

To: Cabinet
Date: 10 November 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.

3. This report returned to Scrutiny on 08 September 2021 for sign-off in light of the fact that a number of members had expressed difficulty with the audio at the meeting. It was wished to check that the report did indeed represent the wishes of Scrutiny in making recommendations to Cabinet. A number of amendments have been made to the report as a result, meaning this report is not identical to the one which was submitted to Cabinet in July 2021.

Summary and recommendation

4. 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.
5. 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
6. The Committee makes three recommendations relating to i) the wording of the document in relation to Connecting Oxfordshire, ii) the relationship between the EV strategy and the Zero Emissions Zone and the need to plan for this, and iii) investigating extending ethical investment principles to the delivery of the EV strategy.

Connecting Oxfordshire

7. 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 1: 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

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). The ZEZ is primarily expected to promote modal shift in transport, but it will also incentivise the take up of electric vehicles, which will not be subject to the levy. The Committee seeks to ensure that the Council's plans for EV charging infrastructure takes the impacts of wider transport-related strategies, such as the ZEZ, into account.

Recommendation 2: That the Council, in its planning for the adequacy of future EV charging infrastructure, ensures that the incentivising impact of other policies on demand for electric vehicles, such as the ZEZ, is taken into account

Ethical Investment

8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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 3a): 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 3b): That the Council amends its ethical investment policy to make explicit reference to exploitative mining practices and arms trading as proscribed activities.

Further Consideration

12. 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

Response provided by Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, Tom Hayes

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Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) 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.	No	This Council supports the introduction of Connecting Oxford and on 9 September 2020, Scrutiny requested: <i>That the Council continues to employ its best endeavours in working with its partners to realise the plans for the Zero Emissions Zone and Connecting Oxford.</i>
2) That the Council, in its planning for the adequacy of future EV charging infrastructure, ensures that the incentivising impact of other policies on demand for electric vehicles, such as the ZEZ, is taken into account	Yes	The EV Strategy and Implementation Plan is being commissioned to help inform the Council on how rising demand for EV charging in Oxford could best cover the years up to 2030 by which point, Oxfordshire County Council’s modelling suggests the clear majority of private vehicles in the city will be EV. Demand for EVs is being driven by a variety of factors including an increased focus by vehicle manufacturers, technology improvement, environmental awareness, and the looming deadline of 2030 after which no new petrol or diesel cars can be sold in the UK. Locally, the ZEZ may also be a factor, and this will be taken into account in the EV Strategy.
3) 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	No	4a) Electric vehicle charging is a rapidly growing market with different operators including both relatively small businesses and global corporations. The purpose of the EV strategy is to enable Oxford City Council to do more itself, in particular in the areas of the city which would typically be last in the queue to receive charging infrastructure—ours is an approach grounded in fairness and social justice.

<p><i>3b) That the Council amends its ethical investment policy to make explicit reference to exploitative mining practices and arms trading as proscribed activities.</i></p>	<p>No</p>	<p>We also believe that engagement is key to shape partners' approaches because dialogue and the airing of differences can get us to a better place. It also ensures that citizens and communities do not lose out on the EV infrastructure that they are requesting in order to be part of a greener and fairer future. We all believe as local councillors that the City Council to which we are elected has an important voice to raise and we will continue to raise it to advance our values.</p> <p>4b) This is not linked to the commissioning of an EV Strategy.</p>
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