

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 13 January 2026

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Committee members present:

Councillor Powell (Chair)

Councillor Azad

Councillor Miles

Councillor Ottino

Councillor Stares

Councillor Rowley (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Corais

Councillor Mundy (substitute)

Councillor Qayyum

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Celeste Reyeslao, Scrutiny and Governance Advisor

Hannah Carmody-Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Sobia Afridi, Diversity and Inclusion Specialist

Natalie Dobraszczyk, Planning Policy Team Leader

Sarah Harrison, Team Leader (Planning Policy)

Gail Malkin, Head of People

Rachel Williams, Planning Policy Team Leader

Also present:

Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Focused Services and Council Companies

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Culture

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Jarvis and Latif sent apologies.

82. Declarations of interest

The Chair advised Members to declare any communications with groups relating to the Local Plan, specifically those public speakers attending this meeting.

The Chair, Councillor Miles, Councillor Stares, and Councillor Rowley noted having received emails from those speaking at this meeting.

83. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reminded the Committee and attendees of the process the Local Plan would follow, namely its route through the Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet, and full Council on 26 January. It was clarified that the Scrutiny Committee has only the power to make recommendations, and that these would be passed to Cabinet for consideration.

84. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meetings held on 2 December 2025 as a true and accurate record.

85. Addresses by members of the public

The Committee heard two public addresses.

The Chair invited Deborah Glass Woodin from Oxfordshire Doughnut Economics to address the Committee. The address was delivered as follows:

There are several flaws in the Local Plan process & content that require your scrutiny:

1. The notion that the Scrutiny Committee can properly scrutinise a Local Plan of this length & complexity (over 900 pages including an unreadable policies map) in the course of a few days is unrealistic and procedurally flawed.

2. Important statutory information that is missing:

The officer report does not include even a summary of responses to the last consultation, never mind any explanation of changes made in light of that consultation or the reasons for ignoring consultee feedback. This does not meet essential transparency standards, nor fulfil the stated corporate priority to support thriving communities. The information needs to be provided before the plan can properly be considered.

3. Additional key information that is also lacking:

a) what is the proposed balance between new jobs (on one hand) & new housing & green spaces (on the other) in the city & how has this been reached?

In particular, has any of the land previously identified for employment use been firmly re-allocated for housing? This was a promised policy change around a common theme in many responses in previous consultations. If the plan continues to prioritise a huge increase in employment and economic growth over better provision for housing for the existing population's needs, especially genuinely affordable housing, then Oxford's housing crisis as well the related infrastructure issues including flooding, sewage, water scarcity, commuting, congestion, pollution and loss of green space in Oxford, will continue to get much worse.

b) what work has been done to measure the impact of the Local Plan on key measures of thriving & resilience?

4. The proposal is for the plan to move directly to the Reg 19 stage of consultation where feedback can be given only on specific and limited material matters. Why are Oxford City Council not following the process and best practise (as being undertaken by neighbouring districts), with a further Reg 18 Spatial Strategies stage of consultation? Moving straight to Reg 19 gives no opportunity for constructive feedback on sites.

In conclusion, these deficits in procedure & content present serious risks in achieving an appropriate balance in the corporate objectives for the Local Plan, risks that will have far-reaching impacts on how the city copes with the escalating multiple cases we face. What recommendations will the Scrutiny Committee make to address these risks so that the City Council produces a plan that is fit for the future for Oxford?

There were no questions from the Committee on this address.

The Chair then invited Martin Reed, Chair of the Friends of Iffley Fields, to address the Committee. The address was delivered as follows:

I am Martin Reed, Chair of Friends of Iffley Village speaking on behalf of Iffley's residents and visitors.

Your scrutiny is requested today, to review the soundness of the decision to re-allocate Land at Meadow Lane. This is a 2.5 acre greenfield plot which forms an integral part of the Iffley Conservation Area. There is now abundant expert evidence that any development here is unsustainable in planning terms. Including evidence of your own consultants.

