

Appendix A

Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the responsible Cabinet Members to recommendations made by the Child Poverty Review Group. These recommendations were endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 08 June 2022. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	Responsible Cabinet Member	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>1) That the Council discusses whether to adopt an Oxford Good Employers Charter as an expansion of the Oxford Living Wage and promote a Charter instead of the Oxford Living Wage alone.</p> <p>31</p>	Cllr Brown		<p>With over 100 Oxford Living Wage (OLW) employers including both universities, there is a real opportunity to build on the OLW, in order to further embed better standards of prosperity and inclusion. This aim is highlighted within Oxford's Economic Strategy. There is already complementary activity underway that allows this recommendation to be adopted in significant form. The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP), which the City Council is taking a leading role on, is developing the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Charter (alongside around 100 local partners including local authorities), which we will promote alongside the OLW. It is very similar in nature to what is proposed and has significant buy-in. The Charter is aimed at organisations and individuals who wish to demonstrate their targeted commitment to its principles and to making a thriving inclusive economy in Oxfordshire that works for local people and businesses alike.</p> <p>Inclusive economies increase the social benefits that flow from, and feed into, economic activity. By reducing inequality and improving opportunities for people and communities, they create tangible benefits for businesses. Signatories to the Charter will be able to</p>

			make a range of pledges on ways in which they will support the aims of the OIEP Charter. These pledges are being devised across a number of inclusive employer themes, which organisations will be able to make. These can be cross referenced with the broader recommendations of the Child Poverty Review Group Report and adopted where appropriate.
2) That the Council appoints a living wage/good employment champion.	Cllr Brown		This is currently the responsibility of the Leader of the Council so is held at the most senior elected level.
3) That the Council appoints a child poverty champion.	Cllr Brown		This responsibility is held by the Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities.
4) That the Council continues to communicate forcefully to central government the impacts of the current inadequate welfare system, and pushes for one which adequately meets the needs of those relying on it.	Cllr Rehman		The Council continues to use all opportunities in communications directly with Government and through representative bodies such as the Local Government Association (LGA) and District Councils' Network (DCN) to make the case for a welfare system that meets need locally, in particular the need to raise the local authority allowance for claimable housing benefit. This includes officers attending quarterly meetings with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) at which they regularly discuss the impacts of local and national welfare issues.
5) That the Council commits to maintaining advice centre funding on, at minimum, an inflation-adjusted basis for the next four years.	Cllr Rehman		Our commitment to the advice centres has been well documented as part of the grants review. The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) shows our overall commitment through the Community Impact Fund and commissioned services. Like all local authorities we are under increasing financial pressure, but will do all we can to protect our contribution to these valuable services. All decisions about the grant funding envelope are taken as part of the Council's usual budget process, with the availability of government funding a major factor which we cannot control, while decisions on individual grants to organisations are considered through the grant allocation process.

<p>6) That the Council continues to resource challenges to viability assessments which, if accepted, would result in significant shortfalls from the Local Plan requirements.</p>	<p>Cllr Upton</p>	<p>The report states that “Whilst the Council’s Local Plan states that for qualifying developments, 50% must be made available for social housing, typically developers seek to reduce this on the grounds that doing so makes the development unviable.” This is incorrect, in two ways.</p> <p>First, the Oxford Local Plan 2036 policy H2 as adopted required that a minimum of 50% of qualifying developments should be for affordable housing, of which at least 80% should be social housing. The remainder could be provided as intermediate forms of affordable housing, which includes homes for rent, shared ownership and so on. However since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2020 the Government has introduced its First Homes policy, which has altered the percentages of different forms of affordable housing required by policy H2. As notified by the Council in a Technical Advice Note published in March 2022, the Government now requires that 25% of all affordable housing must be First Homes, which are a form of affordable housing for sale at a discounted price to first time buyers. The Government further required that the total value of affordable housing captured by the revised policy should be the same. As a result of this the requirement that a minimum of 50% of dwellings on qualifying developments be affordable remains, but the split of tenures is now a minimum of 25% First Homes, a minimum of 70% social housing and up to 5% intermediate tenures.</p> <p>Secondly, it is not “typical” that developers seek to reduce the percentage on viability grounds in Oxford. The Oxford Local Plan 2036 was adopted after changes in national planning policy guidance made clear that the viability of policies – including affordable housing policy requirements – should be tested as part of the plan</p>
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<p>7) That the Council exerts all the influence it can to see developers building homes for social rent rather than shared ownership.</p>	<p>Cllr Upton</p>	<p>As the Oxford Local Plan 2036 and the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Oxford 2023 to 2028 both make clear, there is a shortage of all forms of affordable housing in the city, whether for social rent, for shared ownership or for other forms of intermediate tenure. The priority for the Council is therefore to pursue all forms of affordable housing tenure not as alternatives to one another, but together. Recently completed shared ownership schemes built by the City Council's housing company OX Place have been highly successful, showing the demand that exists for them is substantial.</p> <p>The Council set out its minimum requirements for</p>

