

Council



Briefing note and supplementary papers

Date: **Monday 27 January 2025**

Time: **5.00 pm**

Place: **Council Chamber - Oxford Town Hall**

The Council agenda, reports, this briefing note, and any other supplementary papers should be considered together.

This briefing note forms part of the papers to be considered at the Council meeting. It contains additional information; councillors' questions, public addresses; and amendments to motions.

All papers for this meeting can be accessed through the council's website.

For further information please contact:

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager,

 01865 529117

 democraticservices@oxford.gov.uk

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All public papers are available from the calendar link to this meeting once published

Briefing note

Information for councillors and additional papers to be considered.

	Pages
12 Questions on Cabinet minutes	
<i>This item has a time limit of 15 minutes.</i>	
Councillors may ask the Cabinet Members questions about matters in these minutes:	
12a Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 11 December 2024	
12b Draft Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 22 January 2025	
13 Questions on Notice from Members of Council	31 - 50
Questions on notice from councillors received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.11(b).	
Questions on notice may be asked of the Lord Mayor, a Member of the Cabinet or a Chair of a Committee. One supplementary question may be asked at the meeting.	
The full text of questions must have been received by the Head of Law and Governance by no later than 1.00pm on Wednesday, 15 th January 2025.	
These, and written responses where available, will be published in the briefing note.	
14 Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision at this Council meeting	51 - 54
<i>This item will be taken at or shortly after 7.00pm</i>	
Public addresses and questions to the Leader or other Cabinet member received in accordance with Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution and <u>not</u> relating to matters for decision in Part 1 of this agenda.	
Up to five minutes is available for each public address and up to three	

minutes for each question. Questions must be less than 200 words.

The request to speak accompanied by the full text of the address or question must be received by the [Head of Law and Governance](#) by 5.00 pm on 21 January 2025.

The briefing note will contain the text of addresses and questions submitted by the deadline, and written responses where available.

A total of 45 minutes is available for both public speaking items. Responses are included in this time.

15 Outside organisation/Committee Chair reports and questions

As set out in the Constitution at procedure rule 11.16, Members who are Council representatives on external bodies or Chairs of Council Committees who consider that a significant decision or event has taken place, may give notice to the Head of Law and Governance by 1.00 pm Thursday, 23 January 2025 that they will present a written or oral report on the event or the significant decision and how it may influence future events. Written reports will be circulated with the briefing note.

15c Scrutiny Committee update report

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee has submitted a report which updates Council on the activities of scrutiny and the implementation of recommendations since October 2024.

Council is invited to comment on and note the report.

16 Motions on Notice January 2025

This item has a time limit of 60 minutes.

Motions received by the Head of Law and Governance in accordance with the rules in Section 11 of the Constitution by the deadline of 1.00pm on Wednesday, 15th January 2025 are listed below.

Cross party motions are taken first. Motions will then be taken in turn from the *Independent Oxford Alliance Group, Oxford Community Independents Group, Oxford Independent Group, Real Independent Group, Labour Group, Liberal Democrats Group, Green Group in that order.*

Substantive amendments to these motions must be sent by councillors to the Head of Law and Governance by no later than 10.00am on

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Friday, 24th January 2025 so that they may be circulated with the briefing note.

Minor technical or limited wording amendments may be submitted during the meeting but must be written down and circulated.

Council is asked to consider the following motions:

- a) Zero Emission Zone (Proposed by Cllr. David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr. Ian Yeatman)
- b) Visitor Parking Permits (Proposed by Cllr. Ajaz Rehman, Seconded by Cllr. Dr. Amar Latif)
- c) Devolution (Proposed by Cllr. Susan Brown, Seconded by Cllr. Anna Railton)
- d) Protection of Carers from Exploitation (Proposed by Cllr. Jo Sandelson, Seconded by Cllr Theo Jupp)
- e) Demand compensation from Network Rail for delays in reopening Botley Road (Proposed by Cllr. Lois Muddiman, Seconded by Cllr. Alex Powell)

This briefing note is published as a supplement to the agenda and should be considered along with the agenda; reports; and other supplementary papers.

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Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 11 December 2024

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Committee members present:

Councillor Brown

Councillor Arshad

Councillor Chapman

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Munkonge

Councillor Railton

Councillor Linda Smith

Councillor Upton

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)

Caroline Green, Chief Executive

Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

Peter Matthew, Executive Director of People and Communities

Emma Jackman, Head of Law and Governance

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy

Jenny Barker, Regeneration Manager

Hannah Carmody-Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Lourdes Debarry, Housing Consultant

Lorraine Freeman, CIL Data Analysis and Reporting Team Leader

Sarah Harrison, Team Leader (Planning Policy)

Hagan Lewisman, Active Communities Manager

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

Bruce McRobie, Capital Programme Surveyor

Rachel Nixon, Principle Planner

Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services

Paula Redway, Culture and Community Development Manager

Jane Winfield, Head of Corporate Property

Also present:

Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of Scrutiny

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Turner sent apologies.

76. Declarations of Interest

None.

77. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None received.

78. Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda

None received.

79. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None received.

80. Items raised by Cabinet Members

Councillor Railton expressed her appreciation to City Council and ODS employees for their diligent response to recent storm conditions in November and flash flooding in September. She noted their commitment to circulating information, installing equipment, and checking on vulnerable residents. She also warned that similar weather conditions are likely to occur more frequently in Oxford City as winters get warmer and wetter and the Council must be considerate of this when planning. Councillor Railton thanked specific frontline staff for their work protecting the community. Councillor Brown echoed the comments.

81. Scrutiny Reports

Councillor Miles presented reports from the Scrutiny Committee.

The committee met for an extraordinary meeting on 18 November 2024 to consider a call in of a Cabinet decision from 16 October 2024 regarding the entering of an options agreement for Foxwell Drive. The Committee discussed concerns relating to the length of the agreement, risks, and concerns around the separation of planning and land disposal processes. The Committee upheld the original Cabinet decision.

The Scrutiny Committee convened on 2 December 2024 to consider the Thriving Communities Strategy Update and the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24. 7 recommendations were proposed. On the first item, the Committee raised the need for data reporting to be more outcome focused and comparable, the need for more member engagement in locality plans, and the success of the EPAU at Rosehill. Councillor Miles pointed to the recommendations in the pack and Councillor Brown confirmed that all had been agreed. Councillor Munkonge thanked all involved with the strategy and echoed the acceptance of the recommendations. In relation to The Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24, the Scrutiny Committee discussed concerns over the loss of family homes to students, the use of existing student accommodation, and the effect of increasing student numbers on the private rented sector in the city. The Committee requested more detailed data relating to student housing demand and considered whether land options for student housing demand could be sought outside of the city

centre. This discussion resulted in 2 recommendations, as noted in the report. In response, Councillor Upton explained that the report is focused on presenting data and measuring policy performance. As such, not all aspects of the recommendations could be incorporated into this report and some of the data requested already exists. She did however note her agreement with the sentiment of the first recommendation. On the second recommendation, she assured Councillor Miles that engagement with universities already takes place to encourage them to facilitate student housing on their own land; little more can be done.

The Climate and Environment Panel convened on 20 November 2024 to discuss updates around the UK Moorings Project and the deliverability of solar opportunities in Council car parks. This produced 4 recommendations, three of which related to the Council car parks project which have been agreed to. Councillor Railton noted that the recommendation regarding eco-moorings will be accepted only in part as there is not sufficient budget for letter drops to surrounding residents.

The Housing and Homelessness Panel convened on 27 November 2024 for an extraordinary meeting to discuss the HRA Asset Management Strategy and 5-Year Investment Programme and the Tenancy Engagement and Management report. Councillor Smith noted her support for the first recommendation relating to engaging young people as tenants in council properties. The recommendation was accepted. Councillor Smith noted a second recommendation regarding tenant satisfaction which focused on a discrepancy between corporate KPIs and the report. This recommendation was also accepted.

The Finance and Performance Panel convened on 4 December 2024 but made no recommendations.

Councillor Brown thanked Councillor Miles for her work within the Scrutiny Committee.

82. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

The Executive Director Communities and People had submitted a report to present the HRA 40-year Business Plan for approval and implementation. Councillor Smith presented the report which aims to continue investment in Council homes, generate capacity to build more, and maintain sustainable levels of borrowing. The plans within the report are affordable and set out intentions to maximise income whilst replacing and improving old housing stock. The combined measures will support the reduction of debt and enable funding of future priorities. This will ensure that Oxford City Council is the best social landlord going forward.

The Executive Director Communities and People highlighted that the business plan is a medium-term plan which gives consideration beyond 2031 for future investment plans as the HRA's borrowing ability improves.

Councillor Chapman praised the report and noted his comfort in finally seeing comprehensive plans for house repairs to be conducted through ODS that will ensure value for money and responsive service. Councillor Railton focused on the topics of retrofitting and decarbonisation in relation to EPC commitments. Finally, Councillor Brown positively commented that that Oxford City Council is the only in the Oxford

region to possess and control its own housing stock meaning it can be ensured that tenants receive a better experience.

Councillor Smith specifically thanked the Housing and Tenant Consultant for this report who in return noted that the report is beneficial for the future of tenant experiences, should hold ODS to account, and ensure good value for money.

Cabinet agreed to

1. Adopt the new OCC Housing Revenue Account 40-Year Business Plan, which is attached at Appendix A that shows the HRA is able to fund planned expenditure over the medium term as set out in the 2025/26 Budget and MTFP proposals.
2. Agree:
 - i. implement the actions set out at paragraph 3.12 for further improving the financial position of the HRA in the medium term and bring forward availability of new borrowing from 2030/31; and
 - ii. prepare the options available to the Council for investing the HRA beyond 2030/31 as outlined at paragraphs 3.19/20.

83. Asset Strategy and 5 Year Investment Programme

The Executive Director, Communities and People, had submitted the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Asset Management Strategy and 5-Year Investment Programmes for adoption and approval. Councillor Smith presented the report and its findings which offered more detail on how investment in Council owned homes over the next 5 years will use £250m. She explained that plans are informed by data and stock condition surveys and tenant feedback. ODS will complete half of the work, with the other half to be allocated through a bidding process. The strategy also seeks to support ODS with their business planning to ensure value for money is achieved.

Councillor Chapman welcomed the level of certainty and long-term plan that the strategy offered but questioned how more efficiency will be guaranteed given the scale of the workload. He queried what project management systems will be in place. The Executive Director for Communities and People informed Cabinet that a delivery work plan, managed by a governance structure, is being designed with the Council and ODS. Additionally, there are provisions for a 1-year transition period for ODS to make necessary adjustments. The detail of the work plan is due in the new year and The Chief Executive Officer noted that it will be discussed amongst CMT pending the report's approval at Cabinet.

Councillor Turner requested further information and examples of the likely spends on energy efficiency that could be made within this plan. The Executive Director for Communities and People informed him that the plan to 2030 includes around £40m from the HRA to invest in measures such as window replacements but admitted that investment must be targeted to ensure that units below EPC are picked up and improved to meet targets.

Cabinet agreed to

1. Adopt the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Asset Management Strategy plan for 2025-28, a draft for which is attached at Appendix A.
2. Approve the HRA Investment Programmes of up to £250m over the next 5 years. The programmes are summarised at Appendix B, and comprise:
 - a. HRA 5-year Capital Programme (planned works) totalling up to £177m, which should ensure that OCC meets its landlord obligations including new safety, quality and decent home standards; and
 - b. annual demand led revenue works for responsive repairs and services of up to £14m for 2025/26 (up to £70m over 5 years).
3. Approve the commissioning of the following sub programmes to Oxford Direct Services Ltd (ODS) through current HRA direct award arrangements:
 - a. capital programme and projects valued at up to £77m over the next 5 years; and
 - b. responsive repairs (revenue) programme for 2025/26 valued at up to £12m (£60m).
4. Approve the commissioning, clienting and financial management arrangements at Appendix C and D for effectively implementing the recommendations above and enable the development of annual Delivery Plan by ODS for 2025/26
5. Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Communities and People, in consultation with the lead member for housing, to:
 - a. agree annual capital plans and programmes that are in line with the approved 5-year capital programme; and
 - b. make minor modifications to the specifications at Appendix C and D
 - c. delegate/decision to commence procurement activities to ensure delivery of capital and revenue works as required.

84. Tenancy Engagement and Management

The Executive Director of Communities and People had submitted a report to set out and seek approval for the reset of the Council's Tenant Engagement work, in its role as a social landlord and in alignment with the new Consumer Standards issued by the Regulator for Social Housing. Councillor Smith presented the high-level report which seeks to ensure improved and increased consultation with tenants alongside the maintenance of a direct link between the Council's governance structure and a new representative forum for tenants. She outlined that the forum would include the Cabinet Member for Housing who will be able to bring feedback directly to Cabinet. The report also explained the reorganisation of landlord services to ensure more responsive work on the ground to facilitate relationships with tenants and to inspire confidence in the Council's plans. The Head of Housing Services explained that the plans seek to bring the landlord function in line with the expectations of the tenants as a means of

strengthening a two-way relationship. This will place the tenant's voice at the decision-making table.

Councillor Brown thanked those involved in the report.

Cabinet agreed to

1. To approve the adoption and implementation of the new approach to Tenant Engagement as set out in this report.
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Communities and People (Interim) to make any further changes as necessary in line with service development and new legislation.

85. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 and 2028/29 and 2025/26 Budget for Consultation

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to propose a Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the 2025/26 Budget for consultation. Councillor Turner presented the report and its findings with reference to an amended circulation of documentation provided. He thanked officers for their work on the fast-moving matter considering recent Government funding changes. As such, he noted the discrepancy between the 'potential support' committed to by Government, and the materialisation of these funds; local governments will need to be assertive in accessing this money. He explained that the aim of the strategy is to deliver services properly and efficiently in a context where resources are more constrained. Due to Covid it is expected that reserves will be drawn on for a couple of years but that changes to business rates could tighten the budget in the future. Furthermore, by planning more than one year ahead, negative events in the future could be reduced and risks mitigated to some extent by ensuring dividends, such as those from ODS and OX Place. Overall, Councillor Turner explained intentions to run the Council in a progressive way which maintains services and insources work.

Councillor Brown thanked Councillor Turner and the relevant officers.

The Head of Financial Services highlighted the benefits of having a 4-year balanced plan which has been achieved by using £5.5m of reserves and the reliance on the two companies to produce £19m in dividends over the next few years. However, he also noted uncertainty around the Government's budget announcement and the lack of clarity this offered. He cautioned that although the plan is positive, care must be taken to ensure and maintain income streams.

Councillor Brown thanked The Head of Financial Services and officers and noted that suggestions or questions regarding the report should be saved until the next meeting of Council.

Councillor Munkonge queried how the reform to business rates, if it goes ahead, would impact small businesses, and asked who is lobbying for this reform. Councillor Turner advised that the matter is complex and includes changes such as the business rate reset which will affect council income rather than small businesses, and the fairer funding changes which will impact how business rates are allocated. There will be

Government consultation on other changes to business rates and he committed that Oxford City Council will respond, as well as the LGA. The Head of Financial Services committed to sharing the draft response to the Government consultation with the Council.

Councillor Hollingsworth referred to paragraph 42C in the report relating to car parking and the closure of Oxpens car park. He asked whether any other car parks will be closed, specifically Worcester Street. The Head of Financial Services explained that any changes on Worcester Street would fall outside the timeframe of this budget.

Cabinet agreed to

1. Approve the 2025-26 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets for consultation and the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-10, noting:
 - a. The Council's General Fund Budget Requirement of £29.678 million for 2025/26 and an increase in the Band D Council Tax of 2.99% or £10.36 per annum representing a Band D Council Tax of £356.72 per annum assuming it is confirmed that the authority is able to do so (see para 14 below)
 - b. The Housing Revenue Account budget for 2025/26 of £54.810 million and an increase of 2.7% (average of £3.51 per week) in social dwelling rents from 1 April 2025 (see paragraphs 76-78) giving a revised weekly average social rent of £133.68 as set out in Appendix 5.
 - c. The increase in shared ownership rental in accordance with the lease as shown in paragraph 79-80.
 - d. The General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme as shown in Appendix 6.
2. Agree the fees and charges shown in Appendix 7
3. Delegate to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Board Member for Finance and Assets the decision to determine whether it is financially advantageous for the Council to enter into a Business Rates Distribution Agreement as referred to in paragraphs 23-24 of the report.

