

To: Cabinet
Date: 13 September 2023
Report of: Climate and Environment Panel
Title of Report: City-wide Smoke Control Area Declaration

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Panel Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice
Corporate Priority:	Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford; Support Thriving Communities
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 Climate and Environment Panel met on 12 September 2023 to consider a report concerning a City-wide Smoke Control Area Declaration. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 13 September 2023, recommends that Cabinet approves plans to revoke Oxford's existing 23 Smoke Control Orders and replace them with a single Smoke Control Order across the whole city, subject to the outcome of consultation and confirmation by the Secretary of State; and, subject to the outcome of the public consultation and confirmation by the Secretary of State, seeks delegated authority to the Head of Corporate Strategy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice and the Head of Law and Governance, to make the order.

2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Railton (Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice) and Pedro Abreu (Principal Air Quality Officer) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Pedro Abreu, Principal Air Quality Officer introduced the report, giving an overview of the plans for the creation of a city-wide Smoke Control Area (SCA). Cllr Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice added that the emphasis of this work was very much centred around Public Health.
4. The Panel was very supportive of the report and asked a range of questions, largely relating to how the Council could best leverage local expertise from the universities in its communications campaign, how clear communications would be managed in relation to moored vessels not being subject to the SCA and how local tensions might be addressed.
5. The Panel understood and agreed with the reasoning behind moored vessels not being subject to the SCA when explained, but noted that this exemption was not prominent enough in the report. It stated that the exclusion of moored vessels from the SCA would need to be very clear in the communications campaign, to ensure that boating communities and those who lived alongside boating communities, and had perhaps previously objected to smoke pollution from boats, had a common understanding.

Recommendation 1: That the Council ensures clear messaging in its publicity campaign that moored vessels are exempt from the Smoke Control Area, and communicates the rationale for the exemption.

6. During discussion around the rationale for moored vessels not being subject to the SCA, the Panel noted the particular vulnerability of some boating communities and the barriers they might face to switching to alternative fuel types and/or heating methods. The Panel agreed that a longer-term project to understand those barriers to the adoption of cleaner fuels and explore grant funding opportunities to support different profiles of boat dweller in this, would be beneficial.

Recommendation 2: That the Council commits to working with the various boating communities (e.g. boaters living on permanent moorings and visiting boaters) to identify and address the barriers to these communities adopting cleaner fuel types; and explores grant funding opportunities to support the work to address these issues.

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