

# Agenda

## Scrutiny Committee

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Tuesday 5 August 2025**

Time: **6.00 pm**

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

**For further information** please contact:

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## Committee Membership

Councillors: Membership 12: Quorum 4 substitutes are permitted.

Councillor Alex Powell (Chair)

Councillor Mike Rowley (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Mohammed Altaf-Khan

Councillor Mohammed Azad

Councillor Tiago Corais

Councillor Chris Jarvis

Councillor Dr Amar Latif

Councillor Katherine Miles

Councillor Edward Mundy

Councillor Simon Ottino

Councillor Asima Qayyum

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
<b>1 Apologies for absence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Councillor Katherine Miles</li></ul>	
<b>2 Declarations of interest</b>	
<b>3 Chair's Announcements</b>	
<b>4 Minutes of the previous meeting</b> <p>The Committee is asked to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2025 as a true and accurate record.</p>	9 - 24
<b>5 Addresses by members of the public</b> <p>Public addresses relating to matters of business for this agenda, up to five minutes is available for each public address.</p> <p><i>The request to speak accompanied by the full text of the address must be received by the <a href="#">Director of Law, Governance and Strategy</a> by 5.00 pm on Wednesday, 30 July 2025.</i></p>	
<b>6 Councillor addresses on any item for discussion on the Scrutiny agenda</b> <p>Councillor addresses relating to matters of business for this agenda, up to five minutes is available for each address.</p> <p><i>The request should be received by the <a href="#">Director of Law, Governance and Strategy</a> by 5.00 pm on Wednesday, 30 July 2025.</i></p>	
<b>7 Oxpens River Bridge Update</b> <p>Cabinet, at its meeting on 13 August 2025, will consider a report to agree to the virement of underspend in the current capital programme to increase the project budget in the capital programme for the Oxpens bridge; to accept additional funding for the construction of the bridge from external bodies, and to agree to amending and entering legal</p>	25 - 48

agreements as necessary for the funding, construction and transfer of the bridge.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Culture, Tom Bridgman, Deputy Chief Executive – Place, and Jenny Barker, Regeneration Lead have been invited to present the report and take part in discussions.

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

*Appendix 2 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)

## **8 Scrutiny Work Plan**

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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.

The Committee is recommended to confirm its agreement to the Work Plan, or agree any amendments as required.

## **9 Cabinet responses to Scrutiny recommendations**

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At its meeting on 9 July 2025, Cabinet considered a report from Scrutiny and responded to the following recommendations:

- Domestic Abuse Policy for Service Users
- Tourism (and ABID presentation)
- Citizen Experienced Strategy
- Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28

The Committee is asked to:

1. **Note** Cabinet's responses to its recommendations.

## 10 **Endorsement of Recommendations from Working Groups**

Since the Scrutiny Committee's previous meeting on 10 July 2025, the following Working Groups have met:

- Climate and Environment Working Group (22 July 2025)

The Committee is asked to:

2. **Endorse** the recommendations from Working Groups.

## 11 **Dates of future meetings**

### **Scrutiny Committee**

- 9 September 2025
- 14 October 2025
- 11 November 2025
- 2 December 2025
- 13 January 2026
- 3 February 2026
- 10 March 2026
- 7 April 2026

**All meetings start at 6:00 pm.**

## **Information for those attending**

### **Recording and reporting on meetings held in public**

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- 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 1 July 2025**

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### **Committee members present:**

Councillor Powell (Chair)

Councillor Azad

Councillor Miles

Councillor Ottino

Councillor Fry (Substitute)

Councillor Rowley (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Jarvis

Councillor Mundy

Councillor Qayyum

Councillor Henwood (Substitute)

### **Also present:**

Councillor Lubna Arshad, Cabinet Member for A Safer Oxford

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Culture

### **Officers present for all or part of the meeting:**

Celeste Reyeslao, Scrutiny and Governance Advisor

Hannah Carmody-Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager

Helen Bishop, Director of Communities & Citizens

Vicki Galvin, Citizen Experience Manager

Liz Jones, ASBIT Manager & Domestic Abuse Lead

Diana Fawcett, City Centre Manager

### **Apologies:**

Councillor(s) Corais, Latif and Stares sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

## **13. Declarations of interest**

None.

## **14. Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reordered the agenda.

Items were considered in the following order: 8, 7, 9, 4, 5, 6, 10.

*Councillor Fry joined the meeting.*

## **15. Domestic Abuse Policy for Service Users**

Cabinet, at its meeting on 9 July 2025, will consider a report to approve the Domestic Abuse Policy for Service Users.

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

Councillor Lubna Arshad, Cabinet Member for A Safer Oxford, Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager, and Liz Jones, ASBIT Manager & Domestic Abuse Lead, were present to respond to questions.

Councillor Arshad introduced the report, noting that Oxford City Council is currently working to achieve the Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation (DAHA) which will offer housing providers a framework and benchmark to operate by to ensure delivery of effective responses to domestic abuse. The Committee heard that the Council will be assessed for the required standards in respect of supporting survivors of domestic abuse, children of domestic abuse, and holding perpetrators to account. Councillor Arshad explained that the policy will guide the Council in this effort. Members were also notified of an edit to the report, as highlighted in yellow.

The Chair invited the Committee to ask questions.

Councillor Ottino requested some illustrative examples of how staff would be expected to respond.

*Councillor Qayum joined the meeting.*

Councillor Jarvis asked firstly, in relation to the wider context of temporary accommodation provision pressures, what confidence there is that the current capabilities are adequate for dealing with instances of domestic abuse and how much confidence is there that the Council can move people on from temporary accommodation into more stable environments. Secondly, information regarding prevention of domestic abuse was requested.

Councillor Henwood sought clarification around the process for recording and managing domestic abuse against those under 16 years of age.

The ASBIT Manager & Domestic Abuse Lead responded. In response to Councillor Ottino's request, an increase in the number of people coming forward and reporting domestic abuse was noted. For these scenarios it was explained that contact centres report to Safer Oxford and the Community Safety Team who then consider the report and contact the person as required. The Committee heard that contact could take the form of a text, and risk assessments are used to determine risk levels and next steps. The ASBIT Manager & Domestic Abuse Lead explained that referrals are made to MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) for high-risk cases and referrals to Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service are used for medium-risk cases. It was emphasised that each case is individual, and needs are assessed upon this understanding, however Oxford City Council is not a support service but does hold responsibility for identifying and sourcing the correct support for victims. In respect of children, it was explained that referrals are made to MASH as necessary.

In response to Councillor Jarvis, the ASBIT Manager & Domestic Abuse Lead explained that anyone who approaches the Council through the housing team to report lack of accommodation due to domestic abuse would be immediately triaged and risk assessed. This can lead to the assignment of emergency accommodation with consideration of the location and context of the placement based on the risk assessment. The Committee heard how this work crosses over with the Sanctuary Scheme to ensure that victims are supported and connected with support services and necessary resources. Furthermore, in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, persons are then moved on under the consideration of further risk assessments to more permanent accommodation which suits their individual needs.

*Councillor Mundy joined the meeting.*

Councillor Qayyum asked on average how long the process of triaging reports takes for those with children facing domestic violence to receive emergency housing. The ASBIT Manager & Domestic Abuse Lead reassured the Committee that this would take place on the same day generally but emphasised that this depends on the ability to successfully contact and communicate with the person in question.

The Chair asked, in relation to pages 55 and 56 of the report, what protections are in place for those of vulnerable immigration status to reassure them that their information will not be passed on to the Home Office, for example, as means of encouraging them to come forwards. Secondly, it was asked whether there has been any consideration of explicitly recognising how immigration controls can be a barrier to people coming forward, and as a result increasing vulnerability.

The ASBIT Manager & Domestic Abuse Lead assured the Committee that a process is currently being drafted to ensure that housing teams can access support for those who come forward with no recourse to public funds whilst fleeing domestic abuse. Language barriers were also recognised as a necessary factor for consideration. If the person is fleeing domestic abuse and has no children, they can be housed with Sanctuary Hosting until they are awarded the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession (MVDAC) which provides temporary immigration status and access to public funds. They can then be housed in a refuge and can apply for indefinite leave to remain.

In response to an earlier question regarding prevention measures for domestic abuse, the ASBIT Manager & Domestic Abuse Lead informed the Committee that she sits on the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy Board which is focused on raising awareness, working with schools and community groups, and changing misogynistic attitudes.

Councillor Qayyum requested clarification on how legal fees to support leave to remain applications are sourced. The ASBIT Manager & Domestic Abuse Lead explained that people are signposted to the Home Office who provide the domestic abuse concession which allows immigration lawyers to access legal aid to help them apply for indefinite leave to remain.

The Chair invited the Committee to discuss possible recommendations.

**The Committee resolved to make the following recommendation(s) on the report to Cabinet:**

1. That there is explicit recognition under section 3, Diversity Implications, of the way in which national immigration policy makes people less likely to disclose domestic violence, given Oxford's status as a Council of Sanctuary, it is especially important to acknowledge how national policy can harm the efforts of local authorities to build inclusive and safe communities.

The Chair thanked Councillor Arshad, the Community Safety Service Manager, and the ASBIT Manager & Domestic Abuse Lead.

*Councillor Arshad, the Community Safety Service Manager, and the ASBIT Manager & Domestic Abuse Lead left the meeting and did not return.*

## **16. Tourism**

Scrutiny Committee had commissioned a report to consider an update on tourism work across the city, alongside work being undertaken to explore the implementation of a tourist tax for the city.

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

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Culture, and Diana Fawcett, Oxford City Centre Manager, were present to respond to questions.

Councillor Hollingsworth introduced the report, explaining that it provides a broad summary of ongoing actions relating to tourism in Oxford City centre which are subject to high tourist levels from visitors across the world and the associated benefits and challenges. The Committee were informed that positive change in recent years has ensured that on average, tourists often now stay longer overnight and attend more events and facilities within Oxford and the surrounding areas.

The City Centre Manager provided a summary of the impacts of tourism and potential funding routes in line with the presentation enclosed within the agenda. The Committee were informed that the statistics enclosed relate to 2023 and demonstrate the popularity of Oxford as a global city with international reputation. Following the pandemic, it has been noted that countries within Asia and North America have started to return to Oxford in larger numbers and have contributed to the boom observed in 2024 which is a shared trend across other regions such as Europe. The City Centre Manager recognised the impacts that accompany increased tourism and assured Committee members that funding options are being explored to manage this considering that the City Centre Action Plan has no funding available for tourism related issues. The Committee were assured that the matter is being considered with importance as tourism affects anyone living and working in the city, and not just those visiting. As such, focus is being paid to supporting overnight stays and hotels to ensure more stable employment levels in the hospitality industry.

