

Supplement for

Cabinet

On **Wednesday 10 July 2024** At **6.00 pm**

Agenda Item 7 - Scrutiny Reports

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<p>The Scrutiny Committee met on 2 July 2024 and the Housing and Homelessness Panel met on 3 July 2024. The following reports and recommendations have been published as a supplement:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oxford City Council Corporate Strategy 2024-28• Citizen Experience Strategy Progress Report No Recommendations• Leisure Investment Programme• Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28 No Recommendations• Temporary Accommodation Demand and Mitigations No Recommendations• 2024/25 Capital Programmes (HRA) Delegations No Recommendations• Update of Byelaws for Parks and Open Spaces	

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: 10 July 2024
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Oxford City Council Corporate Strategy 2024-2028

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	Yes
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Katherine Miles, Scrutiny Committee Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	This is a policy framework document
Recommendation(s): That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to Scrutiny recommendations

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 02 July 2024 to consider a report on the Oxford City Council Corporate Strategy 2024-2028. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 10 July 2024, recommends that Cabinet notes the public and stakeholder consultation on the draft Council Strategy 2024-28; agrees the revisions to the draft strategy in response to the consultation; delegates authority to the Head of Corporate Strategy in consultation with the Leader of the Council to make further minor amendments to the draft strategy before adoption; and recommends to Council the adoption of the Council Strategy 2024-2028.
2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Susan Brown (Leader of the Council), Mish Tullar (Head of Corporate Strategy) and Clare Keen (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 feedback from the public and stakeholder consultation on the Council Strategy 2024-2028 and sought approval for the draft strategy. The draft strategy built on the existing Council Strategy 2020-24; it incorporated feedback from the Council's recent LGA Peer Review and, where possible and appropriate, feedback from the consultation and previous comments from the Scrutiny Committee in 2023/24 when it reviewed the pre-consultation draft of the strategy. The draft strategy had undergone a great deal of consultation, which had revealed overarching support of the priorities identified in the document. The Committee was advised that the key performance indicators linked to the strategy would be submitted to Cabinet for approval in August 2024.
4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the fact that a number of key and statutory Council services did not appear to be mentioned in the draft strategy – and whether this was an unintentional omission; which buildings fell into the category of 'other buildings' in relation to the Council's Zero Carbon Oxford priority: 'decarbonising homes and other buildings'; whether consideration had been given to 'Child Friendly City' status in Oxford as part of the strategy development process; the degree to which the Council's zero carbon ambitions were tempered by financial realities; and whether consideration had been given to explicitly referencing 'Vision Zero' (the countywide strategy aimed at eliminating deaths and serious injuries on Oxfordshire's roads by 2050) within the strategy.
5. In particular, the Committee noted that a number of cities billed themselves as 'Child Friendly Cities' and queried whether or not this had been considered for Oxford during the development of the strategy. The Committee was informed that no work had been undertaken in relation to making Oxford a 'Child Friendly City', but work had recently commenced with external partners in relation to making Oxford an 'Age Friendly City'. In discussion, officers advised that many of the elements related to ensuring an 'Age Friendly City' also applied to children and families, therefore the city would become more child friendly as a result of work to make the city age friendly.
6. It was also noted that the unaffordability of housing in Oxford was one of the reasons why the city did not have a large child population, as families were driven out of the city to find more affordable housing. The Committee recognised that 'good, affordable homes' was identified as a priority within the draft strategy and this priority would seek to help children, including children in poverty, across the city by working to ensure the availability of affordable housing in Oxford. The Leader of the Council stated that there was good provision in the city of play parks, leisure centres and affordable leisure options for children and families – albeit in some areas of the city there was not as much play space as the Council would like. In particular, the Leader of the Council acknowledged that there was a lack of children's play space in the city centre. The Committee asked whether this could be addressed via a commitment in the strategy to ensure adequate play space for children across the city – and in particular the city centre, including a specific commitment to including dedicated children's play space in the Broad Street redevelopment. The Committee was

informed that the strategy was not the appropriate place for that level of detail; however, the Leader of the Council confirmed that the comments had been noted.

