

# Agenda

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## Scrutiny Committee

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Tuesday 9 June 2026**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Long Room - Oxford Town Hall**

**For further information** please contact:

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

☎ 07485 396185

✉ [DemocraticServices@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:DemocraticServices@oxford.gov.uk)

**Members of the public can attend to observe this meeting and.**

- may register in advance to speak to the committee in accordance with the [committee's rules](#)
- may record all or part of the meeting in accordance with the Council's [protocol](#)

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Please contact the Committee Services Officer to register to speak; to discuss recording the meeting; or with any other queries.

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*All public papers are available from the calendar link to this meeting once published*

## **Committee Membership**

Councillors: Membership 12: Quorum 4 substitutes are permitted.

Councillor Alex Powell

Councillor Mohammed Altaf-Khan

Councillor Mohammed Azad

Councillor Tiago Corais

Councillor Chris Jarvis

Councillor Simon Ottino

Councillor Asima Qayyum

Councillor Anne Stares

Councillor Trish Elphinstone

Councillor Siobhan Lancaster

Councillor Dr. Max Morris

Councillor Elizabeth Turkson Wood

Apologies and notification of substitutes received before the publication are shown under *Apologies for absence* in the agenda. Those sent after publication will be reported at the meeting. Substitutes for the Chair and Vice-chair do not take on these roles.

# Agenda

## Pages

### 1 Election of Chair for the Council Year 2026/27

The Committee is asked to elect a Chair from among its voting members for the 2026/27 council year. In accordance with Part 13.6a of the Council's Constitution, the Chair must be drawn from the opposition.

### 2 Election of Vice-Chair for Council Year 2026/27

The Committee is asked to elect a Vice-Chair from among its voting members for the 2026/27 council year. The Vice-Chair may be drawn from any political group.

### 3 Apologies for absence

### 4 Declarations of interest

### 5 Chair's Announcements

### 6 Minutes of the previous meeting

The Committee is asked to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2026 as a true and accurate record.

9 - 18

### 7 Addresses by members of the public

Public addresses relating to matters of business for this agenda. Up to five minutes is available for each public address.

**The request to speak accompanied by the full text of the address must be received by the [Director of Law, Governance and Strategy](#) by 5.00 pm on Wednesday 3 June 2026.**

## 8 Councillor addresses on any item for discussion on the Scrutiny agenda

Councillor addresses relating to matters of business for this agenda. Up to five minutes is available for each address.

The request should be received by the [Director of Law, Governance and Strategy](#) by 5.00 pm on Wednesday 3 June 2026.

## 9 Establishment of the Scrutiny Standing Working Groups and Review Group

19 - 40

The Director of Law, Governance and Strategy has submitted a report to establish Working Groups and Review Groups for the 2026/27 municipal year and appoint standing Working Group and Review Group membership and chairs.

### The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. **Agree** to establish the following working groups for the 2026/27 municipal year with the following remits:
  - a) Finance and Performance Working Group – finance and budgetary issues and decisions, annual review of the Council's budget, quarterly monitoring of finance and performance (including performance of the Council's companies), executive decisions made in relation to any companies wholly or partly owned by the Council.
  - b) Housing and Homelessness Working Group – strategic housing and landlord issues and decisions, homelessness, housing services performance and interaction with the Tenant's Forum.
  - c) Climate and Environment Working Group – climate and environmental issues and decisions, progress and performance monitoring, monitoring delivery of existing strategies, policies and projects.
2. **Agree** the Terms of Reference for:
  - a) Climate and Environment Working Group at Appendix 1
  - b) Finance and Performance Working Group at Appendix 2
  - c) Housing and Homelessness Working Group at Appendix 3
3. **Agree** to appoint members and chairs of the Finance and Performance, Housing and Homelessness, and Climate and Environment Working Groups or any other working groups as agreed by the Committee in accordance with nominations made by political groups.
  - a. **Finance and Performance:** Cllrs James Fry, James

Thorniley, Chris Snowton, Ian Yeatman

- b. **Housing and Homelessness:** Cllrs Lizzy Diggins, Rosie Rawle, Roz Smith, Anne Stares
  - c. **Climate and Environment:** Cllrs Louise Upton, Chris Jarvis, Katherine Miles, Judith Harley
4. **Agree** to establish a Budget Review Group, comprising the membership of the Finance and Performance Working Group and **note** that the proposed scope and Terms of Reference will be agreed at a future Scrutiny Committee meeting.
  5. **Agree** the schedule of meetings as presented within the report;

## 10 Scrutiny Work Plan

The Work Plan is driven to a very large extent by the [Cabinet Forward Plan](#). The Scrutiny Committee agrees its priorities for items coming onto the Forward Plan, which then form part of its Work Plan.

The Committee is recommended to confirm its agreement to the Work Plan, or agree any amendments as required.

*This report will be published as a supplement to the agenda.*

## 11 Cabinet responses to Scrutiny recommendations

41 - 68

At its meeting on 15 April 2026, Cabinet considered the following reports from Scrutiny and made responses to the recommendations:

- Watercourses and Ditches
- Review of Ward Member Budget and Community Infrastructure Levy Councillor Applications
- Urgent Key Decisions End of Year Update 2025-2026

Cabinet also considered the following reports from the Scrutiny Working Groups and made responses to the recommendations:

- Finance and Performance Working Group – 26 March 2026
  - Integrated Performance for Q3 2025/26
  - OX Place Financial Business Plan, Development Sites update and Period 9 Monitoring report [SJVG]
- Housing and Homelessness Working Group – 31 March 2026
  - Housing Performance 2025/26
  - Selective Licensing Year 3 update

- Climate and Environment Working Group – 1 April 2026
  - Social Housing EPCC update
  - Local Area Energy Planning update

The Committee is asked to:

1. **Note** Cabinet's responses to its recommendations.

*Appendices 1,2 and 3 contain exempt information pursuant to Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. To discuss this item, it will be necessary for the Committee to pass a resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, specifying the grounds on which their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.*

*(The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Section 15 of the Council's Constitution – sets out the conditions under which the public can be excluded from meetings of the Council)*

## **12 Endorsement of Recommendations from Working Groups**

Since the Scrutiny Committee's previous meeting on 7 April 2026 there have been no further recommendations made by the Working Groups which require endorsement.

## **13 Dates of future meetings**

Future meetings of the Scrutiny Committee are scheduled on the following dates:

- 30 June 2026
- 11 August 2026
- 8 September 2026
- 13 October 2026
- 10 November 2026
- 1 December 2026

**All meetings start at 6:00 pm.**

## **Information for those attending**

### **Recording and reporting on meetings held in public**

Members of public and press can record, or report in other ways, the parts of the meeting open to the public. You are not required to indicate in advance but it helps if you notify the Committee Services Officer prior to the meeting so that they can inform the Chair and direct you to the best place to record.

The Council asks those recording the meeting:

- To follow the protocol which can be found on the Council's [website](#)
- Not to disturb or disrupt the meeting
- Not to edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes not editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show a lack of respect towards those being recorded.
- To avoid recording members of the public present, even inadvertently, unless they are addressing the meeting.

Please be aware that you may be recorded during your speech and any follow-up. If you are attending please be aware that recording may take place and that you may be inadvertently included in these.

The Chair of the meeting has absolute discretion to suspend or terminate any activities that in his or her opinion are disruptive.

### **Councillors declaring interests**

#### **General duty**

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

#### **What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?**

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your\* employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

#### **Declaring an interest**

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

#### **Members' Code of Conduct and public perception**

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". The matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

\*Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

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## **Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 7 April 2026**

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### **Committee members present:**

Councillor Powell (Chair)

Councillor Rowley (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Azad

Councillor Corais

Councillor Jarvis

Councillor Ottino

Councillor Stares

### **Officers present for all or part of the meeting:**

Celeste Reyeslao, Scrutiny and Governance Advisor

Hannah Carmody-Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

Malcolm Peek, Property Services Manager

Michael Woods, Major Works Project Manager

### **Apologies:**

Councillor(s) Latif, Miles, Qayyum and Taylor sent apologies.