		<p>affordable housing and the minimum requirements for particular types of tenures for all qualifying sites in policy H2 of the Local Plan. The mixture of tenures has been subsequently altered by the Government's First Homes policy, as outlined in the response to recommendation 6 above. In determining a planning application the Council can only take into account whether or not these minimum requirements are met; it cannot require a different mixture of tenures through the planning process.</p> <p>However the Council is able, through direct delivery (with OX Place, the Council's wholly owned housing company, or otherwise), to increase the numbers of affordable housing units on particular sites through the use of Homes England grants or other forms of external financial support such as the Oxfordshire Growth Deal. While sites would still have to meet the minimum requirements in the Local Plan for affordable housing and social rented housing, using grant funding in this way allows additional units of affordable housing to be built, of all tenures. On larger schemes having a mixture of tenures is desirable from a place-making point of view, as well as helping to address the demand for all forms of different affordable housing tenure.</p> <p>Recent schemes that have used additional or external funding in this way include Gibbs Crescent (developed by A2Dominion) - 140 homes; Elsfeld Hall – 26 homes, and Cannons Court (OX Place) - 38 homes; Littlemore Park (Catalyst) - 273 homes; Barton Park (Places for People) - an additional 96 homes; and William Morris Close (L&G) - 86 homes.</p>
8) That on top of the Council's prioritisation of retrofitting Council homes with the worst EPC ratings, vulnerability of the tenants is also used as a means of prioritisation.	Cllr L Smith	As the Council is unlikely to have sufficient capital funds to meet the costs of retrofit of its housing stock, it is seeking all opportunities to secure additional funding for this purpose – particularly from Government. Each

		<p>Government retrofit funding round sets out detailed qualifying criteria which in some cases includes an assessment of means of the financial means of the tenant and in other cases focuses simply on the existing EPC rating of the property.</p> <p>The Council will seek to ensure that vulnerable tenants benefit from retrofit programmes. As the criteria typically changes from one bidding round to the next, it is impossible for the Council to determine to what extent the financial needs of tenants will form part of the targeting approach for future retrofit programmes. Therefore our primary focus is on identifying those properties with poor EPC ratings and hence works that will achieve both the largest financial savings for the tenant and reduction in carbon emissions. As around 2,500 council homes are below EPC C rating and almost all 8,000 will require works to get to net zero carbon emissions – it is planned that all Oxford tenants will benefit in due course.</p>
9) That the Council includes within its workforce equalities plan a specific section on developing opportunities for young people.	Cllr Chapman	<p>This is something we have already tackled with our apprentice programme and, budgets permitting, is something we have planned for next year. The work involves our new Diversity and Inclusion Specialist, our Recruitment Consultant and our Learning and Development Consultant. It's about attracting and developing local talent and meeting future workforce needs.</p>
10) That the Council includes within its staff survey questions about whether the Council is a family-friendly employer.	Cllr Chapman	<p>We are reviewing the staff survey questions and will consider this for inclusion.</p>
11) That the Council considers and agrees a cross-party motion committing to formally adopting the socio-economic duty and using its influence to encourage local partner institutions to do the same.	Cllr Brown	<p>On 03 October 2022 Council passed a motion requesting that the Head of Corporate Strategy submit a report to Cabinet with options to:</p> <p>a. Implement the Socio-economic Duty within all Council policies over the next eighteen months; and</p>