Known locally as the Horse Fields in Iffley, there is now no realistic dispute that this site is of considerable significance: for wildlife, for heritage and for wellbeing as a treasured city-wide resource and should never have been considered for allocation. This meadow dates back to the Domesday Book, and unlike nearby green spaces has never been built nor used for landfill.

Unsustainable development

Rejected from earlier Local Plans due to access and heritage constraints, the Council's mistaken allocation to Local Plan 2036 and later application resulted in an unprecedented number of objections from residents and visitors to any development here: 60 000 on our petition and over 1000 objections (98% of respondents) to the first planning application in 2023. The main reasons they give are multiple and all of them relate to valid planning issues:

- 1. Destruction of the abundant wildlife here that sits along the Thames blue / green corridor: protected species, 636 species of invertebrates some rare at County and National level that qualify it easily as a City Wildlife Site*

2. Harms to the rural conservation area and drovers routes which are a much used Principal Quiet Route for Active Travel
3. Increased flood risk and pollution of the ancient ditch, river and Iffley Meadows SSSI across the Thames
4. Traffic and safety concerns, and unresolved queries about whether the areas needed for development are even fully owned by the Council

Objections have also been received from the following organisations and statutory bodies: The Environment Agency, Bucks, Berks and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, BugLife, Oxfordshire Badger Group, Oxford Urban Wildlife Group, Windrush Against Sewage, Cyclox, Oxford Pedestrian's Association, Greyfriars School, Oxford Preservation Trust.

Errors, omissions and inconsistencies

Given the wealth of factual information now elicited by the planning application, we are surprised also to see the number of ongoing errors, inconsistencies and omissions in the allocation that persist despite 2 earlier rounds of consultation feedback.

These errors, omissions and inconsistencies have the effect of making the allocation appear to be deliverable and sustainable when the evidence is to the contrary. That is not sound.

I'd like to highlight some of these for your scrutiny - you will find the policy listed as SPS8: Land at Meadow Lane on page 257 of your packs.

In the first table (p 257): The current use is not 'private green space' as stated. This land is held in public ownership by Oxford City Council's housing subsidiary. On any rational reading, this is public (publicly owned) land.

Notable heritage status applies to Iffley's rural Conservation Area of which the meadow itself is a vital part. The Conservation Area designation is about setting as well as material structures. The meadow is an integral and crucial part of that setting.

The list of notable ecological features fails to mention that the biodiversity found on the Council's own surveys is more than sufficient to qualify as a City Wildlife Site. The Council's own consultants concluded it was of County level importance for invertebrates alone.

Moreover, the recently published Local Nature Recovery Strategy rightly identifies the **whole** meadow as a restoration and enhancement priority, not just part of it as the policy claims.

In terms of Urban greening, given that achieving BNG is already highly unlikely (and impossible on site) no credence can be given to the claim 'likely to score above the urban greening factor target'. Nor is any evidence presented to that end. This is redolent of past mistakes where the site was assumed to be of low biodiversity value without any proper surveys to inform that view.

Looking at additional errors in the detailed points on p258, Open space, nature, flood risk.

- The site does not merely have 'Potential to become important for biodiversity' - the biodiversity is already of county and national significance and qualifies for City Wildlife Site status. This comment is misleading and Inconsistent with

section 3.17 of the Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix 2) which states that 'LNRs are intended to identify important areas for biodiversity as well as opportunity areas for its enhancement'. This is already a key extant resource.

- The policy states a requirement for 'a detailed assessment of the site's value for invertebrates' despite the Council having already done multiple ecological surveys, finding species of county and national rarity which is impossible to compensate or mitigate for. This comment indicates a disregard for what the council's surveys have already revealed and suggests an attempt to throw the dice again in the hope of a better answer.