In relation to the proposed Accommodation Business Improvement District (ABID), the City Centre Manager emphasised that the Council is a facilitator and not the levy payers as the ABID would be set up and managed by an independent company. As such, the Council cannot decide if the bid goes ahead but can support facilitation of the process. The Committee heard details relating to similar examples in Manchester and Liverpool and understood that the project is a positive opportunity to generate funds for the city. The City Centre Manager explained however that any funds resulting from the ABID could not be used on Council services under existing legislation. There is no legislation currently in England that allows a 'tourist tax' but such has been discussed in locations such as Edinburgh. An ABID is the only legislation in England that allows a levy charge.

The City Centre Manager summarised other funding options which had been considered and explained the rationale for supporting the ABID which would involve around 29 hotels. On a presumed hotel occupancy rate of 75%, and a presumed charge of £2 per room per night, the project could generate around £1.3m per annum over a 5-year period. It was noted that these parameters would be set by the levy payers. Furthermore, it was also explained that University colleges have also been

engaged with to set up a College Task Group. There will also be consideration given to an overarching team to cross reference projects across both Task Groups.

The City Centre Manager outlined the next steps being taken, including setting up tourism task groups with hoteliers and colleges to consider projects and analyse numbers.

Finally, the City Centre Manager emphasised that the overarching aim of the Council in relation to the ABID is to facilitate bringing people together and to raise money for the city. The Committee also understood that the Council seeks to take time in considering this process rather than rushing to ensure that the most successful outcomes possible are achieved and strong relationships are developed.

Councillor Hollingsworth explained that the decision to adopt an ABID would not lie with the Council, however it can encourage the project by building partnerships and trust with a range of business and non-businesses. The Committee were also assured this was not a tourist tax; it is an option to raise money from tourism accommodation to spend on further supporting tourism in Oxford. Councillor Hollingsworth emphasised the preference for the Council to take time to garner support from decision makers.

The Chair invited the Committee to ask questions.

*Councillor Jarvis left the meeting.*

Councillor Qayyum asked what percentage increase was there in tourism from pre-Covid to 2023 and requested further information on the negative impacts of tourism specifically relevant to Oxford. Councillor Qayyum also commented positively on the ABID and the potential for it to include colleges.

Councillor Fry, in reference to the City Centre Action Plan not being funded by the City Council budget, asked whether it was likely that the ABID could pick up this gap.

Councillor Henwood requested clarification around the definition of a 'tourist' being utilised, and whether it includes groups such as persons on business trips.

*Councillor Jarvis rejoined the meeting.*

Councillor Hollingsworth clarified that 'tourist' is used as a collective term and specific groups within this, such as those on business trips, are not split out. In response to Councillor Qayyum, statistics relating to the pre-Covid period were not available but could be sourced. In regards negative impacts of tourism in Oxford specifically, Councillor Hollingsworth listed in detail some transport impacts and effects in

residential areas relating from short-term lets. In relation to the ABID and City Centre Action Plan, it was explained that if the project went ahead, levy payers could decide if they wanted to allocate funds to help alleviating some negative impacts of tourism e.g. better toilet facilities.

The City Centre Manager addressed the governance of meetings relating to the ABID to emphasise to the Committee that the choices of projects to fund are subject to agreement by levy payers through the task groups. A variety of stakeholders, including residents, could have their views heard by the Task Groups as to which projects they would like considered.

Councillor Mundy requested further clarification around what the money from the ABID could be spent on and what would classify as 'enhancements'.

Councillor Ottino firstly queried the admin costs to the Council and how they would be limited, and secondly, how communication and the spread of benefits from the ABID amongst residents living further from the city centre would be ensured. Lastly, Councillor Ottino asked whether any of the hotels included are those used by probation and social services for emergency accommodation, and how it could be ensured they were not subject to the levy costs.

Councillor Mundy asked further questions:

- Whether there is a cost impact on those choosing to stay overnight in the city and whether this could be a deterrent
- Whether a flat rate would be the most appropriate approach.
- Whether there are means of ensuring lesser-known areas of Oxford were promoted to tourists as a means of diversifying the attractions of the area, and if further thought could go into this.
- What is being done to improve the streets and reduce empty units.
- What is being done, or could be done, to ensure the salaries within the tourism sector are aligned with the living wage.

Councillor Hollingsworth clarified that the use of funds from the ABID is subject to current legislative requirements and could be used for items such as lighting improvements, for example. It was emphasised that it could not be used for Council services which are legally required or being funded. In regards communication with residents, Councillor Hollingsworth assured the Committee that it is key to consider how tourism is presented and how to ensure it benefits all persons within the area and is meaningful. In response to Councillor Mundy, it was agreed that there are lesser-known areas of Oxford such as the river which could be enhanced for tourism and efforts could be made to support this.



The City Centre Manager, in response to Councillor Ottino, explained that admin costs (including Officer time) and the appointment of consultants for the facilitation of the Task Groups are covered by the Shared Prosperity Fund. The Committee therefore understood that admin costs were not being covered by taxpayer money. Regarding communication with residents, the City Centre Manager listed the measures being taken including an imminent press release and resident engagement via the task groups. In response to Councillor Mundy's concern regarding cost implications, it was explained that based on existing examples, tourists are not being deterred by costs added to overnight stays. It was also emphasised that budget hotels could be excluded from the levy. In regards city centre management and city improvements, working groups have already been set up to listen to stakeholder views on areas which need work, including St. Michael's Street and the Botley Road Traders. The Committee learned that every quarter, residents, and businesses are invited to share their views at networking events and landlords are also engaged with in efforts to attract the right tenants in the city. Finally, the City Centre Manager responded to concerns around tourism sector wages and noted no significant awareness with issues.

*Councillor Miles joined the meeting.*

Councillor Azad asked what could be done to better the experience of tourists arriving in personal vehicles in relation to parking availability.

Councillor Fry emphasised the shortage of public toilets in Oxford City and the dissatisfaction that exists around the matter.

The Chair, in connection with Councillor Fry's query, asked whether money from the ABID could be used to support the availability of toilets which are not directly owned by the Council, such as those offered by private companies in the city centre.

Councillor Miles, in relation to the demographics of tourists frequenting Oxford, requested further information relating to the nationalities, languages, and ages of tourists. It was also asked how it can be ensured that the needs and interests of underrepresented groups be better met.

Councillor Hollingsworth, in response to Councillor Azad, explained that it would be impossible for Oxford city to sustain parking for the number of tourists arriving by car and therefore it is better to encourage transport to the area via alternative means.

The City Centre Manager thanked the Committee for the wide range of questions posed. In response to Councillor Fry and the Chair, it was acknowledged that there used to be a Community Toilet Scheme targeted at increasing availability of public toilets access across the city. However, the Committee heard of the complex problems and costs associated with this, and the valid unwillingness of businesses to participate without funding and support. The Committee were assured that case studies across



Europe are being assessed to consider future options for easing this issue in Oxford. In response to Councillor Miles, the City Centre Manager noted the difficulty in obtaining detailed demographic information but explained that with technological advancements, it is possible to analyse footfall and in future the origin registration of mobile phones. At present therefore, most demographic information is anecdotal. The Committee were informed that to cater to various tourist groups, information points located across the city, are currently being branded as tourist hubs and based on feedback other projects are being considered to support the visitor and resident experience. The City Centre Manager noted that these efforts seek to present Oxford as a welcoming and inclusive city. Councillor Hollingsworth reiterated the value on phone data and the use of online maps for tourists.

Councillor Miles queried firstly, whether the tourist offer around the river and water sports could be enhanced, and secondly, what work is being done to assess future purposes of the Town Hall building and its tunnels.

The Chair requested guidance on geographic modelling and where the city centre boundary ends, and asked what scope there is for democratic involvement of the Council in the ABID task groups.

Councillor Hollingsworth reiterated his earlier comments relating to the tourist offer of Oxford's rivers. In reference to the tunnels, it was noted that the costs relating to this would be beyond that which the ABID, as a private company, would unlikely be willing to invest in another private landowner.

The City Centre Manager agreed with comments relating to the underuse of Oxford's waterways within the tourism sector and informed the Committee that an app is being considered to support promotion of all locations. In response to the Chair, the City Centre Manager noted the risks of expecting too much Council involvement in the task groups and the possibility of this causing other task group attendees to disengage. The Committee understood that there was an expectation of some Senior council officer or Senior councillor involvement, but that the public and private balance would require careful consideration.

The Chair invited the Committee to discuss possible recommendations.

**The Committee resolved to make the following recommendation(s) on the report to Cabinet:**

1. That the Council take further steps to publicise the locations of public toilets that are accessible to visitors and residents alike, such as those in the Town Hall and other public buildings.
2. That Council encourage the highest possible level of elected representation within the ABID task groups, within the constraints of the scheme, in order to promote democratic accountability, recognising the Council's role as the scheme's facilitator.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet member and officers.

The City Centre Manager and Councillor Hollingsworth thanked the Committee for the variety of questions received.

*The City Centre Manager and Councillor Hollingsworth left the meeting and did not return.*

The Chair suggested that the Committee break for 5 minutes.

*The Committee paused at 19.38.*

*The Committee resumed at 19.45.*

*Councillor Rowley had left the meeting during the break and did not return.*

## **17. Citizen Experience Strategy 2025-27**

Cabinet, at its meeting on 9 July 2025, will consider a report reviewing the Citizen Experience Strategy 2025-27 and approve the updated action plan.

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

Vicki Galvin, Citizen Experience Manager, and Helen Bishop, Director of Communities and Citizens Services, were present to respond to questions.

The Director of Communities and Citizens Services summarised the report, noting that the original strategy from 2023 is expected to be reviewed in full in 2027. This report offers a brief refresh which focused on updating the data and insight and using this to update the action plan. The demographic profile of the city demonstrates increasing diversity, healthy inequalities, poverty and a digital divide. The Committee understood that a lot of work has gone into the revised action plan to ensure that the Council services support the quality of life for all citizens of Oxford City. The report also considers feedback from a range of key stakeholders.

*Councillor Azad and Councillor Mundy rejoined the meeting.*

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor Ottino requested examples of how they are reaching people that may not usually respond to survey and in places without community buildings. It was also asked what is being done to ensure that residents believe that their views are relevant and matter to the Council. Additionally, in relation to young people, it was asked what is being done to ensure engagement in the democratic process.

With a focus on AI, Councillor Jarvis asked how it is currently being utilised within Council services and whether it risks diminishing residents' service experiences. It was commented that AI is often variable in quality. The Chair supported this query and asked whether AI had been considered within the environmental impact assessment.

