

# Supplement for

# Cabinet

On **Wednesday 13 December 2023 At 6.00 pm**

## Agenda Item 7 - Scrutiny Reports

### Contents

#### 7. Scrutiny Reports

3 - 38

The Scrutiny Committee met on 4 December 2023, the Climate & Environment Panel met on 29 November 2023, the Housing & Homelessness Panel met on 5 December 2023 and the Finance & Performance Panel met on 6 December 2023. The following reports are expected, together with any other recommendations from those meetings:

- Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23
- Equalities Update
- LGA Corporate Peer Review – Council Action Plan
- Review of Glyphosate use by Oxford Direct Services to manage weeds on behalf of Oxford City Council
- City of Sanctuary Accreditation
- Integrated Performance Report Q2 2023/24
- Treasury Management Mid-Year Report

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:** 13 December 2023  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Authority Monitoring Statement and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23

Summary and recommendations	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Lucy Pegg, Scrutiny Committee Chair
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	All
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24; Local Plan 2036
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b>	

Appendices	
<b>Appendix A</b>	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

## Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 04 December 2023 to consider a report concerning the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 13 December 2023, recommends that Cabinet approves the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23 for publication and delegates authority to the Planning Policy and Place Manager to make any necessary minor corrections which do not materially affect the document prior to publication.
2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Upton (Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities), Rachel Williams (Planning Policy and Place Manager), Alexander Sutton (Planner), Lorraine Freeman (CIL, Data Analysis and Reporting Team Leader) and Lan Nguyen (Senior Data Analyst) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

## Summary and recommendations

3. Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities introduced the report. The Authority Monitoring Report was a statutory requirement providing information as to the extent to which the policies set out in the Local Plan 2036 were being achieved and on the implementation of the Local Development Scheme. The Infrastructure Funding Statement was a statutory requirement which summarised the amount of developer contributions (Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 (S106)) obtained, allocated and spent by the Council in the 2022/23 financial year.
4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to student numbers and exclusions when calculating those numbers; the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student numbers; scope for the Council to cap the number of students at other educational institutions which are not universities (e.g. sixth forms, language schools, colleges etc.); the monitoring of dwelling permissions versus dwelling completions each year; and heritage assets.
5. In particular, the Committee discussed the data trajectory surrounding student numbers in the City and was interested to know the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on that trajectory, as there was a clear decrease in the number of students from 2020/21. The Committee was advised that it would be difficult to compare numbers of students pre-COVID-19 versus post-COVID-19 as the definition of students captured by the student threshold had changed; which would make the collection of comparative data impractical and would be unlikely to lead to an accurate, and therefore useful, comparison. The Committee accepted the impracticalities surrounding such a comparison, but noted that it would be helpful for future iterations of the report to set out the change in definition of students captured by the student threshold at the boundary where it changed so that it was clearly identifiable – and would avoid the same questions being raised by the Committee year-on-year.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council sets out the change in definition of students captured by the student threshold at the boundary where it changed in future iterations of the Authority Monitoring Report.***

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## Appendix A

### Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 04 December 2023 concerning the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
1) That the Council sets out the change in definition of students captured by the student threshold at the boundary where it changed in future iterations of the Authority Monitoring Report.	Yes	<p>Additional clarity will be provided in future versions of the Authority Monitoring Report adding to the note of both Figure 1 (University of Oxford Students) and Figure 2 (Oxford Brookes students) on pages 60 and 61 of the AMR as follows:</p> <p><b><i>Note:</i></b> Student numbers contributing to the threshold for 2020/21 onwards have been redefined according to the Local Plan 2036 definition and only include full-time, taught-course students. Please refer to Appendix 3.5 in the Local Plan to see the full list of student exclusions.</p>

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 13 December 2023  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Equalities Update

Summary and recommendations	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Lucy Pegg, Scrutiny Committee Chair
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	All
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b>	

Appendices	
<b>Appendix A</b>	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

## Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 04 December 2023 to consider a report concerning an Equalities Update. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 13 December 2023, recommends that Cabinet approves the Workforce Equality Report 2023 and reports on the Gender Pay Gap, Ethnicity Pay Gap and Disability Pay Gap for 2023; along with granting delegated authority to the Head of Business Improvement to publish the relevant documents.
2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Chapman (Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies), Helen Bishop (Head of Business Improvement) and Gail Malkin (Head of People) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

## Summary and recommendations

3. Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies introduced the report. The report was an annual update containing information that the Council was obliged to publish every year in accordance with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. The reporting formed part of the Council's overall People Strategy, which defined the Council's workforce ambition; and ongoing work was being done to improve the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion lens that the Council was applying as part of the People Strategy.
4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to minority ethnic group representation within the workforce; number of applications versus appointments of individuals from minority ethnic groups; reflections on whether the workforce reflects the diversity of Oxford's local population; reporting on the sexual orientation pay gap; support for staff identifying as Trans and/or Non-Binary; staff engagement with 'Lunch and Learn' sessions; targets relating to workforce representation; key achievements in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the past year; staff recruitment and retention; career trajectories within the Council of individuals from minority ethnic groups; the availability of comparative benchmarking data from other local authorities; Oxford Direct Services' Gender Pay Gap; the definition of the 'Economically Active Population' of Oxford; and ensuring the Council is a welcoming and inclusive workplace.
5. In particular, the Committee discussed the reported increase in applications from individuals from minority ethnic groups but noted there had been no notable increase in ethnic minority group representation within the Council's workforce. The Committee was interested in understanding the point at which these applications were unsuccessful and agreed that the Council could do more to gather data on this, which would aid improvements over subsequent years.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council surveys unsuccessful job applicants relating to equalities issues and surveys appointing managers as to why unsuccessful applicants were not recruited in order to improve the Council's data and insight into workforce equalities issues at the recruitment stage.***

6. The Committee also noted that the Council had a target of 15% by 2024 for representation of minority ethnic groups in the workforce, but during discussion agreed that if a more ambitious target was set then the pace of improving representation of minority ethnic groups within the workforce would increase.

***Recommendation 2: That the Council sets a higher, more ambitious target for the representation of minority ethnic groups within the workforce to increase the pace of improving representation.***

7. During discussion on ethnic minority and religious representation within the workforce, the Committee agreed that it was imperative for the Council to identify, review and address any cultural and physical barriers to recruitment – for example availability of prayer rooms for staff who follow the Islamic faith. The Committee was of the view that particular attention should be paid to the reasons for under-



representation within the workforce of Muslim staff and how any barriers to recruitment and retention of Muslim staff could be identified and addressed.

***Recommendation 3: That the Council explores the reasons for under-representation of Muslim staff within the workforce and works to identify and address barriers to the recruitment and retention of Muslim staff.***

8. The Committee noted that, following a recommendation made in the previous year, the Council had introduced Trans and Non-Binary options for personal data collected via application forms and workforce monitoring. On reflection, the Committee agreed that it would be appropriate to expand the Trans option to include an option to select Trans Man or Trans Woman, rather than just Trans in a broad sense.

***Recommendation 4: That the Council expands the gender identity options within its application forms and workforce monitoring to include options for Trans Man and Trans Woman.***

9. When discussing current recruitment practices, the Committee noted responses to questions that, when applicants applied for a role at the Council through submitting a CV as opposed to the online application form, the Council did not collect Equality, Diversity and Inclusion data from those applicants. The Committee agreed that this data should be routinely collected, regardless of whether an applicant applied through submitting a CV or an online application form.
10. The Committee also noted that many workplaces anonymised applications during shortlisting processes, however this was not a practice currently employed by the Council. The Committee agreed that anonymising applications would be beneficial to the Council's recruitment processes in order to avoid biases.