86. Controlled Parking Zones and CIL Spend

The Head of Planning and Regulatory Service had submitted a report to approve the release of CIL monies to the Local Highway Authority, Oxfordshire County Council for spending on the review of 7 existing Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) within the Oxford City boundary. Councillor Upton presented the report and its findings. She explained that the CIL is a levy charged per square metre of infrastructure to help fund the city. The report seeks approval for the release of plots and expenditure to support work around CPZs, managed by Oxford County Council. Councillor Upton noted this as a good opportunity to improve CPZs with input from residents.

Councillor Brown welcomed the report and noted her personal dissatisfaction with many local CPZs. However, she also emphasised that the process of reviewing CPZs must engage with city and county councillors.

Councillor Smith welcomed the scope for the City Council to influence how Oxford County Council consults residents to ensure improvements. She also extended the consideration to local businesses and highlighted that the review of CPZs could improve possibilities for visitors to access small businesses more easily, especially in East Oxford.

Councillor Hollingsworth agreed with the plans in principle but questioned the appropriateness and legality of using CIL funds for the review of CPZs. He expressed understanding that CIL should not be used to redevelop existing infrastructure. The Head of Law and Governance acknowledged the question as valid and noted that the plans should be considered in principle at Cabinet, with a commitment to checking the detail and legality later. Councillor Brown agreed further discussion was required. The Team Leader for CIL, Data analysis and Reporting explained that CIL regulations change regularly and at present, would allow for the plans set out in the report. Per the Planning Act 2008, she noted no issue with the plans but committed to confirm this.

The Head of Law and Governance clarified that the recommendation could be accepted in principle but that further legal advice on funding should be sought with the final decision being delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with Councillor Upton following the meeting.

On this basis, Cabinet agreed to

1. Approve, in principle, the request for the release of £358,000 In CIL monies to Oxfordshire County Council, for spending towards the review of 7 existing CPZs within Oxford City, but to delegate the final decision to The Head of Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, subject to consultation with Oxford City councillors, residents and businesses.

87. Integrated Performance Report Q2 2024/25

Councillor Ed Turner, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets had submitted a report to update the Cabinet on Finance, Risk and Corporate Performance matters as at 30th September 2024. Councillor Turner presented the report and its findings. He explained that more money had been spent than anticipated due to pressures from temporary accommodation and increased HRA costs this year. Consideration of these factors will be accounted for when assessing the budget for next year.

Cabinet agreed to

1. Note the projected financial outturn as well as the current position on risk and performance as on 30th September 2024.

88. Treasury Management Mid Year Review - April to September 2024

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to report on the performance of the Treasury Management function for the 6 months to 30 September 2024. Councillor Turner presented the report and its findings. He explained that the figures in the review are a response to interest rates and property funds which have been invested in.

Cabinet agreed to

1. Note the performance of the Treasury Management function for the six months to 30th September 2024.

89. Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24

The Head of Planning and Regulatory Service had submitted a report to approve the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement for publication. Councillor Upton presented the report and its findings. She explained that it is a statutory requirement for the Council to set out how well it is doing against the criteria of its planning policies, measured against three objectives: strong economy, healthy and vibrant communities, and protection of natural and built environments. She focused on several highlights within the report including the 365 homes built in Oxford in the last year which includes 61 affordable homes, the increase in employment floor space across the city, and the role of Oxford as a major driver of the UK economy.

Councillor Hollingsworth noted that the plan will be out of date from next year and questioned whether this could be causing some of the delays and reductions in the production of developments in the last year. In response, The Team Leader for Planning Policy explained that the local plan will remain the relevant document beyond next year and that work for a new plan is continuing. The reduction in permissions for housing developments in the last year are more linked to other factors including reliance on smaller sites for permissions She noted that these tend to be more unreliable and subject to the variability of the economic climate.

Councillor Chapman requested clarification on an error on page 293 of the report. Cabinet and officers collectively agreed the error.

Councillor Railton queried why there is a difference in how housing and employment land are reported on in respect of the measured categories of permissions and completions. The Team Leader for Planning Policy confirmed that housing uses both measures, but employment land is based only on one. This is based on requirement.

Cabinet agreed to

1. Approve the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24 for publication.
2. Authorise the Head of Planning and Regulatory Services to make any necessary minor corrections not materially affecting the document prior to publication.

90. Thriving Communities Strategy Update

The Executive Director for Communities and People had submitted a report to provide an update on the delivery of the Thriving Communities Strategy. Councillor Munkonge presented the report on the progress of the strategy and thanked officers and cabinet members for their work. He noted that the strategy supports the Council's wider corporate priorities and is underpinned by work with a range of partners. Successes and highlights to date were noted which have contributed towards inequality reduction and improved ability for the community to enjoy local spaces. Councillor Munkonge pointed to the measures in the report which demonstrate the strategy's success, particularly measure 4 relating to swimming rates of young people in Oxford. He concluded that further improvements are required and acknowledged the recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Arshad also summarised the update report and focused on its ability to unite leisure, culture, and community initiatives to foster collaborative outcomes. To date, it has secured £2.8m in external funding and will distribute £1.5m annually through the Oxford Community Impact Fund. She also welcomed the recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Hollingsworth praised the consistency of the report for establishing and continually monitoring 11 measures. He noted the importance for using these for developing a useful and comparable data set over time.

The Active Communities Manager highlighted the importance of community work and the breadth of partnerships at the core of the strategy, including cultural partners and those within the health system. The Culture and Communities Development Manager added that the strategy is a whole system approach which includes the voluntary sector and other statutory agencies through a locality-based approach.

Councillor Brown pointed to the greater engagement the city has experienced recently from Oxford University as a result of this strategy and expressed hope that the trend continues. She explained that this could offer further access to the university's facilities, people, and expertise and concluded by thanking The Executive Director for Communities and People.

Councillor Arshad thanked all officers who have worked on the strategy.

Cabinet agreed to

1. Note the update on the delivery of the Thriving Communities Strategy.

91. Blackbird Leys Development Project - Compulsory Purchase Order

The Executive Director of Development had submitted a report to seek approval to utilise the Council's Compulsory Purchase powers to support the acquisition of properties required for Phase 2 of the Blackbird Leys Development Project. Councillor Smith presented the report outlining that phase 1 of the regeneration scheme was under way for new homes, new shops, and a new community centre. Preparation is under way for phase 2 which involves planning for the use of compulsory purchase

order powers as a last resort if agreement cannot be sought in the first instance. She explained that the report would allow necessary preparation to take place, but that a Cabinet decision would still be required in the future should the use of the compulsory purchase order powers be necessary. The unit in question includes shops and maisonettes which would be taken down for the development of a new residential block containing 98 affordable units.

Cabinet agreed to

1. Authorise the use by the Council of its Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) making powers pursuant to Section 226(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for the acquisition of the land and [section 13 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 for the acquisition of new rights over land] shown outlined in red on the plan attached as Appendix 1.
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Development in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management and the Cabinet Member for Homes and Communities:
 - a. to take all necessary steps to secure the making, seeking confirmation and implementation of a CPO under section 226(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 including the publication and service of all notices and presentation of the Council's case at any public inquiry following the making of the Compulsory Purchase Order for the land shown on the plan attached as Appendix 1. To agree in principle to the use of the Council's compulsory purchase order powers pursuant to section 226(1) (a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to acquire third party rights and interests subject to detailed land referencing exercise, in order to facilitate the Blackbird Leys Development Project
 - b. approve and enter agreements with landowners setting out the terms for withdrawal of objections to the Compulsory Purchase Order, including, where appropriate seeking exclusion of land or new rights from the Compulsory Purchase Order and/or making arrangements for the relocation of occupiers
 - c. to agree the terms and any documentation required to settle any property matters necessary to progress the regeneration scheme.

92. Disposal of City Council Land

The Executive Director Development had submitted a report to seek approval for the disposal of City Council owned land with development potential. The Head of Law and Governance provided some clarity regarding recommendation 2 which was updated to read as follows: 'to agree to the proposal to dispose of the land as set out in the report, subject to the agreement of contractual terms'.

Councillor Turner noted that the report must be read in conjunction with the confidential appendix provided to Cabinet. He explained that any disposal of land follows careful process to consider balance between controls of ownership and the potential benefits of disposal, including financial and other. He also assured Cabinet that on cases such as this, expert independent advice is utilised.

Councillor Brown reminded Cabinet of the confidential nature of this report and offered to enter a private session for further discussion. No private session was requested.

Cabinet agreed to

- 1. Note the contents of the report.
- 2. To agree to the proposal to dispose of the land as set out in the report, subject to the agreement of contractual terms.
- 3. Delegate to the Executive Director Development in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management and the Head of Law and Governance and Head of Financial Services the agreement of the detailed terms for the sale and to enter into all the necessary agreements to effect the disposal of the land on the basis that the terms comply with S123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

93. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2024 as a true and accurate record.

94. Dates of Future Meetings

Cabinet noted the dates of future meetings.

The meeting started at 6.05 pm and ended at 7.40 pm

**Chair
January 2025**

Date: Wednesday 22

When decisions take effect:
Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired
Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued
All other committees: immediately.
Details are in the Council’s Constitution.

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 22 January 2025



Committee members present:

Councillor Brown

Councillor Arshad

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Railton

Councillor Upton

Councillor Turner

Councillor Chapman

Councillor Munkonge

Councillor Linda Smith

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

None

Also present:

Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of Scrutiny

None

None

Apologies:

Councillor(s) None sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

No apologies were received

95. Declarations of Interest

None.

96. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

An address to Cabinet was submitted by Mark Pott regarding Agenda Item 11:

This question is similar to my consultation response, which was not listed in the response summary of the report to the Cabinet. (Redesignation of the Neighbourhood Forum for Headington) Decisions seem to be taken for CIL funding by a Committee of only three persons, minutes are extremely sparse and, in some cases, unlinked on the web site. (eg: Dec 2022) There is clearly a relationship between Headington Action and the Forum, but the lines of responsibility are unclear with possible overlap of personnel. There appears to be insufficient publicly available information as to how this arrangement is authorised or how it operates and how responsibilities are delineated.

For example, for a project as large as the Regeneration Plan (£37K for first phase only) at a minimum the following publicly accessible, details should be available:

- Plan objectives (partly provided)
- Outline costs prior to commencement
- Tendering – Tender details, responses, and formal selection process
- Detailed minutes of all meetings and decisions, with clear line of responsibility for the two organisations (Headington Action and Forum) and individuals, and record of voting etc
- Formal consultation and justification of disbursements especially including a go/no go decision with public consultation
- Cost breakdown by item for proposed and completed projects
- What was achieved, lessons learnt, and future steps
- Declaration of interests [1]

This provides accountability and transparency to the taxpayer and residents. The £39,916.67 CIL money for Headington Regeneration Design was disbursed and appears to have been a complete waste of money, providing training for budding urban design consultants, producing a report consisting almost entirely of academic analysis with only 11 “ideas” which are either extremely obvious, completely unrealistic or would be very poor value for money. There is no evidence of any productive outcome or next steps, even recommendations to “declutter” have not only been ignored but clutter has increased. (chairs outside cafes, BT Hubs etc) Similarly, £9800 Street Champion Coordinator was paid for, with no report as to what was achieved for the money spent. The Forum has considered a large disbursement of £33k for Courtside but it is not clear what this was for or whether it was disbursed as it does not appear in the CIL Statement from OCC. (yet?) It includes the extraordinary request that: “The original application was approved by HA committee in January 2022 but was not advertised for consultation at the client’s request.” (08/10/2023) which is extraordinary for a request to disburse public funds. A Street Champion Coordinator 2021-2022 - £9,800. The above is also not addressed in the financial implications section of the report. Without robust governance, the sort of financial disaster the Regeneration Project represents will only be repeated. Whereas the structure appears to be adequate for minor disbursements such as flowers, lights and minor costs, it is inadequate for the large projects as below. Information may be available allay these concerns, but it is not, but should be, publicly accessible via the web site. A yearly report should be produced itemising all costs with the details above for each project for years to date and going forward. Given the weaknesses suggested above, the Forum should not disburse funds greater than say £5000 until the above is implemented. Question To Cabinet There appear to be several issues around governance, consultation and accountability and transparency concerns regarding the Forum. Based on the above, prior to redesignation, can the Cabinet give assurance that the above governance issues will be addressed to ensure CIL and other funds are disbursed transparently, accountably, and with clear rationale for decisions reached? It is surely not possible to redesignate a forum without issues such as these being resolved? Footnote: For clarity, there is no reason to believe any impropriety has occurred and none is implied.

The following response was provided to this question by the Cabinet Member for Planning & Cycling Champion.

The report sets out the rules and regulations that the City Council must follow when considering an application for a Neighbourhood Forum designation (or redesignation). Unfortunately, the question refers to operational issues that do not have direct bearing on the criteria we have to consider. The Headington Neighbourhood Forum (HNF) has demonstrated that it meets all of the required criteria for redesignation so we will be allowing it to proceed.

Perhaps surprisingly, there are no specific rules regarding how a Neighbourhood Forum operates, and there is therefore no basis on which the council can direct how the HNF spends the CIL funds allocated to it, as long as the spend meets the set criteria. However, Officers at the City Council work with all Neighbourhood Forums with regards to governance and other CIL-related matters and they will ensure that the feedback contained in the question is relayed to the HNF.

97. Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda

None received.

98. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None received.

99. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

100. Scrutiny Reports

Councillor Miles presented reports from the Scrutiny Committee.

The Scrutiny Committee met on 14 January 2025 and considered reports related to Agenda Items 8, 9 and 10. They discussed flood management systems and governance changes which are being implemented regarding urgent key decisions.

Councillor Miles presented the measures and objectives that were discussed relating to the Council of Sanctuary Framework. She noted that the Scrutiny Committee and discussed queries around data protection. The Scrutiny Committee also discussed problems related to the learning of English and the anti-migrant violence which had emerged since the report was drafted. The Scrutiny Committee had also considered the needs assessment. Councillor Miles presented the following recommendations related to this report.

- Recommendation 1: That the Council establishes and reports on clear Key Performance Indicators for its action plan, providing annual updates to the Scrutiny Committee to monitor its progress and ensure accountability.
- Recommendation 2: That the Council updates the document's text on National Policy Challenges to include contextual information that recognizes the evolving policy environment and anticipates potential changes to national policy.

- Recommendation 3: That the Council acknowledges the prevalence of anti-migrant violence by adding to the Key Challenges section of the document a list of specific responses and preventative measures addressing this key issue.
- Recommendation 4: That the Council releases the Needs Assessment report to the public to foster better understanding of the experiences of people seeking sanctuary, ensuring that any confidential data it contains is appropriately safeguarded.

Councillor Smith presented the response to these recommendations and said that they were happy to accept the first and fourth recommendations. The second and third recommendations were not being accepted. She stated that this was due to the recommendations' references to future changes, which were beyond the scope of the purpose of the paper being presented to Cabinet. She noted that the report being considered by Cabinet involves delegating authority and will be updated as changes occur.

Councillor Miles presented the Scrutiny Committee consideration of the HRA Rent Setting Report 2025/26. She stated that the Committee had discussed the rationale behind the percentage increase in garages and concerns around the need for more dynamic pricing. Councillor Miles said that the Scrutiny Committee had also debated whether they need to consider the impact of rental price changes in the private rental market when adjusting council housing rent prices. Councillor Miles presented the Scrutiny Committee recommendations relating to this report.

- Recommendation 1: That Officers includes a modelling of the impact of limiting garage charge increases to CPI + 1% in the final report presented to Cabinet.
- Recommendation 2: That the report, and any future annual iterations, includes a section reflecting on trends in the private rental market, with any relevant anticipated changes for the year ahead.

Councillor Smith responded that both recommendations had been accepted. She said that they did not believe that a modest increase in council house rents will have any impact on the high rents that they see in the private rental sector in the city.

Councillor Miles then presented the Scrutiny Committee's discussion regarding Flood Management. She said that they had discussed logistical challenges and clarity around the responsibilities of different agencies. Councillor Miles presented the recommendations relating to this issue.