### **118. Declarations of interest**

None.

### **119. Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reminded the Committee that this would be the final meeting of the municipal year; he thanked Committee members and officers for their work.

### **120. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meetings held on 10 March 2026 as a true and accurate record.

### **121. Addresses by members of the public**

None.

### **122. Councillor addresses on any item for discussion on the Scrutiny agenda**

None.

### **123. Watercourses and Ditches**

At the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 1 July 2025, the Committee requested a report setting out the Council responsibilities in relation to managing and maintaining watercourses, ditches, streams and brooks that run alongside or through land owned by the City Council.

Councillor Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford, Malcolm Peek, Property Services Manager and Michael Woods, Major Works Project Manager were present to respond to questions.

Councillor Railton introduced the report and welcomed the ongoing work of officers.

The Major Works Project Manager outlined the contents of the report, noting that it included content from across Council services.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor Ottino requested maps outlining the rivers and streams that the Council is responsible for and noted concern relating to the lack of progress with flood action plans for specific areas of the city.

The Major Works Project Manager committed to sharing a map in the future and, in relation to the flood action plans, explained that due to feasibility issues, alternative options are now being assessed by the environmental sustainability team on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council. The Committee understood that actions arising from this should be apparent in due course. Councillor Railton seconded these comments.

Councillor Ottino queried when the relevant reports would be received and emphasised the need for more urgency to ensure residents' homes are not flooded.

Councillor Jarvis queried what is involved with ditches surveys and what the resulting actions are, specifically whether there is a threshold for taking action on anything discovered. Councillor Jarvis also asked, in relation to brooks with blockages, what is the best route residents can you use to flag such issues and whether there is a clear plan for addressing these flood risks.

The Property Services Manager outline the ongoing work to assess and plan future preventive maintenance, of which Oxford Direct Services already deliver most. Difficulties relating to waterway ownership were also explained; the Council does not have control over many areas which are privately owned.

The Committee understood that ongoing close working with the County Council continues where funding is available. In relation to signposting the public, the Property Services Manager noting ongoing work to display information ore clearly online in relation to waterways ownership.

Councillor Rowley, following from comments from Thames Water regarding the inadequacy of drains, asked what the Council does to identify issues and works when formulating a preventative maintenance plan. Councillor Rowley also asked what would happen if a ditch in the Council's ownership was no longer adequate for drainage.

The Chair noted that currently, work has often been delivered on an ad hoc or repair basis and asked how many ad hoc repairs have been completed since the Environment Agency pulled back.

The Property Services Manager responded that these are not captured as a standalone work type by ODS. However, this would be raised with ODS to see if they would be able to provide this information going forward.

In response to the Chair's question, the Major Works Project Manager explained that it would be hard to quantify the number of ad hoc repairs given that the Environment Agency did not pull back on a defined date, but rather over a phased period of time.

Councillor Ottino queried what the expectations for ODS are in relation to litter in water areas.

The Chair also queried how the Council can be sure of the quality and nature of reactive repairs completed by ODS.

The Property Services Manager explained that ODS carry out planned maintenance, and any ad hoc tasks tend to be more reactive in nature, such as overgrowth clearance around plant works to ensure blockages are avoided. The Committee heard that this report focuses on how a more robust programme of planned preventative work can be implemented and the checks which are currently carried out by ODS; confidence was noted in the delivery of these. For any larger projects that require civil engineering, the Property Services Manager explained that ODS would facilitate these but not self-deliver them.

Councillor Ottino noted his lack of confidence that ODS are adequately removing litter from ditches or streams.

The Chair, in relation to the previous meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, also requested more clarity about when ODS would and would not retrieve litter from waterways

The Property Services Manager committed to picking this up with ODS colleagues and reporting back.

The Chair invited the Committee to consider possible recommendations.

*Councillor Corais joined the meeting during discussion of recommendations.*

**The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet:**

1. **That there is greater urgency in drawing up local flood risk action plans for the identified areas, specifically but not limited to Lobelia Road and Campbell Road, as well as other high flood risk areas.**
2. **That there is clear framework setting out:**
  - **the undertaking of routine clearances and ad hoc collection**
  - **relevant timelines and circumstances, including when litter can safely be removed from watercourses**
  - **a list of current equipment available to complete the clearance, together with any additional equipment that would be required to enable greater levels of removal.**
3. **That Council work with ODS to start keeping records of the number of reactive repairs being undertaken to better inform any needs for maintenance plans.**

The Chair thanked Councillor Railton, the Property Services Manager, and the Major Works Project Manager.

*Councillor Railton, the Property Services Manager, and the Major Works Project Manager left the meeting and did not return.*

**124. Review of Ward Member Budget and Community Infrastructure Levy Councillor Applications**

Cabinet, at its meeting on 15 April 2026, will consider a report to approve the decision-making route for Councillor applications for Ward Member Budget and Community Infrastructure Levy spend and approve amendments to with part 4 of the Council Constitution to reflect those arrangements.

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager, was present to respond to questions.

The Committee and Member Services Manager introduced the report, noting that it provides an update on the decision-making route for ward member budgets and community infrastructure levy (CIL) applications. The Committee heard that the process has been formalised, and it ensures delegation is made to appropriate officers. Members were also informed that the report summarises the ongoing work of reviewing the applications process to ensure it is fit for purpose and aligned with relevant legislation.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

The Chair asked how decision regarding central CIL spend are reached and also requested an explanation of the process for adding to the central CIL list.

The Committee and Member Services Manager explained that, although outside the scope of this report, strategic CIL (i.e. that not allocated to member CIL budgets /parish /Neighbourhood forums or on CIL administration) is agreed as part of the wider budget process. CIL projects are discussed through the Development Board process with the Director of Planning & Regulation and the Group Finance Director agreeing on both the appropriateness of the item, and the capacity of the CIL budget to incorporate any new nominations. In response to the Chair's second question, The Committee and Member Services Manager relayed a response from officers which explained that additional requests come forward via the Development Board process where the proposal is for the strategic CIL budget, with ultimate approval via the budget process.

Councillor Stares welcomed the changes listed in the report and noted that they have been effective in streamlining the processes.

Councillor Ottino also welcomed the changes and requested clarity on when planning permission is required for ward member budget and CIL requests.

The Committee and Member Services Manager explained that the relevant form has been updated to include questions relating to the need for planning permission and location; this will ensure necessary permissions are in place before CIL is spent. The Committee were minded that due to the number of stakeholders across the city, it is not possible to give a one-size-fits-all response. In relation to ongoing costs, the Committee and Member Services Manager also explained that ward member spend cannot be used for projects which involve ongoing costs; examples were discussed. Councillor Ottino requested additional clarification of what would be classified as an ongoing spend.

The Chair also welcomed the changes set out in the report. The Chair queried the response times for applications and requested a description of the background processes involved.

In response to Councillor Ottino, the Committee and Member Services Manager outlined that anything not accounted for in an annual ongoing budget cannot be accepted, this included examples of waste bins with ongoing staffing and material costs.

In response to the Chair, the Committee and Member Services Manager explained that following the introduction of the new form, Councillors would be asked not to use the Member Enquiry Form to request quotations from ODS. The Committee heard that this is now the responsibility of officers; when the member budget form is completed, it will be passed to the relevant officers for completion on the councillors' behalf. In terms of timings, the Committee and Member Services Manager explained that an understanding of this will be developed once the form is rolled out in May, but it is hoped that the new triage process will prevent any cases from being missed.

Councillor Ottino queried whether there is a mechanism for Members to add suggestions to the strategic CIL spend plans; the Chair also queried whether this could be facilitated.

The Committee and Member Services Manager recommended that the request be placed via the Member Enquiry Form to ensure a response from the relevant officer can be obtained.

To avoid several submissions of the same query, the Chair requested that this action be taken away by the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor to follow up on behalf of the Committee.

Councillor Ottino queried how often spend requests are refused or called in.