7. While recognising the other work going on to achieve 'Age Friendly City' status and how this would also lay the foundation for making Oxford more child friendly, the Committee agreed that having an age and child friendly city should be an explicit priority for the Council – which should be articulated within the strategy. This would demonstrate that inclusivity for all ages was at the forefront of the Council's approach. The Committee noted that the detail related to creating an age and child friendly city would not sit in the high-level strategy document, but rather it would likely sit in other supporting strategies, such as Oxford's Economic Strategy, the City Centre Action Plan and the Thriving Communities Strategy.

Recommendation 1: That the Council includes a priority within the strategy to have an age and child friendly city, noting that the detail would sit in other supporting strategies such as Oxford's Economic Strategy, the City Centre Action Plan and the Thriving Communities Strategy, to ensure that inclusivity of all ages is at the forefront of the Council's approach.

8. The Committee noted that the draft strategy referenced child poverty and thriving communities as priority areas. However, it noted that there was not explicit reference to the work of the previous Child Poverty Review Group or the Council's recent adoption of the Socio-Economic Duty. The Committee agreed that explicit reference to these should be included within the strategy to demonstrate the Council's commitment to reducing inequality at every level.

Recommendation 2: That the Council includes specific reference within the strategy to the work of the Child Poverty Review Group and adoption of the Socio-Economic Duty to demonstrate the Council's commitment to working to reduce inequality at every level.

9. During its questioning, the Committee identified that not all activity set out within the strategy was funded; much of it relied on the Council securing additional funding. Given current financial constraints on the Council, the Committee was of the view that the Council's ability to deliver on the entirety of the strategy was therefore somewhat diminished. To assist with expectation management and ensure clarity, the Committee agreed that activity which was funded versus activity which was dependent on securing funding should be more clearly drawn out within the strategy. It was also agreed that there should be specific reference to prioritisation processes for strategy activity that ensured maximum impact given limited resources – to ensure the Council got the greatest value for money.

Recommendation 3: That the Council makes more explicit reference within the strategy to activity which is funded versus activity that is dependent on securing funding; and references prioritisation processes to ensure that activity is undertaken on the basis of having maximum impact when considering cost/benefit and value for money.

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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 02 July 2024 concerning the Oxford City Council Corporate Strategy 2024-2028. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
<p>1) That the Council includes a priority within the strategy to have an age and child friendly city, noting that the detail would sit in other supporting strategies such as Oxford's Economic Strategy, the City Centre Action Plan and the Thriving Communities Strategy, to ensure that inclusivity of all ages is at the forefront of the Council's approach.</p>		<p><i>Officers are currently working with partners in the city to examine the opportunity of becoming an Age Friendly City. If a decision is taken to seek accreditation this will be added to the strategy.</i></p> <p><i>While the Council has limited capacity to support additional work when it is also managing significant budget pressures, Councillor Louise Upton and 2 council officers have been awarded places on a residential course at LSE for intensive training on how to make a city work for young children (95 cm tall, hence the name Urban95) and their care-givers. This can inform future work in this area.</i></p> <p><i>The Council has a strong record on supporting children and young people and creating child-friendly spaces and activities. Examples include the provision of 87 play areas and recreation grounds across the city, the work of our Youth Ambition team to provide regular and summer holidays for some of our most disadvantaged young people, and leisure discounts including free swimming for under-17s and an expanded free swimming lessons provision.</i></p>

<p>2) That the Council includes specific reference within the strategy to the work of the Child Poverty Review Group and adoption of the Socio-Economic Duty to demonstrate the Council's commitment to working to reduce inequality at every level.</p>		<p><i>A reference to adoption of the Socio-Economic Duty has been added to the draft Council Strategy 2024-28. A reference to the work of the Child Poverty Review Group would not be appropriate, as this is a forward-looking document that doesn't seek to replicate information published elsewhere on how proposals were developed.</i></p>
<p>3) That the Council makes more explicit reference within the strategy to activity which is funded versus activity that is dependent on securing funding; and references prioritisation processes to ensure that activity is undertaken on the basis of having maximum impact when considering cost/benefit and value for money.</p>		<p><i>A reference to the Council's ability to meet its 2030 and 2040 Net Zero targets being subject to additional external funding has been added to the draft Council Strategy 2024-28. The Strategy's sister document, the Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan is the Council's main tool for prioritising spend. It uses the Council Strategy as the basis for that prioritisation process together with associated consideration of cost/benefit and value for money.</i></p>

To: Cabinet
Date: 10 July 2024
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Leisure Investment Programme

