

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 15 June 2022  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Oxford's Economic Strategy – Consultation Report and Recommendations

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Lizzy Diggins, Scrutiny Committee Vice-Chair
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Enabling an Inclusive Economy
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b>	

<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix A</b>	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

## Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 08 June 2022 to consider a report concerning Oxford's Economic Strategy. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 15 June 2022, recommends that Cabinet notes the recommended changes to the Consultation version of Oxford's Economic Strategy and resolves to adopt and publish the revised version of Oxford's Economic Strategy. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Brown (Leader and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships), Carolyn Ploszynski (Head of Regeneration and Economy) and Matt Peachey (Economic Development Manager) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

## Summary and recommendations

2. The Committee received a request to speak on Oxford's Economic Strategy and invited the representative from Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment to make the address prior to its consideration of the item. A number of points were raised, including:
  - That 80% of respondents to the consultation had felt that the Strategy had not fully captured the issues and, in their view, this feedback had been either dismissed or addressed only in minor ways in the report.
  - Oxford had 99% employment and jobs growth in sectors such as life sciences would only serve to exacerbate inequality.
  - The Strategy would not support the aim of achieving net zero by 2040.
  - Only one individual who identified as being from a BAME group had responded to the consultation.
  - Members had insufficient time to digest the report prior to its adoption by Cabinet and it should be deferred to enable further engagement and work on the aims of the Strategy and to ensure that it would be coherent, deliverable and fit for the future.
3. Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships introduced the report and clarified that the Strategy aimed to address existing planned growth, as set out in Local Plans, and ensure that growth would be inclusive. The Strategy reflected a range of other strategies related to housing, planning, etc. but was focused specifically on the economy. The work on the Strategy had started pre-pandemic and there had been a good level of engagement from residents and stakeholders. The context was that notwithstanding the national economic challenges, Oxford's economy was growing strongly and this was clearly evident, for example in the increasing demand for workspaces. It was necessary for the City to plan for the growth that was happening.
4. The Economic Development Manager added that the Council had done its best to listen to the consultation feedback. The inclusion and zero carbon themes had been well supported but the global theme less so, and efforts had been made to make this clearer. Oxford had a globally significant and impactful economy and it was about making that impact positive, it wasn't about greed or globalisation. Lots of work was underway to manage growth in an inclusive way, such as the Meanwhile in Oxfordshire programme, the Oxford Living Wage, affordable workspaces, biodiversity work, the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme, and community employment benefits from major developments such as Oxford North. It was accepted that there was a need to engage better with BAME groups and young people in particular.
5. The Committee discussed that consulting on strategy documents was inherently difficult and noted that the Council had used a Citizen Panel to test consultation approaches and there had also been workshops. However the Committee agreed there was a need to consider different ways of engaging with diverse groups.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council seeks to more effectively engage with diverse communities as part of future consultation exercises, with a focus on using different methods of engagement to get responses from a wider demographic – and in particular increased responses from minoritised groups and young people.***

6. During discussion about the term 'affordable housing' used in the report, the Committee highlighted that there were various definitions and it was important to clarify that the Council was primarily talking about social housing and, to a lesser extent, shared ownership and keyworker housing schemes.

***Recommendation 2: That the Council clarifies the definition of affordable housing being used within Oxford's Economic Strategy.***

7. The Committee noted that one of the objectives of the Economic Growth Steering Board was to diversify membership. It agreed that diversity of membership on that Board was crucial and made particular reference to the inclusion of Trade Union representation. Committee members also highlighted the fact that Trade Unions were not referenced in the report and suggested that there should be explicit mention of Trade Unions as a key driver of elements of economic development. In addition, the Committee noted the absence of any mention of the Third Sector within the report, and the valuable contribution it made to the local economy beyond the contributions of more traditional businesses. It suggested that the Third Sector and its contributions should be explicitly referenced in the report.

***Recommendation 3: That the Council seeks to have Trade Union representation on the Economic Growth Steering Board.***

***Recommendation 4: That the Council makes explicit reference to Trade Unions within Oxford's Economic Strategy.***

***Recommendation 5: That the Council makes reference to the Third Sector within Oxford's Economic Strategy and ensures a bigger focus on the Third Sector's contribution to the local economy.***

8. During discussion about the 'success factors' outlined in the Strategy, the Committee suggested that there should be a biodiversity metric under the environmental success factor. The Committee also suggested that there should be a Key Performance Indicator ratio based on the number of working age people living in Oxford and the number of jobs in the City.

***Recommendation 6: That the Council includes reference to biodiversity under the 'environmental success factor' outlined in Oxford's Economic Strategy.***

***Recommendation 7: That the Council develops an additional Key Performance Indicator ratio based on the number of working age people living in Oxford and number of jobs in the City for inclusion in Oxford's Economic Strategy.***

9. Referencing the section in the report which related to balancing competing priorities (economic vs. social and environmental), the Committee highlighted a need to consider how to communicate how those different priorities were assessed. It was suggested that this could be achieved by the Council adopting a Doughnut Economics model.

***Recommendation 8: That the Council seeks to develop a clearer way of demonstrating how competing priorities (economic vs. social and environmental) have been assessed.***

10. The Committee raised a number of points related to public transport, active travel, transport strategy, air quality, food production and land usage, such as sites for housing and the protection of green spaces. It was noted that, while related to the economy, these issues were being addressed elsewhere.
11. Towards the end of discussion on this item, the Committee noted that Brexit was leading to staff shortages in a number of key sectors and pointed out that Brexit, and the challenges associated with it, was not referenced in the report. In the Committee's view, this was an obvious omission.

***Recommendation 9: That the Council makes explicit reference to Brexit and the challenges it brings within Oxford's Economic Strategy***

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