

Supplement for

Cabinet

On **Wednesday 15 December 2021** At **6.00 pm**

Agenda Item 7 - Scrutiny Reports

Contents

7. **Scrutiny reports**

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The attached pack contains the following reports from Scrutiny to Cabinet containing their recommendations on:

- 1) Workplace Equalities
- 2) Strategic Grants
- 3) Asset Management Strategy
- 4) Air Quality Action Plan
- 5) Housing and Carbon Reduction
- 6) Tourism Review Group Progress Update

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

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To: Cabinet
Date: 15 December 2021
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Workplace Equalities and Action Plan

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations concerning the Workplace Equalities and Action Plan report
Key decision:	Yes
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Liz Wade, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Customer Focused Services
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction and overview

1. At its meeting on 08 December 2021, the Scrutiny Committee considered the Cabinet Workplace Equalities and Action Plan report.
2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet portfolio holder for Customer Focused Services, for presenting the report and answering questions, and Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement for authoring the report and supporting the meeting.

Summary and recommendation

3. Cllr Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Customer Focused Services introduced the report. Which reflected the Council's ambition to be a welcoming and inclusive employer with a diverse, representative and high performing work force. The Workforce Equality Report attached to the report fulfilled a statutory requirement and contained some positive indicators. The target for BAME employees had been exceeded and the gender pay gap decreased. There had, nonetheless, been a stagnation in the number of BAME applications and there was more which could be done in this area, especially in relation to work with schools and further education establishments.
4. There had been good progress with the recommendations made by the Committee a year previously.
5. Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement, noted that this area work was underpinned by the new People Strategy which emphasised the importance of a truly inclusive culture which would be integrated into all aspects of an employee's work life.
6. As is often the case with this topic, the Committee makes a high number of recommendations in regards to this topic. In total, six recommendations are made relating to i) understanding the equalities performance of the Council's companies, ii) internal actions to support the Action Plan, and iii) clarifying an area of uncertainty over the causes of the pay gap.

Equalities Performance in the Council's Companies

7. As referenced above, the Workplace Equalities report is one which Scrutiny is particularly engaged with, and the Committee is supportive of its production each year. Indeed, it feels that the Council could be going further.
8. The Council itself employs around 700 staff, but it is the sole shareholder in two other companies which, in total, employ almost as many people again. It is recognised by the Committee that there is a statutory responsibility on the Council to make a return for its Council staff, and that there are other arrangements for its wholly-owned companies. That point is accepted; the Council is not under a duty to do more than it currently is.
9. Scrutiny's suggestion is that the Council may actually wish to go further than the legal minimum. The Workplace Equalities and Action Plan report is viewed as an extremely worthwhile piece of work by the Committee. As the sole shareholder in two companies the Council is entitled to expect them to work in accordance with its strategic aims, and can, should it wish, require them to produce plans which support those aims. The Council, therefore, has the potential to near-double the extent of its reach if it were to tackle the issue of the diversity of the workforce of its companies. Indeed, with the fact that ODS is at present overwhelmingly staffed by white males there may be lower-hanging fruit and opportunity for greater impact.

10. Although the Committee is keen to see this being done, it recognises that to expect it too soon would be an undue burden. It suggests that the next round of Shareholder and Joint Venture Group meetings in March and April 2022 provide sufficient notice to gather, present and develop a plan to make the workforces of the Council's companies (and ODS in particular as the significantly larger employer) more reflective of the City's community. The Committee would then like to see in future years this information being published as an appendix to the Council's Workplace Equalities and Action Plan report.

Recommendation 1: That the Council considers a report providing similar details of the diversity profile of its companies, particularly ODS, and the actions being taken to ensure the workforces of these companies are reflective of the community they serve.

Recommendation 2: That the Council publishes as an appendix to next year's report the same statistics for the staff in its wholly-owned companies as it does for its own staff

Internal Actions to Support the Action Plan

11. The Committee supports the proposed Action Plan and welcomes the results that have been achieved in a challenging year, with fewer vacancies making change more difficult. In addition to what is in the Action Plan the Committee highlights a number of additional areas it feels could be of benefit to the Council in achieving a workforce more reflective of the community it serves.

12. The first point put forward is that the Council's approach is not simply passive in attracting diverse candidates for roles – making it easier for them to apply – it is proactive, taking positive steps to address inequalities. For example, the promotion of the apprenticeship scheme to create a pathway for more women and BAME joiners for junior roles, and requiring recruitment agencies to put forward a diverse field of applicants for senior roles. The Committee's view is that this proactivity itself makes a powerful statement of the Council's intention to be an inclusive employer, an attractive characteristic when trying to develop a diverse workforce.

13. The Committee would welcome it if the Council were to leverage the positive actions it is taking to attract a diverse workforce, so that they contribute not only through their direct effects but indirectly as a tool to demonstrate the suitability of the Council's as a working environment for minoritised groups. The precise means of doing this will vary in different contexts, but the Committee would welcome a focus on the outcomes, real world difference, of the positive action. This is because it provides a greater sense of momentum for those being targeted and may therefore be more effective in attracting underrepresented candidates

14. In order to be able to do this, the Council must monitor its positive action schemes. If it were to do this, the Committee suggests that there is value in

including a dedicated section in the next year's Workforce Equalities report, detailing fully the schemes launched, the schemes concluded and the results of those schemes. As the Council wishes to take active steps to recruit a representative and diverse workforce it would also benefit from knowing whether its efforts in realising that goal are being effective. Specific inclusion within the report would help bring greater focus on the area and allow iterative improvements on an important element of the Council's workforce equality plan.

Recommendation 3: That the Council, in the next year's report, provides details of the positive action schemes undertaken by the Council – those started, those completed and those planned, and their results (where relevant) – and that that information is shared with those minoritised groups the Council is targeting as being particularly unrepresented within the Council workforce

15. Appendix 1 p. 9 of the Cabinet report contains the following statistic: '33% of managers have not declared their ethnicity'. The Committee views this as concerning. The Council's monitoring of its workforce relies on having good quality data upon which to build its response. Although a third of managers not declaring is unlikely to undermine data quality on its own, two problematic issues arise. The first being that managers are not understanding how important the link is between sharing their data and the Council's efforts to employ a representative workforce, a possible indication amongst those responsible for recruitment of the seriousness of the Council's commitment in this area. The second is that if declaring is not a high priority for managers, they are unlikely to impress upon their teams the importance of responding. Whilst management reticence may not undermine data quality on its own, the cascade effect of having a third of managers not deeming responding to be a priority could begin to impair the data in the future. Consequently, the Committee recommends that this reticence amongst managers is addressed and not allowed to become an embedded trend.

