

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 10 March 2026

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Committee members present:

Councillor Powell (Chair)	Councillor Rowley (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Corais	Councillor Jarvis
Councillor Latif	Councillor Miles
Councillor Ottino	Councillor Qayyum

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Celeste Reyeslao, Scrutiny and Governance Advisor
Hannah Carmody-Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer
Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
James Baughan, Leisure and Active Wellbeing Manager
Helen Bishop, Director of Communities & Citizens
Diana Fawcett, City Centre Manager
Hagan Lewisman, Active Communities Manager
Tina Mould, Environmental Sustainability Business Lead
Maria Warner, Social Value and Sustainability Lead
Bruce Thompson, ODS Head of Environmental Services
Rob Jennings, SERCO Contract Manager

Also present:

Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for A Healthy, Fairer Oxford
Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Culture
Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies

Apologies:

Councillor Stares sent apologies.

In Councillor Powell's absence, the Vice-Chair, Councillor Rowley, opened the meeting.

106. Declarations of interest

None.

107. Chair's Announcements

None.

108. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Committee resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meetings held on 3 February 2026 as a true and accurate record.

109. Addresses by members of the public

None.

110. Councillor addresses on any item for discussion on the Scrutiny agenda

None.

111. More Leisure Annual Service Plan (Year 3) and Update

Cabinet, at its meeting on 18 March 2026 will consider a report to update Cabinet on the highlights of the second year of the new leisure contract and approve the Annual Service Plan 2026-27, which is an annual requirement of the operator, aiming to align outcomes to the Council's priorities and to address health inequalities.

Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford, Hagan Lewisman, Active Communities Manager, James Baughan, Leisure and Active Wellbeing Manager, and Rob Jennings, SERCO Contract Manager, were present to respond to questions.

Councillor Munkonge provided a comprehensive summary of the report, noting that it provided an annual opportunity for a review of performance and the business plan for the next year. The Committee heard that overall, performance had exceeded expectation; specific details were provided.

Councillor Qayyum and Councillor Corais joined the meeting.

The Active Communities Manager emphasised the positive ongoing partnership work with Serco and the delivery of a youth hub in the past year, both of which have contributed towards public health and wellbeing goals.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor Jarvis requested clarity on whether all the targets had been exceeded, as mentioned, with reference to specific data within the report. Secondly, more detail on the number of recorded visits was requested in order to provide a comparison with the previous year.

Councillor Miles requested disaggregated data in relation to the participation rates of women, girls, and young people in sport via membership numbers. Councillor Miles also asked how youth age groups are using the leisure centres in the evenings across different locations; references to existing positive examples were provided.

Noting the loss of space at Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre, Councillor Ottino asked if there is confidence that people have been able to find alternative venues for some sports, and whether new sports, such as padel, have been considered as part of a broader programme of activities.

In response to Councillor Jarvis, the Leisure and Active Wellbeing Manager explained that it is accurate to say that the 3% targets have been met or exceeded overall; any noted in the report that did not reach this number were not specifically targeted, such as swimming lessons. Therefore, the statement is true for targets which were set. An explanation of how data gaps from the previous year have been backfilled was also provided.

In response to Councillor Miles, the Active Communities Manager acknowledged that different interventions are required in relation to the youth hub to specifically target involvement of women and girls; examples of recent successes were noted, including the recent relaunch of girls' sessions at the East Oxford Community Centre. The Committee understood that feedback is sought from attendees to ensure plans are targeted and informed in the future.

The Active Communities Manager committed to checking the data relating to women and girls' attendance at the East Oxford Community Centre sessions.

The SERCO Contract Manager committed to sourcing disaggregated data on women and girls' attendance but explained that this relies on the self-reporting of members and customers.

In response to Councillor Ottino, the Leisure and Active Wellbeing Manager explained that half of the sports hall space had been converted as it was underutilised; this is now an active zone (consisting of soft play, tag arena and climbing wall). The Committee also heard that the timetable has been reorganised to ensure that most activities are still facilitated.

The Active Communities Manager outlined ongoing partnership working with community groups which is encouraging people to become more active. Furthermore, details of consultations with younger groups and efforts to find funding for padel were detailed.

The Chair invited further questions.

Councillor Ottino expressed concern that young people do not have access to outdoor football and asked what could be done to provide another pitch.

Councillor Miles queried what other geographical areas of the city could be focused on to ensure young people have access to leisure services.

The Leisure and Active Wellbeing Manager, in response to Councillor Ottino, confirmed that youth groups do have access to a regular weekly booking on the 3G pitch via the Youth Ambition scheme, however, it was noted that if feedback suggests this is not sufficient, there is an in-kind community fund that can be applied to in order to run other sessions. In response to Councillor Miles, the free under 17s city-wide swimming offer in Oxford was emphasised.