In response to Councillor Ottino, the Director of Communities and Citizens Services detailed examples of ongoing work to engage broadly within the local community. This included examples such as telephone contact centres, face to face services within the Westgate Library, and links with food larders across the city. The Committee heard that reviews are ongoing to assess the regularity of visits to food larders and possible new community locations to attend. To support digital access, work is also ongoing with Oxfordshire County Council to facilitate a digital cafe in the Westgate Library to support skill development. In response to the need to ensure residents' feel their voices are valued, the Director of Communities and Citizens Services emphasised that a new comments and complaints process has been installed across the Council and in-person walkabouts are taking place in localities. In respect of young people specifically, the Committee heard that a young person's panel has been established and there is ongoing work with schools.

In response to Councillor Jarvis, the Director of Communities and Citizens Services detailed the ongoing work relating to AI, including upskilling current staff and purchasing additional MS CoPilot licenses. The Committee also heard of an upcoming workstream which will focus on analysis of people's intents when phoning the Contact Centre to understand if AI, automation, and other digital services could be better utilised to signpost, triage or respond to these calls. Furthermore, it was clarified that a new policy has been drafted to support safe and transparent use of AI, and an AI Working Group has been established that is also currently developing an AI Strategy. Finally, in response to the Chair, it was explained that the current Equalities Impact Assessment does consider AI but that it could be a recommendation of the Committee that more focus is centred on this from an environmental perspective. The Citizen Experience Manager agreed.

The Chair clarified the reasons for which AI should be considered within the environmental impact assessment.

Councillor Miles expressed concern for vulnerable residents with chronic conditions who may experience limitations with engaging with the Council. To this end, she asked whether the Council engages with carers and relatives of frail residents and noted the hinderances of timed automated phone systems. Additionally, Councillor Miles queried if the Council engages with boat dwellers and young persons below the age of 12.

The Chair queried what contingency planning has taken place given the increased utilisation of digital contact points and the risks of web outages or technological limitations.

The Director of Communities and Citizens Services agreed that a separate Environmental Impact Assessment should be considered for the AI strategy and that this could also be a focus of the 2027 Citizen Experience Strategy refresh. In response to Councillor Miles, it was explained that work is ongoing to understand the demographic profiles of each locality and the Director of Communities and Citizens Services offered to sit down with Councillor Miles to discuss this in more detail. In relation to automated phone services, the Committee were reassured that if a caller does not select an option or speak, then the call is automatically connected to a real member of staff who can engage with the resident. Furthermore, the first option on the call is to select the phoneline for vulnerable persons which also connects to a real member of staff. In regards engagement with under 12's, the Committee heard that a consultation strategy is being worked on, but that further could be done for this age group.

In response to the Chair, the Director of Communities and Citizens Services explained that business continuity is a priority and that if required, the service could revert to using pen and paper to ensure continued contact with residents.

The Chair invited the Committee to discuss possible recommendations.

**The Committee resolved to make the following recommendation(s) on the report to Cabinet:**

1. That Cabinet consider incorporating physical presence in future consultations, particularly in areas further outside the city centre, and undertake support of language interpreters where appropriate.
2. That the environmental and equality impacts of AI use be considered as a core component of the full review of the Citizen Experience Strategy in 2027, adding dedicated sections addressing the implications of AI in both areas within the strategy.
3. That proactive efforts be made to consult children under 12, in recognition of the city's commitment to becoming an age and children friendly city.

The Chair thanked the Citizen Experience Manager and the Director of Communities and Citizens Services.

*The Citizen Experience Manager and the Director of Communities and Citizens Services left the meeting and did not return.*

## 18. Minutes

The Chair requested an amendment to Minute 7 of the minutes to note in his introduction that whilst it was not the appropriate time for members to raise broader concerns related to Serco Group, those concerns were nonetheless legitimate.

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2025 as a true and accurate record incorporating the amendment from the Chair.

*Councillor Fry left the meeting.*

## 19. Work Plan and Forward Plan

The Chair informed the Committee that Cabinet has added a new item to its Forward Plan and would now be considering the Oxpens River Bridge at its next meeting in August. The Chair suggested that the Scrutiny Committee also considered the report at its meeting in August.

Councillor Henwood and Councillor Ottino requested clarification on what this would involve and what the Scrutiny Committee would be considering.

The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor informed members that Cabinet would be considering approval for power to be delegated and enter into necessary legal and funding agreements. Councillor Ottino questioned whether there was value in Scrutiny engaging meaningfully with the item given the scope of the report.

The Chair noted that the Committee may wish to scrutinise the delegations for the decision Cabinet will be taking and put forward recommendations given that the topic has been of great interest.

Councillor Miles reflected on previous discussions at the Scrutiny Committee and suggested that members could focus on lessons learned to inform future projects.

Upon a vote, the Committee voted in favour of adding the report to Scrutiny agenda for discussion at the meeting in August.

The Chair thanked Councillor Ottino for the issues he raised and committed to considering and managing the remit of the discussion.

The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor updated the Committee on the suggested topics added to the workplan, as detailed in the report, and explained how these topics were

selected. The Committee were assured that further additions could be made and would be agreed with the Chair.

In response to Councillor Ottino, the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor explained the TOPIC scoring system used to determine the addition of topics to the workplan.

Councillor Miles suggested that the Committee consider capacity constraints on the Council's environmental health team following discussion within Licensing Committees. The Chair supported the suggestion.

#### The Committee:

1. **Confirmed** its agreement to the Work Plan, or agree any amendments as required.
2. **Agreed** the Scrutiny-commissioned items for consideration during 2025/26, noting that exact scope and timescales may be dependent on resource capacity.
3. **Requested** that the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor liaise with relevant Cabinet Members and officers to schedule Scrutiny-commissioned items into the Work Plan.

## **20. Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Working Group meetings**

The Chair detailed the response from Cabinet to the 5 recommendations made at the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee. The Committee understood that all were agreed in full or in part. The Chair outlined each individually.

*Councillor Jarvis left the meeting and did not return.*

The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor summarised the recommendations resulting from the meetings of the Scrutiny Committee's working groups since its last meeting.

#### The Committee:

1. **Noted** Cabinet's responses to its recommendations.
2. **Endorsed** any recommendations from Working Group meetings.

## **21. Dates of future meetings**

The Committee **noted** the dates of future meetings.

**The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.35 pm**

**Chair .....**  
**2025**

**Date: Tuesday 5 August**

*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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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 13 August 2025  
**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive - Place  
**Title of Report:** Oxpens River Bridge Update on Delivery and Funding

Summary and recommendations	
<b>Decision being taken:</b>	To agree to the virement of underspend in the current capital programme to increase the project budget in the capital programme for the Oxpens bridge; to accept additional funding for the construction of the bridge from external bodies, and to agree to amending and entering legal agreements as necessary for the funding, construction and transfer of the bridge.
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Alex Hollingsworth Cabinet Member for Planning and Culture
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Enable an inclusive economy; Support thriving communities; and Pursue a zero carbon Oxford.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Adopted Local Plan policy AOC1 and SP2 and West End SPD

Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:	
1	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
2.	To approve the increase in the budget for the project within in the capital programme for the Oxpens River Bridge project by £3.7 m from £10.3m to £14.00m through the virement of underspend within the capital programme 2025/26.

3. 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 a construction contract and any necessary ancillary contracts for the delivery of the bridge, subject to the necessary funds being in place.
4. 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 approve the transfer of the bridge to Oxfordshire County Council on completion.

Information Exempt From Publication	
<b>Cost Information contained in the report</b>	<p>This information is exempted from publication under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information about someone's finances or business</li> </ul> <p>This appendix includes cost information that is commercially sensitive</p>

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
<b>Appendix 1</b>	Risk Register	No
<b>Appendix 2</b>	Confidential Appendix	Yes

## Introduction and background

1. The Cabinet considered the Oxpens Bridge project at its meeting on 16 November 2022. The Cabinet report and resolutions can be viewed at: <https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=527&MId=7378>
2. In November 2022 the Cabinet approved the delegation of the acceptance of £2.8m from the Oxfordshire Growth Deal and the additional budget, entering into the pre-construction services agreement and delivery agreement and to enter into agreements with OXWED to allow the bridge to be constructed on their land.
3. Following that meeting, Balfour Beatty was appointed to provide early contractor support and deliver the detailed design via Stantec, the designers. The architectural concept for the bridge was developed and planning permission granted in July 2024. The detailed design was further developed and was accepted by Oxfordshire County Council, acting as the Technical Approval Authority for the scheme in early 2025. In June 2025 the Secretary of State for Transport granted permission for the bridge over the river under S106(3) of the Highways Act 1980 (as amended). The

bridge has now been designed so that it does not require OXWED land for the bridge structure or for its construction.

4. A Judicial Review was requested by Friends of Grandpont Nature Park in October 2024 based on five grounds. The request for permission for a Judicial Review was allowed by the courts and the Judicial Review hearing was heard over a two-day period at the Royal Courts of Justice in London on the 4/5th February this year. The judgement was issued on 10th March and dismissed all five grounds. An appeal has been submitted against the JR decision and the outcome is awaited. The Judicial Review has delayed the delivery of the bridge.
5. This report sets out progress on the delivery of the bridge and looks to secure an increase in the budget needed, due to the increase in overall project costs that has now occurred. This report is coming forward in advance of a decision on both the appeal of the JR decision and also in advance of having secured all external funding. This is so the Council can move forward quickly if the permission to appeal the JR judgement is dismissed, no further Judicial Review is forthcoming and the funding necessary to deliver the bridge has been secured.

### **Progress on scheme**

6. The construction of the bridge requires detailed technical design, a considerable number of approvals and development of a construction approach to enable delivery. Considerable progress has been made to develop a deliverable design.
7. The planning application (23/02506/CT3) for the proposed bridge was submitted on 27th October 2023 and permission was granted on 8th July 2024. Work is underway to discharge planning conditions for the development and an application for a Non-Material Amendment has been submitted, which if approved, would reduce the number of trees required to be removed.
8. The Oxpens Meadow is subject to a covenant in favour of Fields in Trust that commits the Council to keeping the meadow as a recreational space. The agreement of Fields in Trust for the bridge to be constructed over the meadow has been received.
9. The RIBA stage 4 (Technical Design) has been developed during 2024 by Stantec via Balfour Beatty through the SCAPE Framework service. The Design & Build route was followed allowing valuable Early Contractor Involvement (ECI). This has provided much needed advice on fabrication, cost, programme and installation methodology. Technical Approval in Principle has now been received from the Oxfordshire County Council for the bridge design.
10. Input from the Balfour Beatty project team throughout 2024 has also allowed the key temporary works designs to be developed and informed discussions with stakeholders such as the Environment Agency ('the EA') to understand the permissions required and the constraints to working adjacent to, and lifting in the new bridge, over the river. A Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) to outline the proposed methodology has been submitted and agreed with the EA and is currently being updated to reflect some additional details around the installation methodology and reflect the revised construction dates. The updated FRAP is expected to be agreed in the coming weeks.
11. On this section of the Thames the EA has an embargo on closing the river to traffic, and therefore on lifting the bridge sections, over the summer months. Through discussion it has been agreed that lifts from early September onwards would be

acceptable and this has formed one of the key milestones from which the overall construction programme has been developed.

