

Supplement for

Cabinet

On **Wednesday 11 December 2024** At **6.00 pm**

Agenda Item 7: Scrutiny Reports

Contents

7. **Scrutiny Reports**

3 - 32

The Scrutiny Committee met on 2 December 2024. The Climate and Environment Panel met on 20 November 2024, and the Housing and Homelessness Panel held an extraordinary meeting on 27 November 2024. The following reports and recommendations are published as supplement:

- Thriving Communities Strategy Update
- Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24
- HRA Asset Management Strategy and 5-Year Investment Programme
- Tenancy Engagement and Management
- Eco-moorings Update
- High-level challenges and constraints impacting on the deliverability of solar opportunities at Council car parks

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

This page is intentionally left blank

To: Cabinet
Date: 11 December 2024
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Thriving Communities Strategy Update

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Business, Culture and an Inclusive Economy Councillor Lubna Arshad, Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2024-28
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 2 December 2024 to consider the Thriving Communities Strategy Update. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 11 December 2024, recommends that Cabinet notes the update on the delivery of the Thriving Communities Strategy.
2. The Committee is grateful to Councillor Chewe Munkonge (Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford), Councillor Lubna Arshad (Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford), Peter Matthew (Executive Director – Communities and People), Hagan Lewisman (Active Communities Manage), and Paula Redway (Culture and Community

Development Manager) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford, and Councillor Lubna Arshad, Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford introduced the report.
4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including the practicality and clarity of the measures outlined in the strategy, particularly where baselines or specific targets were unclear, and whether all measures were equally useful or specific enough to monitor progress. Questions were also raised about the use of data to provide comparative analysis overtime, identify demographic disparities, and refine interventions.
5. The Committee expressed concerns about residents' awareness of and access to programmes, particularly in areas of deprivation, and how strategic coordination between the Council and its partners support both social and financial goals. In addition, the Committee queried how the locality plan aligns with broader Council priorities and the importance of applying lessons learned to improve future strategies.
6. In particular, the Committee discussed the significance of targeting health inequalities by prioritising walkability in areas with the greatest deprivation in physical activity, suggesting that specifying this focus within Measure 6 of the Strategy would strengthen its alignment with the motion passed by Full Council on 25 November 2024 to create a truly walkable Oxford. The Committee believed that doing so would emphasise the Council's commitments to improving accessibility and health outcomes, particularly in communities where the need is most acute.

Recommendation 1: That Cabinet makes the Council commitment to creating a truly walkable Oxford clear, by specifying in Measure 6 of the Strategy that focused attention will be given to improving walkability in areas most affected by physical activity deprivation, in line with the motion passed by Full Council on 25 November 2024.

7. Further discussions highlighted the value of incorporating comparative data over time to provide a clearer picture of the Strategy's impact. Recognising that the Strategy is still new and evolving, the Committee suggested that such data would not only provide essential context on progress but also help identify demographic disparities, such as gender gaps in swimming participation, that require targeted interventions.

Recommendation 2: That Cabinet incorporates comparative data over time in future updates of the Strategy to contextualise the scale of progress and identify gender disparities, particularly in activities like swimming, to guide and refine targeted interventions.

8. The Committee recognised the importance of learning from the current implementation of the Strategy to inform the next iteration. It was suggested that identifying practical lessons and areas for improvement, where appropriate, would

enhance future strategies by focusing on outcomes rather than outputs. This approach, the Committee felt, would strengthen the Council's ability to meet community needs effectively and ensure that policies remain grounded in evidence and best practices.

Recommendation 3: That Cabinet draws on and incorporates lessons learned from the implementation of this strategy to inform and strengthen the preparation of its next iteration, ensuring future improvements are grounded in evidence and best practices.

9. The Committee acknowledged and commended the success of the Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit in Rose Hill as an innovative model of community health support, noting that promoting this initiative as a national case study would showcase its positive outcomes and encourage other councils to replicate its success.

Recommendation 4: That Cabinet promotes the Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit health hub in Rose Hill as a case study to highlight its positive outcomes and innovative practices, disseminating these successes nationally to encourage other councils to adopt similar initiatives.

10. Lastly, the Committee underscored the need for stronger Member engagement in the development and review of locality plans to address deprivation across the city. The Committee suggested that involving ward councillors in identifying and targeting pockets of need within their ward would ensure that resources are allocated effectively and that no communities in need are overlooked.