These multiple errors and omissions draw into question the credibility and soundness of the Council's assessments and decision making in seeking to continue to allocate this site for development. Unfortunately, despite requests for the amended Reg 18 Site Assessment, the site assessment was not made available with the Reg 19 documents. That is a failure of publicity.

Ignores residents' input

We wonder how the Council can achieve their aim to 'get the Local Plan right' whilst steadfastly ignoring input from large numbers of residents.

For example, the early engagement survey elicited 50 emails from residents asking that Land at Meadow Lane should not be developed. The Council's engagement survey report highlighted 'cross-cutting themes, including the protection of green spaces, sustainable infrastructure (particularly sewage and flooding concerns), and the importance of aligning development with community health and wellbeing'.

It is unclear how any of this early engagement feedback was taken into account at Reg 18.

Currently Reg 18 Consultation feedback is not available. Surely scrutiny of the Reg19 stage of the Local Plan 2045 cannot proceed without the Consultation Report on the Reg 18?

Conclusion

Any development of Land at Meadow Lane is clearly unsustainable in planning terms, given the weight of evidence covering heritage, biodiversity, flooding, urban drainage and transport and the clear and unresolvable policy conflicts that have been exposed.

It is misleading to mask the extent of unsustainability with errors, omissions and inconsistencies in the Local Plan policies. Indeed, this is procedurally wrong.

It is contrary to the Local Plan stated objective to seek feedback but fail to take into account the overwhelming and ongoing level of valid objections from residents, statutory consultees and other expert bodies.

Finally, you will notice that the minimum number of houses for this allocation has been reduced from 32 in LP 2036 to effectively ZERO in LP 2045. Why exactly is the Council continuing to pursue harmful development here at all costs, particularly when this site is not needed to provide any material contribution to Oxford's housing need, and is not capable of doing so without breaching national and local nature conservation policy?

We invite the Scrutiny Committee to question how the expensive, resource intensive and risky process of continuing to pursue development plans on this ancient meadow is either politically advisable or financially viable.

Councillor Ottino asked what action Mr. Reed had taken to communicate with planning officers regarding the points raised in his address to the Committee, and whether he had received a response. Mr. Reed confirmed that he had attended a public consultation hosted by the planning officers at which time he raised some matters, however he is yet to receive a substantive written response.

Councillor Mundy joined the meeting during this address.

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

None.

87. Workforce Report 2025

Cabinet, at its meeting on 21 January 2026, will consider a report to share current progress on the Workforce Equalities Report and Action Plan and to present and seek approval for the publication of the annual Workforce Equality Report 2024/2025, the Gender Pay Gap Report, Ethnicity Pay Gap Report and Disability Pay Gap Report.

Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Focused Services and Council Companies, Gail Malkin, Head of People and Sobia Afrida, EDI Specialist, were present to respond to questions.

Councillor Chapman introduced the report and provided a comprehensive summary, noting that it represents data as of 31 March 2025 and includes information regarding gender, ethnic minority, and disability pay gaps. Councillor Chapman thanked the officers who have supported the work and praised the Council's achievements in relation to increasing workforce diversity. A summary of the EDI staff survey was delivered, and the Committee heard an explanation of external context linked to a reduction in the progress of improving the gender pay gap.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor Rowley noted that Oxford City Council is one of few councils to publish such a breadth of data, however recognised that there has been a rise in pay gaps as more staff have been recruited. It was asked how this Council compares with other examples, and whether any analysis of the reasons for this issue has been completed.

The Head of People summarised a report commissioned by the Council seeking research relating to pay gaps and informed the Committee that recommendations had been made around intersectional data analysis, positive action, and KPIs for managers. The Head of People confirmed that the latter two recommendations have been implemented through ongoing work with service directors, however monitoring of data relating to promotions is yet to begin. The Committee understood that this data rests on the willingness of staff to share their personal data with the Council.