12. The second key driver when looking at the construction programme has been to ensure critical works such as the main bridge lifting operations are carried out outside of the season of highest flood risk for the Oxpens site. Flood risk tends to increase from November through to April. The flood risk and the EA constraints have led to a construction start date programmed in early spring 2026 with a main lift over the river in September with a target completion of early 2027.
13. Work is underway to enter into a S38 Agreement with the Oxfordshire County Council in relation to the adoption of the path and bridge when complete. Agreement is also sought with SERCO Leisure Ltd to amend the eastern boundary within the ice rink lease to accommodate widening of the footpath and for a temporary construction access across the ice rink frontage. Liaison is also taking place re the timing of works on Oxpens and their enabling works on the Meadow,, which were recently permitted, to ensure there is no conflict between different construction activity. The entering into of these types of property agreements is delegated to the Director Property & Assets.
14. A Delivery Agreement is required for the construction of the bridge. The favoured route to deliver the bridge is with Balfour Beatty, through the SCAPE framework. This remains the most advantageous delivery route to deliver the bridge in terms of shortening the programme, while still obtaining best value. As part of the SCAPE Framework service, Balfour Beatty is the single source contractor with agreed framework rates. It has developed a cost plan for the delivery of the bridge which will be finalised as part of the contract process. Alternative routes to construct the bridge have been explored should they be necessary.

### **Bridge Costs**

15. Following delay to the project whilst the judicial review was heard, costs have increased due to programme prolongation and construction cost inflation. Therefore, additional funding has been sought to bridge the gap. This funding is sought to allow construction to take place in 2026 to avoid further delay and cost increases. This increase is estimated as requiring a further £3.7m, including contingency.
16. The Council is working with potential funders including the University of Oxford and Homes England to meet the increase in costs. This report seeks delegation to enter into the necessary funding agreements should additional funding be agreed from these, or other parties.
17. Negotiations are taking place regarding the detailed project costs. These negotiations are commercially sensitive and as such, are as set out in the confidential appendix 2 of this report.

### **Programme**

18. As noted above, since planning permission was granted for the new bridge further discussions have taken place with the Environment Agency and it has been agreed that the bridge could be craned into position in September, avoiding the period of greatest flood risk. As a result, a programme has been developed to enable the bridge to be delivered during 2026. There is no construction work planned for 2025.
19. The following milestones show the timing of key elements of the programme:

Pre-construction Services Delivery Agreement with Balfour Beatty	Completed March 2025 – this included technical approval of the detailed design by Oxfordshire County Council.
Enter contract to build bridge	November/December 2025
Commence site works	February/March 2026
Bridge Lift	Early September 2026
Complete bridge & landscaping works	February 2027

20. In April 2022, a written request was sent to Oxfordshire County Council to extend the original completion date for the bridge of March 2023 to December 2023 and an amendment to the funding agreement was signed. A further revision to the funding agreement has been agreed by the Oxfordshire County Council to reflect the latest project timeline. Cabinet approval to enter into an amended the agreement with Oxfordshire County Council for this extension of time is sought.
21. The project needs to move to a position where a Delivery Agreement can be signed with Balfour Beatty to then commence onsite works in early 2026. This work will include but not be limited to agreeing the terms and conditions within the Delivery Agreement, agreeing the final price for the works together with a programme and allocation of risks along with any additional ancillary agreements required. The work to compile all of this and pass through both the contractor's and Oxford City Council's governance is expected to take until late Autumn 2025.
22. Once the bridge is complete the Oxfordshire County Council will be responsible for the maintenance of the bridge under the terms of the s38 agreement and agreement is sought for the bridge to be transferred to them. This was the basis on which the Growth Deal funding was accepted by the Council and is consistent with the Oxfordshire County Council taking on the future maintenance responsibility.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

The following alternative options were considered:

23. Not to deliver the proposed bridge and return funding currently held. This option has been rejected as funding currently secured would be lost and future delivery is likely to be more expensive and have an increased impact on the Council's ability to secure future funding. Not to deliver the bridge at all would result in a longer route between the west of the city and the city centre and increase pressure on the footpath alongside the Castle Mill Stream which is narrow and cannot be widened due to the proximity of the stream and residential frontages.
24. To delay the delivery of the bridge. This option was rejected as further delay is only likely to increase the cost of delivery and potentially impact funding held. In addition, if the bridge works were delayed they could clash with the enabling works on the Oxpens Meadow approved as part of the OXWED scheme at Oxpens (22/02955/FUL). As it would not be possible to have both works taking place at the same time this could add further lengthy delay.

### **Financial implications**

25. The original funding for the bridge was provided by central government via the Oxfordshire Growth Deal, for which the Oxfordshire County Council is the Accountable Body. Furthermore, Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) from Homes England was secured for path works to be implemented alongside the bridge. These funds are held by the Council. If it is not possible to spend the Growth Deal funding it will need to be returned to the Oxfordshire County Council minus funding agreed on design and staff costs. The funding would need to be returned within 30 days of a request by the County Council. HIF funding for path works could still be used even if the bridge did not go ahead but would require a revised design and delivery approach.
26. However, as noted above, delays have resulted in an increase in costs estimated at £3.7m including contingency. Therefore, further work is being undertaken to close the funding gap. This report seeks to secure delegations to enter into all necessary agreements for these external funds and approval to allow for the associated increased budgetary provision for the Oxpens River Bridge project, subject to the receipt of funds. As such, if external funds are not secured to meet the funding gap, then it is unlikely the bridge will be delivered in line with the programme outlined above.
27. Irrespective of where the additional funds are coming from, the Oxpens Bridge project budget will need to be increased within the Capital Programme. The Council's Capital Strategy provides that after the approval at Full Council in February of the Budget and Capital Programme, the Cabinet may approve any capital project for which there is funds within the approved capital budget as approved by full Council. To provide for the necessary budget headroom for the Oxpens bridge project within the existing overall approved envelope of the Capital Programme, this paper seeks approval to increase the budget envelope for the project by £3.7 million through the virement from underspend within the Capital Programme.
28. Three areas of the current capital programme have been identified where funding can be vired within 2025/26 without impacting existing projects and programmes. These areas are £2m from the Capital Salary budget where budget is due to be reprofiled due to slippages in the programme this year, £1m from the Planned Maintenance budget which would leave sufficient funding in budget for the current time and £0.7m from the SCS and energy works where the budget is not required this year.
29. The report also seeks a delegation to authorise entering into contract with the contractor to undertake the work. This will be a fixed price contract to limit exposure to the Council. The Council would only enter into this contract if adequate additional external funding has been secured.
30. As part of the funding agreement with the Oxfordshire County Council, the bridge will be adopted and maintained by them, so this liability will not sit with the Council. The report seeks the ability to transfer the bridge to the County Council once adopted.

## **Legal issues**

31. Under Parts 4.5 (10) 4.5 (11) and 19 (17) of the Constitution Cabinet is responsible for the decisions set out in the recommendations in this report. Under section 9E (3)

(c) of the Local Government Act 2000 Cabinet is empowered to delegate its functions to officers.

32. Due to the estimated value of spend, the procurement of consultants, contractors and external legal advisors to support the delivery of the bridge it will need to be carried out in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023 and the Council's Constitution. The Legal Services Team can, support and advise on the procurement process and provide the contract documentation needed. Any decision, following the procurement process, to award a contract of £750,000 or greater will be a Key Decision and will need to comply with the procedure for taking Key Decisions set out in the Council's Constitution.
33. The approval of Cabinet is sought to delegate the securing of grants and to allow the Group Finance Director to increase project budget within 25/26 through virements between capital cost centres where there is underspend in the current year and these are in line with the Council's Policy Framework and within the approved budget envelope. Cabinet can approve such virements in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules provided that it does not alter the overall Capital Budget, a matter reserved to Council.
34. To construct the proposed bridge a series of approvals and agreements are required, not limited to the potential new funding agreements, variation of existing funding agreements, the s38 agreement and Development Agreement. This is a non-exhaustive list and therefore delegation is sought to allow for the Council to enter into all agreements for the construction and transfer of ownership of the bridge.

### **Level of risk**

Risk Register attached as Appendix 1.

35. Risks have, where possible, been mitigated throughout the detailed design phase. Nevertheless a number of risks remain particularly around securing funding in sufficient time and the JR process. Construction risks also remain for a project such as this including delay due to weather, unknown ground conditions, necessary approvals, transport of the bridge sections and installation and delays which have cost implications as set out in the risk register. A construction risk register has also been developed through the PCSA with a costed allocation of construction risk and funding identified in addition to normal contingency.
36. If the bridge does not proceed there would be the need to return grant funding connected directly to the bridge and potential risk to HIF funding for path works which are currently proposed to be delivered as part of the bridge delivery.

### **Equalities impact**

37. The Equality Act 2010 Section 149 places a duty on public authorities to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

38. Equalities Impact Assessment exists to ensure no discrimination, direct or indirect exists within the project planning and structure. It also exists to ensure that appropriate funding uplifts are included where additional works may be needed to ensure equity of service.
39. An “Initial Equalities Impact Assessment screening form” was undertaken in July 2022. This was used to shape the design of the infrastructure. The detailed design of the bridge has been subject to separate technical approval processes to ensure compliance with current standards not just in construction but also for accessibility.

### **Carbon and Environmental Considerations**

40. The bridge is intended to encourage greater walking and cycling within the city and reduce the number of trips by private vehicle.
41. The greatest opportunity to reduce carbon happened at the early stages of design, when the “build less” principle was the focus. The alignment of the bridge has been selected to create as direct route as possible between Osney Mead via Grandpont and the city centre. By minimising the length of the route it reduces the materials needed which helps reduce the carbon impact of the scheme.
42. Ensuring the design provides a positive user experience will also contribute to the sustainability of the project. The pedestrian/cycle only bridge itself will encourage modal shift, encouraging more journeys to be undertaken by cycling and walking thereby reducing car journeys. This promotes active travel and reduces vehicle use.
43. Alternative designs and construction materials were considered to minimise embodied carbon. After considering a number of options for construction materials, and how they addressed acceptance by the adopting authority (Oxfordshire County Council), maintenance, longevity, placemaking requirements and visual bulk & identity. Some of the other constraints were the need to provide vertical river clearance for watercraft and headroom for cyclists on both towpaths, whilst limiting span lengths and delivering shallow tie-in gradients to existing ground levels that provide access for maintenance.
44. When assessing timber bridge options, the navigation clearance was compromised by the depth of construction, the durability and design life, likely requiring two bridges in the life of the steel bridge proposed with the associated disruption and additional carbon and capital costs. The adopting authority, Oxfordshire County Council also stressed the requirements to meet its adoption standards and approvals would not be achieved by a timber structure. The combination of these constraints led to the bridge material section of steel with steel/concrete piers to provide durability of the structure, facilitate easy maintenance over the river and to meet the adoption requirements.
45. The scheme is being designed to ensure at least a 5% Biodiversity Net Gain in accordance with the planning policy in place when the planning application was submitted.

