

Agenda

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Scrutiny Committee

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Monday 4 November 2024**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Long Room - Oxford Town Hall**

For further information please contact:

Celeste Reyeslao, Scrutiny and Governance Advisor, Committee and Member Services

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Members of the public can attend to observe this meeting and.

- may register in advance to speak to the committee in accordance with the [committee's rules](#)
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Committee Membership

Councillors: Membership 12: Quorum 4 substitutes are permitted.

Councillor Katherine Miles (Chair)

Councillor Tiago Corais (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Mohammed Altaf-Khan

Councillor Chris Jarvis

Councillor Dr Amar Latif

Councillor Sajjad Malik

Councillor Edward Mundy

Councillor Simon Ottino

Councillor Asima Qayyum

Councillor Dianne Regisford

Councillor Mike Rowley

Councillor Anne Stares

Apologies and notification of substitutes received before the publication are shown under *Apologies for absence* in the agenda. Those sent after publication will be reported at the meeting. Substitutes for the Chair and Vice-chair do not take on these roles.

Agenda

	Pages
1 Apologies for absence <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Cllr Qayyum</i>	
2 Declarations of interest	
3 Chair's Announcements	
4 Minutes <p>Minutes from 8 October 2024</p> <p>Recommendation: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2024 be APPROVED as a true and accurate record.</p>	9 - 12
5 Work Plan and Forward Plan <p>The Work Plan is driven to a very large extent by the Cabinet Forward Plan. The Scrutiny Committee agrees its priorities for items coming onto the Forward Plan, which then form part of its Work Plan.</p> <p>The Committee is recommended to confirm its agreement to the Work Plan, or agree any amendments as required.</p>	13 - 16
6 Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Panel meetings <p>At its meeting on 16 October 2024, Cabinet considered the following reports from Scrutiny and made responses to the recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual Air Quality Status Report• ZCOP Expansion Plans <p>Since the Scrutiny Committee's previous meeting on 8 October 2024, the following Panels have met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing and Homelessness Panel (10 October 2024) <p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note Cabinet's responses to its recommendations.	17 - 26

2. **Note** any updates from Panel meetings.

7 Leisure Update

27 - 32

Appendix 1 to this item includes exempt information pursuant to Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. If the Scrutiny Committee wishes to discuss matters relating to the information set out in Appendix 1 to the report, it will be necessary for the Scrutiny Committee to pass a resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting (as set out at agenda item 9).

At its meeting on 16 January 2024, the Committee consider a report concerning the Leisure Services Contract Award. This report updates the Committee on the mobilisation of the leisure contract and client function arrangements in line with the recommendations from Scrutiny Committee that were approved at Cabinet on 24 January 2024.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and agree ant recommendations.

8 Update on the development of Oxford River Charter

A briefing note for this item will be circulated as a supplement, following the publication of the agenda.

9 Matters exempt or part exempt from publication and exclusion of the public

If the Committee wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any aspects of the preceding or following agenda items it will be necessary for the Committee to pass a resolution 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).

9a Leisure Updated - exempt appendix

33 - 34

9b OX Place - OCH(I)L Recovery Plan

35 - 50

This item includes exempt information pursuant to Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It will be necessary for the Committee to pass a resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of this item (as set out at agenda item 9).

The Shareholder and Joint Venture Group, at its meeting on 6 November 2024, will consider a report from the OX Place relating to the Oxford City Housing (Investment) Limited Recover Plan.

Helen Horne, Managing Director (OX Place) has been invited to present the report and answer questions from the perspective of the Housing Companies.

Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies, and Emma Jackman, Head of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) have been invited to present the report and answer questions from the perspective of the Council as Shareholder.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and agree any recommendations.

10 Dates of future meetings

Scrutiny Committee

- 2 December 2024
- 14 January 2025
- 29 January 2025
- 03 March 2025
- 1 April 2025

Standing Panels

Housing & Homelessness: 7 November 2024; 27 November 2024 (extraordinary); 6 March 2025

Finance & Performance: 4 December 2022; 15 January 2025; 7 April 2025

Climate & Environment: 20 November 2024; 26 February 2025; 27 March 2025

All meetings start at 6.00 pm.