- Recommendation 1: That Cabinet ensures Members are informed whenever flood investigations occur within their areas; sharing findings promptly will enable Councillors to respond effectively to residents' concerns and advocate for necessary measures.
- Recommendation 2: That Cabinet develops clear contact information for Members and distributes guidance leaflets to residents at risk of flooding, explaining proper reporting of flood incidents and actionable advice on mitigating flood risks, and support available for vulnerable residents.
- Recommendation 3: That Cabinet commits to long-term flood resilience and preparedness in the context of the need for climate adaptation measures, by

reviewing and reassessing the adequacy of emergency planning funding reserves, recognizing the growing frequency and severity of flooding in Oxford.

Councillor Railton responded that the third recommendation was agreed, and the first and second recommendations were partially agreed. With the first recommendation, Councillor Railton said that they have agreed to share that information when findings are published, not when the investigations are underway, as it can take some time for findings to be published. Councillor Railton said that she would take the second recommendation as an action item and would come up with advice regarding comms to be distributed to residents.

Councillor Turner said that looking at Councillor Railton's response, members should use the members enquiry form to make enquiries about flood issues. He added that he would also want it to be a default that Cabinet members act as the point of contact for urgent messages.

Councillor Miles then presented the Scrutiny Committee's discussion of the proposed governance changes to address the increase in

Urgent Key Decisions. She said that they had noted that measures are ongoing to address this and that these efforts are strengthening governance in the Council. She also noted that these decisions are being reviewed by full Council as well as Cabinet. She presented the recommendations relating to this matter.

- Recommendation 1: That Cabinet supports the continued implementation and embedding of the actions proposed to mitigate the increased number of Urgent Key Decisions taken.
- Recommendation 2: That Officers ensure an end-of-year report is submitted to the Scrutiny Committee, reporting the number and nature of urgent key decisions taken, including data to track trends and evaluate distinctions between capacity-related and unavoidable issues.

Councillor Brown responded that they are happy to agree the recommendations on this item.

Councillor Miles then presented the Scrutiny Committee's discussion regarding the Withdrawal of Oxford Local Plan 2040 from Examination and Approval of the Local Development Scheme 2025-2030. She said that Scrutiny Committee's discussion on this item focused on the local plan document, the local devolution papers, how the devolution papers might impact the local plan, the implications of extending the end date, and how that would impact neighborhood plans. Councillor Miles said that the Scrutiny Committee had noted with regret the withdrawal of the local plan and they agreed to endorse the officer recommendations. Councillor Miles said that there were no Scrutiny Committee recommendations on this item.

Councillor Brown thanked Councillor Miles for her and the Scrutiny Committee's work and the thorough approach they had taken in their review of these matters.

101. Council of Sanctuary Framework, 2025-2028

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources had submitted a report which sought approval and adoption of the draft Council of Sanctuary framework document.

Councillor Smith presented the report. She said that Cabinet are being asked to agree a three-year local plan and that the paper does not request any new funding to support the proposed action plan. She noted that Oxford has a long history of welcoming

people from around the world and since 2015 the Council had resettled 58 families. She stated that the accreditation and action plan proposed in the report provides a solid platform for providing a city in which everyone can thrive.

Councillor Brown thanked Councillor Smith and Stephen Cohen, Refugee and Resettlement Manager for their work on the report. Councillor Brown agreed that the official status proposed in the report is important and that this was a milestone report for the Council.

Councillor Smith also thanked the Refugee and Resettlement Manager and his team for the work they had done on the report.

Cabinet agreed to:

- **Approve** and adopt the draft Council of Sanctuary Framework document, including the Action Plan.
- **Agree** that an annual progress update should be produced for Cabinet.
- **Delegate** power to the Executive Director – Corporate Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, to amend the design of the framework document without changing the content, and to make changes to the action plan to keep it updated to developments and changes.

102. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Rent Setting Report 2025/26

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to present the outcome of Oxford City Council's (the council's) annual rent review and associated rent setting proposal for 2025/26 in respect of all council dwellings within the Housing Revenue Account, including the setting of associated services and facilities charges.

Councillor Smith presented the report and its recommendations. She stated that colleagues will know that there is a need to maximise income into the HRA to fund the Council's housing services. She noted that they need to invest in their Council homes, and they need to continue providing satisfactory landlord services for their tenants. Councillor Smith said that they need to invest in building and buying more affordable homes. Councillor Smith said that her message to tenants is that she regrets the need to raise the rents at all, but that she hopes tenants will understand the reasons this is necessary and that Council rents still represent great value for money.

Councillor Brown agreed that the proposed increases present a modest and necessary rise. She agreed with Councillor Smith that she also regretted that any rise was needed. Councillor Brown stated that it is necessary to put this modest increase in place to care for the housing that the Council provides. She noted that compared to private rents, Council rental prices continue to present significant value for money.

Cabinet agreed to:

- **Recommend** Council to approve an increase of 2.7% for 2025/26 (subject to any subsequent cap on increases imposed by central government) in social dwelling rents from 1st April 2025 giving an average weekly increase of £3.51 per week, and a revised weekly average social rent of £133.68 as set out in the Financial Implications section of this report.

- **Recommend** Council to approve an increase to rents for shared ownership dwellings as outlined in paragraph 21 of the Financial Implications.
- **Recommend** Council to approve an increase to service charges by 2.7% (CPI + 1%) to enable the HRA to recover the associated cost of supply.
- **Recommend** to council to approve an increase to the charge for a garage of 4.1%, equating to an increase of £0.78 per week for a standard garage within a curtilage with a revised charge of £20.00 per week.

103. Withdrawal of Oxford Local Plan 2040 and approval of Local Development Scheme 2025-2030

The Head of Planning and Regulatory Service had submitted a report which sought approval for the withdrawal of the Oxford Local Plan 2040 from Examination and to approve the Local Development Scheme 2025-2030, which sets out the work programme for the revised Oxford Local Plan 2042.

Councillor Upton presented the report and its recommendations. She emphasised that herself and the Council did not want to be taking this step, but that they are where they are. Councillor Upton said that the planning inspectors had asked them to withdraw this plan, and the only sensible option was to do what the inspectors had asked. She said that the report sets out the timeline for that process. Councillor Upton stated that immense work had went into the 2040 plan, but that withdrawing it does give them the chance to review and update the plan. She stressed that it is frustrating that the 2040 plan had been delayed, but that this is perhaps a chance to improve the plan further. Councillor Upton said that the second part of the report proposes changes to CIL charging schedule. For this matter, Councillor Upton said that they can find their own inspector privately and that is their plan. Councillor Upton said that the timetable for this work was set out in the report, and that there will likely be a two-year delay, but that they are working as quickly as they can on this matter.

David Butler, Head of Planning Services, said that they have presented an ambitious timeline to go out for consultation in two rounds. He assured that they will move as rapidly as they can to submit a new robust plan to meet their citizens' needs.

Sarah Harrison, Planning Policy Team Leader, said that the LDS is not going to go to Council. She added that they must make sure they do everything right and make sure they do the processes properly before an updated plan is resubmitted.

Councillor Hollingsworth agreed with the frustration that had been expressed regarding the decision of the inspector and agreed with the need to get the CIL schemes implemented. He asked about the LDS, particularly regarding appendix one and the timings presented there. He said that regulation 18 consultation is being planned to begin in June 2025. He asked if that regulation 18 document would go through cabinet and if so, which cabinet meeting was the team aiming for? Councillor Hollingsworth added that there is a significant amount of material which exists, and he supported the point about needing to keep the materials developed. He asked if he could get a sense of what elements of adjustment rather than change are being taken in this timescale, for example, issues in their conservation areas and the need to reflect on environmental changes in a different way than they had previously done. Councillor Hollingsworth asked if they going to be able to pick those up in the tight timescale being presented.

Planning Policy Team Leader responded that the regulation 18 document will go to a future meeting of Cabinet and that they were aiming to submit this for June 2025

cabinet. She said that consultation is planned to start at the end of June and run for 6 weeks. She added that there will be a lot of points from now to meet with people and discuss their previous set of options and see what needs to be adjusted. She assured that they had factored in time to determine what they should adjust and change into their proposed timescale.

Councillor Brown agreed that she was also disappointed in the inspector's decision. She said that it is disappointing that they are in this position, but they are and they need to make sure they have the right plans and policies in place so that they can ensure decisions are being made in the right way in the Council.

Cabinet agreed to:

- **Recommend** Council to approve the withdrawal of the Oxford Local Plan 2040 and the publication of the withdrawal statement;
- **Approve** the Local Development Scheme 2025-2030;
- **Authorise** the Head of Planning and Regulatory Services to make any necessary minor corrections not materially affecting the document prior to publication.
- **Agree** to the removal of the CIL Charging Schedule from the Planning Inspectorate so that an alternative Examiner (independent of the Planning Inspectorate) may be appointed.

104. Redesignation of the Neighbourhood Forum for Headington

The Executive Director of Development had submitted a report to redesignate the Neighbourhood Forum for Headington.

Councillor Brown presented the question that had been posed by a member of the public regarding this item. She noted that Councillor Upton will provide a response to the question which will be included in the published minutes.

Councillor Upton presented the report. She noted that neighbourhood forums are unique, as they are formed when neighbourhoods and their members seek to form one. She said that this one was first formed in 2014 and every five years it must be redesignated to set out the geographic area. Councillor Upton said that the Forum had applied to be redesignated and they have met all of the requirements. Councillor Upton added that she understands that occasionally people can be upset with how these forums operate, if they are not a part of the group which operates the forum. However, she emphasised there are few ways in which the Council can exercise control over the operation of these forums. She stated that they will make sure the question from the member of the public is shared with the relevant forum.

Councillor Brown added, regarding the governance issues raised regarding these forums, that it is open to a forum to apply to become a parish or community council. She said that if they wish to approach the Council to become one, they could consider this. She added that this could make the governance processes a little more accountable. She emphasised that this matter was not for them to consider in the current report, but that they will feed this back to the forum for their information. Councillor Brown noted on governance and the neighbourhood forums, that they have a couple of forums with neighbourhood plans, and they have in the past tried to engage

with them and invite them to Parish Councils meetings, but that this had not been very successful. She said that they will continue to send out these invitations.

Cabinet agreed to:

- **Approve** the redesignation of Headington Neighbourhood Forum in respect of the originally designated neighbourhood area to which it related.

105. Archive Scanning Project

The Head of Planning & Regulatory Services had submitted a report which sought approval to release £999,500 from the Town Hall Works (Lot 2) fund to complete Phases 1 and 2 of the proposed Archive Scanning Project.

Councillor Chapman presented the report and said that the report asks for resources to catalogue and scan the thousands of documents which are housed in the Town Hall. He said that moving these documents to a digital place would release space in the Town Hall and help to better organise the documents. He added that this would also help to reduce fire risk in the Town Hall. Councillor Chapman said that the money for this proposed work is in the budget, and he asked Cabinet to support the paper.

Nathan Breeze, Regeneration Manager, added that a further benefit of cataloguing the documents is that it would help the Council to better adhere to GDPR and relevant policies.

Councillor Arshad expressed her support for this project and the report.

Councillor Hollingsworth noted the previous efforts which had attempted to do this work. He said that in previous efforts, some document packs only had the front page scanned and that many key documents had not been scanned. He said that they want to make sure that whatever contractor they use, they do not allow them to do a poor job of scanning. He emphasised that they need to ensure the scanning of the whole document is done properly.

Councillor Smith added that she would hope that a critical human eye will be cast over everything, to ensure that documents are kept in good shape once scanned. She asked if the documents would be disposed of after being scanned.

Councillor Turner said that regarding the financial implications of this project, that this work will free up space in the Town Hall. He noted that there is ongoing work to examine the future use of the Town Hall. He said that this work is going to lead to a more effective use of their building which can benefit the Council as an organization and their finances.

The Head of Planning Services responded that part of the first phase of this work will involve officers examining the documents to decide what is going to be scanned and cataloguing the archived documents. He said that they would ensure that scanners don't only scan the first page or do a poor job. He added that their plan is to only retain the physical documents of scanned documents where there is a legal requirement for them to. He stated that they are proposing to confidentially destroy many of the documents once they are scanned.

The Regeneration Manager emphasised that this work provides an opportunity to make better use of the Town Hall and the spaces therein.

Councillor Chapman added that they are expecting to receive some proposals shortly on how the space will be used going forward.

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director of Development said that they are working on this matter. He said that they will be engaging with staff, members, and users on this topic.

Councillor Brown encouraged the Cabinet to remember that storing things digitally also holds a cost that they should consider. Although this project would improve matters, Councillor Brown noted that there are still financial and energy costs associated with storing documents online.

Cabinet agreed to:

- **Approve** the request for the release of £999,500 from the Town Hall Works (Lot 2) fund to complete Phases 1 and 2 of the proposed Archive Scanning project.
- **Delegate** to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with Councillor Chapman [Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies], the Head of Finance and the Head of Law and Governance the authority to enter into any contracts necessary to undertake the project where they do not already have authority within the constitution.

106.38-40 George Street Regeneration Project -Appropriation

The Executive Director of Development had submitted a report which sought approval to appropriate land (change the statutory basis on which it is held by the Council) at 38-40 George Street to be held in future for planning purposes to facilitate the 38-40 George Street Regeneration Project. The appropriation relates to land owned by Oxford City Council.

Councillor Turner presented the report. He emphasized that this is an important project. He said that they always need to look carefully to make sure that all permissions are in place as needed. He stated that they would like to exercise their powers to undertake this appropriation.

Cabinet agreed to:

- **Approve** the exercise of the Council's powers to appropriate land in its ownership at 38-40 George Street (See plan at Appendices 1 & 2) ("the Land"), for planning purposes under section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972 so as to rely on the use of the Council's powers under sections 203-206 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016.
- **To authorise** the Executive Director of Development in consultation with the Head of Finance/s151 officer and Head of Law and Governance and the Cabinet member (Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management) to agree the terms of settlements and any associated fees.

107. Fleet Procurement of RCV's and Toploaders

The Monitoring Officer (Head of Law and Governance) had submitted a report to provide Cabinet with a summary of the matters concerning the procurement of fleet which have led to governance issues arising and actions taken to prevent reoccurrence.

Emma Jackman, The Monitoring Officer (Head of Law and Governance), presented the report. She said that this report concerns a transaction that was entered into to purchase a fleet for ODS. She stated that owing to technical issues, there were some governance processes which were missed which meant the Council entered into a contract without first going to Cabinet. She stated that they have taken the necessary steps to address this issue and they are in the process of dealing with this matter. She said that the report seeks to make Cabinet aware of the issues with the previous contract and to ask Cabinet for contract approval.

Councillor Chapman responded that it was good that they had caught this before they finalised everything. He said that it was also good to see that there will be training and development work for officers around the procurement issue and how approvals should flow. He emphasised that he was reassured about this issue by the report. He added that he was also assured by the report that the risks to service delivery are low and that they are being managed properly. He thanked the Monitoring Officer (Head of Law and Governance) for her work on this matter.

Cabinet agreed to:

- **Note** the historic matters set out in the report
- **Note** the steps taken to address the governance issues to prevent reoccurrence
- **Delegate** to the Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, authority to award two contract for the purchase of fleet vehicles as detailed at section 17 to 23 of the report following the completion of the procurement process.

108. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on **11 December 2024** as a true and accurate record.

109. Dates of Future Meetings

Cabinet noted the dates of future meetings.

Matters Exempt from Publication

If Cabinet wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for Cabinet to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cabinet may maintain the exemption if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.55 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 5 February 2025

*When decisions take effect:
Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired
Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued
All other committees: immediately.
Details are in the Council's Constitution.*

To: Council
Date: 27 January 2025
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Cabinet Members and Leader

Introduction

Questions submitted by members of Council to the Cabinet members and Leader of the Council, by the deadline in the Constitution are listed below in the order they will be taken at the meeting.

Responses are included where available.

Questioners can ask one supplementary question of the Cllr answering the original question.

This report will be republished after the Council meeting to include supplementary questions and responses as part of the minutes pack.

Unfamiliar terms may be briefly explained in footnotes.