The Committee and Member Services Manager noted that rejections are very rare and assured the Committee that officers work hard to liaise with any councillors who have made applications which are not clear or feasible. The Committee also heard that it is very rare for applications to be called in; there was no recent example. The Committee and Member Services Manager explained that there is provision within the constitution for call in of applications, and if this occurred, the application would be brought to the Committee for consideration.

The Chair requested information on what is being spent across the various wards.

The Committee and Member Services Manager explained that spend over the past 12 months are normally published after May each year. However, due to the pre-election period, the information will not be shared during this meeting; instead, Members can review their own balance in real time via their QL page.

The Chair invited the Committee to consider possible recommendations.

**The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet:**

- 1. That the annual pricing list of regular work also itemises the permissions required for each work in order to provide members with all, if not most, information needed to submit a complete application.**

**125. Urgent Key Decisions End of Year Update 2025-2026**

The Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 14 January 2025, requested a report summarising all urgent key decisions that have been taken in the 2025/26 municipal year.

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager, was present to respond to questions.

The Committee and Member Services Manager introduced the report, noting that six urgent decisions had been taken over the last 12 months. The Committee were also reminded of an addendum published last week containing details of a further urgent decision taken most recently. The Committee were assured that each urgent decision is taken with the permission of the Chair in line with the urgency functions as listed in the constitution.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor Ottino asked the Chair if sufficient information and notice had been provided on each occasion.

The Chair confirmed that sufficient information had been provided on each occasion, and whilst haste had often been required, this was due to factors out of the Councils' control, such as government action and pressures. The Chair also noted that the current process has improved in comparison to the previous year.

Councillor Stares noted a typed error in the report; this was acknowledged.

The Chair invited the Committee to consider possible recommendations.

### **The Committee made no recommendations.**

The Chair thanked the Committee and Member Services Manager.

### **126. Scrutiny Work Plan**

The Chair noted that due to the upcoming election it would be hard to determine scheduling for future meetings but welcome suggestions from Members.

The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place in June in the new municipal year and outlined suggested topics currently recorded on the long list, including two new topic suggestions from the Chair:

- Review of the impact of museum charging
- Park Trees audit, specifically, on the volume and health of trees in parks across the city including planting, removal and ill health patterns.

Councillor Ottino suggested that a report on the state and use of disused garage sites be requested, as well as report on HRA land in relation to attraction of anti-social behaviour.

The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor recorded the suggestions.

The Committee **noted** the workplan.

### **127. Cabinet responses to Scrutiny recommendations**

The Chair provided a summary of Cabinet's 14 responses to the Committee's previous recommendations, as set out in the report, and noted that an addendum to this agenda also contained an updated recommendation from the previous meeting in relation to the nighttime economy, as requested by Councillor Jarvis.

The Committee **noted** Cabinet's responses to its recommendations.

### **128. Endorsement of Working Group recommendations**

The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor detailed the recommendations made by the working groups since the Committee last met, as set out in the report.

The Committee **endorsed** the recommendation.

### **129. Dates of future meetings**

Noting that the next meeting would be in the new municipal year following the election, the Chair thanked Members for their work and recommendations across the year.

The Committee thanked the Chair for his work throughout the last year.

The Committee **noted** the dates of future meetings.

**The meeting started at 6.03 pm and ended at 7.05 pm**

**Chair .....**

**Date: Tuesday 9 June 2026**

*When decisions take effect:*

*Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired*

*Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued*

*All other committees: immediately.*

*Details are in the Council's Constitution.*

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**To:** **Scrutiny Committee**

**Date:** 9 June 2026

**Report of:** Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer)

**Title of Report:** Establishment of the Scrutiny Standing Working Groups and Review Group

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Decision being taken:</b>	To establish Working Groups and Review Groups for the 2026/27 municipal year and appoint standing Working Group and Review Group membership and chairs.
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Chair of the Scrutiny Committee 2026/2027
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	All
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	All

<b>Recommendation(s): That the Scrutiny Committee resolves to:</b>	
1.	<p><b>Agree</b> to establish the following working groups for the 2026/27 municipal year with the following remits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Finance and Performance Working Group – finance and budgetary issues and decisions, annual review of the Council’s budget, quarterly monitoring of finance and performance (including performance of the Council’s companies), executive decisions made in relation to any companies wholly or partly owned by the Council.</li> <li>b) Housing and Homelessness Working Group – strategic housing and landlord issues and decisions, homelessness, housing services performance and interaction with the Tenant’s Forum.</li> <li>c) Climate and Environment Working Group – climate and environmental issues and decisions, progress and performance monitoring, monitoring delivery of existing strategies, policies and projects.</li> </ul>
2.	<p><b>Agree</b> the Terms of Reference for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Climate and Environment Working Group at Appendix 1</li> <li>b) Finance and Performance Working Group at Appendix 2</li> </ul>

- c) Housing and Homelessness Working Group at Appendix 3
3. **Agree** to appoint members and chairs of the Finance and Performance, Housing and Homelessness, and Climate and Environment Working Groups or any other working groups as agreed by the Committee in accordance with nominations made by political groups.
    - **Finance and Performance:** Cllrs James Fry, James Thorniley, Chris Snowton, Ian Yeatman
    - **Housing and Homelessness:** Cllrs Lizzy Diggins, Rosie Rawle, Roz Smith, Anne Stares
    - **Climate and Environment:** Cllrs Louise Upton, Chris Jarvis, Katherine Miles, Judith Harley
  4. **Agree** to establish a Budget Review Group, comprising the membership of the Finance and Performance Working Group and **note** that the proposed scope and Terms of Reference will be agreed at a future Scrutiny Committee meeting.
  5. **Agree** the schedule of meetings as presented within the report;

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	Terms of Reference for the Climate and Environment Working Group	No
Appendix 2	Terms of Reference for the Finance and Performance Working Group	No
Appendix 3	Terms of Reference for the Housing and Homelessness Working Group	No
Appendix 4	A Guide for Scrutiny Committee Members	No

### Introduction and background

1. The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the key principles by which the Committee, its working groups, and review groups, will operate in order to provide Members, officers, and the public clarity about how Scrutiny will manage and organise its activities during the 2026/27 municipal year.
2. The Committee has the power to delegate responsibility for the scrutiny of certain issues to specific Working Groups, which report back to the Committee with recommendations (where time allows). It should consider whether it wishes to reconstitute the previous standing arrangements or establish new working groups and define its remits. As Working Groups are established, it is recommended that the number of seats, political composition, and membership are agreed, and Chairs appointed.
3. The Committee may also establish Review Groups to undertake issue-led and time-bound 'task and finish' reviews of specific issues. It is recommended that Review Groups conclude their work with a report setting out its findings and recommendations. As Review Groups are established, it is recommended that the

number of seats, political composition, and membership are agreed, and Chairs appointed.

### **Role of the Scrutiny Committee**

4. Scrutiny operates to provide democratic oversight and public assurance that the Council is carrying out its business effectively. It acts as a check and balance to ensure that decisions are taken in the best interests of the people of Oxford. The Scrutiny Committee carries out research, reviews, and hears from independent experts, as well as Council officers. It then makes recommendations for improvement where necessary.
5. The primary focus of the Scrutiny Committee's work is to hold the Cabinet to account on decisions being taken. Alongside this, it may also pursue its own programme by commissioning reports from officers on priority issues and assisting the Council in developing future policies or strategies. As outlined in the Council's Constitution Part 8.3, the Committee can:
  - a. Develop and review policy:
    - Help Council and the Cabinet to develop policy by studying issues in detail;
    - Carry out research and consultation on policy;
    - Consider and introduce schemes to involve the public in developing policy;
    - Work with national, regional and local organisations to promote the interest of local people.
  - b. Hold the Cabinet to account:
    - Review the performance and decisions of the Cabinet, and Council officers (but not decisions on individual planning or licensing applications);
    - Review the Council's progress in achieving its policy aims and performance targets;
    - Review the performance of individual services;
    - Review executive decisions in respect of any companies wholly or partly owned by the Council and hold the shareholder to account for the performance of those companies (*the decisions of Council-owned companies do not fall within the remit of the Scrutiny Committee*);
    - Ask Cabinet members and senior officers questions about their decisions and performance – these may be questions about general performance or about particular decisions and projects.
  - c. Require senior officers and Cabinet Members to attend meetings and answer questions.
  - d. Hold other public service providers to account (though there is no legal requirement for them to engage).
6. Members of the Committee are encouraged to read the relevant guidance supplied as Appendix 3 which sets out an overview of how the Committee operates, how to be effective as a scrutiny councillor, and the support and development opportunities available to members. Similar guides and training are available from the Local Government Association (LGA), Local Government Information Unit (LGIU), and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS). There are opportunities to organise training for Members later in the municipal year.