Information for those attending

Recording and reporting on meetings held in public

Members of public and press can record, or report in other ways, the parts of the meeting open to the public. You are not required to indicate in advance but it helps if you notify the Committee Services Officer prior to the meeting so that they can inform the Chair and direct you to the best place to record.

The Council asks those recording the meeting:

- To follow the protocol which can be found on the Council's [website](#)
- Not to disturb or disrupt the meeting
- Not to edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes not editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show a lack of respect towards those being recorded.
- To avoid recording members of the public present, even inadvertently, unless they are addressing the meeting.

Please be aware that you may be recorded during your speech and any follow-up. If you are attending please be aware that recording may take place and that you may be inadvertently included in these.

The Chair of the meeting has absolute discretion to suspend or terminate any activities that in his or her opinion are disruptive.

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your* employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". The matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

Members Code – Other Registrable Interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing** of one of your Other Registrable Interests*** then you must declare an

interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members Code – Non Registrable Interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests, then you must declare the interest.

You must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room, if you answer in the affirmative to this test:

“Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.”

Otherwise, you may stay in the room, take part in the discussion and vote.

*Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member’s spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

** Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person’s quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

*** Other Registrable Interests: a) any unpaid directorships b) any Body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority c) any Body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

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Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 8 October 2024



Committee members present:

Councillor Miles (Chair)	Councillor Corais (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Altaf-Khan	Councillor Jarvis
Councillor Latif	Councillor Mundy
Councillor Regisford	Councillor Rowley
Councillor Yeatman (for Councillor Stares)	

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy
Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Officer
Celeste Reyeslao, Scrutiny and Governance Advisor

Also present:

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Stares sent apologies.
Substitutes are shown above.

31. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

32. Chair's Announcements

The Chair stated that Fairtrade City had been added to the longlist of proposed Scrutiny items that the Committee would consider; and a report on the City of Sanctuary Framework was due to Cabinet in December and had been added to the Work Plan

33. Minutes

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2024 as a true and accurate record.

The Committee agreed to consider item 7 next on the agenda, followed by items 5, 6 and 8.

Cllrs Yeatman, Corais and Regisford joined the meeting.

34. Local Government Association Corporate Peer Review

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working, and Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Services introduced the report, noting the Council was not obliged to have a LGA peer review but wanted 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.

Councillor Rowley requested the Committee initially focus on Community Engagement, with Councillor Brown noting the ongoing process with the Localities Team, and improved communications with those who do not traditionally engage with the Council.

Councillor Corais then discussed the overall ambition of the Council. Councillor Brown highlighted the high expectations of the authority, and the ongoing work with external organisations, such as Oxford hospitals and the Council's Homelessness Prevention Team, ensuring homeless people are accommodated when leaving hospital.

The Head of Corporate Services noted the Government approach to prevention first, which translated into work at a local level by meeting regularly with Council's partners. Health inequalities and working with the Health and Wellbeing Board, shaping a County-wide strategy.

Councillor Miles asked about the review of the Council-owned Companies. Councillor Brown noted as part of the peer review it involved learning from other authorities including the provision of improved governance and scrutiny. Councillor Brown highlighted the ongoing partnership with other authorities, such as Hounslow Council.

Finally, Councillor Miles concluded with a review of the ongoing priorities for the Town Hall. Councillor Brown noted the allocation of funds for projects, and the continuing balance between space for staff and commercial. It was noted the Town Hall is a grade 2 listed building, which prevents certain challenges to make the building carbon zero building. The Head of Corporate Services noted the potential use of the basement and other un-allocated parts of the building, which would be reviewed as part of a feasibility study.

The Committee thanked the officers across the Council, involved with their ongoing work with the Peer Review, and to the Corporate Policy and Partnership Officer who organised and collated the review.

The Committee noted the report; there were no recommendations.

Cllr Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working and Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy left the meeting and did not return.

35. Work Plan and Forward Plan

The Committee was informed that three items had slipped from the October agenda due to recent changes to the Forward Plan, including Corporate Debt Policy, Anti-social

Behaviour Review and Thriving Communities Strategy Update. The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor advised that the three items were currently deferred to November but that further changes to the Work Plan was anticipated to align with the further changes to the Forward Plan. Amendments to the Work Plan would be liaised and agreed with the Chair.

36. Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Panel meetings

The Committee noted that on 11 September 2024, Cabinet considered recommendations related to two reports, responses to which were set out in the Cabinet supplement report:

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Charter/Pledges annual Update

The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor advised that the Finance and Performance Panel had met on 4 September and considered three substantive items: Council Strategy 2024-28 KPI's; Integrated Performance Report Q1 2024-25; and Treasury Management Annual Report 2023-24. The Panel made 2 recommendations to Cabinet in respect of the Integrated Performance Report and Treasury Management Report, both were agreed by Cabinet. The Climate and Environment Panel had met on 10 September 2024 and considered four substantive items: Net Zero Masterplan; Annual Air Quality Status Report; Local Area Energy Planning and Mitigation Measures Regarding Local Grid Constraints; and Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership (ZCOP) Expansion. The Panel made 5 recommendations relating to the Annual Air Quality Status Report and ZCOP Expansion, three of which were agreed by Cabinet, one not agreed, and one agreed in-part. Responses to all recommendations were set out in the Cabinet supplement report.

37. Dates of future meetings

Councillor Latif noted that meeting on the 1 April 2025 would clash with the Festival of Eid.

The date of future meetings were noted.

The meeting started at 6:03 pm and ended at 6:50 pm

Chair

Date: Monday 4 November 2024

*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.*

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Proposed Scrutiny Work Schedule

November 2024 to January 2025

November 2024 – confirmed reports

Committee/Panel	Meeting date	Reports
Scrutiny Committee	04 November	Leisure Update OX Place – OCH(I)L Recovery Plan (SJVG report)
Housing and Homelessness	07 November	Furnished Tenancy Scheme Implementation of Refugee Resettlement in Oxford Housing Performance Monitoring (2024/25 mid-year) Housing Complaint Handling Performance (Q1 & Q2 2024/25)
Housing and Homelessness	27 November (additional meeting)	Housing Revenue Account 30-year Business Plan and Asset Strategy HRA 5-year Investment Programme and Delivery Arrangements Tenancy Engagement and Management
Climate and Environment	20 November	Net Zero Masterplan Eco-moorings Project Update (and update on other fuel-related issues in relation to boating communities) [presentation] High-level challenges and constraints impacting on the deliverability of solar opportunities at Council car parks Local Nature Recovery Strategy

December 2024 – provisional reports

Committee/Panel	Meeting date	Reports
Scrutiny Committee	02 December	<p>Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24</p> <p>Equalities Update</p> <p>Council of Sanctuary Framework</p> <p>Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2025/26</p> <p>Thriving Communities Strategy Update</p>
Finance and Performance	04 December	<p>Budget 2025/26</p> <p>Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025-26</p> <p>Review of the Council Tax Discretionary Reduction Policy</p> <p>Review of the Discretionary Hardship Relief Policy</p> <p>Integrated Performance Report Q2 2024/25</p> <p>Treasury Management Mid-Year Review – April to September 2024</p> <p>Business Rates Non-Payment and Systems Management</p> <p>Benchmarking report comparing the Council's Treasury Management function to other councils, including data on return on investment versus risk</p> <p>Briefing note – analysis of housing benefit subsidy issues and potential options</p> <p>Exempt Treasury Management Matters [discussion item]</p>

January 2025 – provisional reports

Committee/Panel	Meeting date	Reports
Scrutiny Committee	14 January	Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Review
Finance and	15 January	Report of the Budget Review Group

Performance		2025/26 Exempt Treasury Management Matters [discussion item]
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To: Cabinet
Date: 16 October 2024
Report of: Climate and Environment Panel
Title of Report: Annual Air Quality Status Report

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Emily Kerr, Panel Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Anna Railton, Deputy Leader (Non-Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2024-28
Recommendation(s): That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to Scrutiny recommendations

Introduction and overview

1. The Climate and Environment Panel met on 10 September 2024 to consider the Annual Air Quality Status Report. The report fulfilled the Council's statutory obligation to review and assess air quality in the city to report on whether the legal air quality limit values had been met.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Anna Railton (Deputy Leader (Non-Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford) and Pedro Abreu (Principal Air Quality Officer) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Pedro Abreu, Principal Air Quality Officer introduced the report. The report provided an update on air quality in Oxford in the past year.