Questions and responses

Cabinet Member for Partnership Working; Leader of the Council

SB1: From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Brown – Community Councils

Question

Can you update Council regarding the expected consequences of local government reorganisation for Parish and Community Councils? Considering that any reorganisation is likely to result in less-local representation in a larger council, ought we to look again at whether, like Swindon and Milton Keynes, Oxford ought to have Community Councils to bolster neighbourhood-level democracy?

Written Response

The White Paper specifically mentions positively the role of parish and community councils in the government's devolution proposals. It is open to any area of the city to put forward proposals for a parish or community council.

SB2: From Cllr Sandelson to Cllr Brown – Cash Payments

Question

Would the leader support my campaign to require businesses providing vital local services to continue to accept cash payments, in order to ensure people

Written Response

I welcome Cllr Sandelson's support for the digitally excluded. I urge her to support the representations we have made to the County Council over the new system for residents' parking permits.

unable or unwilling to use electronic payment means are able to purchase basic provisions?

SB3: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Elections

Question

Cllr Brown’s recent letter to Jim McMahon MP states that the County Council has requested a postponement of the county council elections in May 2025. This is a misrepresentation. Will she withdraw and correct her statement and apologise?

Written Response

I refer Cllr Gant to the statement by the Local Government Minister on 15 January which states: “*We have received letters from the leaders of the following county and unitary councils with requests that involve postponing their election from 2025 to 2026.*” The list of councils includes Oxfordshire County Council. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-reorganisation-letter-to-two-tier-areas>

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SB4: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Timing of Devolution

Question

Cllr Brown has said it is “too early” to talk about local government reorganisation. Her letter to Jim McMahon MP does exactly that. Is it the right time to talk about reorganisation or not?

Written Response

The county council’s letter asking for the county council elections to be postponed was on the basis that there could be a quick solution to local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire. Considering that there had been no discussion at all between local authorities in Oxfordshire on what is bound to be a complex subject I thought it was premature and that is what my letter indicated.

SB5: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Consultation on Oxford’s expansion

Question

In making the case for an expanded Oxford unitary council, what evidence does the leader have that town and parish councils and residents around the city want to be part of such a council run from Oxford?

Written Response

As per my previous response, there has been no discussion at all on reorganisation as yet, but you can rest assured that discussions with parish councils and engagement with the wider public will be important to us and will happen.

SB6: From Cllr Yeatman to Cllr Brown – Child Grooming

Question

Given the recent comments from Simon Morton, (former senior investigating officer for Thames Valley Police), that child grooming is still happening in Oxford, can this Council, alongside Oxfordshire County Council, assure our communities that the lessons from Operation Bullfinch & the serious case review have been fully learnt, implemented and enhanced over time, so that children across Oxfordshire are receiving the best possible safeguarding.

Written Response

The grooming of children for sexual abuse is a vile and horrific crime. In 2011, Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Valley Police launched Operation Bullfinch—a joint investigation into reports of child sexual exploitation in Oxford. By 2013, seven individuals were convicted of 59 counts of rape and child prostitution, resulting in custodial sentences totalling 95 years.

The courage of the victims to come forward, disclose their abuse, and seek justice through the courts is paramount in our thoughts when reflecting on these events.

In 2015, the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) published a Serious Case Review (SCR) examining child sexual exploitation in Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for children's services. The Review's findings highlighted numerous failings by the County Council's Children's Services, Thames Valley Police, and other agencies.

Significant changes to child safeguarding arose from the SCR, including:

- the Kingfisher Team, a dedicated multi-agency unit, was formed to

	<p>support victims and has ensured the prosecution of offenders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub established a unified referral pathway to children’s social care. • a Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) screening tool was implemented across all partner agencies. • over 7,500 professionals received CSE training. • educational plays raised awareness in schools, and a new approach to addressing missing children was developed. <p>The tragedy of Operation Bullfinch profoundly shaped safeguarding practices in Oxfordshire. By learning from past failures and implementing robust, multi-agency approaches, we are steadfast in our commitment to play our role in protecting children from harm.</p>
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<p>SB7: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Brown – Botley Road</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>The prolonged closure of the Botley Road is causing serious financial pressure on businesses in West Oxford and across the whole city. Elderly and vulnerable residents, and those with limited mobility, are cut off from essential services and social opportunities and are incurring increased costs for taxis to attend medical appointments. Urgent plans to reduce carbon emissions and pollution have been delayed. The social, economic and environmental costs to the City as a whole are enormous. Will the Leader consider taking legal action against Network Rail in order to gain compensation for those affected?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>We can all see the impacts on local communities and businesses and sympathise with their frustration. As I understand it, the delays in the delivery of the much-needed enhancements to Oxford Station, have been caused by a number of issues, most significantly delays linked to agreements needed with Thames Water. However, the City Council is not able to take legal action against Network Rail on behalf of third parties as it has no right to do so. Third parties would need to seek legal advice on their own position.</p>

SB8: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Brown – Devolution 1**Question**

In light of the Government's proposals for devolution and local government re-organisation, can the portfolio holder please confirm what actions she will be taking to ensure the views and needs of Oxford City residents are properly represented within any re-organisation of local government.

Written Response

We will want to ensure that the views and needs of Oxford City residents, businesses and other stakeholders are taken into account in any proposals and as we start the process of considering local government reorganisation we will make sure that this is part of our plans.

SB9: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Brown – Devolution 2**Question**

The letter sent by the Leader of the Council to the Minister of State for Local Government and Devolution makes reference to an expanded City authority. Can the Leader provide any further details about what these expanded boundaries might look like?

Written Response

We have not yet had any formal discussions about boundaries. However, it should be clear to everyone that Oxford is tightly bounded with our administrative geography constraining our population size and having ceased to reflect the character of our city decades ago.

SB10: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Brown – Oxford Literacy Festival**Question**

Oxford plays host to the Oxford Literary Festival. Recently a number of speakers have pulled out of this event citing concerns that there are multiple panels which involve discussion of the rights of transgender and non-binary people but no speakers with lived experience. Given this council's stated support for diversity, inclusion, and the rights of Oxford's trans and non-binary citizens, does the leader have a view on the

Written Response

In my view people's lived experience is always an important factor to take into account in any discussion and anyone putting together panels should be thinking about that.

importance of including trans and non-binary voices in discussions around the rights of trans and non-binary people?

Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; Deputy Leader of the Council

ET1: From Cllr Coyne to Cllr Turner - Ethical Investment Policy

Question

On February 7th, 2024, Cabinet agreed to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation (concerning the Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25) to review Council investments "in light of the conflict in Israel and Palestine and any associated human rights abuses with a view to assessing alignment with the Council's current Ethical Investment Policy".

Cabinet commented: "The Council reviews its investments in line with its Environmental, Social and Governance Policy at the time of making the investment as well as our Ethical Investment Policy. This is updated and subject to review and in the light of the current situation we are happy to confirm that it will be included in our review arrangements."

How have these review arrangements progressed, and what specific actions has Council taken to heed the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation regarding the Treasury Management Strategy?

Written Response

We have indeed looked at our ESG policy in the light of the awful developments highlighted. In fact, circumstances have changed: Due to the policy of using internal funds to finance capital before taking out more expensive external borrowing, the Council has now reduced the funds available for investment to a level that only allows short term cash-type investments. Investments now held are limited to the pooled funds (property and multi-asset) and money market cash deposits. There is not therefore investment capacity to enter into fixed term investments.

We think our current ESG policy and the current circumstances mean local people can be assured that their council tax is not being used in a problematic way

ET2: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – Flood Response Costs

Question

What was the cost to the city council of its emergency flood efforts in late November 2024 which resulted in the South site of the Cherwell school being closed to pupils among other impacts. What was the source of council funds used to cover these costs and had they been allocated in the budget for emergency flood response?

Written Response

The cost of flooding in November is estimated at around £30k. This was charged to an earmarked reserve of the Council's which is held for flood related expenses.

ET3: From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Turner – Reorganisation and Council Budgets

Question

Can you update the Council regarding the expected budgetary consequences of local government reorganisation? I would hope that since reorganisation is touted as a money-saver, councils would be rewarded with increased budget security; is there any sign from ministers that this will happen?

Written Response

It is too early to say what the financial impact of local government reorganisation will be, as proposals for alternative structures across the country have yet to be tabled. It is my personal view that grand assumptions about cost savings are likely to be misplaced, and that inefficiency can result from having organisations, including councils, that are too big as well as too small. More generally, ministers have told us to expect a multi-year settlement next year – I am not clear about the interface of that with changes to local government structures.

ET4: From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Turner – Employers' National Insurance

Question

Can you update Council regarding whether the City expects to be fully compensated for increased employers' National Insurance costs resulting from the

The Government have yet to announce the allocations of compensation grant for local authorities in respect of national insurance and do not intend to do so until the Final Local Government Finance Settlement is made sometime between now and the end of January. It is estimated that the

increased rate announced in the 2024 Budget?	council's share of the £515 million grant announced by the Government in the Provisional Finance Settlement for local authorities to cover this issue, would be around £250k. The Councils estimated cost of increased national insurance is £800k per annum with an additional £600k for ODS. The budget presented to Cabinet in February will be updated to build in the financial impact of this change.
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ET5: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Turner – Grandpoint Bridge 1

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<p>Question Following from last council, I am seeking clarification the original grant funding has expired/lost due to time restrictions as set out previously. With that in mind can you confirm this £10 million bridge will not be funded by council finances subject to the Judicial Review?</p>	<p>Written Response Discussions have taken place to secure the grant funding that has been allocated for the proposed bridge following the delays resulting from the judicial review process. Once the outcome of the judicial review is known it will be possible to accurately review the costs position on the bridge. Clearly the bridge needs external funding, it is not a cost we would be able to fund from City Council resources.</p>
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ET6: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Turner – Grandpoint Bridge 2

<p>Question Can you clarify the cost of grant funding bids in relation to future bids and can they be justified in light public concern and financial costs already incurred?</p>	<p>Written Response Future funding bids are only likely to involve staff time and we would consider this a good use of our staffing resource. Any other costs would be dependent on the funding and the requirements of the bidding process.</p>
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Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford; Deputy Leader of the Council

AR1: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Railton – Fines for Vehicles Idling

Question

What is the council's approach to managing the enforcement of idling and issuing of fixed penalty notices for such behaviour? How many fixed penalty notices have been issued by the city council for vehicle idling?

Written Response

OCC is not the primary enforcer for idling engines. It normally falls to County Council who as has widely been publicised in local press have sent Civil Parking Enforcement Officers to locations where this is highlighted as a concern. A prime example being the coaches parked at St Giles. Even then if they are loading or unloading, they will idle engines as they are actually controlling the climate for the passengers. The City Council does not have any dedicated resources to police traffic or consistently patrol for this.

Whilst the City Council may issue an FPN, it has not issued any FPNs. On the few occasions we have assisted due to complaints the drivers have turned their engines off or moved on. They must be warned first and simply turn the engine off. The FPN is currently set at £20 rising to £40 if unpaid in 28 days.

It is considered that educational campaigns such as the ones promoted over recent years by the Air Quality Team are more effective in delivering the anti-idling message

AR2: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Railton – Grazing on Meadows

Question

Has the city council considered adopting a similar approach to Port Meadow allowing residents grazing rights (for a small fee or free) for specific types of graziers on other council owned meadows during the spring and summer, rather than paying a contractor for grass cutting of these land assets?

Written Response

In addition to Port Meadow, we also use grazing to manage habitats at Chilswell Valley and Raleigh Park, but these are the only obvious sites where it is viable to install the appropriate fencing and take other measures needed to control stock.

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AR3: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Railton – Grandpont Bridge 1

Question

Trees felled prior to planning permission granted, you have stated the trees were in a poor condition. Can you share a report on the condition of the trees?

Written Response

All the trees impacted by the construction of the proposed bridge were subject to a tree survey. This was completed prior to any works to the trees taking place. The survey was submitted with the planning application and can be viewed on the planning application reference 23/02506/CT3, Arboricultural Impact Statement, Appendix B.

AR4: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Railton – Grandpont Bridge 2

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Question

Would you agree any tree is better than no tree and planning decisions should not be pre-empted and when were you aware of the tree felling?

Written Response

Trees were removed for the Oxpens bridge before the planning determination to avoid disturbance to nesting birds and to enable the delivery of the bridge within the original programme required by the funding envelope. The bridge has subsequently been delayed by the judicial review process. There is a commitment to replant trees. The biodiversity value of the trees has been assessed as well as the impact on the canopy cover of the trees and proposals included in the development, secured through the planning permission, to ensure biodiversity and tree canopy are increased through the proposals for the bridge. Details can be viewed on the planning application.

AR5: From Cllr Morris to Cllr Railton – Making Oxford a Truly Walkable City motion

Question

At the previous full council meeting we passed the 'Making Oxford a Truly Walkable City' motion, where Council resolved to 1) discuss with officers the designing of a plan for improving walking in Oxford; 2) work with the Cabinet Members for Zero Carbon and Culture and officers to create a walkable map of Oxford; 3) write to the new Transport Minister to urge rapid release of the 2020 pavement parking consultation; and 4) propose the idea of a 'Kerbside Strategy for Oxford' to the County Council. What steps have been taken towards these actions, so far, and is there a timeline for them to be resolved?

Written Response

The first two elements of the original motion would require a budget allocation by full council. Until a budget allocation is made progress is likely to be slow on these elements. The council has no dedicated officer resource for transport except where there is project specific funding so even bringing forward a cabinet report exploring the detail of what would be needed to fulfil this motion will be challenging to deliver quickly.

I have spoken with the Head of Regeneration and Economy since the motion and she will confirm a timetable to me for bringing forward a short paper about what would be required during 2025. I will also raise with the county council, as highway authority, to see what their role could be in delivering this as part of future phases of the Central Oxfordshire Movement and Place Framework that sites as part of the Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan.

In the meantime, we will progress the letter to the Transport Minister regarding the 2020 pavement parking consultation. I will raise the Kerbside Strategy with the County Council at the next regular meeting where we discuss issues affecting the city relating to Transport, Planning and Placemaking. There has not been a meeting of this group yet since the motion was agreed at November Council.

In the meantime, I have sought to get some information from the county council relating to the use of Dutch kerbs in new developments but also when dropping existing kerbs, which are important when considering progress to a more walkable city. I will follow this up with the county at the same meeting.

Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford

LA1: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Arshad – Pavement Parking

Question

Pavement Parking continues to cause considerable accessibility issues for residents across our city. Can the portfolio holder undertake to raise this ongoing issue with relevant individuals in both the County Council and the police as a part of her role as Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford?

Written Response

Thank you for raising this important issue. I will contact the Highways Authority at Oxfordshire County Council regarding this matter. Concerns relating to a specific area can be reported to the Highway Authority via the FixMyStreet website.

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Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford

CM1: From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Munkonge – Bury-Knowle Storybook Tree

Question

On 12th Feb 2024 a plan was announced to reuse the Storybook Tree sculpture as a climbing log in the Bury-Knowle play area. However it has now been waiting behind metal fencing for over a year. Can we please get it moved and the fencing removed?

The sculpture was converted into a climbing log and the fencing removed some time ago. Unfortunately, the log has started to fall apart because of the natural decaying process, though this has been accelerated by the constant wet weather over the last year (there was already significant rot in the dragon's head section before it was felled, which is why it was not re-erected).

Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

LS1: From Cllr Miles to Cllr L Smith – Selective Licensed Properties - Overseas Landlords

Question

What proportion of the properties licensed under the council's selective licensing scheme are owned by overseas based individual landlords?

Written Response

Our data analysis is by licence holder not "landlord/owner". A licence is not always issued to the owner.

Analysis in October 2024 found 0.656% of Selective Licence holders are overseas. At this time, the data was not further analysed to establish the proportion of overseas licence holders held by individuals or organisations.

LS2: From Cllr Miles to Cllr L Smith – Selective Licensed Properties - Beneficial Ownership

Question

What proportion of the selective licensed properties in our city are owned by companies rather than individuals?

Is proof of residency and beneficial ownership information collected during the selective license process for overseas landlords?

Written Response

Our data analysis is by licence holder not "landlord/owner". A licence is not always issued to the owner.