Recommendation 5: That Cabinet ensures strong Member engagement in the development and review of measures relating to locality plans, by involving all ward councillors in recognising and identifying pockets of deprivation within each ward, with an aim to target resources effectively and ensure that no communities in need are overlooked.

Report author	Celeste Reyeslao
Job title	Scrutiny and Governance Advisor
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252946
e-mail	creyeslao@oxford.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

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 2 December 2024 concerning the Thriving Communities Strategy Update. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That Cabinet makes the Council commitment to creating a truly walkable Oxford clear, by specifying in Measure 6 of the Strategy that focused attention will be given to improving walkability in areas most affected by physical activity deprivation, in line with the motion passed by Full Council on 25 November 2024.	Yes	The Council is committed to Oxford being a truly walkable city and we will emphasise this in future reporting on measure 6.
2) That Cabinet incorporates comparative data over time in future updates of the Strategy to contextualise the scale of progress and identify gender disparities, particularly in activities like swimming, to guide and refine targeted interventions.	Yes	We will incorporate comparative data in future reporting on the strategy.
3) That Cabinet draws on and incorporates lessons learned from the implementation of this strategy to inform and strengthen the preparation of its next iteration, ensuring future improvements are grounded in evidence and best practices.	Yes	We will draw on and incorporate lessons learned from the implementation of this strategy to inform and strengthen the preparation of its next iteration, ensuring future improvements are grounded in evidence and best practices.

<p>4) That Cabinet promotes the Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit health hub in Rose Hill as a case study to highlight its positive outcomes and innovative practices, disseminating these successes nationally to encourage other councils to adopt similar initiatives.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>We will consider how to improve the promotion of achievements in delivering the Thriving Communities Strategy, including the Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit.</p>
<p>5) That Cabinet ensures strong Member engagement in the development and review of measures relating to locality plans, by involving all ward councillors in recognising and identifying pockets of deprivation within each ward, with an aim to target resources effectively and ensure that no communities in need are overlooked.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>It is our plan to fully engage all ward members in the preparation of the locality plans.</p>

To: Cabinet
Date: 11 December 2024
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	All
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 2 December 2024 to consider the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 11 December 2024, recommends that Cabinet approves the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24 for publication, and authorise the Head of Planning and Regulatory Services to make any necessary minor corrections not materially affecting the document prior to publication.
2. The Committee is grateful to Councillor Louise Upton (Cabinet Member for Planning), David Butler (Head of Planning and Regulatory Service), Sarah Harrison (Planning Policy Team Leader), Lorraine Freeman (CIL, Data Analysis and Reporting Team Leader) and Rachel Nixon (Principal Planner) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning introduced the report.
4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including those related to the use of existing student accommodations, the broader implications of student housing on private rental sector, and about financial and policy issues, including the potential for levies on higher education institutions to offset costs associated with students living out of student accommodations. Questions were also raised about the impact of policy gaps in the Local Plan post-2026, strategies to maximise housing targets, barriers to delivering extra care facilities and the effective use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds.
5. In particular, the discussion centred on the need for better data and monitoring of student accommodation use, specifically in relation to the extent of unmet demand and the reliance on family housing and HMOs for student accommodation. The Committee highlighted concerns about the pressures this demand places on the private rental market and the associated loss of family homes. The Committee was of the view that universities need to take greater responsibility for addressing accommodation needs, including making better use of their existing land holdings.
6. The Committee recognised that addressing unmet student accommodation demand requires transparency and robust data. The Committee felt that including comprehensive information on unmet demand and sites identified or proposed by universities in the Authority Monitoring Report would enhance accountability and enable better planning, reflecting the Committee's commitment to ensuring that the Council has a clear understanding of accommodation needs and the measures being taken to meet them.

Recommendation 1: That Cabinet ensures that comprehensive data on unmet student accommodation demand from universities, alongside details of sites identified or proposed by these institutions to address their accommodation requirements, are included in future reporting of the Authority Monitoring report.

7. In addition, the Committee expressed concerns about the effective use of university-owned land, particularly at or near city boundaries, to address accommodation needs. The Committee highlighted the universities' role in alleviating pressures on the private rental market by utilising their land assets strategically. It was therefore suggested that Council collaborates with these institutions to ensure their land holdings, including those near city boundaries, are used effectively to meet unmet accommodation demands, and that Council should encourage the universities to disclose their future development plans for leveraging these land assets to support this objective.

