

# Supplement for Cabinet

**Wednesday 15 September 2021  
6.00 pm**

## **Scrutiny Reports Supplement**

### **Contents**

<b>7. Scrutiny Committee reports</b>	<b>3 - 38</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cabinet response to Domestic Abuse Review Group</li><li>• Urban Forest Strategy (report and recommendations)</li><li>• EV Strategy (report and recommendations)</li><li>• QL Implementation (report and recommendations)</li><li>• Social Value in Procurement (report and recommendations)</li></ul>	

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

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**Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 03/11/2020 concerning the Domestic Abuse Review Group report**

**Response provided by Cabinet Member for a Safer, Healthy Oxford, Councillor Louise Upton**

3

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>1) That the Council formally adopts the definition of ‘domestic abuse’ included within the Domestic Abuse Bill, and reviews its usage of the phrase ‘domestic violence’ in its policies and literature to ensure correct usage.</b>	Agree	
<b>2) That the Council requests from the County Council early monitoring data from the Family Solutions Plus domestic abuse perpetrator monitoring programme and includes that information within its six month review of progress made on agreed recommendations from this report.</b>	Agree	
<b>3) That the Council engages with Thames Valley Police and provides appropriate support for the development of a universal domestic abuse perpetrator programme.</b>	In part	Thames Valley Police have received funding from the OPCC to run the Cara Programme across the force. Perpetrators of domestic abuse will receive a conditional caution to attend two workshops. The results from the Hampshire evaluation have been very good. The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Group have commissioned a Needs Assessment to inform a local strategy. This includes perpetrator programmes.
<b>4) That the Council works with partners for the development of additional group work programmes for victims and survivors of domestic abuse, and that these programmes be embedded within the broader multi-agency framework for managing</b>	Agree	Completed  Group work for victims is already part of the response to domestic abuse in Oxfordshire. The programmes available are: <b>Freedom Programme</b> – to raise awareness of abusive

<p><b>domestic abuse.</b></p>		<p>behaviours  <b>Recovery Toolkit</b> – to empower women and assist them to move on from an abusive relationship  <b>The TAP and MEG programmes</b> – for women with complex needs who are vulnerable  <b>Our Voice</b> – for women from minority communities  <b>Power to Change</b> – empowerment programme  <b>DAY Programme</b> – for young people experiencing domestic abuse</p>
<p><b>5) That the Council reviews the recommendations and outcomes of the Barking and Dagenham Domestic Abuse Commission, and as part of the Review Group’s six-month progress update reports on the steps it has taken to adopt and implement learning and actions from the Commission into the Council’s own activity.</b></p>	<p>Disagree</p>	<p>Oxfordshire DA Strategic Board is currently undertaking an extensive Needs Assessment to inform the local strategy and action plan. The Needs Assessment is being carried out by Public Health and the Council will base its activities on our local situation and needs, which may be different from other councils.</p>
<p><b>6) That the Council works with strategic partners to review and, if necessary, strengthen the connection between existing lived-experience groups and the Council’s services.</b></p>	<p>Agree</p>	
<p><b>7) That the Council trains the staff at its hubs to recognise domestic abuse and know how to respond, to know who to speak to in the event of a disclosure, and to be able to signpost appropriately to support services.</b></p>	<p>Agree</p>	
<p><b>8) That the Council makes available training and resources to Councillors to enable them to recognise domestic abuse and know how to respond, to know who to speak to in the event of a</b></p>	<p>Agree</p>	

disclosure, and to be able to signpost appropriately to support services.		
9) That the Council continues to work with ODAS and the County Council to explore the suitability of its own current or future housing stock being recommissioned as a 'place of safety'.	Agree	
10) That the Council contacts the County Council with its concerns over the safety of vulnerable women from predatory behaviour by men at the Bullingdon Road Young Mothers project.	Agree	<p>Completed - A2Dominion who are managing the property have been contacted. There was an incident some time ago relating to a specific female. Social Care were involved and A2Dominion employed a security service for 24hrs to protect the female. The female was moved to another area and there have been no other issues. With regards to keeping the females safe A2Dominion have a number of measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCTV</li> <li>24 hour on call service</li> <li>Alarm system</li> <li>Young Person's Independent Domestic Violence Advisor who engages with the females</li> </ul>
11) That the Council seeks that steps are taken to ensure that houses designated as 'places of safety' do not become well-known as such and a target for predatory behaviour.	In part	<p>There are two types of places of safety.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Internal provision. The place of safety is not a set property, but DA victims will be given a property in an area which reduces the risk of harm. The allocation of the place of safety varies with each person so there is no risk of it becoming 'well-known or a target'</li> <li>2. External. There are 4 designated places of safety properties which are managed by Oxfordshire Domestic</li> </ol>