The SERCO Contract Manager also emphasised a 69% rise in under 18s activities across Oxford's leisure facilities which marked significant growth. The Committee heard of family inclusive sessions which are available and the SERCO Contract Manager invited any suggestions for future opportunities.

Councillor Munkonge also summarised the open weekends which take place across Oxford that offer activities to families for free; this particularly supports those who cannot afford to pay for leisure activities.

The Chair invited the Committee to consider possible recommendations.

The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. That future reports provide More Leisure KPI outcomes broken down by gender, as well as youth participation by geographic venue, acknowledging that demographic in certain geographic areas differ. This is**

to identify if there are any interventions required to address any gaps or segments that are underrepresented.

- 2. That, as part of the service plan, Council and More Leisure set out what could be done to expand into non-traditional sports that are not currently offered in the leisure centres.**

Councillor Powell joined the meeting during the discussion of recommendations.

The Chair thanked Councillor Munkonge, the Active Communities Manager, the Leisure and Active Wellbeing Manager, and the SERCO Contract Manager.

Councillor Munkonge, the Active Communities Manager, the Leisure and Active Wellbeing Manager, and the SERCO Contract Manager left the meeting and did not return.

112. Nighttime Economy

Councillor Powell resumed the role of Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

At the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 1 July 2025, the Committee requested an update on the Council's work to support the nighttime economy.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Culture, and Diana Fawcett, City Centre Manager, were present to respond to questions.

Councillor Hollingsworth provided a comprehensive introduction to the report and explained that the council works hard to identify ways in which it can facilitate, encourage, and fix aspects of the nighttime economy in Oxford. The importance of creativity when supporting all groups in Oxford was emphasised.

The City Centre Manager guided the Committee through the presentation contained within the agenda pack.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor Latif left the meeting and did not return.

Councillor Ottino questioned the geographical focus of the work so far, noting that it perhaps excluded locations which could offer beneficial opportunities for the nighttime economy, such as some industrial spaces.

Councillor Jarvis queried the number of venues hosting live music and the regularity of these events. Secondly, he asked how far up the Cowley Road the audit surveyed and lastly, Councillor Jarvis emphasised that the capacity of each venue must be considered.

In response to Councillor Ottino, Councillor Hollingsworth welcomed the suggestion that a broader geographical area could be considered, however explained that the initial audit had been completed with limited resources and therefore, consideration was paid to what workload was feasible. Councillor Hollingsworth noted that the intention would be to identify next steps and focus points before expanding the workload. In response to Councillor Jarvis, it was noted that the capacity of venues is also an important consideration to ensure that more people can attend live music events.

In response to Councillor Jarvis, the City Centre Manager welcomed the suggestion to focus on the capacity of venues. In relation to regular live music, the Committee heard of the challenges officers experienced in finding venues which easily advertise their events. For the purposes of the audit, regular live music was classified as those events which takes place at least once a month in pubs, bars and nightclubs; this did not include theatres which had been analysed in their own category. Furthermore, clarification on the geographical areas covered within the audit was provided.

The Chair invited further questions.

Councillor Miles requested a definition of the nighttime economy and emphasised that it should consider a distinction between activities for adults, families, and children. Secondly, Councillor Miles asked how the impacts of the nighttime economy on residents are being assessed, specifically environmental factors and noise.

The City Centre Manager explained that whilst the audit had heavily focused on live music, it did also consider all forms of nighttime activity including events at libraries and museums; work going into the assessment of future opportunities for families and those under 18 at these venues was outlined. The Committee heard that analysis of existing licenses was not undertaken as licence conditions do not necessarily correlate with what a venue is being used for and what it has on offer in practice. The City Centre Manager explained that future work would look at impacts on residents.

Councillor Hollingsworth emphasised that it should be aimed for people who visit and live in Oxford to use the evenings to socialise and explore what the city has to offer.

The Chair invited further questions.

Councillor Jarvis asked whether a broader focus could be paid to offering live music more inclusively, and in scenarios which do not involve the sale of alcohol. Councillor Jarvis also queried whether the Council could work with promoters to support grassroots live music and whether alternative venues could be considered to support increased capacity for live music events. Finally, it was asked what could be done to support the safety of nighttime economy staff during their journey home.

Councillor Hollingsworth encouraged innovative and more inclusive approaches to supporting the commercial elements of the nighttime economy and recognised the challenges venues can face. In relation to supporting live music promoters, Councillor Hollingsworth noted his support for major events and developing relationships with the industry but also recognised that there is a shortage of space and land, and flexible approaches would be required. In relation to the safety of nighttime economy staff, engaging with venues and promoters was emphasised and the importance of addressing associated risks was acknowledged.

