# Agenda

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OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

# Scrutiny Committee

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Tuesday 11 August 2026**

Time: **6.00 pm**

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

**For further information** please contact:

Celeste Reyeslao, Scrutiny and Governance Advisor

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**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

Information about speaking and recording is set out in the agenda and on the website

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

## Committee Membership

Councillors: Membership 12: Quorum 4 substitutes are permitted.

Councillor Alex Powell (Chair)

Councillor Mohammed Altaf-Khan

Councillor Mohammed Azad

Councillor Tiago Corais

Councillor Trish Elphinstone

Councillor Chris Jarvis

Councillor Siobhan Lancaster

Councillor Dr. Max Morris

Councillor Simon Ottino (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Asima Qayyum

Councillor Anne Stares

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



The Committee is asked to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2026 as a true and accurate record.



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 5 August 2026.**



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 5 August 2026.**



Cabinet, at its meeting on 19 August 2026, will receive a report from the Depute Chief Executive – Place seeking approval for future CIL funding collected within the vicinity of the Cowley Branch Line to be ringfenced to meet necessary infrastructure and public realm costs in relation to the reopening of the line for passenger services.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and agree any recommendations.

## 8 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 item will be published as a supplement to the agenda.*

## 9 Cabinet responses to Scrutiny recommendations — 29 - 36

At its meeting on 8 July 2026 Cabinet considered the following reports from Scrutiny and made responses to the recommendations:

- Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy
- Annual Review of the Council of Sanctuary Framework
- HRA Policies

Shareholder and Joint Venture Group also considered the recommendations from the Finance and Performance Working Group relating to Council Companies on the following items (supplied as Appendix 1):

**Finance and Performance Working Group – 15 July 2026**

- ODS Executive Pay Policy [SJVG]
- ODS Group Performance Report [SJVG]

The Committee is asked to:

1. **Note** Cabinet and SJVG responses to its recommendations.

*Appendix 1 will be published as a supplement to the agenda.*

*Appendix 1 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)*

## 10 Endorsement of Recommendations from Working Groups

37 - 44

Since the Scrutiny Committee's previous meeting on 30 June 2026, the following Working Groups have met:

- Climate and Environment Working Group on 6 July 2026
- Finance and Performance Working Group on 15 July 2026

The Committee is asked to:

1. **Endorse** the recommendations from Working Groups.

*Appendix 1 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)*

## 11 Dates of future meetings

- 8 September 2026
- 13 October 2026
- 10 November 2026
- 1 December 2026
- 12 January 2027
- 2 February 2027
- 9 March 2027
- 6 April 2027

**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 30 June 2026

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OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

## Committee members present:

Councillor Altaf-Khan

Councillor Jarvis

Councillor Elphinstone

Councillor Max Morris

Councillor Corais

Councillor Ottino (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Lancaster

Councillor Thorniley

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

Hannah Carmody-Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

Courtney Bennett, Regulatory Services Manager

Stephen Cohen, Refugee and Resettlement Manager

Richard Wood, Head of Homelessness and Housing Need

Katherine Coney, Residential Regulation Team Area Manager

## Also present:

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
Councillor Rowley, Cabinet Member for Regulation of the Private Rented Sector and Preventing Homelessness

## Apologies:

Councillor Powell sent apologies; Councillor Thorniley attended as substitute.

Councillor Qayyum sent apologies.

*In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Ottino, as Vice-Chair of the Committee, chaired proceedings for the duration of the meeting.*

## 13. Declarations of interest

None.

## 14. Chair's Announcements

None.

## 15. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2026 as a true and accurate record.

## 16. Addresses by members of the public

None.

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

None.

## 18. Annual Review of the Council of Sanctuary Framework 2025-2028 (Report for Cabinet)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 8 July 2026, will consider a report outlining the progress made in Year 1 to implement the Council of Sanctuary Framework and Action Plan and delivery plans in the next year.

Councillor Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Richard Wood, Head of Homelessness and Housing Need, and Stephen Cohen, Refugee and Resettlement Manager, were present to respond to questions.

Councillor Smith highlighted that the report includes a comprehensive summary of the Year 2 Action Plan which focuses on points such as improved coordination and systemwide working, more equitable access to provision across the city, stronger progression routes in employment, and increased involvement and leadership of people with lived experience. The Committee heard that the goal is to transition from a pilot activity to a long-term and sustainable delivery model. Councillor Smith also summarised the need for enhanced communications and community cohesion to combat negative narratives and inaccurate information; reference was paid to social media narratives on topics such as social housing.

The Refugee and Resettlement Manager summarised the report, noting that it sets out progress made against the year one action plan of the three-year plan with a focus on six priority areas derived from topics highlighted through research and engagement with residents and partnership work. The Committee heard that the framework aims to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting refugees, asylum seekers, and vulnerable migrants in the city, whilst also retaining a consideration of existing residents and hopes the benefits will be wider for Oxford and residents. A comprehensive summary of key successes to date was delivered, including increased staff training, support for individual projects such as the school advocacy project, and increased support for moves into private sector accommodation. The Committee heard that many of the initiatives within the action plan also aim to encourage people towards independence through focusing on employability skills, health and well-being, and volunteering opportunities. In terms of future challenges, The Refugee and Resettlement Manager noted that attention will be paid to addressing emerging regulations and legislation from national government, continuing to combat anti-migrant sentiment, and continuing to support homelessness prevention via the procurement of accommodation. It was emphasised that this work would be underpinned by an endeavour to ensure residents' voices are included and considered.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor Jarvis noted that the report suggested outperformance against KPIs linked to wellbeing, leisure, and therapeutic outcomes; he asked whether this was a result of significant success, or underestimation of the need required from the outset. In the case of an underestimation, he further queried what the impact of this would be, and whether preparations have since been made for higher uptake in the future. Secondly, in reference to the positive housing outcomes KPI, Councillor Jarvis queried why this was not met, and how the Council compares to other local authorities.

In response to Councillor Jarvis’ first question, the Refugee and Resettlement Manager explained that the grant funding received by the Council is designated for certain groups and when reviewing the KPIs, the target audience was considered. It was noted this could be reviewed for the year 2 action plan, however, the Committee was also reminded that health portfolios fall under the remit of the NHS; the City Council is only a partner within this work.

In response to Councillor Jarvis’ second question, the Head of Homelessness and Housing Need recognised that the target had not been achieved, however explained linkages with the Home Office evictions and shorter notice periods which cause challenges with move on into the private rented sector. The Committee also understood the challenges of being required to make a decision in 42 days following Home Office decisions. The Head of Homelessness and Housing Need committed to requesting some benchmarking data from other councils.