Recommendation 4: That the Council makes a renewed and determined effort to persuade managers to share the details of their protected characteristics, particularly ethnicity, to ensure an increased response rate next year

16. A final area the importance which the Committee feels it necessary to bring attention to is that of monitoring the demographic profile of responses to job adverts and short-listed candidates. The Committee recognises that the Council does already do this, but wishes to underline it as an area of particular importance from which further fruitful learning may be gleaned. Given that it is already Council policy to do so, the Cabinet does not need to be convinced of its merits as a principle. Scrutiny is aware of the resource constraints that the Council is subject to and does not wish to make a recommendation which fails to recognise this. However, as parts of the formal recruitment process these provide hard data on who is applying for roles and how far they are getting in the process. This information can be used to identify bottlenecks and inform future approaches. If there is capacity within the organisation, greater resourcing would

enable greater granularity of data, and hopefully more bespoke and effective solutions for the different parts of the Council.

Recommendation 5: That the Council continues to monitor the demographic profile of responses to adverts and short-listed candidates, and supports areas which are struggling to attract appropriately-qualified diverse candidates to do so.

Clarifying the Causes of Pay Gaps

17. The final recommendation is a point of clarification. It was suggested to and agreed by the Committee that references to pay gaps could give the impression to members of the public reading that the Council paid unequal amounts for equal work, on the basis of protected characteristic status. Though the existence of pay gaps points towards underlying inequalities, which rightly the Council is seeking to address, this is very different to being proactively discriminatory. The Committee suggests that to avoid giving this impression the report should clarify that pay gaps exist as a function of the seniority and number of hours worked by people in different demographic categories, rather than unequal pay for the same work.

Recommendation 6: That the Council amends its report to clarify that the pay gaps referenced in the report are caused by differences in seniority and full time/part time working, rather than unequal pay for equal work.

Further Consideration

18. The Committee does not anticipate revisiting this topic in the current civic year.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 08/12/2021 concerning the Workplace Equalities and Action Plan

Response provided by Cabinet Member for Customer Focused Services, Councillor Mike Rowley

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council considers a report providing similar details of the diversity profile of its companies, particularly ODS, and the actions being taken to ensure the workforces of these companies are reflective of the community they serve.	Yes	Scrutiny may wish to refer this to the Companies Scrutiny Panel, as a report on the diversity of the ODS workforce would be legally and administratively separate from the Council's Equalities Report. However, I'm happy to endorse the request; this wouldn't involve a lot of extra effort since ODS does monitor and does strive to diversify its workforce.
2) That the Council publishes as an appendix to next year's report the same statistics for the staff in its wholly-owned companies as it does for its own staff	Yes	It would make sense to do this for the sake of clarity and convenience, though as stated above, the reports would be prepared separately.
3) That the Council, in the next year's report, provides details of the positive action schemes undertaken by the Council – those started, those completed and those planned, and their results (where relevant) – and that that information is shared with those minoritised groups the Council is targeting as being particularly unrepresented within the Council workforce	Yes	
4) That the Council makes a renewed and determined effort to persuade managers to share the details of their protected characteristics, particularly ethnicity, to ensure a greater response rate next year	Yes	It isn't compulsory for any Council employee to do this, but we will once again make absolutely clear that there can be no negative consequence to identifying yourself as having a protected characteristic under the Equality Act.

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<p>5) That the Council continues to monitor the demographic profile of responses to adverts and short-listed candidates, and supports areas which are struggling to attract appropriately-qualified diverse candidates to do so.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>This work is ongoing, and considerable progress is being made as this year's report shows. Efforts will continue to broaden knowledge and appeal of Council job and apprenticeship opportunities among minoritised groups and across the full diversity of Oxford's community.</p>
<p>6) That the Council amends its report to clarify that the pay gaps referenced in the report are caused by differences in seniority and full time/part time working, rather than unequal pay for equal work.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	

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To: Cabinet
Date: 15 December 2021
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Strategic Grants Review

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations concerning the Strategic Grants Review report
Key decision:	Yes
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Liz Wade, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction and overview

1. At its meeting on 08 December 2021, the Scrutiny Committee considered the Cabinet Strategic Grants Review report.
2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet portfolio holder for Inclusive Communities, for presenting the report and answering questions, and Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services, for authoring the report and supporting the meeting.

Summary and recommendation

3. Prior to the commencement of the meeting, a brief presentation was made to the Committee on behalf of some of Oxford's advice centres and in anticipation of the Strategic Grants Review item. Sue Tanner, Chair of the Board of Trustees at Rosehill and Donnington, spoke on behalf of the three local advice centres, Agnes Smith in Blackbird Leys; Barton and Rose Hill; and Donnington. She drew attention to a paper which had been distributed by them to members of the Committee in advance of the meeting. The presentation detailed the value, financial and non-financial that advice centres provide the local community. A copy of this letter can be provided to Cabinet members on request.
4. Cllr Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities, introduced the report by first thanking Sue Tanner for her presentation at the beginning of the meeting and for the important contribution made by all those who work in advice centres. The workload of advice centres had undoubtedly increased as a result of Covid, having to deal with a multitude of issues, frequently affecting the most vulnerable members of the community and particularly women. The proposals before the Committee did not seek to identify, specifically, where cuts would be made but, rather, to set out a strategy for making such decisions in due course. Comments made at this stage would help to inform the strategy.
5. Cllr Aziz was grateful for the letter which had been sent to members of the Committee on behalf of the advice centres in advance of the meeting and said she would be pleased to meet their representatives to discuss their concerns. It was agreed that this letter should inform the Budget Review group's deliberations.
6. The strategy sought to set out a new approach to grant funding which supported the following principles: equalities at the heart of the programme; recovery from Covid; tackling deprivation; and environmentally sustainable. The strategy also sought to make the process of accessing grants easier and, in particular, to facilitate access to grants by organisations/groups which had not done so previously.
7. Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services, said the need to take £200k from the overall programme was a difficult and unwelcome challenge. The review process leading to this point had been lengthy and detailed, involving conversations with as many relevant people as possible to inform the proposals now before the Committee. The contribution of advice centres was not in question, and the written submission made in advance of the Committee provided the basis of some helpful options to be explored.
8. Issues raised and discussed by the Committee included much recognition of the value of the work provide by advice centres. Some discussion was held over how to make the application system for funding more straightforward, the ability of different organisations to leverage grant funding to provide outcomes far beyond what might be expected from the outlay, the close relationship between grant funding and the Council's objectives. Greater discussion was held over the topics of the recommendations below.