## **Establishment of Working Groups**

7. In previous years, the Committee has established three standing working groups focusing on Finance and Performance, Housing and Homelessness, and Climate and Environment matters. They each undertake detailed scrutiny of decisions and issues relevant to their remit. They are made up of a small group of members with interest in these priority areas, building up specialist knowledge to help produce more effective scrutiny outcomes. The working groups have a degree of discretion to manage their own work plan but remain accountable to the Scrutiny Committee for their work.
8. Working groups must report their recommendations to the Committee before they are submitted to the Executive. However, for recommendations to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group, the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor has delegated authority to forward the recommendations directly to the SJVG, in consultation with the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee; this is reported back to the Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting.
9. The Committee is recommended to re-establish the Finance and Performance, Housing and Homelessness, and Climate and Environment Working Groups for the 2026/27 council year and agree their remits. This amounts to the maximum of three working groups which the Council has capacity to support. It is also recommended that the Budget Review Group be re-established to examine the annual budget proposals for 2027/2028.
10. Assuming the Committee agrees to re-establish the recommended working and review groups, capacity within the Scrutiny function remains for approximately five meetings each, with six meetings for the Finance and Performance Working Group to align with the Shareholder and Joint Venture Groups.
11. On agreeing the establishment of working groups, the Committee is recommended to agree their full membership, appoint Chairs, and agree their terms of reference. In 2025/2026, the Committee recommended that each working group should comprise four councillors, with cross-party representation across each of the political groups of the Council. This year, it is recommended that all working groups be established with four members to ensure the wide-ranging views from across the Council are reflected within the Scrutiny function; this should be one member from each of the four largest groups, which will support more efficient scheduling and ensure consistent attendance.
12. The quorum for all working groups with 4 members is two. It should be noted that if this quorum is not met, reports may proceed without formal cross-party scrutiny, and consideration of other items may need to be delayed.
13. Given that working group meetings are not formal committees of the Council, there is no legal requirement for them to be held in-person. It is also established Council practice that non-committee members (i.e. officers, cabinet members, external guests) may attend meetings virtually to broaden scrutiny's engagement and offer flexibility. To mitigate any potential governance risks, the working groups will continue to not be livestreamed in accordance with the access to meetings rules within the Local Government Act 1972. The Committee is recommended to consider the additional resource that in-person and hybrid meetings place on the organisation and agree that meetings of working groups be held virtually. Due to resource constraints, hybrid or in-person meetings will not be possible.

14. The Members Allowances Scheme allocates a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) equivalent to 25% of the Basic Allowance (£1,552.92 in 2026/2027) to a maximum of two standing working group chairs, on the basis that panels meet at least five times a year. If there are more than two working groups set up, then 50% of the Basic Allowance (£3,105.84 for 2026/2027) will be divided between the total number of working group chairs. This SRA is to reflect the additional responsibility of standing working group chairs.

### Scrutiny Review Groups

15. Each year, the Scrutiny Committee ordinarily establishes a Budget Review Group to examine the Council’s budget proposals for the next financial year, which helps ensure good financial governance practices.

16. It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee agrees to establish a Budget Review Group for the 2026/27 municipal year to examine the Council’s budget proposals for 2027/28 and that the proposed scope be presented at a future Scrutiny Committee meeting for agreement.

17. Given the Finance and Performance Working Group’s involvement in scrutinising the Council’s finances, it is recommended that the membership of the Budget Review Group align with that of the Finance and Performance Working Group (should it be re-established). Additionally, the Chair of the Finance and Performance Working Group should also serve as the Chair of the Budget Review Group.

- Cllrs James Fry, James Thorniley, Chris Smowton, Ian Yeatman

18. Due to the busy time of year during which the Budget Review Group takes place, and the absence of a legal requirement for the review group to meet in-person, it is recommended that meetings of the Budget Review Group take place virtually.

### Schedule of meetings

19. Members of the Committee are invited to agree the schedule of meetings for the remainder of the municipal year and to diarise these where necessary. The table below shows the working groups and which meetings of the Committee the recommendations will be discussed and endorsed.

**Table 1: Schedule of Committees and Working Groups for the 2026-2027 municipal year**

Finance and Performance	Housing and Homelessness	Climate and Environment	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet Meeting and Month
-	-	-	9 June 2026	17 June 2026
16 June 2026	24 June 2026	-	30 June 2026	8 July 2026
15 July 2026	-	6 July 2026	11 August 2026	19 August 2026
-	2 September 2026	-	8 September 2026	16 September 2026

-	-	17 September 2026	13 October 2026	21 October 2026
28 October 2026	3 November 2026	20 October 2026	10 November 2026	18 November 2026
25 November 2026	-	-	1 December 2026	9 December 2026
-	-	-	12 January 2027	20 January 2027
-	-	-	2 February 2027	10 February 2027
-	24 February 2027	-	9 March 2027	17 March 2027
24 March 2027	30 March 2027	16 March 2027	6 April 2027	14 April 2027
13 April 2027	-	21 April 2027	8 June 2027*	16 June 2027*

20. Meeting dates with an asterisk in the table above are those provisionally scheduled for 2027-2028 municipal year and are subject to approval by full Council.

### **Alternative options for Working Groups**

21. The Committee is not required to reappoint the recommended working groups, and it may choose to appoint panels with different remits.
22. If the Committee decides to set up different standing working group arrangements, Committee and Member Services will liaise with the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee and return to a future meeting with a revised proposal for agreement. Consideration would need to be given to the organisation's capacity to support the number and remits of working groups.

### **Co-Option**

23. The Scrutiny Committee has the right to co-opt members as non-voting members under the Local Government Act 2000 (section 9FA(4)). Part 13.3 of the Council's Constitution allows the Scrutiny Committee to 'appoint non-voting co-opted members to serve for a specific policy review or until the next annual Council.'

### **Scrutiny-Commissioned Reports**

24. The Scrutiny Committee has the power to commission its own reports. However, it should be recognised that doing so is significantly more resource-intensive for officers than presenting a report which is already being written for Cabinet. The Constitution state that 'items will be taken forward as resources allow, and the Committee must provide officers with sufficient notice and guidance on what they are requesting to consider, mindful of the impact on resources and the constraints of the organisation. The Scrutiny Committee and its working groups will provide as much notice as is possible when commissioning reports from Council officers (minimum 8 weeks).'
25. As a guideline, to allow time for consideration of reports in sufficient depth whilst maintaining timely meetings of Scrutiny and its working groups, each meeting will aim to have three reports for consideration. It is recommended that the Committee is

mindful of resource implications of Scrutiny-commissioned reports and seeks to average no more than one Scrutiny-commissioned report per meeting over the municipal year.

26. The Committee is recommended to agree that ideas from Members will be sent to Committee and Member Services by e-mail for consideration outside the meeting.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

27. Any additional or replacement working groups would need to be reviewed by the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor before being set-up by the committee, which could delay the impact of the scrutiny function. It is recommended that any changes to the working groups are discussed in advance to ensure capacity and scope is outlined.

### **Financial implications**

28. No financial implications arise from this report, however ensuring the Council's financial position, and that of the Council's Companies, is critical for the Scrutiny function of the authority.
29. Any additional reviews set up by the Scrutiny Committee need to consider the capacity of the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor; any additional Working Groups, Review Groups or additional Scrutiny Committees would require additional staffing resources.

