

Supplement for

Cabinet

Wednesday 13 October 2021

6.00 pm

Scrutiny Reports

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To: Cabinet
Date: 13 October 2021
Report of: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Title of Report: Housing Performance Q1

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Housing and Homelessness Panel recommendations concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned report on Housing Performance Q1
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Chair of the Housing and Homelessness Panel
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Diko Blackings, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security, and Housing the Homeless
Corporate Priority:	More Affordable Housing
Policy Framework:	Housing and Homelessness Strategy
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction and overview

1. At its meeting on 02 September 2021, the Housing and Homelessness Panel considered a report it had commissioned concerning the Council's performance against its Housing targets in 2020/21 Q1.
2. The Panel would like to thank Richard Wood, Strategy and Service Development Manager, for compiling and presenting the report, and responding to questions, as well as Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services, Diko Blackings, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless, and Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing for attending and answering questions.

Summary and recommendation

3. Richard Wood, Strategy and Service Development Manager, presented the report, outlining the key activities of Housing Services in the first quarter of the financial year 2021/22.
4. For the Council's activities around rough sleeping the challenging context of undertaking its work in a new way - the 'everyone in' policy - was noted. Housing's current focus in this area was on getting those people who had been provided temporary accommodation moved on into longer-term accommodation. The pandemic had brought increased presentations of people as homeless. With changes such as the end of the eviction ban, the furlough scheme and the recommencement of evictions that number was liable to remain elevated. Despite the challenges, however, securing move-on accommodation was proving successful, with 252 having been moved on to date. Since the publication of the report Canterbury House had been vacated, and attention was being turned to those housed at the YHA. The Council's work was being supported by a successful bid for RSA funding from central government, which would partially be used for a private lettings pilot to trial enabling access to private lettings from former rough sleepers. Overall, number of rough sleepers was reducing, with 24 recorded at the last count, down from 62 the year before. Other KPIs about temporary accommodation and successful outcomes from homelessness prevention interventions were also being met.
5. Traditionally the Council's affordable housing targets were reported on annually. However, owing to the pace at which housing developments proceed it was deemed more appropriate to have a four year target instead, set at 1200 affordable homes. In the first quarter 49 affordable homes had been delivered, compared to 123 in the entire year prior.
6. The main focus around the Council's own housing stock in terms of KPIs was over decarbonisation and retrofitting, with the aim that fewer than 46% of homes would be rated below an EPC rating of C. Last year 54% failed to meet this standard. Prioritisation was being undertaken to ensure that the 240 homes being improved were all below the threshold, with the worst performing properties being targeted first.
7. In its response the Panel raised questions over a number of areas including:
 - Plans for move-on, particularly amongst harder to house residents currently being housed through 'everyone in'.
 - The meaning of 'successful outcomes' in terms of homeless prevention interventions
 - The level of tenant engagement in retrofitting plans
 - The suitability of different technology for retrofitting.

The Panel wishes to make one recommendations regarding Council engagement with individuals with lived experience of rough sleeping.

Lived Experience

8. Present at the meeting were a number of tenant ambassadors, who were primarily attending to contribute to the Panel's other substantive item, on Tenant Engagement. Challenge was put to the Panel and the officers concerning the suitability of move-on accommodation for temporarily housed individuals by one tenant ambassador. There was a disconnect between the success presented in the report, and the comments made by a number of people he knew concerning the suitability of accommodation offered. This disconnect was talked through, with it being explained that for the purposes of performance monitoring successfully finding move-on accommodation was a case of finding a temporarily-housed individual a secure tenancy, and one which was financially sustainable in light of benefit entitlements.

9. A wider discussion was held, however, over Council engagement with those with lived experience in the design and provision of its homelessness-related services. The Council has previously looked to work with the Lived Experience Advisory Forum to access the views of currently and recently homeless individuals to do exactly this. However, it was recognised that engagement is not a 'do and forget' activity, but an ongoing process, and whilst the Council had worked well previously to engage those with lived experience of homelessness, the huge pressures on the team caused by 'everyone in' and the additional challenges of social distancing meant such engagement had been reduced. The Panel requests, therefore, that as the abnormal workloads arising from the Covid response begin to ease, and restrictions on in-person interactions are reduced, that the Council begins again to re-engage with those with lived experience, through the Lived Experience Advisory Forum or other relevant means.

Recommendation 1: That the Council, as Covid restrictions ease, increases the breadth and depth of its engagement with the Lived Experience Advisory Forum and other similar groups in shaping Council homelessness services.