		Abuse Service. Each property is alarmed, has CCTV, is flagged by the police and has a 24hr service. All residents in the property have to agree not to share the address with others. They are situated in housing estates to make them less visible as a place of safety.
<b>12) That the Council refreshes its allocations scheme to change references from ‘domestic violence’ to ‘domestic abuse’, and that when it is adopted as law, the definition of domestic abuse as included within the Domestic Abuse Bill be included as an ‘exceptional circumstance’ in relation to housing prioritisation.</b>	In part	The Allocations policy cannot be changed without public consultation. However it has been agreed that when it is next reviewed all necessary changes will be made.
<b>13) That the Council increases the priority for move-on accommodation of women who have been facing domestic abuse for as long as the availability of refuge provision remains historically further beyond supply.</b>	Disagree	Women who have suffered domestic abuse are a priority need and all options are considered to ensure they are kept safe and based on their individual needs. Refuge is a last resort.
<b>14) That in the absence of other mitigating factors, the Council will pursue a policy of seeking to remove a perpetrator from the home in situations where a perpetrator is adjudged to be a high risk to the victim.</b>	Disagree	<p>Section 2A of the Housing Act 1985 give grounds for possession on the proviso that the victim has no intention of returning. The possession will be on discretionary grounds and the Court will have to be satisfied the victim will not return. The victim can be offered alternative accommodation and keep their secure tenancy. We already have a policy on this.</p> <p>If the perpetrator has left we can apply the O’Grady principal where 1 tenant can stop the joint tenancy and have a new secure tenancy.</p> <p>In a situation where the victim does not support enforcement against the perpetrator the Council, in theory, can seek possession on breach of tenancy but it</p>

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		applies to the whole family, thereby evicting the victim who will then be deemed as intentionally homeless
<b>15) That the Council reviews the strength of the clause(s) regarding anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse in Council tenancies and provides a model paragraph for inclusion in tenancies let via housing associations/private landlords with the aim to make it easier to evict tenants who perpetrate domestic abuse.</b>	Disagree	Registered Housing Providers operate under a different piece of legislation to Local Authorities. It is therefore inappropriate for the Council to give advice on this as they have their own, different, legal rules to follow. The same applies to private landlords who operate under another piece of legislation.
<b>16) That the Council seeks DAHA accreditation for its housing services</b>	Agree	This process has begun
<b>17) That the Council, once the work of its Domestic Abuse Specialist in mapping pathways and experiences of victims who engage with the Council's work is complete, engages closely with specialist domestic abuse support providers to improve the outcomes and experience of victims in their interaction with the Council.</b>	Agree	
<b>18) That the Council develops a clear domestic abuse pathway for managing housing of domestic abuse victims</b>	Agree	

<p><b>19)That the Council takes proactive steps to ensure appropriate cultural support is available to individuals moving out of Oxford.</b></p>	Disagree	<p>The Council currently provide a support package for people moving out of area. Generally the Council will not be aware of which area the person is moving to. If a person flees to Oxford they will ensure they are able to access appropriate support</p>
<p><b>20)That the Council includes within its budget provision for the cost of the Sanctuary Scheme for the duration of the next Medium Term Financial Plan, rather than reconfirming its funding year on year.</b></p>	In part	<p>The Sanctuary Scheme is a priority service, however it is funded through an annual government grant so although it will remain a priority the Council cannot predict the level of funding for subsequent years.</p>
<p><b>21)That the Council runs a mapping and awareness-raising exercise of the opportunities in Oxford for ESOL classes, aimed particularly at its community centres users and grant recipients.</b></p>	In part	<p>In line with its remit, Oxfordshire County Council offers access to ESOL classes and Oxford City Council staff and website provides information and refers people to these services. Guidance on ESOL is also provided through the community based Locality Hubs to all those in need.</p>
<p><b>22)That the Council raises with the BAED Worlds Group, including the County Council representative, the existence of 14 previously trained community interpreters, with a view to investigating whether and how their services may be used to improve access for non-native English speakers to domestic-abuse related support.</b></p>	Agree	
<p><b>23)That the Leader writes to the minister at MCHLG to highlight the impact that the huge cuts to English languages classes have on domestic abuse victims.</b></p>	Agree	
<p><b>24)That the Council makes a public statement confirming that it will not share immigration status information with the Home Office when individuals come forward for support with domestic abuse, and</b></p>	Agree	<p>This has already happened and can be stated again when there is relevant communications sent out.</p>



that it takes steps to publicise this amongst relevant community groups locally.		
<b>25) That the Council, in the development of networks to support homeless people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF), ensures that the remit is extended to ensure the specific needs of those made homeless from fleeing domestic abuse are incorporated.</b>	Agree	Completed - There is already a DA NRPF Pathway in Oxford for people which includes tailored support and legal advice, assistance to apply for leave to remain and further accommodation.  The Oxfordshire Homeless Pathway for rough sleepers who have no recourse does not provide the additional support required for victims of domestic abuse.
<b>26) That the Council contacts Manchester City Council to understand the overall cost of providing support for those with no recourse to public funds who are in destitution.</b>	Disagree	There is already a NRPF Pathway for victims fleeing due to Domestic Abuse within Oxford
<b>27) That the Council investigates how Slough Borough Council offer support to those with no recourse to public funds.</b>	Disagree	There is already a NRPF Pathway for victims fleeing due to Domestic Abuse within Oxford
<b>28) That the Council works with relevant local and national organisations to lobby government for an exemption to allow those experiencing domestic abuse with no recourse to public funds to access public support.</b>	Disagree	Activists are currently lobbying the Government on this issue and the Council does not have officer capacity to duplicate this.
<b>29) That the Council investigates the legalities and cost of implementing a Flexible Funding scheme, with a view to one being established if practicable and legal.</b>	In part	Provision of a Flexible Funding scheme is part of the Needs Assessment being conducted for the Oxfordshire DA Strategic Group. Sourcing the money for this scheme post March 2022 may be problematic.

