

**To:** Climate and Environment Panel  
**Date:** 20 March 2024  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Officer  
**Title of Report:** 2023-24 Year in Review

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To provide an overview of Climate and Environment Panel activity in 2023/24.
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation(s): That the Panel resolves to:</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Note and comment on</b> the report.</li> <li>2. <b>Confirm</b> its agreement to the Scrutiny Officer's suggestions as to which recommendations should continue to be monitored, or agree any amendments as required.</li> <li>3. <b>Reflect</b> on the Panel's work to date and give consideration to impact and where the Panel could add more value going forward.</li> </ol>	

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Climate and Environment Panel Recommendation Tracker
Appendix 2	List of Suggested Items for 2024/25

## Introduction and background

1. At its meeting on 29 November 2023, the Climate and Environment Panel requested an item be submitted to its final meeting of the municipal year which allowed it to reflect on its work during 2023/24. The Panel agreed it would be useful to assess its impact and consider where it could add more value going forward.

## Panel Remit

2. As per the Panel's scope, which was agreed by the Scrutiny Committee in November 2022, the Panel was established to scrutinise progress in delivering existing climate and environment workstreams and to consider their effectiveness. This includes consideration of Cabinet reports with a clear climate or environmental focus, reviewing regular performance reports and the delivery of strategies, policies

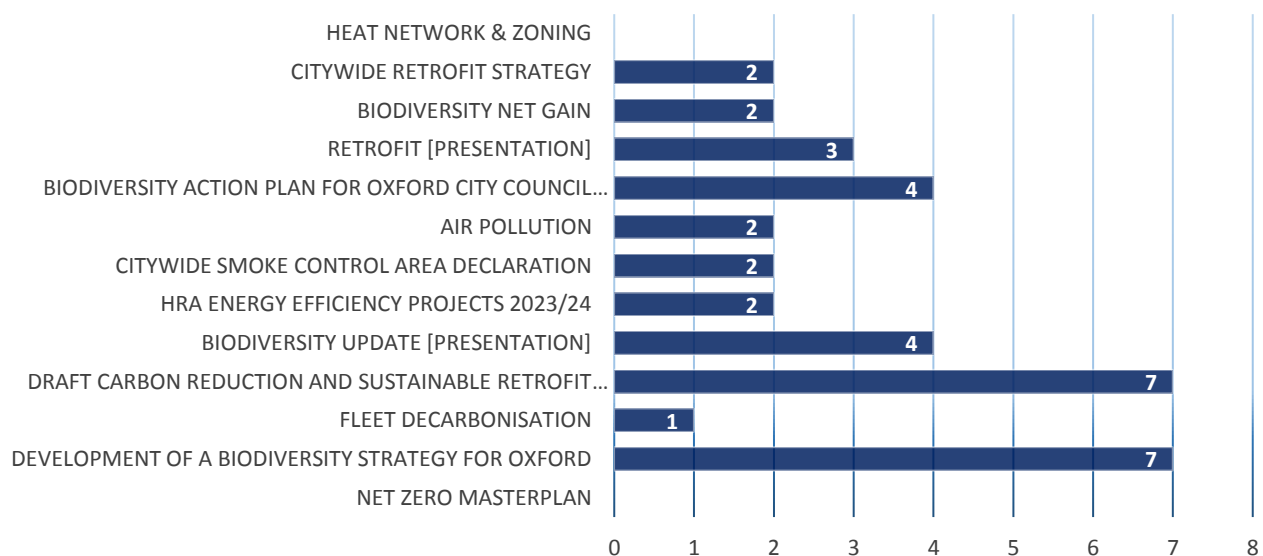
and projects already adopted. In addition, the Net Zero Masterplan is a standing item at each meeting.