Recommendation 2: That Council works with University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University to ensure that their land holdings, including those located at or near city boundaries, are used effectively to meet unmet accommodation demands; and that Council encourages universities to share their plans for leveraging these land assets for this purpose.

Report author	Celeste Reyeslao
Job title	Scrutiny and Governance Advisor
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252946
e-mail	creyeslao@oxford.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

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 2 December 2024 concerning the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023-24. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

13

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That Cabinet ensures that comprehensive data on unmet student accommodation demand from universities, alongside details of sites identified or proposed by these institutions to address their accommodation requirements, are included in future reporting of the Authority Monitoring report.	No	<p>We already publish the numbers of students at both universities that are living outside of university-provided accommodation.</p> <p>This is to ensure that Policy H9 of our current Local Plan, which seeks to restrict the number of students that each university is permitted to have living outside of university provided accommodation is adhered to.</p> <p>Although we ask the universities, as part of the evidence base work for the Local Plan, about their intentions for land use on their sites, we do not actively monitor their accommodation requirements through the AMR.</p>
2) That Council works with University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University to ensure that their land holdings, including those located at or near city boundaries, are used effectively to meet unmet accommodation demands; and that Council encourages universities to share their plans for leveraging these land assets for this purpose.	Yes	<p>We continuously engage with both universities to encourage them to share their plans and to house as many students as possible on their own land holdings.</p> <p>The only lever we have is Policy H9 which specifies that if a university exceeds the threshold numbers for students living outside of university-provided accommodation, we will withhold planning permission for any new/redeveloped or refurbished academic, research or administrative accommodation</p>

This page is intentionally left blank

To: Cabinet
Date: 11 December 2024
Report of: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Title of Report: HRA Asset Management Strategy and 5-Year Investment Programmes

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present the Housing and Homelessness Panel recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Lizzie Diggins, Chair of the Housing and Homelessness Panel
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Corporate Strategy 2024-28
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Draft Cabinet response to Scrutiny recommendations

Introduction and overview

1. The Housing and Homelessness Panel met on 27 November 2024 to review a Cabinet report on HRA Asset Management Strategy and 5-Year Investment Programmes. The report, which is due for consideration on 11 December 2024, recommends that Cabinet adopt the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Asset Management Strategy plan for 2025-28; approve the HRA Investment Programmes of up to £250m over the next 5 years; approve the commissioning of the sub programmes to Oxford Direct Services Ltd (ODS) through current HRA direct award arrangements; approve the commissioning, clienting and financial management arrangements for effectively implementing the recommendations and enable the development of annual Delivery Plan by ODS for 2025/26; and delegate authority to the Executive Director for Communities and People, in consultation with the lead member for housing.

2. The Committee was grateful to Councillor Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities) for attending to present the report as well as to Peter Matthew (Executive Director – Communities and People), Nerys Parry (Head of Housing Services) and Lourdes DeBarry (Housing and Tenant Consultant) for attending the meeting and answering questions from the Committee.

Summary and recommendations

3. Lourdes DeBarry, Housing and Tenant Consultant introduced the report, highlighting its connection to the HRA 40-Year Business Plan. The strategy included a three-year asset management plan, which establishes the foundation for the Council’s long-term approach to planning, investing, and improving its housing stock, alongside a five-year investment programme outlining the planned delivery of works. Both were informed by tenant surveys and existing asset data.
4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including those about the setting of tenant satisfaction targets, and how demand-led aspects of the programme would be managed given the unpredictability of future needs. Questions were also raised in regard to the management of the transitional period for implementing the investment programme, and whether mechanisms would be in place to address urgent issues that fall outside expected lifecycles.
5. The Panel discussed measures considered to manage the unpredictability of demand-led aspects of the programme, noting the importance of data trends and joint working to predict and address future needs, particularly for issues like repairs and adaptations. A proactive approach to managing demands was underscored, and the Panel was reassured that current delegation arrangements allow for flexibility in budget allocations, enabling resources to be effectively redirected to priority areas in response to under or overspending.
6. Another key focus of discussion was the importance of ensuring that tenant satisfaction targets were ambitious enough to drive continuous improvement, particularly in areas such as repairs and placemaking. Acknowledging the necessity to benchmark against national standards for comparability, the Panel was of the view that there are other opportunities to enhance satisfaction levels through increased face-to-face engagement, aligning with the Council’s commitment to delivering better outcomes for its tenants.

Recommendation 1: That Cabinet sets more ambitious targets for tenant satisfaction, aiming to exceed the current benchmark of 70%, by aligning with best practices from top-performing authorities and exploring opportunities for enhanced engagement with tenants.

