

To: Cabinet
Date: 12 February 2020
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Council (Corporate) Strategy

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee comments concerning the Council (Corporate) Strategy
Key decision:	Yes
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Partnerships
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	The Council (Corporate) Strategy is a Policy Framework document
Recommendation: That the Cabinet notes the feedback within this report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction and overview

1. At its meeting on 04 February 2020, the Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to consider the revised Draft Council Strategy.
2. Owing to an increased number of respondees to the Council's consultation compared to previous iterations and the closure date for consultation being scheduled only two working days before the meeting (as a consequence of the December General Election) it was not possible to provide to the Committee the

post-consultation Council Strategy. A summary report of the consultation responses and the recommended changes to the Council Strategy was distributed to Committee members shortly prior to the meeting.

3. The Committee were talked through the summary of the consultation responses and the recommended changes to the Council Strategy by Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council, and Mish Tullar, Corporate Policy, Partnerships and Communications Manager.
4. In the absence of the revised Council Strategy itself the Scrutiny Committee considered that it was unable to make any recommendations on its contents. Instead, it has asked that an update report be provided to the Cabinet to summarise its responses to the information provided.

Feedback

5. Members of the Committee made a number of suggestions about the content, presentation or priorities arising from the feedback:
 - a. In response to the recommended amendment in section 29 of the report that the strategy 'reinforce our commitment to take account of affordability and the impact on carbon measures on those least able to pay' a concern was raised about reinforcing the view that carbon reduction and reduced costs were necessarily mutually exclusive, when in many cases they can be enjoyed simultaneously
 - b. The term 'growth' can have multiple meanings with a broad range of positive and negative connotations. A suggested alternative may be to make reference to 'clean growth' which has a narrower definition of growth achieved whilst reducing carbon emissions,¹ which would also correspond with the Council's ambitions to tackle climate change.
 - c. Particular stress was given to the importance for the Council to work with the University and Colleges to extend the uptake of the Oxford Living Wage.
6. Committee members also made a number of comments about the way in which the consultation had been undertaken:
 - a. Accepting the explanation of a timetabling issue and the apologies made, the Committee did nevertheless express disappointment at being unable to provide scrutiny to the final version of the Council Strategy, a guiding document for the Council for the next four years.
 - b. Recognised by the presenters of the report as an issue for improvement, the Committee echoed the need to provide greater clarity

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy/clean-growth-strategy-executive-summary#fn:1>

- of what is being asked when consulting young people, and that framing future aspirations in the present tense may not have been suitable.
- c. As a broad-ranging document which touches on a variety of complex concepts ('sustainable economy' was cited in particular) questions were raised as to the degree to which a shared understanding could be ensured amongst respondees to the consultation. It was, however, also recognised that there is inherent in any such consultation a degree of variable understanding, and that consequently caution should be applied to the interpretation of results.

Further Consideration

7. The Committee has historically considered update reports against the progress made against the Council Strategy on an annual basis. It is anticipated that the Council's reports against its annual business plans will be considered in a similar manner.

Report author	Tom Hudson
Job title	Scrutiny Officer
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252191
e-mail	thudson@oxford.gov.uk

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