### **Conclusion**



46. The delivery of the proposed bridge would facilitate walking and cycling and fulfil a gap in the existing network. Considerable work has taken place to reach a point where the key permissions and approvals are in place to enable the delivery of the bridge in 2026. The bridge costs have increased and therefore this report seeks delegated approval to proceed subject to the necessary budget being secured.

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**Background Papers:**

List the background documents and, if possible, link to them.

All background papers must be listed in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act and The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. This includes, any material which discloses facts or matters on which the report or an important part of it is based and which have been relied on in the preparation of the report. Each document must be listed and a copy of each document made available to members and the public on request, (or they should be directed where to find it if it is already published on the Council's website). All confidential, exempt, copyrighted and published works are EXCLUDED from this requirement.

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|---|---|
| 1 | <a href="https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=527&amp;MId=7378">https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=527&amp;MId=7378</a> |
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Risks & Issues Register [180324 V3]  
Oxpens River Bridge - New-build cycle & pedestrian bridge project  
As @ 27/01/25

Ref	Title	Risk or Issue	Risk Description	Opp / Threat	Cause	Consequence	Risk Treatment	Date Raised	Owner	Gross			Current			Target			Comments	Control / Mitigation Description	Date Due	Action Status	% Progress	Action Owner
										P	I	Score	P	I	Score	P	I	Score						
1	Growth Deal (GD) funding	I	County council's Growth Deal funding agreement originally required handover + total funds expenditure by March '23, which was deemed unviable from a design/construction programme perspective - this was subsequently extended to March '25 and now needs to be extended to reflect latest forecast delivery dates.	Threat	Unachievable funding agreements end dates	Unspent funding could be retrieved by Growth Board, making project undeliverable due to lack of funding	Contingency Plans	Mar '20	Service Lead	5	4	20	2	3	6	2	3	6		January 25 Update - Verbal agreement has been reached with county to extend the GD funding period due to JR related delay. OXC legal are advising that this is a key decision and may need to go to cabinet. Legal have advised that the extension would need to be put in place prior to the existing agreement running out. Next action is to plan a route through sign off/agreement within OXC.	01/08/25	Ongoing	70%	County council + City council
1a	Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) funding	I	Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) funding agreement requires total funds expenditure by March '25	Threat	Unachievable funding agreements end dates	Unspent funding could be retrieved by HIF, making project undeliverable due to lack of funding	Contingency Plans	Mar '20	Service Lead	5	4	20	2	3	6	2	3	6		Revised Deed of Variation - permits funding up to March 25 £380k initial claim has been submitted. JB talking to EA about drawing down remaining HIF funding. EA carrying out flood alleviation works. Claim for remaining funds to be submitted by mid Feb. January '25 Update - risk is that OXC could be circa £1.4 million short if second claim is not permitted and HIF agreement runs out.	01/08/25	Ongoing	90%	City council
2	Economic viability	R	Ongoing budget pressures through inflation, scope and risks makes the project economically unviable	Threat	Insufficient funding	Not possible to award building contract to Balfour Beatty (BB) due to lack of funding	Reduce	Mar '20	Service Lead + Project Manager	5	5	25	3	4	12	2	4	8		On appointment BB undertook a VE exercise which was concluded successfully on 25.08.23 with the issue of the final VE report by BB to OXC. VE workstream programme is culminated at PB on 29.08.23 with approval to proceed to the next phase. Following receipt of initial s/c pricing packages an updated outturn construction budget figure is anticipated from BB in June 24.  Jan 25 Update - Value Engineering exercise was completed and project came back into budget. Flood risk has pushed budget up but project was viable.  With delay due to JR project is now expected to commence in Spring 26 and inflation pressures will increase delivery cost. Revised budget has been assembled and funding gap now being addressed.	01/08/25	Ongoing	80%	City council + Balfour Beatty
3	Construction cost inflation	R	Construction cost total could increase further due to inflation, given significant increase in material prices and further delay to construction phase.	Threat	Inflation linked to Covid pandemic, Brexit, Ukraine-Russia war & the consequent UK near-recession. Additional inflation pressure through delivery delay from JR process.	Pressure on the viability of the business case	Reduce	Mar '20	Project Manager	5	4	20	4	4	16	3	3	9		Global financial outlook is for more price stability & availability of materials as pandemic recedes. Brexit/Ukraine war/UK near-inflation remain issues that need regular monitoring  BB Risks Register 23.08.23 includes Inflation allowance of @ 2.5% of forecasted construction cost = £176K  January 25 Update - Risk workshop planned for 6/2/25 to review and update register and undertake QRA	01/08/25	In Progress	80%	City council
4	Adjacent landowner agreement	I	North-side bridge landing includes land that is not in the City council's ownership, as it's owned by developer OxWed	Threat	Bridge design requires interventions in land owned by OxWed	Project made unviable	Reduce	Oct '21	Property Manager + Project Manager	4	4	16	3	3	9	2	2	4		HoTs due to be agreed by the end of October 2023. Principle is that if OXWED are not able to proceed with works in good time prior to OXC SOS date in May/ June 2024, OXC will proceed on a 'stand-alone basis'. Contingency allowance is included in BB Cost Plan to account for extra costs of progressing with construction option that utilises OxWed land. Further OXWED may elect to engage BB to undertake their enabling works which would simplify matters and lessen risk.  January '25 - Through detailed design the bridge has been moved on the North Side and no longer sits on Oxwed land. This risk has been mitigated.  Works remain close to the boundary and there is a possibility that we will need to use some OxWed land for construction. Through continuous liaison with OxWed this risk should be manageable.	June '24	In Progress	100%	City council

5	Adjacent landowner agreement: technical & programme coordination complexities	I	Timing of Oxpens bridge works affecting OxWed deal viability	Opportunity	Request to combine BB bridge building works with BB carrying out enabling works on behalf of OxWed, in order to increase construction efficiency, avoid doubling up of work & reduce risk of damage to the bridge after erection	Delay to programme, in relation to Planning approval delays + potential damage to constructed structure post-completion	Reduce	Mar '23	Service Lead + Project Manager	4	4	16	3	4	12	2	4	8		Lengthy talks have been held with OxWed team to explore bringing OxWed enabling works into City/BB ORB package via a funds transfer, this now looks more likely but dependent on success and timings of planning approvals for both schemes.  <b>January 25</b> - OxWed development is reliant on sewage treatment upgrade which may not take place until 2031. The risk of OxWed and Oxpens Bridge construction programme clashing is considered unlikely. The risk remains but likelihood is redcing under the current circumstances. Maintain dialogue with OxWed and monitor programmes. Update risk prior to award of construction contract.	01/08/25	Ongoing	50%	OxWed + City council + Balfour Beatty
6	Ecological constraints: natural reserves	R	The northern & southern landing points have extensive ecological constraints which need to be addressed, related to the settings of Oxpens Meadow & Grandpont Nature Park	Threat	Selected bridge location is situated within an extensive natural habitat setting	Planning approval may not be granted, as Environmental Net Gain is required by LPA	Reduce	Mar '20	Project Manager	4	4	16	1	4	4	1	4	4		Consultant appointed and trees and ecology surveyed for planning resubmission in Oct 23. Design progressed taking account of high-quality trees and ecological effects. Off-site mitigation options are available & viable.  <b>January 2025</b> - This risk was being mitigated through detailed design phase supported by ecology surveys but delay to construction now means that ecology surveys will be out of date and will need to be carried out again. Offsite BNG and Newt license not yet progressed due delay.	01/08/25	In Progress	50%	City Council/Balfour Beatty
7	Ecological constraints: floodplains	R	The Northern landing point is located within a floodplain site	Threat	Agreement of compensation works required by the Environment Agency (EA)	Extent of required compensation works taking project over-budget or not accepted by EA	Reduce	Mar '20	Project Manager	4	5	20	3	4	12	2	3	6		Lack of EA engagement is a key issue that can't be controlled or mitigated fully. Following recent correspondence, BB/Stantec have re-engaged and are maintaining regular contact - which will be required throughout the planning consultation period and into the the delivery phase.  <b>January 2025</b> - Flood mitigation measures have been agreed with the EA and incorporated into the detailed design.  Residual flood risk is around construction and contractor delay. See construction risk register for details.	01/08/25	Ongoing	90%	City council + Balfour Beatty
7a	Environment Agency (EA) delay in responding to planning application	I	Given recent EA objection to OxWed development, issued some 8 months after OxWed planning application was submitted in Dec '22 & despite months of OxWed-EA engagement, it's looking very likely that EA will delay responding to ORB planning application too	Threat	More likely resourcing issues at EA	Planning approval may not be granted, as EA could refuse to advise LPA that scheme is agreed by them	Accept	July '23	Head of Department + Service Lead + Project Manager	4	5	20	3	4	12	1	4	4	Consultant Stantec have tried to engage with the EA to reach agreement - however, under-resourcing of EA team has caused severe delays. Planning C'tte date of 20/02/24 now delayed due to lack of timely response to planning consultation. New date of 19/03/24 identified. OXWED still awaiting confirmation of flood management proposals, which could delay their planning c'ttee date beyond April '24.	Meeting with EA arranged for 22nd to discuss their objection. Principal issue around bank profile.	01/08/25	Completed	100%	City council + Balfour Beatty
8	Ecological constraints: contaminated land	R	The southern landing point may be onto contaminated land	Threat	Selected bridge location is situated in former Gasworks land	Delays & cost increases related to removal & backfill of contaminated land	Reduce	Mar '20	Project Manager	3	3	9	4	3	12	4	2	8		Site investigation undertaken in Feb 2022. Contaminated zone defined and design amended accordingly to avoid it. Risk being monitored during construction  <b>January '25 update</b> - Current design shows works being carried out on boundary of gas holder site which has potential contamination. Southern footpath realignment which is planned to be incorporated will move works further away from gas holder site/potential contamination and further mitigate this risk. Footpath realignment to be submitted as NMA to planning post JR  Contamination risk is also included on construction risk register.	01/08/25	Ongoing	80%	Balfour Beatty

8a	Ecological constraints: out-of-date technical information	R	Ecological surveys are all out of date, as they are valid 18 months from when they were issued in July '21 - so they are likely to need re-doing.	Threat	Project progression	Delays & cost increases, issues with EA agreement	Reduce	Aug '23	Project Manager	5	4	20	2	4	8	2	3	6	<p>All ecological surveys have an expiry date &amp; general guidance used for determining this is set out via advice note from industry body CIEEM. Relevant point is that after 18 months, a professional Ecologist will need to undertake site visit &amp; may also need to update desktop study information via an update to the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, then review validity of the Ecological report. Ecologist site visit being arranged in Sep '23 via JB + City's Ecology &amp; Biodiversity officer</p> <p>Biggest risk over this kind of time period are usually bats moving into potential roosting features that were previously unused and badgers excavating new setts.</p> <p><b>January 25</b> - There is a risk that surveys will be out of date and a walkover to revalidate is expected. If there is ecology</p>	<p>Instruct for ecological surveys to be updated ahead of Planning application submission.</p> <p><b>January 25 Update.</b> The surveys are likely to expire again to the delay in construction start. The project team will need to instruct a walkover survey to check if any ecology has changed and whether the existing surveys remain valid or will need to be completed again, There is a risk that the current ecology situation has changed and additional mitigation measures will be required.</p>	As required by ecology survey calendar	Ongoing	70%	City council
9	Local opposition	R	Local opposition causing the scheme to halt	Threat	Despite some local residents opposing principles of scheme given the bridge's proposed location is within a natural habitat setting, with potential environmental harm - during pre-app consultation, however, there was surprisingly very little opposition	Planning approval may not be granted if there are strong local objections to the scheme	Accept	Mar '21	Service Lead + Project Manager	5	3	15	5	3	15	4	3	12	<p>January 2025 - Risk has occurred with JR on planning process. If JR is outcome in Oxford favour then this could still be appealed resulting in further delay and increase in delivery costs.</p>	<p>Landscaping proposals prepared to ensure Biodiversity net gain of + 5% along with tree canopy calculations &amp; landscape design. Non Material Amendment submitted to reduce tree loss.</p>	01/06/25	Ongoing	90%	City council + Balfour Beatty
9a	Local Opposition - Tree/ landscape works	R	Opposition due to removal of trees/ vegetation prior to granting of planning permission - and risk of bird nesting.	Threat	People may see early tree removal (prior to positive response to application at planning committee) as pre-empting a planning decision. Further the timing of any tree removal in late Feb may generate concerns around commencement of bird nesting season.	Negative response from key stakeholders and concerns about the overall perception of the project, moving into the delivery phase.	Accept	January '24	Service Lead + Project Manager	5	4	20	5	4	20	4	3	12	<p>January 2025 - Trees have been removed on North and South side. This risk is closed.</p>	see aside	July/ Aug '24	Ongoing	100%	City council + Balfour Beatty
10	County technical/contractual approvals & agreements	R	Schedule 5 & 6 + internal County governance + Section 38 + Section 106 decision delays could affect programme & project viability from an approvals perspective	Threat	Delays in agreeing terms of City-County contractual relationships & approvals	Frequent coordination & continuing to work with County reps to tackle issues & ensure there are no delays	Contingency Plans	July '23	Head of Department + Service Lead + Project Manager	5	5	25	3	4	12	3	4	12	<p>Draft Section 38 Agreement has been received. S.38 agreement is being reviewed to align/mitigate against conditions in funding agreement.</p> <p>AiP &amp; Detailed Design is now accepted by County TAA.</p>	Ongoing meeting being held with County to progress alignment of S.38 and Funding Agreement terms.	01/08/25	Ongoing	90%	County council + City council
11	Flooding	R	Flooding of site	Threat	Flood	May cause delay to works and impact heavily on delivery programme	Contingency Plans	Feb '24	Head of Department + Service Lead + Project Manager	4	5	20	3	5	15	3	4	12	<p>January 2025 - Design and programme currently takes account of potential flood risk. Incident of flood particularly around access rd and crane pad may necessitate suspension of works. Programme now schedules lifting at lowest flood risk period.</p>	The construction programme has been prepared so that the main bridge lift takes place at the lowest flood risk time which is late summer. There is an EA embargo on lifting over the summer months but the lift can take place in September.	01/10/25	In Progress	90%	City Council

12	Approval to bridge the river.	Risk	Section 106/3 - SoS approval to bridge the river. This is outside of OXC control.	Threat	The risk is more time related. If the JR is successful in OXC favour there is no reason why this would not granted but the timing could place entering into the construction contract at risk.	The project could stall further and due to constraints of lifting/flood the delay could be more significant than the delay to approval from SoS	Accept	27/01/25	Service Lead + Project Manager	3	4	12	2	4	8	1	4	4	A response has now been received bacf from the SoS for Transport and approval to bridge the river has been granted. Documents now need to be deposited from early 3rd July to 14th August which is the period required should anyone wish to challenge the decision.	Ongoing	In Progress	90%	
13	Non adoption/delay adoption by the county	Risk	There could be an increase in cost through ongoing reactive maintenance if county do not adopt the new bridge. And/Or the RSA 3 highlights additonal works which the county require to progress adoption of new asset.	Threat	County do not accept the completed asset into ownership.maintenance.	Additional cost for Oxford City to maintain the new bridge post completion.	Reduce	27/01/25	Service Lead + Project Manager	3	3	6	2	2	4	1	2	2	1. Maintain dialogue with County Council officers and capture all requirements prior to commencement of construction phase. 2. Ensure Delivery Agreement T&C's reflect agreements with County 3. Maintain close dialogue throughout construction phase.		In Progress		

Risks should be identified that may affect the Council's ability to achieve its business objectives, execute its strategies successfully or limit its ability to exploit opportunities.

Risks can be identified through a number of methods, including:

- A 'brainstorming' session or workshop with the whole management team and relevant stakeholders
- Interviews or questionnaires with key stakeholders
- Meetings with smaller groups of people

There are a wide range of methods available that can be used to identify and understand risks. The method that you select will depend upon the type of risk(s) that you are dealing with but typically a management team workshop is the method most commonly used.

Additionally, existing sources of information could help inform this stage. Some examples are listed below:

- Service / corporate plans, strategies and objectives
- Existing risk registers
- Risks or issues raised by internal audit or other scrutiny body
- Risks identified through budget setting processes
- Health & safety risk assessments
- Business continuity risk assessments
- Partnership, programme or project documentation (e.g. business case or project risk register)
- Experience of those participating in the risk identification process

It is the responsibility of those identifying risks to decide which sources of information they should consult. This may be one or more of the sources listed above or it could be something else you think is appropriate.

As well as direct risks to the achievement of our objectives it is important to think broadly about uncertainties that may have an impact on the organisation. The diagram shown below illustrates a variety of different risk themes, expanding on PESTLE prompts, which the organisation could face. Think also in terms of these themes when identifying risks.



Once identified, the risks need to be described in sufficient detail and recorded in a consistent format to support effective decision making on the way that the risk is managed. It is crucial for risks to be defined properly at this stage. Failure to do so can result in confusion about the exact nature of the risk, ineffective risk controls being implemented, or the risk analysis being over or underestimated.

The description of the risk should include the following elements:

- Risk Title – a short and concise header for the risk
- Description – expanding on the risk title outlining the situation or event that exposes us to a risk.
- Risk Cause – also known as the trigger event. Situations or factors which result in the risk becoming a reality.
- Risk Effect – the likely consequences if the risk materialises (The negative impact - consider worst likely scenario)

When describing a risk try not to describe the impact of the risk as the risk itself or define risks with statements which are the converse of objectives. Focus upon the uncertain event that would result in those impacts.

Types of Risk to consider	
<b>Strategic / Commercial</b>	
1	Under performance to specification
2	Management will under perform against expectations
3	Collapse of contractors
4	Insolvency of promoter
5	Failure of suppliers to meet contractual commitments (quality, cost, time)
6	Insufficient capital
7	Market fluctuations
8	Trade/Banking crises
9	Fraud/theft
10	Partnership failing to deliver desired outcomes
11	Situation is not insurable (cost of insurance outweighs the benefit)
<b>Economic / Financial / Market</b>	
1	Exchange rate fluctuation
2	Interest rate instability
3	Inflation
4	Shortage of working capital
5	Failure to meet projected revenue targets
6	Market developments will adversely affect plans
<b>Legal and Regulatory</b>	
1	New or changed legislation may invalidate assumptions upon which the activity is based
2	Failure to obtain appropriate approval e.g. planning consent
3	Unforeseen inclusion of contingent liabilities
4	Loss of intellectual property rights
5	Failure to achieve satisfactory contractual arrangements
6	Unexpected regulatory controls or licencing requirements
7	Changes in tax or tariff structure
<b>Organisational / Management / Human factors</b>	
1	Management incompetence
2	Inadequate corporate policies
3	Inadequate adoption of management practices
4	Poor leadership
5	Key personnel have inadequate authority to fulfil their roles
6	Poor staff selection procedures
7	Lack of clarity over roles and responsibilities
8	Vested interests creating conflict and compromising overall aims
9	Individual or group interests given unwarranted priority
10	Personality clashes
11	Indecision or inappropriate decision making
12	Lack of operational support
13	Inadequate or inaccurate information
14	Health and Safety constraints
<b>Political</b>	
1	Change of government policy
2	Change of government
3	War and disorder
4	Adverse public opinion/media intervention
<b>Environmental</b>	
1	Natural disasters
2	Storms, flooding, tempests
3	Pollution incidents



4	Transport problems (including aircraft/vehicle collisions)
<b>Technical / Operational / Infrastructure</b>	
1	Inadequate design
2	Professional negligence
3	Human error/incompetence
4	Infrastructure failure
5	Operation lifetime lower than expected
6	Increased dismantling/decommissioning costs
7	Safety being compromised
8	Performance failure
9	Residual maintenance problems
10	Scope creep
11	Unclear expectations
12	Breaches in security/information security
13	Lack or inadequacy of business continuity

## Risk Evaluation and Prioritisation

Once risks have been identified the risk matrix is the main tool for prioritising risks so we can establish which risks are most significant and therefore are in need of greater attention and resources. It also allows us to compare different types of risk with each other across the council.

