies, explores how it could incentivise, promote and encourage the planting, retention and renewal of trees through those policies – particularly within Planning and Licensing.

7. The Panel noted that there were a number of new community buildings and spaces in development across the City and agreed that there should be a focus on ensuring trees were incorporated into their design so as to support the City's wider environmental agenda. The Panel agreed that the Council should take an active role in encouraging tree planting in respect of these projects, including communicating with those developing the spaces to advise how they could contribute to the success of the Council's tree policies and strategies.

Recommendation 4: That the Council actively encourages tree planting within and around new community buildings and spaces to ensure alignment of these new projects and developments with the City's wider environmental policies.

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Appendix A
Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of
the Climate and Environment Panel of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Panel on 20 March 2024 concerning the Tree Planting item presented at the meeting. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council produces a guidance document and accompanying flow chart which clearly sets out the process for the planting of new street trees on public land, including but not limited to the mapping of existing empty tree pits within the City; responsibility for the replacement of dead or damaged trees; and a breakdown of the costs for planting and maintaining new street trees, with information as to how those costs might be met by different organisations, groups and/or individuals.	In Part	The creation of a simple guidance document that explains how groups and individuals could support the funding of new trees on public land, including new street trees would be welcomed. However, such work should be taken forward in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, which has overall responsibility for street trees and empty tree pits. Officers will engage with colleagues at the County Council to discuss how such a guidance document could be commissioned.
2) That the Council produces a guidance document for the planting of new trees, and associated costs, on private land which is aimed at a diverse audience, including community groups, schools, private landowners and landlords.	Yes	An accessible guidance document for others to use to inform tree planting on their own land will be created as part of a suite of Council communications around the 2024/25 tree planting season.

3) That the Council, when it reviews its policies, explores how it could incentivise, promote and encourage the planting, retention and renewal of trees through those policies – particularly within Planning and Licensing.	Yes	This will be considered as part of the Council’s review and updating of its existing Tree Management Policy.
4) That the Council actively encourages tree planting within and around new community buildings and spaces to ensure alignment of these new projects and developments with the City’s wider environmental policies.	Yes	The Council’s draft Local Plan 2040 will require that all major developments should plant more trees, hedges and other greenery to meet new minimum standards. It also increases the level of Biodiversity Net Gain for new housing and business development from 5% to 10%.