<p><b>30)That the Council, as part of its upcoming grant funding review, increases the funding available to domestic abuse services, particularly around BAME access to support.</b></p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>The Grant Funding review will include an Equalities assessment and the effect on groups with Protected characteristics will be reviewed in line with Equalities legislation. Grant funding provided to bodies tackling domestic and other forms of abuse will be part of the review and review recommendations will specifically refer to these issues.</p>
<p><b>31)That the Council is proactive in providing support to those organisations which provide domestic-abuse related activities but struggle to attract external funding to identify and successfully apply for external grant funding.</b></p>	<p>Agree</p>	
<p><b>32)That the Council continues to support grant funding to ‘by and for’ organisations, but that for domestic abuse-related applications it is mindful of the need to situate ‘by and for’ support within the wider overall framework for supporting domestic abuse victims.</b></p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>The Council promotes and supports a wide ranging community partnership effort across all categories of support, including grants and other funding for services within Oxford’s communities. It is mindful of the need to situate support within a wider framework that includes efforts on health, safety, housing, wider advice and justice, for example.</p>
<p><b>33)That the Council includes within its grant funding application forms a question along the lines of “Does this funding intend to support positive family relationships? If so, how?”</b></p>	<p>Agree</p>	
<p><b>34)That the Council identifies and requires levels of organisational awareness and capacity around domestic abuse prevention and support which is reasonable relative to the size of organisation, size of grant sought and the purpose of the grant.</b></p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>The Council Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults policy mandates training for all staff. The Council reviews all safeguarding policies of commissioned services to check they meet local and national standards. Voluntary organisations must comply with standards set by Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children’s Board and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board and this is stated</p>

		in our funding agreements. Safeguarding guidance is included throughout our grant process within all service areas and through our formal procurement portal process. When groups apply for grant funding from Oxford City Council, the organisation must provide its safeguarding policies.
<b>35) That the Council includes in its guidance for grant applicants links to appropriate resources through which organisations may support positive family relationships.</b>	Agree	
<b>36) That the Council extends its definition of social value in procurement to include opportunities for companies to support positive family relationships.</b>	In part	Procurement are currently discussing the development of their own social value framework based on the National one; OxTOMs. This is in the preliminary stages. To include 'support positive family relationships' requires extensive consideration for it to be an effective measurement. As the framework develops the Procurement Team will consult with the Domestic Abuse Lead to discuss the potential for inclusion.
<b>37) That the Council uses the existing draft domestic abuse policy as its template, to be updated, for its to-be-developed Domestic Abuse in the Workplace Policy.</b>	Agree	
<b>38) That the Council gives its to-be-adopted policy on domestic abuse a clearer title, such as 'Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy'</b>	Agree	
<b>39) That the Council includes a section within its domestic abuse policy to provide guidance to staff if, in the course of their job, they suspect or know that someone is a victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse</b>	Agree	

<b>40)That the Council at its next review of its constitution gives consideration to the practicability of including an explicit expectation that Councillors will not perpetrate domestic abuse.</b>	Agree	
<b>41)That the Council as shareholder of its wholly-owned companies implements domestic abuse policies in those companies</b>	In part	There will be discussions with ODS to determine what they need to ensure staff can identify and report DA as well as what staff can do if they are either a victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse.
<b>42)That the Council, as part of its People Strategy, initiates a project to provide enhanced awareness, resources, and capability to recognise and support victims of domestic abuse, and engages with safeguarding and domestic abuse specialists to identify good practice and best resources.</b>	Agree	Completed
<b>43)That the Council improves the detail of the support it provides staff facing domestic abuse on the staff intranet.</b>	Agree	Completed
<b>44)That the Council reviews the adequacy of the internal training it provides for all staff, line managers and elected members on domestic abuse</b>	In part	Training is being refreshed and when rolled out will be asking for feedback to assist in improving the training
<b>45)That the Council makes domestic abuse awareness and management training mandatory for all those in the Council with line-management responsibility.</b>	In part	Making training mandatory is problematic as there is no internal mechanism to effectively monitor it has been completed. However with the revised training available there will be a push internally for staff and line managers to attend training. Oxford City Council with the County Council have bid for funding to develop an e-learning package for line managers

<p><b>46)That the Council reviews its HR processes around sickness, lateness, time off and performance management to ensure they are capable of supporting staff involved in either side of domestic abuse.</b></p>	<p>Agree</p>	
<p><b>47)That the Council includes within domestic abuse awareness and management training for managers training on identifying the appropriate level of training required for the staff in their team regarding domestic abuse.</b></p>	<p>Disagree</p>	<p>There will be training package available for staff with different levels of awareness and response. In addition when a whole team is trained on domestic abuse it will be tailored to meet their needs. The DA training delivered through the OSCB will be available to staff who need more in depth training, including training to become a Domestic Abuse Champion. There is no internal facility to identify the level of DA training each member of staff needs to have. The Safeguarding training, which is mandated, does include DA</p>
<p><b>48)That Council training provided to staff and elected members on domestic abuse considers, at a level relevant to type of training, training which is sensitive to specific cultural contexts and working with a diverse range of communities, and culturally-specific issues which can increase vulnerability amongst specific minority community members.</b></p>	<p>Agree</p>	

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 15 September 2021  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Urban Forest Strategy

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations concerning the Urban Forest Strategy
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Liz Wade, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Tom Hayes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Zero Carbon Oxford
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendation in the body of this report.</b>	

<b>Appendices</b>
None

### **Introduction and overview**

1. At its meeting on 08 September 2021, the Scrutiny Committee considered a report to Cabinet concerning the Council's proposed Urban Forest Strategy.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Lubna Arshad, Cabinet Member for Parks and Waste Reduction for presenting the report and answering questions, and Amanda Ford, Environmental Quality Team Manager, for authoring the report and supporting the meeting.