			b. Encourage partnership institutions, including Oxford University, to adopt the Socio-economic Duty.
12) That the Council adopts the socio-economic duty within the next 12 months.	Cllr Brown		Any decision over adoption by the Council of the socio-economic duty - and if so, the associated timeframe - should be subject to the options set out in the report to Cabinet, including an assessment of resources needed. Cabinet should base any decision around adoption following an assessment of those options. Given the potential breadth of scope of the socio-economic duty, and potential need for additional budget to support the work, it is unlikely it could be adopted into all areas of Council policy within the next 12 months.
13) That the Leader of the Council's portfolio is expanded to include poverty prevention.	Cllr Brown		This is part of our work on encouraging the principles of an inclusive economy.
14) That the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive are identified as the lead councillor and officer for implementing the socio-economic duty.	Cllr Brown		Arrangements for any implementation of the socio-economic duty should be considered as part of the options report to Cabinet requested in the 03 October 2022 Council motion which was passed by Council.
15) That the Council develops clear metrics on tackling and preventing poverty, and includes those metrics within the KPIs it monitors in its Quarterly Integrated Performance Report	Cllr Rehman		<p>As part of our Thriving Communities Strategy we have implemented a commitment to meaningful measures. We have created a meaningful and balanced approach to measurement, ensuring we can sensibly track our performance and progress, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use numbers so we are aware of how many people use our services. • Use metrics to demonstrate value for money. • We will targets and laid out in our action plan to increase inclusivity and address inequality. • Use techniques such as collecting and publishing the stories of our communities and their lived experience of living in the City, case studies and videos to bring outcomes to life and learn from people's lived experiences <p>A progress update will be presented to Cabinet annually.</p>
16) That the Council produces a Poverty Strategy within the next eighteen months.	Cllr Rehman		Following an extensive piece of work and two-month city conversation with hundreds of residents and partners the

			<p>Council's Thriving Communities Strategy was agreed by cabinet in January 2023. This Strategy consumes our Children and Young Person's Strategy and continues our approach to use the Ready by 21 Framework.</p> <p>Ready by 21 Framework is a holistic approach to supporting young people, with a focus on young people who are the most disadvantaged. As such a separate strategy is not recommended as this will lead to duplication.</p>
38	17) That the Council agrees, subject to securing funding, to hold a poverty truth commission within the next 12 months.	Cllr Brown	<p>The impact of poverty on Oxford citizens and actions to prevent and alleviate poverty are a core focus of the Council's Thriving Communities Strategy, which was the subject of more than 100 separate engagement and consultation meetings with a very broad range of representative groups that reflect the diverse citizens of Oxford. As a result, tackling poverty and the impacts of poverty are at the centre of the <i>Thriving Communities Strategy</i> which is already adopted.</p> <p>It should be noted the Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change cost c£160,000 to stage. With limited budget and resources, any funding would better be directed at delivering the <i>Thriving Communities Strategy action plan on tackling inequalities</i> rather than on holding a poverty truth commission.</p>
	18) That the Council investigates options for securing external funding to support a poverty truth commission.	Cllr Brown	<p>See response to recommendation 17 above. Work required to secure external funding would still require resources to be diverted from other programmes of work.</p>
	19) That the Council collects and publishes the stories of young people and their experience of living in the City.	Cllr Munkonge	<p>Our Youth Ambition team produces an annual needs assessment; the lived experience of young people is central to how this is developed.</p>
	20) That the Council provides cash support for those receiving poverty-related support, not vouchers or support in kind.	Cllr Rehman	<p>The Council's primary support comes through the Oxford Community Impact Fund (OCIF). This fund replaces all former funding programmes for communities including:</p>

			<p>Culture Fund, Green Neighbourhood Scheme, Youth Ambition Fund, Youth Ambition Holiday Activities Fund, Small Grants and Open Bidding.</p> <p>If after reading the webpage linked above you have any queries, please email the Grants Team: grants@oxford.gov.uk</p>
21) That the Council contacts shops listed as accepting Household Support Grant or Healthy Start vouchers to ensure that they are accepted, and provides a service whereby individuals or agencies can highlight where problems occur.	Cllr Rehman		<p>Our plan with this round of the Household Support Fund as with previous versions has been to work with suppliers directly to avoid this from happening by purchasing items on behalf of residents. We have encountered a small number of issues with energy vouchers which we worked with the local retailers to resolve.</p>
22) That the Council finds out what the planned governance arrangements are for the local ICB 'place' or 'sub-place'	Cllr Brown / Cllr Upton	39	<p>The Oxfordshire Place-Based Partnership has officer representatives from the county's Primary Care Networks, hospital trusts, Healthwatch, Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action (OCVA) and County Council. Mark Stone, Chief Executive South & Vale Councils was, up until recently, the representative for City and District Councils – however as of June 2023, this role has passed to Caroline Green, Chief Executive Oxford City Council. It is anticipated that Caroline will hold this role for at least a year, pending the outcome of a review of arrangements.</p> <p>Caroline will engage with the City and the other District Councils through the Chief Executives group and through direct liaison with the City and District Health Liaison Officer – a role fulfilled by Oxford City Council.</p> <p>As a result of inputs from City and Districts via the Place Based Partnership, changes were made to the initial draft BOB ICP strategy to better ensure linkage with the breadth of our work that helps address health inequalities – including our work in both housing and leisure provision – which are both determinants of health.</p> <p>The Council has made good progress to connect with the</p>