***Recommendation 5: That the Council routinely collects Equality, Diversity and Inclusion data from all job applicants, regardless of the application route they take (e.g. CV or online application form).***

***Recommendation 6: That the Council anonymises job application forms during the shortlisting process for all applications going forward.***

11. The Committee was interested in the career trajectory over time of individuals within the workforce and, during discussion, agreed that it would be helpful for the Council to map (anonymised) career trajectory over time for individuals with a protected characteristic so that opportunities for progression and retention within the organisation in relation to equalities and representation could be understood in a broad sense. It was noted that this could be a difficult piece of work to get right, however the Committee was of the view that it was worth exploring how this could be done.

***Recommendation 7: That the Council maps the career trajectory over time for individuals within the workforce with a protected characteristic; to include information such as length of service, pay grade, age and protected characteristic.***

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## Appendix A

### Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 04 December 2023 concerning the Equalities Update. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1) That the Council surveys unsuccessful job applicants relating to equalities issues and surveys appointing managers as to why unsuccessful applicants were not recruited in order to improve the Council's data and insight into workforce equalities issues at the recruitment stage.	No	<p>Given our existing resources and the many new initiatives outlined in the Workplace Equalities Plan for 2024/25, we cannot commit to this in the next 12 months. There would be an additional cost of producing and delivering an online survey: it would be impractical and time consuming to do a manual survey. The survey could not be totally anonymous as we would need to track feedback by vacancy. This may put people off from being honest if they were interested in other roles.</p> <p>It is a great suggestion as it would be valuable to gather feedback. This may be something we can look at in the future when our online recruitment process is operating effectively. At present, we are trying to fix basic processes.</p>
2) That the Council sets a higher, more ambitious target for the representation of minority ethnic groups within the workforce to increase the pace of improving representation.	Yes	This is planned. Background work is complete and a suitable target needs now to be agreed by the senior leadership team and our Portfolio Lead.
3) That the Council explores the reasons for under-representation of Muslim staff within the workforce and works to identify and address barriers to the recruitment and retention of Muslim staff.	Yes	We can do some work around this by consulting with existing staff and our new staff network to identify barriers and possible solutions.
4) That the Council expands the gender identity options within its application forms and workforce monitoring to include options for Trans Man and Trans Woman.	Yes <i>depending on key staff feedback</i>	When groups are small, careful thought is needed around how far to go with the level of information gathered. There is a benefit to collecting this data and some individuals are likely to welcome the greater

		recognition of the two different groups of trans man and trans woman but some individuals may be uncomfortable sharing the extra layer of detail. I suggest we consult our LGBTQ+ staff network on this issue and take advice from Inclusive Employers as we are a member. If we believe it is the right thing to do after taking advice and staff soundings, then we will go ahead.
5) That the Council routinely collects Equality, Diversity and Inclusion data from all job applicants, regardless of the application route they take (e.g. CV or online application form).	Yes <i>but in the longer term</i>	<p>The data is certainly important and will help us identify issues or bias in selection processes. However, we should look for an online solution where applicants register with us and then submit a CV. We can look at whether we can deliver this with our current system in the future. There may be an extra cost associated with system changes as our system supplier may need to support any change.</p> <p>Our aim is to have a straightforward process for all applicants and that all applicants will apply online through our website. We wish to automate the process as much as possible. This will include collecting applicant personal data upfront and having managers shortlist online. Progress has been hindered because we have had a systems administrator vacancy for over 12 months but now have filled the post. There is an additional cost to deliver improvements to our system as we will need input from our software provider and we have made provision/a proposal in the capital budget.</p>
6) That the Council anonymises job application forms during the shortlisting process for all applications going forward.	Yes	This is something we have already explored and can't deliver right now. We will pick this up with the planned system review of how we manage recruitment. I am not sure when we will be able to deliver this but it is the right thing to do to reduce bias in the selection process.
7) That the Council maps the career trajectory over time for individuals within the workforce with a protected characteristic; to include information such as length of	No	We can look at whether we can report from our current HR system but this is a complex task as some people leave, the typical service/time with the authority will vary

service, pay grade, age and protected characteristic.		according to professional group and career pathways are clear in some areas and less clear in others. We can start by looking at more detailed workforce profiling but I would suggest this is not a priority for the team right now as we still have lots of basic functional processes to improve. Our focus is on addressing barriers to entry to the Council workforce currently and our plan is to monitor diversity by grade to see if our actions have any impact.
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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 13 December 2023  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Local Government Association Corporate Peer Review: Council Action Plan