Further Consideration

10. The Housing and Homelessness Panel has requested that a quarterly dashboard of key performance metrics to form a standing item on its agenda. This dashboard is likely to replace consideration of future Housing Performance reports.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Panel made on 02/09/2021 concerning Housing Performance Q1

Provided by the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security, and Housing the Homeless, Councillor Diko Blackings

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>1) That the Council, as Covid restrictions ease, increases the breadth and depth of its engagement with the Lived Experience Advisory Forum and other similar groups in shaping Council homelessness services.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Working with LEAF and others with lived experience to inform and help shape homelessness services is vitally important. The pandemic has made engagement more difficult, but has continued over the past year including: informing the specification for the new countywide rough sleeping and single homelessness service and Housing First support service, contributing to the developing Housing and Homelessness Strategy, and working with LEAF and King’s College London to put together a team of peer assessors to conduct the qualitative evaluation of the Step-down housing service which is part of the Out of Hospital project.</p> <p>We are committed to continue to build on this engagement, including involving LEAF in the next stages of the development of the new Housing and Homelessness Strategy, and they will be a key component of the new countywide service with representation in the governance arrangements, and a partner in ensuring the voice of service users are heard in the ongoing monitoring and development of the services.</p>

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To: Cabinet
Date: 13 October 2021
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Development of Land at South Oxford Science Village

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations concerning the Development of Land at South Oxford Science Village report
Key decision:	Yes
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Liz Wade, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Ed Turner Deputy and Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery
Corporate Priority:	Enable an inclusive economy; Deliver more, affordable housing; Support thriving communities; and Pursue a zero carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction and overview

1. At its meeting on October 2021, the Scrutiny Committee considered a report to Cabinet concerning the Council's proposed Development of Land at South Oxford Science Village.

2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery for presenting the report and answering questions, and Jenny Barker, Regeneration Manager, for authoring the report and supporting the meeting.

Summary and recommendation

3. Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning & Housing Delivery, introduced the report which provided an update on proposals for the development of land in partnership with Magdalen College and Thames Water. The report set out options for delivery of the scheme and the rationale for the preferred option.
4. Owing to the commercial sensitivity of the proposals the Committee's discussion of them was held in closed session and is reported briefly here. Issues that were considered in detail by the Committee included:
 - The working relationships between partners and degree to which there existed a shared vision
 - Clarifications over the requirements of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan
 - The impact of possible changes to building regulations at local or national level
 - Opportunities for delivering social value
5. The Committee wishes make clear that it is supportive of the overall proposals to proceed on the basis of engaging a master developer. This not only provides the most optimal balance between risk/reward and control, but it also recognises the significant draw on senior officer time of a more involved process. Alongside its overall support, however, the Committee makes four recommendations, relating to i) environmental standards, ii) delivering social value, and iii) the recommended scheme of delegation.

Environmental Standards

6. The Committee recognises that on a project such as this there are multiple strategic objectives, and that these strategic objectives can be in tension with one another. This is true even of the Council's own objectives, where there is a balance to be struck between its commitment to high environmental standards and its wish to provide more affordable housing. The particular strategic objectives of joint venture partners further amplify the complexity and need for trade-offs.
7. With its express corporate objective to pursue a zero carbon Oxford the Council's commitment to high environmental standards is expected to be more advanced than its prospective joint venture partners. The Committee understands that increased costs accruing from a higher prioritisation of environmental standards on the entire development would be liable to be reflected in the Council's contribution to costs. However, the Committee is keen that the Council's position does not entail the abandonment of its commitment to high environmental standards.

8. The multiple uncertainties and trade-offs that are to be made over the course of the development mean that the Committee recognises that it is not realistic to seek a specific commitment to environmental standards. However, it is keen that a marker be put down to recognise the particular importance of environmental standards, and a commitment be made to pursue them as far as possible within the confines posed by operating within a joint venture model and the necessity of internal strategic trade-offs.
9. One way in which the Committee feels the Council can optimise the delivery of environmental standards is to ensure that full consideration is given to what can be achieved throughout the project, and in particular at key stages. The Committee views the agreement between partners and the master developer agreement as being particularly important in this regard.

Recommendation 1: That, so far as is possible without compromising other key strategic objectives for the development, the Council affords the greatest possible weight to environmental standards and seeks that this importance is reflected at all stages of the development, including the agreement between partners and in the master developer agreement.

10. The following recommendation is similar in intention to the above, but is more specific in scope. The minimum standards to which the development can be built are the higher of national Building Regulations or those contained within the Local Plan of the relevant planning authority, in this case South Oxfordshire District Council. As noted, ambition by the Council to build beyond this minimum standard would mean incurring significant cost. The Committee is of the view, however, that there is a strong business case for the joint venture group as a whole to adopt above-minimum standards.
11. The project is of significant scale, such that it is expected to extend into the next decade. This is a period over which minimum energy standards may not remain static. Indeed, growing public consciousness of the climate emergency and the increasing proximity of net zero goals may suggest a tightening of building energy efficiency standards at a national level are likely. Equally, the recent change in administration in South Oxfordshire District is likely to be at least partially explained by environmental concerns, and which may in due course be reflected in local requirements.
12. This situation poses a risk to the joint venture should it proceed on the basis of current-minimum requirements. Any subsequent tightening would require re-planning to ensure compliance with new standards, an outcome which would be a best-case scenario. The worst case scenario could require retrofitting to meet new standards, a situation soon to be applied to the domestic lettings market. Doing so would be highly disruptive, expensive and much less financially efficient than designing and building to higher standards at the time of construction. The Committee views the provision of a buffer against this risk being realised as providing a sound business reason for the joint venture as a whole to proceed with above-minimum standards, and the Committee hopes that the Council will pursue this point with partners.