The Refugee and Resettlement Manager outlined ongoing work to monitor rough sleeping statistics more comprehensively to track people who have come from Home Office accommodation and have no recourse to public funds.

Councillor Jarvis noted that the report referenced activities to support people once they have been moved on from Home Office accommodation and queried whether this starts before or after they move. This was asked in relation to employment support specifically. Councillor Jarvis also requested information on the timelines and inclusions in relation to the No Recourse to Public Funds Protocol. Lastly, the support available for those living in the Kassam Hotel was queried in the context of far-right protest activity nearby, specifically any lessons learned from last summer.

The Refugee and Resettlement Manager explained that the Home Office has a statutory responsibility to support asylum seekers if they are destitute when their claim is being assessed; this is usually through basic accommodation and subsistence. The Committee heard that local authorities are often provided a small grant for this, and the City Council has used this to commission a local charity to provide support. In reference to the Kassam Hotel, the Committee heard that the Council's commissioned partner runs face-to-face drop-in sessions twice a week to offer advice, signposting to activities, and links with relevant services. Furthermore, a Council team attends regularly to offer housing advice. The Refugee and Resettlement Manager demonstrated how this is a proactive approach to offering support within the guidelines of what the Home Office allows.

In relation to the protocol, the Committee heard that the County Council leads this work and the City Council is a partner alongside other voluntary organisations. The Refugee and Resettlement Manager explained that the protocol will be signed off in around 3-6 months, at which point it will be publicised. Members understood that the protocol focuses on the Council's statutory responsibilities and improving what is on offer for marginalised groups.

The Head of Homelessness and Housing Need reassured the Committee that work is proactively ongoing to support the current cohort ahead of the protocol being finalised, for example close working with the Oxfordshire Homeless Movement; the protocol will then provide further structure and emphasis in the future.

In response to Counclilor Jarvis' concerns regarding far-right activism, the Refugee and Resettlement Manager outlined ongoing work with Thames Valley Police to provide community safety responses. The Committee also heard that the Year 2 Action plan outlines myth-busting workstreams which aim to reduce the scope of misinformed narratives relating to refugees and asylum seekers. Information was also provided on a range of community activities and volunteer opportunities; a regular litter pick run by the Council and local residents was referenced as an example. The Refugee and Resettlement Manager emphasised this as cross-cutting and noted that partnership working with the police and other districts is critical.

Councillor Altaf-Khan requested that additional statistical data be presented to the Committee on the different communities within Oxford City, and the channels of funding and financial support they receive.

The Refugee and Resettlement Manager noted that some data is publicly available and could be provided to the Committee, however, some is confidential due to security and protection requirements for certain groups.

The Head of Homelessness and Housing Need explained that information on grant funding is already included within the existing needs assessment documentation.

Councillor Smith reminded the Committee that the scope of work relating to the Council of Sanctuary accreditation is wide and includes consideration of groups other than those in asylum accommodation.

Councillor Thorniley queried how access to services is evaluated and how successful this has been.

The Refugee and Resettlement Manager explained that whilst considered within the action plan, success measurement is hard as the topic is impacted by national and local issues. The Refugee and Resettlement Manager committed to taking this away for consideration.

Councillor Elphinstone noted the importance of communication around housing and community cohesion and recognised the positive results of comms in respect of community engagement. In relation to the refugee employment program referenced in the report, it was asked if any more is being done.

The Refugee and Resettlement Manager thanked Councillor Elphinstone for the feedback and explained that the refugee employment programme was a historic project run in partnership with other charities in Oxford that is currently under evaluation. Examples of other ongoing workstreams were outlined, including projects with the youth ambition team on CV writing and employability skills for residents. The Committee was also reminded that resettled families receive employment support, and focus is simultaneously paid to individual and wider projects.

Councillor Morris emphasised the need to focus on the health and wellbeing of those seeking sanctuary and queried whether there has been consideration of other partners who may focus on specific areas of health inequality, such as mental and sexual health. Councillor Morris noted the value of expanding the scope of third sector organisations involved.

The Refugee and Resettlement Manager outlined that the Council works in partnership with the NHS and sits on the Oxfordshire Migration Partnership with other district councils, the county council, the police, and the health service. The Committee heard that grant funding is used to support health outcomes, including via an asylum seeker health coordinator who works to bridges gaps between hotels and primary care, and via counselling services.

The Chair requested that an updated version of the KPIs be circulated to the Committee once available.

The Chair invited the Committee to consider recommendations.

**The Committee made the following recommendations to Cabinet:**

1. The updated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be published as part of the updated report and circulated to the Scrutiny Committee.
2. Further, localised data and information regarding the refugees housed in Oxford, to be included within the report next year and to be shared with the Scrutiny Committee.
3. To include Community Associations within the updated Action Plan.
4. A bench-marking exercise against similar authorities to the City Council have succeed in positive housing outcomes, linked to government data.
5. The No Recourse to Public Fund (NRPF) protocol, once finalised with Oxfordshire County Council, to be returned to the Scrutiny Committee for review.
6. Measure the impact of the Council comms team regarding myth busting against misinformation.

The Chair thanked Councillor Smith, the Refugee and Resettlement Manager, and the Head of Homelessness and Housing Need.

*Councillor Smith, the Refugee and Resettlement Manager, and the Head of Homelessness and Housing Need left the meeting and did not return.*

## 19. Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy (Report for Cabinet)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 8 July 2026, will consider a report which seeks approval for the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.

Councillor Rowley, Cabinet Member for Regulation of the Private Rented Sector and Preventing Homelessness, Courtney Bennett, Regulatory Services Manager, and Katherine Coney, Residential Regulation Team Area Manager, were present to respond to questions.

Councillor Rowley provided a summary of the report, noting that it related to changes following the new Renters Rights Act. The Committee understood that the Act gives new rights to renters, it consolidates previous legislation into a local regime, and it gives the council the legal duty as the Housing Authority to enforce those rights. Resultantly, Councillor Rowley outlined that the Council now requires its own private rental sector enforcement policy to meet the requirements of the Act but also emphasised that this Council has been one of the few nationally to have a licensing scheme for all HMOs and non-HMOs in the private rent sector. As such, the Committee heard that the Council is in a strong position to respond to the changes.

