

Supplement for

Scrutiny Committee

On **Tuesday 7 April 2026** At **6.00 pm**

Addendum to Item 9 and Item 12 Endorsement of Working Group recommendations

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9.	Urgent Key Decisions End of Year Update 2025-2026	3 - 6
	<p>The Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 14 January 2025, requested a report summarising all urgent key decisions that have been taken in the 2025/26 municipal year.</p> <p>Cllr Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working and Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager have been invited to present the report and take part in discussions.</p> <p>The Committee is asked to consider the report and agree any recommendations.</p>	
12.	Endorsement of Working Group recommendations	7 - 20
	<p>Since the Scrutiny Committee's previous meeting on 3 February 2026, the following Working Groups have met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finance and Performance Working Group (26 March 2026)• Housing and Homelessness Working Group (31 March 2026)• Climate and Environment Working Group (1 April 2026) <p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Endorse the recommendations from Working Groups.2. Note the recommendations to the Shareholder and Joint Venture	

Group.

Appendix 1 contains exempt information pursuant to Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. To discuss this item, it will be necessary for the Committee to pass a resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, specifying the grounds on which their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act 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 Access to Information Procedure Rules – Section 15 of the Council’s Constitution – sets out the conditions under which the public can be excluded from meetings of the Council)

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

Addendum to Item 9 Urgent Key Decision End of Year Update 2025-2026

1. Since the publication of the agenda for the Scrutiny Committee on 26 March 2026, a further decision has been taken following consultation with the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.
2. As per part 17.10 of the Constitution, this will be reported to full Council at the next ordinary meeting on 13 July 2026.
3. The Scrutiny Committee are asked to note additional urgent decision taken since the publication of the agenda.

Entering into an agreement with Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government in respect to funding for Oxpens River Bridge

4. The decision, taken on 31 March 2026, was for the Deputy Chief Executive – City and Citizen Services to enter into an agreement with Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in respect to funding for Oxpens River Bridge.
5. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee was consulted on 30 March 2026 to remove the requirement of the call-in period under section 17.10 of the Constitution.
6. A report was presented to Cabinet on the 13 August 2026 which provided delegation as follows:

“Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive - Place, in consultation with the Council’s Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer), the Director of Law Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer) and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Culture to enter into legal agreements, or amend legal agreements, to secure the additional external funds required to meet the £3.7 m needed to deliver the Oxpens River Bridge and to enter an amended agreement with Oxfordshire County Council to enable the Growth Deal funding to be spent in 26/27”
7. Growth Deal funding was identified to deliver the Oxpens River Bridge in 2020. As the design of the project has been developed and delays have occurred, the cost of delivering the bridge has increased. This was reported to Cabinet 13th August 2025 and additional funding has been sought to enable the delivery of the bridge.
8. The MHCLG had identified additional funding and provided a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to accompany the funding. The MOU sets out that the funding is Growth Deal Funding and ‘.....should be spent by Oxford City Council by the end of the financial year 25/26 on activities relating to the aims of the Growth Deal – to deliver significant increases in the supply of new homes in Oxfordshire’.
9. The agreement was subject to two project milestones;
 - March 2026: The Council will spend the money on any activities relating to the terms of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.
 - October 2026: Construction of the bridge will be completed.
10. The agreement also required ‘full transparency open book working on all matters relating to the project, including project proposals, project expenditure, reporting and evaluation forms.’ The MOU also includes standard requirements re

participation in wider evaluation, assurance and risk and marketing and branding and due diligence and procurement.

11. The MOU sets out that it is not legally binding on the parties but that it is expected that the parties will honour the MOU.
12. The proposal for the Oxpens River Bridge was being funded through the Oxfordshire Growth Deal (OGD). The OGD identified infrastructure that would be funded to facilitate housing delivery. Within the city, due to the nature of the housing sites, the housing delivery supported by the infrastructure was spread across the city. In the case of the bridge the housing delivery was in the central, south and western parts of the city. Since the original funding allocation costs have increased as the programme has been delayed and hence the need for top up funding.
13. The reason for using the urgent provisions as described in the Constitution was the Council was notified of the new MHCLG funding and received the MOU late on the 25 March, however the MOU referred to a grant letter that was only been received on 30 March.
14. The MOU seeks for the grant funding to be spent in the 25/26 financial year. The Council cannot allocate the funding until the decision has been made to accept the grant funding and enter into the MOU.
15. The proposed decision to enter into an agreement with MHCLG to accept funding has been advertised on the Forward Plan for over 28 days awaiting receipt of the funding terms. The timing of the receipt of the MOU and grant letter and the need to have spent the funding by the 31 March 2026 made the decision to accept the funding urgent. If the decision was taken on 31 March, the two-day period to allow for call-in would have the effect of making the decision beyond the timescales set out by MHCLG in the MOU for spending the grant funds.
16. The alternative to taking this decision would be not to enter the MOU. The implication of this would be that the funding would not be available and it would be unlikely to be able to deliver the project.

Implications of Local Government Reorganisation

17. The decision to proceed with the bridge was taken prior to the Government's announcement and plans for Local Government Reorganisation. The budget is in place to enable the project to proceed.
18. Where appropriate, any implications relating to LGR were reviewed when considering the decisions using the linked guidance from Government: [Financial decisions before local government reorganisation - GOV.UK](#)

Financial implications

19. There are no financial implications arising from this addendum.
20. Financial implications for the urgent decisions have been outlined above, and the Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer) was consulted before each decision was taken.

Legal issues

21. There are no financial issues arising from this addendum.

22. Legal issues for each of the urgent decisions have been outlined above, and the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer) was consulted before each decision was taken.