The City Centre Manager noted that promoters would be considered within the live music taskforce which is being established by the Council and details regarding ongoing work with the police in relation to the nighttime economy and staff safety were noted. The Committee heard that public transport must be considered in relation to staff commuting at night.

The Chair asked if alternative venues that are not focused on alcohol sales, such as cafes, could be more heavily encouraged in Oxford to promote accessibility; questions of resourcing were raised. Additionally, the Chair queried whether work has gone into liaising with local media outlets to promote the nighttime economy and to develop partnerships. Finally, the potential use of AI for collecting relevant data for the audit was suggested.

The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor left the meeting.

Councillor Hollingsworth supported the Chair's suggestion and emphasised that a nighttime economy that is broadly inclusive for all must be aspired towards; examples of how this could be done were noted. The consideration of minority groups was also emphasised to ensure everyone feels safe and welcome in the city at night. In relation to working with media outlets, Councillor Hollingsworth also welcomed the presence of grassroots media operators.

The City Centre Manager acknowledged that caution must be taken around the use of AI but also noted the gap in the market.

Councillor Jarvis suggested that council owned venues be more widely used for events within the nighttime economy.

The Scrutiny and Governance Advisor rejoined the meeting.

Councillor Miles, in relation to the Council's camping strategy for the city's parks, suggested that overnight events could be explored. The possibility of utilising the city's river spaces was also suggested. Finally, Councillor Miles emphasised the need to be creative with the use of venue spaces whilst also considering noise impacts on residents.

Councillor Hollingsworth noted that consideration of camping events would be within the remit of alternative council projects but appreciated that it was an interesting idea.

The Chair invited the Committee to consider possible recommendations.

The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. That when considering the nighttime economy in relation to families and children, age groups are disaggregated into children up to age 11 and young people under 18.**
- 3. That the ongoing work maintains an open-minded approach to a wider range of nighttime activities, including bookshops, museums, the Covered Market, and other activities that are non-alcohol related.**
- 3. That late night cafés are categorised separately from other food-related venues.**
- 4. That consideration is given to include local promoters as part of the Live Music Taskforce.**
- 5. That the Council continues to engage with employers to identify how best to address the issues faced by workers travelling home late at night.**
- 6. That current analysis includes the capacity of venues, in addition to the number of venues.**

The Chair thanked the City Centre Manager and Councillor Hollingsworth.

The City Centre Manager and Councillor Hollingsworth left the meeting and did not return.

113. Fly-tipping and Litter Management

At the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 1 July 2025, the Committee requested an update on the Council's work to mitigate fly-tipping and the work on litter management.

Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies, Helen Bishop, Director of Communities and Citizens Services, Tina Mould, Environment Sustainability Business Lead, Maria Warner, Social Value and Sustainability Lead, and Bruce Thompson, ODS Head of Environmental Services, were present to respond to questions.

Councillor Chapman provided a comprehensive introduction, noting that the report had been specifically requested by the Committee.

The Chair invited questions from the Committee.

Councillor Ottino queried how effective the signage around the city is, why there are not more, and why signs are not automatically placed in fly tipping hotspots. More data regarding fly tipping locations and hotspots was requested. Councillor Ottino also asked what is being done to encourage communities to not fly tip and to be more proactive in keeping their areas free of rubbish.

Councillor Qayyum left the meeting and did not return.

Councillor Chapman noted that whilst fly tipping signage is not always useful and therefore is not always installed, it is generally a positive feature. Any installation delays are not related to budget matters but likely due to organisation of resources.

The ODS Head of Environmental Services noted that fly tipping hotspots are largely seasonal in nature and heavily linked to students occupying accommodation in term times. Issues with landlord responsibilities being upheld and poor bin store designs were also noted.

Councillor Chapman and the ODS Head of Environmental Services explained the collection rates of bulky waste in relation to fly tipping trends. It was noted that fly tipping predominantly occurs to the east of the city and the centre; reference was made to morning collections following events within the nighttime economy.

Councillor Jarvis queried the strategy for addressing fly tipping of smaller items around bins and asked what capacity there is for effectively dealing with litter in the parks. Councillor Jarvis also asked whether anything more could be done to handle the waste from licensed premises.

The ODS Head of Environmental Services outlined the identification of bins which are and are not used and expressed caution in removing bins as a method of deterring fly tipping. The Committee also heard that ODS usually responds positively to requests for additional bins and Members were assured that litter collection in parks is adapted

around weather to ensure a responsive service is delivered. In parks, it was also noted that bins are placed at exits to discourage dropping of litter around the wider park area and to ensure vehicles can easily reach the collection points.

