OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

To:	**Cabinet**
Date:	**12 July 2023**
Report of:	**Scrutiny Committee**
Title of Report:	**Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter/Pledge**

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Lucy Pegg, Scrutiny Committee Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships
Corporate Priority:	Enable an Inclusive Economy
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24

Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 04 July 2023 to consider a report concerning the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter/Pledge. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 12 July 2023, recommends that Cabinet approves Oxford City Council's participation in the OIEP Charter and endorses a series of Oxford City Council pledges that officers in respective service areas will deliver against, within existing budget and for the duration of the current Medium Term Financial Strategy. Oxford City Council progress/performance against the pledges will be reported against annually and the results shared on Oxford City Council's website.

2. The Committee would like to thank Clayton Lavallin (Economic Development Team Leader) and Emma Coles (Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Manager) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Clayton Lavallin, Economic Development Team Leader and Emma Coles, Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Manager introduced the report. The OIEP was a countywide group which brought together employers, business, education, community groups and local government, including Oxford City Council, in the interests of working towards a more inclusive economy across Oxfordshire.

4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the rationale behind pledge selection; the distribution of proposed Council pledges across the six pledge themes; communications; whether the Council could go further with the pledges; and whether the Council's companies were engaged in the OIEP.

5. During discussion, the Committee noted that the full list of possible pledges was not included within the report and the list did not appear to be easily accessible online. In the interests of transparency and the ability for the Council to be held to account on what it pledged, the Committee agreed that the full list of pledges should be easily and prominently available online.

    Recommendation 1: That the Council requests that the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership ensures the full list of possible pledges is easily and prominently available online.

6. The Committee challenged the rationale for the selection, or non-selection, of pledges. The report highlighted that pledges had been selected from five out of the six pledge themes and the Committee was surprised to see that no pledges had been selected from the 'recruit inclusively' theme, as the Council had previously made a number of commitments in that area. The Committee was also of the view that there were a number of pledges within the other themes that the Council could have committed to, but for one reason or another had not. There was no clear rationale articulated as to why pledges had or had not been selected within the report, alongside no clear prioritisation criteria, which the Committee agreed was an omission. While the Committee understood that it may not be practical to select all of the pledges, it agreed that the provision of more information as to the decision-making process around pledge selection would be useful.

    Recommendation 2: That the Council reviews the full list of possible pledges to see if it could sign-up to additional pledges; including whether the Council could sign-up to any pledges within the 'recruit inclusively' theme.

    Recommendation 3: That the Council undertakes a RAG rating audit for the full list of potential pledges outlining what it could do against each one, whether there are any additional budget or resource implications, whether the Council is currently meeting a pledge or if more work needs to be done and then prioritises pledges on the basis of that audit, to provide assurance that the Council is doing as much as possible to ensure an inclusive economy.

7. During further discussion around the rationale for pledge selection, the Committee noted that it was unclear from the report whether pledges were selected because they represented work that the Council was already doing or had done, similar to a checklist; or whether they had been chosen because they represented gaps in the Council's current work, making them more aspirational pledges. It was also unclear on what basis the OIEP required pledge selection to be made, or if there was flexibility for individual organisations to determine their own approach. The Committee agreed that communications around the framing of pledges at the OIEP and Council level needed to be improved so that it was clear whether the pledges were more of a checklist, or an aspirational 'to do' list.

    Recommendation 4: That the Council engages with the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership to understand whether it has a preferred approach for organisations' pledge selection approach, or whether there is flexibility for organisations to determine their own approach; and requests that this be clearly articulated in an appropriate location.

    Recommendation 5: That the Council improves its communications on how its pledge commitments are framed to ensure clarity around whether they are a checklist of work already completed or underway, or whether they represent a more aspirational 'to do' list; and clearly articulates this locally.

8. Relating to the pledges around procurement, the Committee identified that unionisation appeared to be a key area which was missing. Procurement was an important tool which could be used to support unionised workplaces, such as through committing to buying only from organisations which have Trade Union Recognition Agreements in place for their workforce. The Committee noted responses from officers that this area was likely not included as it did not feature in any of the initial working group discussions; however the list of pledges was a living document and so this area could be fed back to the working group for consideration.

    Recommendation 6: That the Council suggests to the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership the addition of pledges relating to the inclusion of organisations with Trade Union Recognition Agreements as a preference during procurement exercises.

Report author	Alice Courtney
Job title	Scrutiny Officer
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 529834
e-mail	acourtney@oxford.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank