

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 14 October 2025

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Committee members present:

Councillor Powell (Chair)

Councillor Altaf-Khan

Councillor Corais

Councillor Miles

Councillor Ottino

Councillor Rowley (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Azad

Councillor Jarvis

Councillor Mundy

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

Laura Jones, Safeguarding Coordinator

Simon Manton, Community Response Team Supervisor

Dave Scholes, Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead

Also present:

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

Councillor Lubna Arshad, Cabinet Member for A Safer Oxford

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Qayyum and Stares sent apologies.

Councillor Powell submitted apologies for the first 30 minutes of the meeting and was substituted as Chair by Councillor Rowley at the commencement of proceedings.

43. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

44. Chair's Announcements

There were none.

45. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2025 as a true and accurate record.

46. Addresses by members of the public

There were none.

47. Councillor addresses on any item for discussion on the Scrutiny agenda

There were none.

48. Project Approval and Delegations for Westlands Drive and Halliday Hill affordable housing scheme

Cabinet, at its meeting on 22 October 2025, will consider a report to seek project approvals and delegations for Westland Drive and Halliday Hill affordable housing scheme.

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

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities and Dave Scholes, Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead, were present to respond to questions.

Councillor Smith presented the report to the Committee, noting that the scheme pertains to land already owned by the housing revenue account and has achieved planning permission. The Committee heard that the scheme is affordable and will include six units for social rent, five for affordable rent, and four for shared ownership; this spread reflects the relative priority given to each of those tenures by the Council. Councillor Smith emphasised that the scheme also responds to the local housing need. Finally, it was noted that the Council has set a target of 1600 new affordable homes in the next four years, of which at least 850 will be for social rent.

The Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead informed the Committee that the scheme is currently finalising its tender process, and the contract will be awarded in the coming weeks. The Committee heard that the build stage is expected to commence in April 2026 and will be completed within around 12 months from this date.

The Chair thanked Councillor Smith and the Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead and reminded the Committee that should they wish to discuss any information enclosed within the confidential appendix to this item, it would be required to enter private session.

Councillor Miles requested clarification between the distinction of 'low car development' and 'car free development' referenced in the report. The Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead noted that only a small number of parking spaces had been designed into the scheme and committed to providing relevant data following the meeting.

Councillor Miles also asked what provision there would be for resident bike parking, recommending that this be considered from the start of the scheme, rather than built in at a later date. The Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead noted confidence that bike spaces had been included within the plans and committed to providing this information following the meeting.

Councillor Altaf-Khan clarified the timing of the tendering process with the Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead who confirmed the scheme was progressing on time.

Councillor Smith confirmed that two disabled parking spaces were included within the plans, and also an increase in cycling provisions.

The Chair invited the Committee to discuss possible recommendations.

The Committee made no recommendations to Cabinet.

The Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead left the meeting and did not return.

Following the meeting, the Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead provided the Committee with the following information:

- Car parking: There will be two parking spaces available, both designated for disabled users.
- Bike parking: The bike store will provide 28 spaces for the flats (two-tier rack system). The houses will each have a bike shed located in their yard.

49. Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

Cabinet, at its meeting on 22 October 2025, will consider a report to seek approval for the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

The Committee is 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 Simon Manton, Community Response Team Manager, were present to respond to questions.

Councillor Arshad presented the report to the Committee, noting that the policy put forward is for approval from 2026 to 2029. The policy supports the Council's efforts to tackle all forms of antisocial behaviour and to fulfil its duties under Section 218A of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003. It was explained that as a housing provider, the council is required to formulate and publish antisocial behaviour policies and procedures, liaise with local partners, and support tenants to live in safe, clean and well-maintained conditions. Councillor Arshad explained that the policy is reviewed every three years, and the current iteration expires in December 2025. The Committee heard a detailed summary of the Council's principles and service standards in relation to ASB and learned that the policy has been taken through consultation with local communities.

Councillor Mundy joined the meeting.

The Community Safety Service Manager clarified that the consultation process began around 12 months ago and noted the useful recommendations it produced which are helping to amend the policy or used to implement it. A broad summary of the consultation response was delivered, and the Community Response Team Manager was introduced.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor Altaf-Khan requested clarity on how the percentages within the report were calculated and asked how action to tackle ASB could be taken more swiftly and directly. He also queried how feedback is obtained.

Councillor Ottino firstly asked how confident the Council is that Registered Providers uphold their responsibilities and perform to expectation in terms of tackling ASB. He also queried how strong the Council's relationship is with the registered providers. It was requested that relevant contact details for the housing associations be shared with councillors. Secondly, Councillor Ottino asked what the Council is doing to coordinate actions against fly tipping with housing associations and ODS. And finally, it was observed that whilst the report focuses on responses to ASB, there needs to be more proactive action taken to decreasing ASB. Therefore, Councillor Ottino asked what more could be done to this end, including considering how to design areas more considerately.

