

## Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 3 September 2024



### Committee members present:

Councillor Miles (Chair)	Councillor Altaf-Khan
Councillor Fry ( <i>substitute for Councillor Ottino</i> )	Councillor Jarvis
Councillor Latif	Councillor Malik
Councillor Mundy	Councillor Qayyum
Councillor Stares	

### Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Clayton Lavallin, Economic Development Team Leader  
Emma Coles, Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Manager  
Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager  
Laura Jones, Safeguarding Coordinator  
Alice Courtney, Scrutiny Officer  
Celeste Reyeslao, Committee and Member Services Officer

### Also present:

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Partnership Working  
Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies  
Councillor Lubna Arshad, Cabinet Member for A Safer Oxford

### Apologies:

Councillor(s) Corais, Ottino and Regisford sent apologies.

Substitutes are shown above.

## 21. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

## 22. Chair's Announcements

The Chair announced to the Committee that this would be Alice Courtney's final meeting as Scrutiny Officer for Oxford City Council. She expressed heartfelt thanks to Alice for her dedication and invaluable contributions over the years. In the interim, the Chair advised members to direct any Scrutiny-related queries to the [Democratic Services](#) inbox until a successor was appointed.

## 23. Minutes

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the informal remote meeting held on 02 July 2024 as a true and accurate record.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the following actions had been completed since the informal remote meeting on 02 July 2024:

- An update report on online payments system rollout had been scheduled into the Work Plan for February 2025.
- The comparative work between the Corporate Strategy 2020-24 and Corporate Strategy 2024-28 had been circulated to the Committee and also included as a minutes supplement for the July 2024 meeting.
- The follow-up report which was requested as part of a recommendation in 2023/24 on the Leisure Services Contract Award had been scheduled into the Work Plan for November 2024. This report would also include a progress review of implementation of the Leisure Investment Programme as requested by the Committee at its last meeting. Updates on the Leisure Investment Programme would follow again in June and November 2025, at which point the requirement for further ongoing updates could be reviewed by the Committee.
- Scrutiny-commissioned items for 2024/25 had been scheduled into the Work Plan as follows:
  - Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) – September 2024 (overview presentation), October 2024 (ASB Policy Review – early look), January 2025 (ASB Policy pre-Cabinet)
  - Business Rates Non-Payment and Systems Management – December 2024 (Finance and Performance Panel)
  - Report back on arrangements from Leisure Contract Award – November 2024
  - Adult Exploitation and Modern Slavery – March 2025
  - Tourism – April 2025
- Information was circulated to the Committee on 15 August 2024 in relation to the query about grass mowing/verge management at the previous meeting, which had also been included as a minutes supplement for the July 2024 meeting.
- The Scrutiny Officer had produced a recommendation tracker, which was included in the agenda pack for consideration later in the meeting.

*The Committee agreed to consider items 8, 9 and 10 next on the agenda, followed by items 5, 6, 7 and 11.*

## 24. Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Charter/Pledges - Annual Update

Clayton Lavallin, Economic Development Team Leader introduced the report from the Executive Director (Development) which provided a year one update against the Council's pledge commitments as part of the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter. He highlighted Oxford City Council's positive performance in the year-one audit, noting that whilst the Council had initially agreed to adopt 13 of

the 39 OIEP pledges, the audit showed that progress had been made on 35 of the 39 pledges in the past year. Despite fiscal constraints and reduced capacity, no decline in progress was reported compared to the previous year, with significant improvements driven by the People Team, as well as notable progress in the Council companies.

Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies noted that ODS had successfully recruited 15 to 20 apprentices, emphasising the importance of widening the employee base through apprenticeships. He explained that a key goal of these apprenticeships was to diversify recruitment, especially by reaching out to underrepresented areas of Oxford, with a focus on increasing gender and minority representation.