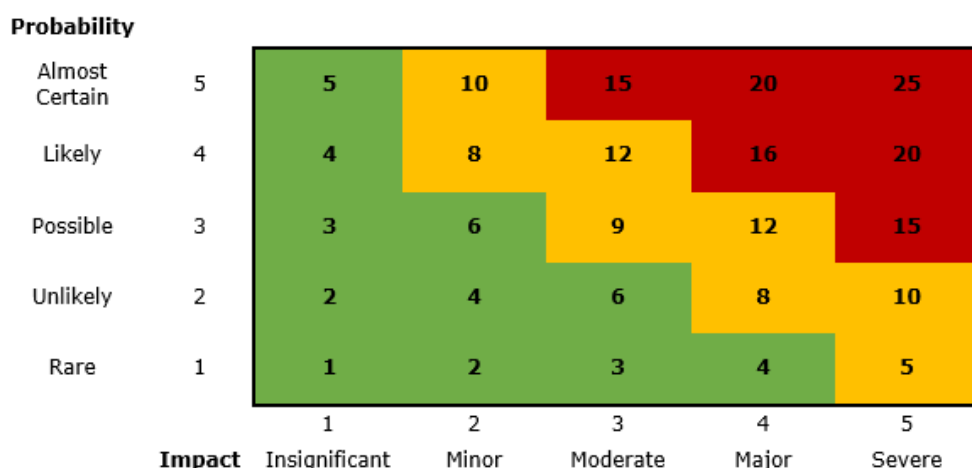
Each risk should be analysed using a five by five matrix for (1) the likelihood it will happen and (2) the impact if it did occur. This assessment should be made on three different basis:

- Gross risk – risk level if existing key controls and mitigations were not in place or not effective.
- Current risk – risk level after existing controls and mitigations are taken into consideration.
- Target risk – anticipated risk level following the introduction of planned controls and mitigations.

Assessing the gross risk allows consideration of the dependency the organisation has upon the existing key controls and informs decisions around risk treatment, and selection of an appropriate target risk level, considered in the next section of this toolkit. It is often helpful to consider the Current Risk first, and then ask yourself what the impact and likelihood of the risk might be if the key controls were not in place.

It is the risk owner's responsibility to ensure the controls they believe are reducing the risk are effective and are working in practice. Controls that are not yet in place should not be considered within the current risk.

Each identified risk should then be plotted onto the risk matrix.



When considering the likelihood of a risk happening you should select the number from 1 to 5 from the risk matrix that you think it will be over the next 12 months (it can be longer or shorter; some risks in the Strategic Risk Register are better considered over 3 to 5 years, some operational risks will be considered over 3 to 6 months). This score will require an element of judgement when considering how likely an event is to occur and you should consider the following:

- Has this event happened before in the Council? (How frequently?) Has this event happened elsewhere? (How frequently?)
- How likely is it that one or more of the causes/ triggers of the event will occur?
- Has anything happened recently that makes the event more or less likely to occur?

The following tables provide some support in quantifying the risk in terms of likelihood and impact.

### Risk Probability Assessment Criteria

Scale	Description	Likelihood of Occurrence	Probability of Occurrence
1	Rare	1 in 10 years	The event may occur in certain circumstances
2	Unlikely	1 in 3 years	The event could occur
3	Possible	1 in 2 years	The event should occur
4	Likely	Annually	The event will probably occur
5	Almost certain	Monthly	The event is expected to occur or occurs regularly

When you select the impact you should give consideration to the factors outlined in the risk matrix. For example, if the risk you are scoring has a low financial impact but a high impact on our reputation then you would select the most appropriate number between 1 and 5 that relates to the level of reputational impact. Once again, this score will have an element of judgement.

### Risk Impact Assessment Criteria

	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
<b>Financial</b>	<£50k per annum	£50k - £250k per annum	£250k - £500k per annum	£500k - £750k per annum	>£750K per annum
<b>Service Delivery</b>	No impact to service quality, limited disruption to operations	Minor impact to service quality, minor service standards are not met, short term disruption to operations, minor impact on a partnerships	Significant fall in service quality, major partnership relationships strained, serious disruption in service standards	Major impact to service quality, multiple service standards are not met, long term disruption to operations, multiple partnerships affected	Catastrophic fall in service quality and key service standards are not met, long term catastrophic interruption to operations, several major partnerships are affected
<b>Reputation</b>	Public concern restricted to local complaints which do not attract local media attention.	Minor adverse local / public / media attention and complaints	Adverse national media public attention	Serious negative national or regional criticism	Prolonged, regional & national condemnation
<b>Compliance &amp; Regulation</b>	Minor breach of internal regulations, not reportable	Minor breach of external regulations, not reportable	Breach of internal regulations leading to disciplinary action Breach of external regulations, reportable	Significant breach of external regulations leading to intervention or sanctions	Major breach leading to suspension or discontinuation of business and services
<b>Strategic</b>	Little impact on the organisational strategy	May have an impact on achieving organisational strategy	Would impact on the organisational objectives	Would require a significant shift from current strategy and objectives	Would require a fundamental change in strategy and objectives

## Risk Treatment

Once risks have been identified and scored based on current controls the next step is to decide what action needs to be taken to manage them. Generally speaking, there are four approaches to treating risk: Treat, Tolerate, Terminate or Transfer:

Action	Description	Options
<b>Treat / Reduce</b>	Controlling the likelihood of the risk occurring, or controlling the impact of the consequences if the risk does occur	Reducing the likelihood of the risk occurring AND / OR Mitigating the impact if the risk does occur
<b>Tolerate / Accept</b>	Acknowledging that the ability to take effective action against some risks may be limited or that the cost of taking action may be disproportionate to the potential benefits gained.	The ability to take effective action against some risks may be limited or the cost of taking action may be disproportionate to the potential benefits gained in which case the risk is accepted on an "informed" basis.
<b>Terminate / Avoid</b>	Not undertaking the activity that is likely to trigger the risk	Changing the direction or strategy and revisiting objectives or improving channels of communication Obtaining further information from external sources or acquiring expertise Reducing the scope of the activity or adopting a familiar, proven approach Deciding not to undertake the activity likely to trigger the risk
<b>Transfer</b>	Handing the risk on elsewhere, either totally or in part – e.g. through insurance.	Financial instruments such as insurance, performance bonds, warranties or guarantee. Renegotiation of contract conditions for the risk to be retained by the other party. Seeking agreement on sharing the risk with the other party. Sub-contracting risk to a consultant or external suppliers. NB. It may not be possible to transfer all aspects of a risk. For example, where there is or reputational damage to the organisation.

When considering further action required to manage the risk, and indeed the appropriateness of existing controls, an assessment of treatment options should be made alongside a consideration of the Council's risk appetite and tolerance for the current level of risk.

A further consideration is the efficiency of risk treatment in relation to the cost effectiveness of the proposed actions to be taken. Firstly the cost of implementation has to be considered (time, manpower, budget, etc.). The impact expected if no action is taken, should be weighed against the cost of action and the reduction of the impact. There should be a direct benefit from the cost implementation in terms of the reduction of the level of the risk.

Plans should then be put into place to manage the risk with key milestones identified and clear owners – ensuring that they are 'SMART' – Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound.

Oxford City Council has focused on the Red, Amber, Green status of risks in determining the risk appetite of the organization. Red risks are considered unacceptable and every effort must be made to reduce the risk to the organization.

The risk appetite is reviewed periodically or when there are significant changes to the organisation. Changes to the risk appetite level would require a change to strategy and would therefore require approval of the Cabinet.

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

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## Scrutiny Work Plan

August 2025 to October 2025

www.oxford.gov.uk



The Scrutiny Committee agrees an annual work plan detailing key issues – affecting Oxford and its people – selected for review. While the plan sets out the work of scrutiny for the year, it also includes flexibility to address topical issues and forthcoming Cabinet decisions as they arise.

The Work Plan is informed by suggestions received from elected members and senior officers, and it is reviewed at every Scrutiny Committee meeting to ensure it remains current and relevant. Members of the public are invited to contribute topics for consideration by submitting a [suggestion form](#). See our [Get Involved](#) webpage for further details on how you can participate in the work of scrutiny.

Topics included in the plan may be examined directly by the Scrutiny Committee, delegated to standing Working Groups, or explored in greater depth by time-limited Review Groups. Recommendations from the Working Groups and Review Groups need to be endorsed by the Committee.

The Committee also reviews the Council's [Forward Plan](#) at each meeting and determines which Cabinet decisions it wishes to consider before the decision is made. In addition, the Council has a 'call in' process to allow decisions made by the Cabinet to be reviewed by the Committee before they are implemented.

### Climate and Environment Working Group

Committee/Working Group	Meeting date	Reports
Climate and Environment Working Group	22 July 2025	2030 Net Zero Masterplan (including Net Zero tracker)
Climate and Environment Working Group	22 July 2025	Overview of Air Quality - Progress and Forthcoming Action Plan

### Scrutiny Committee

Committee/Working Group	Meeting date	Reports
Scrutiny Committee	5 August 2025	Oxpens River Bridge Update

### Climate and Environment Working Group

Committee/Working Group	Meeting date	Reports
Climate and Environment Working	4 September 2025	2030 Net Zero Update

Group		
Climate and Environment Working Group	4 September 2025	Heat Network Update
Climate and Environment Working Group	4 September 2025	EV Infrastructure Update
Climate and Environment Working Group	4 September 2025	Local Area Energy Planning

## Scrutiny Committee

Committee/Working Group	Meeting date	Reports
Scrutiny Committee	9 September 2025	Introduction on the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy
Scrutiny Committee	9 September 2025	Re-procurement of Housing First support service
Scrutiny Committee	9 September 2025	Citizen and Community Engagement Policy 2025
Scrutiny Committee	9 September 2025	Budget Review Group Scope

## Finance and Performance Working Group

Committee/Working Group	Meeting date	Reports
Finance and Performance Working Group	16 July 2025	Online Payments System Rollout - Update Report
Finance and Performance Working Group	16 July 2025	Quarterly Integrated Performance Report - Q4 2024/25

## Housing and Homelessness Working Group

Committee/Working Group	Meeting date	Reports
Housing and Homelessness Working Group	29 September 2025	Housing Performance
Housing and Homelessness Working Group	29 September 2025	Annual update on Allocations and Lettings

## Climate and Environment Working Group

Committee/Working Group	Meeting date	Reports
Climate and	8 October 2025	Net Zero Tracker



Environment Working Group		
Climate and Environment Working Group	8 October 2025	Biodiversity Strategy and Environment Act update

### Scrutiny Committee

Committee/Working Group	Meeting date	Reports
Scrutiny Committee	14 October 2025	Annual Safeguarding Report
Scrutiny Committee	14 October 2025	Project Approval and Delegations for Westlands Drive and Halliday Hill affordable housing scheme
Scrutiny Committee	14 October 2025	Anti-Social Behaviour Report

### Finance and Performance Working Group

Committee/Working Group	Meeting date	Reports
Finance and Performance Working Group	29 October 2025	Quarterly Integrated Performance Report Q1 2025/26

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 9 July 2025  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee

Summary and recommendations	
<b>Decision being taken:</b>	To submit the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee for Cabinet's consideration.
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Alex Powell, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	A Well-Run Council
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	None

<b>Recommendation(s): That Cabinet:</b>
1. <b>Considers and responds</b> to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee as set out in the report.