### **Legal issues**

30. No legal implication arises from this report, however failing to have an effective Scrutiny Committee could lead to the authority receiving legal challenges in the future.
31. Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 grants power to the Scrutiny Committee to make reports or recommendations to the Cabinet with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the Executive; and on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.

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### **Background Papers:**

- 1 [Local Government Act 2000, Section 9FA](#)

- 2 [Oxford City Council Constitution Part 8 – Role of the Scrutiny Committee](#)
- 3 [Oxford City Council Constitution Part 13 – Scrutiny Committee Procedures](#)

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Climate and Environment Working Group (of the Scrutiny Committee)**

#### **1. Purpose**

The Climate and Environment Working Group is a sub-group of the Scrutiny Committee, established to support the Committee in carrying out its responsibilities by reviewing climate and environmental policies, decisions and performance. It monitors progress against strategies, projects and action plans and contribute to the development and scrutiny of new initiatives in response to the Council's climate and net zero carbon commitments.

#### **2. Status**

The Working Group is an informal, non-decision-making body created by the Scrutiny Committee. It operates under the authority of the Committee and report its findings and recommendations for formal consideration.

#### **3. Scope of Work**

The Climate and Environment Working Group will:

- Review implementation of the Council's climate and environmental strategies
- Monitor progress against carbon reduction targets and other environmental performance indicators
- Examine the delivery of decisions and projects related to sustainability, biodiversity, energy efficiency, waste and air quality
- Provide input on new or revised environmental policies and initiatives
- Support the Council on improving environmental outcomes

#### **4. Membership**

Membership will be set by the Scrutiny Committee and drawn from all non-executive members. It will not be required to reflect the Council's make up. The Climate and Environment Working Group will comprise four councillors or up to one member from each political group.

The quorum shall be 2 members. Substitution will be allowed.

#### **5. Chairing**

The Chair shall be elected by the Scrutiny Committee at the first meeting of the municipal year, or at the time of the group's formation.

The Chair will be responsible for leading meetings and reporting the Group's findings and recommendations back to the Scrutiny Committee. They may also be invited to present these outcomes to the Cabinet.

In the absence of the Chair, members present shall elect an acting chair for that meeting.

## **6. Meetings and ways of working**

- The Scrutiny Committee will commission and scope the work of the Climate and Environment Working Group and therefore has final agreement on its recommendations.
- The agenda will be issued in advance, however the usual requirement for 7 days' notice do not apply.
- Meetings will be held 5 times each year. Additional meetings must be approved by the Monitoring Officer.
- Members are expected to review papers in advance and contribute constructively to discussions with a focus on evidence-based scrutiny.
- Meetings are not legally required to be held in-person and are not subject to the Local Government Act 1972 requirement to be held in public.

## **7. Attendees**

Officers or cabinet members shall attend the meetings from time to time where their attendance is required as a result of an item on the agenda.

Directors and Company Secretaries of Council-owned companies may be invited to attend meetings for businesses relating to their companies.

External guests or other members of the council may be invited to meetings where their input is required to inform the work of the Working Group.

## **8. Access to information**

Members of the Climate and Environment Working Group will have access to relevant papers, including those concerning Council-owned companies. It may request additional information as necessary to support its work.

## **9. Confidentiality**

Meetings and agendas of the Working Group may involve the consideration of information that is personal, confidential or commercially sensitive. All such information must be treated confidential by those in attendance unless otherwise agreed in advance with the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer, following a request to share information outside of the meeting.

## **10. Relationship with Scrutiny**

The Climate and Environment Working Group supports the broader work of the Scrutiny committee. It acts in an advisory and investigative capacity, with its outputs feeding into the formal scrutiny process via reports and recommendations for the Committee's consideration.

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Finance and Performance Working Group (of the Scrutiny Committee)**

#### **1. Purpose**

The Finance and Performance Working Group is a sub-group of the Scrutiny Committee, established to support the Committee in carrying out its responsibilities by examining financial matters and performance outcomes across the Council and its wholly or partly owned companies.

#### **2. Status**

The Working Group is an informal, non-decision-making body created by the Scrutiny Committee. It operates under the authority of the Committee and report its findings and recommendations for formal consideration.

#### **3. Scope of Work**

The Finance and Performance Working Group will:

- Review the Council's financial and budgetary issues and decisions
- Review and provide input into the development of the Council's annual budget
- Monitor the Council's financial performance and data on a quarterly basis, identifying areas of underperformance
- Review the finance and performance of the Council-owned companies
- Scrutinise executive decisions relating to any companies wholly or partly owned by the Council

#### **4. Membership**

Membership will be set by the Scrutiny Committee and drawn from all non-executive members. It will not be required to reflect the Council's make up. The Finance and Performance Working Group will comprise four councillors or up to one member from each political group.

The quorum shall be 2 members. Substitution will be allowed.

#### **5. Chairing**

The Chair shall be elected by the Scrutiny Committee at the first meeting of the municipal year, or at the time of the group's formation.

The Chair will be responsible for leading meetings and reporting the Group's findings and recommendations back to the Scrutiny Committee. They may also be invited to present these outcomes to Cabinet or the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group.

In the absence of the Chair, members present shall elect an acting chair for that meeting.

## **6. Meetings and ways of working**

- The Scrutiny Committee will commission and scope the work of the Finance and Performance Working Group and therefore has final agreement on its recommendations.
- The agenda will be issued in advance, however the usual requirement for 7 days' notice do not apply.
- Meetings will be held 6 times each year. Additional meetings must be approved by the Monitoring Officer.
- Members are expected to review papers in advance and contribute constructively to discussions with a focus on evidence-based scrutiny.
- Meetings are not legally required to be held in-person and are not subject to the Local Government Act 1972 requirement to be held in public.

## **7. Attendees**

Officers or cabinet members shall attend the meetings from time to time where their attendance is required as a result of an item on the agenda.

Directors and Company Secretaries of Council-owned companies may be invited to attend meetings for businesses relating to their companies.

External guests or other members of the council may be invited to meetings where their input is required to inform the work of the Working Group.

## **8. Access to information**

Members of the Finance and Performance Working Group will have access to relevant papers, including those concerning Council-owned companies. It may request additional information as necessary to support its work.

## **9. Confidentiality**

Meetings and agendas of the Working Group may involve the consideration of information that is personal, confidential or commercially sensitive. All such information must be treated confidential by those in attendance unless otherwise agreed in advance with the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer, following a request to share information outside of the meeting.

## **10. Relationship with Scrutiny**

The Finance and Performance Working Group supports the broader work of the Scrutiny committee. It acts in an advisory and investigative capacity, with its outputs feeding into the formal scrutiny process via reports and recommendations for the Committee's consideration.

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Housing and Homelessness Working Group (of the Scrutiny Committee)**

#### **1. Purpose**

The Housing and Homelessness Working Group is a sub-group of the Scrutiny Committee, established to support the Committee in carrying out its responsibilities by reviewing strategic housing policy, homelessness, housing service performance, and landlord-related issues, including the Council's engagement with tenants.

#### **2. Status**

The Working Group is an informal, non-decision-making body created by the Scrutiny Committee. It operates under the authority of the Committee and report its findings and recommendations for formal consideration.

#### **3. Scope of Work**

The Housing and Homelessness Working Group will:

- Review strategic housing policy and housing-related decisions
- Monitor the performance of housing and landlord services
- Review homelessness prevention strategies and services
- Examine housing need and supply, including delivery of affordable housing
- Consider tenant engagement processes and outcomes
- Scrutinise executive decisions related to housing and homelessness
- Contribute to the Scrutiny work plan by identifying key themes and emerging issues in housing

#### **4. Membership**

Membership will be set by the Scrutiny Committee and drawn from all non-executive members. It will not be required to reflect the Council's make up. The Housing and Homelessness Working Group will comprise four councillors or up to one member from each political group.

The quorum shall be 2 members. Substitution will be allowed.