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Background Papers:	
1	<u>Decision - Entering into an agreement with Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government in respect to funding for Oxpens River Bridge Oxford City Council</u>

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To: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 7 April 2026
Report of: Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Recommendations from the Working Groups for endorsement at the Scrutiny Committee

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To endorse the recommendations from the Working Groups.
Key decision:	No
Lead Member:	Chairs of the Scrutiny Working Groups
Corporate Priority:	A Well-Run Council
Policy Framework:	None

Recommendation(s): That the Scrutiny Committee resolves to:
1. Endorse the recommendations from the Climate and Environment, Housing and Homelessness, and Finance and Performance Working Groups.
2. Note the recommendations to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group.

Information Exempt From Publication
Information contained in or appended to this report is deemed exempt from publication under Schedule 12A paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	Recommendations to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group - 2 April 2026	Yes

Overview

- The Scrutiny Committee is asked to endorse the recommendations from the following Working Groups held since the previous meeting:

Finance and Performance Working Group – 26 March 2026

- Integrated Performance for Q3 2025/26
- OX Place Financial Business Plan, Development Sites update and Period 9 Monitoring report [SJVG]

Housing and Homelessness Working Group – 31 March 2026

- Housing Performance 2025/26
- Selective Licensing Year 3 update

Climate and Environment Working Group – 1 April 2026

- Social Housing EPCC update
- Local Area Energy Planning update

2. The recommendations due at Shareholder and Joint Venture Group on 2 April 2026 were endorsed through delegated authority by the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor, in consultation with the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee. They have been included as an exempt appendix (Appendix 1) for the Committee to note.
3. Cabinet Members, in consultation with the relevant Officers, will either, agree, agree in-part, or disagree with the recommendations. The tables below detail the Working Groups' recommendations for endorsement by the Committee. No table was produced for items where no recommendations were suggested.
4. The Working Groups wish to put on record:

Finance and Performance

The Finance and Performance Working Group reflected that delivery performance has not aligned with current optimism bias assumptions, and suggested a more realistic starting point may be needed, with scope to adjust as performance improves. There was also a clear view that recruitment and retention pressures currently reflected across multiple services should be recognised as a single corporate risk to better capture their scale and impact. In addition, concerns were raised that existing budget provision for damp, mould and retrofit works underestimates the likely ongoing demand. Members therefore emphasised the need for more realistic medium-term planning assumptions to avoid repeated in-year budget adjustments.

Housing and Homelessness

The Housing and Homelessness Working Group reflected on the positive progress made over the past year in relation to the Council's housing offer and performance against key targets. Members noted in particular the development of the tenant strategy and look forward to reviewing how this is put into practice in future reporting. The Working Group also recognised the successes of the Selective Licensing scheme and was fully supportive of the ongoing work that the council is doing in this area including driving up standards in the private rented sector and ensuring tenants are better protected.

Climate and Environment

The Climate and Environment Working Group noted the updates on Social Housing EPC particularly the work being undertaken to identify and replace gas boilers with air source heat pumps. Members supported this. They felt the council could be an exemplary authority and accelerate the rollout of air source heat pumps moving away from bad technologies and make full use of newer, more sustainable technologies available.

5. The Working Groups wish to thank Cabinet Members and Officers who contributed to the meetings.

Financial implications

6. Financial implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Working Groups.

Legal issues

7. Legal implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Working Groups.

Level of risk

8. Risk Registers, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Working Groups.

Equalities impact

9. Equalities Impact Assessments, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Working Groups.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

10. Consideration for Carbon and Environmental impacts, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Working Groups.

Implications of Local Government Reorganisation

11. Implications of Local Government Reorganisation for the reports listed above were outlined within the report when presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Group.
12. Where appropriate, any further implications were reviewed when considering the recommendations using the linked guidance from Government: [Financial decisions before local government reorganisation - GOV.UK](#)

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**Table 1 – Recommendations of the Finance and Performance Working Group –
Integrated Performance for Q3 2025/26**

The table below sets out the recommendations made by the Finance and Performance Working Group on 26 March 2026 for endorsement by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7 April 2026. The Cabinet will be asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That Cabinet, in the light of experience, reviews whether the current optimism bias remains appropriate, including whether a higher starting point (such as 50%) should be considered, with scope to reduce this (back to 45% or 40%) where delivery performance improves.		
2) That Cabinet considers whether recruitment and retention should be recognised and managed as a single corporate risk, rather than being reflected separately across individual service risk registers.		
3) That Cabinet reviews whether current and future budget assumptions for damp, mould and retrofit works are sufficient, in light of emerging experience, including whether higher baseline provision should be built into the MTFP.		

**Table 2 – Recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Working Group –
Housing Performance 2025/26**

The table below sets out the recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Working Group on 31 March 2026 for endorsement by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7 April 2026. The Cabinet will be asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) Officers to provide the Working Group with data relating to the number of homeless people being housed in hotel accommodation and the length of time those people have occupied hotel accommodation.		

**Table 3 – Recommendations of the Climate and Environment Working Group –
Social Housing EPC Update**

The table below sets out the recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Working Group on 1 April 2026 for endorsement by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7 April 2026. The Cabinet will be asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That Cabinet adopts a policy that makes air source heat pumps as the default heating system for all social housing properties going forward. In recognition that in emergency situations a gas boiler may still be required, installation of gas boilers should only be permitted in those circumstances.		

Table 3 – Recommendations of the Climate and Environment Working Group – Local Area Energy Planning Update

The table below sets out the recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Working Group on 1 April 2026 for endorsement by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7 April 2026. The Cabinet will be asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That Cabinet assess whether action areas identified through LAEP that are not currently in the draft Local Plan 2045, could be incorporated, including a gap analyses to identify where the Local Plan does not yet reflect LAEP priorities, as well as a feasibility check on whether they can be integrated at this stage.		

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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