

To: Cabinet
Date: 9 July 2025
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To submit the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee for Cabinet's consideration.
Key decision:	No
Lead Member:	Councillor Alex Powell, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Corporate Priority:	A Well-Run Council
Policy Framework:	None

Recommendation(s): That Cabinet:
1. Considers and responds to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee as set out in the report.

Information Exempt From Publication	
N/A	N/A

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
N/A	N/A	N/A

Overview and Summary

- The Scrutiny Committee met on 1 July 2025 and reviewed the following items:
 - Domestic Abuse Policy for Service Users
 - Tourism (and ABID presentation)
 - Citizen Experienced Strategy
- Working Group meetings were also held to consider a range of reports:

Housing and Homelessness Working Group on 24 June 2025

- National Homelessness Property Fund 1
 - Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28
3. Following the meetings, Cabinet Members, in consultation with the relevant Officers were asked to agree, agree in-part, or disagree with the recommendations.
 4. The tables below detail the recommendations made by the Committee and its Working Groups for each report, which Cabinet will consider at their meeting on 9 July 2025. Cabinet has provided a commentary on each recommendation to inform the Committee of the rationale behind its decision. No table was produced for items where no recommendations were suggested.
 5. Draft minutes of the meeting are available [here](#).
 6. The Committee and Working Groups wish to put on record:
 - Its support for the officer recommendation to roll over the Council's investments in the NHPF1 into the new "evergreen" property fund in September 2025.
 - In relation to Priority 2 of the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Housing and Homelessness Working Group noted that action P2-1 current target was to process only 'the majority' of property licence applications, and suggested the aim should be to process all applications.
 - Their congratulations to the Housing Needs Team for being named LGC Housing Team of the Year – a well-deserved recognition of their impactful work in preventing homelessness in Oxford.
 7. The Scrutiny Committee and its Working Groups would like to thank Cabinet Members Cllr Lubna Arshad (A Safer Oxford), Cllr Alex Hollingsworth (Planning and Culture), Cllr Nigel Chapman (Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies) and Cllr Linda Smith (Housing and Communities) for their contributions. The Committee was also grateful Richard Adams (Community Safety Service Manager) Liz Jones (ASBIT Manager and Domestic Abuse Lead), Dawn Thompson (DAHA Project Worker), Clive Tritton (Interim Director of Economy, Regeneration and Sustainability), Diana Fawcett (City Centre Manager), Helen Bishop (Director of Communities and Citizens' Services) and Vicki Galvin (Citizen Experience Programme Manager) for their participation in presenting reports and responding to questions.

Financial implications

8. Financial implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Group.
9. Where appropriate, any further financial implications were reviewed when considering the recommendations.

Legal issues

10. Legal implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Group.

11. Where appropriate, any further legal implications were reviewed when considering the recommendations.

Level of risk

12. Risk Registers, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Groups.

13. Where appropriate, the risk register was reviewed when considering the recommendations.

Equalities impact

14. Equalities Impact Assessments, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Groups.

15. Where appropriate, the Equalities Impact Assessments was reviewed when considering the recommendations.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

16. Consideration for Carbon and Environmental impacts, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Groups.

17. Where appropriate, the Carbon and Environmental impacts were reviewed when considering the recommendations.

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**Table 1 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee –
Domestic Abuse Policy for Service Users**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 1 July 2025 concerning the Domestic Abuse Policy for Service Users. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That there is explicit recognition under section 3, Diversity Implications, of the way in which national immigration policy makes people less likely to disclose domestic violence, given Oxford's status as a Council of Sanctuary, it is especially important to acknowledge how national policy can harm the efforts of local authorities to build inclusive and safe communities.	In-part	Partially – to include an additional bullet point in S3.4 of the DA Policy for Service users: Fear of deportation This will be in line with the style of the policy and informs service users (the policy will be on our website) that the City Council validates the victim/survivors concerns and will support them.