Councillor Miles firstly queried whether the positive progress against ethnic minorities targets meant that it could be increased to encourage further improvement, and secondly whether anything could be done to encourage men to opt for flexible working to promote more gender equality. Councillor Miles also asked whether action could be taken to ensure those who have the necessary skillsets, are not automatically locked onto lower pay brackets when recruited, specifically in reference to skills learned from informal employment. Finally, Councillor Miles whether data is disaggregated according to those who live within Oxford, and outside of the city, and whether more data on youth employment could be presented.

Councillor Chapman explained that disaggregation of data would be a task for the new authority which will emerge following Local Government Reorganisation and any new geographical boundaries. In relation to flexible working, the Committee were reminded of the Council's positive action schemes to support various skillsets and training and the successes these have achieved in focusing on the correct groups within the workforce.

In relation to targets, the Head of People explained that an increase to 17% would be appropriate to support an ambition to improve workforce diversity. In relation to flexible working, it was confirmed that some male employees are on part-time arrangements alongside other options. In response to Councillor Miles' query regarding pay scales, the Head of People noted that each grade contains two pay points, and all staff enter on the minimum, with variation from this requiring approval as a means of ensuring fair pay decisions. Furthermore, in 2025 an incremental progression plan was introduced to allow employees to move up the pay scale after a 6-month probationary period. The Committee heard a summary of findings from the last EDI survey which noted some instances of bullying or harassment in the workplace and work is ongoing to address these.

The EDI Specialist confirmed that analysis of the EDI survey results is underway, and development of an anonymous reporting system for bullying and harassment is ongoing. The Committee also heard an update on progress being made on with encouraging employment at the Council via schools, and the aspiring managers' scheme.

Councillor Corais queried the drop off between application and hiring stage for those from ethnic minority groups.

Councillor Ottino requested examples of ongoing outreach activities which aim to support increasing presence of ethnic minorities within the workforce.

The Chair, noting the awaited guidance from the EHRC, asked how the rights of trans and non-binary persons in the workplace will be impacted.

In response to Councillor Corais, Councillor Chapman explained that hiring is based on suitability for roles, regardless of ethnic background and the statistics represent those who have been selected based on merit and meeting the required criteria. The Head of People also noted that progress had been made in this area, referencing data within the report, and explained that anonymous applications have been introduced to reduce any bias in shortlisting. The Committee understood that further work on inclusive recruitment practices would be ongoing over the next year.

In response to the Chair, the Head of People recognised the impact that the EHRC guidance will have, and the difficulties faced by trans and non-binary colleagues. The Committee heard an update on the trans network designed to offer support, and the space this will open for sharing experiences.

The EDI Specialist outlined additional work and conversations which have been ongoing over the past year with colleagues, and the supportive environment this has enabled for employees to come forward with increased confidence.

Councillor Chapman emphasised the value the Council places on inclusive values and the focus and work which goes into continuously improving.

The Chair associated himself with Councillor Chapman's sentiments and invited discussion of possible recommendations.

The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet:

1. That the current target for workforce representation of 17% for employees from minority ethnic groups be increased to a higher, evidence-based, figure in order to strengthen the Council's recruitment from these groups.
3. That Cabinet fully implement an anonymised, third-party reporting system, reflecting standard practice across the public and private sectors, to enable employees to raise concerns relating to harassment, bullying, discrimination, corruption and other workplace-related issues with confidence.
4. Acknowledging there are challenges posed by low staff numbers and reliability of available data in this area, that future workforce equality reports include a dedicated section on gender reassignment, recognising this as a protected characteristic.

The Chair thanked the officers and the Cabinet member.

Councillor Chapman, the Head of People, and the EDI Specialist left the meeting and did not return.

88. Local Plan 2045

Cabinet, at its meeting on 21 January 2026, will consider a report to recommend that Council approve the Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan 2045 for public consultation and, subject to the outcome of the consultation, if no matters are raised that materially impact upon the Plan strategy, to submit the Submission Draft Oxford Local Plan 2045 to the Secretary of State for formal examination.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Culture, Rachel Williams, Planning Policy and Place Manager, Sarah Harrison, Planning Policy Team Leader, and Natalie Dobraszczyk, Planning Policy Team Leader, were present to respond to questions.