The Regulatory Services Manager explained that the council's corporate enforcement policy will remain in place and is unchanged, however private sector housing will now operate under a much more complex distinct legislative framework; as such, a dedicated policy is required. The Committee heard that this would provide landlords and tenants clarity about what to expect, protect the council's decisions, and ensure the council’s approach is lawful. The Regulatory Services Manager highlighted that the policy was developed with the necessary professional bodies for housing enforcement authorities in England and aligns with national best practices and other local authority approaches. The report outlines the framework for meeting the new statutory duties whilst giving protections and confidence to communities of what powers the local authority holds, and how they can enforce these formally and informally; examples were provided.

The Residential Regulation Team Area Manager explained that the focus is to protect tenants, and this can involve investigation of complaints regarding disrepair, investigation of unlicensed properties, and ensuring protections from discrimination. The Committee heard that the changes would allow more enforcement and penalty procedures to be used in the future.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor Jarvis queried whether tenants' unions were consulted during the development of the policy.

The Residential Regulation Team Area Manager explained that consultation was not specifically undertaken for this policy, however previous communications with Tenant Unions has indicated their support for a specific policy on private sector housing.

Councillor Rowley also emphasised that the details of the policy are largely dictated by the requirements of the Act and would therefore be uniform across councils. The value and importance of tenants' unions voices in evaluating the policy were however recognised, and it was suggested that they should be involved in reviewing the policy once it has been embedded.

Councillor Elphinstone queried how discrimination by landlords is measured, noting it is an important consideration.

The Residential Regulation Team Area Manager explained that any measurement and investigation must be based on the definition of discrimination used within the Act. The Committee heard that time will be taken to develop an approach with legal support, and the Council is part of focused regional discussion groups which are addressing this topic.

Councillor Rowley also informed the Committee that a new officer with relevant expertise will be recruited.

Councillor Altaf-Khan requested specific data on the number of HMOs and selective licenses in the city to better understand the new enforcement requirements.

Councillor Rowley emphasised that the data is publicly available on the council website and explained that the requirement for new officers is not related to increases in private rented properties, but rather the new regulatory burden and duties resulting from the Act.

The Regulatory Services Manager quoted the data requested by Councillor Altaf-Khan from the Council website and outlined the new funding burdens on local authorities.

The Chair queried whether there is anything further the Council could do to extend beyond the requirements of the Act when asking landlords and agents to sign up to better conditions; voluntary schemes were suggested.

Councillor Rowley outlined that the Council does already operate schemes.

The Residential Regulation Team Area Manager further explained the licensing schemes already in place, such as the fee scheme designed to incentivise accredited landlords. The Committee heard that it is very difficult trying to encourage voluntary actions beyond the legal standards, however, when the Council renewed the additional licensing scheme earlier in the year, it was positively noted as being one of the lowest fees across the country by the National Residential Landlords Association; this demonstrates the Council's commitment to encouraging more than minimum standards.

The Chair invited the Committee to consider recommendations.

**<u>The Committee made the following recommendations to Cabinet:</u>**

1. That Tenants Unions be involved in the evaluation of the implementation of the policy.

3. That further and regular data to be provided regarding the enforcement of the policy to be shared with the committee and included within future reports brought to the committee.
4. That further information to be brought to Councillors regarding Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, including a briefing to be scheduled.

The Chair thanked the Councillor Rowley, the Residential Regulation Team Area Manager, and the Regulatory Services Manager.

*Councillor Rowley, the Residential Regulation Team Area Manager, and the Regulatory Services Manager left the meeting and did not return.*

## 20. Scrutiny Work Plan

The Committee and Member Services Manager explained that the workplan outlines proposed items for meetings of the Committee until November. Members were encouraged to submit via email the details of any additional requests.

The Committee **agreed** the work plan.

## 21. Cabinet responses to Scrutiny recommendations

The Committee and Member Services Manager informed the Committee that Cabinet is yet to respond to recent recommendations, but members were assured that the Committee will work alongside Cabinet over the coming year.

## 22. Endorsement of Recommendations from Working Groups

The Committee and Member Services Manager noted that two working groups had met since 9 June, and the recommendations were enclosed in the report. The Committee was asked to endorse the three recommendations from the Housing and Homelessness Working Group focused on HRA Policies.

The Committee **endorsed** the recommendations from the Working Groups:

<u>Housing and Homelessness Working Group</u>

1. Within the Voids Policy, for there to be consideration for the wider community and social impact

4. Within the Lifting Equipment and Lifting Operations Policy, to ensure complaints for Oxford Direct Services (ODS) have a robust oversight procedure and to ensure the timescales within the policy are clearly defined
5. Within the Complaints Policy, to ensure there is clarity on repeated complaints and tightening the wording for public clarity

## 23. Dates of future meetings

The Committee noted the dates of future meetings.

**The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.20 pm**

**Chair …………………………..** **Date: Tuesday 11 August 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.*
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OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

| | |
|---|---|
| **To:** | **Cabinet** |
| **Date:** | 19 August 2026 |
| **Report of:** | Deputy Chief Executive Place |
| **Title of Report:** | Cowley Branch Line infrastructure and public realm funding |

| **Summary and recommendations** | |
|---|---|
| **Decision being taken:** | To seek approval for future CIL funding collected within the vicinity of the Cowley Branch Line to be ringfenced to meet necessary infrastructure and public realm costs in relation to the reopening of the line for passenger services. |
| **Key decision:** | Yes |
| **Cabinet Member:** | Councillor Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Zero Carbon Oxford<br>Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management. |
| **Corporate Priority:** | All |
| **Policy Framework:** | Council Strategy 2024-28 |

**Recommendation(s):** That Cabinet resolves to:

1. Ringfence 30% of future CIL income arising from development within 1.5 km of either of the two CBL stations to a cap of £2.5m or for a period of 10 years (whichever is earlier) to repay forward funding agreed by Oxfordshire County Council to support essential infrastructure and public realm works in relation to the line. This ringfencing applies only once existing CIL commitments in relation to Cowley Branch from previous Cabinet decisions have been met (as set out in paragraph 12-14).

| Appendix No. | Appendix Title | Exempt from Publication |
|---|---|---|
| **Appendix 1** | | No |