#### **5. Chairing**

The Chair shall be elected by the Scrutiny Committee at the first meeting of the municipal year, or at the time of the group's formation.

The Chair will be responsible for leading meetings and reporting the Group's findings and recommendations back to the Scrutiny Committee. They may also be invited to present these outcomes to the Cabinet.

In the absence of the Chair, members present shall elect an acting chair for that meeting.

## **6. Meetings and ways of working**

- The Scrutiny Committee will commission and scope the work of the Housing and Homelessness Working Group and therefore has final agreement on its recommendations.
- The agenda will be issued in advance, however the usual requirement for 7 days' notice do not apply.
- Meetings will be held 5 times each year. Additional meetings must be approved by the Monitoring Officer.
- Members are expected to review papers in advance and contribute constructively to discussions with a focus on evidence-based scrutiny.
- Meetings are not legally required to be held in-person and are not subject to the Local Government Act 1972 requirement to be held in public.

## **7. Attendees**

Officers or cabinet members shall attend the meetings from time to time where their attendance is required as a result of an item on the agenda.

Directors and Company Secretaries of Council-owned companies may be invited to attend meetings for businesses relating to their companies.

External guests or other members of the council may be invited to meetings where their input is required to inform the work of the Working Group.

## **8. Access to information**

Members of the Housing and Homelessness Working Group will have access to relevant papers, including those concerning Council-owned companies. It may request additional information as necessary to support its work.

## **9. Confidentiality**

All information shared within the agenda and meeting concerns decisions to be taken. It will, from time to time, contain personal and commercially sensitive information. As such all information provided in the meeting shall be kept confidentially by those in attendance unless otherwise agreed in advance with the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer, following a request to share information outside of the meeting.

## **10. Relationship with Scrutiny**

The Housing and Homelessness Working Group supports the broader work of the Scrutiny committee. It acts in an advisory and investigative capacity, with its

outputs feeding into the formal scrutiny process via reports and recommendations for the Committee's consideration.

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## **A Guide for Scrutiny Committee Members**

Scrutiny is essential for ensuring that council policies and decisions are effective, fair, and in the best interests of residents. Acting as a 'critical friend' to Cabinet, Scrutiny Committee provides oversight and constructive challenge which ultimately contributes to a more transparent and accountable council.

### **What is Scrutiny?**

The Local Government Act 2000 brought about significant changes that transformed the way decision-making took place in local authorities. Previously, local authorities operated under a committee system where decisions were made within service-specific committees. However, a 1998 Audit Commission report found this approach inefficient and lacking public transparency.

The 2000 Act introduced an executive model, separating decision-making (Cabinet) from oversight (Scrutiny). This ensured that policies and decisions are independently reviewed, creating a more accountable and transparent governance.

### **What is the role of the Scrutiny Committee?**

Oxford City Council's Scrutiny Committee is comprised of 12 cross-party councillors who are not members of the Cabinet. Their role is to carry out a 'check and balance' function to the Cabinet by reviewing policies, decisions, and key issues affecting residents.

Scrutiny operates to provide public assurance that the Cabinet is carrying out its business effectively, taking decisions in the best interests of the residents of Oxford. To provide this assurance, the Committee carries out research, reviews and conducts evidence-led discussions.

While the Committee does not have direct decision-making powers, it can make recommendations to the Cabinet arguing for change and service improvement. It can also delay decisions for further scrutiny through the power of 'call-in', however this must only be used in exceptional circumstances. The Committee can require Cabinet to respond in writing within two months to recommendations made, stating whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations.

### Key roles of Scrutiny:

- **Review and Develop Policy** – Reviewing existing policy to ensure it remains fit for purpose and contributing to the development of new policies before they are implemented. Monitoring policy implementation may also take place.
- **Hold the Cabinet to account** – Scrutinising decisions of the Cabinet either before or after they are implemented, to ensure that the right decisions are made at the right time, and in an open and transparent way.
- **Reflect the concerns of the public** – Promoting the views of the public through scrutiny and engaging with a diverse range of issues and people. The Committee Work Plan should reflect the concerns and aspirations of local people.
- **Challenge performance** – Reviewing the performance of council services to ensure they provide value for money and are meeting targets.
- **Scrutinise externally** – Examining how external organisations contribute to the benefit of the City and recommend ways to improve their contributions. Notably, there are limitations to the level of influence over external organisations, and reputational and relationship risks.

### How does the Committee prioritise its work?

Effective scrutiny requires a strategic approach to selecting and reviewing topics. Given the breadth of council services and policies, the Committee must prioritise and plan its work to aim and achieve positive outcomes.

The Committee does so by agreeing an annual schedule of work each June. This Work Plan remains flexible and is kept under review throughout the year. Officers and members are encouraged to suggest issues for scrutiny, however it is important to note that not every suggestion can be pursued.

An effective work programme will:

- Prioritise on key issues
- Clearly define the purpose of why items are being considered
- Minimise the number of update reports or routine items that do not require scrutiny
- Ensure that agendas are realistic and well-structured
- Use a combination of scrutiny methods (pre-decision scrutiny, post implementation review, and internal/external engagement)
- Provide attendees with sufficient notice to prepare for meetings
- Establish review groups to undertake detailed work

The Committee is encouraged to use a systematic approach called ‘TOPIC’ scoring criteria as a guide for prioritising issues:

<b>Timely</b>	Is the need for a review timely and not duplicated elsewhere?
<b>Oxford Priority</b>	Is the issue featured in the Council’s Corporate Plan?
<b>Public Interest</b>	Is the issue of significant public interest?
<b>Influence</b>	Is the Committee realistically able to influence the issue?
<b>Cost</b>	Is the issue an area of high expenditure or savings?

## What are Review Groups?

In some instances, the Scrutiny Committee may consider it more effective to establish a small group to carry out a review, where it would be impractical for the whole committee to be involved. The work of a review group should be focused, time limited, and carry out in depth research and scrutiny in the interest of developing recommendation for service improvement. Often, review groups will seek the help of external experts to help inform their work. Members of these groups should have the interest and time to commit to undertake in-depth scrutiny. Review group meetings are not bound by the same rights of public access to meetings. Chairs should be Scrutiny members, but the remaining membership can be from across the council.

The five stages of a scrutiny review are:

### SCOPING

The scoping of a scrutiny review is fundamental to the effectiveness of the review process. This starts with identifying outputs and objectives, and clarifying what members hope to achieve. It also considers what evidence is needed, the timeframe for the review, who should be involved and any publicity.

### EVIDENCE GATHERING

Evidence is gathered in accordance with the review scope. This principally involves speaking with experts, but could also involve site visits, consultation exercises, examining performance, desktop research and holding public workshops.

### REVIEWING EVIDENCE

Once all of the evidence has been gathered, it then needs to be reviewed. This is where members take stock and assess the evidence, and decide if enough information is available to draw reasonable conclusions and recommendations

### REPORTING AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor, in consultation with the Chair, will produce a detailed report on the review group's work, outlining the rationale for its conclusions and recommendations. Following endorsement from the Scrutiny Committee, recommendations will be put to the Cabinet for a written response.

### MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Although responsibility for the implementation of any accepted recommendations rests with the Cabinet and officers, it is essential that the Scrutiny Committee monitors progress usually at 6 or 12-month intervals.