Councillor Hollingsworth provided a comprehensive summary of the Local Plan 2045 report, emphasising that it must be compliant with the national planning policy framework (NPPF), and outline the process by which the current Local Plan has been through to this point. The Committee specifically heard a summary of housing need policy and the high housing demand in Oxford, with reference to some specific site allocations. Councillor Hollingsworth discussed Oxford's potential and its role as a city which positively contributes to national economic growth also. Councillor Hollingsworth concluded by thanking the officers for their dedicated work.

The Chair thanked Councillor Hollingsworth and invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor Miles firstly queried whether the Local Plan considers the density of hot food takeaways in district centres, specifically possible maximum limits; Manchester was referred to as an example. Specifically, Councillor Miles considered the proximity of these retail units to schools. Secondly, Councillor Miles asked whether play for children has been considered within the plan, and finally, it was asked whether remerging subdivided dwellings (previously altered for caring reasons) will be considered in respect of the challenges posed to reconfiguring buildings at later points.

Councillor Ottino asked whether the policy will address inequalities in the city, beyond just the consideration of additional social housing. Examples of boosting economic development and employment in a manner which most benefits the least advantaged were suggested.

The Planning Policy Team Leader (SH), in response to Councillor Miles, clarified that policy C1 does restrict hot food takeaways in line with the NPPF, which, whilst allowing different approaches to be used, requires they be justified with evidence. In the case of Oxford, the Committee heard that sufficient evidence had not been found to deviate from the NPPF.

In reference to play for children, the Planning Policy Team Leader (ND) noted policies C2, G1 and G2, which generally seek to protect green spaces and open spaces which can be used for play. It was noted that the plan currently features sufficient flexibility around the concept of play, and due to the complexity of the concept and variable needs of different groups, it was preferred not to refine the wording further.

Finally, in reference to the splitting of dwellings for care purposes, Councillor Hollingsworth explained that the matter would be better considered via planning applications in the first instance, not the local plan. A summary of the complexities of this process was offered to the Committee. In response to Councillor Ottino, it was noted that the Local Plan considers community employment and procurement plans within policy E3 which makes commitments in relation to apprenticeships, rates of pay, and accessibility policies. The Committee heard of ongoing efforts to engage with local contractors and small businesses who are often excluded from these schemes in order to increase equality. Councillor Hollingsworth noted his hope that the planning inspector would receive this positively and offered examples such as the Oxford North scheme.

Councillor Mundy, in relation to policy G4 on biodiversity net gain, asked whether the proposed Local Plan has considered exceeding the expectations that were given by government in respect of new sites. It was asked whether the plan would consider exceeding 10%, and whether mapping and costings of potential advantages of this have been done. Secondly, Councillor Mundy requested that the glossary refer to the current rate of the Oxford living wage, and, queried why it is stipulated that contractors could have alternative social arrangements other than the Oxford living wage. Lastly, Councillor Mundy queried whether a higher percentage of social rent should be aimed for given the number of people waiting for a council home.

Councillor Stares expressed concern that homes and facilities are being built without consideration for developing communities. The Committee heard a summary of her experiences and the changes in Blackbird Leys since 1960; Councillor Stares emphasised that planning permission often is awarded to developers who provide nothing to the community.

In response to Councillor Mundy, the Planning Policy Team Leader (SH) explained that consideration was made of whether the Local Plan should seek to exceed the 10% target, however government regulations deter this unless specific evidence is available to justify the decision; it was not determined that Oxford had sufficient evidence for this. It was also confirmed that viability testing supported the affordability of the 10% target.