## Summary and recommendation

3. Councillor Lubna Arshad, Cabinet Member for Parks and Waste Reduction, introduced the report which represented another workstream flowing from the Council's declaration of a climate emergency. The long-term strategy sought to look at the City as a whole and respond to the fact that there was a correlation between areas of deprivation and lower levels of canopy cover. At its heart was the desirability of having "the right tree in the right place". Amanda Ford, Environmental Quality Team Manager, added that the Council was committed to increasing opportunities for biodiversity wherever they arose, something to which tree planting would contribute although it was important to note that it was not the only means. In addressing the position of the City as a whole and, therefore land which was not owned by the Council, it would be necessary to encourage other land owners to participate. An important source of funding for this work would be via developers' contributions. Developers were required to ensure that schemes, when complete, resulted in a net biodiversity gain of 5% over the position prior to development. The gain was not limited to the area covered by a development but could include improvements made anywhere within the City boundary.
4. Issues that were considered in detail by the Committee included:
  - The relationship between the Urban Forest Strategy and other climate-related policies
  - The relationship between the Strategy and wider pro-biodiversity possibilities, such as rewilding arable farm land
  - The capacity of ODS to support the additional work generated by a successful implementation of the policy
  - Community engagement
5. The Committee makes three recommendations relating to i) interactions with other Council strategies relating to climate change, ii) the importance of community engagement, and iii) clarifying responsibilities within the activity of the strategy.

## Interaction with other Climate Change Strategies

6. An issue which was raised by the Committee as a challenge to the Council's tree-planting ambitions has also recently been reported in the press, the conversion of front gardens into driveways, with a recent study showing a growth in the number of applications for dropped kerbs – a proxy for conversions to driveways.<sup>1</sup> The Committee took on board the advice of the Environmental Quality Team Manager in recognising the loss of trees (or potential space for trees) inherent in such conversions must be judged within a framework where the application's overall costs benefits can be assessed. The Committee was concerned however, that this might enable a perverse situation in which the desire to roll out electric vehicle charging points might actively encourage the removal of trees and loss of spaces for trees to be planted in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/money/decline-of-the-front-garden-as-homeowners-install-driveways-b1916768.html>



7. Oxford suffers from a lack of off-street parking, with 40% of households not having a driveway. The Council is also making policy decisions to encourage the take up of electric vehicles. For people without driveways, access to on-street electric charging suffers from a number of drawbacks relative to private off-street charging: principally, being unable to guarantee access to a charging point when needed, and the price premium of a public charger. Consequently, removing those drawbacks by enabling access to new, private off-street charging is beneficial. However, the cost of creating the space to allow off-street charging is the potential loss of trees, and the definite loss of space that might otherwise be used for tree planting, and with the high proportion of homes without off street parking this issue is particularly acute for Oxford. The fact that such decisions are weighed on their overall benefits and disbenefits means that in seeing off-street electric charging as being of general benefit, the equilibrium point will move away from the protection of trees or tree-plantable areas.
8. Scrutiny does not have an answer to this issue, but it feels that there is clearly an unexpected tension between the working of two policies with shared aims. One partial suggestion was to consider whether the Council would create designated parking areas within its Controlled Parking Zones for specific houses. This would enable residents in these areas at least to ensure access to private charging points, whilst not having to remove gardens. However, this is only an idea put forward for further consideration and not a recommendation. It is the Committee's wish that these interactions be looked at more closely, with possible mitigations explored, and a conscious decision arrived at over which strategy outcome ought to take priority over the other.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council reviews the policy tensions between garden space and electric charging and develops a considered position on their interaction, and that it reviews its other climate-related strategies for similar unanticipated tensions.***

### **Community Engagement**

9. A strong element of feedback from multiple members of the Committee concerned the importance of community engagement with regards to tree planting. The proposed approach of 'right tree, right place' is absolutely the correct one to take, but to ascertain that the multiple (and sometimes conflicting) views of local residents must be heard and digested because they are often nuanced. Overall, there is support for greater tree planting, but on a more granular level they can cause upset through the blocking of light, damage to pathways or by dropping fruits, seeds or leaves. This point holds true for whether the Council plants a tree on its own land, or for proposals for biodiversity net gain arising from developments, both important elements of the strategy.
10. Reports from members indicated that tree planting attracts significant local interest and engagement by local residents, which is to be welcomed. If engaged local residents are unable to make their voices heard, however, it can lead to significant frustration and disappointment. The Urban Forest Strategy seeks to deliver an increase in an area where Committee members felt the Council had not historically engaged with residents as fully as it might. It seeks, therefore, that the Council recognises the need for and builds in at the outset greater community engagement over tree-planting proposals.

***Recommendation 2: That the Council takes steps to ensure that with greater number of trees being planted, community engagement over proposals is treated as a matter of priority and local residents are given an opportunity to voice their views.***

### **Understanding Roles and Responsibilities**

11. A further point made by the Committee builds on the previous one. With tree planting being an issue that the public cares deeply about being done right, it is important for councillors and staff members to know who to contact when things are not done correctly. As paragraph 24 of the Cabinet report shows, overall responsibility is diffused across multiple areas of the Council, with no single point of access: “Roles and responsibilities across the council relating to trees and biodiversity are spread between tree officers in planning, the ecology and biodiversity officer in Environmental Sustainability and officers in the parks service and ODS. Parks and ODS work relates only to trees on land that is owned or managed by Oxford City Council. The Council does not have an officer responsible for the urban forest at a strategic level.” The Committee is concerned that this will make it difficult to respond to and address any resident issues promptly or effectively. It is requested, therefore, that a breakdown of who is responsible for what is made available to steer both councillors and the public to the right place when wanting to raise issues about tree planting.

