

Appendix 1: Scrutiny Recommendations and Cabinet Responses

Table 1 – Cabinet response to the list of Scrutiny recommendations in August 2025

The table below sets out the response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made or endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee during its meeting on 5 August 2025.

Oxpens River Bridge Update

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That Cabinet undertake high-level remodelling and assess potential impact of the judicial review appeal progressing to a hearing, particularly around timescales and future costings, to ensure the Council is better prepared and has a more informed basis for decision-making.	Yes	<p>The discussion at the Scrutiny Committee raised this recommendation having heard that it is difficult to fully estimate the costs that would be incurred if there was another delay to the project caused by the Judicial Review process and an appeal against the original rejection of the JR. That is because those costs will be based on the length of the delay, which is outside the control of the City Council.</p> <p>It is likely that a delay due to Judicial Review beyond Autumn 2025 would result in the delivery of the project being pushed from 2026 to 2027, to avoid construction over the period of highest flood risk. The high-level cost of such a delay will be reported verbally at the meeting.</p>

Local Plan 2042 Climate Change and Resilience

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That the Local Plan 2042 include clearer support for renewable energy schemes, particularly the potential for solar panel installations on terraced houses through community-led energy schemes.	Yes	The new Local Plan will set out clear support for renewable energy generation, as is the case in the first draft plan that is currently subject to consultation, as we agree this is important. However, it is crucial that flexibility is retained in relation to what format this generation takes – i.e. not

		<p>specifying rigidly that generation come from a particular technology. This will allow proposals to respond to particular characteristics of each site, and help future-proof the policies (e.g. should new technologies become suitable in future).</p> <p>We will consider how best to respond to proposals for community-led energy schemes, and whether the currently proposed policies can suitably cover this, or whether additional wording is needed and incorporate if necessary (potentially through supporting text).</p>
2) That there is greater robustness demonstrated in the Local Plan 2042 supporting text acknowledging the urgency of climate action when balancing the need to address climate emergency through retrofitting heritage buildings to support decarbonisation against the need to minimise harm to heritage assets.	In-part	<p>The proposed draft policies in the current Local Plan 2042 Regulation 18 consultation strongly respond to the need for both mitigating impacts on climate change and adapting to it. Whilst the supporting text to the policies is yet to be drafted, we will also ensure that this message comes through strongly here.</p> <p>The new Local Plan 2042 proposes policy on retro-fitting of existing buildings, including historic buildings, in order to support applicants in making the best possible application. This is a new policy compared with the adopted Local Plan as we agree it is a key challenge we need to help applicants respond to. As the plan develops, we will continue to set out that, wherever possible, these applications will be supported, however, it should be noted that we also have a statutory duty towards protecting the historic environment which we must balance in preparing a legally compliant Local Plan.</p> <p>Whilst the vast majority of buildings in Oxford do not have a heritage designation, we are clear that heritage designations do not need to be a barrier to retro-fit but do necessitate additional care and consideration in designing such projects which the policy seeks to address. Having</p>

		<p>previously sought advice on this issue, there are limitations in how much further Local Plan policy can go, however, we will consider how we can further support such projects, whether this is through additional messaging in supporting text, or through other associated guidance (e.g. Technical Advice Notes) as we agree it is an important objective for the city.</p>
<p>3) That the Plan explicitly references the potential use of energy offsetting funds from developers for retrofit improvements to schools and community buildings, recognising the wider public benefit of public buildings rather than individual residential buildings, and criteria applied to the allocation of these funds prioritises maximum community impact.</p>	In-part	<p>Firstly, it should be noted that the proposed policy is clear that use of offsetting should be a last resort and that the preference is for net zero carbon to be achieved onsite first. Where offset funds are collected, it will be important that these funds are spent on projects that are identified through a fair and transparent methodology and that the funding is utilised for delivering true offsetting. We would agree that these would ideally be securing additional benefits for wider communities wherever possible – such as focusing on community buildings and/or social housing – but there may also be other important criteria.</p> <p>The methodology for administering these funds, including identifying suitable projects, is a work in progress that will continue to be developed as the Local Plan progresses, though separately to the Local Plan itself.</p> <p>We will look for ways to reference in the Local Plan examples of how we would wish to utilise funds generated from offsetting going forward, including that they can secure wider benefits for the community wherever possible. We will also factor the recommendation into the considerations of the wider process of creating the fund and its ongoing governance, which will ultimately need to be approved separately at an appropriate time (e.g. once the overarching policy approach has been tested at examination).</p>

