

Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Panel made on 05/11/2020 concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned Hidden Homelessness Update

Provided by the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Councillor Mike Rowley

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>1) That the Council invests sufficient resources to gain an understanding of hidden-homelessness and sub-optimal housing, possibly through the use of external consultants undertaking research, and begins to monitor it.</p>	Partially	<p>The Council already monitors the number and types of bandings on the Housing Register and will continue to do so. However, the work required to meet this recommendation is extensive. Because this group do not meet the thresholds of any statutory services, there is no data collected about their situation by either the council, or anyone else. As such the only way to gain insight into this situation would be by undertaking extensive fieldwork. This would need to be undertaken by a professional research company in order to minimise the required field work through the use of statistical sampling techniques. Under the present financial circumstances faced by the Council, this suggestion has not been put forward as a proposal for consideration within the Council's draft budget.</p>
<p>2) That the Council, when it has sufficient understanding, undertakes a communications exercise to increase the engagement by sub-optimally housed individuals with the Council.</p>	Partially	<p>As explained above, the specific work suggested would be very extensive and cannot be committed to. However, the Council endeavours to continue promoting the support it provides to those who need it in an effective way, we and will continue to examine how awareness of its services can be improved among those who are vulnerably housed, particularly those in marginalised communities.</p>

Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 01/12/2020 concerning the Draft Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire report

Response provided by Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Partnerships, Susan Brown

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
<p>1) That the Council seeks in its discussions at the Oxfordshire Growth Board to have the following suggestions included within future drafts of the draft Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The recommendations of the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel made on 21st October 2020 - To increase the emphasis throughout the document on economic inequality - Reference within the Inclusive Economy section to the promotion of the Living Wage, either the national standard or the local standard - To create a section dedicated to the improvement of mental wellbeing - For issues of inequality, particularly with regards to race, to be embedded throughout the document rather than being treated in isolation under equality, diversity and inclusion. - To recognise the priority of increasing active transport across Oxfordshire 	Agreed	<p>Scrutiny's recommendations are in alignment with what the Council has already been seeking to do with its partners around the Draft Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire. Specific issues arising are as follows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is assumed that Scrutiny is referencing the tackling of economic inequality. The Council is extremely keen that this becomes part of the overall vision of the County, not just the City. - The creation of a whole section on mental wellbeing may be a big ask, but the Council is in full support of Scrutiny's concern over this area, particularly given the significant underfunding of these services, and will seek to expand consideration of it as part of the wider section on health.

Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 01/12/2020 concerning the Workplace Equalities and Action Plan report

Response provided by Cabinet Member for Customer Focused Services, Nigel Chapman

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
2) That the Council continues its work to foster an environment in which staff members feel confident to participate in exit interviews as a matter of course	Agreed	Progress to date has already increased the percentage of leavers taking up exit interviews from less than 30% to circa 55% by the end of March 2020. We wish to see this percentage increase. The more accurate information we can gather from departing employees as to their reasons the better we can tailor our policies and working practices to encourage talented individuals to stay with us.
3) That the Council adopts practices for recording sexual and gender insight in line with Stonewall's guidance	Agreed	Stonewall uses anonymous surveys and recommends taking a snapshot of employees at different parts of the employee life cycle. Hence this approach is not all about getting staff to declare, it is also about using other insight channels to understand issues.
4) That the Council investigates the barriers to individuals disclosing their ethnicity, sexuality and faith-based identities	Agreed	
5) That the Council continues to increase the promotion of itself as an employer to those within the City	Agreed	This will build on existing good practice that was in operation pre Covid where the Council was using a variety of approaches to promote job opportunities within the local community, including: holding recruitment roadshows in local community venues; attendance at local job fairs and careers events in local schools. The next cohort of apprentices will be introduced into the organisation in the coming year and will naturally provide an opportunity to promote the Council as a relevant and viable employer.

<p>6) That the Council further develops communications and recruitment approaches to target women from minoritised backgrounds</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>Each recruitment campaign is currently reviewed to ensure that the vacancy attracts as diverse a group of applicants as possible. Further improvements are planned to improve the skills of under-represented staff; to use local community pathways to advertise and promote opportunities and to ensure diversity at each stage in the recruitment process.</p>
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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 03/11/2020 concerning the Waterways report

Response provided by Cabinet Member for a Safer, Healthy Oxford, Councillor Louise Upton

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council investigates the appetite amongst neighbouring authorities for establishing a shared Waterways Coordinator post	Agree	The work programme with the Waterways Officer will be agreed to include contacting neighbouring authorities with a proposal outline to gauge the level of support.
2) That the Council establishes and administers a forum of key waterways stakeholders to coordinate strategic policy and activity.	Partially Agree	There are a range of forums in existence, working with key partners we will review the need for any new or additional meeting with stakeholders. This will align with the work in recommendation 1.
3) That the Council ensures the provision of facilities for boats to dispose of waste, empty sewer tanks and take on fresh water at Redbridge Paddocks or an alternative venue locally.	Agree	The Council has noted the lack of facilities within the City. Where feasible, the Council will encourage the provision of new facilities through instructing our planning officers, who have the key relationship with developers, to actively explore providing these amenities.
4) That the Council explores the option of community ownership for moorings when ownership and management arrangements are decided.	Agree	This will be explored where feasible, through research into models adopted elsewhere in the UK.
5) That the Council incorporates the provision of electric charging points for boats into its strategic development plans for the waterways, particularly in those areas where moorings are in close proximity to housing and schools.	Agree	Where feasible this will be explored, an opportunity may exist if there is scope to develop the community ownership model of mooring. It may require capital expenditure and needs detailed feasibility to understand if the desired outcome is possible at appropriate locations.
6) That the Council includes within its refreshed Housing and Homelessness Strategy a section to consider the implications and responsibilities arising from endorsing the use of boats as homes in Oxford.	Agree	Council recognises that boats provide one of the few affordable housing options in the city. We will explore the implications in the next housing strategy refresh.

<p>7) That the Council proactively seeks to increase the number of projects in waterways to the east and south of the city.</p>	<p>Disagree</p>	<p>At present the focus is on key waterways, the Thames/Isis and Oxford Canal. Other waterways within the city can be examined to understand the needs in those areas. However, with the limited resource currently available, priority is centred on the key waterways links. In due course this will be revisited.</p>
<p>8) That the Council refreshes the Waterways Vision document to reference the Council’s motion on bathing water quality.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Reference can be made to this in the Waterways Vision document, while it must also be recognised that the key players on water quality are Thames Water and the Environment Agency.</p>