9. The Committee makes a two recommendations, concerning i) balancing access to funding with providing stability, and ii) the Oxford Lottery.

Balancing Access and Stability

10. The issue of greatest discussion amongst members of the Committee concerned the issue of those groups given funding for three years. The issue raised was that groups who are funded for three years face a deep uncertainty for the final 18 months of their funding. If funding is not secure, staff will begin to drift away in favour of greater stability, which impairs the organisation's ability to undertake its work, even if that funding is subsequently renewed. The idea of annual funding rounds, which would providing a rolling three year buffer was put forward as a means of providing a longer financial horizon to organisations funded in this way.
11. Two problems were identified with this suggestion. The first being the perception amongst some voluntary and community organisations that grant funding is hard to access by those who have previously been unsuccessful. Secondly, that applying for funding, particularly for less experienced groups is a significant administrative burden, and that for some this burden outweighs the uncertainty that a possible cliff-edge to their funding brings. The Committee is aware that long-term stability and diverse access to grant funding do not sit particularly easily with one another, and that there is a degree of trade-off between the two. Whilst ease of access for all sections of the community is certainly a valuable goal, the suggestion of the Committee is that there are other means of safeguarding this, such as the weightings of grant criteria. It would be expected that a successful re-applicant would have to show strong alignment with the Council's own strategic goals, including supporting diverse communities. Consequently, the Committee suggests that, on balance, the additional robustness that greater financial stability brings, would be of greater benefit than having the potential for greater churn of groups provided with grant funding. The second point, that for some organisations, applying for funding is a burden is taken on board. The Committee's suggestion, therefore, is that three-year funded organisations are allowed, but not obliged, to apply for a further three years of funding on an annual basis.

Recommendation 1: That the Council permits (but does not oblige) organisations granted three-year grant funding to reapply for such funding on an annual basis.

Oxford Lottery

12. A relatively small recommendation, but the Committee noted that for some community groups a small amount of money can go a long way. The Oxford Lottery is a contributor to the overall sums available to the voluntary and community sector, generating £12,000 per year for qualifying local good causes. Although not a major contributor to the overall budget, the Committee would like to see this maximised as far as possible. One idea put forward to achieve that is that ticket sales could be increased if they were offered as a matter of course to those making purchases at the different shops in the Town Hall – the museum shop and the coffee shop. At present, tickets are not on sale at these places. Not

only might this presage a moderate increase in sales, but it would have the further benefit of being likely to be attracting money from outside Oxford to give to its voluntary and community sector. The Committee suggests this idea is implemented.

Recommendation 2: That the Council, makes available tickets for the Oxford Lottery at cash registers in the Town Hall, such as the museum shop and coffee shop.

Further Consideration

13. The Committee has requested that the Budget Review Group give special attention to the proposals, and a briefing note is being written up to inform this. Further, Scrutiny also wishes to consider the forthcoming report on grant allocations.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 08/12/2021 concerning the Strategic Grants Review

Response provided by Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities, Councillor Shaista Aziz

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council permits (but does not oblige) organisations granted three-year grant funding to reapply for such funding on an annual basis.	No	<p>Whilst we understand that this would give security to organisations and their other funders, it goes against the review findings in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would enable a small group of organisations to hold onto the bulk of the available funding which would make it harder for new organisations to join therefore potentially reducing access, diversity and inclusion. <p>It would reduce the timetable to change the funding scheme, making it more difficult for the council to align the grants programme to future financial challenges</p>
2) That the Council makes available tickets for the Oxford Lottery at cash registers in the Town Hall, such as the museum shop and coffee shop.	Yes	<p>Yes, we will look to do this and also explore how we can also do so in other community venues such as our community centres</p>

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To: Cabinet
Date: 15 December 2021
Report of: Finance and Performance Panel
Title of Report: Asset Management Strategy

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Finance and Performance Panel recommendations concerning the Cabinet's Asset Management Strategy report
Key decision:	Yes
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor James Fry, Chair of the Finance and Performance Panel
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Corporate 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 07 December 2021, the Finance and Performance Panel considered the forthcoming Cabinet report concerning the Asset Management Strategy.
2. The Panel would like to thank Mike Scott, Senior Estates Surveyor, for authoring and presenting the report and responding to questions, and to Emma Gubbins, Corporate Asset Lead for her support with the meeting also.

Summary and recommendation

3. Mike Scott, Senior Estates Surveyor, presented to the Panel the Cabinet report on the Asset Management Strategy .
4. The Strategy would cover the next 10 years, a change in approach from previously, where the Council had had five year plans. The key difference would be that the new arrangements would allow delineation between strategic objectives, and the plans how to achieve those objectives, enabling the Council to have a more flexible and dynamic approach. In terms of its contents, the strategy engaged with new issues, such as the impacts of Covid on the commercial property market, but was generally an evolution from previous iterations. An investment of £20m in regenerative activities would help dilute the Council's high concentration of property within the retail sector. Another issue more prominent in the strategy compared to previous documents was the activity of the Council in seeking to address the Climate Emergency. Cost-wise, the Strategy was already included within the Medium Term Financial Plan, meaning the costs formed part of the Council's existing budget.
5. Issues discussed by the Panel in response to the report presented included; exploring issues around alternative diversification possibilities, particularly housing and logistics; the importance of integration of biodiversity into projects rather than just including it in designated sites; noting the value of taking a policy view on whether to support boats as homes in the City in order to maximise the utility of the Council's waterway assets; the comparative attractiveness of the city centre as a shopping destination; the level of resource available for the implementation of the Strategy, and the degree of cross-working between Council departments to deliver it and the issues arising from the need to work within the constraints of the Local Plan.
6. The Panel wishes to make one recommendation regarding the carbon reduction strand of the policy, and the importance of phasing out gas.