In relation to the social rent target of 80% of the 40% affordable housing, Councillor Hollingsworth acknowledged that this is a high rate and provided an explanation of the factors which are considered in balancing this. The Committee heard that the percentage of social housing affects the total amount of affordable housing that can be afforded.

In relation to the living wage, Planning Policy Team Leader (ND) committed to updating the glossary, and it was explained that additional information will be supplied within a technical advice note to support the plan to ensure clarity. The Committee heard that the policy is aimed at promoting the Oxford living wage and ensuring that necessary objectives are met to deal with inequalities.

In response to Councillor Stares, Councillor Hollingsworth acknowledged the fundamental issue of developing communities and pointed to aspects of the plan which address the issue. Councillor Hollingsworth provided a detailed response in relation to Armstrong Road, as referenced by Councillor Stares, and discussed the concept of district centres. Councillor Stares and Councillor Miles noted concern regarding the definition of district centres and drew on other local examples when discussing this with Councillor Hollingsworth. The Committee learned that the definition of a district centre is laid down in the NPPF. The Planning Policy Team Leader (SH) explained how this is defined in the NPPF and the exclusions made.

In response to this discussion, the Planning Policy and Place Manager referred the Committee to pages 205 and 206 of the draft plan which contained relevant policy information. The Committee heard that a centre must be as defined by law and this means it would be appropriate for a wide range of "Town Centre" uses, as listed in the report on page 206. Planning Policy and Place Manager also explained that a suite of additional and separate policies are present within the Plan to encourage development of communities.

Councillor Hollingsworth also referred the Committee to page 207 and discussed some specific examples with Councillor Ottino located in Blackbird Leys. Councillor Hollingsworth committed to looking at this outside of the meeting in order to refer to maps.

In relation to policy G4 and the biodiversity net gain, the Chair acknowledged comparisons with other Councils and asked whether consideration has been given to the potential to include a higher percentage requirement for biodiversity net gain.

Councillor Miles sought clarification in relation to the technical advice notes mentioned by officers. It was asked whether these would be created separately to elaborate on the local plan, and what would then constitute a topic that a note could be focused on. Councillor Miles also commented that there seems to be a lack of focus in the current local context on the planning needs of children which is distinct from the earlier topic of play. On this basis, it was asked whether there is scope to have either a technical

advice note or design code guidance around how developers can respond to the needs of children in planning terms.

In response to the Chair, the Planning Policy Team Leader (SH) explained that the constrained nature within Oxford makes it harder to justify a higher than 10% biodiversity net gain, as the focus is on redevelopment sites and not development of large green field sites where there is more scope for incorporating biodiversity. In response to Councillor Miles, the Planning Policy Team Leader (SH) explained how the children's needs have already been incorporated into the draft plan, including guidance relating to the need for street hierarchy to prioritise children. The Committee heard that this is elaborated on within the design code, and a separate technical advice note could be provided as there is no restriction on what can be included within a technical advice note; this is determined by what officers feel is needed to help explain how to meet policy requirements. In response to Councillor Miles, the Planning Policy Team Leader (SH) also provided a definition of technical advice notes, emphasising that they are to help explain how to meet policy requirements. Councillor Hollingsworth added that technical advice notes provide a very important set of guidance to increase the degree of certainty and confidence for applicants and for decision makers.

The Chair invited further questions.

Councillor Miles queried whether the consultation results could be published for reference and asked whether it is feasible for this to be done before proceeding to the next stage of the process. In agreement, the Chair also asked whether summaries of the consultation responses could be provided to Cabinet and to full Council.

The Planning Policy and Place Manager reassured the Committee that a comprehensive consultation statement will be published alongside the consultation following the Council's approval, as per the requirement of regulations.

The Chair invited questions related specifically to site allocations.

Councillor Miles referred to the earlier public addresses and the example of removal of land at Meadow Lane. The feasibility of this was questioned.

