

Appendix 2: Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 05/11/2019 concerning Oxford's Waterways

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Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That the post of Oxford Waterways Coordinator be extended for a sufficient duration to enable the benefits of the Oxford Waterways partnership to be realised.	Agree	The post has established a strong partnership approach to improving the waterways, developed and published a clear vision and a framework for improvements. Already, much as been achieved and extending the post to continue this work is supported.
2) Where appropriate and in line with our standard review processes and timescales, council strategies and policies will be updated to reflect the contribution of the waterways to the city. For example, the Local Plan, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Housing and Homelessness Strategy, Green Spaces Strategy and Leisure Strategy.	Agree	As the review cycle allows, and in line with the Council's priorities, there will be opportunities to update our strategies and policies to reflect the contribution made to the city by the waterways.
3) That the city's waterways are recognised as an infrastructure asset and consideration is given to where and when the Council should invest to support them, alongside that of wider partners.	Agree	As the project has developed, we have gained a better understanding as to the range of benefits and opportunities which the waterways present to the city. We will continue to work across the organisation and with our partners to support and maximise those, in line with our priorities.
4) Given the limited understanding of the diverse communities living on boats in the city, the Council considers how, together with the other key partners and communities involved, it can develop a better understanding of the number of people living permanently on boats in the City, the varying reasons for living on boats, the provision of mooring sites and services and the suitability of existing infrastructure to support these communities and whether there are any unmet needs which partners can work together to	Agree	We will discuss with colleagues across the council as to whether there are gaps in our knowledge, where any further research/evidence base can assist in our policy making and the way we respond to specific needs. This will also require further joint work with key partners such as the Environment Agency and the Canal & River Trust.

resolve.		
<p>5) That consideration is given as to how the Council should establish a position on the issue of boats as housing and what roles and responsibilities the Council has, alongside those of its partners. Consideration of the following questions may help inform this position:</p> <p>a) Does Cabinet agree with the Scrutiny Committee that boats should be recognised and welcomed for the contribution they currently make to housing provision in the city?</p> <p>b) Council should consider its own roles and responsibilities, alongside those of its partners, with regard boats being used as homes. This should include seeking to understand the Council’s statutory roles, such as those associated with being a housing and planning authority, also the wider legal obligations under, for example, equalities legislation.</p> <p>c) Are there sufficient mooring sites and service infrastructure, and what is the Council’s role and those of other partners in addressing any shortfalls?</p> <p>d) Is the infrastructure at current Council-owned sites sufficient?</p> <p>e) Are there opportunities for the Council to develop approaches to prioritise the allocation of moorings to those most in need?</p>	Agree	<p>It is acknowledged that boats make a valuable contribution to housing supply in the city, providing homes to vibrant communities.</p> <p>However, the growth in the use of boats as homes and the associated issues is a complex area for the council and our partners.</p> <p>We recognise that further work with colleagues across the council, with key partners and of course with those communities living afloat, is now needed.</p> <p>Through this, we will seek to develop clearer policies, identify and address any shortfalls or unmet need, based on evidence and through engaging and involving our communities.</p> <p>We will first discuss with Cabinet colleagues how best to progress this, in line with our wider priorities.</p>
6. As the Council works together with its partners	Agree	Scrutiny Committee’s support for this area of focus is

<p>and communities to regenerate and improve the waterways within the City, it should increase the emphasis on the contribution made to local history and culture, ensuring that this heritage is protected and enhanced wherever possible.</p>		<p>welcomed. Celebrating, protecting and enhancing the heritage of the waterways remains a key objective of the Oxford Waterways Project work and there is a range of activity planned across 2020.</p>
<p>7. That the Council will support the use of the waterways as a health and wellbeing resource, supporting healthy communities. In particular, it will support efforts to explore how the waterways can contribute to social prescribing activity and other health initiatives such as health walks.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Scrutiny Committee's support for this area of focus is welcomed. Promotion of the waterways as an infrastructure asset which supports active, healthy people is a key aim for the Oxford Waterways Project and there is a range of activity planned across 2020.</p>
<p>8. That Council will work with its partners and communities to deliver and support improvement initiatives on the waterways which contribute to wider efforts to combat the climate and ecological crisis</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Scrutiny Committee's support for this area of focus is welcomed. Good progress has already been made with delivering initiatives that protect and enhance the biodiversity of the waterways, combat pollution and damage. There is a range of activity planned across 2020.</p>
<p>9. That the Council identifies how it intends to increase access and use of the waterways by all in the city, particularly as routes for sustainable alternative transport modes such as cycling and walking, with particular consideration given to the issues at Wolvercote Lock and Hythe Bridge.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Scrutiny Committee's support for this area of focus is welcomed. We continue to work closely with colleagues in the County Council, with the Canal & River Trust and other partners such as SusTrans, to improve the infrastructure, and to promote and increase use of the waterways as places to walk, run and cycle. This work looks across the whole city and there is a range of activity planned across 2020.</p>

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