Carbon Reduction

7. The draft Asset Management Strategy states in s 7.4 that 'The Council's strategic response to these challenges are not to be seen as 'nice to have' but as 'must have' if it is to deliver on our carbon goals for our operational property assets, as set out in our Carbon Management Plan.' The Panel is fully in agreement with this view. The Strategy also notes that 'gas combustion accounts for 43% of the Council's emissions. Emissions have increased due to the addition of extra properties on our estate carbon footprint and through increased usage in our leisure centres.'
8. In discussion of this the view of the Panel was that if gas usage is sufficiently deleterious to the Council's carbon reduction targets that it is specifically identified as part of the strategy, the Council ought to be meeting that issue with a commensurate response, to phase out gas usage over the medium to long term.
9. The response made by officers to this suggestion was that particular projects and properties, with their own specific needs and considerations would be

informed by the strategy goals, but the specific means of achieving those goals most effectively would be situation-specific and more appropriately dealt with as part of the Asset Management Action Plan, rather than committed to within the overall Strategy. The Panel largely takes this point, that a strategy document should not unduly fetter the Council in options to achieve its strategic aims by being excessively specific. In this instance, however, the Panel feels that with gas being such a significant contributor to Council carbon emissions, if the Council is to meet its zero carbon targets, it must address the use of gas. This is particularly the case as the Cabinet is due to reconsider its green gas purchasing policy and recommends diverting the monies for it towards 'net zero transition.' The Panel considers its suggestion to be very much consistent with this position and suggests that it is appropriate that a commitment towards phasing out the use of gas in the medium to long term is therefore included in the Asset Management Strategy.

Recommendation 1: That the Council includes within the Strategy a commitment to working towards phasing out the use of gas within its non-domestic properties over the medium to long term.

Further Consideration

10. The Panel does not anticipate revisiting this issue again directly, although a lot of the issues the strategy aims to address will remain of relevance and interest to the Panel in its consideration of other items.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Finance and Performance Panel made on 07/12/2021 concerning the Asset Management Strategy report.

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

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council includes within the Strategy a commitment to working towards phasing out the use of gas within its non-domestic properties over the medium to long term.		

To: Cabinet
Date: 15 December 2021
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Annual Air Quality Status Report (2020)

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations concerning the Annual Air Quality Status Report (2020)
Key decision:	No
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:	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 05 October 2021, the Scrutiny Committee considered a report based on the Council's Annual Air Quality Status Report for 2020.
2. The Committee would like to thank Pedro Abreu, Air Quality Officer, for authoring and presenting the report, particularly in light of Councillor Hayes' inability to attend the meeting owing to illness.

Summary and recommendation

3. Pedro Abreu, Air Quality Officer, introduced the annual report, which fulfilled a statutory duty and provided an overview of all monitoring data for the year and an update in relation to the air quality actions set out in the Council's Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2025.
4. The previous year had been atypical given the consequences of Covid and significantly reduced traffic volumes. As a result of this, for the first time since air quality monitoring started in Oxford, there were significant reductions in air pollution levels and the city had been compliant with all short and long term UK air quality objectives. The highest annual mean however continued to be in St Clements.
5. The Committee devoted significant discussion to i) understanding air quality impacts arising from Low Traffic Neighbourhood schemes (LTNs) ii) ways to work with other stakeholders to improve air quality, and iii) suggested functionality for the upcoming air quality website. On these issues it makes a total of five recommendations. Further, the Committee discussed its concern over the use of wood burning stoves. Members were assured that this would be addressed by information programmes to draw attention to the impact of their use and advice about best practice in relation to their use.

Air Quality and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

6. An issue of particular interest for the Committee is that of LTNs, and specifically whether traffic (and therefore vehicle emissions) which can no longer travel through the LTNs is being funnelled to nearby streets instead, a displacement effect. Committee members highlighted particular concern for Hollow Way as potentially experiencing this effect.
7. The Committee recognises that the current LTN in Headington is a trial. It notes that projected falls in car journeys may not happen immediately, meaning it is important that the effects are given time to show. Equally, however, it is also important that LTNs do not merely shift the negative externalities of traffic, such as poorer air quality, from one area to another. Indeed, it is quite possible that a partial reduction in traffic and a partial displacement effect could co-exist, and not inconceivable that the negatives of displacement could outweigh the benefits of a reduction in overall traffic. This situation would concentrate the burdens some households more heavily than others, oftentimes on the less well off, leading to their being asked to bear unacceptable proportions of the burdens arising from LTNs. The Committee considers this an important consideration within the overall conversation about the future of LTNs, and requests that the Council review the location of its air quality monitoring equipment to enable monitoring of areas where there is the potential of a displacement effect from LTNs. Given the public interest in this issue, the Committee suggests that all information be made publicly available to inform the discourse on the issue.

Recommendation 1: That the Council reviews the location of its air quality monitoring equipment to support the monitoring of roads where there is the possibility of displacement traffic generated by LTNs,

particularly around Hollow Way and the junction with Crescent Road, that the Council makes publicly available the findings as soon as possible if and when the Cowley, Headington and East Oxford LTNs are concluded, and that the information is also passed on to County Council colleagues.

8. Getting air quality data for streets around LTNs is necessary in identifying whether a displacement effect is occurring, but it is not sufficient. Without other sources of data it is not possible to tell whether a deterioration in air quality in streets in the vicinity of an LTN can be attributed to displacement traffic from the LTN, or from an overall growth in traffic. Members of the Committee were unsure as to whether traffic monitoring of this sort was being undertaken by the County Council in its role as the Highways authority. Given how polarising a topic LTNs are proving to be, it is the Committee's view that it is imperative that decisions made around their continuation should be evidence-led. Air quality impacts for nearby streets are an important issue within that wider conversation and the Committee seeks that the Council works with colleagues at the County Council to ensure that decisions made around it are informed by data.