**Executive Summary**

1. In October 2025, following the submission of a full business case, government announced its support for the Cowley Branch Line (CBL), including a contribution of £120m towards the delivery of the line. This was conditional on £35m being made available from local funding sources. A revised Full Business Case (FBC) is needed to secure a final investment decision from government.
2. £23m of funding has been secured in principle from the private sector through the Oxford Science Park (TOSP) and Ellison Institute of Technology (EIT). There is therefore a £12m shortfall in the local funding required to fund the line.
3. Work commissioned by the Council in 2022, suggested that in addition to the £35m of local funding for the rail infrastructure, a further £20m would be required beyond the immediate boundaries of the CBL to create the infrastructure needed for local communities and users to access the line and to maximise the benefits to the local area resulting from the scheme. It is forecast that c£12.5m of this will be needed in the short term for infrastructure needed by the time the line opens, ie on day one. Other elements can follow later as surrounding development comes forward. £10m of funding has been secured through the County Council (£7.5m from Enterprise Zone and S106) and the City Council (£2.5m through CIL) for this purpose. There is therefore an additional shortfall of £2.5m in the funding required to provide this wider 'day 1' infrastructure, bringing the total funding shortfall to £14.5m (a full breakdown is provided in paragraph 25)
4. In July 2026, Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet agreed forward funding to meet this £14.5m shortfall . County Cabinet noted the expectation that this forward funding would be replaced by future S106 and CIL contributions but agreed that Enterprise Zone or other capital funding would underwrite the forward funding should insufficient S106 and CIL come forward within a reasonable timeframe. The element of forward funding which related to the shortfall in infrastructure and public realm funding (ie £2.5m) was subject to the approval of a paper through this Cabinet to support the repayment of funds through CIL.
5. Therefore, this paper proposes allocating 30% of future CIL funding, as required, within the environs of CBL stations, to service any forward funding provided from Oxfordshire County Council via Enterprise Zone funding to secure the delivery of the CBL to a cap of £2.5m. Discussions are ongoing with potential private sector landlords to support the delivery of the CBL. The CIL funding identified in this paper will only be utilised if additional up front funding is not secured from the private sector.
6. Cabinet should note that the Full Business Case itself cost £4.56m to deliver. This was funded through capital contributions and forward funded CIL. The forward funded CIL has not yet been fully collected and will need to be raised as new developments come forward. In addition, Cabinet has previously agreed £2.5m of CIL to fund the Cowley Branch Line. The decision sought in this paper is in addition to these commitments which will need to be met first.

**Introduction and Background**

7. The Cowley Branch Line (CBL) will introduce passenger services onto the existing freight-only Cowley Branch Line by enhancing the main line infrastructure between Oxford and Kennington Junction plus upgrading the existing branch Line itself.

There will be a two trains per hour service on the Cowley line achieved by extending the current Chiltern's London Marylebone to Oxford services.

8. The reopening of this line to passengers, along with the construction of two new stations at Littlemore and Cowley in the south-east of Oxford will create a genuinely two-way railway i.e. a route which has peak journeys in both directions. The line would connect all four of Oxford's economic growth areas and onwards to London, with the potential for direct trains to Cambridge as well, via EWR. In summary it will:

    a. Improve mobility in areas of deprivation in the city;

    b. Unlock significant housing growth potential;

    c. Produce agglomeration benefits by linking 4 innovation clusters;

    d. Support local and government carbon net zero targets through transport modal shift from road to rail;

    e. Deliver journey times as fast as 10-12 minutes into central Oxford from Littlemore and the Leys; and

    f. Unlock capacity at Oxford station.

9. In April 2025, the partners promoting the CBL, including the Council, submitted a Full Business Case to government. This FBC envisaged a £20m local contribution to the line. This was in line with National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) guidance that local promoters should bring together 15-25% of the overall expected delivery cost if they expect government to consider investing in a scheme. In October 2025, the government announced its support for the early delivery of the CBL but set the local funding target at £35m (23%).

10. In parallel with progressing the FBC, the Council appointed 5th studio to assess the level of appropriate investment in local infrastructure and public realm, both to enable the maximum number of passengers to access the CBL ('first and last mile') and to ensure that the line maximised benefits to local communities such as Blackbird Leys. The single largest element of infrastructure is a proposed new walking and cycling bridge to provide connectivity between Blackbird Leys and Cowley station as well as facilities to the north of the CBL including Tesco and ARC Oxford. 5th Studio's work looked at immediate requirements around each of the two stations and wider connectivity. Indicatively, their proposed infrastructure and public realm improvements were costed at c£20m. It is likely that those indicative costings will have increased because of inflationary pressures since 5th Studio did their work.

11. The improvements proposed by 5th Studio can be divided into those elements which are needed on 'day 1' ie they should be in place when the CBL becomes operational and those which can follow at a later date. The cycle and pedestrian bridge is the largest element of the 'day 1' requirements, both because local residents would need access on day one and because constructing a bridge after the railway is operational would be more expensive. Day one projects are expected to cost c£12.5m.

**Previous Cabinet Decisions**

12. At Cabinet on 14 December 2022, it was agreed to "Approve the funding strategy and recommend Full Council to approve a capital budget of £4.56m to deliver the next phase of the project", namely the production of a Full Business Case. The FBC costs were split across the City and County Councils, plus a number of local

landowners, with a large element of the latter to be repaid from CIL as each landowner brought development forward. Through forward funding CIL and direct capital contribution, the City Council secured £3.789m  The split is set out in the table below.

| Organisation | Risk Capital | Contribution capable of reimbursement by CIL | Total contribution to Design Phase |
|---|---|---|---|
| ARC Oxford (ARC) | £250,000 | £1,443,943 | £1,693,943 |
| The Oxford Science Park (TOSP) | £250,000 | £1,443,943 | £1,693,943 |
| The Ellison Institute Technology (EIT) | £65,000 | £612,114 | £677,114 |
| County Council | £206,000 | | £206,000 |
| City Council | £289,000 | | £289,000 |
| TOTAL | £1,060,000 | £3,500,000 | £4,560,000 |

13. On 29 March 2023, the Council entered into a Collaboration Agreement regarding the Design Phase of the CBL project, a Development Services Agreement (DSA) with Network Rail (NR) and a Memorandum of Understanding with Oxfordshire County Council. The purpose of the DSA was for Network Rail to produce the Full Business Case.
14. In February 2025, Cabinet authorised the City Council to commit up to £2.5m of future Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income to support funding the delivery stage of the CBL. At this time the local funding contribution was expected to be £20m.

**S106 and CIL income**

15. Whilst The Oxford Science Park and Ellison Institute of Technology have both come forward to fund the CBL, a number of other landowners in the surrounding area who will benefit from the line in terms of the value of their landholding have not to date agreed to fund the scheme. Two possible routes to capturing an element of the land value uplift from surrounding developments are through S106 agreements and CIL payments.
16. Potential S106 payments for the CBL is the responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council as the transport and highways authority. The County Council has in place a charging mechanism in relation to the CBL and is putting in place the necessary arrangements to capture contributions both in advance of and following the construction of the line. As contributors to the CBL, any S106 payments allocated to TOSP and EIT would be netted off direct contributions to the scheme up to the value of their contributions.
17. Part of the case made for investing in the CBL is the level of growth that it helps to unlock on surrounding sites. As those sites come forward, CIL payments will be made in line with the Council's agreed CIL policy. CIL payments are not ringfenced for local infrastructure schemes and therefore where a proportion of future CIL funding is to be utilised to fund the CBL, this must be specifically agreed. Any such proportion must take into account current commitments which exist from the previous Cabinet decisions set out above.