## Who is involved in Scrutiny?

### The role of the Chair and Vice-Chair:

- the Chair leads the Scrutiny Committee and presides over its meetings
- the Vice-Chair supports the Chair and deputises in their absence
- the management of the Work Plan is with the whole Committee, but the Chair and Vice-Chair take an "organisational role" between meetings
- the Chair updates Full Council about the work of the Committee

### The role of all Scrutiny Members:

- to contribute to the Work Plan and participate at Scrutiny Committee meetings
- to think strategically about City-wide issues, using local knowledge
- to be mindful of and actively seek community views
- to be questioning, deliberative and evidence based
- to be robust and constructive in challenging; not oppositional

**The role of the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor:**

- to support all the work of scrutiny and to co-ordinate its Work Plan
- to provide policy advice and best practice guidance
- to prepare and support witnesses attending the Committee
- to draft reports and recommendations on behalf of the Committee
- to act as a champion for scrutiny within the organisation

**The role of the Committee and Member Services Officer:**

- to clerk Scrutiny meetings
- to prepare the meeting agenda and minutes
- to provide advice on procedural and constitutional issues
- to provide other general support
- to act as champion for members within the organisation

**What are Working Groups?**

In addition to carrying out time limited scrutiny reviews, the Scrutiny Committee can also establish yearly standing working groups to help manage its workload. In previous years, the Committee has opted to establish three working groups; Finance and Performance, Housing and Homelessness and Climate and Environment. Each Working Group is tasked with scrutinising decisions related to their delegated area, and reporting back to the Scrutiny Committee with recommendations. The membership of these working groups is made up of between four and six members, and accountable to the Scrutiny Committee. Regular agenda items for these Working Groups include annual and quarterly performance reports.

**How can Scrutiny add value?**

Scrutiny is improvement-focused and solution-driven. It provides an additional mechanism to evaluate and develop policy and assures that decisions are taken in the best interest of residents. Scrutiny enhances transparency by involving the voices of the public, independent experts, and stakeholders who might not otherwise contribute to Council decision-making.

Scrutiny also serves as a valuable tool for Cabinet members and officers by offering detailed feedback on proposed decisions and council services. By acting as an early stage sounding board, the Committee helps confirm broader member buy-in to important decisions. The Committee contributes to the continuous improvement of services through evidence-based recommendations.

**What do effective recommendations look like?**

The [Centre for Governance and Scrutiny](#) advocates that recommendations should be evidence-based, specific, and realistic enough to be implemented. They should have a clear focus on outcomes and advocate for a measurable change.

Where possible, recommendations should be developed in partnership with other interested parties and should take account of the Council's financial realities.

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 15 April 2026  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Decision being taken:</b>	To submit the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee for Cabinet's consideration.
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Alex Powell, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	A Well-Run Council
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	None

<b>Recommendation(s): That the Cabinet:</b>
1. <b>Consider and respond</b> to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee as set out in the report.

<b>Information Exempt from Publication</b>	
N/A	N/A

<b>Appendix No.</b>	<b>Appendix Title</b>	<b>Exempt from Publication</b>
N/A	N/A	N/A

## Overview and Summary

- The Scrutiny Committee met on 7 April 2026 and reviewed the following items:
  - Watercourses and Ditches
  - Review of Ward Member Budget and Community Infrastructure Levy Councillor Applications
  - Urgent Key Decisions End of Year Update 2025-2026

2. Working Group meetings were also held to consider a range of reports:

**Finance and Performance Working Group – 26 March 2026**

- Integrated Performance for Q3 2025/26
- OX Place Financial Business Plan, Development Sites update and Period 9 Monitoring report [SJVG]

**Housing and Homelessness Working Group – 31 March 2026**

- Housing Performance 2025/26
- Selective Licensing Year 3 update

**Climate and Environment Working Group – 1 April 2026**

- Social Housing EPCC update
- Local Area Energy Planning update

3. Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 grants the power to the Scrutiny Committee to make reports or recommendations to the Cabinet with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the Executive; and on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.
4. Following the meetings, Cabinet Members, in consultation with the relevant Officers were asked to agree, agree in-part, or disagree with the recommendations.
5. The tables below detail the recommendations made by Scrutiny for each report, which Cabinet will consider at their meeting on 15 April 2026. Cabinet has provided commentaries to inform the Committee of the rationale behind its decision. No table was produced for items where no recommendations were suggested.
6. Scrutiny wish to put on record:
- The Committee considered the end of year report summarising all urgent key decisions that have been taken in the 2025/26 municipal year and noted a reduction in the use of this provision compared to the previous year.
  - The Finance and Performance Working Group reflected that delivery performance has not aligned with current optimism bias assumptions, and suggested a more realistic starting point may be needed, with scope to adjust as performance improves. There was also a clear view that recruitment and retention pressures currently reflected across multiple services should be recognised as a single corporate risk to better capture their scale and impact. In addition, concerns were raised that existing budget provision for damp, mould and retrofit works underestimates the likely ongoing demand. Members therefore emphasised the need for more realistic medium-term planning assumptions to avoid repeated in-year budget adjustments.
  - The Housing and Homelessness Working Group reflected on the positive progress made over the past year in relation to the Council's housing offer and performance against key targets. Members noted in particular the development of the tenant strategy and look forward to reviewing how this

is put into practice in future reporting. The Working Group also recognised the successes of the Selective Licensing scheme and was fully supportive of the ongoing work that the council is doing in this area including driving up standards in the private rented sector and ensuring tenants are better protected.

- The Climate and Environment Working Group noted the updates on Social Housing EPC particularly the work being undertaken to identify and replace gas boilers with air source heat pumps. Members supported this. They felt the council could be an exemplary authority and accelerate the rollout of the air source heat pumps in social housing properties to move away from fossil based technologies and make full use of newer, more sustainable technologies available.
7. Minutes of the Scrutiny meeting held on 7 April 2026 can be viewed [here](#).
  8. The Scrutiny Committee would like to thank Cabinet particularly Cllr Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities) and Cllr Anna Railton (Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford). The Committee was also grateful to Nigel Kennedy (Group Finance Director), Alistair Rush (Interim Group Finance Director), Clare Paterson (Strategic Finance Manager), Jason Jones (Finance Business Partner), Richard Wood (Housing and Homelessness Strategy Manager), Bill Graves (Landlord Services Manager), Courtney Bennet (Regulatory Services Manager), Katherine Coney (Residential Regulation Team Area Manager), Vikki Robins (Environmental Sustainability Manager), Alice Jones (Carbon Reduction Project Manager), Jonathan Malton (Committee and Member Services Manager), Jane Winfield (Director of Property and Assets), Malcolm Peek (Property Services Manager) and Michael Woods (Major Works Project Manager) for the reports and for responding to questions.

### **Financial implications**

9. Financial implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Group.
10. Where appropriate, any further financial implications were reviewed when considering the recommendations.

### **Legal issues**

11. Legal implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Group.
12. Where appropriate, any further legal implications were reviewed when considering the recommendations.

### **Level of risk**

13. Risk Registers, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Groups.

14. Where appropriate, the risk register was reviewed when considering the recommendations.

### **Equalities impact**

15. Equalities Impact Assessments, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Groups.

16. Where appropriate, the Equalities Impact Assessments was reviewed when considering the recommendations.

### **Carbon and Environmental Considerations**

17. Consideration for Carbon and Environmental impacts, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Groups.

18. Where appropriate, the Carbon and Environmental impacts were reviewed when considering the recommendations.

### **Implications of Local Government Reorganisation**

19. Implications of Local Government Reorganisation for the reports listed above were outlined within the report when presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Group.