Report author	Celeste Reyeslao
Job title	Scrutiny and Governance Advisor
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252946
e-mail	creyeslao@oxford.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

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 27 November 2024 concerning the HRA Asset Management Strategy and 5-Year Investment Programme. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

19

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That Cabinet sets more ambitious targets for tenant satisfaction, aiming to exceed the current benchmark of 70%, by aligning with best practices from top-performing authorities and exploring opportunities for enhanced engagement with tenants.	Yes	We will assess the efficacy of our tenant satisfaction target further as we review our tenant engagement arrangements, our plans for reviewing the delivery of our landlord services; and the expected improvements in the delivery of repairs services as a result of our new commissioning and clienting arrangements with ODS and we will align to the corporately agreed KPIs on tenant satisfaction as follows: 23-24 - 78% 24-25 - 79% 25-26 - 80% 26-27-81% 27-28 - 82%

This page is intentionally left blank

To: Cabinet
Date: 11 December 2024
Report of: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Title of Report: Tenancy Engagement and Management

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present the Housing and Homelessness Panel recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Lizzie Diggins, Chair of the Housing and Homelessness Panel
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Corporate Strategy 2024-28
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Draft Cabinet response to Scrutiny recommendations

Introduction and overview

1. The Housing and Homelessness Panel met on 27 November 2024 to review a Cabinet report on Tenancy Engagement and Management. The report, which is due for consideration on 11 December 2024, recommends that Cabinet approve the adoption and implementation of the new approach to Tenant Engagement; and to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Communities and People (Interim) to make any further changes necessary, in line with service development and new legislation.
2. The Committee was grateful to Councillor Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities) for attending to present the report as well as to Peter Matthew (Executive Director – Communities and People) and Nerys Parry (Head of Housing Services) for attending the meeting and answering questions from the Committee.

Summary and recommendations

3. Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services introduced the report, highlighting its focus on resetting the Council's approach to tenant engagement and landlord. The report alludes to key outputs from the Grenfell report which informed a new approach, including improved tenant engagement, clearer governance structures, enhanced communication of performance data to tenants, and the development of a comprehensive strategy. In addition, the reorganisation of the landlord services, planned for the next calendar year, aims to better respond to tenant needs and deliver a more cohesive and effective service.
4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including why the Young People's Forum was proposed as a separate group within the tenant engagement structure, given concerns about their underrepresentation and distinct needs as a demographic. Questions were also raised seeking clarity on how the Young People's Forum would integrate with other engagement mechanisms, and how these structures would address the unique challenges faced by younger tenants (such as mobility and differing engagement styles).
5. The Panel also queried how the new approach to tenant engagement would differ from the current model. The Panel was particularly interested in understanding how the new model would allow for earlier identification of issues and vulnerabilities within the tenant community. It was noted that the new structure aims to shift from reactive work to more responsive approaches, focused on meaningful contact with tenants to address concerns before they escalate into more significant problems.
6. The Panel refocused its discussion on the engagement of younger tenants, noting that though they represent a smaller proportion of the Council's tenant population, their unique needs and perspectives are crucial to consider. The Panel highlighted the value of bespoke initiatives, such as interest-based activities and youth-focused programmes, to foster greater participation and engagement among this demographic. Recognising that traditional forms of engagement may not resonate with younger tenants, the Panel suggested reconsidering the approach to ensure their voices are effectively represented within the tenant engagement structure.

Recommendation 1: That Cabinet reconsiders its approach of Young People within the tenant engagement structure to ensure their representation is given greater prominence, by elevating their role within the governance structure, providing a direct pathway for their contributions to the Tenant Representative Forum and creating a bespoke mechanism for their input to be highlighted at the top level; and that innovative and youth-focused methods of engagements are continually explored to ensure their voices are actively included in strategic decision-making.

Report author	Celeste Reyeslao
Job title	Scrutiny and Governance Advisor
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252946
e-mail	creyeslao@oxford.gov.uk

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 27 November 2024 concerning the Tenancy Engagement and Management. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

23

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That Cabinet reconsiders its approach of Young People within the tenant engagement structure to ensure their representation is given greater prominence, by elevating their role within the governance structure, providing a direct pathway for their contributions to the Tenant Representative Forum and creating a bespoke mechanism for their input to be highlighted at the top level; and that innovative and youth-focused methods of engagements are continually explored to ensure their voices are actively included in strategic decision-making.	Yes	We will consider how best to secure the involvement and representation of young people as we develop our tenant engagement and governance arrangements.