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	Yes
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Katherine Miles, Scrutiny Committee Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford and Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Finance and Asset Management
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Thriving Communities Strategy
Recommendation(s): That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to Scrutiny recommendations

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 02 July 2024 to consider a report on the Leisure Investment Programme. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 10 July 2024, recommends that Cabinet grants project approval for the Leisure Management Programme; recommends to Council the approval of an additional capital budget of £1.04m, above the £2m already agreed in the capital programme, necessary to deliver the Leisure Investment Programme; and agrees various delegations of authority related to the Leisure Investment Programme.
2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Chewe Munkonge (Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford) and Hagan Lewisman (Active Communities Manager) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford introduced the report. The report sought approval for a programme of improvements at the Council's leisure facilities. The Committee was advised that the Council had successfully completed its transition to the new leisure provider, More Leisure, and was now moving from contract mobilisation to contract management.
4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to current usage of the sports hall at the Leys Leisure Centre in the evenings; maintaining adequate access to a variety of leisure facilities; communications with and feedback from residents/user groups on the proposals; provision for emerging sports (e.g. padel and pickleball); accessibility and inclusivity in relation to the athletics club; the proposed new state of the art inflatables included in the plans; and interdependencies between the Leisure Investment Programme and Leys Youth Hub.
5. In particular, the Committee was concerned that the proposal to develop half of the sports hall at the Leys Leisure Centre into soft play including Tag Active would negatively impact user groups which currently used the space in the evenings. While the report outlined that the sports hall was generally underutilised in the day, there was no consideration within the report regarding the impact on evening users, when the sports hall was better utilised. While noting responses to questions that the sports hall was not fully booked in the evenings, the Committee agreed that the Council should undertake a thorough analysis of sports hall usage during all opening times, including the evenings, to understand the impact that the proposal would have on all user groups. It also agreed that the Council should actively engage with users regarding appropriate alternative provision in the event that they could no longer use the sports hall; and put in place mitigations to protect against disproportionate impacts of the proposals on active user groups.

Recommendation 1: That the Council undertakes a thorough analysis of the Leys Leisure Centre sports hall usage during all opening times, paying particular attention to evening usage, to understand the impact that the proposal would have on user groups; actively engages with users regarding appropriate alternative provision; and ensures that appropriate mitigations are put in place to protect against disproportionate impacts of the Leys Leisure Centre sports hall proposals on active user groups.

6. The Committee recognised that, as a result of previous failings, it would be useful for the Council to publish information on the Leisure Investment Programme, and progress on its delivery, in a prominent place on the Council's website. The Committee agreed that this may help provide public reassurance and transparency in relation to leisure provision.

Recommendation 2: That the Council publishes high-level information on the Leisure Investment Programme and progress on its delivery in a prominent place on the Council's website in order to provide public reassurance and transparency.

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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 02 July 2024 concerning the Leisure Investment Programme. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That the Council undertakes a thorough analysis of the Leys Leisure Centre sports hall usage during all opening times, paying particular attention to evening usage, to understand the impact that the proposal would have on user groups; actively engages with users regarding appropriate alternative provision; and ensures that appropriate mitigations are put in place to protect against disproportionate impacts of the Leys Leisure Centre sports hall proposals on active user groups.	Yes	Agreed, but with slightly amended wording: <i>'That the Council undertakes a thorough analysis of the Leys Leisure Centre sports hall usage during all opening times, paying particular attention to evening usage, to understand the impact that the proposal would have on user groups; actively engages with users regarding appropriate alternative provision; and ensures that appropriate mitigations are put in place where possible to try to protect against disproportionate impacts of the Leys Leisure Centre sports hall proposals on active user groups.'</i>
2) That the Council publishes high-level information on the Leisure Investment Programme and progress on its delivery in a prominent place on the Council's website in order to provide public reassurance and transparency.	Yes	Agreed

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To: Cabinet
Date: 10 July 2024
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Update of Byelaws for Parks and Open Spaces

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	Yes
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Katherine Miles, Scrutiny Committee Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities; Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford; Deliver More, Affordable Housing
Policy Framework:	Thriving Communities Strategy
Recommendation(s): That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to Scrutiny recommendations