Recommendation 2: That the Council recognises the risk of national or local energy efficiency building standards rising over the course of the

development, determines a risk-adjusted baseline for energy efficiency standard for buildings on the development, and seeks to encourage partners of the business case for adopting a standard beyond current South Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan standards.

Delivering Social Value

13. The Committee recognises that the Council is one of the foremost performers amongst councils nationwide in delivering social value from its spending, ensuring that the way it spends public money maximises the generation of public good. Over the course of a development of the scale and duration such as is anticipated the difference in social outcomes between taking such an approach and not doing so is very significant. The Committee would therefore clearly welcome the application of a pro social value approach.
14. The Council, as a minority partner in a joint venture, is clearly unable to act unilaterally on this, so the Committee seeks that it work with partners to develop an agreed approach. One issue it would welcome particular thought being given to is not simply how to ensure that the master developer generates social value, but also if and how there is a way to ensure that sub-developers too can be required to contribute.

Recommendation 3: That the Council works with partners to seek to optimise social value generation throughout all the stages of the project.

Scheme of Delegation

15. The Committee noted that in the Cabinet report recommendations contained delegations to a number of officers, but no Cabinet members. This was queried and it was confirmed that the omission was made in error. The Committee recommends that this be amended.

Recommendation 4: That the Council includes the Cabinet members for Planning and Housing Delivery and Finance and Asset Management as consultees the delegations referred to in recommendations 1 – 3 the Cabinet report

Further Consideration

16. The Committee does not anticipate revisiting this topic in the current civic year. It would, however, welcome the opportunity in the future of continuing its monitoring through the Companies Scrutiny Panel membership's involvement in the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 05/10/2021 concerning the Development of Land at South Oxford Science Village

Response provided by Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, Ed Turner, and Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, Alex Hollingsworth

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<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>1) That, so far as is possible without compromising other key strategic objectives for the development, the Council affords the greatest possible weight to environmental standards and seeks that this importance is reflected at all stages of the development, including the agreement between partners and in the master developer agreement.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Council will be one of three partners who will be promoting the development of the site and for the development to progress it will need to be commercially viable; as the report sets out, different partners have different objectives, and it will be essential to achieve consensus about the degree to which these are pursued, which may require that a balance be struck between desirable elements and the essential infrastructure required for the site such as schools and road improvements as well as much needed affordable housing. It is also worth pointing out that South Oxfordshire District Council, as the planning authority, may also have requirements that the scheme and the partners will need to meet. But, as set out in the answer to recommendation 2 below, pursuing the highest possible environmental standards while being conscious of these constraints is the best way to mitigate against both the risks of changes to environmental standards and more importantly, against the risks of climate change itself.</p>
<p>2) That the Council recognises the risk of national or local energy efficiency building standards rising over the course of the development, determines a risk-adjusted baseline for energy efficiency standard for buildings on the development, and seeks to encourage partners of the business case for</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The detailed analysis of the scheme does currently include in the risk assessment the likelihood that nationally or locally set environmental standards will change, and that the timetable for any such changes is currently uncertain. The partners are aware that South Oxfordshire District Council has started worked on a new Local Plan, and has</p>

<p>adopting a standard beyond current South Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan standards.</p>		<p>made clear its aspirations to set the highest possible environmental standards in that Plan. At this early stage of course it is not certain what those standards will be and when any new Local Plan might be adopted. Nonetheless it is the Council's view as a partner in the project that the best way to mitigate this risk is pursue standards that are not just beyond those in the Building Regulations, but more importantly beyond the more rigorous standards that are a requirement of the current South Oxfordshire Local Plan.</p>
<p>3) That the Council works with partners to seek to optimise social value generation throughout all the stages of the project.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>While pursuing additional measures that impact on costs and thus viability is subject to agreement and compromise between the partners, the pursuit of social value through the development is something that adds value rather than cost, and is something therefore that the Council will promote to its partners and in particular through the appointment of the Master Developer. This is a very significant development, with great opportunities for new jobs, training and skills for local people, and the City Council would like to see this sort of social value reflected not just in the outcome of the development, but as part of the criteria against which the appointment of the Master Developer is measured.</p>
<p>4) That the Council includes the Cabinet members for Planning and Housing Delivery and Finance and Asset Management as consultees to the delegations referred to in recommendations 1 – 3 the Cabinet report</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Consultation with both Cabinet members will be added to the delegation recommendations in the report; this was a drafting error in the report, and Scrutiny are thanked for spotting it.</p>

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To: Cabinet
Date: 13 October 2021
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Oxford City Council EV Strategy

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

Appendices
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

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

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