20. Where appropriate, any further implications were reviewed when considering the recommendations using the linked guidance from Government: [Financial decisions before local government reorganisation - GOV.UK](#)

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**Table 1 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee –  
Watercourses and Ditches**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 7 April 2026 concerning the Watercourses and Ditches 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 there is greater urgency in drawing up local flood risk action plans for the identified areas, specifically but not limited to Lobelia Road and Campbell Road, as well as other high flood risk areas.	No	<p>Flood risk action plans are not a formal function, therefore the City Council does not have the power/remit, duty, funding or resource to develop or implement plans to manage flood risk throughout the City.</p> <p>We <b>do</b> have a remit to, and will continue to, formally investigate flood events and propose recommendations in accordance with Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act – as we have done for Lobelia Road and other locations. Recommendations made within these reports are for a number of stakeholders (residents, Thames Water, Highways etc.), and we have no power to compel others to take action.</p> <p>However, where appropriate, and opportunity exists; we will look for funding sources to help stakeholders implement recommendations from the formal reports, and further look to implement flood risk management measures where funding/opportunities arise – for example the SuDS Planters at New Hinksey School, and extensive water butt planter roll-out in Florence Park and the Lye Valley area, both of which have been implemented in the past 18 months.</p>

<p>2) That there is clear framework setting out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the undertaking of routine clearances and ad hoc collection</li> <li>• relevant timelines and circumstances, including when litter can safely be removed from watercourses</li> <li>• a list of current equipment available to complete the clearance, together with any additional equipment that would be required to enable greater levels of removal.</li> </ul>		<p>Responsibility for waterways and ditches is shared across the Council, ODS (as contractor) and the Environment Agency. As such, any approach to matters such as routine and reactive maintenance, operational frameworks, equipment provision, and data collection will require appropriate coordination between all relevant agencies. Given there is need to engage with all partners, further work is required before a position can be confirmed.</p> <p>A full response addressing the recommendations will therefore be provided in due course.</p>
<p>3) That Council work with ODS to start keeping records of the number of reactive repairs being undertaken to better inform any needs for maintenance plans.</p>		<p>Responsibility for waterways and ditches is shared across the Council, ODS (as contractor) and the Environment Agency. As such, any approach to matters such as routine and reactive maintenance, operational frameworks, equipment provision, and data collection will require appropriate coordination between all relevant agencies. Given there is need to engage with all partners, further work is required before a position can be confirmed.</p> <p>A full response addressing the recommendations will therefore be provided in due course.</p>

**Table 2 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee –  
Review of Ward Member Budget and Community Infrastructure Levy Councillor Applications**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 7 April 2026 concerning the Review of Ward Member Budget and Community Infrastructure Levy Councillor Applications. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
<p>1) That the annual pricing list of regular work also itemises the permissions required for each work in order to provide members with all, if not most, information needed to submit a complete application.</p>		<p>A centralised list is not possible as this can depend on the location of works and size of the project. Members are advised to submit a request via the Members' Enquiry Form for any projects intending to use Ward Member Budget or Community Infrastructure Levy for projects to install new infrastructure to establish if any permissions would be required and if the proposals are viable.</p> <p>The annual spend list referenced is a rough outline for Members as to what the expected costs of certain items, however these are advisory and are subject to change due to size and location of the project, but also external factors outside of the Council's control (such as costs of materials). Members will also need to ensure there are no ongoing costs for a project, but if so, this would need to be reviewed with the relevant Officers, via the Members Enquiry Form, to discuss the ongoing revenue costs to maintain the new infrastructure and if it will be covered via service areas annual budgets. The items listed below are part of the annual list and include the relevant permissions:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Permission would need to be sought from the land owner to place litter/dog bins depending on where these are being placed. If placed on highway/pavement, then permission would need to be sought from County Highways. The OCC Green Space team may also need to be involved if being placed within public parks.</li><li>• Installation of additional benches/picnic tables, depending on where they are going, land owners consent or the OCC Green Space team if being placed in a public park.</li><li>• Tree planting, to seek any permissions from the OCC Green Space team. May also be worth checking with the Tree officers in the Planning department, if any tree planting would affect any adjacent trees that may be protected</li></ul> <p>A comment at the Committee related to the use of Councillor CIL spend for lighting in parks, this would be out of the scope for using this funding and would need to form part of the centralised CIL spend, for which Members are required to raise these with the Director of Planning and Regulation, via the Members' Enquiry Form, so the service area is aware of the request.</p>
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**Table 3 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Finance and Performance Working Group – Integrated Performance for Q3 2025/26**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Finance and Performance Working Group on 26 March 2026 and endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 7 April 2026 concerning the Integrated Performance for Q3 2025/26. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
1) That Cabinet, in the light of experience, reviews whether the current optimism bias remains appropriate, including whether a higher starting point (such as 50%) should be considered, with scope to reduce this (back to 45% or 40%) where delivery performance improves.	Yes	We can consider this when we undertake the next iteration of the budget and MTFP.
2) That Cabinet considers whether recruitment and retention should be recognised and managed as a single corporate risk, rather than being reflected separately across individual service risk registers.		Whilst recruitment and retention are reflected in service risk registers, it is also the subject matter of Risk 3 in the Corporate Risk Register. This is “Workforce Sustainability” and concerns recruitment and retention challenges in key areas such as Legal, ICT and Environmental Health.
3) That Cabinet reviews whether current and future budget assumptions for damp, mould and retrofit works are sufficient, in light of emerging experience, including whether higher baseline provision should be built into the MTFP.	Yes	We included £0.8m in the 25/26 budget round for damp and mould and based on our experience during 2025/26 have increased this budget by a further £0.7m to £1.5m for 2026/27. We will continue to review the position over the 2026/27 year. For retrofit we have included as much capital resources as the HRA business plan will allow up to 2030 at which point we will review.

**Table 4 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Working Group –  
Housing Performance 2025/26**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Working Group on 31 March 2026 and endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 7 April 2026 concerning the Housing Performance 2025/26. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
1) Officers to provide the Working Group with data relating to the number of homeless people being housed in hotel accommodation and the length of time those people have occupied hotel accommodation.	Yes	Data on Temporary Accommodation to be provided by agreement with the Chair of the Working Group.

## Table 5 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Climate and Environment Working Group – Social Housing EPC C Update

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Working Group on 1 April 2026 and endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 7 April 2026 concerning the Social Housing EPC C Update. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<p>1) That Cabinet adopts a policy that makes air source heat pumps as the default heating system for all social housing properties going forward. In recognition that in emergency situations a gas boiler may still be required, installation of gas boilers should only be permitted in those circumstances.</p>	<p>In-part</p>	<p>Air source heat pumps are not suitable in all instances (e.g. flats) and other technologies will need to be installed such as Ground Source Heat Pumps and other electrical forms of heating.</p> <p>Heat pumps require a new design and enabling works prior to replacing a gas boiler, this means that fast replacement is not always possible e.g. when heating systems break down so like for like replacement will be required in certain circumstances.</p> <p>A draft Energy and Sustainability strategy is currently under internal consultation and will subsequently be presented to cabinet. This proposes gas boilers should not be installed from 2036 in line with the governments original plan to phase out gas boilers (now scrapped). In the meantime, it is proposed that gas boiler replacements are gradually replaced with low carbon heating (where appropriate e.g. well insulated properties). This phased approach will allow a transition period in order to train and develop the industry and prove the technologies in Oxford's housing stock. The other factor is limited HRA funds available for low carbon heating installation and</p>

		additional funding requirements for the uplift in cost compared to a gas boiler replacement.
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## Table 6 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Climate and Environment Working Group – Local Area Energy Planning Update

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Working Group on 1 April 2026 and endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 7 April 2026 concerning the Local Area Energy Planning Update. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<p>1) That Cabinet assess whether action areas identified through LAEP that are not currently in the draft Local Plan 2045, could be incorporated, including a gap analyses to identify where the Local Plan does not yet reflect LAEP priorities, as well as a feasibility check on whether they can be integrated at this stage.</p>		<p>The LAEP is being closely developed with planning input. The Local Plan 2045 has just completed the Regulation 19 consultation, with the next step being submission to the Secretary of State, which is likely to take place in June 2026. Whilst the Council can propose modifications for the Inspector to consider as part of the examination process, we do not currently envisage that these would be necessary to align the Local Plan with the emerging work of the LAEP. A gap analysis exercise can take place to check if there are any areas which do not reflect the LAEP's priorities in due course however.</p> <p>Whilst the detail of the city LAEP is still emerging, the work is expected to support the Local Plan objective of helping the city meet its net zero carbon targets and to complement various policies including ensuring new buildings are net zero carbon in operation and supporting retrofitting of existing buildings. Where particular infrastructure interventions are identified through the LAEP process, it may be appropriate to incorporate these into future updates of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan which supports the Local Plan and identifies key infrastructure</p>

		needs in the city (and is a live document). This will depend upon there being sufficient detail around these projects (e.g. timescales for delivery, costs etc) and we will keep this under review as the LAEP continues to be developed.
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