Recommendation 2: That the Council seeks to work with the County Council to ensure that sufficient concurrent data is collected and shared to enable contextualised analysis of the impacts of LTNs, with particular regard to identifying whether a displacement effect is evident.

Working with Other Stakeholders

9. The Committee recognises that whilst it has a goal and a plan to reduce air pollution to below government limits, the overwhelming majority of emissions are produced outside the direct influence of the Council. As such, partnership working with other local stakeholders is vital. There are a number of institutions based locally providing a high number of jobs, and therefore a commensurate contribution to commuter travel – the universities, the hospitals, the County Council, Unipart and the Mini factory, for example. Working to ensure that such key institutions are working in tandem with the Council's own targets and plans over air quality would provide an outsized impact. The Committee suggests the Oxfordshire Strategic Partnership as the easiest means to engage such institutions, but its primary concern is that the Council is proactive in engaging and working with partners in the most effective way to ensure their strategic plans are in line with the Council's own air quality targets and aspirations.

Recommendation 3: That the Council works with the Oxfordshire Strategic Partnership to engage major local stakeholders, including the universities, in conversations with the Council about how they can incorporate air-quality positive measures into their strategic plans.

10. Whilst strategic plans and high-level activity to curb air pollution are undoubtedly important, so too is behavioural change at a local community and individual level. The Committee wishes the Council's efforts to promote this to be as effective as possible, with members keen to be able to share the educational material

produced by the Air Quality team throughout their own community networks. It is requested, therefore, that these graphics are made available to all councillors as they are produced with the encouragement that they be shared further.

Recommendation 4: That the Council makes available to all councillors all educational graphics developed by the Air Quality team for further sharing with community organisations.

Website Functionality

11. The Committee approves of proposals to launch a new community air quality website to provide greater transparency over air quality throughout the city. One function felt to be of particular benefit is to allow members of the public to subscribe to real time air quality alerts. Given that traffic volume is not the sole determinant of air pollution on a given day, it is not necessarily easy to tell when it has reached a level where behaviour may need to be adjusted for health reasons. This is particularly important for those with particular vulnerability to air pollution, such as those with breathing problems, the elderly and the young. Real time alerts would provide objective data to enable such people to make choices beneficial to their health. Discussions at the meeting indicated that there were not technical barriers to adding this function to the website, in which case the Committee recommends that it is.

Recommendation 5: That the Council builds a function into the new community Air Quality website to enable members of the public to subscribe to real time air quality alerts

Further Consideration

12. The Committee does not anticipate revisiting this topic in the current civic year.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 05/10/2021 concerning the Annual Air Quality Status Report (2020)

Response provided by Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, Councillor Tom Hayes

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<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>1) That the Council reviews the location of its air quality monitoring equipment to support the monitoring of roads where there is the possibility of displacement traffic generated by LTNs, particularly around Hollow Way and the junction with Crescent Road, that the Council makes publicly available the findings as soon as possible if and when the Cowley, Headington and East Oxford LTNs are concluded, and that the information is also passed on to County Council colleagues.</p>		<p>This is already in progress. The effects of LTNs on Holloway road is currently being monitored in 2 locations: south, close to intersection with Garsington Road; and also to the north – Hollow Way road and The Slade area –here looking at potential traffic displacement in that area.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council is making a preliminary evaluation of the Cowley LTNs, and that the impact of LTNs on air quality, displaced vehicle traffic and active travel modes will be introduced in the evaluation. The assessment will also try to estimate the specific contribution of the pandemic to air quality and traffic levels in these areas and during the period of interest, so that the impacts caused by LTNs alone can be isolated and properly quantified –the results of this evaluation are expected to be shared with everyone. The air quality elements of the analysis will be provided by Oxford City Council to Oxfordshire County Council.</p> <p>Working with Oxfordshire County Council we will then review the location of air quality monitoring equipment in this area.</p>

<p>2) That the Council seeks to work with the County Council to ensure that sufficient concurrent data is collected and shared to enable contextualised analysis of the impacts of LTNs, with particular regard to identifying whether a displacement effect is evident.</p>		<p>This is already in progress. Oxford City Council's air quality officer has been working with County Council Colleagues since early March 2021 on the development of monitoring plans that could assess the impacts of LTNs.</p> <p>LTN geographical areas were compared against the areas where air quality monitoring was currently being conducted by the City Council, to identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Locations where OCCs current AQ monitoring network does not provide adequate coverage + where LTN impacts are expected to be greater. This included: · Locations inside LTN designated areas · Locations on the outskirts of LTN areas but with the potential to suffer from traffic displacement caused by LTNs <p>The analysis above has allowed to identify 16 black spots: i.e. extra locations that were not currently being covered by the city's air quality network and that were considered relevant to assess the impacts of LTNs and hence where air quality should start being monitored.</p> <p>Those locations were: <u>Prince St, East Oxford Primary, Morrel Avenue, Divinity Road, Quarry School, Gladstone Road, Wharton Road, Ruskin Hall, Woodlands Road, Latimer Road, Saint Christopher School, Howard Street, Quarry Road, Valentia Road, Hurst St, The Slade</u></p> <p>New diffusion tubes were installed and monitoring started at the end of March 2021 at these locations. Monitoring at this locations is still ongoing</p>
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<p>3) That the Council works with the Oxfordshire Strategic Partnership to engage major local stakeholders, including the universities, in conversations with the Council about how they can incorporate air-quality positive measures into their strategic plans.</p>		<p>This is already in progress. There has been engagement with city centre colleges and businesses with regards to last mile deliveries, and also via the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership. This partnership work will continue as ZEZ work progresses</p>
<p>4) That the Council makes available to all councillors all educational graphics developed by the Air Quality team for further sharing with community organisations.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Agreed. Meanwhile, useful air quality information (including access to latest air quality data, reports, air quality action plan, and access to air quality factsheets on air quality data interpretation, bonfires, idling, smoke control areas) , and some raising awareness projects such as STOP, anti-Idling campaign, etc can also be find directly in our website here: https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20052/air_quality</p>
<p>5) That the Council builds a function into the new community Air Quality website to enable members of the public to subscribe to real time air quality alerts</p>		<p>Under consideration. This is already being considered by the project team</p>