Our current reporting categorises licence holders as "individuals" or "organisations". "Organisations" includes companies, trusts or other types of legal entity. Individual licence holders are likely to be the owner/landlord. Licences issued to organisations include where the managing agent is the licence holder. Analysis in October 2024 found 2.9% of selective licences are issued to an organisation (87.5% to individual; 9.7% unclear data). For HMO licences, 12.8% HMO licences issued to an organisation (87.2% issued to individual; 0.02% unclear data).

As part of the application process, the name and address of all interested parties is required as per the Regulations pertaining to applications.

Following Legal Advice requested at the start of the Selective Licensing scheme where the proposed licence holder resides overseas, for both HMO and Selective Licensing, we request a statement for how the property will be managed given the person is overseas. A standard form was developed for this purpose, with legal advice. We do not collect further

information.

LS3: From Cllr Miles to Cllr L Smith – Overcrowded Properties — Children Sharing Bedrooms

Question

What proportion of households on the housing waiting list for the city are living in overcrowded properties (i.e. have children sharing rooms of an age where it is recommended they have separate bedrooms based on age and gender)?

Written Response

26.2% of the 3588 current live housing register applications have received priority as a result of being overcrowded in their current occupation. This includes households where there are more children than rooms available (factoring in who can share by age and gender), but also adults and couples who don't have rooms available.

LS4: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr L Smith – HRA 40 Year Business Plan

Question

Target of reducing operating costs, over the next 5 years. Given the current maintenance record and costs together with energy targets. Can you explain in detail how council propose to reach efficiency targets by a whopping 5%?

Written Response

It is imperative that the Housing Revenue Account demonstrates value for money to its tenants and drives sufficient efficiency to enable it to deliver against its statutory and regulatory requirements e.g. Decent Homes. With its new Asset Management Strategy and 5-year capital programmes, investment work will be delivered in a more holistic and efficient way allowing both ODS and OCC to plan its resources over a longer term which will support a more efficient delivery.

LS5: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr L Smith – Council Rents

Question

Council rents are already at their highest and continue to rise, currently set at 1% above CPI which does not include council tax rises. Any additional rise will obviously hurt tenants financially. These rises whatever

Written Response

The Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is currently facing significant additional financial cost in a number of areas including meeting the requirements of the New Housing Regulator and the Governments

the amount are no more than stealth taxes sugar coated and really impact the most vulnerable in our City. Does this administration believe it to be fair to financially penalise the neediest in our City and if not why are the Council imposing rise upon rise on council tenants?

requirements for decent homes as well as meeting carbon net zero by 2040 and Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of level C by 2030. To be able to fund all this additional work as well as continue to meet its housing priorities of providing additional social dwellings then the council must increase rents by the maximum allowable by the Government which is CPI+1%. At an average weekly rent of £133.68 these social rents are still low in comparison to rents charged by other landlords in the city and it should be noted that 67% of tenants are in receipt of housing benefit or the housing cost element of universal credit.

LS6: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr L Smith – Disposal of 10 Properties 1

Question

Referring to the HRA 40 Year Business Plan Cabinet report from December 2024, it noted: “increasing capital through the sale of poor performing assets, by reviewing underperforming stock that do not work socially for tenants, or are expensive to maintain and maybe beyond maintainable. Initial indication for disposing up to 10 units/yr from 2025/26 for 10 years “How will they be returned to stock after 10 years, or is that was a typing error?”

Written Response

The councillor misunderstands. The suggested action involves disposing of 10 units a year, every year for 10 years. Not disposing of 10 units for 10 years.

As part of its asset management work, and HRA Business Plan, OCC will need to develop a policy for the disposal of properties where properties demonstrate unsustainable financial performance i.e. requiring high investment presenting inefficient use of capital resource OR poor customer experience. Examples would be excessive repair issues (eg structural), significant cost linked to energy efficiency (based on archetype).

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LS7: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr L Smith – Disposal of 10 Properties 2

Question

How can a property be beyond maintaining, bringing these properties to a reasonable standard can the cost really be more expensive than purchasing properties on Barton Park?

Written Response

Properties can be beyond maintenance where there are significant structural issues, repair issues based on e.g. post-war archetypes or where the required energy efficiency work to bring up to EPC C are beyond the financial performance of the property and often combined with poor

customer experience e.g. damp and mould.

LS8: From Cllr Rawle to Cllr L Smith – Selective Licensing Scheme

Question

With more than 11,000 properties now registered under the Selective Licensing Scheme, it is understood that enforcement has become a growing focus for the council. Would the Cabinet member therefore be willing to meet with local housing groups, including tenants unions, to discuss progress in this area and to gather feedback on our approach

Written Response

The Selective Licensing Year 2 report is due to be published Spring 2025 following review at Housing and Homelessness Scrutiny Panel in March 2025. The report will include information on enforcement. The team use advice, encouragement, and enforcement to achieve the schemes' aims as per the Council's Enforcement Policy. Yes, I am happy to meet with tenant unions to discuss general matters of policy and operation of our licensing schemes including our approach to enforcement.

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Cabinet Member for Planning

LU1: From Cllr Goddard to Cllr Upton – Timely Community Infrastructure Levy Payments

Question

What steps are being taken to ensure that Community Infrastructure Levy payments owed to organisations in Wolvercote ward and elsewhere are in future made promptly in order to avoid months-long waits such as have recently occurred?

Written Response

Payments to neighbourhood groups were unfortunately delayed due to staff turnover. Once this was identified officers reached out to all neighbourhood forums to alert them to the issue and where possible expedite payments. We have recently expanded and recruited into the team, as well as changing our internal processes to ensure there is a centralising of information to avoid this happening again in the future.

LU2: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Upton – Fines for noise nuisance from licensed premises

Question

How many fixed penalty notices have been issued to licensed premises due to noise over the last 12 months?

Written Response

There have been none

LU3: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Upton – Contractor Parking During Construction

Question

How does the city council ensure that contractors follow the terms of their construction management plan regarding the location of contractor parking around construction sites?

Written Response

This is something that we would expect to be managed by the Local Highways Authority given they are the responsible authority for matters such as contractor parking around construction sites.

Our planning enforcement team would investigate any concerns about a breach of the terms of a construction management plan as and when they were alleged, and we would involve the Local Highways Authority in such investigations.

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LU4: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Upton – Taxi Extension for Electric Vehicles

Question

After answering a number of queries, it now transpires the decision to extend or not does not lie with the cabinet member thus with the administration. Can you then inform us who is in charge?

Written Response

Any decision to remove, retain or amend a licensing policy lies with the General Purposes Licensing Committee.

LU5: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Upton – Controlled Parking Zones

Question

Several residents in my ward have been in contact to raise concerns about un-permitted cars parking in Controlled Parking Zones during the evenings and early morning, when the chances of coming into contact with enforcement are lower. As a part of her Transport Liaison role, will the responsible member make representations to the County Council regarding the impact of this on Oxford residents?

Written Response

As identified in the question, the responsibility for enforcing against unauthorised car parking does sit within the remit of the County Council. I am happy to raise this issue at the next appropriate meeting that I attend. Residents, and city councillors, can also raise their concerns about this directly with County, and I encourage you to do that as well.

LU6: From Cllr Robinson to Cllr Upton – eBikes**Question**

In light of the recent motion to 'Make Oxford a Truly Walkable City' and the recent BBC Panorama documentary about eBikes, could you detail how you will ensure that Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Valley Police will enforce the safe and legal use of eBikes and eScooters in Oxford City?

Written Response

We are a very high performing council, nominated for best council of the year last year, and we do far more than the statutory minimum for our residents, but we cannot perform the jobs of TVP and the County Council too.

That said, I have had discussions with the city centre policing team who have devoted a fair bit of resource to this issue - they confiscated more than 40 illegal e-bikes last year and had an education outreach event for delivery riders to explain the law. Many people are not aware that a legal e-bike has a motor that cuts out if you stop pedalling, or if you reach 15mph.

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To: Council
Date: 27 January 2025
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision – as submitted by the speakers and with written responses from Cabinet Members

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.
2. The text reproduces that sent in the speakers and represents the views of the speakers. This is not to be taken as statements by or on behalf of the Council.
3. This report will be republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This will list the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and any further responses.

Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

1. Address from Julian Le Vay – Support for Motion 16e (Demand compensation from Network Rail for delays in reopening Botley Road)
2. Address from Tom Lewis - Stop Botley West Solar Farm

Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

1. Address from Julian Le Vay – Support for Motion 16e (Demand compensation from Network Rail for delays in reopening Botley Road)

I don't need to go into detail, since you've each had my report on the impact on our community of the endless closure of Botley Road. In November 2021 I sat **here** while Network Rail boasted to you that they would close the road only for four days. It's now been closed 625 days [and still no date for reopening].

The report tells our story, at last, through graphic statements by 32 local people. Who are they?

First on those with mobility problems, unable to stagger through the narrow, poorly maintained, overcrowded and often scary *Tunnel of Doom* under the rail bridge. They were suddenly cut off from much their lives, even GPs and hospitals.

Second small businesses, suddenly deprived of most of their customers, pushed into loss or closure or quitting Oxford altogether.

And the local economy, deprived, by my estimate, of around £20m and 100 jobs

And the knock-on impact on Oxford as a whole, with journey times rising by 15-20% according to the managing director of the Oxford Bus Company, as an indirect consequence of the closure of Botley Road

But I want to talk of another loss, the loss of faith in our public institutions. For two years, some of us in West Oxford have suffered exclusion from our own city, unbearable intrusion of works and traffic, including piling work all night 40 metres from peoples' bedrooms, and continuing uncertainty from one week to another, as the institutionally incompetent Network Rail constantly miss their own deadlines and change their plans. And no one has listened to us, no one has cared what is happening to us. Not Network Rail, Kier, Thames Water, British Gas, government, the County Council or, I have to say, this council. No difference whether privatised, or nationalised, or elected. All keen to look the other way and get on with other things. In fact, the only official contact from your council was a guy who came to make quite sure small businesses knew that you would not help them.

You may say your functions as a council are not involved. Certainly, not to the extent that's true of the County Council, which we regard as deeply culpable. But you have had *some* involvement. We asked you, right at the beginning, to set up a joint steering group for the project with Network Rail, the county council and residents, **because** we foresaw how profound the effects would be – no answer.

But the issue is much wider than that. Democracy is in a bad way. In America it may not survive. In this country the Tory party has been ripped up. Labour is in power, but quite extraordinarily unpopular. Scary fringe parties are on the rise. Both this council and the County Council are on the hands of minorities. A recent poll showed one in five young people don't think much of democracy.

And thinking about our experience, why should they? We have been suffering for two years something like an occupation by entities that are both incompetent and arrogant, which are completely unaccountable, yet **we are not heard**. You trumpet great plans for Westgate or Osney Mead - which seem to many of us who live in West Oxford to have nothing to do with us, not to benefit us, we had no real say in them. Your city - not ours. Few voters understand the differences between county and City Council. No one understands how you're funded. Planning is carried on in an occult language and the one thing it *always* excludes is what local people actually want. Now seemingly Oxford will be abolished and wrapped up in a much bigger authority, after hard bargaining between politicians. The only people not to have a voice in this are **the** people.

I tell you, this city hall sometimes feels as remote as Westminster, or Brussels.

So, I think our experience is really a challenge to you, each of you. As our small businesses go under and our disabled and infirm live lives suddenly isolated, I ask you whether it is really acceptable that you do nothing and say nothing in this, our city?

2. Address from Tom Lewis - Stop Botley West Solar Farm

Good evening, I am Tom Lewis a member of the Stop Botley West group of volunteers who are all in favour of renewable energy but critical of the unjustifiably large and damaging proposal to build Botley West Solar Farm. I live in Church Hanborough, one of the 15 villages that will be affected by the project.

Just a few facts

- Botley West Solar Farm (BWSF) stretches from Wootton to Botley, and Hanborough to Kidlington, an area the size of Heathrow airport. It will be the largest solar farm in Europe affecting 11,000 homes within 1.5km of the site.
- 75% of the solar farm is to be constructed on the City of Oxford's Greenbelt, which is described by local authorities as "functioning well".
- 36% of the 1400ha is on Best and Most Versatile agricultural land growing National average yields of cereals. This land will be lost to food production for the 42-year life of the project.
- It will involve installing up to 2,200,000 solar panels, ancillary equipment and at least 30km of cable runs, fences, lights and cameras. It will cross beneath The Thames at Eynsham and connect to a new sub-station near Farmoor, before the electricity generated during daylight hours is uploaded to the national grid network and within seconds used throughout the UK, not just Oxfordshire.
- Because BWSF is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project the planning process is handled by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) who send their recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy and Net Zero for final review. No decision is likely before the middle of 2026.

Surveys by both the Stop Botley West and by the developers themselves find that overwhelmingly residents oppose this project. Oxford City Council themselves have made a clear statement that:

"The DCO application will need to provide a strong and robust case for the development of this scale particularly where it will need to demonstrate exceptional circumstances to justify development within the green belt; justify impacts on the setting of a number of heritage assets including Blenheim Palace..." (Ref 1). The Developer has not taken notice of this comment.

The Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Statement of the DCO states (Ref 2) that:

"There are no significant adverse effects either temporary [or] permanent [effects] on the local landscape character arising from construction and operation of the Project."

- this is patently untrue.

With regards to Historic Environment the same document states (Ref 3):

"No significant effects in respect of any aspect of the historic environment have been identified within the Environmental Statement (ES)."

Given the size and scale of the BWSF and its location on the hills which are visible for miles and valley slopes of the rivers Glyme, Evenlode and Cherwell, it is simply inconceivable that the impacts of such a scheme can be anything other than significantly adverse. The proposed development will cause lasting damage to the City of Oxford's Greenbelt, impacting both the openness of the landscape and the spatial integrity due to its unprecedented scale. The setting of Blenheim Palace was cited in their own 2017 Management Plan (Ref 2) as being important to the landscape and to the surrounding historic villages. This too has been ignored.

Pluvial flooding is also a serious issue already particularly for the villages of Cassington, Worton, Yarnton and Kidlington. The developers have consistently ignored peer-reviewed scientific evidence that solar panels increase runoff. All the water flowing of this area ends up in the River Thames increasing the risk of flooding downstream.

The Stop Botley West group would like to ask the City Council to address these four questions:

1. Are the Council not concerned that the Developer, in the DCO, has ignored the City Council's request and provided no justification for the development which would still represents a significant adverse impact on the city's Greenbelt, visually and spatially, including Public Rights of Way, and that the proposed mitigation is inadequate?
2. Are the Council not concerned about this project's impacts on the surroundings of Blenheim Palace a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and other local heritage, including the city of Oxford itself and the gateway to the Cotswolds AONB?
3. Will the Council ask for more detail on why alternatives to the current scheme have not been investigated?
4. Have the council explored the full implications of an increase in the risk of flooding associated with the BWSF and its impact both on the City and villages local to the scheme?

At this Pre-Examination stage the City Council has a chance now to submit a Relevant Representation to PINS raising what are significant concerns for the city and surrounding area and I would urge you to do so before the deadline of 27 February 2025.

To: Council
Date: 27 January 2025
Report of: Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Scrutiny Committee Update Report

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update Council on the activities of the Scrutiny function
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2024-28
Recommendation:	That Council resolves to note the update report.

Appendices
Appendix 1 – Recommendations to Shareholders and Joint Venture Group (Exempt)

Introduction

1. This report provides an update on the Scrutiny Committee and its Panels since the previous update to Council on 7 October 2024. This report covers the period from 1 October 2024 to 14 January 2025.
2. During this reporting period, the Committee met five times on 8 October 2024, 4 November 2024, 18 November 2024, 2 December 2024 and 14 January 2025.
3. In addition, there have been five Panel meetings:
 - Housing and Homelessness Panel – 10 October 2024, 7 November 2024 and 27 November 2024;
 - Climate and Environment Panel – 20 November 2024;
4. Finance and Performance Panel – 4 December 2024.
5. A summary of each meeting is set out below.

Scrutiny Committee – 8 October 2024

6. At its meeting on 8 October 2024, the Committee considered one substantive item:
 - Local Government Association Corporate Peer Review
7. The **Local Government Association Corporate Peer Review** noted the Council's request to have external oversight and to formulate plans to improve services in the city. An Action Plan had been drafted, with areas of focus being partnerships, communication around regeneration work and improved technology for use by Officers and Councillors and was reviewed by the Committee.
8. The Committee asked a range of questions, including the focus on Community Engagement, the ambition of the Council regarding the collaborative work with external organisations and the Council's Homelessness Prevention Team.
9. The Committee also asked for clarification of improved governance and scrutiny of the Council-owned Companies and the ongoing challenges and priorities of the Town Hall.
10. There were **no recommendations** for this report.