Summary and recommendations	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Lucy Pegg, Scrutiny Committee Chair
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	All
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b>	

Appendices	
<b>Appendix A</b>	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

## Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 04 December 2023 to consider a report concerning the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Review: Council Action Plan. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 13 December 2023, recommends that Cabinet approves the Council's Action Plan in response to the LGA Corporate Peer Review undertaken in July 2023 and notes the progress made in relation to the Peer Review recommendations to date.
2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Brown (Leader of the Council), Caroline Green (Chief Executive) and Lucy Cherry (Policy and Partnerships Officer) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

## Summary and recommendations

3. Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council introduced the report. The report provided an update on the Council's Action Plan in response to the LGA Corporate Peer Review feedback and recommendations received in July 2023.
4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to prioritisation of actions within the action plan; any challenges foreseen in relation to addressing the Peer Review Team's recommendations; project lifecycles; and working with local anchor institutions to further the aims of the City.
5. The Committee discussed the importance of the Council working together with local anchor institutions and, in particular, the need for open and honest conversations with those anchor institutions that challenge organisational assumptions and consider the aspirations of Oxford more holistically, rather than on a singular organisational basis. It was noted that the Corporate Strategy 2024-28 was currently being drafted and the Committee agreed that this work could usefully feed-in and be placed at the heart of the updated Corporate Strategy.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council places engagement with local anchor institutions at the heart of the Corporate Strategy 2024-28, in particular the need to hold open and honest conversations about the overall vision and aspirations for Oxford to enable organisations to work together to drive forward that collective vision of the type of city Oxford should be.***

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## Appendix A

### Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 04 December 2023 concerning the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Review: Council Action Plan. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
1) That the Council places engagement with local anchor institutions at the heart of the Corporate Strategy 2024-28, in particular the need to hold open and honest conversations about the overall vision and aspirations for Oxford to enable organisations to work together to drive forward that collective vision of the type of city Oxford should be.	Yes	Oxford's anchor institutions have been involved from the outset in the development of the Council's new Corporate Strategy 2024-28, via the Oxford Strategic Partnership. We will continue to engage with them to drive forward and deliver against a collective vision for the city and the wording of the new strategy will reflect this.

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 13 December 2023  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Review of Glyphosate Use by Oxford Direct Services to Manage Weeds on Behalf of Oxford City Council

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Lucy Pegg, Scrutiny Committee Chair
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b>	

<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix A</b>	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

## Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 04 December 2023 to consider a report concerning the Review of Glyphosate Use by Oxford Direct Services to Manage Weeds on Behalf of Oxford City Council. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 13 December 2023, recommends that Cabinet approves the continued use of Glyphosate for its current limited purposes, to be kept under periodic review until such point as the Government changes its advice on use of the herbicide, or another viable, economical and effective treatment emerges; and approves the usage of Glyphosate to manage weed intrusion in paved surfaces uniformly across the City.
2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Chapman (Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies), Tina Mould (Head of

Sustainability) and Laura Harlock (Parks and Open Spaces Service Manager – Oxford Direct Services) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

### **Summary and recommendations**

3. Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies introduced the report. The report set out recommendations over the use of Glyphosate by Oxford Direct Services (ODS) to control weeds on behalf of Oxford City Council following a review of its use and possible alternative options, which was undertaken by ODS in August 2023.
4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to aligning the work of ODS and local community groups in terms of weed and plant management; communications; areas of the City which had currently ‘opted-out’ of Glyphosate application in their areas; the annual timetable for Glyphosate application; where Glyphosate was used to control weeds; and possible alternative options to Glyphosate usage.
5. In particular, the Committee referenced community gardening groups which had planted various plants along areas adjacent to the public highway with agreement from the Council and ODS. The Committee agreed that it was key that the Council and ODS were aware of these areas and that ODS, in the absence of a ward-based ‘opt-out’ option, approached these areas with caution when applying Glyphosate to avoid treating plants which had been purposefully planted. The Committee also discussed the possibility of community gardening groups and other interested individuals or groups being able to register for updates on the timetable for Glyphosate application so that this work could be synchronised with other work undertaken by groups within the community each year.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council works with Oxford Direct Services to compile a list of areas within the City where local community groups have purposefully planted plants, which should be approached with caution by Oxford Direct Services when applying Glyphosate so as not to cause unwanted damage.***