3. In addition, it was agreed that the following items would be within the remit of the Panel, should it wish to request future updates:
  - Climate Emergency Review Group Update
  - Zero Carbon Action Plan Updates
  - Waterways Update
  - Annual Air Quality Status Report
  - Biodiversity Action Plan (*including reporting required under the Environment Act secondary legislation*)

### Overview of 2023/24

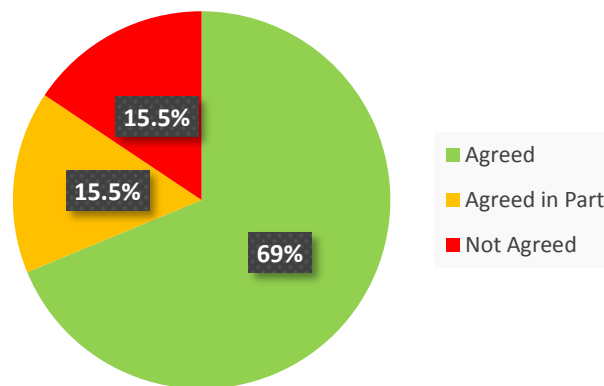
4. The Scrutiny Officer has produced a recommendation tracking document of recommendations to date, which is included at Appendix 1. Given there was only one formal meeting of the Climate and Environment Panel in 2022/23 (the year the Panel was established), recommendations made in 2022/23 and 2023/24 to date are included for completeness.
5. The tracking document at Appendix 1 sets out the meeting date, reports considered, recommendations agreed by the Panel and Cabinet responses (where available). It also includes a column setting out whether or not each recommendation will continue to be monitored; those recommendations which will not be monitored any longer have been greyed-out to help focus the document.
6. From 09 March 2023 to 29 February 2024, the Panel held 5 formal meetings and considered 12 substantive items. In addition, the Panel considered the Net Zero Masterplan as a standing item at each of its meetings. During this reporting period, the Panel made a total of 36 recommendations; the distribution of recommendations by report is set out in Table 1 below.

*Table 1: Recommendations by Report*



- To date, 32 of the 36 recommendations made by the Panel have received a response from Cabinet. Of those 32 recommendations, 22 (69%) were agreed by Cabinet, 5 (15.5%) were agreed in part and 5 (15.5%) were not agreed. The Panel is awaiting Cabinet responses on 4 recommendations which were made at its meeting in February 2024.

*Table 2: Recommendations Agreed, Agreed In Part and Not Agreed*



- Of the 32 Panel recommendations which have received Cabinet responses to date, the Scrutiny Officer has suggested that 23 should continue to be monitored until such a time as the Panel determines no further monitoring is required, based on Cabinet responses. It is suggested that 9 should not be monitored further but will remain on the tracking document for information and to help avoid duplicate recommendations being made at future meetings. This is set out at Appendix 1.
- The Panel is recommended to confirm its agreement with the Scrutiny Officer's suggestions as to whether or not recommendations should continue to be monitored, or agree any amendments as required.

### **Impact**

- It is widely recognised that measuring the impact of Scrutiny is difficult. A focus on quantitative data and outcomes alone, while providing some useful insight into the work of Scrutiny, risks reducing the meaning and impact of that work. On the other hand, a focus on only qualitative data and outcomes can make it difficult to capture impact in a consistent way.
- Table 2 shows that the majority of the Panel's recommendations were agreed, which is an indicator of positive impact. However, the way in which recommendations are responded to by the Cabinet is quite binary and does not necessarily present an accurate enough indicator of the scale of impact. This is evidenced by some of the Panel's recommendations being 'not agreed', but the narrative response alluding to longer-term work to progress those recommendations. This has led to some recommendations which were 'not agreed' being kept on the 'continue to monitor' list as some appear to have been agreed in all but name, but in the much longer term.
- The draft Council Corporate Plan 2024-28 is currently out for public consultation. It sets out the Council's highest priority areas for the next four years and the Council

will prioritise time, money and resources to achieve the outcomes set out in the document. Going forward, the Panel may wish to consider aligning its approach to Scrutiny of climate and environment issues to the 'Zero Carbon Oxford' priority within the refreshed Corporate Plan 2024-28, once adopted, to ensure continuous Scrutiny oversight of progress towards the outcomes set out alongside the Zero Carbon Oxford priority. This would complement the Panel's consideration of the Net Zero Masterplan at each meeting.

13. It is recommended that the Panel reflects on its impact to date and considers where it might add more value going forward, noting that decisions regarding items for consideration during 2024/25 will be a matter for the new Panel. Reflection should be within the context of the Panel's remit.

### **Look Ahead to 2024-25**

14. The list of suggested items for consideration at future Panel meetings is included at Appendix 2. Decisions as to which items are considered during 2024/25 will be a matter for the new Panel.
15. The Panel is asked to suggest any additional items to add to the longlist for consideration in 2024/25.

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**Background Papers:** None