

To: Council

Date: 03 October 2022

Report of: Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Scrutiny Committee Update Report

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update Council on the activities of the Scrutiny function
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Dr Chris Smowton, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation:	That Council resolves to note the update report.

Appendices
None

Introduction

1. This report provides an update on Scrutiny activity during the period from 01 July 2022 to 16 September 2022.
2. During this reporting period, Cllr Marie Tidball resigned as a member of the Council and there is thus a vacancy on the Committee which will be filled following the by-election. The Chair and Committee thank former Cllr Tidball for her contribution to the Committee's work.

Scrutiny Committee 2022/23

3. During this reporting period, the Committee met three times, on 05 July; 02 August; and 06 September. A summary of each meeting is set out below.

Scrutiny Committee: 05 July 2022

4. At its meeting on 05 July 2022, the Committee considered a report on Standing Panel and Review Group arrangements for the 2022/23 municipal year. The Committee agreed to establish a Climate and Environment Panel, noting that the remit, proposed business, and meeting dates would be agreed at a future Scrutiny Committee meeting. The Committee agreed a membership level of four Members to sit on the Panel, deferred agreement of a Panel Chair/Lead Member to a future Scrutiny Committee meeting, and invited nominations for membership from political groups, to be agreed at a future Scrutiny Committee meeting. In addition, the Committee agreed to establish a Budget Review Group, comprising the membership of the Finance and Performance Panel, noting that the proposed scope would be agreed at a future Scrutiny Committee meeting. It is anticipated that the Budget Review Group will begin its work in December 2022, once the proposed scope has been agreed by the Scrutiny Committee.
5. In addition to consideration of Standing Panel and Review Group arrangements for the 2022/23 municipal year, three substantive reports were considered on 05 July 2022:
 - Oxford City Council Safeguarding Report 2021/22 (*Cabinet report*)
 - Oxford City Council's Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (*Cabinet report*)
 - Growth Fund Cycle Routes (*Cabinet report*)
6. The Safeguarding Report was the annual report to Cabinet setting out how the Council had fulfilled its statutory safeguarding duties. The Committee was reminded that the Council had achieved a 'best practice' finding for the fifth consecutive year. The Committee noted the key achievements of the safeguarding work, as outlined. One recommendation was made to Cabinet which encouraged the Council to work with the County Council and other local organisations to ensure that digital inclusion and digital safeguarding were covered in safeguarding training.
7. The EV Infrastructure Strategy set out the Council's approach to ensuring a robust, quality, and equitable deployment of charging infrastructure across the city. It noted that an Implementation Plan would follow in the autumn. Three recommendations were made to Cabinet, two relating to charging infrastructure and one regarding whether the Council's projected electric vehicle uptake figures were realistic.
8. The Growth Fund Cycle Routes report sought approval for variations to cycle route schemes which were approved by Cabinet in March 2020 and had subsequently been deemed undeliverable owing to local opposition or other approvals needed. The Committee noted that there were restrictions on what could be delivered in accordance with the Growth Deal funding agreement. Two recommendations were made to Cabinet, each related to public communications. One called for clear messaging to explain the rationale for the changes and the other sought to ensure that, where appropriate, Vision Zero was highlighted in communications, to raise awareness.

Cabinet Responses to Recommendations: July 2022

9. The following reports were submitted to Cabinet in July 2022:

- Oxford City Council Safeguarding Report (*Cabinet report*)
 - Oxford City Council's Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (*Cabinet report*)
 - Growth Fund Cycle Routes (*Cabinet report*)
 - Waterways Update (*Scrutiny-commissioned report*)
10. In addition, Cabinet agreed responses to the recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Panel and endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee in relation to Tenant Involvement and Empowerment. The Housing and Homelessness Panel had commissioned a review of these areas of work. Nineteen recommendations were made, many of which involved formalising or regularising existing tenant involvement activity.
11. The vast majority of recommendations received positive responses from Cabinet.

Scrutiny Committee: 02 August 2022

12. The substantive report considered by the Scrutiny Committee on 02 August 2022 was the Asset Management Strategy 2021-2031. This report to Cabinet sought approval for a strategy which was intended to provide an ongoing framework for the management of the Council's property assets, prior to adoption by Council. The Committee explored the strategy in detail and made six recommendations to Cabinet, mostly relating to environmental, financial, and ethical questions arising from the strategy.

Cabinet Responses to Recommendations: August 2022

13. The following report was submitted to Cabinet in August 2022:
- Asset Management Strategy 2021-2031 (*Cabinet report*)
14. Of the six recommendations, four recommendations were accepted in full and two recommendations were agreed in part.

Scrutiny Committee: 06 September 2022

15. The main business before the Committee at its meeting on 06 September 2022 was to consider the following two Cabinet reports:
- Oxford Local Plan 2040 Preferred Options Regulation 18 Consultation Document (*Cabinet report*)
 - Lease of Council Office Accommodation at St Aldate's Chambers (*Cabinet report*)
16. The Committee explored the Local Plan Consultation Document at some length and raised a large number of questions, grouped around the themes of: Consultation and engagement methodology and plan; Development sites and areas of focus; Net zero decarbonisation, biodiversity and climate change. The Committee noted that over 4000 responses had been received to the previous Local Plan Consultation and was keen that such levels of engagement should be

achieved again or, even, surpassed. Twelve recommendations were submitted to Cabinet. These were largely aimed at seeking to make the consultation process as accessible as possible, so that responses could be gathered from all areas of the community. Recommendations were also made in relation to clarifying references to some elements of the document, and highlighting their importance.

17. The Committee considered the report relating to the lease of Council Office Accommodation. It explored issues relating to terms and conditions and accessibility and made one recommendation relating to secure cycle storage at the Town Hall.

Cabinet Responses to Recommendations: September 2022

18. The following reports were submitted to Cabinet in September 2022:
 - Oxford Local Plan 2040 Preferred Options Regulation 18 Consultation Document
 - Lease of Council Office Accommodation at St Aldate's Chambers
19. The twelve recommendations on the Local Plan Consultation and the one relating to Council Office Accommodation were all accepted.

Housing and Homelessness Panel

20. The Housing and Homelessness Panel did not meet during this reporting period.

Finance and Performance Panel

21. The Finance and Performance Panel met twice during this reporting period.
22. At its meeting on 07 July 2022, the Panel considered a Cabinet report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-24 to 2026-27. The Panel considered the report and identified further Scrutiny-commissioned work it would request going forward. No recommendations were submitted to Cabinet. In addition, the Panel agreed the list of Key Performance Indicators it wished to monitor during 2022/23 as part of its Performance Monitoring function.
23. At its meeting on 05 September 2022, the Panel considered reports on:
 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023/24;
 - Integrated Performance Report Q1;
 - Treasury Management Annual Report.
24. Members raised questions and explored these reports in full. No recommendations were submitted to Cabinet.

Companies Scrutiny Panel

25. The Companies Scrutiny Panel joined the Shareholder and Joint Venture meeting as non-voting members on 28 July 2022 to consider reports relating to Oxford Direct Services. This was the second meeting under the new operating arrangements which are intended to enable more effective and efficient scrutiny of

the Shareholder function. Commercial confidentiality prevents the provision of a summary report.

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