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 02 July 2024 to consider a report on the draft proposed byelaws for Oxford City Council parks and open spaces. The report, which is due for Council consideration on 15 July 2024, recommends that Council approves the proposed byelaws for parks and open spaces following public consultation; recommends the submission of the application to the Secretary of State for approval of the proposed byelaws; notes that upon the Secretary of State granting leave for the Council to make the proposed byelaws there will be a further period of consultation of not less than 28 days; and notes that a further report will be presented to Council to allow for a final decision to make the proposed byelaws.
2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Chewe Munkonge (Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford), Tom Bridgman (Executive Director (Development)) and Chris Bell (Green and Blue Spaces Development Manager) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford introduced the report. The Council's byelaws had not been updated for 25 years; an update was required as some of the byelaws were outdated and/or related to parks that no longer existed or had a different name. The report would seek Council approval for the proposed byelaws for submission to the Secretary of State for approval, after which there would be a further period of public consultation and then a final decision by Council to make the proposed byelaws. There had been a good response to public consultation to date, which had demonstrated very clear support for the byelaws overall.
4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the definition of a bicycle used in the byelaws; whether any conversations had taken place with the universities to influence them to change their policies in parks; concerns over the Council encouraging tree climbing, particularly during nesting season and in relation to public liability; whether there was a trial period for the byelaws once implemented, where revisions could be made if there were any negative repercussions; cycling; and whether the byelaws could include a requirement that boats at Council-owned river moorings must have the equivalent of a vehicle MOT.
5. In particular, the Committee queried the definition of a 'bicycle' within the byelaws, in recognition of the increasing use of e-bikes which could reach much higher speeds but were still technically a bicycle, for example. The Committee noted that e-bikes were much heavier and faster than traditional push-bikes, which could present a danger to the public if not ridden considerately. There was also mention of motorised bikes such as mopeds – and whether these were included in the definition of a bicycle, citing similar public safety concerns. There was recognition from the Committee that bicycles now came in various forms, therefore it would be difficult to include an all-encompassing and futureproof definition of a bicycle within the byelaws.
6. It was clarified that the Council needed to look carefully at this, as it did not want to discriminate against people who used e-bikes, for example, in a considerate way; e-bikes had reintroduced cycling to some groups, such as those with reduced strength or mobility, and the Council wanted to support them to continue cycling considerately. It was confirmed that consideration could be given to including a speed restriction related to cycling within the byelaws, which would help futureproof the byelaws while ensuring that cyclists could continue using bicycles considerately, in accordance with the byelaws. The Committee was of the view that a speed restriction would be the most pragmatic option to help ensure public safety within parks and open spaces.

Recommendation 1: That the Council includes a speed restriction within the byelaws related to cycling.

7. In discussion, the Committee noted the proposed byelaw prohibiting endangerment and annoyance – and the general role of the byelaws in preventing and suppressing

nuisance. The Committee agreed that this largely amounted to reducing and preventing anti-social behaviour and agreed that it would be helpful for the public if information was displayed in parks (e.g. on notice boards) about how to report anti-social behaviour. The Committee was of the view that promoting how to report anti-social behaviour could assist with enforcement, which the Committee recognised was challenging for the Council.

Recommendation 2: That the Council displays information in parks (e.g. on notice boards) for the public on how to report anti-social behaviour.

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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 02 July 2024 concerning the Update of Byelaws for Parks and Open Spaces. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That the Council includes a speed restriction within the byelaws related to cycling.	In Part	Although it is not viable to set a specific speed limit for bicycles in parks as such (there would be no way to police/enforce this) the need has been identified to provide a clearer definition in the proposed byelaws of what constitutes a bicycle to ensure only legally defined e-bikes are permitted in parks, and that there is a clear distinction between these and motorbikes of any description. There is a clear legal definition of an e-bike under UK law which will be added to the byelaws to cover this (it must have a motor output not exceeding 250w continuously and a maximum speed assistance of up to 15 mph). There is a general byelaw included which covers dangerous or inconsiderate cycling in parks regardless of the type of bicycle being ridden.
2) That the Council displays information in parks (e.g. on notice boards) for the public on how to report anti-social behaviour.	Yes	New updated signage is currently being installed in all the play areas which contains the direct Parks number which people can use to report issues. These and other signs also contain the web address, and on the whole people prefer to contact the council in this way. For more serious ASB we need to continue to encourage the public to report this to the police at the time.

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