4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the anticipated impact on air quality of the reopening of Botley Road; site-specific air quality action plans; future plans for communications campaigns; monitoring and reporting on air quality; Central Government funding; and emissions breakdowns.
5. In particular, the Panel considered that funding from Central Government in relation to air quality had previously not been adequate. Noting the recent change in Government, the Panel agreed that the Council should ensure it made representations to the new Government in relation to the need to ensure future additional funding to adequately resource measures related to air quality.

Recommendation 1: That the Council writes to Central Government to make representations in relation to securing future additional local government funding to adequately resource the Council's statutory air quality obligations.

6. The Panel also noted that Botley Road had seen improvements in air quality (in relation to NO₂ emissions) as a result of the road closure. The road was due to reopen in the not too distant future and the Panel was keen that improvements in air quality during the closure should not be reversed when Botley Road reopened. The Panel agreed that the Council should develop a plan so that it could take a proactive approach in retaining the air quality improvements achieved during the closure.

Recommendation 2: That the Council develops a clear plan to mitigate against reversing the improvements in air quality achieved as a result of the Botley Road closure, when the road is reopened.

7. There was a suggestion that the Council should seek to invest in air quality display boards to be installed across the city setting out information such as current air quality, travel route management and number of local deaths per year as a result of poor air quality. The Panel was of the view that measures such as this would help effect the behavioural change required at the personal level to support efforts across Oxford to improve air quality.

Recommendation 3: That the Council explores investment in air quality display boards to disseminate key messages to the public related to air quality.

8. In discussion, the Panel also suggested that the Council could explore other tools to improve air quality locally which it had direct control over. For example, the Panel suggested that the Council should consider capping the number of licensed vehicles in the city, which would reduce the emissions from Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles.

Recommendation 4: That the Council considers setting a limit for the number of vehicles it licenses in the city (i.e. Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles).

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

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Panel on 10 September 2024 concerning the Annual Air Quality Status Report. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

21

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That the Council writes to Central Government to make representations in relation to securing future additional local government funding to adequately resource the Council's statutory air quality obligations.	Yes	A letter will be written to DEFRA seeking a reversal of its April 2024 decision to withhold Local Air Quality Grant Scheme funding - the first time the Scheme has been withheld since its inception in 1997.
2) That the Council develops a clear plan to mitigate against reversing the improvements in air quality achieved as a result of the Botley Road closure, when the road is reopened.	In part	Oxford City Council will continue to deliver its Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2025, which has seen a significant improvement in air quality across the city to date, working in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, the Highways Authority and other relevant stakeholders. Any future air quality measures to be delivered in the city (past 2025) will form part of the statutory process of developing the city's future air quality action plan (2026-2030). This work will start in 2025 and will involve engagement and partnership work with relevant external and internal stakeholders and public consultation for the agreement of the next set of air quality measures and initiatives for the city.
3) That the Council explores investment in air quality display boards to disseminate key messages to the public related to air quality.	Yes	Oxford City Council officers are working in partnership with Oxfordshire County and District Council officers and will explore whether live data on the www.oxonair.uk website could be linked with highways traffic display boards.

<p>4) That the Council considers setting a limit for the number of vehicles it licenses in the city (i.e. Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles).</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Oxford City Council currently is in the process of reviewing Hackney Carriage Quantity Control Policy, which limits the number of Hackney Carriages (Taxis) to 107. However, Hackney Carriage Vehicles (HCV) are also subject to Emission Standards requiring all HCV to be ULEV's by January 2026, currently 33 of those vehicles already meet these criteria.</p> <p>The Council has no legal power to limit the number of Private Hire Vehicles licensed in the district. PHV's are subject to five (5) year age restriction for licensing of new vehicles, as well as subject to the ZEZ pilot requirements, which are expected to continue with the expansion of the ZEZ.</p>
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To: Cabinet
Date: 16 October 2024
Report of: Climate and Environment Panel
Title of Report: Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership (ZCOP) Expansion

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Emily Kerr, Panel Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Anna Railton, Deputy Leader (Non-Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2024-28
Recommendation(s): That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to Scrutiny recommendations

Introduction and overview

1. The Climate and Environment Panel met on 10 September 2024 to consider a report on Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership (ZCOP) Expansion. The report set out the work of the ZCOP and ambition of its corporate members to expand focus from a City to an Oxfordshire scale.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Anna Railton (Deputy Leader (Non-Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford) and Mish Tullar (Head of Corporate Strategy) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy introduced the report. The report set out the work of the ZCOP and ambition of its corporate members to expand focus from a City to an Oxfordshire scale.