Cllr Susan Brown, Cabinet Member for Partnership Working, acknowledged the significant contributions of the Economic Development Team and the OIEP. She highlighted that the formation of the pledges and charter was central to the Council's goal of driving a more inclusive economy. She emphasised the importance of the Council setting an example as an inclusive employer and noted that the Council was in the early stages of reintroducing the work experience programme, acknowledging the challenges of hybrid working in relation to reintroducing the scheme. She noted that the Council was focused on making significant strides in addressing inequalities and building a more diverse workforce that better reflected the community.

Emma Coles, Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership Manager had also been invited to speak on the item and answer questions.

During discussion, the Committee noted the following:

- The initial 13 pledges were chosen based on the assessment that they could be delivered effectively within existing resources and capacity. The approach was to start slowly and steadily to ensure consistent progress, with the hope of increasing the number of pledges in future years.
- Data was currently obtained from the leads of various participating services or organisations. However, the data had not yet been fully disaggregated.
- It was not feasible to enforce the requirement for all Council suppliers to pay the Oxford Living Wage within contracts, as some contracts were with businesses outside of Oxfordshire and it was determined unfair to expect those suppliers to pay the Oxford Living Wage. These cases were relatively few, however the Council ensured that the national living wage was met in all instances.
- The Council's procurement policies required a high number of local employers to be included in contracts. Continued efforts were being made to encourage local businesses to meet Oxford Living Wage standards, participate in Council contracts and increase their contributions to the local economy.

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendations on the report to Cabinet:

1. That the Council reviews the complete list of OIEP pledges and commits to additional pledges where it is advancing practices or meeting the requirements of pledges not currently committed to, to ensure that the Council's pledge commitments are aligned to existing and advancing organisational practices.
2. That the Council includes quantitative data in future OIEP Charter/Pledges annual update reports to evidence progress, including the use of disaggregated

data on apprenticeships and SME Council suppliers to enable more detailed interrogation of the figures.

*Cllr Susan Brown, Cabinet Member for Partnership Working, Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies, Clayton Lavallin, Economic Development Team Leader and Emma Coles, OIEP Manager left the meeting and did not return.*

## **25. Annual Safeguarding Report 2023/24**

Cllr Lubna Arshad, Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford introduced the report from the Executive Director (Communities and People) presenting the Safeguarding Annual Report 2023-24. She highlighted that annual audits were reviewed by the Safeguarding Board and Sub-groups, with actions informing training, communication, and the annual safeguarding action plan. Referrals to statutory agencies were recorded using MyConcern when the threshold was met, reflecting the work of various Oxford City Council teams in preventing and addressing safeguarding issues.

Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager, and Laura Jones, Safeguarding Coordinator, added that the report showcased the Council's comprehensive efforts in effectively safeguarding vulnerable adults and children. The implementation of last year's Scrutiny Committee recommendations had improved safeguarding practices in terms of organisations which the Council provided grant funding to. The Committee was also advised that Council staff engagement with safeguarding practices was consistently ranking highest in Oxfordshire, reflecting the Council's broad commitment to safeguarding. Positive feedback from peer reviews further affirmed the Council's overall success of these initiatives.

*Cllr Altaf-Khan joined the meeting.*

During discussions, the Committee noted the following points:

- The commissioning and decommissioning of Floyd's Row services sat within Housing Services and was not directly related to this report. Community Safety Services remained actively involved in street outreach and addressing anti-social behaviour.
- In relation to migrants without right to remain, the Council facilitated support meetings around hotels housing homeless individuals, primarily single males. The issue of the recent upsurge of these individuals rough sleeping had been addressed. Whilst there were challenges in relation to individuals who had no recourse to public funds, the Council continued to work with Asylum Welcome to provide support. Detailed questions in relation to migrant homelessness should be directed to Housing Services.
- The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) bed provisions during extreme weather were triggered by Met Office forecasts that accounted for both high heat and cold conditions. The use of forecasts as the trigger afforded partners a few days' notice to prepare. Questions related to data on the frequency of SWEP being triggered annually and predictive modelling were best directed to Housing Services.
- 85 Council staff had attended optional Domestic Abuse training, which was part of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation. Although this training was promoted, it was not as relevant to some staff (e.g. some who are

not frontline), which would present a challenge in terms of making the training mandatory for all staff.

- Exploitation of vulnerable adults was noted in several areas, including drug dealers exploiting individuals through the "cuckooing" phenomenon, a trend observed nationwide. Adult sexual exploitation, particularly through brothels rather than street-based activity, was also reported. Although instances of domestic servitude remained relatively low, there had been a slight increase in cases, though these were difficult to report and uncover. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) offered statistics on the nationalities of internationally trafficked individuals, with small but consistent numbers from the same countries.
- The identification of vulnerable tenants was an action within the safeguarding action plan for 2024/25 so would be a focus in future reports.

The Committee requested:

- That the safeguarding annual report continue to be brought to the Committee annually.
- That the Scrutiny-commissioned report on Adult Exploitation and Modern Slavery scheduled for March 2025 includes detail on exploitation and modern slavery in different sectors; and includes information on any joint working with the Council's Licensing Teams in response to reports of adult exploitation and/or modern slavery in licensed premises.

The Committee noted the report; there were no recommendations.

*Laura Jones, Safeguarding Coordinator left the meeting and did not return.*

## **26. Anti-Social Behaviour [presentation]**

Cllr Lubna Arshad, Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford, introduced the presentation by emphasising the importance of tackling anti-social behaviour in the community, including environmental crimes such as littering and fly-tipping. She highlighted how these actions negatively impacted shared spaces and the overall quality of life in Oxford. Collaboration with local residents, businesses, and organisations was key to effectively addressing these issues and creating a cleaner, safer, and more harmonious community.

Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager delivered the presentation, noting that the presentation was a precursor to the Committee reviewing the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy later in 2024/25. A copy of the presentation slide deck is included in the minutes pack.

*Cllr Latif left the meeting and did not return.*

During discussion, the Committee noted the following:

- The closure of certain recycling and waste facilities was supported due to the high quantity of fly-tipping occurring at these sites, especially in locations such as Ambassador Avenue in Cowley. The closure of these facilities had seen a significant reduction in fly-tipping at these locations.
- The Community Safety Service had strong working relationship with Oxford Direct Services (ODS), which handled street cleaning and evidence collection related to fly-tipping, and currently operated a joint project that allowed for early

identification of hotspots and gathering evidence. The [Report It](#) page on the Council's website streamlined communication between Council services and ODS.

- Enforcement in relation to 'anti-social cycling' was not within the remit of the Community Safety Service, as this was not defined as anti-social behaviour within the policy. Safety in relation to cycling was within the remit of the Council's Parks and Green Spaces Team, Oxfordshire County Council and/or the Police.
- In terms of rehousing and tenancy management, there were increasingly complex cases relating to individuals and households in temporary accommodation, general needs accommodation and the adult homeless pathway. Efforts were made to avoid evictions due to anti-social behaviour and the Community Safety Service worked jointly with Housing Services to identify vulnerable tenants and work with them to find mutually agreeable solutions.
- Safeguarding concerns should be recorded via MyConcern.
- The Council worked with Oxford Brookes University and the University of Oxford to address fly-tipping by students and/or HMO landlords, particularly during peak periods like move-out times. Student wardens played a role in raising awareness and reporting incidents.
- Noise complaints, which remained a significant issue, were managed by the Community Response Team. These complaints were triaged and handled through the Council's reporting system.
- The growing number of complex cases necessitated substantial resource allocation, particularly for relationship-building with vulnerable individuals as part of complex cases. This posed ongoing challenges in capacity management.

*Cllr Malik left the meeting and did not return.*

The Committee resolved to make the following recommendation on the report to Cabinet:

1. That the Council, in the context of budget-setting in future years, conducts a review of the future capacity challenges and resource implications of complex anti-social behaviour cases which the Community Safety Service manages or is involved in with partners.