Housing and Homelessness Panel: 10 October 2024

11. At its meeting on 10 October 2024, the Panel considered two substantive items:
 - Temporary Accommodation and Homelessness Update
 - Housing Complaint Handling Annual Report 2023/24
12. The **Temporary Accommodation and Homelessness Update** report provided the panel with the latest with the Council's ongoing work with preventing homelessness within Oxford.
13. The Panel noted the primary factors driving increased homelessness in the city were largely beyond the Council's control such as evictions from private rented sectors linked to high rental inflation and cost-of-living pressures.
14. In addition, the local challenges faced by Council included rehousing asylum seekers from hotels and the city's disproportionately high number of domestic abuse cases. There had also been statutory changes which lowered the threshold for priority needs and intentional homelessness decisions reducing eligibility for temporary accommodation.
15. Particularly, Oxford rehousing efforts extended to surrounding Oxfordshire towns through reciprocal agreements between local authorities. Comprehensive suitability assessments were conducted and residents' preferences for outside-city housing were considered to ensure appropriate placements in these units.
16. Finally, the Council received a Homelessness Prevention Grant, allowing for the expansion of staff without adding pressure to the general budget. This funding was crucial for delivering services, and the authority was awaiting confirmation of the grant for 2025, hoping for guidance from the Autumn statement or December announcements.
17. There were **no recommendations**.
18. The **Housing Complaint Handling Annual Report 2023/24** was a report due for Cabinet on 16 October 2024 to agree the content of the report.

19. The Panel asked a range of questions, including the numbers of complaints reviewed compared to the number of tenants within Council homes, response times to repairs completed by Oxford Direct Services and any communications issues between tenants and the tenancy management officer.
20. There were **no recommendations**.

Scrutiny Committee – 4 November 2024

21. At its meeting on 4 November 2024, the Committee considered three substantive items:
 - Update on the development of Oxford River Charter
 - Leisure Update
 - OX Place – OCH(I)L Recovery Plan
22. The **Update on the development of Oxford River Charter** provided the Committee with the latest on the Council's engagement with Thames Water, noting two consecutive years of poor water quality and the Council's intent to conduct a detailed investigation into pollution sources.
23. The Committee asked questions to clarify Council and Environment Agency responsibilities, particularly in relation to gaps in oversight of local waterways and flooding risks. Queries were also raised about the status of water quality initiatives, road runoff management, and the council's role in regulating domestic water misconnection issues.
24. The Committee sought updates on the Council's ongoing communication with Thames Water and discussed ways to strengthen stakeholder engagement to address resident concerns more effectively.
25. The Committee noted the need for clearer boundaries in responsibility between the Council and other agencies, as well as legislative gaps in water management and environmental protection. The Committee highlighted the importance of maintaining regular and meaningful engagement with Thames Water, particularly regarding water quality and sewage flooding. The Committee also discussed the impact of deregulation on water companies and raised concerns about road runoff as a pollution source, suggesting areas for Council action to support overall water quality improvements.
26. In addition, the Committee discussed issues of river pollution due to misconnected properties, emphasising the Council's environmental health team enforcement responsibilities including within its own housing stock and those that it regulates such as in HMOs and selective licensed properties, as well as in housing association properties. Reviewing and clarifying the Council's role in this area, and learning from good practices elsewhere in the country, would better position it to prevent future misconnections, establish proactive measures to identify and take action to reduce domestic pollution sources, to safeguard local water quality.
27. **Three recommendations** were sent to Cabinet on 13 November 2024, one was accepted fully, one was accepted in-part, and one was rejected.
28. The **Leisure Update** report provided the Committee with the latest from the leisure investment programme and leisure contract clienting arrangements in line

with the recommendations from Scrutiny Committee that were approved at Cabinet on 24 January 2024.

29. The Committee asked wide ranging questions, including questions about the progress and reassurance of improvements made by the new leisure supplier, as well as the level of accountability held by the supplier for facility conditions. Discussions based on these questions covered various aspects such as the sufficiency of ongoing renovations, particularly at the Ferry Leisure Centre and Oxford Ice Rink, and whether sufficient steps were being taken to address issues inherited from the previous supplier.
30. The Committee sought clarity on specific actions demonstrating the new supplier's commitment to improved standards, noted efforts made on recruitment for essential roles, and commented on the state of some facilities, particularly the changing rooms at Barton, which were noted to appear less than satisfactory since the transition to the new provider.
31. Recognising that the transition process requires time to fully address inherited issues, the Committee acknowledged and welcomed the new practice of a dedicated officer responsible for overseeing facility conditions and ensuring issues are picked up on a timelier manner.
32. Further key points were noted by the Committee in relation to facility enhancement and resource planning, including an 18-month improvement roadmap which prioritises essential upgrades to facilities in Barton Leisure Centre, including the installation of improved ventilation and retrofitting of changing rooms.
33. In particular, the Committee proposed exploring a business case for year-round access to the lido, leveraging the existing water source heat pump to support eco-friendly operations, and prioritisation for enhanced ventilation in changing rooms to ensure air quality and safe environment for all facility users, aligning with health and safety standards.
34. In reflection on past experiences and lessons learned, the Committee identified that regular, structured financial reviews would enable the Council to monitor the supplier's financial health and address any emerging concerns early on.
35. **Three recommendations** were sent to Cabinet on 13 November 2024, two were accepted and one was rejected.
36. The **OX Place – OCH(I)L Recovery Plan** was reviewed by the Committee.
37. **One recommendation** was sent to Shareholder and Joint Venture Group on 06 November 2024, which was accepted.

Housing and Homelessness Panel: 7 November 2024

38. At its meeting on 7 November 2024, the Panel considered four substantive items:
 - Furnished Tenancy Scheme
 - Implementation of Refugee Resettlement in Oxford
 - Housing Performance Monitoring (2024/24 mid-year)
 - Housing Complaints Handling Performance (Q1 & Q2 2024/25)

39. The **Furnished Tenancy Scheme** was a report due for Cabinet on 13 November 2024, to approve the procurement of a contract at a value of £4,300,000 over a 5-year period for a supplier or suppliers to provide household furniture, white goods, and carpets as part of a Furnished Tenancy Scheme.
40. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the scheme's uptake within Oxford compared to national averages, the flexibility of the contract in accommodating growing demand, and how well it meets the needs of local tenants. Questions also focused on the extent to which the Council could support tenants without placing undue financial pressure on them, particularly given rising costs of living and inflationary pressures on service charges.
41. The Committee sought clarity on items like carpets, which are unique to Oxford's scheme, and on the process for repairs, replacements, and storage of furnished items across tenancies.
42. In discussion, the Committee noted the benefits for tenants and the Council, including the scheme's flexibility to allow tenants to choose from various furnishings, thus promoting a sense of ownership and belonging. Financial advantages for tenants were also noted, particularly that the scheme's service charges were covered by housing benefits, effectively eliminating out-of-pocket expenses for eligible tenants. This set up was noted as being mutually beneficial, given that the scheme operated on a cost-neutral basis funded by the HRA, avoiding additional pressure on the Council's resources. The Committee also noted the economic challenges, which has emphasised the scheme's role in preventing tenants from resorting to high-interest credit sources to furnish their homes.
43. The Committee discussed the disposal and potential wastage of furniture under the scheme, noting that whilst some furniture were recycled or stored for future use such as emergency housing, there were opportunities for local organisations to repurpose that furniture. The Committee emphasised the value of collaborating with external organisations such as charities to minimise waste through creative reuse and recycling channels.
44. **One recommendation** was sent to Cabinet on 13 November 2024, which was accepted.
45. The **Implementation of Refugee Resettlement in Oxford** provided the Panel with the annual update regarding the Council's work as part of the Government's refugee resettlement schemes since 2015.
46. The Panel asked a range of questions, including communication between those accessing and leaving the resettlement scheme, the operations for securing additional properties and the ongoing support refugees receive from the Council.
47. There were **no recommendations**.
48. The **Housing Performance Monitoring** provided an update to the Panel regarding the ongoing challenges faced by the Council, including homelessness and the inclusion of higher prevention targets.
49. There were **no recommendations**.
50. The **Housing Complaints Handling Performance** provided the Panel with an update to the ongoing performance of the Council's complaints handling for the

first two quarters of 2024/25 in terms of volume, outcome and timeliness of the responses.

51. There were **no recommendations**.

Scrutiny Committee – 18 November 2024 (Extraordinary)

52. At its extraordinary meeting on 18 November 2024, the Committee considered the call-in for the Cabinet Decision of the Disposal of Land at Foxwell Drive, Headington.
53. The Committee heard from a member of the public and asked a range of questions to the Officers present relating to the Council's governance processes, the professional and independent handling of planning applications, including those involving Council-owned land.
54. The Committee decided to support the decision made by Cabinet on 16 October 2024.

Climate and Environment Panel – 20 November 2024

55. At its meeting on 20 November 2024, the Panel considered four substantive items:
- Net Zero Masterplan
 - Eco-moorings Project Update
 - High-level challenges and constraints impacting on the deliverability of solar opportunities at Council car parks
 - Local Nature Recovery Strategy
56. The **Net Zero Masterplan** provided the Panel with an updated to the Council's actions over the next two years to achieve its two carbon targets: a Net Zero Estate and Operations by 2030 and a Net Zero City by 2040.
57. The Panel asked a range of questions, including the training for businesses and ongoing recruitment for external contractors for the planning and strategic elements of the biodiversity project.
58. There were **no recommendations**.
59. The **Eco Moorings Project Update** provided the Panel with the latest on the 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 25 associated with solid and diesel fuel burnings, and causes health implications to local residents and boaters alike.
60. 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.

61. 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.
62. The Panel highlighted the need for clear strategies to manage overstays and ensure accessibility.
63. 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.
64. 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.
65. **One recommendation** was sent to Cabinet on 11 December 2024, which was accepted in-part.
66. The **High-level challenges and constraints impacting on the deliverability of solar opportunities at Council car parks** provided the Panel with 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.
67. 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.
68. 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.

69. 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.
70. **Three recommendations** were sent to Cabinet on 11 December 2024, all were accepted.
71. The **Local Nature Recovery Strategy** provided the Panel with an update to the Council's plan for Biodiversity Net Gain and the continued collaborative efforts with councils across Oxfordshire.
72. The Panel asked a range of questions, including the use of the mapping tool of identify green networks, the inclusion of allotments, community growing spaces and other greens areas, and the different geographies within the County.
73. There were **no recommendations**.

Housing and Homelessness Panel – 27 November 2024 (Extraordinary)

74. At the extraordinary meeting on 27 November 2024, the Panel considered three substantive reports:
 - HRA 40 Year Business Plan
 - HRA Asset Management Strategy and 5 Year Investment Programmes
 - Tenancy Engagement and Management
75. The **HRA 40 Year Business Plan** was a report due at Cabinet on 11 December 2024; to adopt the plan and show the Housing Revenue Account would be able to fund the planned expenditure as set out in the 2025/26 budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy proposals.
76. It was noted by the panel the key challenges in Oxford, including, the increasing homelessness in the city and issues with temporary accommodation faced by the council; a new, tougher regulatory regime for the HRA partly influenced by post-Grenfell reforms; and ongoing challenges related to tenant engagement with the council.
77. The Panel asked a range of questions, including the balance of medium to long term investments and the risks of slippage in the programme.
78. There were **no recommendations**.
79. The **HRA Asset Management Strategy and 5 Year Investment Programme** was a report due at Cabinet on 11 December 2024. The report 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.

80. 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 regarding 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.
81. 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.
82. 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.
83. **One recommendation** was sent to Cabinet on 11 December 2024, which was accepted.
84. The **Tenancy Engagement and Management** was a report due at Cabinet on 11 December 2024. This report noted the 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.
85. 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).
86. 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.
87. 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.

88. **One recommendation** was sent to Cabinet on 11 December 2024, which was accepted.

Scrutiny Committee – 2 December 2024

89. At its meeting on 2 December 2024, the Committee considered two substantive items:
- Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24
 - Thriving Communities Strategy Update
90. The **Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24**, a report, due at Cabinet on 13 December 2024 to authorise the statement for publication.
91. 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.
92. 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.
93. 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.
94. 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.

95. **Two recommendations** were sent to Cabinet on 11 December 2024, one was accepted, and one was rejected.
96. The **Thriving Communities Strategy Update** was a report due for Cabinet on 11 December 2024 to note the update on the delivery of the Thriving Communities Strategy.
97. 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.
98. 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.
99. 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 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.
100. 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.
101. 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.
102. 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.
103. 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.

104. **Five recommendations** were sent to Cabinet on 11 December 2024, all were accepted.

Finance and Performance Panel – 4 December 2024

105. At its meeting on 4 December 2024, the Panel considered five substantive items:

- Integrated Performance Report Q2 2024/25
- Business Rates Non-Payment and Systems Management
- Supported Accommodation cost of City Council Finances
- Treasury Management Mid-Year Review – April to September 2024
- Budget 2025/26
- ODS-ODSTL Business Plan Refresh

106. The **Integrated Performance Report Q2 2024/25** was a report due at Cabinet on 11 December 2024.

107. The Panel asked a range of questions, including income from Council owned car parks, costs relating to temporary accommodation, costs associated with the repairs to Council tenants and overspends relating to evaluation fees and bank charges, following a move to Cloud-based software and services.

108. There were **no recommendations**.

109. The **Business Rates Non-Payment and Systems Management** provided the Committee with an update to the administration of Business Rates within Oxford.

110. The Panel asked a range of questions, including the amount of debt collected during 2023/24, the empty premises and pop-up shops across the city and any changes to the Corporate Debt policy.

111. There were **no recommendations**.

112. The **Supported Accommodation cost of City Council Finances** was a briefing note requested by the Panel in September 2024 analysing the housing benefit subsidy issues and potential options.

113. The Panel asked a range of questions, including if similar issues were faced in other cities across the Country, and further coordination between District and County Councils.

114. There were **no recommendations**.

115. The **Treasury Management Mid-Year Review – April to September 2024** was a report due at Cabinet on 11 December 2024.

116. There were **no recommendations**.

117. The **Budget 2025/26** report was a report due at Cabinet on 11 December 2024, due to be approved for consultation.

118. There were **no recommendations**.

119. The **ODS-ODSTL Business Plan Refresh** was reviewed by the Panel.
120. **Two recommendations** were sent to Shareholder and Joint Venture Group on 05 December 2024, which were accepted.

Scrutiny Committee – 14 January 2025

121. At its meeting on 14 January 2025, the Committee considered 5 substantive items:
- Governance changes to address the increase in Urgent Key Decisions
 - Council of Sanctuary Framework
 - HRA Rent Setting Report 2025/2026
 - Withdrawal of Oxford Local Plan 2040 and approval of the Local Development Scheme 2025-2030
 - Flood Management
122. The **Governance changes to address the increase in Urgent Key Decisions** was a report updating the Committee on progress made and ongoing plans to address the increase in Urgent Key Decisions taken in 2024. The Committee was presented a series of measures aimed at improving and strengthening governance across the Council.
123. The Committee looked at and noted the various measures outlined in the report, which included clarifying the definition of a Key Decision in the Council's constitution, revising the Forward Plan and report templates to include clearer guidance for users, delivery of training sessions for senior management and staff across various services, and the introduction of mandatory e-learning modules for all staff. The Committee also noted efforts being made to align the governance practices of Council-owned companies through training arrangements tailored to them.
124. Members of the Committee asked questions relating to the specifics of staff training and how continued compliance could be maintained. Questions were also raised about the gaps in governance practices between the Council and its companies, as well as trends that might explain the increase in urgent key decisions.
125. The Committee sought clarification on timelines and the implementation of mandatory training, asking whether a two-year refresh cycle was the right approach. Members wondered if more frequent monitoring mechanisms could be introduced to ensure consistent compliance across the board.
126. Another area of focus was the transition involving the appointment of a new Company Secretary in the Council-owned companies. The Committee noted the need to avoid governance gaps during such transitions and highlighted the importance of aligned governance standards between the Council and its companies.
127. Lastly, the Committee discussed the importance of analysing trends that result in urgent key decisions being taken, highlighting the need to distinguish between unavoidable circumstances and capacity-related challenges. The Committee

suggested implementing better data collection and reporting would help provide a clear picture for ongoing scrutiny.

