

To: Cabinet
Date: 21 July 2021
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Oxford City Council EV Strategy

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations concerning the Oxford City Council EV Strategy
Key decision:	Yes
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Liz Wade, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Tom Hayes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendation in the body of this report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction and overview

1. At its meeting on 14 July 2021, the Scrutiny Committee considered a report to Cabinet concerning the Council's EV (Electric Vehicle) Strategy.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Tom Hayes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford for presenting the report and answering questions, and Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy, for authoring the report and supporting the meeting.

Summary and recommendation

3. For reasons of timeliness the Chair requested that the Cabinet report be only briefly introduced by Councillor Tom Hayes, Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, a report which sought approval to proceed with commissioning the Council's EV strategy and so determine its future role in the EV world. The majority of the Committee's time was devoted to questions and discussion.
4. Issues that were considered in detail by the Committee included:
 - Textual tweaks of wording pertaining to disabled access and electric vehicles
 - Situating the EV strategy within the wider context of traffic-reduction
 - The overall costs of the strategy and the Council's role vis a vis those of central government and the private sector
 - The impacts of differential access to charging points amongst wealthier and poorer areas of the City
 - Ethical investment principles
5. The Committee makes four recommendations relating to i) the importance of prioritisation, ii) the wording of the document in relation to Connecting Oxfordshire, iii) the dynamic relationship between the EV strategy and the Zero Emissions Zone and the need to plan for this, and iv) investigating extending ethical investment principles to the delivery of the EV strategy.
6. It is brought to Cabinet's attention that these recommendations were agreed by Scrutiny via a voting process because there was not a strong consensus on all recommendations. In addition, the votes that did take place had high numbers of abstentions and were not carried by a majority of the Committee. These recommendations arising are presented to Cabinet on the basis that they are the outcome of carried votes, but that recommendations one and three were nevertheless endorsed only by a minority of the Committee.

Prioritisation

7. As referenced in paragraphs 16 to 18 in the Cabinet report the EV strategy seeks to broaden access to and usage of zero emitting vehicles within a broader strategic context of seeking to reduce the overall number of private cars on the road. A query was raised at the Committee that whilst the Cabinet report contains possibilities, concerns and questions in need of answering, it does not require the identification of priorities by whoever is commissioned to draft the EV strategy as to how the EV strategy will contribute to this wider strategic aim. This point by a member of the was not uniformly accepted by the Committee, with some strong disagreement put forward. Nevertheless, it was agreed by the Committee that a recommendation be made seeking that the commissioned document seeks to identify within the EV strategy's remit priorities of how private car numbers and usage might be reduced in the city.

Recommendation 1: That when the Council commissions the EV infrastructure study it asks those who produce it to come up with a clear recommended prioritisation for EV infrastructure roll-out which takes

account of the wider policy context of reducing overall private car ownership and use in the city. The prioritisation should be clear, widely understandable by and acceptable to the public and the report should indicate how it could be applied in practice.

Connecting Oxfordshire

8. S. 16 of the Cabinet report states that "... Electric Vehicles are not a panacea. Everyone has the right to move anywhere, anytime, yet traffic is an issue in the city and the Council is already committed to schemes to cut congestion, including Connecting Oxford..." It was questioned at the Committee whether the statement that the Council was already committed to Connecting Oxford was fully reflective of the Council's position as agreed by Cabinet in January 2020. At that meeting it resolved "to endorse the overall approach proposed [in the Cabinet paper] as the basis for further scheme and business case development of Connecting Oxford proposals in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council." It was suggested that commitment to Connecting Oxford and an agreement to further develop the business case may not necessarily be the same, and it was agreed to recommend that the document be amended to reflect the agreement made by Cabinet in January 2020.

Recommendation 2: That the Council amends paragraph 16 of the report to remove reference to the Council already being committed to Connecting Oxford, and states instead that the council has agreed to further scheme and business case development.

Planning for Interactions with Other Policies

9. As highlighted above, the point was made at and recognised by the Committee that the EV Strategy does not stand alone in seeking to reduce transport-related emissions and traffic in the city, but works alongside other policies and activities, for example the zero emissions zone (ZEZ). An important issue to note is that the relationship between the two is not static but dynamic; the success of the EV strategy, which seeks to increase the take-up of electric vehicles, will reduce the proportion of polluting vehicles which are subject to the levy for driving within the ZEZ. A consequence of this could well be an increase in traffic within the ZEZ. It was recommended by Scrutiny that planning be undertaken to identify the likely impacts on the ZEZ of the EV strategy, decide whether they are desirable, and plan corrective action if not.

Recommendation 3: That the Council includes within the EV strategy an evolution plan for the ZEZ for when it ceases to serve its congestion-reducing function due to increased EV take-up.

Ethical Investment

10. The Committee is supportive of Council's decision to adopt an ethical investment policy which proscribes direct investment 'in businesses whose activities and practices pose a risk of serious harm to individuals or groups, or whose activities are inconsistent with the Council's mission and values.' Specifically, the inclusion of environmentally harmful activities, such as pollution, destruction of habitat and

use of fossil fuels within that definition fits well alongside the aim of the EV strategy in improving usage of and access to zero emitting vehicles.

11. The consistency of the EV strategy and ethical investment policy indicate a clarity of vision across the Council. However, the influence of the ethical investment policy on the EV strategy is likely to be minimal to non-existent because the Council is likely to make few, if any, direct investments as part of the EV strategy. The concern raised at the Committee concerned the fact that the EV strategy will require infrastructure, and that such infrastructure could possibly be delivered by companies who engage in practices which are not commensurate with the Council's mission and values. Particularly, concerns were raised about exploitative mining practices in the Global South.
12. The Committee recognises that addressing this lacuna would be complex, and to extend the ethical principles of its investment policy into other areas, such as the delivery of the EV strategy, would have far-reaching consequences and involve trade-offs. However, the Committee would like to see the Council's aims achieved not only through what it delivers, but how it delivers them and for the risks, consequences and practicability of extending its ethical investment principles to the delivery of the EV strategy to be looked at in greater depth.
13. Further, the Committee would like to recommend explicit inclusion within the ethical investment policy of exploitative mining practices and arms trading as examples of activities which would put companies outside the Council's willingness to invest in.

Recommendation 4a): That the Council investigates the practicability of not partnering with or commissioning organisations relating to the EV strategy in which it would be unable to invest because of its ethical investment policy

Recommendation 4b): That the Council amends its ethical investment policy to make explicit reference to exploitative mining practices and arms trading as proscribed activities.

Further Consideration

14. As a document written to enable the early stages of the process of developing the Council's EV strategy the Cabinet report necessarily contains few concrete proposals. An offer has been made by the Cabinet member to return to Scrutiny in March 2022 when the strategy draft has been developed, which the Committee is likely to accept.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 14/07/2021 concerning the Council EV Strategy

A verbal response will be provided by Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, Tom Hayes

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That when the Council commissions the EV infrastructure study it asks those who produce it to come up with a clear recommended prioritisation for EV infrastructure roll-out which takes account of the wider policy context of reducing overall private car ownership and use in the city. The prioritisation should be clear, widely understandable by and acceptable to the public and the report should indicate how it could be applied in practice.		
2) That the Council amends paragraph 16 of the report to remove reference to the Council already being committed to Connecting Oxford, and states instead that the council has agreed to further scheme and business case development.		
3) That the Council includes within the EV strategy an evolution plan for the ZEZ for when ceases to serve its congestion-reducing function due to increased EV take-up.		

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