			Integrated Care Board (ICB), this has included meetings with the Chair and CEO of the ICB and we have been involved in developing the new ICB Strategy. We attend the Health Inequalities Network and are represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board and the working group developing the new Oxfordshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy.
23) That the Council lobbies appropriately to ensure it is included in any local ICB 'place' or 'sub-place'.	Cllr Brown / Cllr Upton		See response to recommendation 22 above.
24) That the Council agrees an executive member to represent the Council, preferably the Leader and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Growth, Recovery and Partnerships and/or the Chief Executive as appropriate.	Cllr Brown		See response to recommendation 22 above. The Leader does represent the council on the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) and many other partnerships, and is joined by the Chief Executive on many of them.
25) That the Council's representatives seek the agreement of other Framework members to establish a sub-Group to the Recovery and Renewal Framework focusing on child poverty, or poverty prevention.	Cllr Brown		The countywide group that is taking forward work linked to the Recovery and Renewal Framework is the Communities Joint Working Group, which meets weekly. The Head of Community Services attends for Oxford City Council, and the City and District Health Liaison Officer also attends. The Group is currently focused on ensuring joined up responses to the cost of living crises. Consideration of the need to tackle Child Poverty is central in framing those responses.
26) That the Council requests that a number of KPIs which are both anti-poverty in nature and relate to the Framework's aims be developed and monitored on a quarterly basis.	Cllr Brown		There are existing recognised KPIs in place that relate to poverty, including some of those captured within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and in the Multiple Indices of Deprivation. These are used to ensure an accurate and holistic understanding of the nature of poverty and help design responses with other agencies. The creation of new KPIs that are not backed by ONS data are unlikely to be accurate or accepted by the wide range of partners that need to be engaged in work to address poverty.
27) That the Council proposes to OSP partners that the OSP adopts a new theme – embedding poverty	Cllr Brown		The new Chair of the Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP), Paul James, CEO River Learning Trust has proposed a

prevention in policy - and that for public sector organisations this is based around adopting the socio-economic duty.			key OSP theme should be tackling inequalities. The report requested for Cabinet on options to adopt the socio-economic duty will also consider, if adopted, how other stakeholders may be encouraged to follow suit.
28) That the Council proposes to OSP partners that they invite Graham Whitham for advice on how to take forward adopting the socio-economic duty.	Cllr Brown		See response to recommendation 27 above.
29) That the Council holds a discussion at its next Parish Council Forum to explore the issue of child poverty in Oxford, parish contributions and ways of integrating and improving efforts.	Cllr Brown		This sounds like a good idea, we would like to talk this through with the Forum to see how we best design this session.
30) That the Council seeks, in the Oxfordshire Food Strategy, that either food larders are made more accessible to those in poverty, or greater provision is made for them.	Cllr Rehman		The Council is an active member of the community food network, which the Council set up in partnership with Good Food Oxfordshire to support the system. This includes food banks, larders, fridges and other community food providers. We are working with partners to continue to strengthen the community food system through a variety of mechanisms including opening hours, volunteers, food quality, group buying, effective chilled/frozen storage and various other initiatives. A food strategy was endorsed by Cabinet in June 2022 and an action plan is now being developed. We are actively seeking to incorporate measures that ensure children have sufficient, healthy food into Oxford's Food Action Working Group's action plan.
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31) That the Council provides support to 'cash first' or 'food first' organisations as less stigmatising support mechanisms for those in poverty.	Cllr Rehman		We provide funding for a wide range of local not-for-profit groups, including 'cash first' or 'food first' organisations, via Oxford Community Impact Fund. Like all local authorities we are under increasing financial pressure and our grant funding is limited, but we also offer bespoke funding advice sessions to support organisations to source additional external funding from other grant giving bodies.
32) That the Council seeks that the Oxfordshire Food Strategy gives full consideration to how parents in poverty can access formula and baby food.	Cllr Rehman		The Oxfordshire Food Strategy was endorsed by Cabinet in June 2022. An Action plan will be developed that will follow early next year. The Community Food Network

