

To: Cabinet
Date: 17 April 2024
Report of: Climate and Environment Panel
Title of Report: Citywide Retrofit Strategy

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 27 February 2024 to consider an item on the Citywide Retrofit Strategy. It was recommended that the Panel 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), Mish Tullar (Head of Corporate Strategy), Tina Mould (Environmental Sustainability Lead) and Vikki Robins (Carbon Reduction Team Manager) for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Tina Mould, Environmental Sustainability Lead delivered a presentation which set out an overview of work to date in relation to the development of a Citywide Retrofit Strategy and Action Plan and sought the Panel's feedback.
4. The Panel asked a range of questions and raised a number of points, including those relating to whether non-residential Council-owned buildings were in scope; the retrofit 'efficiency paradox'; the importance of having a trackable action plan to sit alongside the strategy; and whether the strategy focus should be on areas where the Council had control versus influence alone.
5. During discussion, the Panel noted that the Council's 2030 net zero ambitions included emissions relating only to non-residential Council-owned buildings where the Council paid the energy bill. This meant that non-residential buildings which formed part of the Council's commercial property portfolio were not in scope. Emissions relating to non-residential Council-owned buildings were in scope of the 2040 net zero ambitions for the City more broadly. The Panel agreed that any citywide retrofit strategy should incorporate all non-residential Council-owned buildings, even where the Council did not pay the energy bill.

Recommendation 1: That the Council incorporates all non-residential Council-owned buildings within the scope of the Citywide Retrofit Strategy and includes an approach within the strategy and associated action plan to ensure improvements in energy efficiency of all non-residential Council-owned buildings regardless of whether or not the Council pays the energy bill.

6. In addition, the Panel discussed the limited amount of resource within the Environmental Sustainability team to directly deliver and provide expertise on the range of projects and actions that the Council was driving forward. The Panel was of the view that specialist expertise should exist within specific service areas where the Council had control over those projects and actions (e.g. Housing Services should have its own expertise in relation to decarbonisation of social housing, for example), rather than being drawn from the expertise of the Environmental Sustainability team. The Panel agreed that this approach would free-up some capacity within the Environmental Sustainability team to drive forward areas of work where the Council had influence, but not direct control. This would enable the Environmental Sustainability team to continue shaping and enabling collaboration across the City in the interests of achieving net zero ambitions.

Recommendation 2: That the Council ensures appropriate internal expertise in relevant service areas to drive forward projects and actions to achieve the Council's net zero ambitions where it has direct control in order to release additional capacity and resource within the Environmental Sustainability team to enable the continuation of its transition towards driving forward areas of work where the Council has influence and can shape and enable collaboration across the City to facilitate the achievement of the City's broader net zero ambitions.

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