***Recommendation 3: That the Council makes available to councillors and members of the public information on who is responsible for what within the Urban Forest Strategy, and help with understanding who to contact in different scenarios.***

### **Further Consideration**

12. By its nature this strategy is very long-term, with proposed reviews to take place every ten years. This makes regular consideration by Scrutiny unnecessary. However, the Committee has referred the question of the capacity of ODS to support this strategy to the Companies Scrutiny Panel for further scrutiny.

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**Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 08/09/2021 concerning the Urban Forest Strategy**

**Response provided by Cabinet Member for Parks and Waste Reduction, Lubna Arshad**

19

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>1) That the Council reviews the policy tensions between garden space and electric charging and develops a considered position on their interaction, and that it reviews its other climate-related strategies for similar unanticipated tensions.</b>	In part	There are many trade-offs associated with decarbonisation, at a household, city, national and international level. However, Oxford City Council is seeking to manage these through, <i>inter alia</i> , enabling on street EV charging through the GUL-e cable-gulley project, being developed jointly with ODS and Oxfordshire County Council. It is also seeking to increase tree cover across Oxford by encouraging planting where there is available land – most typically in residents <i>back</i> gardens, the grounds of colleges, businesses and other institutions, and where possible on streets and public land. The council will continue to monitor tree cover and biodiversity to see that the removal of front garden space by householders choosing to charge their vehicles, hasn't impacted these objectives.
<b>2) That the Council takes steps to ensure that with greater number of trees being planted, community engagement over proposals is treated as a matter of priority and local residents are given an opportunity to voice their views.</b>	Yes	
<b>3) That the Council makes available to councillors and members of the public information on who is responsible for what within the Urban Forest Strategy, and help with understanding who to contact in different scenarios.</b>	Yes	



**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 15 September 2021  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Oxford City Council EV Strategy

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations concerning the Oxford City Council EV Strategy
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Liz Wade, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Tom Hayes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Zero Carbon Oxford
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendation in the body of this report.</b>	

<b>Appendices</b>
None

### **Introduction and overview**

1. At its meeting on 14 July 2021, the Scrutiny Committee considered a report to Cabinet concerning the Council's EV (Electric Vehicle) Strategy.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Tom Hayes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford for presenting the report and answering questions, and Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy, for authoring the report and supporting the meeting.

3. This report returned to Scrutiny on 08 September 2021 for sign-off in light of the fact that a number of members had expressed difficulty with the audio at the meeting. It was wished to check that the report did indeed represent the wishes of Scrutiny in making recommendations to Cabinet. A number of amendments have been made to the report as a result, meaning this report is not identical to the one which was submitted to Cabinet in July 2021.

### **Summary and recommendation**

4. For reasons of timeliness the Chair requested that the Cabinet report be only briefly introduced by Councillor Tom Hayes, Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, a report which sought approval to proceed with commissioning the Council's EV strategy and so determine its future role in the EV world. The majority of the Committee's time was devoted to questions and discussion.
5. Issues that were considered in detail by the Committee included:
  - Textual tweaks of wording pertaining to disabled access and electric vehicles
  - Situating the EV strategy within the wider context of traffic-reduction
  - The overall costs of the strategy and the Council's role vis a vis those of central government and the private sector
  - The impacts of differential access to charging points amongst wealthier and poorer areas of the City
  - Ethical investment principles
6. The Committee makes three recommendations relating to i) the wording of the document in relation to Connecting Oxfordshire, ii) the relationship between the EV strategy and the Zero Emissions Zone and the need to plan for this, and iii) investigating extending ethical investment principles to the delivery of the EV strategy.

### **Connecting Oxfordshire**

7. S. 16 of the Cabinet report states that "... Electric Vehicles are not a panacea. Everyone has the right to move anywhere, anytime, yet traffic is an issue in the city and the Council is already committed to schemes to cut congestion, including Connecting Oxford..." It was questioned at the Committee whether the statement that the Council was already committed to Connecting Oxford was fully reflective of the Council's position as agreed by Cabinet in January 2020. At that meeting it resolved "to endorse the overall approach proposed [in the Cabinet paper] as the basis for further scheme and business case development of Connecting Oxford proposals in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council." It was suggested that commitment to Connecting Oxford and an agreement to further develop the business case may not necessarily be the same, and it was agreed to recommend that the document be amended to reflect the agreement made by Cabinet in January 2020.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council amends paragraph 16 of the report to remove reference to the Council already being committed to Connecting***

***Oxford, and states instead that the council has agreed to further scheme and business case development.***

### **Planning for Interactions with Other Policies**

As highlighted above, the point was made at and recognised by the Committee that the EV Strategy does not stand alone in seeking to reduce transport-related emissions and traffic in the city, but works alongside other policies and activities, for example the zero emissions zone (ZEV). The ZEV is primarily expected to promote modal shift in transport, but it will also incentivise the take up of electric vehicles, which will not be subject to the levy. The Committee seeks to ensure that the Council's plans for EV charging infrastructure takes the impacts of wider transport-related strategies, such as the ZEV, into account.