Information Exempt From Publication	
N/A	N/A

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
N/A	N/A	N/A

## Overview and Summary

- The Scrutiny Committee met on 1 July 2025 and reviewed the following items:
  - Domestic Abuse Policy for Service Users
  - Tourism (and ABID presentation)
  - Citizen Experienced Strategy
- Working Group meetings were also held to consider a range of reports:

## **Housing and Homelessness Working Group on 24 June 2025**

- National Homelessness Property Fund 1
  - Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28
3. Following the meetings, Cabinet Members, in consultation with the relevant Officers were asked to agree, agree in-part, or disagree with the recommendations.
  4. The tables below detail the recommendations made by the Committee and its Working Groups for each report, which Cabinet will consider at their meeting on 9 July 2025. Cabinet has provided a commentary on each recommendation to inform the Committee of the rationale behind its decision. No table was produced for items where no recommendations were suggested.
  5. Draft minutes of the meeting are available [here](#).
  6. The Committee and Working Groups wish to put on record:
    - Its support for the officer recommendation to roll over the Council's investments in the NHPF1 into the new "evergreen" property fund in September 2025.
    - In relation to Priority 2 of the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Housing and Homelessness Working Group noted that action P2-1 current target was to process only 'the majority' of property licence applications, and suggested the aim should be to process all applications.
    - Their congratulations to the Housing Needs Team for being named LGC Housing Team of the Year – a well-deserved recognition of their impactful work in preventing homelessness in Oxford.
  7. The Scrutiny Committee and its Working Groups would like to thank Cabinet Members Cllr Lubna Arshad (A Safer Oxford), Cllr Alex Hollingsworth (Planning and Culture), Cllr Nigel Chapman (Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies) and Cllr Linda Smith (Housing and Communities) for their contributions. The Committee was also grateful Richard Adams (Community Safety Service Manager) Liz Jones (ASBIT Manager and Domestic Abuse Lead), Dawn Thompson (DAHA Project Worker), Clive Tritton (Interim Director of Economy, Regeneration and Sustainability), Diana Fawcett (City Centre Manager), Helen Bishop (Director of Communities and Citizens' Services) and Vicki Galvin (Citizen Experience Programme Manager) for their participation in presenting reports and responding to questions.

### **Financial implications**

8. Financial implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Group.
9. Where appropriate, any further financial implications were reviewed when considering the recommendations.

### **Legal issues**

10. Legal implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Group.

11. Where appropriate, any further legal implications were reviewed when considering the recommendations.

#### **Level of risk**

12. Risk Registers, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Groups.

13. Where appropriate, the risk register was reviewed when considering the recommendations.

#### **Equalities impact**

14. Equalities Impact Assessments, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Groups.

15. Where appropriate, the Equalities Impact Assessments was reviewed when considering the recommendations.

#### **Carbon and Environmental Considerations**

16. Consideration for Carbon and Environmental impacts, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Groups.

17. Where appropriate, the Carbon and Environmental impacts were reviewed when considering the recommendations.

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**Table 1 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee –  
Domestic Abuse Policy for Service Users**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 1 July 2025 concerning the Domestic Abuse Policy for Service Users. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
1) That there is explicit recognition under section 3, Diversity Implications, of the way in which national immigration policy makes people less likely to disclose domestic violence, given Oxford's status as a Council of Sanctuary, it is especially important to acknowledge how national policy can harm the efforts of local authorities to build inclusive and safe communities.	In-part	Partially – to include an additional bullet point in S3.4 of the DA Policy for Service users: Fear of deportation  This will be in line with the style of the policy and informs service users (the policy will be on our website) that the City Council validates the victim/survivors concerns and will support them.

**Table 2 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee –  
Tourism (and ABID presentation)**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 1 July 2025 concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned item on Tourism (and ABID presentation). The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
1) That the Council take further steps to publicise the locations of public toilets that are accessible to visitors and residents alike, such as those in the Town Hall and other public buildings.	Yes	The Council will ensure that public toilets are publicised on the widest possible range of information providers online and in physical form such as signs and posters.
2) That Council encourage the highest possible level of elected representation within the ABID task groups, within the constraints of the scheme, in order to promote democratic accountability, recognising the Council's role as the scheme's facilitator.	Yes	The Council will continue its role as the scheme's facilitator, supporting the work being done by the ABID decision makers, the accommodation providers themselves. The Task Group will be led by those decision makers, and they will ultimately determine its attendance. The Council will encourage the Task Groups to consider the most appropriate attendance from the City Council.

**Table 3 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee –  
Citizen Experience Strategy**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 1 July 2025 concerning the Citizen Experience Strategy. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i><b>Recommendation</b></i>	<i><b>Agree?</b></i>	<i><b>Comment</b></i>
1) That Cabinet consider incorporating physical presence in future consultations, particularly in areas further outside the city centre, and undertake support of language interpreters where appropriate.	Yes	This is best included in the Council's Citizen and Community Engagement Policy, scheduled for Cabinet in September 2025.
2) That the environmental and equality impacts of AI use be considered as a core component of the full review of the Citizen Experience Strategy in 2027, adding dedicated sections addressing the implications of AI in both areas within the strategy.	No	We will ensure that the Council's future AI Strategy – which is currently being worked on - incorporates an assessment of the environmental and equality impacts. This is the right place for this work, rather than the full review of the Citizen Experience Strategy, which is at least two years away.
3) That proactive efforts be made to consult children under 12, in recognition of the city's commitment to becoming an age and children friendly city.	Yes	This is best included in the Council's Citizen and Community Engagement Policy, scheduled for Cabinet in September 2025.



**Table 4 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Working Group – Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Working Group on 24 June 2025, endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 1 July 2025, concerning the Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Agree?</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1) That Cabinet continue to actively lobby against changes to local government funding for homelessness services, particularly those that would result in significant funding reductions for Oxford and other local authorities with high levels of homelessness.	Yes	<p>Cabinet will continue to use opportunities to influence the government's approach to funding for homelessness services, and where proposed changes are detrimental to Oxford we will make the case for the support we need from central government for local services.</p> <p>Recently Officers completed a formal consultation response to the government's proposed changes to the Homelessness Prevention Grant formula which if implemented would result in the reduction of funding to Oxford City Council and other Local Authorities with a similar profile. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities also wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister to raise these points.</p> <p>The Government has confirmed in their response to the consultation that the planned changes will still go ahead, but there have been amendments which will mitigate some of the reductions for the Council based on the response of Oxford and other Local Authorities. The Council will continue to look for opportunities to lobby government on key issues that affect the Council and residents.</p>

<p>2) That Council explore all available measures to safeguard tenants from unjust or revenge evictions pending the passage of the Renters' Rights Bill.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Council continues to support tenants to ensure that they are protected from unjust or revenge evictions under current provisions within the law and will raise awareness and support tenants to use the new protections within the Renters' Rights Bill once its agreed and implemented.</p> <p>Alongside reactive engagement with tenants who have made complaints regarding their property and landlord, the Council continues to employ a Tenancy Relations Officer (TRO) who's specialist area of work is to support tenants who have complaints against their landlord, for example allegations of threats or harassment. The TRO offers a weekly face to face drop in for residents and can take enforcement action under the Prevention from Eviction Act 1977 to prevent illegal evictions if necessary.</p> <p>Alongside supporting tenants, the Council is also focused on engaging and supporting landlords to following the correct process when renting out their property. We have launched the 'Call B4 You Serve' - landlord advice and mediation service, which provides a dedicated Officer for landlords to contact to provide upstream advice to resolve and mediate between tenants and landlords to avoid evictions and homelessness.</p> <p>In preparation for the Renters' Rights Bill, Officers have launched a cross department working group to improve training and develop changes to services in preparation for the implementation of the new legislation if it becomes law.</p>
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**To:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 5 August 2025  
**Report of:** Chair of the Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Recommendations from the Working Groups for endorsement at the Scrutiny Committee

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

Recommendation(s): That the Scrutiny Committee resolves to:
1. <b>Endorse</b> the recommendations from the Climate and Environment, Housing and Homelessness, and Finance and Performance Working Groups.

Information Exempt From Publication	
N/A	N/A

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
N/A	N/A	N/A

## Overview and Summary

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

## **Climate and Environment Working Group – 22 July 2025**

- Net Zero Masterplan Tracker
  - Local Plan 2042 Climate change and resilience
  - Annual Air Quality Status Report
2. 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.
  3. The Climate and Environment Working Group would like to record:
    - Consideration around building cooling, particularly of public buildings, as an integral part of design. The Working Group suggested that, if not already included, the design checklist should feature examples of various cooling measures, including passive solutions to help guide future development proposals.
  4. The Working Groups wish to thank Cabinet Members and Officers who contributed to the presentation of reports and discussions.

### **Financial implications**

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

### **Legal issues**

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

### **Level of risk**

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

### **Equalities impact**

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

### **Carbon and Environmental Considerations**

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

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**Table 1 – Recommendations of the Climate and Environment Working Group –  
Local Plan 2042 Climate Change and Resilience**

The table below sets out the recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Working Group Working Group on 22 July 2025 for endorsement by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5 August 2025. The Cabinet will be asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i><b>Recommendation</b></i>	<i><b>Agree?</b></i>	<i><b>Comment</b></i>	<i><b>Status</b></i>
1) That the Local Plan 2042 include clearer support for renewable energy schemes particularly the potential for solar panel installations on terraced houses through community-led energy schemes.			
2) That there is greater robustness demonstrated in the Local Plan 2042 supporting text acknowledging the urgency of climate action when balancing the need to address climate emergency through retrofitting heritage buildings to support decarbonisation against the need to minimise harm to heritage assets.			
3) That the Plan explicitly references the potential use of BNG offsetting funds from developers for retrofit improvements to schools and community buildings, recognising the wider public benefit of public buildings rather than individual residential buildings, and criteria applied to the allocation of these funds prioritises maximum community impact.			

4) That there is specific language acknowledging the potential for loss and damage associated with new and existing properties in areas of high flood risk, and that local plan policies take account of these potential impacts in future planning and climate resilience design features to minimise possible damage (e.g. positioning of plugs, use of specific materials on the ground floor that can cope with flood damage).			
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**Table 2 – Recommendations of the Climate and Environment Working Group –  
Annual Air Quality Status Report**

The table below sets out the recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Working Group Working Group on 22 July 2025 for endorsement by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5 August 2025. The Cabinet will be asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i><b>Recommendation</b></i>	<i><b>Agree?</b></i>	<i><b>Comment</b></i>	<i><b>Status</b></i>
1) That the Air Quality Action Plan incorporates specific measures addressing the use of diesel generators associated with street trading, construction and similar activities, reflecting the Council's regulatory responsibilities in relation to street trading and seek to reduce air quality impacts.			

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