The Director of Communities and Citizens Services informed the Committee that ODS are currently reviewing their approach to litter collection across the street scene. Suggestions of anti-fly tipping campaigns were also acknowledged for exploration.

Councillor Miles outlined a two-minute litter pick scheme which had been successful in Cutteslowe Park and suggested this be placed in additional settings. Councillor Miles also queried the deep cleaning schedule for main road stretches in high footfall areas of the city, especially in relation to litter and mess connected to the nighttime economy. Finally, it was asked what is done to manage litter picking on immediate side streets away from main zones.

Councillor Chapman left the meeting and did not return.

On Councillor Miles' suggestion, the ODS Head of Environmental Services committed to looking at the feasibility of litter picking boards in conjunction with the Director of Communities and Citizens Services, noting that it had previously been trialled. In relation to litter hotspots in the summer, the Committee heard that members of the public hosting gatherings in the parks are offered gloves and bags to collect their own rubbish; this has some success. In relation to deep cleaning of areas off the main roads, the approach varies dependent on the area; details were provided. The ODS Head of Environmental Services invited Members to notify him of any areas which require additional attention. Finally, the Committee were assured that every road throughout the city centre is swept thoroughly, and residential areas are attended throughout the day.

The Chair queried why the recycling rate has declined recently.

Councillor Ottino queried how certain the Council is of where litter is located; examples of litter embedded in hedges were referenced. A suggestion was made for more signage, perhaps designed by children.

Councillor Miles left the meeting and did not return.

The Environment Sustainability Business Lead confirmed that garden waste and paper recycling rates have declined in recent years. The Committee heard that this fits with national trends since the pandemic and Members also learned of issues with increasing waste contamination rates.

The Social Value and Sustainability Lead emphasised the steady decline in garden waste rates since the pandemic and an increase in domestic waste contamination. The Committee were informed that a new stream of work would be focusing on this to improve recycling rates.

In response to Councillor Ottino, the ODS Head of Environmental Services emphasised his confidence that the relevant teams are aware of the locations of litter requiring collection and clarified that litter in hedges is extracted thoroughly when hedges are trimmed annually.

Councillor Ottino raised concerns relating to collection from bin stores.

The Social Value and Sustainability Lead outlined the variable collection methods dependant on the owner of the bin store, including those on council owned land. The Committee understand that a focus on bin store design would be included in the upcoming workstream. The Social Value and Sustainability Lead and the ODS Head of Environmental Services also set out how waste is collected from various bin stores and the logistics of access requirements.

Community and education initiatives in relation to litter collection were also acknowledged and encouraged for consideration within future workstreams.

Councillor Ottino queried where responsibility lies for litter collection in ditches and waterways.

The ODS Head of Environmental Services outlined the responsibilities of ODS and emphasised that staff are not requested to collect litter in a manner which may be deemed unsafe. Furthermore, the shared responsibilities with the Environment Agency were also outlined.

The Committee understood that matters related to waterways would be discussed as a separate item at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chair invited the Committee to consider possible recommendations.

The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. To explore the provision of facilities in parks during the summer period to allow “2-minute litter picks” where this would be beneficial.**
- 4. To review the appropriateness of measures businesses, have in place to ensure that the waste they produce is managed responsibly and that they are encouraging their customers to dispose of litter appropriately.**

4. **To audit the use of signage in areas with high levels of fly-tipping and to consider where additional signage could be most effectively implemented.**
5. **That Council consider reengaging with education programmes and resources aimed at addressing behaviours and culture relating to litter and fly-tipping.**
6. **That future reports include a breakdown of locations with high levels of litter across the city, presented visually on a map where possible.**

The Chair thanked Councillor Chapman, the Director of Communities and Citizens Services, the Environment Sustainability Business Lead, the Social Value and Sustainability Lead, and the ODS Head of Environmental Services.

Councillor Chapman, the Director of Communities and Citizens Services, the Environment Sustainability Business Lead, the Social Value and Sustainability Lead, and the ODS Head of Environmental Services left the meeting and did not return.

114. Scrutiny Work Plan

The Committee **noted** the workplan.

115. Cabinet responses to Scrutiny recommendations

The Chair provided a summary of Cabinet’s responses to the Committee’s previous recommendations, as set out in the report.

The Committee **noted** Cabinet’s responses to its recommendations.

116. Endorsement of Recommendations from Working Groups

The Committee **endorsed** the recommendation.

117. Dates of future meetings

The Committee **noted** the dates of future meetings.

The meeting started at 6.15 pm and ended at 8.40 pm

Chair

Date: Tuesday 7 April 2026

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.

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