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To: Cabinet
Date: 15 December 2021
Report of: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Title of Report: Housing and Carbon Reduction

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Housing and Homelessness Panel recommendations concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned report on Housing and Carbon Reduction
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; Zero Carbon Oxford
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 06 October 2021, the Housing and Homelessness Panel considered a report it had commissioned concerning Housing and Carbon Reduction.
2. The Panel would like to thank Malcolm Peek, Property Services Manager, for authoring the report and attending the Panel meeting to present it and respond to questions.
3. This report was not submitted to Cabinet in November to allow the relevant Cabinet portfolio-holder to respond in person.

Summary and recommendation

4. Malcolm Peek, Property Services Manager, presented a Panel-requested report on Housing and the Low Carbon Agenda.
5. The Council had a target of ensuring that 95% of its homes were rated no lower than a C on EPC ratings by 2030. Some government funding was being used to support this, with Local Authority Delivery and Social Housing Decarbonisation Funds being accessed as available. The bulk of the work was progressing, however, without government funding and a budget of £7m was available to 2030 to cover the work required to bring approximately 2500 Council-owned homes up to a C rating. Current focus was on procuring external expert advice on the works required, which would then be profiled into a programme. Surveys were anticipated to be completed by March 2022. Typical solutions would include fabric-first solutions such as internal and external insulation, draft-proofing, but also possibly other solutions such as solar and installation of heat pumps.
6. The Panel's key area of discussion in response was over tenant engagement with the process, which is detailed further below. Beyond this, it also challenged the degree of disruption that the works would cause tenants, and welcomed reports that there would be very little need to decant tenants. Government funding was also discussed further, and the Panel agrees with the proposed approach and its rationale, to seek government funding wherever possible, but to recognise that government funding is often time or technology specific. As such, it is unlikely that the Council's plans and government funding will align closely enough to rely on, and the Council should therefore prioritise delivering the improvements, doing so to its own programme and willing to fund it, and take any cross-overs as serendipitous.
7. As alluded to above, the Panel wishes to make three recommendations regarding Council engagement with tenants over the improvements to the energy efficiency of their homes.

Tenant Engagement

8. The retrofitting of around 2500 properties is large undertaking, which has the potential to change the way that a significant number of tenants use and enjoy their homes. The scale of the project and the importance to tenants of a pleasant home environment means that, to the Panel's view, strong tenant engagement throughout is particularly important. In the report that the Panel received there was an appendix detailing the Council's campaign plan, which consists of a letter-writing exercise with in-person follow-ups for non-responders over a course of three months with a view to securing details of those interested in having their homes upgraded. The Panel agrees with the need for this, but suggests there is opportunity for greater tenant empowerment and self-determination if more collaborative working is established at the outset.
9. The Panel was informed that it is the Council's policy to pursue a fabric first approach, seeking to make homes more efficient before changing the way

homes are heated. Switching from gas to electric would, unless other measures were also taken, such as solar, increase energy costs for heating. As such, it is likely that there will be a lot of replacements to doors and windows. Similarly, if internal wall insulation is required, this will require redecoration. Whilst for the Council the outcome of the retrofitting is the primary concern, for tenants the finishings might be of greater importance, and the Panel is keen that the ability to shape this is improved by involvement at an early stage.

10. Not all changes will be made to individual homes; blocks of flats are likely to have at least some work undertaken on a block level. The Panel would wish to see tenant representatives consulted to ensure these works also progress with tenant support. Establishing such consultee networks is not quickly done, which is a further reason for early involvement.
11. There is, however, a more fundamental point to be made, which is that spending from the HRA is spending of tenant's rent monies. Collaborating on finishings and what is to be delivered is worthwhile, but it remains fairly limited in terms of autonomy. The ability to choose *who* will undertake work is also an important function of self-determination and the Panel is keen this is promoted as far as possible. This is already work done by the Tenant Involvement Team, who get informed tenant input into responding to tenders, so it is felt that doing so in this instance would be fairly straightforward.

Recommendation 1: That the Council works with the Tenant Involvement Team to ensure tenant engagement is sought and incorporated into the Council's work plans for improving the energy efficiency of its housing stock at the earliest stage. Areas of engagement to include both work with individual households and multi-household representatives for wider-ranging issues

12. Related to the point above is another, more specific one. In its discussion the Panel noted that individuals with disabilities or who have mental health difficulties face greater risks when changes are made to the ways in which their homes are lived in. Specific consideration of their situation and particular needs is necessary in order to avoid disproportionate negative consequences arising from poor choices. For instance, someone who is at home almost all the time may benefit from a heating system designed to be always on, such as a heat pump and solar. Someone who also medically requires that their household is kept at a high temperature may find a heat pump not so useful a solution if it has insufficient heat generation during a cold snap. Loss of room space from internal insulation could be particularly problematic for people who are mobility-impaired. In each situation, what might be a standard (and reasonable) response for a person without disability or mental health problem could lead to significant detriment, be it financially, health-wise, or in terms of the functionality of their home. The Panel is concerned that without specific training or other provision to support these people they risk getting a substandard service in designing the upgrade of their new home, or they may choose not to engage at all. As such, the Panel wishes to underline the importance of providing dedicated provision for people in this situation to ensure they get informed advice on the best changes to make to their homes.

Recommendation 2: That the Council makes specific provision to support those with disabilities or mental health problems to engage in discussions about the most appropriate changes to their homes.