***Recommendation 2: That the Council provides a means for community groups and interested individuals to register for updates related to when Glyphosate application will take place in particular areas across the City, to enable the synchronisation of works undertaken by those groups and Oxford Direct Services.***

6. The Committee noted that, as referenced in the report, there were currently a number of areas within the City that had ‘opted-out’ of Glyphosate application. However, the report stated that going forward the proposal was to apply Glyphosate uniformly across the City, with no option to ‘opt-out’. In response to questions, the Committee was advised that councillors would be a key communication channel for local areas which had currently ‘opted-out’, to ensure that they were aware that Glyphosate usage in those areas would recommence. The Committee raised concerns that councillors were not necessarily aware of areas which had currently ‘opted-out’ and it would be useful for the Council to publish a list of those areas to

ensure councillor awareness. The Committee also agreed that a communications plan should be developed for areas which had 'opted-out' currently and the public more broadly, to help manage expectations and any potential tensions which may arise as a result of the proposed changes.

***Recommendation 3: That the Council publishes a list of those areas of the City which have currently opted-out of Glyphosate application, to ensure councillors are aware of areas in their respective wards and can access the information freely.***

***Recommendation 4: That the Council develops a communications plan for those areas of the City which have currently opted-out of Glyphosate application and the public more broadly to ensure awareness and understanding of the proposals regarding Glyphosate usage going forward.***

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## Appendix A

### Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 04 December 2023 concerning the Review of Glyphosate Use by Oxford Direct Services to Manage Weeds on Behalf of Oxford City Council. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1) That the Council works with Oxford Direct Services to compile a list of areas within the City where local community groups have purposefully planted plants, which should be approached with caution by Oxford Direct Services when applying Glyphosate so as not to cause unwanted damage.	No	Glyphosate is only applied topically onto weeds growing within pavements and other paved areas. Care is already taken to ensure it does not impact on other plants growing within the vicinity of those areas where the herbicide treatment is being applied.
2) That the Council provides a means for community groups and interested individuals to register for updates related to when Glyphosate application will take place in particular areas across the City, to enable the synchronisation of works undertaken by those groups and Oxford Direct Services.	No	The application of Glyphosate is undertaken three times a year, and only when conditions are appropriate – for example not when it is raining or windy. It would not be practicable to provide real time updates on operational works of this nature undertaken across the city.
3) That the Council publishes a list of those areas of the City which have currently opted-out of Glyphosate application, to ensure councillors are aware of areas in their respective wards and can access the information freely.	Yes	Historically, Osney and St Thomas Ward has been opted out of Glyphosate treatment for weeds on paved surfaces with the agreement of ODS. Going forwards it is proposed that the usage of Glyphosate to manage weed intrusion in paved surfaces is delivered uniformly across the city to meet need.
4) That the Council develops a communications plan for those areas of the City which have currently opted-out of Glyphosate application and the public more broadly to ensure awareness and understanding of the proposals regarding Glyphosate usage going forward.	Yes	A communications plan is already being applied. A press release has already been issued and media coverage generated on the proposed approach to Glyphosate usage. Infographics have been created and will be distributed through the Council's digital channels.