**How is the Cowley Branch Line to be funded?**

18. Funding for the Cowley Branch Line is made up of two elements.

19. Firstly, the cost of delivering the line itself (the line, the stations and the supporting infrastructure such as signalling) falls to Network Rail who will be delivering this element as the minimum viable product (MVP). The full business case (FBC) submitted to government in 2025 identified the MVP cost at £155m. When support for the CBL was confirmed in October 2025, government indicated that there would be an expectation that local funding sources (public and private) would contribute £35m of the MVP costs. This was higher than envisaged in the FBC which stated £20m of local funding.

20. Secondly, the other essential funding requirement relates to wider infrastructure and public realm which is required to make the CBL a success. This will ensure that there are appropriate interfaces outside of stations (for example cycle racks, blue badge parking etc), but also that wider infrastructure is in place to maximise the local benefit of the scheme – for example, the bridge which will link Cowley station into the communities at Blackbird Leys. This wider infrastructure and public realm investment is crucial to maximising the benefits of the CBL for local communities and some of our most excluded residents. These benefits will not be achieved through the funding which is being secured for the line itself.

21. Some of these elements of the scheme can follow from the opening of the line and therefore can be secured as part of wider development coming forward, through the future collection of developer contributions. However, a significant proportion are essential 'day one' projects in that they need to be in place on the day the line opens and therefore represent up-front costs. These costs fall outside of the MVP and need to be met via local funding sources. Day one costs are expected to be £12.5m.

22. The total 'day one' cost of delivering the CBL is therefore currently estimated at £167.5m.

**Secured Funding**

23. Significant local funding has been secured to support delivery of the CBL, subject to final confirmation. In relation to the MVP costs, local funding of £23m has been secured in principle from local landowners including The Oxford Science Park (TOSP) the Ellison Institute of Technology (EIT).

24. In relation to 'day one' infrastructure and public realm funding, £10m of public sector funding has been secured. This is made up of £5m of Enterprise Zone funding and £2.5m of S106 funding or General Balances provided by the County Council and £2.5m of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding provided by the City Council (agreed by Cabinet in February 2025).

25. The table below shows the expected costs and secured funding to date. There is a shortfall estimated at £12m for the Minimum Viable Product and £2.5m for infrastructure and public realm costs.

| Minimum Viable Product (MVP) | £m |
|---|---|
| | |
| **Total cost** | **£155m** |
| | |
| **Funding**: | |
| Government commitment | £120m |
| | |
| Local Funding required | £35m |
| Local Funding secured[1] | £23m |
| **Shortfall** | **£12m** |
| | |
| **Infrastructure and Public Realm costs** | |
| | |
| **Expected ‘day 1’ costs** | **£12.5m** |
| | |
| **Funding** | |
| Secured (City and County CIL and EZ) Funding | £10m |
| **Shortfall** | **£2.5m** |
| | |
| **Total Funding Shortfall** | **£14.5m** |

**Meeting the CBL Funding Shortfall**

26. On 14 July 2026, Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet approved forward funding of £14.5m to meet the CBL shortfall through the use of retained business rates funding from the two Oxfordshire Enterprise Zones. Cabinet noted the expectation that this forward funding would be replaced by future S106 and CIL funding. It was noted that there was no guarantee that there would be sufficient S106 and CIL funding to replace the forward funding in which case a further decision would be required on how to replace the forward funding.

27. In relation to the £12m of funding required for the MVP, any forward funding will be replaced through future S106 payments coming forward on land in the vicinity of the Cowley Branch Line. By year 10 the expectation is that there should be sufficient S106 to replace £12m of the funding shortfall.

28. In relation to the £2.5m of funding required to support the ‘day one’ infrastructure and public realm costs, County Council Cabinet forward funding was made on the basis that it would be replaced by a proportion of CIL payments coming forward on land in the vicinity of Cowley Branch Line. CIL funding is different from S106 in that it is not ringfenced for specific local infrastructure. How CIL is spent is currently determined by Oxford City Council. To replace the forward funding required for CBL, the County Council decision is dependent on the City Council making arrangements to enable the repayment to be made by ringfencing an element of CIL schemes in the vicinity of the CBL to repay the forward funding up to that cap of £2.5m. Again, with a ringfencing of 30% of future CIL, the expectation is that there should be sufficient funds to replace the £2.5m funding shortfall but the County Council recognise that is not guaranteed.

29. It is therefore the recommendation of this paper that 30% of CIL collected within 1.5 km s of either CBL stations is ringfenced for a period of 10 years or until the £2.5m

of forward funding has been replaced. This ringfencing only occurs when the CIL commitments set out in paragraphs 12-14 have been met.

**Alternative Options Considered**

30. The Council could insist that private sector contributions are increased to meet the shortfall in infrastructure and public realm costs. However, a number of private sector partners have come forward with funding contributions and discussions with other partners have stalled. This approach to funding vital infrastructure looks to ensure that private sector contributions are captured through land value uplift once delivery of the CBL is confirmed via s106, which will then pay back County borrowing. Certainty on both the local contribution to the MVP and deliverability of wider first and last mile infrastructure will be essential elements of any final investment decision by government. Therefore, failure to definitively identify the availability of such funds potentially puts CBL delivery at risk.

31. The Council could focus purely on securing resources for the line itself rather than additional infrastructure and public realm which the funding sought in this paper will realise. However, such an approach would limit the benefits of the line to local people and communities, a key priority for supporting the Cowley Branch Line.

**Implications of Local Government Reorganisation**

32. How CIL is spent is currently determined by the City Council. This responsibility would pass to the successor authority following Local Government Reform. The government has issued guidance on financial decision in relation to local government reorganisation. That guidance clarifies that once directions are issued under section 24 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, written consent from the successor council will be required for land disposals worth more than £100,000, entering contracts of more than £1,000,000 for capital and entering contracts of more than £100,000 for non-capital (whole life costs). The decision sought in this paper does not fall within those criteria.