***Recommendation 2: That the Council, in its planning for the adequacy of future EV charging infrastructure, ensures that the incentivising impact of other policies on demand for electric vehicles, such as the ZEV, is taken into account***

### **Ethical Investment**

8. The Committee is supportive of Council's decision to adopt an ethical investment policy which proscribes direct investment 'in businesses whose activities and practices pose a risk of serious harm to individuals or groups, or whose activities are inconsistent with the Council's mission and values.' Specifically, the inclusion of environmentally harmful activities, such as pollution, destruction of habitat and use of fossil fuels within that definition fits well alongside the aim of the EV strategy in improving usage of and access to zero emitting vehicles.
9. The consistency of the EV strategy and ethical investment policy indicate a clarity of vision across the Council. However, the influence of the ethical investment policy on the EV strategy is likely to be minimal to non-existent because the Council is likely to make few, if any, direct investments as part of the EV strategy. The concern raised at the Committee concerned the fact that the EV strategy will require infrastructure, and that such infrastructure could possibly be delivered by companies who engage in practices which are not commensurate with the Council's mission and values. Particularly, concerns were raised about exploitative mining practices in the Global South.
10. The Committee recognises that addressing this lacuna would be complex, and to extend the ethical principles of its investment policy into other areas, such as the delivery of the EV strategy, would have far-reaching consequences and involve trade-offs. However, the Committee would like to see the Council's aims achieved not only through what it delivers, but how it delivers them and for the risks, consequences and practicability of extending its ethical investment principles to the delivery of the EV strategy to be looked at in greater depth.
11. Further, the Committee would like to recommend explicit inclusion within the ethical investment policy of exploitative mining practices and arms trading as

examples of activities which would put companies outside the Council's willingness to invest in.

***Recommendation 3a): That the Council investigates the practicability of not partnering with or commissioning organisations relating to the EV strategy in which it would be unable to invest because of its ethical investment policy***

***Recommendation 3b): That the Council amends its ethical investment policy to make explicit reference to exploitative mining practices and arms trading as proscribed activities.***

### Further Consideration

12. As a document written to enable the early stages of the process of developing the Council's EV strategy the Cabinet report necessarily contains few concrete proposals. An offer has been made by the Cabinet member to return to Scrutiny in March 2022 when the strategy draft has been developed, which the Committee is likely to accept.

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**Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 14/07/2021 concerning the Council EV Strategy**

**A verbal response will be provided by Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, Tom Hayes**

25

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>1) That the Council amends paragraph 16 of the report to remove reference to the Council already being committed to Connecting Oxford, and states instead that the council has agreed to further scheme and business case development.</b>		
<b>2) That the Council, in its planning for the adequacy of future EV charging infrastructure, ensures that the incentivising impact of other policies on demand for electric vehicles, such as the ZEZ, is taken into account</b>		
<b>3) That the Council investigates the practicability of not partnering with or commissioning organisations relating to the EV strategy in which it would be unable to invest because of its ethical investment policy</b>  <b>3b) That the Council amends its ethical investment policy to make explicit reference to exploitative mining practices and arms trading as proscribed activities.</b>		

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**To:** Cabinet

**Date:** 15 September 2021

**Report of:** Finance and Performance Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

**Title of Report:** QL Housing Management Software System Implementation

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Finance and Performance Panel recommendations concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned report on the QL system implementation
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor James Fry, Chair of the Finance and Performance Panel
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	All
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020 - 24
<b>Recommendation: That Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations made in the body of this report.</b>	

<b>Appendices</b>
None

### **Introduction and overview**

1. At its meeting on 02 August 2021, the Finance and Performance Panel considered a Scrutiny-commissioned update report on the implementation of the QL system, a system to manage a broad range of Housing-related functions including the management of the Housing List, rent payments and repairs, as well as supporting the financial processes lying behind those activities.
2. The Panel would like to thank Paul Leo, Interim Executive Director of Housing, for authoring and presenting the report, and to Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services, Anna Winship, Management Accountancy Manager, and Phil

McGaskill, Revenues Manager, for attending the meeting and answering questions.

## **Summary**

3. The Panel was introduced to the Scrutiny-commissioned report by Paul Leo, Interim Executive Director of Housing. This item was taken in confidential session so only a brief outline is presented here. A full account is available in the confidential minutes of the meeting. The main issues discussed concerned what had caused the problems in the first place, the scale of the disruption caused, and the remedial actions being taken.
4. The Panel makes two recommendations. These recommendations focus on understanding the full cost that the challenges relating to the implementation of the QL system, particularly the exemplary efforts by many staff, and finding ways to recognise and compensate their commitment to mitigating the negative impacts arising from the QL implementation to date.