13. As the ultimate 'owner' of the reports from its Panels, the Scrutiny Committee is responsible, where time permits, for signing off reports made from its Panel to Cabinet. The following recommendation was added at the request of the Scrutiny Committee in the sign-off process.
14. Specifically in relation to heat pumps, but potentially other technologies as well, the Committee expounded upon the theme of energy efficiency upgrades impacting the way in which tenants live in their own homes. The efficiencies of heat pumps, for example, are not to be found in finding a more efficient way to replicate the status quo; they approach heating differently, with lower, but typically more constant heat emissions. As a consequence, to feel the benefits it is necessary that the tenant modify their behaviour, and without that behavioural change the tenant may find themselves in a less pleasant environment than before the switch. It was suggested that this was an experience for at least some tenants in a heat pump pilot at Rose Hill. Similarly, growing accustomed to the working of new technology could prove flummoxing to some even if they understand and are willing to follow the best course of action, with similar negative consequences. The Committee is keen to see that this adaptation to the requirements of new technology is successfully navigated, and seeks therefore that ongoing support is made available for those who have technological solutions fitted to understand and implement these changes.

Recommendation 3: That the Council provides ongoing support to those with new technology fitted to their homes to understand and implement the changes those technologies require to realise their full benefits.

Further Consideration

15. The Housing and Homelessness Panel is unlikely to consider this item directly again during the civic year. Scrutiny, however, will continue to focus on issues of sustainability in the stock being developed through the Companies Scrutiny Panel.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Panel made on 06/10/2021 concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned report on Housing and Carbon Reduction

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

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<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council works with the Tenant Involvement Team to ensure tenant engagement is sought and incorporated into the Council's work plans for improving the energy efficiency of its housing stock at the earliest stage. Areas of engagement to include both work with individual households and multi-household representatives for wider-ranging issues	Yes	Housing Management have made a budget bid for two Customer Experience Officer roles in addition to the Energy Advice officer role currently in place. These Customer Experience roles will have a wide range of engagement activities which will include the carbon reduction projects
2) That the Council makes specific provision to support those with disabilities or mental health problems to engage in discussions about the most appropriate changes to their homes.	Yes	Through the engagement activities, officers will speak to those with disabilities or mental health problems about their individual needs, including any adjustments that might be needed. This will include identifying any unmet support needs and actively working with relevant support agencies throughout the whole process.
3) That the Council provides ongoing support to those with new technology fitted to their homes to understand and implement the changes those technologies require to realise their full benefits.	Yes	We will continue to support residents with any changes to technology within their homes, including Contractor demonstrations on how to operate items such as Heating, hot water etc. on a one to one basis upon completion of any works.

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To: Cabinet
Date: 15 December 2021
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Tourism Review Recommendations Update

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned Tourism Review Recommendations Update
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Liz Wade, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Mary Clarkson, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities, Enable and Inclusive Economy, Pursue 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 08 September 2021, the Scrutiny Committee considered a report to Cabinet concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned Tourism Review Recommendations Update. This report is delayed in being presented to Cabinet owing to an officer oversight.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Mary Clarkson, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism for presenting the report and answering questions,

Iain Nicholson, City Centre Manager, for supporting the meeting and Matt Peachey, Economic Development Manager, for authoring the report.

Summary and recommendation

3. Councillor Andrew Gant addressed the Committee concerning this item at the start of the meeting in his capacity as the Chair of the Tourism Management Review Group. The review had been a good piece of work with which he was proud to have been involved. Covid-19 had, inevitably, had a profound impact on tourism, as recognised by the update report. This was a matter which warranted more active engagement and the update provided an opportunity to ask that Cabinet revisit the report and recommendations and he urged the Committee to make a recommendation to that effect.
4. Councillor Mary Clarkson, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism, introduced the report. Inevitably much of the work in this area had come to a halt as result of Covid-19. The Council had continued to work with Experience Oxfordshire and provided £50,000 to help support the visitor economy until March 2023. It was unlikely that the Council would be in a position to provide further funding to Experience Oxfordshire which was, now, moving towards operating on a more commercial basis. The emerging Oxford Economic Strategy and City Centre Action Plan would include recovering and rebuilding the visitor economy as a priority. Visitor numbers had plummeted as a result of the pandemic and were currently estimated to be just 15% of the number in 2019 and were anticipated to reach 50% of the number in 2022. Work on identifying alternative arrangements for the delivery of visitors by coach was continuing with the County Council, with a site near the Westgate being considered as an additional drop off location to help ease pressure on St Giles. It would not, however, be meaningful to conduct a consultation (for which funding was available) on options given the atypically low number of coach arrivals at the present time. Officers were working to find a suitable premises for a visitor centre in the hope of finding someone willing to run it on a private and commercial basis. A fundamental challenge was to persuade visitors to spend more time and money in the city. The majority of visitors were estimated to spend no more than 90 minutes in the city. The recent opening of hotels in and close to the city should be help with that.
5. In response, issues that were considered in detail by the Committee included:
 - Parking arrangements for coaches
 - Recent developments in the idea of a cable car running from Redbridge Park and Ride to the City Centre
 - The expected timing of the City Centre Action Plan
 - The future of Experience Oxfordshire
 - Toilet provision in the City Centre
 - Activities relating to the Waterways
6. The Committee makes four recommendations: two made at the meeting relating to i) the environmental impact of tourist traffic to Oxford, and ii) the availability of public toilets in the City Centre, and two subsequently which relate to the benefits

of promoting domestic tourism, and evaluating the impact of Covid and recent policy announcements on previous recommendations made by Scrutiny to the Cabinet.

Environmentally Sustainable Tourist Transport

7. A significant proportion of the discussion held by Scrutiny, evidencing a widespread concern, was over issues relating to making tourist transport to Oxford more environmentally sustainable. With the majority of visitors spending not more than 90 minutes in Oxford, the environmental cost of coming to Oxford has a short period in which to be amortised by other corresponding benefits. This makes it incredibly important, particularly in light of the high ratio of visitors to residents, that the environmental impact of tourist transport is managed as much as possible. The Committee were particularly interested in the new plans for coach parking away from St Giles, the future impacts of the Zero Emissions Zone on coach traffic, and issues of accessibility from the train station to the City Centre. The Committee was also given an update on the previously-mooted idea around a cable car, running from Redbridge Park and Ride to the City Centre, which had recently had a developer come forward with a proposal alongside the world's primary cable car manufacturer. Multiple other meetings with civic, business and environmental groups had also taken place.
8. The Committee recognises that there is a wide matrix of stakeholders responsible for the environmental sustainability of visitor transport to Oxford, with the County Council, bus and coach providers being key. The City Council does not fall within this group who hold primary responsibility, making it more difficult to make direct interventions. However, the Council is not without the ability to influence –its planning policies, the OxWED development, and its joint-working with those key partners on other environmentally-focused traffic initiatives are all opportunities for the Council to press for policies which will promote more environmentally sustainable visitor transport. The Committee asks that the Council give full thought as to how this influence can be maximised.