**Financial implications**

33. This capital scheme has a £2.5million funding gap which will be forward funded by Oxfordshire County Council. Oxford City Council will repay the County Council by ringfencing 30% of future CIL receipts from developments within the vicinity of the Cowley Branch Line over the next 10 years. This ringfencing of £2.5million has been factored into the CIL projections.

**Legal issues**

34. The Council must apply CIL to funding the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure to support the development of its area. Infrastructure includes roads and other transport facilities, flood defences, schools and other educational facilities, medical facilities, sporting and recreation facilities and open spaces.

35. Where the Council has borrowed money for the purposes of funding infrastructure, it may apply CIL to repay that money, and any interest, provided that (1) the Council has collected CIL, or CIL has been collected on its behalf, for at least one full financial year before the date on which CIL is to be applied to repay the money and (2) the total amount to be applied in any one financial year does not exceed the relevant percentage of CIL collected by or on behalf of the charging authority in the

preceding financial year. The relevant percentage is 0% unless the Secretary of State directs otherwise. (Regulation 60 Community and Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010). Guidance is provided in the National Planning Practice Guidance as follows: *Charging authorities, with the exception of the Mayor of London (which has a special arrangement in relation to Crossrail), are not allowed to borrow against future levy income. However, the levy can be used to repay expenditure on infrastructure that has already been incurred (Regulation 60). Charging authorities may not use the levy to pay interest on money they raise through loans*. (Paragraph: 160 Reference ID: 25-160-20190901

**Level of risk**

36. The key risk is that sufficient development does not come forward within the environs of the two stations to meet the £2.5m required to service the forward funding committed by Oxfordshire County Council within a 10 year period. If that is the case, there is no further obligation on the City Council to find those funds.

**Equalities impact**

37. This proposed decision to ringfence CIL funding to support wider infrastructure, maximising access to CBL stations, willd pave the way for significantly improved public transport accessibility for a significant portion of Oxford's community. In the 2021 census there were an estimated 39,107 usual residents living in postcodes within 1.5km of at least one of the proposed CBL stations. And these are areas which have relatively high levels of transport related social exclusion, i.e. they are not well served by public transport and it is relatively harder to access basic services by sustainable transport modes.

**Carbon and Environmental Considerations**

38. The Cowley Branch Line FBC highlighted as one of the key benefits of the new rail link being to reduce car journeys in Oxford and to be a positive contributor to the Council's net zero targets.


| **Report author** | Clive Tritton |
|---|---|
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| Service area or department | Insert details here |
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## Risk Register

**CIL funing for Cowley Branch Line**

**16 August 2026**

| | | | | Gross | | | Current | | | Target | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ref** | **Description** | **Consequence** | **Name of Risk Owner** | **P** | **I** | **Score** | **P** | **I** | **Score** | **P** | **I** | **Score** | **Control/Mitigation Description** | **Control Date Due** | **Progress on Control/Mitigation** | **Action Owner** |
| 001 | Cost increases make CBL unviable. Final investment decision is not supported by government | The consequence for CBL would be significant as this would risk the project as a whole. The consequences for the CIL decision in this report are minimal as the works to be undertaken with this funding would not begin until a final investment decision was made. | Clive Tritton | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | Work with DfT/government to ensure that Final Investment decision remains on track for early 2027. | March 27 when Final Investment decision is expected | | Clive Tritton |
| 002 | Funds are not sufficient to deliver necessary day one infrastructure and public realm. | Infrastructure and public realm costs are indicative at this stage and there could be cost overruns following full design of the works needed. | Clive Tritton | 4 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 4 | Should costs increase, there would need to be a review of whether additional funding could be raised or whether there were elements of public realm and infrastructure funding which could form a phase 2, to be provided post entry into service of the CBL. | September 27 following full design phase. | | Clive Tritton. |
| 003 | Costs are incurred but CBL is subsequently abandoned. | The consequence for CBL would be significant as the rail link would not be provided. Ultimately, the impact would depend on the point at which this event occurs. If all public realm works had been delivered and funded then the approach to securing CIL funds would need to remain in place. | | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | | 0 | Work with DfT/government to ensure delivery of CBL remains on track. | 6 monthly reviews of progress. | | Clive Tritton. |
| 004 | Development does not come forward to provide the CIL levels envisaged. | The consequence in this instance would be minimal as the Council would not receive CIL funds and responsibility for meeting any gap would revert to the County Counci. | | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | This eventuality is dealt with through the Oxfordshire County Council report which acknowledges that insufficent CIL funding might be received and that alternative sources would be needed if that were the case. | Ongoing monitoring of CIL income required. | | Clive Tritton. |
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OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

| | |
|---|---|
| **To:** | **Cabinet** |
| **Date:** | **8 July 2026** |
| **Report of:** | **Scrutiny Committee** |
| **Title of Report:** | **Recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee 30 June 2026** |

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

| **Recommendation(s): That the Cabinet:** |
|---|
| 1. **Consider and respond** to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee as set out in the report. |

| **Information Exempt from Publication** |
|---|
| N/A |

| Appendix No. | Appendix Title | Exempt from Publication |
|---|---|---|
| **N/A** | N/A | N/A |

### Overview and Summary

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 30 June 2026 and reviewed the following items:
   - Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy (Report for Cabinet)
   - Annual Review of the Council of Sanctuary Framework (Report for Cabinet)

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

**Housing and Homelessness Working Group – 24 June 2026**

- HRA Policies [Report for Cabinet and Council]
- Housing Services Performance Report Quarter 4 and Resident Engagement "You Said, We Did" Report Quarter 4 2025-26 [Scrutiny Commissioned Report]
- Housing Consumer Standards Improvement Plan 2026-27 [Scrutiny Commissioned Report]
- Housing Work Programme Review [Scrutiny Commissioned Report]

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 the Committee and its Working Groups for each report, which Cabinet will consider at their meeting on 8 July 2026. Cabinet has provided a commentary on each recommendation to inform the Committee of the rationale behind its decision. No table was produced for items where no recommendations were suggested.
6. Minutes of relevant meetings are available detailed below:
   - Scrutiny Committee 30 June 2026

**Summary of Discussions from the Working Groups**

7. For the HRA Policies, due to be recommended by Cabinet for Council to approve, there were questions around the Lifting Equipment and Lifting Operations Policy regarding the order of work and subsequent timescales for it to be completed. The Working Group were told the priority would be to rescue individuals stuck in lifts and then the other timeframes would be for the securing and fixing of the lift, depending on specifics determined contactors. Any defined targets for repairs were not currently suggested as the policy was proposing alternative measures to this.
8. There was a request to link with the complaints procedure, but this policy was seen as a preventative approach, with a monitoring mechanism linked to complaints and wider health and safety systems.
9. Regarding the Complaints Policy, there were questions around those received by social media from residents, which would need to be formally submitted for processing. The Working Group were told the policy had been drafted with expectations of social media trends, suggesting there could be an increase in complaints, but there was not a significant issue at present.
10. Referring to stage 2 escalation for complaints, there were queries if a full response would be received within specified 20 working days, as set out by the Housing Ombudsman Service. Officers noted that they usually respond quicker than the specified timescale, but always consider the associated risks, health and safety concerns, disrepair, vulnerability, and any repeated service failures before responding. The Housing Ombudsman Service requests that an annual report is

published, and a self-assessment is completed through the quarterly Residents' Complaints Panel, which then reports to the Tenant and Leaseholder Board.