## **Accounting for the full cost**

5. Owing to the unanticipated difficulties of the QL system's implementation the Council has incurred additional costs to mitigate the consequences of those difficulties. Further costs have and will arise in fixing the causes of these problems. The Panel was informed of the Council's intention to bring in an external organisation to audit the implementation exercise and to quantify the costs arising from its problems. The Panel wishes to express its support for this intention. However, although when it asked for an estimate of the additional costs accruing from the difficulties of the implementation the Panel was provided with one, the scope of that cost was narrow: primarily the cost of bringing in extra staff to backfill roles directed to QL or increasing the hours of part time staff, and the payment of overtime. In discussion of the effect on the authority it is clear that this narrow definition does not come close to reflecting the true cost to the Council.
6. Given the breadth of its functions, the challenges of the implementation have affected many areas of the Council, with many staff at different levels involved in mitigating the negative impact. Most senior staff are not entitled to overtime payments, and yet it was reported that many directly involved have worked evenings and weekends over a sustained duration. These efforts are not measured in a narrow definition of financial cost. Likewise, the definition does not cover those who are not doing additional hours but have had the mitigation efforts prioritised over other areas of work. It was reported, for example, that senior finance staff have had to process payments to suppliers. The cost to the Council of doing this manifests itself in the opportunity cost, resources dedicated to one area mean they cannot be used in another. With staff at senior levels drawn into dealing with the extra work, and high numbers of more junior staff involved in checking the flow of data, this opportunity cost to the Council is significant. Indeed, if the timespan from starting the implementation of QL to the future date in which its full potential is realised the Council has lost out very significantly.

7. One major area of loss to the Council through opportunity cost is the impact of delays and poorly-functioning system is on its companies. Commercial opportunities are felt to have been lost due to the delayed and impaired functionality themselves, and the senior management time devoted to managing these problems. When talking of opportunity cost of senior staff it is easy to think that the consequence is possibly bumpier service provision, which – though regrettable – is more easily absorbed than a loss of cash. Particularly in the case of the Council's companies, this is not the case. Missed commercial opportunities mean reduced turnover, and ultimately lower dividend income to the Council. It is the Panel's view that the scale of this loss is serious and should not be overlooked.
8. The Panel's overall concern is that if, when its audit is undertaken by an external organisation, only the direct costs are tallied the true costs to the Council will be significantly underestimated, and the immense collective effort of staff made to recover the situation effectively taken for granted. If the costs are under-counted through narrow definitions this could affect decision on the steps needed to avoid a repeat of the situation, which raises the risk of it happening again. The Panel therefore recommends that the lessons learnt exercise be undertaken on the basis of a broad understanding of the costs, including the indirect and opportunity costs, associated with the implementation of the QL system on both the Council and its companies.

**Recommendation 1: That the Council, in a future exercise to learn lessons from this experience, includes within its audit an estimate of the indirect and opportunity costs arising from the implementation of the QL system on both the Council and its companies.**

9. Although it is touched on above, the Panel's view is that the Council is fortunate that many staff (including also at ODS) have gone above and beyond what is required of them to help in the recovery effort. Without these efforts the problems would have been far greater. The Council is indebted to these individuals, particularly as it was reported to the Panel that many had experienced significant stress on the back of their efforts. The Panel is very keen that this is recognised, which it is sure that the Cabinet is also keen to do.
10. One particular issue concerning the Panel is that staff making extraordinary efforts should not be penalised by internal policies which are not designed with such scenarios in mind. The Panel is not aware that the following are real problems, but they are possibilities.
11. Staff are expected not to carry over flex time and TOIL of more than 10 hours from month to month or forfeit it. It is very possible that some staff will have accrued significant TOIL and not been able to take it. The annual leave year also resets in October with a permitted carry-over of 5 days for each year, with any beyond that forfeited unless Heads of Service waive that cap. It is possible that some staff will have deferred (or possibly even cancelled) holiday during the summer holidays, a late point in the leave year, and may not easily be able to take that time before the end of September. In both cases those staff who have

shown commitment above and beyond what it reasonably required could potentially be penalised for doing so. The Panel is keen that the Council works with union representatives to explore these and any similar issues and to find suitable ways to ensure that the commitment of staff is not unintentionally penalised by current policies or that suitable compensation is agreed.

**Recommendation 2: That the Council recognises the exemplary commitment of staff across multiple functions in managing and mitigating the challenges posed by the QL implementation and works with union representatives to find ways to ensure that these officers are not penalised for their commitment.**

#### **Further consideration**

12. The Scrutiny function is likely to defer further specific monitoring of this to the Audit and Governance Committee but expects that it will receive regular updates through its consideration of the Integrated Performance Reports.

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**Cabinet response to recommendations of the Finance and Performance Panel made on 02/08/2021 concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned report on the QL Implementation**

**A verbal response will be provided by Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services, Councillor Mike Rowley**

<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
<b>1) That the Council in a future lessons learnt exercise, includes within its audit an estimate of the cost the indirect and opportunity costs arising from the implementation of the QL system on the Council and its companies</b>		
<b>2) That the Council recognises the exemplary commitment of staff across multiple functions in managing and mitigating the challenges posed by the implementation and works with union representatives to find ways to ensure that those staff are not penalised for their commitment.</b>		

**Date of Cabinet meeting:**

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 15 September 2021  
**Report of:** Finance and Performance Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)  
**Title of Report:** Social Value in Procurement

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Finance and Performance Panel recommendations concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned report on Social Value in Procurement
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor James Fry, Chair of the Finance and Performance Panel
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	All
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020 - 24
<b>Recommendation: That Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations made in the body of this report.</b>	

<b>Appendices</b>
None

### **Introduction and overview**

1. At its meeting on 02 August 2021, the Finance and Performance Panel considered a Scrutiny-commissioned progress report on Social Value in Procurement.
2. The Panel would like to thank Annette Osborne, Procurement Manager, for authoring and presenting the report, and for answering questions.