128. **Two recommendations** were sent to Cabinet on 22 January 2025, which were accepted.
129. The **Council of Sanctuary Framework** was a report due at Cabinet on 22 January 2025, which recommends that Cabinet approve and adopt the draft Council of Sanctuary Framework document, including the Action Plan; agree that an annual progress update should be produced for Cabinet; delegate power to the Executive Director (Corporate Resources), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, to amend the design of the framework document.
130. The document proposed a three-year action plan supporting Oxford's Council of Sanctuary accreditation. This accreditation underscores the city's commitment to welcoming refugees and asylum seekers while fostering an inclusive environment.
131. The Committee acknowledged the significant work of officers in developing a bold vision for addressing key issues faced by individuals seeking sanctuary in Oxford. They discussed several key measures and objectives outlined in the document, and raised questions about enhanced data collections, partnership development, and language and education support.
132. Members raised queries about the adequacy of data on the number of people the action plan aims to support. They asked how data collection could be refined to include precise metrics and identify specific community needs, with Officers confirming work ongoing to enhance data tracking in the form of Key Performance Indicators which will be reported on a yearly basis. With this, the Committee suggested that this reporting is formally established and that annual updates are brought to the Committee for progress monitoring.
133. Further questions centred on the challenges in accessing English language education, with some members noting gaps in provision and barriers such as the lack of qualified tutors and digital access. The Committee noted the ongoing efforts to map current resources and address these gaps are in place through strategic partnerships and face-to-face outreach, including visits to accommodations and partnerships with County programmes to improve digital accessibility and the availability of English language tuition across the county.
134. Focusing more on the details of the document, concerns were raised about the absence of measures addressing anti-migrant violence within the report. The Committee suggested including this as a key challenge and setting out responses to prevent such violence. In addition, the Committee discussed how national policy changes impact local initiatives, urging adaptability in the action plan.
135. The Committee also noted the work the Council has commissioned to fully understand the level of need in Oxford. Noting that this key document could help foster better understanding of people seeking sanctuary and what could be done to improve their experience, the Committee recommended that the needs assessment report is made publicly available, ensuring confidential data is safeguarded where required.

136. **Four recommendations** were sent to Cabinet on 22 January 2025, two were accepted and two were rejected.
137. The **HRA Rent Setting Report 2025/2026** was a report due at Cabinet on 22 January 2025, which proposed the rent setting and garage charge increases for the 2025/26, noting the 2.7% increase in rent charges, in line with the maximum allowable rate of CPI + 1%, bringing the average weekly rent to £133.63, which remained to be very good value for money within the Oxford housing market.
138. The Committee asked a number of questions, including queries on the application of percentage increases in charges, particularly those relating to garages. Members questioned the rationale behind exceeding the CPI +1 threshold for garage charges, with officers pointing to the importance of maintaining consistency of the charge for garages within the HRA and those in the General Fund. Suggestions were made to include exploring a more dynamic pricing modelling the impact of limiting garage charge increases to CPI + 1 in the final report to be presented to Cabinet.
139. The Committee also raised concerns on the potential ripple effect of increased council rents on the private rental market, particularly the feasibility of tracking its long-term impacts. Officers noted ethical and methodological difficulty in tracking this relationship due to the market complexities, however the idea of building vision for understanding market interdependencies was noted. It was suggested that a reflection on trends within the private rental market, including broader market observations for the year ahead, is included in the report and any future iterations.
140. **Two recommendations** were sent to Cabinet on 22 January 2025, which were accepted.
141. The **Withdrawal of Oxford Local Plan 2040 and approval of the Local Development Scheme 2025-2030** was a report due at Cabinet on 22 January 2025, due to recommend to Council the withdrawal statement of the Oxford Local Plan 2040 from Examination and for Cabinet to approve the Local Development Scheme 2025-2030, which sets out the work programme for the revised Oxford Local Plan 2042.
142. The Committee asked questions including the impact of the forthcoming local government organisation to the timetable of the Local Plan, the implications of the extended end date now set to 2042, and whether there would be any impact on the review of neighbourhood plans as a result of these alterations.
143. There were **no recommendations**.
144. The **Flood Management** presentation was requested by the Scrutiny Committee, explaining the current flood response and protocols within the city.
145. The Committee's discussion centred around inter-agency coordination between the City Council, the County Council and the Environment Agency, including how resources like pumps, barriers, and manpower are deployed. The discussion also touched on exploring ways to coordinate volunteers within communities.
146. Members of the Committee raised questions about the adequacy of existing flood mitigation equipment, noting that ODS typically deploys its one pump to Botley Road and its one flood barrier to Hinksey Lake. Officers explained the collaborative nature of pump usage amongst agencies, stating that additional pumps may need to be sourced from outside the county in severe cases of

flooding. They drew attention to the logistical challenges of pump deployment, giving emphasis to the risks associated with improper discharge of water that could potentially exacerbating flooding in adjacent areas. In addition, the manpower required to set up and operate pumps was explained, with the Committee noting the working relationship between ODS and the Environment Agency in managing these resources.

147. Another key concern that the Committee raised was the unclear agency responsibilities for maintaining ditches, waterways and other infrastructure critical to flood prevention, with members highlighting resident perception that some areas are neglected due to the ambiguity around accountability. The Committee was reassured that efforts were underway to map responsibilities more clearly, including close collaboration with the county council to address gaps. The Committee commented on the importance of keeping Councillors well-informed about ongoing investigations specific to their wards and suggested that clear communication channels are maintained between agencies.
148. Members of the Committee highlighted the impact of flooding on residents, including disruptions to education and daily life, stating the need for improved community support. They discussed measures to increase transparency about flood risks and supporting residents with practical guidance to help make their homes more resilient.
149. The discussion also focused on the financial implications of frequent flooding events, noting the strain on emergency planning reserves depleted by unpredictable costs of emergency responses. The Committee agreed that a comprehensive review of the reserves is essential to ensure sufficient funding for future incidents, emphasising the Council’s duty to protect its residents by maintaining preparedness and resilience in the face of worsening flooding risks.
150. **Three recommendations** were sent to Cabinet on 22 January 2025, one was accepted, two were partially accepted.

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

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Date: 27 January 2025
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: **Motions and amendments received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.18**

Councillors are asked to debate and reach conclusions on the motions and amendment listed below in accordance with the Council's rules for debate.

The Constitution permits an hour for debate of these motions.

Introduction

This document sets out motions received by the Head of Law and Governance in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.18 by the deadline of 1.00pm on 15 January 2025, as amended by the proposers.

All substantive amendments sent by councillors to the Head of Law and Governance by publication of the briefing note are also included below.

Unfamiliar terms are explained in the glossary or in footnotes.

Motions will be taken in turn from the Independent Oxford Alliance, Oxford Community Independents, Oxford Independent Group, Real Independent, Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green groups in that order.

Introduction

- a) Zero Emission Zone (Proposed by Cllr. David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr. Ian Yeatman)
- b) Visitor Parking Permits (Proposed by Cllr. Ajaz Rehman, Seconded by Cllr. Dr. Amar Latif) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Simon Ottino, Seconded by Cllr. Linda Smith]
- c) Devolution (Proposed by Cllr. Susan Brown, Seconded by Cllr. Anna Railton) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr. Chris Jarvis]
- d) Protection of Carers from Exploitation (Proposed by Cllr. Jo Sandelson, Seconded by Cllr Theo Jupp) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Linda Smith, Seconded by Cllr. Mark Lygo]
- e) Demand compensation from Network Rail for delays in reopening Botley Road (Proposed by Cllr. Lois Muddiman, Seconded by Cllr. Alex Powell)

a) Zero Emission Zone (Proposed by Cllr. David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr. Ian Yeatman)

Independent Oxford Alliance Group Motion

In February 2024, Oxfordshire County Council committed to spending £5.2m¹ developing plans to expand Oxford's existing Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ). Although previously agreed in principle as part of the Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan², Oxfordshire County Council has not yet committed to proceeding with the ZEZ expansion.³

Each year, Oxford City Council produces an Air Quality Annual Status Report (AQASR)⁴. The report includes a detailed account of NO₂ pollution levels, across numerous monitoring stations in Oxford and surrounding areas in the preceding year. The report also includes a commentary and analysis of themes relating to NO₂ pollution in Oxford, such as the impact of the current ZEZ and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods on NO₂ pollution levels.

Given the current development work taking place by Oxfordshire County Council in relation to the planned ZEZ expansion, it could be useful to draw on the insights collected as part of the AQASR publication process to produce an in-depth analysis of NO₂ pollution levels in the planned ZEZ expansion zone.

Oxford City Council's policy on NO₂ pollution is that the local annual mean NO₂ target for Oxford should be 30 µg/m³ by 2025⁵, which reflects "step two" of the WHO's updated interim target for NO₂.

Oxford City Council notes that Oxford is currently in the process of taking delivery of numerous new electric buses, which have the potential to significantly reduce pollution in and around Oxford city centre⁶.

The Council:

- Believes it would be useful for Oxford City Council to publish a (non-statutory) supplement to its already-published 2023 AQASR. This supplement would help provide the public with the council's baseline analysis of NO₂ pollution levels in the planned ZEZ expansion zone, reusing existing data.
- Further believes that subsequent AQASRs should also include an in-depth analysis of NO₂ pollution levels in the planned ZEZ expansion zone.
- Collectively, these analyses would assist Oxford City Council in deciding whether – in the council's view – the ZEZ expansion remains objectively justified as a policy that the City Council should continue to endorse.

¹

<https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s70023/Section%205.4%20Capital%20Programme%20Council%20Feb%202024.pdf>

² <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=26981>

³ www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/connecting-oxfordshire/city-centre-zez#:~:text=A%20small%20pilot%20ZEZ%20became,assessments%2C%20engagement%20and%20formal%20consultation

⁴ www.oxford.gov.uk/air-quality-data/air-quality-annual-status-reports

⁵ www.oxford.gov.uk/air-quality-management/air-quality-action-plan

⁶ www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1394/oxford-launches-major-all-electric-city-bus-fleet

Noting that where there are any financial and/or resource implications that the implantation of the report will be subject to a report to Cabinet, Council therefore request that Cabinet ask those officers responsible for producing the Oxford City Council's AQASR to:

- Publish a supplement to 2023 AQASR (within three months of the date of this motion), which includes a detailed data table setting out the verified average NO₂ pollution levels between 2019 and 2023, for each pollution monitoring station within the proposed ZEZ expansion zone.
- To provide equivalent data in the 2024 AQASR, and in future years.
- To ensure this data is accompanied by a detailed analysis of recent NO₂ pollution trends within the planned ZEZ expansion zone, where reasonably possible, including an analysis of whether NO₂ pollution within the proposed ZEZ expansion zone have yet fallen to Oxford City Council's 30µg/m³ by 2025 target.

Council also asks Cabinet to consider not taking any decision about revenue and cost sharing arrangements with Oxfordshire County Council beyond the one agreed for the pilot (should they come forward) until the initial ZEZ pollution analysis has been completed.

b) Visitor Parking Permits (Proposed by Cllr. Ajaz Rehman, Seconded by Cllr. Dr. Amar Latif) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Simon Ottino, Seconded by Cllr. Linda Smith]

Oxford Independent Group Motion

This Council asks the Leader of the Council to write to the relevant officers at Oxfordshire County Council to revert back to scratch card permits for visitors

The new scheme is discriminatory against residents who do not have access or struggle with digital technology.⁷

Requesting a family member or neighbour to assist can again be embarrassing or leave a feeling of worthlessness.⁸

This council believes it is the service providers responsibility to ensure services are workable and residents should not be left to seek additional help.

Council tax is at an all-time high^{9 10} and pays for services such as parking permits, whilst efficiency is clearly good, this change places an unfair burden on residents. It may well lead to visitors handed parking fines. The scratch card system is fair and reasonable system that works for all.

Labour Group Amendment

⁷ <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24799256.residents-slam-replacement-scratch-card-parking-permits/>

⁸ Oxfordshire County Council Equalities Impact Assessment- Changes from Physical/paper based residents permits to virtual online permit system

⁹ [Council Tax bills to go up by an average of £100 this year | Oxford Mail](#)

¹⁰ <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24829990.council-tax-bills-go-average-100-year/>

The Council notes the recent commitment from Oxfordshire County Council that paper visitor parking permits will still be available for Oxfordshire residents who are genuinely unable to set up digital accounts.

This Council asks the Leader of the Council to write to the relevant officers at Oxfordshire County Council to ~~revert back to scratch card permits for visitors:~~

1. Seek clarification as to exactly what the criteria are for which residents this will apply to
2. Seek confirmation that this change will be closely monitored to ensure that discrimination doesn't occur.

~~The new An only digital scheme~~ is would discriminate~~ory~~ against residents who do not have access or struggle with digital technology.¹¹

Requesting a family member or neighbour to assist can again be embarrassing or leave a feeling of worthlessness.¹²

This council believes it is the service providers responsibility to ensure services are workable and **accessible for all** residents ~~should not be left to seek additional help.~~

~~Council tax is at an all-time high¹³⁻¹⁴ and pays for services such as parking permits, whilst efficiency is clearly good, this change places an unfair burden on residents. It may well lead to visitors handed parking fines. The scratch card system is fair and reasonable system that works for all.~~

If agreed, the motion would read:

The Council notes the recent commitment from Oxfordshire County Council that paper visitor parking permits will still be available for Oxfordshire residents who are genuinely unable to set up digital accounts.

This Council asks the Leader of the Council to write to the relevant officers at Oxfordshire County Council to:

1. Seek clarification as to exactly what the criteria are for which residents this will apply to
2. Seek confirmation that this change will be closely monitored to ensure that discrimination doesn't occur.

An only digital scheme would discriminate against residents who do not have access or struggle with digital technology.¹⁵

¹¹ <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24799256.residents-slam-replacement-scratch-card-parking-permits/>

¹² Oxfordshire County Council Equalities Impact Assessment- Changes from Physical/paper based residents permits to virtual online permit system

¹³ [Council Tax bills to go up by an average of £100 this year | Oxford Mail](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24829990.council-tax-bills-go-average-100-year/)

¹⁴ <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24829990.council-tax-bills-go-average-100-year/>

¹⁵ <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24799256.residents-slam-replacement-scratch-card-parking-permits/>

Requesting a family member or neighbour to assist can again be embarrassing or leave a feeling of worthlessness.¹⁶

This council believes it is the service providers responsibility to ensure services are workable and accessible for all residents.

c) Devolution (Proposed by Cllr. Susan Brown, Seconded by Cllr. Anna Railton) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr. Chris Jarvis]

Labour Group Motion

The English Devolution White Paper published by the Government on Monday 16 December 2024 will open up opportunities for our local economy and for local residents in Oxford.¹⁷

Devolution could give more influence here in our local community over the policies and services that impact on our lives and our local economy. While there is much thinking and discussion needed for the detail of the changes in our area, this is a chance to make important changes for the better.

Services currently run from Whitehall could instead be run by a new strategic authority for the Thames Valley, which would be led by a directly elected mayor.

Learning from and inspired by the work of elected Mayors and strategic areas like Greater Manchester and the West Midlands, a Thames Valley authority linking together our cities, towns and villages has the potential to be the largest and most successful economy in the UK outside London. The opportunities for our region are huge, and we need to take advantage of them.

This council welcomes any movement of power away from Whitehall closer to local communities, and the Mayoral Strategic Authorities will gain strategic powers on transport, employment growth and skills and strategic planning.

The White Paper also gives us an historic opportunity to bring all local government services back together and to an authority that reflects our city geography.

Council believe once unitary geography is established, citizens of Oxford and our local communities will be best served from having councillors who are as close to those communities as possible. It believes that in designing new unitary authorities, there is a balance to be struck over size and that very large authorities are unlikely to be sufficiently responsive to their communities.

We are rightly proud in Oxford that our councillors are representative of our wider community in terms of age, gender, work, skills and diversity. We want to ensure that far into the future councillors of all parties and none will continue to represent the full diversity of our historic city.