11. There were comments regarding the work contracted to Oxford Direct Services (ODS) and evidence of the complaint statistics being on a negative trajectory. Officers noted that the policy outlined an independent oversight from the Council for ODS complaints, referring to guidance from the Housing Ombudsman Service and resident feedback. It was noted ODS would only be responsible for stage 1 complaints, and the Council would process any complaints escalated.
12. Regarding the Voids Policy, there was a suggestion to link community and mental health support where a property becomes void and requires major work as a result of a traumatic or major incident, such as a fire Officers noted it was not yet referenced within the policy, but the current processes lend to considering community impact and exceptional void impacts.
13. For the Housing Services Performance Report for Quarter 4, there were positive comments around the compliance of safety check rates along with the value and presentation on the report.
14. There were comments on the damp and mould reporting in connection with access issues and resource pressures. It was recognised that there was a period where additional resource was required to clear the backlog, which has since been achieved. However, the Working Group were made aware this could increase again; to manage this, officers are streamlining processes and reviewing date to enable the prediction of trends. This will enable more proactive responses in partnership with ODS.
15. For the Resident Engagement “You Said, We Did” Report Quarter 4 2025-26, there were comments on the positive value of the report and on the responses from the residents. It was noted that not all policies have been approved by Council, but the tenant satisfaction measures and the perceptions of the Council as a landlord had seen a significant improvement in recent months.
16. For the Housing Consumer Standards Improvement Plan 2026-27, the Working Group commented on the quality of the report but noted a delay for the health and safety internal audits. It was noted that the initial target dates did not consider the resulting actions from the audit.
17. There were also questions about the next phase of implementing feedback within the improvement plan, including further engagement with tenants. It was commented that feedback is continually collected and actioned, with communication actions being embedded within the resident engagement strategy action plan.

**Acknowledgements**

18. The Scrutiny Committee would like to thank Councillor Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities) and Councillor Mike Rowley (Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Regulation of the Private Rented Sector and Preventing Homelessness) for their contributions. The Committee was also grateful to Nerys Parry (Director of Housing), Stephen Cohen (Refugee and Resettlement Manager), Richard Wood (Head of Homelessness and Housing Need), Sharan Thompson (Housing Strategy and Performance Lead), James Watkins (Housing Policy and Projects Officer), Neil Schofield (Head of HRA), Courtney Bennett (Regulatory Services Manager), Katherine Coney (Residential Regulation Team Area Manager) and Hannah Carmody-Brown (Committee and Member Services

Officer) for their participation in presenting reports, responding to questions and supporting the Scrutiny function.

### Financial implications

19. Financial implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Group.

20. Where appropriate, any further financial implications were reviewed when considering the recommendations.

### Legal issues

21. Legal implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Group.

22. Where appropriate, any further legal implications were reviewed when considering the recommendations.

### Level of risk

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

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

### Equalities impact

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

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

### Carbon and Environmental Considerations

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

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

| **Report author** | Jonathan Malton |
|---|---|
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| Service area or department | Law, Governance and Strategy |
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## Table 1 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee – Annual Review of the Council of Sanctuary Framework 2025-2028

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 30 June 2026 concerning the Annual Review of the Council of Sanctuary Framework 2025-2028. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

| ***Recommendation*** | ***Agree?*** | ***Comment*** |
|---|---|---|
| 1) The updated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be published as part of the updated report and circulated to the Scrutiny Committee | Yes | Officers will share the updated KPIs with members of the Committee once prepared. |
| 2) Further, localised data and information regarding the refugees housed in Oxford, to be included within the report next year and to be shared with the Scrutiny Committee | Yes | Officers will prepare and circulate available data with committee members shortly |
| 3) To include Community Associations within the updated Action Plan | Yes | The Action Plan will be amended to include this |
| 4) A bench-marking exercise against similar authorities to the City Council have succeed in positive housing outcomes, linked to government data | Yes | Officers will seek to benchmark our outcomes for homelessness duties for people leaving Home Office accommodation. This will only be possible if national government collects this level of detail, or similar LAs are willing to share their information. Officers will update this work in next year's report. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5) The No Recourse to Public Fund (NRPF) protocol, once finalised with Oxfordshire County Council, to be returned to the Scrutiny Committee for review | Yes | Agreed, with acknowledgment that Oxfordshire County Council are the document owner and scrutiny committee may only be able to provide comment |
| 6) Measure the impact of the Council comms team regarding myth busting against misinformation | Yes | Officers will seek to develop measures of success and report back in next year's report |

## Table 2 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee – Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 30 June 2026 concerning the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

| ***Recommendation*** | ***Agree?*** | ***Comment*** |
|---|---|---|
| 1) Tenants Unions to be involved in the evaluation of the implementation of the policy | Yes | Officers will engage with tenant unions and relevant third sector organisations as part of the ongoing evaluation of the policy's implementation, drawing on their insight into the experience of private renters in Oxford |
| 2) Further and regular data to be provided regarding the enforcement of the policy to be shared with the committee and included within future reports brought to the committee | Yes | From 2027/28, MHCLG will require mandatory quarterly reporting from local authorities on private sector housing enforcement activity under the Renters' Rights Act. In the interim, the Council is voluntarily providing this data. Officers will share this with the committee on a regular basis and ensure relevant enforcement data is included in future reports brought to scrutiny. |
| 3) For further information to be brought to Councillors regarding Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, including a briefing to be scheduled | Yes | Officers are very happy to provide members briefings on their work including property licensing, the Renter’s Rights Acts, private sector housing enforcement activities or any other subjects that might be helpful to members. |