## Summary

3. The presentation updated on progress against Scrutiny's previous recommendations around social value – the holding of a meeting amongst stakeholders and benchmarking the Council's activities around social value against other councils. The meeting had not taken place owing to Covid, but a lot of work had been done to improve access to the Council's procurement. It had proven more difficult than expected to compare between councils because of the way in which the information was recorded. However, against the four councils who were suitable and whose data enabled comparison Oxford outperformed or equalled those comparators, with 62.5% being spent locally, well above central government's target of 33%.<sup>1</sup>
4. In addition to these areas, significant progress had been made elsewhere to develop social value through the Council's procurement. The Constitution had been amended, making it easier for the voluntary sector and cooperatives to deliver goods and services. A 'one quote' mechanism for work up to £10,000 had been implemented, and organisations which had tended not to engage with the procurement portal – SMEs and the voluntary sector – had been given greater opportunity to bid for work outside it. Within the Council's procurement templates the weighting of social value issues had been increased from 5% to 10%.
5. The Panel was also introduced to possible upcoming legislative changes arising from central government's Transforming Public Procurement and its Procurement Policy Statement and their impacts on the Council.
6. In response the Panel explored the responsibility and opportunity within procurement to develop jobs and supply chains in new industries, accountability in procurement decision-making, and the mechanics of choosing between different desirable criteria in different scenarios.
7. The Panel makes two recommendations, the first seeking that the Council works with other local councils and institutions to develop a common approach to social value in procurement, and the second to seek information to enable the Council to benchmark its performance against a wider pool of comparators.

### **A common local approach to social value in procurement**

8. One of the key tenets of social value in procurement is the local 'money-multiplier' effect when money is spent with local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Local SMEs are likely to employ local workers, who spend their money in local shops and on local entertainment. Company owners are more likely to live locally also, meaning dividends are more likely to be re-spent in the local economy. And by virtue of being smaller companies, those dividends are likely to be spent rather than reinvested elsewhere. All are positive impacts which multiply the benefit to the local economy of locally-focused spending far beyond its original cash value. The changes made by the Council referenced

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<sup>1</sup> The comparator councils were Southampton, Stoke, Birmingham and Croydon.

above to support and enable SMEs to get greater access to projects procured by the Council are therefore welcomed by the Panel.

9. One characteristic of SMEs, however, is that they have lower capacity to navigate multiple systems and procurement regimes. Lowering barriers to entry may enable some new entrants, but for others the time-investment relative to the expected returns may not be favourable meaning that the bar remains too high. Put in terms of risk and reward, an SME may not risk investing the time to become acquainted with procurement requirements for Council contracts as there may be too few contracts, and therefore too little chance of generating a return from the investment, to do so. Rather than lowering the risk (by making the cost of engaging with the Council's procurement process easier), an alternative and possibly more effective way of encouraging SMEs to become interested is to increase the potential reward. If multiple institutions shared the same approach, the potential pool of possible contracts for the same amount of time invested would be increased.
10. The Panel considers that brokering a shared approach locally to social value should be a strategic aim on the way to realising the Council's plans for an Inclusive Economy. It was heartened, therefore, to hear that work was being commenced locally to explore modifying central government's TOMs (Themes, Outcomes and Measures) calculator, which estimates the monetary value of different social value interventions, in order to create a locally-focused one, an 'OxTOMs'. This work to date has included a meeting with two external organisations (Raw and Owned by Oxford) to discuss social value in procurement, and an agreement to set up a meeting with the neighbouring councils, including the County Council, to develop an OxTOMs calculator. The Panel wishes to commend this as a good starting point and is keen that this work is completed, but would wish to see it as an important step in developing a shared approach across other local authorities and institutions, such as the universities and NHS Trusts, in the area.

**Recommendation 1: That the Council works with other local authorities and institutions to develop a shared OxTOMs framework in the short term and a shared approach to social value in procurement locally in the longer term.**

### **Comparing performance more broadly**

11. The Panel was pleased to see the results of the comparisons between the Council and other similar councils. Although almost doubling central government's target is a sign that the Council's own performance is good, there is the potential that the government's own aspirations are low. It was more pleasing to the Panel to see Oxford comparing favourably amongst other councils who have committed to increasing social value through procurement. The Panel is of the view, however, that there is potential benefit in broadening the field of comparators in order to get a sense of how other organisations – be they private companies, central government or the NHS – compare, and using that knowledge further to improve the Council's own performance. It was suggested at the Panel

that the internal audit be used to look in depth at procurement. This is a good idea but the Panel understands that the internal auditor did undertake a deep-dive into procurement fairly recently and it may not be sensible to revisit this so soon. Nevertheless, it would be expected that they would hold useful information which could be shared to inform the Council of what is possible by different organisations.

**Recommendation 2: That the Council requests from its internal auditor data to allow it to benchmark the social value generated through its procurement against a wider pool of comparators.**

**Further consideration**

12. The Scrutiny Committee has requested to consider a report on Procurement more widely, which would likely touch on these issues. It is not expected, however, that a further dedicated report will be sought before the start of the next civic year.

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**Cabinet response to recommendations of the Finance and Performance Panel made on 02/08/2021 concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned Social Value in Procurement report**

**A verbal response will be provided by Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, Councillor Ed Turner**

<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
<b>1) That the Council works with other local authorities and institutions to develop a shared OxTOMs framework in the short term and a shared approach to social value in procurement locally in the longer term.</b>		
<b>2) That the Council requests from its internal auditor data to allow it to benchmark the social value generated through its procurement against a wider pool of comparators</b>		

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