This page is intentionally left blank

To: Cabinet
Date: 11 December 2024
Report of: Climate and Environment Panel
Title of Report: Eco-moorings Update

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Climate and Environment Panel recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Emily Kerr, Chair of the Climate and Environment Panel
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Anna Railton, Deputy Leader (Non-Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2024-28
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 Climate and Environment Panel met on 20 November 2024 to consider an update on Eco-moorings. It was recommended that the Panel receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel was grateful to Councillor Anna Railton (Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford) and Pedro Abreu (Principal Air Quality Officer) for attending the meeting to answer questions. The Panel would also like to thank Councillor James Fry, who was invited to attend the meeting in his capacity as ward member and his longstanding work on eco-moorings.

Summary and recommendations

3. Pedro Abreu, Principal Air Quality Officer presented an updated on the Eco-Moorings Project which would be delivered on a particular stretch of the canal in Aristotle Lane, noting that this area had historically received a lot of smoke nuisance

associated with solid and diesel fuel burnings, and causes health implications to local residents and boaters alike.

4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including clarification on the types of cables to be used and whether they would be compatible with standard equipment. Questions were also raised about the availability of moorings for temporary users, the management of potential overstays, and how rental boat companies are being engaged to address smoke and pollution issues. The Panel sought assurance that cables would not pose a hazard along the towpath and inquired about plans for community engagement to support the project.
5. In particular, the Panel discussed learning from Islington’s similar eco-moorings project, which demonstrated significant increases in usage and reductions in smoke nuisance complaints through a period of active engagement. It was noted that the data and practices from Islington would be reviewed to guide implementation of eco-moorings at Aristotle Lane.
6. The Panel highlighted the need for clear strategies to manage overstays and ensure accessibility.
7. There was also a discussion on the scalability of the project and its potential to secure future funding based on its success. Cllr James Fry, attending in his capacity as ward member, commended the project, citing its potential to improve air quality and its value as a pilot for wider adoption across Oxford’s waterways.
8. The Panel further discussed engagement with different segments of the community, noting that the closure of the towpath had already prompted queries from constituents in Walton Manor and neighbouring wards such as Summertown. It was noted that a communications strategy was in development, including plans for a dedicated webpage to provide boaters with key information on eco-moorings operation, available grants for retrofitting, comparisons of various heating systems, and other relevant resources, as part of the work being undertaken by the newly appointed Sustainability Engagement Officer.

Building on this discussion, the Panel suggested that Council communicates these plans by distributing letters to local residents and boaters, as well as keeping ward councillors informed, to ensure transparency and effective management.

Recommendation 1: That Council communicates with local residents and the boating community by distributing letters outlining the planned developments and work associated with the installation of eco-moorings at Aristotle Lane, including details of the temporary towpath closure; and to ensure relevant Members are kept informed and updated on this work.

Report author	Celeste Reyeslao
Job title	Scrutiny and Governance Advisor
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252946
e-mail	creyeslao@oxford.gov.uk

Appendix A
Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of
the Climate and Environment Panel of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Panel on 20 November 2024 concerning the Eco-moorings Update. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

27

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>1) That the Council communicates with local residents and the boating community by distributing letters outlining the planned developments and work associated with the installation of eco-moorings at Aristotle Lane, including details of the temporary towpath closure; and to ensure relevant Members are kept informed and updated on this work.</p>	<p>In part</p>	<p>The City Council will prepare a press release, so that Oxford City residents are aware of the works associated with the installation of the eco-moorings and details of the temporary towpath closure. Website content is also being developed to provide relevant information about the project and should go live before the installation works. Ward members will also likely engage with local residents about the moorings.</p> <p>Street notices informing local people about the project are part of the normal process of submitting a TTRO (Temporary Traffic Regulation Order). At the moment signage is also being developed by the C&RT (with direct input from the City) with information about the project, the duration of the installation works and alternative pedestrian routes will be highlighted, whilst the towpath is closed. These will be displayed along the canal path a few weeks before the initiation of the installation works.</p>

This page is intentionally left blank

To: Cabinet

Date: 11 December 2024

Report of: Climate and Environment Panel

Title of Report: High-level challenges and constraints impacting on the deliverability of solar opportunities at Council car parks

