

To: Cabinet
Date: 18 October 2023
Report of: Climate and Environment Panel
Title of Report: Air Pollution

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:	Cllr Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice
Corporate Priority:	Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford
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 Scrutiny-commissioned item on Air Pollution. The item included consideration of the Council's Annual Air Quality Status Report and Action Plan; the OxAir Air Quality Sensor recommendations and progress since the report was published; and indoor air pollution. It was recommended that the Panel note and comment on the Annual Air Quality Status Report; receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Anna Railton (Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice) and Pedro Abreu (Principal Air Quality Officer) for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Pedro Abreu, Principal Air Quality Officer delivered a presentation and highlighted that Oxford City Council had statutory duties in relation to air quality and had published its Annual Air Quality Status Report in June 2023. There was a Council commitment to improve air quality through the Air Quality Action Plan. The presentation spanned a number of areas, including key achievements from July 2022 to June 2023; historic air pollution data; levels of Nitrogen Dioxide, the Zero Emission Zone; Low Traffic Neighbourhoods; particulate pollution; indoor air pollution; and the OxAir recommendations.
4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to air quality monitoring stations and data, monitoring of indoor air pollution in commercial kitchens, use of diesel generators by street traders, communications and messaging, the impact of air quality on people and the use of data as a decision-making tool.
5. During discussion, the Panel noted that the Annual Air Quality Status Report was produced on a template supplied by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and there was not much flexibility for the Council in terms of structure and content. However, the Panel suggested that it would be helpful if the Council produced an accessible and easily digestible executive summary to sit alongside the larger report which set out what the Council had done, next steps and outlining any issues with particular actions which meant those actions may take longer to progress. The Panel agreed that this would assist decision-makers and encourage public engagement by navigating away from the technical detail which was not always compelling to read.

Recommendation 1: That the Council produces an accessible and easily digestible executive summary to sit alongside the Annual Air Quality Status Report in future years; to include what the Council has done, next steps and any issues which are likely to delay progress on particular actions.

6. The Panel also discussed the need for specific communications and messaging for the public around air quality; including what the Council was doing and why it was important. In particular, the Panel felt it would be useful if information was provided around the wider benefits of action to improve air quality (e.g. to health, the economy etc.). It was suggested the materials could include infographics and other short, easy to digest formats for public consumption which told compelling stories around the importance, and real impact of, improving air quality.

Recommendation 2: That the Council considers how to identify and promote the broader benefits of action to improve air quality.

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