			within the City is considering items such as closer ties with supermarkets, donations and crowdfunding that may help to support this.
33) That the Council leverages the relationships it has as a market host and landlord to explore how unsold food might be distributed to local organisations and people in need.	Cllr Rehman		The national picture is one at the moment where the amount of quality and healthy food surplus, such as what might be deemed 'staples' has reduced within the national and local systems. That said, in line with the above, we will continue to work with the community food system including SOFEA, food banks, larders and fridges to broker closer relationships with supermarkets. We will also look at (similar to what we delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic) where those that can afford, are able to donate specific food products.
34) That the Council donates its old iPads and laptops to Getting Oxfordshire Online.	Cllr Chapman		The Council will continue to donate old devices to Getting Oxfordshire Online to address digital poverty within the City, specifically in City schools. Circa 270 laptops and other devices were donated in 2021 and these were distributed through schools and to newly arrived migrants from Afghanistan and Ukraine. We will look at sharing some case studies with partners to encourage others to donate their old devices.
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35) That the Council provides financial education as part of its Youth Ambition work	Cllr Munkonge		The Youth Ambition team and partners will look to evolve some of the youth work curriculum to include this.
36) That the Council briefs debt and benefit advisors and current tenants on the current potential downsides of not being on an electric meter.	Cllr L Smith / Cllr Chapman		The Council's Energy Advice Officers advocate credit meters and smart meters together. Briefings for commissioned advice centres can be organised.
37) That the Council adopts as a policy in its forthcoming Oxford Plan a position that parks and public space, particularly in less affluent areas, must be safeguarded from development.	Cllr Upton		The current Local Plan explains how policies for parks and public spaces are derived from strategic documents in the evidence base, such as the City Council's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy which sets out which sites are needed and which might be surplus to requirements. All Local Plans are required to balance the need for housing alongside a wide range of social, environmental and economic needs using policies derived from evidence, and that will continue to be the case. Individual sites are assessed against those policies and

			that evidence base, and a blanket policy in the new Local Plan that overrode that assessment is unlikely to be found sound when the Plan is submitted for examination in due course.
38) That the Council discusses with the local universities and the Colleges whether, in light of the reducing access to sports and recreational facilities amongst poorer young people, access outside of term time to these facilities can be broadened.	Cllr Munkonge		This is a key action within the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy which was approved at Cabinet in July 2022. There are currently some sports clubs that can gain access to facilities. Oxford Brookes for example allows full community access to its facilities in Headington and Oxford Cricket Club has very good access at OUP. The Head of Community Services and Active Communities Manager regularly meet with the Directors of Sport for Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University. Engagement with each of the Oxford Colleges is more challenging, although we are continuing to pursue this.
39) That as part of the Council's review of the working of its hubs, it makes specific reference to the opportunities for closer working between them and the City's advice centres.	Cllr Rehman		Our hubs were a COVID-19 response and we now have four locality managers who coordinate a local network of staff and partners. The advice centres are an important part of this local network and we will continue to work very closely with them to support residents.
40) That the Council adopts as a strategic grants priority for its next round of funding poverty prevention, including youth club provision in more deprived areas.	Cllr Rehman		A report will be submitted to Cabinet annually to enable a transparent discussion of the following years' grants criteria and how each criteria is weighted.
41) That the Council makes available long-term unused garages to voluntary and community groups for storage of food or baby products.	Cllr Turner		Where we have sufficient demand for garages, we have undertaken works to ensure that garages are wind and watertight and have re-let them. Of the remaining vacant garages, in areas where there is little or no demand, the majority of those garages are in need of works to ensure they are wind and water tight. These works will be costly and in their current condition the units are unsuitable for storage. A piece of work is underway to review the garage portfolio including investigating alternative uses for the sites. At present we have a number of garages let to charities, who do fund the full costs. The current weekly cost for a

			garage is £20.40, and this option would be open to others.
42) That the Council produces a specific communications strategy – leaflets, videos and social media, but also personalised text and email – promoting access to sources of financial and food support.	Cllr Chapman		There is already an ongoing communications and engagement programme involving leaflets and videos on the provision of support in response to the cost of living crisis. This includes information on financial and food support.