4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the goals of other local authorities and members of ZCOP; ensuring that ZCOP membership had representation from the most significant carbon contributors in Oxfordshire; ZCOP membership of organisations outside of Oxfordshire; and ZCOP engagement levels in different sectors.

5. In particular, the Panel noted that there were organisations which were not located in Oxfordshire, but that had an operational footprint in Oxfordshire through supply chain or other means. Examples of this were identified as catering and cleaning businesses which were employed by the university colleges and/or private schools. The Panel was advised that some companies, such as the energy company SSEN, were already actively engaged in ZCOP despite not being directly located in Oxfordshire, however the Panel agreed to formalise its discussion as a recommendation.

Recommendation 1: That the Council works with the expanded ZCOP to explore the feasibility of there being a mechanism by which organisations that are not located in Oxfordshire, but that have an operational footprint in Oxfordshire, can engage with the ZCOP.

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

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Panel on 10 September 2024 concerning the report on Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership (ZCOP) Expansion. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council works with the expanded ZCOP to explore the feasibility of there being a mechanism by which organisations that are not located in Oxfordshire, but that have an operational footprint in Oxfordshire, can engage with the ZCOP.	Yes	There are already organisations not located in Oxford but with an operational footprint in Oxfordshire among ZCOP's members, such as Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks. It is expected that other similar non-Oxfordshire-based organisations may be invited to join the expanded countywide ZCOP.

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To: Scrutiny
Date: 04 November 2024
Report of: Executive Director of Communities and People
Title of Report: Leisure Update

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update Scrutiny on the mobilisation of the leisure contract and client function arrangements in line with the recommendations from Scrutiny Committee that were approved at Cabinet on 24 January 2024.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Thriving Communities Strategy

Recommendation(s): That Scrutiny resolves to:	
1.	Note the update on 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.
2.	Comment on the report and agree any recommendations.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Confidential

Introduction and background

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 16 January 2024 to consider a report concerning the Leisure Services Contract Award. The report's recommendation that Cabinet awards a 10-year contract (with 5-year extension option) for managing and developing the Council's three leisure centres, Hinksey Outdoor Pool and the Oxford Ice Rink to Serco Leisure Ltd, was accepted by Cabinet on 24 January 2024.

2. Cabinet agreed on 24 January 2024 to receive annual reports on the performance of leisure services and the contractor and agree the business plan priorities for the following year.
3. This report provides an update to Scrutiny following the leisure contract mobilisation.
4. Key successes to date include:
 - Brand new gyms at Barton, Ferry and Leys Leisure Centres
 - Redecoration of centres including new café furniture
 - Hinksey opened on time for the first time for several years
 - Opening hours have been extended at all of the leisure centres
 - Additional female-only swim sessions
 - New ice pad at the Ice Rink.
 - Low emissivity ceiling at the Ice Rink
 - More schools now swimming at our pools
 - A diverse programme of events and activities including; Oxford Pride, Swim for León, National Lifeguard Day, Big Splash Weekend, Eid Prayer and UK Warhammer event.
 - Reduction in complaints
 - To help reduce health inequalities, we are moving from a traditional leisure model to active wellbeing, we are actively working with Sport England, More Leisure's fundraising team and the health system to look at ways to bring funding in, add value and enhance the offer.

An update on the arrangements established for the effective commissioning, delivery and management of the leisure services.

5. A client team has been set up which has cross-Council support. The team is led by the Active Communities Manager, supported by the Leisure and Active Wellbeing Manager as the client and contract officers.
6. It also includes a full-time commissioned post in Property Services who has the technical expertise to oversee the maintenance and dilapidations programme within the leisure centres, as well as supporting the client audit of facilities and providing expert technical advice of this nature. Other officers from across the Council such as finance and legal will similarly support through the governance structures below.
7. Governance structures have been set up and are shown below.
 - Regular weekly meetings were held during the first 6 months of mobilisation to ensure that this was successful; these have now moved to monthly client and monthly maintenance meetings.
 - A monthly formal in person client meeting, which rotates around the leisure centres, focusing on ensuring excellent community experience, contract items, health and safety, active communities programme and performance.