Councillor Corais thanked the officers and asked several questions:

- In reference to the response time targets set out in the report, it was asked what happens when these are not met.
- It was queried what the average duration of an ASB case is, and how these are resolved in a timely manner without compromise.
- Information on mechanisms for escalating unresolved ASB cases was requested.
- Information on how residents are kept informed about ongoing ASB cases was requested.
- It was asked how data is used to identify ASB hotspots and how this is shared with other councils and the community.
- Finally, clarity on how the council publicises the policy and educates residents on reporting and feedback options.

The Community Safety Service Manager responded to the questions. In relation to the duration of ABS cases, the staged process was outlined in detail and the Committee heard that around 2500 cases are reported annually, most of which result from environmental ASB issues. It was explained that around 300 neighbourhood nuisance cases are reported a year, and these are often more complex to investigate; therefore, cases take longer. In response to queries regarding performance, it was explained that all cases are logged, and actions are managed and monitored via an interactive dashboard. Performance and case duration can also depend on evidence and whether a matter must be taken to Court or not. In regard hotspots, the Community Safety Service Manager explained that the Council uses a database to map regions of ASB activity and works closely with other partners and ODS on this intelligence; they also have access to police and CCTV data. The Committee heard that these multiple data sets can then be overlayed to support analysis of hotspots. The Committee also heard extensive detail of other metrics needed to report on the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 Consumer Standards. In response to Councillor Ottino, it was noted that contacts for the registered providers can be provided to councillors, however these bodies do not have the same local capacity as the Council for tackling ASB. It was emphasised that building relationships with other parties such as social landlords, is an ongoing process. In regards coordination with ODS around fly tipping, the Community Safety Service Manager confirmed that this does take place and recognised that work to designing-out related hotspots could be expanded, but that officer time is already designated to this. The Community Safety Service Manager also recognised the Council's work with the Targeted Youth Support Service and Youth Ambition Team as

means of discouraging ASB. The Committee also learned that regular liaison with the police is ongoing. In regards timely closure of cases, the Community Safety Service Manager explained that supervisors monitor this, however in order to close a case, the Council liaises with the complainant and seek a resolution.

In relation to the length of ASB cases, the Community Response Team Manager explained that many factors influence this, and the Council does aim to keep each case to no more than 3 months. He also reiterated that this can be more complex in some cases and supported the ongoing work with ODS regarding fly tipping and data collection.

The Community Safety Service Manager, in relation to how the public can report ASB, outlined the multiple options which exist and explained that these are publicised via the internet, social media, leaflets, and newsletters, for example. It was also recognised that internal officers must be aware of reporting mechanisms and that a generic email inbox is available for ASB reports: saferoxford@oxford.gov.uk. Finally, the process that a complaint follows after being reported was outlined in detail.

Councillor Powell joined the meeting.

Councillor Miles requested clarification around the reporting of ASB between the Council and housing associations and asked where the responsibility lies. It was asked whether the Council could be more proactive in addressing housing associations which are failing their duties to residents. Secondly, Councillor Miles asked what the obligations are for the Council and housing associations to advertise their complaints processes, and whether there is an issue with double reporting when residents do not know where to send their concerns. Finally, regarding fly tipping, Councillor Miles queried whether data from ODS is overlayed with HMO licensing data in order to address occurrences of ASB, and also asked what liaison occurs with universities regarding ASB.

Councillor Jarvis, in recognition of the demographics of Oxford and the populations which speak English as a second language, asked what information regarding ASB is currently publicised in different languages, and what languages these are. Secondly, it was asked why the Equalities Impact Assessment suggested no adverse impacts of the policy when much of the evidence shows that certain demographics are more likely to be accused of ABS and face sanctions. Councillor Jarvis asked how the council reflects this and mitigates against institutional racism in the way they handle ASB complaints and reporting.

The Community Safety Service Manager responded to questions. In relation to registered providers, the Committee heard that the Council works closely with them to manage complaints and can investigate where a complaint is best directed upon receipt. Extensive detail was outlined regarding processes relevant to this, and the importance of ongoing multi-agency work was emphasised. The Committee also learned of the detail regarding an ongoing review into the use of a noise reporting app, and that an officer is dedicated to this workstream. In response to queries regarding the use of HMO data, the Community Safety Service Manager confirmed that this is used to connect complaints to individuals. In regards working relationships with the universities, the Committee were informed that the Community Safety Service Manager meets with relevant security teams every Monday morning to discuss any issues affecting students and the local communities. It was also noted that contact details for

these staff could be obtained for councillors. In response to Councillor Jarvis' question, the Committee learned that work is done to ensure that language provisions are in place for ASB systems, including the translation of letters and notices. However, it was also acknowledged that more could be done. In regards the Equality Impact Assessment, the Community Safety Service Manager noted that he is not aware of evidence to suggest that certain groups are being unduly targeted, however he committed to checking this.