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**To:** Cabinet

**Date:** 13 December 2023

**Report of:** Housing and Homelessness Panel

**Title of Report:** City of Sanctuary Accreditation

Summary and recommendations	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Cllr Lizzy Diggins, Panel Chair
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Support Thriving Communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b>	

Appendices	
<b>Appendix A</b>	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

## Introduction and overview

1. The Housing and Homelessness Panel met on 05 December 2023 to consider an update on progress towards obtaining the City of Sanctuary Accreditation. It was recommended that the Panel receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing), Nerys Parry (Head of Housing Services), Richard Wood (Housing Strategy and Needs Manager) and Stephen Cohen (Refugee & Resettlement Manager) for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

## Summary and recommendations

3. Stephen Cohen, Refugee & Resettlement Manager introduced the presentation and provided an overview of the work being done across the Council towards

obtaining the City of Sanctuary Accreditation. The Accreditation journey was owned jointly by Housing Services and Community Services; however the Accreditation journey was embedded across the whole Council and all other service areas were on board, including support from senior management. Accreditation was described as an evolving, ongoing process and once achieved the Council's Accreditation would be reviewed every three years.

4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to assurance that the spirit of the Accreditation was being embraced Council-wide; partnership working with Oxfordshire County Council and other institutions; how different groups of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and their lived experiences fed into this work; advocacy work being undertaken by the Council; how City of Sanctuary work fed into the Council's inclusive economy work; Central Government policy surrounding migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; resource availability; and opportunities for cross-party input into the Accreditation journey.
5. In particular, during discussion the Panel noted that the Council planned to hold a much larger celebration to mark Refugee Week in June 2024. While the Panel agreed that this was welcome news, it agreed that it was vital for the Council to advocate for safe legal routes into the United Kingdom for those fleeing war, conflict and/or persecution – both during Refugee Week and more broadly on an ongoing basis. The Panel noted that this would link in with the lobbying element of the City of Sanctuary Accreditation work.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council advocates for safe legal routes into the United Kingdom for those fleeing war, conflict and/or persecution during Refugee Week and more broadly on an ongoing basis, linking in with the lobbying element of the City of Sanctuary Accreditation work.***

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## Appendix A

### Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Panel of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Panel on 05 December 2023 concerning the City of Sanctuary Accreditation. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
1) That the Council advocates for safe legal routes into the United Kingdom for those fleeing war, conflict and/or persecution during Refugee Week and more broadly on an ongoing basis, linking in with the lobbying element of the City of Sanctuary Accreditation work.	Yes	We agree that it is vital for the Council to advocate for safe legal routes into the United Kingdom for those fleeing war, conflict and/or persecution during Refugee Week and more broadly on an ongoing basis. The Council has supported refugee resettlement for a number of years and continues to do so. In July 2023 the Council made a voluntary commitment to resettle 8 households per year for the next five years. The Council of Sanctuary action plan and associated report, planned for next year will expand on how the Council will go further to create a more welcoming & inclusive City and this will be reported via the Cabinet and Full Council process. It will also include how the Council intends to work with the City of Sanctuary charity on key policy issues to enable positive change more broadly.

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 13 December 2023  
**Report of:** Finance and Performance Panel  
**Title of Report:** Integrated Performance Report Q2 2023-24

Summary and recommendations	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor James Fry, Panel Chair
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	All
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b>	

Appendices	
<b>Appendix A</b>	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

## Introduction and overview

1. The Finance and Performance Panel met on 06 December 2023 to consider the Integrated Performance Report Q2 2023-24. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 13 December 2023, recommends that Cabinet notes the projected financial outturn as well as the current position on risk and performance as at 30 September 2023.
2. The Panel would like to thank Nigel Kennedy (Head of Financial Services), Anna Winship (Management Accountancy Manager) and Jason Jones (Finance Business Partner (HRA)) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