Recommendation 1: That the Council plans how it will work with those responsible for tourist travel to Oxford more environmentally sustainable

Public Toilets in the City Centre

9. The second issue raised by the Committee is one which Scrutiny has previously made recommendations concerning. A recommendation made by the Companies Scrutiny Panel meeting of 13 March 2020 requested that “the Council tasks the City Centre Manager to reinvigorate and republicise its previous scheme for allowing members of the public to use shop toilets in the City Centre and the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group requires ODS to coordinate with these efforts and capitalise on any benefits accordingly.”
10. This recommendation was made just days before the country went into its first Covid-19 lockdown, meaning the response by the executive was not provided until June 2020, supporting it. Clearly, however, the disruption of Covid has lasted far longer than almost all people anticipated, making it impractical to implement this recommendation. However, the paucity of public toilet provision in the City Centre remains. Although tourist numbers are currently low relative to pre-pandemic levels, this remains an urgent issue for a proportion of those

visitors. It is the view of the Committee that the period when visitors have not returned in the same numbers is an apposite time to commence the groundwork for a scheme, in readiness for when they do.

11. The Committee does recognise that Covid does pose additional challenges to such a scheme. However, it also recognises that decreased footfall is problematic for City Centre businesses, and that similar schemes elsewhere have reported business increasing from participation. In light of the need for access to toilets, the fact that toilet use (and therefore risk) would mainly be displaced rather than reduced if the scheme were not offered, and the positive impact on business for those participating, on balance the Committee supports the revival of the partnership with City Centre shops to provide a toilet scheme.

Recommendation 2: That the Council revives its partnership with City Centre shops to provide a toilet scheme.

Domestic Tourism

12. As referenced in the summary, the following recommendations were made by the Scrutiny Committee not during the meeting at which the original report was considered, but when signing off the draft of this report.
13. Since the report was considered in September, the national and international situation with Covid-19 has deteriorated significantly. Much of the country had received vaccinations which offered a high degree of protection from Covid, and the general trajectory was positive, with a sense that normality (or at least a new normality) would be restored in due course. The emergence of the Omicron variant has significantly altered this trajectory, with the efficacy of vaccinations reducing against the new variant and additional measures reintroduced to limit its spread.
14. One of the most significant changes concerns the ease of international travel, with the reintroduction of stricter quarantine requirements. This is clearly expected to have a negative impact on the number of foreign tourists for some while into the future; even if the Omicron variant were to be brought under control there would likely be reluctance to commit to overseas travel for some considerable time whilst the threat of new variants (and new travel restrictions) remained. As such, the view of the Committee is that efforts to promote Oxford as a destination to international travellers is unlikely to be effective at present, and that domestic tourism – with its lower financial and time commitment, and greater flexibility – is likely to be more fruitful. The Committee recommends that the Council, along with its partners, devotes its attention to attracting domestic tourists to Oxford rather than overseas ones.

Recommendation 3: That the Council in its work with partners, pursues a renewed focus on attracting domestic tourists to Oxford

Reviewing the Effects of Covid and Other Changes

15. As is illustrated by the point above, Covid has had, and continues to have, a hugely disruptive effect on local tourism. The landscape has changed inordinately over two years.
16. In spring 2019 Scrutiny's Tourism Review Group convened, generating 21 recommendations across a series of key issues facing tourism in Oxford, including the need for a vision, coach management and transport planning, tourism levies and revenue generation, tourism products and events, and public realm and access improvements. The view of the Committee is that the Review Group engaged with key strategic issues for Oxford, which have remained of relevance despite the changing landscape. The recommendations made, however, were based on the pre-Covid environment and much has changed since.
17. At the time this report was heard by the Scrutiny Committee the Oxford Economic Strategy and City Centre Action Plan were both being worked on but were incomplete. Many of the questions the Scrutiny Committee wished to ask about the Council's course of action in relation to particular Tourism Review Group recommendations were provisional, subject to the publication of these two documents, or were unable to be answered at all. Now that this major piece of work has been undertaken and the Council has a clear policy and strategy framework within which tourism issues stand, that post-Covid re-evaluation is possible. The Committee suggests that the Tourism Review Group was a strong engagement with the key strategic issues facing tourism in the city, and its recommendations were an effort to address these. Whilst some recommendations may be unworkable in the new environment, some may have become more important. The view of the Committee, however, is that this work was of sufficient weight as not to be simply left behind by Covid, and that there is significant value in the Council re-engaging with these recommendations and reviewing its previous responses to them in light of the vast changes that have occurred since.

Recommendation 4: That the Council reviews and updates its responses to the recommendations made by the Tourism Review Group in light of the changes of Covid and the proposed Oxford Economic Strategy and City Centre Action Plan.

Further Consideration

18. Whilst Scrutiny is unlikely to consider a further update report this civic year on the Tourism Review, it will be considering an update on the Waterways in the new year, an important element of which relates to their contribution to culture, heritage and tourism.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 08/09/2021 concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned Tourism Review Recommendations Update

Response provided by Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Mary Clarkson

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council plans how it will work with those responsible for tourist travel to Oxford more environmentally sustainable	Yes	
2) That the Council revives its partnership with City Centre shops to provide a toilet scheme.	Yes	
3) That the Council, in its work with partners, pursues a renewed focus on attracting domestic tourists to Oxford	Yes	
4) That the Council reviews and updates its responses to the recommendations made by the Tourism Review Group in light of the changes of Covid and the proposed Oxford Economic Strategy and City Centre Action Plan.	Yes	

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