The Community Response Team Manager noted that in addition to weekly meetings with the universities, he also attends monthly sessions with Oxford University's crime prevention officers and weekly sessions with Oxford Brookes University.

Councillor Powell, in response to Councillor Jarvis' earlier question, also queried what is being done to tackle the issue of ASB complaints being made against those from the LGBTQ community, and other communities disproportionately affected by homelessness as a result of their social positionality. In regards the Equalities Impact Assessment, Councillor Powell requested clarification around category two listed on page 40 in relation to sex working and sexual acts; clarification of the phrase 'sex acts' was requested.

Councillor Ottino queried what is being done to ensure ODS workers report ASB when they witness it, and to ensure that ODS staff exhibit a zero-tolerance approach to matters such as fly tipping.

In response to Councillor Powell, the Community Safety Service Manager explained that it is challenging for the Council to gather sufficient data on personal and protected characteristics as people often do not disclose such details. The Community Safety Service Manager assured the Committee of his confidence in supervisors amongst the team in raising these issues if they perceived it necessary. Information regarding support for homeless persons was also detailed to the Committee. In response to Councillor Ottino, the process for reporting fly-tipping was explained and the Community Safety Service Manager committed to discussing the matter of zero-tolerance with ODS.

The Chair invited the Committee to consider possible recommendations.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

- 1) For Officers to explore the feasibility of gathering and analysis of data on protected characteristics of both: individuals complained about through the ASB service, and individuals making complaints through the ASB service. Recognising that some data may be limited in validity, that findings from the collected and analysed data be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee at an appropriate time within the next two years.
- 2) That officers set out within the Policy the work the Council is currently undertaking and plans to undertake in relation to proactive prevention of ASB, including actions such as working with youth groups, redesigning areas, and improving coordination between council services.
- 3) That there is a clear commitment within the ASB Policy to work collaboratively with Registered Providers in addressing anti-social behaviour, including requesting information from local RPs on levels and types of ASB reports received within their housing stock. This information can then be used to identify

patterns, overlaps and gaps between council and RP data, and reporting back on the efficacy of this partnership working and health of relationships with RPs as part of the Council's wider multi-agency approach to ASB management.

The Chair thanked the Community Safety Service Manager, the Community Response Team Manager, and Councillor Arshad.

On the conclusion of this item, Councillor Powell took over as Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

50. Annual Safeguarding Report

The Community Safety Service Manager has submitted the Annual Safeguarding Report to note the key achievements of the Safeguarding work delivered through Oxford City Council during 2024/25.

The Committee is 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 Laura Jones, Safeguarding Coordinator, were present to respond to questions.

Councillor Arshad presented the report to the Committee, noting that it outlined the work which has occurred across the Council over the last year. She also emphasised that in response to the corporate leadership team's recognition of the potential impact on staff welfare of managing safeguarding concerns, a training package is being developed to support staff. Furthermore, Councillor Arshad noted that the staff safeguarding questionnaire saw another year of high responses rates and this was used to inform the action plan. Details of ongoing partnership and multi-agency workstreams were summarised. Finally, the Committee heard that My Concern reports have doubled in the last year and the quality of reporting and recording has increased significantly, demonstrating continued improvement to the safeguarding services at Oxford City Council.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor Altaf-Khan expressed concern over the effectiveness of so many multiagency workstreams and therefore asked how confident the Council is that it is dealing efficiently with the voluntary sector. It was asked how much control the Council has in these relationships.

Councillor Jarvis asked, in relation to pages 110 and 111 of the report, whether there is more detail available which would enable comparison to previous years in order to allow the Committee to assess progress. It was requested that this be included within future reports.

Councillor Miles queried the data relating to heat alerts and emergency accommodation to ask whether some data could be made available to enable comparisons of this over time. She also queried whether this could be linked to the budget that the Council makes available. Secondly, it was asked whether any ward specific data was available in relation to youth ambition interventions to demonstrate where these are occurring.

Finally, Councillor Miles noted concern with issues being passed between County and City Council and therefore asked whether officers are aware of any feedback loops.

In regards to ensuring the voluntary sector play their role in safeguarding, the Community Safety Service Manager explained that the legal structures which exist to work with relevant organisations in the voluntary sector, and Members were assured that whilst not every aspect is within the Council's control, they do as much as possible. It was also clarified that previous concerns raised by the Committee in relation to the lack of safeguarding policies within voluntary organisations grant funded by the Council has now been addressed.

