

To: Cabinet
Date: 11 December 2024
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	All
Recommendation(s): 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 Scrutiny recommendations

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 2 December 2024 to consider the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 11 December 2024, recommends that Cabinet approves the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24 for publication, and authorise the Head of Planning and Regulatory Services to make any necessary minor corrections not materially affecting the document prior to publication.
2. The Committee is grateful to Councillor Louise Upton (Cabinet Member for Planning), David Butler (Head of Planning and Regulatory Service), Sarah Harrison (Planning Policy Team Leader), Lorraine Freeman (CIL, Data Analysis and Reporting Team Leader) and Rachel Nixon (Principal Planner) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning introduced the report.
4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including those related to the use of existing student accommodations, the broader implications of student housing on private rental sector, and about financial and policy issues, including the potential for levies on higher education institutions to offset costs associated with students living out of student accommodations. Questions were also raised about the impact of policy gaps in the Local Plan post-2026, strategies to maximise housing targets, barriers to delivering extra care facilities and the effective use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds.
5. In particular, the discussion centred on the need for better data and monitoring of student accommodation use, specifically in relation to the extent of unmet demand and the reliance on family housing and HMOs for student accommodation. The Committee highlighted concerns about the pressures this demand places on the private rental market and the associated loss of family homes. The Committee was of the view that universities need to take greater responsibility for addressing accommodation needs, including making better use of their existing land holdings.
6. The Committee recognised that addressing unmet student accommodation demand requires transparency and robust data. The Committee felt that including comprehensive information on unmet demand and sites identified or proposed by universities in the Authority Monitoring Report would enhance accountability and enable better planning, reflecting the Committee's commitment to ensuring that the Council has a clear understanding of accommodation needs and the measures being taken to meet them.

Recommendation 1: That Cabinet ensures that comprehensive data on unmet student accommodation demand from universities, alongside details of sites identified or proposed by these institutions to address their accommodation requirements, are included in future reporting of the Authority Monitoring report.

7. In addition, the Committee expressed concerns about the effective use of university-owned land, particularly at or near city boundaries, to address accommodation needs. The Committee highlighted the universities' role in alleviating pressures on the private rental market by utilising their land assets strategically. It was therefore suggested that Council collaborates with these institutions to ensure their land holdings, including those near city boundaries, are used effectively to meet unmet accommodation demands, and that Council should encourage the universities to disclose their future development plans for leveraging these land assets to support this objective.

Recommendation 2: That Council works with University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University to ensure that their land holdings, including those located at or near city boundaries, are used effectively to meet unmet accommodation demands; and that Council encourages universities to share their plans for leveraging these land assets for this purpose.

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