Councillor Hollingsworth summarised that the land is subject to a planning application and has previously been allocated for housing need; he acknowledged the contentious nature of this case. A summary of current housing need numbers was also provided to the Committee. The Planning Policy Team Leader (SH) explained that Meadow Lane is described as a private open space as it is owned by Oxford City Housing Limited. As such, it is not a public open space as it does not have public access and has been classified based on how the land is used. A summary of issues relating to this site were offered to the Committee, with acknowledgement of the conservation area.

Councillor Stares noted that the draft plan refers to Templars Square and expressed concern that it will lose all use as a shopping centre if residential units are developed in line with the numbers enclosed.

The Planning Policy Team Leader (SH) clarified that the policy requires it to remain functioning as an important district centre and a document will be published as part of the consultation to explain how the capacity of Templars Square was assessed and the choice of high-density designs. Councillor Hollingsworth referred Councillor Stares to policy SPS16 on page 275 which provided additional relevant detail. Members also heard that this builds on a previous recommendation from the Scrutiny Committee relating to strengthening wording around housing density.

The Chair invited any final questions.

Councillor Ottino reflected on the impact of homelessness in Oxford and the number of people trapped in the private rented sector. He emphasised that the approach to solving this must be a collective responsibility and it must be addressed across the board, with specific progress made towards upward building, rather than houses being built on riskier flood zones.

The Planning Policy Team Leader (SH) clarified that some of the flood zones mentioned within the report refer to sites at which only a small portion of the land falls on flood plain, and therefore the whole site has been noted as a flood risk.

Councillor Stares emphasise the need to build more homes, but also communities and places where people can be happy and supported.

The Chair invited discussion of possible recommendations.

The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet:

1. For officers to undertake a further review of the areas in Greater Leys, in particular Dunnock Way, and other sites such as Littlemore to be allocated Local Centres under Policy C1, noting their similarities to Underhill Circus.
4. That the evidence-base is thoroughly examined to determine whether 10% biodiversity net gain is conclusively the most ambitious minimum the council could set.
5. For officers to explore whether a higher threshold for the acceptability of loss of sports facilities could be incorporated in the Local Plan.
5. For officers to reconsider the language in Policy C2(h) encouraging the development of city centre play amenity.

The Committee emphasised the importance of providing clear guidance on how planning can be designed to ensure Oxford creates child-friendly places and amenities, recognising that such practice has been adopted by other authorities. The Committee noted that children's needs should be addressed within the Local Plan policies, potentially through the Technical Advice Note. Acknowledging the current timeline for the Plan's implementation, the Committee requests that this matter be recorded and revisited in future.

The Committee also requested that a summary of the consultation results be made available to members ahead of Full Council on 26 January 2026 where the submission of the Draft Local Plan 2045 is due to be considered.

Councillor Miles left the meeting during the discussion of recommendations and did not return.

The Chair thanked officers and Cabinet Member.

Councillor Hollingsworth, the Planning Policy and Place Manager, and both Planning Policy Team Leaders left the meeting and did not return.

Councillor Rowley left the meeting.

89. Scrutiny Work Plan

The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor informed the Committee that the Council Tax Debt Policy has been added to the February agenda, and that the sports pitches strategy had also been added to the programme, but that timing was under consideration with the date to be confirmed. In relation to noticeboards, the Committee were reminded that a briefing note had been distributed via email to all Members; the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor queried whether there was also a desire for this to be added to the February agenda. The Chair invited discussion of this; Members agreed that an item on noticeboards be added to the February agenda.

The Committee **agreed** to the Work Plan.

90. Cabinet responses to Scrutiny recommendations

The Chair referred the Committee to the agenda for the detail of all recent recommendations to Cabinet and confirmed that all had been accepted.

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

91. Endorsement of Recommendations from Working Groups

The Chair informed the Committee that there were no updates.

92. Dates of future meetings

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

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.55 pm

Chair
2026

Date: Tuesday 3 February

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.