**Table 2 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee –
Tourism (and ABID presentation)**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 1 July 2025 concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned item on Tourism (and ABID presentation). The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Council take further steps to publicise the locations of public toilets that are accessible to visitors and residents alike, such as those in the Town Hall and other public buildings.	Yes	The Council will ensure that public toilets are publicised on the widest possible range of information providers online and in physical form such as signs and posters.
2) That Council encourage the highest possible level of elected representation within the ABID task groups, within the constraints of the scheme, in order to promote democratic accountability, recognising the Council's role as the scheme's facilitator.	Yes	The Council will continue its role as the scheme's facilitator, supporting the work being done by the ABID decision makers, the accommodation providers themselves. The Task Group will be led by those decision makers, and they will ultimately determine its attendance. The Council will encourage the Task Groups to consider the most appropriate attendance from the City Council.

**Table 3 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee –
Citizen Experience Strategy**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 1 July 2025 concerning the Citizen Experience Strategy. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That Cabinet consider incorporating physical presence in future consultations, particularly in areas further outside the city centre, and undertake support of language interpreters where appropriate.	Yes	This is best included in the Council's Citizen and Community Engagement Policy, scheduled for Cabinet in September 2025.
2) That the environmental and equality impacts of AI use be considered as a core component of the full review of the Citizen Experience Strategy in 2027, adding dedicated sections addressing the implications of AI in both areas within the strategy.	No	We will ensure that the Council's future AI Strategy – which is currently being worked on - incorporates an assessment of the environmental and equality impacts. This is the right place for this work, rather than the full review of the Citizen Experience Strategy, which is at least two years away.
3) That proactive efforts be made to consult children under 12, in recognition of the city's commitment to becoming an age and children friendly city.	Yes	This is best included in the Council's Citizen and Community Engagement Policy, scheduled for Cabinet in September 2025.

Table 4 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Working Group – Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Housing and Homelessness Working Group on 24 June 2025, endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 1 July 2025, concerning the Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That Cabinet continue to actively lobby against changes to local government funding for homelessness services, particularly those that would result in significant funding reductions for Oxford and other local authorities with high levels of homelessness.	Yes	Cabinet will continue to use opportunities to influence the government's approach to funding for homelessness services, and where proposed changes are detrimental to Oxford we will make the case for the support we need from central government for local services. Recently Officers completed a formal consultation response to the government's proposed changes to the Homelessness Prevention Grant formula which if implemented would result in the reduction of funding to Oxford City Council and other Local Authorities with a similar profile. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities also wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister to raise these points. The Government has confirmed in their response to the consultation that the planned changes will still go ahead, but there have been amendments which will mitigate some of the reductions for the Council based on the response of Oxford and other Local Authorities. The Council will continue to look for opportunities to lobby government on key issues that affect the Council and residents.

2) That Council explore all available measures to safeguard tenants from unjust or revenge evictions pending the passage of the Renters' Rights Bill.	Yes	The Council continues to support tenants to ensure that they are protected from unjust or revenge evictions under current provisions within the law and will raise awareness and support tenants to use the new protections within the Renters' Rights Bill once its agreed and implemented. Alongside reactive engagement with tenants who have made complaints regarding their property and landlord, the Council continues to employ a Tenancy Relations Officer (TRO) who's specialist area of work is to support tenants who have complaints against their landlord, for example allegations of threats or harassment. The TRO offers a weekly face to face drop in for residents and can take enforcement action under the Prevention from Eviction Act 1977 to prevent illegal evictions if necessary. Alongside supporting tenants, the Council is also focused on engaging and supporting landlords to following the correct process when renting out their property. We have launched the 'Call B4 You Serve' - landlord advice and mediation service, which provides a dedicated Officer for landlords to contact to provide upstream advice to resolve and mediate between tenants and landlords to avoid evictions and homelessness. In preparation for the Renters' Rights Bill, Officers have launched a cross department working group to improve training and develop changes to services in preparation for the implementation of the new legislation if it becomes law.
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