## Summary and recommendations

3. Anna Winship, Management Accountancy Manager introduced the report. The report provided an update on Finance, Risk and Corporate Performance matters as at 30 September 2023.
4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to business rates; specific Council programmes and projects; capital expenditure; Temporary Accommodation costs; announcements made by Central Government in the recent Autumn Statement and their impact on the Council; dividends expected to be paid to the Council by its wholly-owned companies; optimism bias relating to the assumptions within the Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan; and programme and project slippage.
5. In particular, the Panel discussed Temporary Accommodation and the current significant costs to the Council which were only forecast to increase over time. The Panel noted that it was due to consider a report on the options for the acquisition (purchase or lease) of Temporary Accommodation later in the meeting, but that the report did not clearly set out the options available to the Council for reducing Temporary Accommodation costs, which were currently placing large amounts of pressure on the Council's Budget. The Panel agreed that it would be useful for the Council to produce a simple summary document setting out the options available, alongside the advantages and disadvantages of the different options, given the severity of the current national situation in terms of high demand for Temporary Accommodation.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council produces a summary document which clearly sets out all of the possible options available to the Council for reducing Temporary Accommodation costs, alongside the advantages and disadvantages of those options.***

6. The Panel also noted that there was, as had been the case in previous years, significant slippage in relation to capital and revenue programmes – particularly within ICT and Corporate Property. While the Panel understood that an 'optimism bias' reduction was applied to initial assumptions within capital and revenue programmes, the Panel was of the view that the optimism bias assumptions applied would themselves benefit from more robust challenge – particularly given the degree of programme slippage indicated in the report.

***Recommendation 2: That the Council challenges the optimism bias assumptions applied to initial assumptions within capital and revenue programmes, with a view to arriving at more realistic assumptions and avoiding the current high degree of slippage going forward.***

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## Appendix A

### Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Finance and Performance Panel of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Finance and Performance Panel on 06 December 2023 concerning the Integrated Performance Report Q2 2023-24. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
1) That the Council produces a summary document which clearly sets out all of the possible options available to the Council for reducing Temporary Accommodation costs, alongside the advantages and disadvantages of those options.	Yes	Officers will prepare a document on the options for reducing temporary accommodation costs as requested.
2) That the Council challenges the optimism bias assumptions applied to initial assumptions within capital and revenue programmes, with a view to arriving at more realistic assumptions and avoiding the current high degree of slippage going forward.	Yes	Within the Council's budget papers to be considered at Cabinet on 13 December 2023 officers have included an 'optimism bias' of 40% against project costs included in the capital programme. This methodology is recognised in the HM Treasury Green Book on how to appraise programmes and projects and will effectively reduce the overall capital programme to allow for slippage.

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 13 December 2023  
**Report of:** Finance and Performance Panel  
**Title of Report:** Treasury Management Mid-Year Report

Summary and recommendations	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor James Fry, Panel Chair
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	All
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b>	

Appendices	
<b>Appendix A</b>	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

## Introduction and overview

1. The Finance and Performance Panel met on 06 December 2023 to consider the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 13 December 2023, recommends that Cabinet notes the performance of the Treasury Management function for the six months to 30 September 2023.
2. The Panel would like to thank Nigel Kennedy (Head of Financial Services) and Bill Lewis (Financial Accounting Manager) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

## Summary and recommendations

3. Bill Lewis, Financial Accounting Manager introduced the report. The report provided an update on the performance of the Treasury Management function for the six months to 30 September 2023. The Panel was assured that Treasury Management activity had been managed within the confines of the Treasury Management Strategy agreed by Full Council in February 2023.
4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to changes to the principal value of investments and subsequent impact on the Council; return on investment; whether investments were considered individually or in aggregate within the Council's revenue Budget; and risk profiles.
5. In particular, the Panel discussed the element of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy which set out the limits for non-specified investments. The current limits were 25% of the previous year's average investment portfolio or £25m – whichever was greater. The Panel agreed that consideration should be given to whether this was still the correct limit given the current economic climate, or whether the limit should be revised.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council reviews the current limit for non-specified investments set out in the Treasury Management Strategy within the context of the current economic climate and considers whether the limit should be amended.***

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**Appendix A**  
**Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of**  
**the Finance and Performance Panel of the Scrutiny Committee**

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Finance and Performance Panel on 06 December 2023 concerning the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
1) That the Council reviews the current limit for non-specified investments set out in the Treasury Management Strategy within the context of the current economic climate and considers whether the limit should be amended.	Yes	The Council reviews all of its limits on an annual basis when setting the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, the next review of which will be February 2024.

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