The Committee requested:

- That the Budget Review Group, during consideration of 2025/26 budget proposals, considers bulky waste collection and weighs up the impact on the budget versus the environmental impact of providing/not providing this service.
- That the Scrutiny Officer relays the feedback from members of the Committee in relation to the Members Enquiry Form, availability of officer/team contact details and the Member induction process/support.
- That the Community Safety Service Manager circulates information to the Committee on the Anti-Social Behaviour sub-teams, including which team is responsible for what.

*Cllr Fry, Cllr Lubna Arshad, Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford and Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager left the meeting and did not return.*

## **27. Work Plan and Forward Plan**

In response to a question from the Committee, the Scrutiny Officer clarified that the Work Plan provided a summary of items the Committee proposed to consider. There was no specific priority assigned to the order of the listed items.

The Committee agreed the Work Plan as set out in the agenda pack.

## **28. Report back on recommendations and from Scrutiny Panel meetings**

The Committee noted that on 10 July 2024, Cabinet considered recommendations related to three reports, responses to which were set out in the agenda pack:

- Oxford City Council Corporate Strategy 2024-28
- Leisure Investment Programme
- Update of Byelaws for Parks and Open Spaces

The Committee was informed that, following a request at the previous meeting, the Scrutiny Officer had produced a recommendation tracker which included all Scrutiny Committee recommendations to date since the beginning of the 2023/24 municipal year. The recommendation tracker had been included in the agenda pack. The Committee noted the recommendation tracker.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the Housing and Homeless Panel had met on 03 July 2024 and considered four substantive items: 2024/25 Capital Programmes (HRA) Delegations; Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28; Temporary Accommodation Demand and Mitigations; and Housing Performance Monitoring Q4 2023/24. The Panel had wide ranging discussions on the reports but made no recommendations. The Panel had also agreed its Work Plan to 2024/25. The Finance and Performance Panel had met on 18 July 2024 and considered five substantive items: Strategic Review of Services Across Community Services Progress Update; Strategic Review of Services Provided by Oxford Direct Services (ODS) Progress Update; Comparative Analysis - Capital Slippage; Financial Outturn Report 2023/24; and Scrutiny Performance Monitoring. There were no recommendations agreed at this meeting. The Finance and Performance Panel had also held an extraordinary meeting on 27 August 2024 and considered two substantive items: the ODS Group Performance Report and the ODS Executive Pay and Executive Pay Policy. The Panel agreed four recommendations - two recommendations for each item.

## **29. Budget Review Group Scope**

Alice Courtney, Scrutiny Officer reminded the Committee that at its first meeting of the municipal year in June 2024, the Committee established a Budget Review Group to examine the Council's budget proposals for 2025/26.

She explained that the membership of the Budget Review Group, agreed in June 2024, was identical to the membership of the Finance and Performance Panel: Cllr Fry (Chair), Cllr Jarvis, Cllr Smowton and Cllr Yeatman. The proposed scope was similar to that agreed in previous years; as were the dates and timeline proposed. A key change to note was the provisions for substitutes in exceptional circumstances, noting that Review Group Members should make every effort to attend meetings where possible. Members of the Review Group, relevant Standing Panels, the Cabinet Member and relevant officers had been consulted on the proposed dates.

The Committee was informed that since publication, officers had requested that consideration of the Capital Programme be restricted to the General Fund Capital Programme at the meeting on 07 January 2025, with some additional officers in attendance to answer any detailed questions; and that the HRA Capital Programme be considered at the meeting on 08 January 2025.

The Committee agreed the proposed scope with the proposed minor amendment set out above.

**30. Dates of future meetings**

The dates of future meetings were noted.

The Committee thanked Alice Courtney for her work as Scrutiny Officer and wished her the best for the future.

**The meeting started at 6:00 pm and ended at 8:10 pm**

**Chair .....**

**Date: Tuesday 8 October 2024**

*When decisions take effect:  
Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired  
Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued  
All other committees: immediately.  
Details are in the Council's Constitution.*