The Safeguarding Coordinator also confirmed that now, every grant-funded organisation has a safeguarding policy in place but also acknowledged the scenarios in which the Council has no control. The Committee also learned that as part of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board, subgroups meet, and voluntary organisations are encouraged to attend these meetings. It was emphasised that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and staff are encouraged to report matters should they arise.

In response to Councillor Jarvis, the Community Safety Service Manager also noted that data can be brought forward from previous years to enable comparison and explanation of why reporting statistics can fluctuate was provided. In response to Councillor Miles, it was also confirmed that information on the funding for SWEP could be obtained and reported back to the Committee.

Councillor Jarvis left the meeting and did not return.

Councillor Miles emphasised that residents must be reassured that reports are managed adequately and do not disappear. In response, the Community Safety Service Manager clarified the referrals process, and the Safeguarding Coordinator noted that the Council may not receive a response from the Adult Social Care department at Oxfordshire County Council for a number of reasons. Members were assured that these are followed up on and if a response indicates that the threshold for a referral has not been met, then the Council explores other options through its multi-agency risk assessment process. If the threshold for a referral is met, then an inquiry is opened, and the case is allocated to a social worker. The Committee were assured that Council officers are encouraged to follow up and escalate matters when necessary.

The Chair asked, in reference to page 109 and recent local political context, whether safeguarding support services for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants have been impacted. The Community Safety Service Manager noted his observation of the multi-agency meetings which support the Holiday Inn in Oxford currently housing these groups, and the conversations which have been ongoing. The Committee heard that it is high on the Council's agenda to ensure service users are supported and assurance was provided that the necessary processes are in place.

The Chair offered his anecdotal understanding of the situation, and Councillor Arshad provided further information on actions recently taken by the Council.

The Chair emphasised the need for the Council to provide support for these vulnerable communities and thanked officers for their work continued towards this.

The Chair invited the Committee to discuss possible recommendations.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

- 1) That future Safeguarding reports provide comparisons with previous years data to allow monitoring of trends and assessment progress, particularly data in relation to modern slavery and exploitation, and severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP). Where the data allows for trend analysis, that previous statistics be included to enable a year-on-year comparison and evaluation of changes overtime.

The Chair thanked Councillor Arshad, the Safeguarding Coordinator, and the Community Safety Service Manager.

Councillor Arshad, the Safeguarding Coordinator, the Community Safety Service Manager, and the Community Response Team Manager left the meeting.

51. Scrutiny Work Plan

The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor informed the Committee that the upcoming special meeting on 5th November will consider the Council's Local Government Reorganisation proposal, and the ordinary meeting on 11 November will consider the Hackney Carriage Emissions Standards Reports. The Committee were invited to make suggestions for other items they may wish to consider, including the introduction of Uber which had been previously suggested. The Committee were reminded that it would be necessary to consider the scope of any possible discussion.

The Chair reminded the Committee that any item brought forward in relation to Uber would be for information only. It was clarified that the Committee would not be able to make any recommendations on the topic as Uber is a private company.

Councillor Miles noted that the General Purposes Licensing Committee had considered these issues recently, and therefore recommended that a briefing, as opposed to formal report, may be more useful.

Councillor Altaf-Khan requested that information on Uber and private hire vehicles be brought forward as a formal report alongside the Hackney Carriage Emissions Standards report to the meeting on 11 November.

The Chair, Councillor Miles, Councillor Altaf-Khan, and Councillor Ottino debated this matter.

The Chair recommended that a formal report on Uber not be requested, but that the Committee may be provided the same information on the matter that had already been presented to the General Purposes Licensing Committee

Councillor Ottino queried why the content of the 5 November meeting was not an all-member briefing instead, to which the Chair explained that the report would be going to Cabinet the following week and therefore the Scrutiny Committee was invited to consider it as part of the usual governance chain.

Councillor Mundy suggested that the Scrutiny Committee consider the Council's debt recovery procedure as a future item. The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor noted this.

The Committee **agreed** the work plan.

52. Cabinet responses to Scrutiny recommendations

The Chair presented the report on recommendations.

The Chair referred the Committee to the responses enclosed within the report and noted that 9 recommendations had been taken to Cabinet, 6 of which were agreed, 2 of which were partially agreed, and 1 which was commented on.

The Chair requested any questions or comments from the Committee; there were none.

The Committee **noted** Cabinet's responses to its recommendation.

All recommendations from the last meeting were agreed.

The Committee noted the report.

53. Endorsement of Recommendations from Working Groups

The Chair informed the Committee that since their last meeting, only the Finance and Performance Working Group had met.

The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor noted that the Finance and Performance Working Group met for the first time on 11 September 2025 and discussed three items but made no recommendations.

The Chair noted that there were no recommendations to endorse.

54. Dates of future meetings

The Chair reminded the Committee that the next special meeting of the Committee will take place on 5 November 2025.

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

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.08 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 5 November 2025

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.