

To: Cabinet
Date: 22 January 2025
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Flood Management

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Lead Member:	Councillor Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford Councillor Nigel Chapman, Lead Member for Flood Relief
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	All
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 14 January 2025 to consider a scrutiny-commissioned report on the current flood management in Oxford. It was recommended that the Committee receive the presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion, and agree any recommendations.
2. The Committee was grateful to Richard Adams (Community Safety Service Manager) for attending to present the item as well as to Councillor Anna Railton (Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford), Councillor Nigel Chapman (Lead Member for Flood Relief), James Barlow (Principal Flood Mitigation and Environmental Quality Team Leader), and Andy Brett (Senior Resilience Officer,

Oxfordshire County Council) for answering questions from the Committee.

Summary and recommendations

3. Richard Adams, Community Safety Service Manager gave a presentation explaining the current flood response and protocols within the city.
4. The Committee's discussion centred around inter-agency coordination between the City Council, the County Council and the Environment Agency, including how resources like pumps, barriers, and manpower are deployed. The discussion also touched on exploring ways to coordinate volunteers within communities.
5. Members of the Committee raised questions about the adequacy of existing flood mitigation equipment, noting that ODS typically deploys its one pump to Botley Road and its one flood barrier to Hinksey Lake. Officers explained the collaborative nature of pump usage amongst agencies, stating that additional pumps may need to be sourced from outside the county in severe cases of flooding. They drew attention to the logistical challenges of pump deployment, giving emphasis to the risks associated with improper discharge of water that could potentially exacerbate flooding in adjacent areas. In addition, the manpower required to set up and operate pumps was explained, with the Committee noting the working relationship between ODS and the Environment Agency in managing these resources.
6. Another key concern that the Committee raised was the unclear agency responsibilities for maintaining ditches, waterways and other infrastructure critical to flood prevention, with members highlighting resident perception that some areas are neglected due to the ambiguity around accountability. The Committee was reassured that efforts were underway to map responsibilities more clearly, including close collaboration with the county council to address gaps. The Committee commented on the importance of keeping Councillors well-informed about ongoing investigations specific to their wards and suggested that clear communication channels are maintained between agencies.

Recommendation 1: That Cabinet ensures Members are informed whenever flood investigations occur within their areas; sharing findings promptly will enable Councillors to respond effectively to residents' concerns and advocate for necessary measures.

7. Members of the Committee highlighted the impact of flooding on residents, including disruptions to education and daily life, stating the need for improved community support. They discussed measures to increase transparency about flood risks and supporting residents with practical guidance to help make their homes more resilient.

Recommendation 2: That Cabinet develops clear contact information for Members and distributes guidance leaflets to residents at risk of flooding, explaining proper reporting of flood incidents and actionable advice on mitigating flood risks, and support available for vulnerable residents.

8. The discussion also focused on the financial implications of frequent flooding events, noting the strain on emergency planning reserves depleted by

unpredictable costs of emergency responses. The Committee agreed that a comprehensive review of the reserves is essential to ensure sufficient funding for future incidents, emphasising the Council's duty to protect its residents by maintaining preparedness and resilience in the face of worsening flooding risks.

Recommendation 3: That Cabinet commits to long-term flood resilience and preparedness in the context of the need for climate adaptation measures, by reviewing and reassessing the adequacy of emergency planning funding reserves, recognising the growing frequency and severity of flooding in Oxford.

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