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Climate and Environment Panel recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Emily Kerr, Chair of the Climate and Environment Panel
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Anna Railton, Deputy Leader (Non-Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2024-28
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 Climate and Environment Panel met on 20 November 2024 to consider a report on solar opportunities at Council car parks. The report provides a high-level overview of challenges and constraints impacting on the deliverability of the project.
2. The Panel was grateful to Councillor Anna Railton (Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford) and Alice Jones (Carbon Reduction Project Manager) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Alice Jones, Carbon Reduction Project Manager introduced the report providing a high-level overview of the challenges involved in delivering solar canopies at Council-owned car parks. The report highlighted engagement with the Low Carbon Hub and outlined that the project was still at an early stage, with options for the offtake yet to be fully explored. Key challenges included the significantly higher cost

of installing solar canopies, which was estimated to be two to three times more expensive than rooftop installations of similar size, and the potential for additional costs related to other needs of the car parks.

4. The Panel acknowledged the merit of the initiative and discussed the challenges and costs associated with the project. Clarification was sought about which car parks were owned or managed by the City Council and were large enough to meet the criteria of the scheme. It was noted that the City Council owned the Redbridge and Seacourt Park and Ride, while others, such as Peartree, were leased or managed on behalf of the County Council. The Panel agreed that the report should be updated to include a comprehensive list of Council-owned car parks meeting the viability criteria for the scheme.

Recommendation 1: That Officers update the report to include a comprehensive list of Council-owned car parks that are large enough to meet the viability requirements for the solar canopy scheme.

5. The Panel highlighted the importance of exploring alternative uses for car parks as part of the feasibility assessment. The Panel noted examples such as Redbridge, which already hosts an EV charging hub, and discussed how some sites, such as Oxpens, were being repurposed for redevelopment. The Panel supported progressing with the feasibility assessment, including engagement with the Greater South East Net Zero Hub to identify alternative revenue-generating opportunities and ensure alignment with the Council’s wider sustainability goals.

Recommendation 2: That Cabinet proceeds with the feasibility assessment by engaging with the Greater South East Net Zero Hub, focusing on exploring other viable uses for car parks, including potential revenue-generating opportunities, to ensure the most effective and sustainable outcomes.

6. The Panel also discussed collaborating with the County Council, particularly car parks owned by County but are managed by the City Council. It was suggested that the City Council pursues engagement with the County Council, leveraging its influence in managing these sites to explore joint projects for County-owned car parks, with the aim of maximising opportunities and ensuring alignment with shared sustainability objectives.

Recommendation 3: That Cabinet pursues engagement with the County Council to explore the potential for joint schemes for car parks owned by Oxfordshire County Council but managed by Oxford City Council; efforts should be made to influence and advocate for collaborative projects that maximise opportunities and ensure alignment with sustainability objectives.

Report author	Celeste Reyeslao
Job title	Scrutiny and Governance Advisor
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252946
e-mail	creyeslao@oxford.gov.uk

Appendix A
Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of
the Climate and Environment Panel of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Panel on 20 November 2024 concerning the High-level challenges and constraints impacting on the deliverability of solar opportunities at Council car parks. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

31

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That Officers update the report to include a comprehensive list of Council-owned car parks that are large enough to meet the viability requirements for the solar canopy scheme.	Yes	List of car parks that are likely to meet viability requirements added as an addendum.
2) That Cabinet proceeds with the feasibility assessment by engaging with the Greater South East Net Zero Hub, focusing on exploring other viable uses for car parks, including potential revenue-generating opportunities, to ensure the most effective and sustainable.	Yes	It is proposed the Environmental Sustainability Team engages with the Greater South East Net Zero Hub to explore routes and grant opportunities to support a detailed pre-feasibility study for the Council's car parks. The potential solar opportunities the car parks provide, perhaps most likely associated with the progressive rollout of installation of electric vehicle chargers, will need to be set against alternative options and potential uses for these sites.
3) That Cabinet pursues engagement with the County Council to explore the potential for joint schemes for car parks owned by Oxfordshire County Council but managed by Oxford City Council; efforts should be made to influence and advocate for collaborative projects that maximise opportunities and ensure alignment with sustainability objectives.	Yes	Oxfordshire County Council are looking into the potential of their car parks in terms of solar, they are further into their investigations e.g., at the stage of putting Business Cases together. The City Council Environmental Sustainability team will engage with County officers to understand project scoping findings and assess opportunities for collaboration. At the very least there is the opportunity to share learnings and knowledge.

This page is intentionally left blank