¹⁶ Oxfordshire County Council Equalities Impact Assessment- Changes from Physical/paper based residents permits to virtual online permit system

¹⁷ [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118222/English-Devolution-White-Paper-2017.pdf)

Our councillors will be represent all ages; those in work, retired or carers; those whose families have lived here for generations and those who have recently made our city their home; people from many different jobs and experiences and from different working backgrounds and cultures; of different, ethnic, religious and political influences.

With local government reorganisation alongside the creation of a new strategic authority for the Thames Valley, it is vital that in the new unitary councils, the future representatives are able to continue the long tradition of standing up for the people of Oxford and those who work here.

Council resolves:

- To pledge to put the citizens of Oxford at the heart of all of our discussions to develop proposals that will be best for the residents and businesses in our city.
- To side with those who take the time to develop proposals rather than rushing to deliver a particular outcome without public support or consultation.

Green Group Amendment

The English Devolution White Paper published by the Government on Monday 16 December 2024 will open up opportunities for our local economy and for local residents in Oxford.¹⁸

Devolution could give more influence here in our local community over the policies and services that impact on our lives and our local economy. While there is much thinking and discussion needed for the detail of the changes in our area, this is a chance to make important changes for the better.

Services currently run from Whitehall could instead be run by a new strategic authority for the Thames Valley, ~~which would be led by a directly elected mayor~~ **strengthening local input into decision-making**.

~~Learning from and inspired by the work of elected Mayors and strategic areas like Greater Manchester and the West Midlands, a~~ **A** Thames Valley authority linking together our cities, towns and villages has the potential to be the largest and most successful economy in the UK outside London. The opportunities for our region are huge, and we need to take advantage of them.

This council welcomes any movement of power away from Whitehall closer to local communities, and ~~the Mayoral Strategic Authorities will~~ **this would help us to** gain strategic powers on transport, employment growth and skills and strategic planning.

The White Paper also gives us an historic opportunity to bring all local government services back together and to **establish** an authority that reflects our city geography.

Council believes once unitary geography is established, citizens of Oxford and our local communities will be best served ~~from~~ **by** having councillors who are as close to those communities as possible. It believes that in designing new unitary authorities, there is a

¹⁸ [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](#)

balance to be struck over size and that very large authorities are unlikely to be sufficiently responsive to their communities.

We are rightly proud in Oxford that our councillors are representative of our wider community in terms of age, gender, work, skills and diversity. We want to ensure that far into the future councillors of all parties and none will continue to represent the full diversity of our historic city.

Our councillors will be represent all ages; those in work, retired or carers; those whose families have lived here for generations and those who have recently made our city their home; people from many different jobs and experiences and from different working backgrounds and cultures; of different, ethnic, religious and political influences.

With local government reorganisation alongside the creation of a new strategic authority for the Thames Valley, it is vital that in the new unitary councils, the future representatives are able to continue the long tradition of standing up for the people of Oxford and those who work here.

Council resolves:

- To pledge to put the citizens of Oxford at the heart of all of our discussions to develop proposals that will be best for the residents and businesses in our city **represent the values and needs of Oxford residents.**
- To side with those who take the time to develop proposals rather than rushing to deliver a particular outcome without public support or consultation.

If agreed, the motion would read:

The English Devolution White Paper published by the Government on Monday 16 December 2024 will open up opportunities for our local economy and for local residents in Oxford.¹⁹

Devolution could give more influence here in our local community over the policies and services that impact on our lives and our local economy. While there is much thinking and discussion needed for the detail of the changes in our area, this is a chance to make important changes for the better.

Services currently run from Whitehall could instead be run by a new strategic authority for the Thames Valley, strengthening local input into decision-making.

A Thames Valley authority linking together our cities, towns and villages has the potential to be the largest and most successful economy in the UK outside London. The opportunities for our region are huge, and we need to take advantage of them.

This council welcomes any movement of power away from Whitehall closer to local communities and this would help us to gain strategic powers on transport, employment growth and skills and strategic planning.

¹⁹ [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](#)

The White Paper also gives us an historic opportunity to bring all local government services back together and to establish an authority that reflects our city geography.

Council believes once unitary geography is established, citizens of Oxford and our local communities will be best served by having councillors who are as close to those communities as possible. It believes that in designing new unitary authorities, there is a balance to be struck over size and that very large authorities are unlikely to be sufficiently responsive to their communities.

We are rightly proud in Oxford that our councillors are representative of our wider community in terms of age, gender, work, skills and diversity. We want to ensure that far into the future councillors of all parties and none will continue to represent the full diversity of our historic city.

Our councillors represent all ages; those in work, retired or carers; those whose families have lived here for generations and those who have recently made our city their home; people from many different jobs and experiences and from different working backgrounds and cultures; of different, ethnic, religious and political influences.

With local government reorganisation alongside the creation of a new strategic authority for the Thames Valley, it is vital that in the new unitary councils, the future representatives are able to continue the long tradition of standing up for the people of Oxford and those who work here.

Council resolves:

- To pledge to put the citizens of Oxford at the heart of all of our discussions and to work to develop proposals that will best represent the values and needs of Oxford residents.
- To side with those who take the time to develop proposals rather than rushing to deliver a particular outcome without public support or consultation.

d) Protection of Carers from Exploitation (Proposed by Cllr. Jo Sandelson, Seconded by Cllr Theo Jupp) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Linda Smith, Seconded by Cllr. Mark Lygo]

Liberal Democrat Group Motion

This council has no confidence in the employee protection offered to migrant care workers in Oxfordshire and in the UK, and believe that visa design is driving exploitation.²⁰ Sponsorship agencies have been able to get away with exploiting these carers by demanding large sums of money (often thousands of pounds) in exchange for arranging the carers' journey to the UK, housing them (often in disgraceful conditions) and arranging work. Carers often find they are not given the number of hours work promised and are forced to use food banks to survive.²¹ Many migrant carers have borrowed large sums from loan companies in their own country in order to pay the sponsorship fees, and are then trapped in the UK as they cannot return home

²⁰ CAB; Restrictive Visas 11/03/24

²¹ Citizens Advice Benefits and Work 11/03/2024

without paying the money back. When migrants raise their concerns and needs with their sponsors they are threatened with being returned to their countries.²²

The consequences are many. Migrant carers doing much needed work are forced to live in poverty with very stressful working conditions causing bad health and inability to work.²³ For example, one Oxfordshire family with disabilities reported that their carer X from Ghana needed to arrive for work at a client's (rural) home at 6am. Public transport was not available but sponsors refused to pay for a taxi, so he spent all his wages paying for one himself.

Carers' clients are also affected, if carers become ill and are unable to work. This means their client either has no carer or numerous different cover carers to be instructed in the client's individual care needs. It can lead to clients' families being unable to cope so the client must go into residential care, at great emotional cost to the client and their family, and at great financial cost to Social Services. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that "despite need for care far outstripping current provision, care providers are losing business due to ongoing staff shortages. [A Care England study](#)²⁴ found in 2023 that 44% of providers it surveyed had turned down new admissions and 18% had to close services altogether due to ongoing staff shortages."²⁵

Council believes the following steps should be taken to improve migrant carers' situation.

- 1. Simplify visa applications:** The 60-day time limit needs to be extended so that carers don't lose their visa if they haven't found a new sponsor.
- 2. Grant access to public funds:** Introduce a safety net whereby care workers can access public funds.
- 3. Provide flexible work visas:** Support migrant care workers with work visas that are simply amendable to reflect changing work situations. Currently the UK's labour market enforcement system is complicated, confusing and in dire need of reform.

Council resolves to request that Cabinet Member Cllr Chewe Munkonge write to Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Social Care, calling on him to drive these actions forward promptly.

Labour Group Amendment

This council has no confidence in the employee protection offered to migrant care workers in Oxfordshire and in the UK, and believe that visa design is driving exploitation.²⁶ Sponsorship agencies have been able to get away with exploiting these carers by demanding large sums of money (often thousands of pounds) in exchange

²² Citizens Advice 2024

²³ Joseph Rowntree Foundation 26/07/2024

²⁴ <https://www.careengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Care-England-End-to-End-Workforce-Solution.pdf>

²⁵ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/care/our-acceptance-of-low-pay-in-social-care-costs-us-more-than-we-think#:~:text=Despite%20need%20for%20care%20far,due%20to%20ongoing%20staff%20shortages.>

²⁶ CAB; Restrictive Visas 11/03/24

for arranging the carers' journey to the UK, housing them (often in disgraceful conditions) and arranging work. Carers often find they are not given the number of hours work promised and are forced to use food banks to survive.²⁷ Many migrant carers have borrowed large sums from loan companies in their own country in order to pay the sponsorship fees, and are then trapped in the UK as they cannot return home without paying the money back. When migrants raise their concerns and needs with their sponsors they are threatened with being returned to their countries.²⁸

The consequences are many. Migrant carers doing much needed work are forced to live in poverty with very stressful working conditions causing bad health and inability to work.²⁹ For example, one Oxfordshire family with disabilities reported that their carer X from Ghana needed to arrive for work at a client's (rural) home at 6am. Public transport was not available but sponsors refused to pay for a taxi, so he spent all his wages paying for one himself.

Carers' clients are also affected, if carers become ill and are unable to work. This means their client either has no carer or numerous different cover carers to be instructed in the client's individual care needs. It can lead to clients' families being unable to cope so the client must go into residential care, at great emotional cost to the client and their family, and at great financial cost to Social Services. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that "despite need for care far outstripping current provision, care providers are losing business due to ongoing staff shortages. [A Care England study](#)³⁰ found in 2023 that 44% of providers it surveyed had turned down new admissions and 18% had to close services altogether due to ongoing staff shortages."³¹

Council believes the following steps should be taken to improve migrant carers' situation.

1. Simplify visa applications: The 60-day time limit needs to be extended so that carers don't lose their visa if they haven't found a new sponsor.

2. Grant access to public funds: Introduce a safety net whereby care workers can access public funds.

3. Provide flexible work visas: Support migrant care workers with work visas that are simply amendable to reflect changing work situations. Currently the UK's labour market enforcement system is complicated, confusing and in dire need of reform.

4. Oxfordshire County Council should explore providing social care through providers which are not purely driven by profit, including co-operatives, social enterprises or direct in-house provision, and provide legal support to 'tied' migrant workers on restricted visas who wish to transfer to these new employers.

²⁷ Citizens Advice Benefits and Work 11/03/2024

²⁸ Citizens Advice 2024

²⁹ Joseph Rowntree Foundation 26/07/2024

³⁰ <https://www.careengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Care-England-End-to-End-Workforce-Solution.pdf>

³¹ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/care/our-acceptance-of-low-pay-in-social-care-costs-us-more-than-we-think#:~:text=Despite%20need%20for%20care%20far,due%20to%20ongoing%20staff%20shortages.>

5. Oxfordshire County Council should encourage all of the county's care workers to join a trade union to help defend their individual worker's rights and help fight for improvements in employment conditions across the sector.

Council resolves to request that Cabinet Member Cllr Chewe Munkonge write to Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Social Care, calling on him to drive these actions forward promptly.

If agreed, the motion would read:

This council has no confidence in the employee protection offered to migrant care workers in Oxfordshire and in the UK, and believe that visa design is driving exploitation.³² Sponsorship agencies have been able to get away with exploiting these carers by demanding large sums of money (often thousands of pounds) in exchange for arranging the carers' journey to the UK, housing them (often in disgraceful conditions) and arranging work. Carers often find they are not given the number of hours work promised and are forced to use food banks to survive.³³ Many migrant carers have borrowed large sums from loan companies in their own country in order to pay the sponsorship fees, and are then trapped in the UK as they cannot return home without paying the money back. When migrants raise their concerns and needs with their sponsors they are threatened with being returned to their countries.³⁴

The consequences are many. Migrant carers doing much needed work are forced to live in poverty with very stressful working conditions causing bad health and inability to work.³⁵ For example, one Oxfordshire family with disabilities reported that their carer X from Ghana needed to arrive for work at a client's (rural) home at 6am. Public transport was not available but sponsors refused to pay for a taxi, so he spent all his wages paying for one himself.

Carers' clients are also affected, if carers become ill and are unable to work. This means their client either has no carer or numerous different cover carers to be instructed in the client's individual care needs. It can lead to clients' families being unable to cope so the client must go into residential care, at great emotional cost to the client and their family, and at great financial cost to Social Services. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that "despite need for care far outstripping current provision, care providers are losing business due to ongoing staff shortages. [A Care England study](#)³⁶ found in 2023 that 44% of providers it surveyed had turned down new admissions and 18% had to close services altogether due to ongoing staff shortages."³⁷

Council believes the following steps should be taken to improve migrant carers' situation.

³² CAB; Restrictive Visas 11/03/24

³³ Citizens Advice Benefits and Work 11/03/2024

³⁴ Citizens Advice 2024

³⁵ Joseph Rowntree Foundation 26/07/2024

³⁶ <https://www.careengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Care-England-End-to-End-Workforce-Solution.pdf>

³⁷ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/care/our-acceptance-of-low-pay-in-social-care-costs-us-more-than-we-think#:~:text=Despite%20need%20for%20care%20far,due%20to%20ongoing%20staff%20shortages.>

1. Simplify visa applications: The 60-day time limit needs to be extended so that carers don't lose their visa if they haven't found a new sponsor.

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3. Provide flexible work visas: Support migrant care workers with work visas that are simply amendable to reflect changing work situations. Currently the UK's labour market enforcement system is complicated, confusing and in dire need of reform.

4. Oxfordshire County Council should explore providing social care through providers which are not purely driven by profit, including co-operatives, social enterprises or direct in-house provision, and provide legal support to 'tied' migrant workers on restricted visas who wish to transfer to these new employers.

5. Oxfordshire County Council should encourage all of the county's care workers to join a trade union to help defend their individual worker's rights and help fight for improvements in employment conditions across the sector.

Council resolves to request that Cabinet Member Cllr Chewe Munkonge write to Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Social Care, calling on him to drive these actions forward promptly.

e) Demand compensation from Network Rail for delays in reopening Botley Road (Proposed by Cllr. Lois Muddiman, Seconded by Cllr. Alex Powell)

Green Group Motion

This Council acknowledges the long-term benefits of the Oxford Station Project, which will increase capacity, deliver a new western entrance, create new off-road cycle lanes, contributing to a more sustainable and interconnected transport network.³⁸ However, it is deeply concerned by the prolonged disruption caused by delays to this project by Network Rail, which has caused significant harm to local businesses and residents.³⁹

The closure of Botley Road for 21 months has already led to substantial financial losses for local businesses, many of which are struggling to survive.⁴⁰ With no clear end date yet announced, these businesses face uncertainty and further financial strain, diminishing their ability to recover. The slow progress of Thames Water's work to relocate a mains water pipe and sewer are acknowledged⁴¹, but the extended delay and disruption cannot solely be attributed to external factors. However, this Council believes that Network Rail's failure to effectively manage the project, address challenges promptly, and communicate clear timelines has exacerbated the situation.

Furthermore, this Council is deeply concerned about the negative impact on the health and well-being of older and/or less mobile residents. Many of these individuals have been cut off from the city centre, with no through bus or alternative public transport routes available.⁴² This has left them isolated, unable to access essential services, and

³⁸ <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/our-routes/western/oxfordshire/>

³⁹ <https://networkhell.co.uk/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24844575.botley-road-closure-devastating-tap-social-brewery/>

⁴¹ <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/about-us/projects/improvements-in-your-area/osney-bridge-trunk-main-replacement>

⁴² <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24839904.oxford-bus-company-lost-money-due-botley-road-closure/>

exposed to increased mental and physical strain. The closure has thus exacerbated inequalities, particularly for vulnerable groups.

In light of these serious concerns, this Council resolves:

1. To publicly campaign to protect the interests of Oxford's residents and businesses, and work to ensure that those responsible for the ongoing harm caused by this project are held to account.
2. To request the Leader of the council:
 - a. Examines possible avenues to initiate legal action against Network Rail for their management of the Oxford Station project.
 - b. Calls for a public inquiry into the mismanagement of the project
 - c. Writes to Network Rail to demand a clear and achievable completion timeline for the project.

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