## Table 3 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Working Group – HRA Policies

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Working Group on 24 June 2026 and endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 30 June 2026 concerning the HRA Policies. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

| ***Recommendation*** | ***Agree?*** | ***Comment*** |
|---|---|---|
| 1) Within the Voids Policy, for there to be consideration for the wider community and social impact | Yes | The specific recommendation was for an exceptional void to be addressed with urgency so that, for example, a burnt down property does not blight the local community. It was agreed at the meeting this will be written into the voids procedures |
| 2) Within the Lifting Equipment and Lifting Operations Policy, to ensure complaints for Oxford Direct Services (ODS) have a robust oversight procedure and to ensure the timescales within the policy are clearly defined | Yes | This recommendation was made in respect of the Complaints Policy and was agreed to. |
| 3) Within the Complaints Policy, to ensure there is clarity on repeated complaints and tightening the wording for public clarity | Yes | This recommendation was agreed and the amendment was made to the policy |

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| | |
|---|---|
| **To:** | **Scrutiny Committee** |
| **Date:** | **11 August 2026** |
| **Report of:** | **Chair of the Scrutiny Committee** |
| **Title of Report:** | **Recommendations from the Working Groups for endorsement at the Scrutiny Committee** |

| **Summary and recommendations** | |
|---|---|
| **Decision being taken:** | To endorse the recommendations from the Working Groups. |
| **Key decision:** | No |
| **Lead Member:** | Councillor Alex Powell, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee |
| **Corporate Priority:** | A Well-Run Council |
| **Policy Framework:** | None |

**Recommendation(s): That the Scrutiny Committee resolves to:**

1. **Endorse** the recommendations from the Climate and Environment, Housing and Homelessness, and Finance and Performance Working Groups**.**
2. **Note** the recommendations to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group.

| **Information Exempt From Publication** | |
|---|---|
| **N/A** | N/A |

| Appendix No. | Appendix Title | Exempt from Publication |
|---|---|---|
| **Appendix 1** | Confidential summary of discussions by the Climate and Environment Working Group | Yes |
| **Appendix 2** | Recommendations relating to companies for the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group | Yes |

## Overview and Summary

1. The Scrutiny Committee is asked to endorse the recommendations from the following Working Groups held since the previous meeting:

**Climate and Environment Working Group – 6 July 2026**

- Heat Network Update [Scrutiny-commissioned report]
- Local Area Energy Planning Update [Scrutiny-commissioned report]
- Local EV Infrastructure Update [Scrutiny-commissioned report]
- Community Energy Interim Policy Update [Scrutiny-commissioned report]

**Finance and Performance Working Group – 15 July 2026**

- ODS Executive Pay Policy [SJVG]
- ODS Group Performance Report [SJVG]

2. 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.
3. The recommendations due at Shareholder and Joint Venture Group on 23 July 2026 were endorsed through delegated authority to the Committee and Member Services Manager, in consultation with the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee. They have been included as an exempt appendix for the Committee to note.
4. Cabinet Members, in consultation with the relevant Officers, will either, agree, agree in-part, or disagree with the recommendations. The tables below detail the Working Groups' recommendations for endorsement by the Committee. No table was produced for items where no recommendations were suggested.

**Summary of discussions**

<u>Heat Network Update</u>

5. Discussions relating to this item contains confidential information defined under Schedule 12A paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of the Local Government Act 1972. The summary is therefore provided as an exempt appendix to this report.

<u>Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI)</u>

6. Members received an update on the delivery of the LEVI programme, and sought information on the development of community charging hubs. They noted that the 10 pilot community hubs managed by Oxfordshire County Council are all situated outside the city centre. There is good appetite in the city from a wide spread of communities, however, these sites can be complex owing to community groups not owning the land and so required further engagement with landowners and prioritisation work. In relation delivery timeframes, the Climate and Environment Working Group asked about previously reported milestones aimed for the end of 2027 and noted the delay in procurement due to requiring the LEVI contracts with 5 district councils to be signed prior to commencement. It was reassured that whilst the programme's delivery milestones have changed, the concessionaires' delivery KPI's remained in place.
7. Members expressed the need to do further work with landowners and welcomed the suggestion to review another update once the pilot phase is completed, including identification of sites that could be taken forward. There were no recommendations.

Local Area Energy Planning Update (LAEP)

8. The Climate and Environment Working Group highlighted the damages created by repeated excavation of newly resurfaced roads for utility works, stressing the need for greater coordination between infrastructure projects. Members noted that the work undertaken by the Oxford Growth Commission to ensure a strategic approach would help improve the planning and coordination of infrastructure works. There were no recommendations.

Community Energy Interim Policy Update

9. In seeking clarification on how the arrangements would operate where community-owned organisations were already established and how participation in governance structure would be secured, the Climate and Environment Working Group commented on the importance of transparent governance system. Members recognised the challenges of imposing diverse participation from community groups but that engagement with community organisations, food banks and other local groups would be used to build capacity and maximise participation.
10. It was recommended that capacity-building for community groups should be supported and that diverse representation within the governance structures should be encouraged to enable a broad range of community members to participate.
11. The Working Groups wish to thank Cabinet Members and Officers who contributed to the presentation of reports and discussions.

**Financial implications**

12. Financial implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Working Groups.

**Legal issues**

13. Legal implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Working Groups.

**Level of risk**

14. Risk Registers, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Working Groups.

**Equalities impact**

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

**Carbon and Environmental Considerations**

16. Consideration for Carbon and Environmental impacts, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Working Groups.

**Implications of Local Government Reorganisation**

17. Implications of Local Government Reorganisation for the reports listed above were outlined within the report when presented at the Working Groups.
18. 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 – Recommendations of the Climate and Environment Working Group – Heat Network Update

The table below sets out the recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Working Group on 6 July 2026 for endorsement by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11 August 2026. The Cabinet will be asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

| ***Recommendation*** | ***Agree?*** | ***Comment*** |
|---|---|---|
| 1) That the Council advocates for the creation of a social value fund, acknowledging the previously agreed recommendation to explore and embed social value in the delivery of Heat Network. | | |
| 2) That Cabinet recommends highways disruption is minimised in the delivery of Heat Network, avoiding any potential impacts on the traffic filter trial where possible. | | |

## Table 2 – Recommendations of the Climate and Environment Working Group – Community Energy Interim Policy

The table below sets out the recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Working Group on 6 July 2026 for endorsement by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11 August 2026. The Cabinet will be asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

| ***Recommendation*** | ***Agree?*** | ***Comment*** |
|---|---|---|
| 1) That Cabinet supports the capacity-building of community groups, and in setting up the governance structure for the scheme, encourages diversity within the governance structures to enable a broad range of community members to participate effectively. | | |

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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