- A monthly formal property/maintenance meeting, also in person and rotating around sites focusing on property, maintenance, and dilapidations.
8. These meetings are supplemented by a programme of formal and informal audit inspections by Council staff, alongside mystery visits.
 9. External health and safety audits by Right Directions (industry lead in this area) for external assurance will be completed every 2 years.
 10. Additionally, Quest accreditation is a requirement of the contract, and all sites are to be rated 'Excellent' by the end of Year 2 of the contract.
 11. The work in this area is also discussed on a regular basis including formal monthly meetings with the Cabinet member and regular reports into the officer Communities Change Board that is chaired by the Director of Communities and People and is also attended by the Heads of Service.
 12. Community engagement is also key within this. To enable effective engagement, we have also worked with More Leisure to set up arrangements that work best at each individual site. There are now quarterly meet the manager sessions at Barton, Ferry, and Leys leisure centres, which provide users with an opportunity to formally raise issues and suggestions for improvements. Hinksey Pool has a successful user group and Oxford Ice Rink meets regularly with the key clubs/user groups at the centre. These sessions provide further feedback and are a useful way of monitoring success. We will continue to monitor and review the success of these.
 13. In addition to this, take up of the Council staff leisure membership offer has increased and staff members also provide feedback on their experiences, which widens the clienting reach.
 14. A planned annual report and business plan will be reported at Cabinet before the end of the financial year 2024/25.

The arrangements established to ensure a smooth transition to the new provider – framed in the context of lessons learned.

15. Mobilisation of a leisure contract is a significant exercise and involved a cross-Council team of staff working on the project. An actions tracker was used, containing over 350 items to ensure the safe and effective transition from Fusion Lifestyle with More Leisure.
16. We held 3 meetings per week: one with Fusion Lifestyle, one with More Leisure, and one with both operators. The feedback from both operators and suppliers was that the mobilisation was successful and most importantly, the feedback from our clubs and users was positive. As with any operation of this size, there are always some lessons learnt.
17. The key findings from lessons learnt on the mobilisation are summarised below:
 - The membership data whilst conducted in a safe compliant way, did not all transfer across from Fusion to More Leisure successfully. When we experience a future change in operator, we will ensure that any new operator's database is formatted correctly and aligned to the current operator.

- Telephony issues were experienced as phone lines had to change due to communications issues with the former operator. This resulted in temporary phone numbers being used and temporary downtime. For the future, we will ensure communications are programmed earlier on in the sequencing to ensure a smoother transition.
- The new operator inherited a low staffing base, compared to their own contract submission and had to actively recruit to many vacant posts. The new operator worked hard to recruit even before the contract start date at their own risk, for instance, running lifeguard training sessions at their own cost and starting the promotion of vacancies and recruitment. It has taken longer than planned to build up to a full complement of staff. Going forward for any future contract we will need to ensure we extend the timescales of the procurement and contract exercises to enable more effective and timely recruitment.
- More Leisure performed well and at their own financial risk, in ensuring that Hinksey opened on time at the beginning of April even though their contract did not start until the end of March. In any future procurement exercise we would need to build in additional time to enable this to happen in a less time intensive way.

Progress of the implementation of the leisure investment programme

18. We have been working through the £3.04 million investment programme as detailed within the cabinet report of 10th July 2024, ensuring that it complements works such as the dilapidations programme and Leys Youth Hub construction works. The leisure investment program forms part of the contract and we also have a separate legal agreement in place with More Leisure to explicitly support this including covering payments back to the Council.

19. Significant items that have been delivered to date include:

- New gyms, aerobics equipment and body composition machines at Barton, Ferry, and Leys (including E-GYM kit at two sites)
- New state of the art inflatable at Barton
- New spin bikes
- New branding and redecoration

20. Items coming up include:

- Studio conversion at Barton
- New inflatables at the other swimming pool sites
- Sports hall conversion at Leys – new Tag Active and soft play arena
- AI drowning prevention system
- Changing room improvements (More Leisure currently reviewing and will recommend to Council which sites given condition etc)
- New spin studio at Ferry (conversion of one unused squash court)

Other implications

21. Health and safety of the leisure facilities is paramount, and More Leisure are very committed to this with a safety-first approach. They have set up an effective compliance monitoring system and the Council will be monitoring Health and Safety through the systems mentioned in the report.

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