<p>4) That there is specific language acknowledging the potential for loss and damage associated with new and existing properties in areas of high flood risk, and that local plan policies ensure applicants take account of these potential impacts in future planning and climate resilience design features to minimise possible damage (e.g. positioning of plugs, use of specific materials on the ground floor that can cope with flood damage).</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The term “loss and damage” is a broad concept typically used internationally to refer to the consequences of climate change that go beyond what people can adapt to.</p> <p>In the Oxford context, the Local Plan 2042 is focused on adaption and mitigation that can be secured through the development process, whilst avoiding/mitigating risks now and in future wherever possible.</p> <p>To that end, the Local Plan includes a specific draft policy (Draft Policy G9) which is proposed to ensure that new development is designed in a way that is resilient to future climate change, including appropriate adaptation measures that can address a range of climate hazards like flooding and overheating where necessary. We agree that the Local Plan also has a role in highlighting the key risks in the city, such as flood risk and risk from overheating, at least at a high level, and will ensure this is a part of the supporting text.</p> <p>Proposed policy G9 also includes language that seeks to ensure applicants take these risks into account in designing their development and this will be expanded on in supporting text as it is drafted. The priority for the policies is to ensure that a strong framework is put in place setting out the key considerations which we want applicants to respond to where it is within their power. This can then provide a hook for additional supporting guidance (e.g. Technical Advice Notes) which can provide further detail and specific examples of resilience measures which might be suitable to meet the policy’s requirements.</p>
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Annual Air Quality Status Report

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
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<p>1) That the Air Quality Action Plan incorporates specific measures addressing the use of diesel generators associated with street trading, construction and similar activities, reflecting the Council's regulatory responsibilities in relation to street trading and seek to reduce air quality impacts.</p>	<p>In-part</p>	<p>We acknowledge the importance of addressing air quality impacts associated with diesel generator use in street trading, construction, and similar activities. As part of the development of the city's new Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP), we commit to exploring this issue further.</p> <p>However, at this stage, we are unable to commit to specific measures in detail, as the AQAP is still subject to internal review(s) and will also undergo a full public consultation process. This will ensure that any proposed actions in the final document are informed by stakeholder input and reflect a balanced, realistic, and evidence-based approach.</p>
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Table 2 – Cabinet response to the list of Scrutiny recommendations in September 2025

The table below sets out the response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made or endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee during its meeting on 9 September 2025.

Citizen and Community Engagement Policy 2025

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That the Policy specifically assigns locality managers a role in the dissemination of consultations, making use of their deeper understanding of each local area’s needs and dynamics with the intention to tailor engagement efforts more effectively.	In part	<p>We agree that locality managers have a valuable role in tailoring engagement to the needs of local areas.</p> <p>Rather than including this level of operational detail in the overarching Policy, their role can be referenced in the project brief template, which includes a dedicated section outlining all support and resources planned for each engagement exercise (e.g. Locality Managers, Communications Team, Project Management). This will ensure their contribution is embedded in practice without overloading the Policy.</p>
2) That the Policy acknowledges and identifies busy time periods to be avoided for consultations, to ensure residents or participants have adequate opportunity to participate, particularly where the consultation topic requires more focused attention.	Yes	<p>Under the <i>Timeliness</i> principle, the Policy already states that <i>“If engagement takes place over holiday periods, the Council will assess and mitigate any negative impact on participation.”</i></p> <p>In practice, there are occasions when consultations must take place during holiday periods — for example, the Annual Residents Survey (normally run July–September, where consistency of timing ensures accurate year-on-year comparisons) and the Budget Consultation (which must align with the statutory budget cycle in late December). For these reasons, we believe the current wording in the</p>

		<p>Policy strikes the right balance.</p> <p>Where consultations do need to run during busier periods, officers will carefully assess the necessity, monitor participation closely, and take additional steps to encourage involvement.</p> <p>To further strengthen this in practice, a checkpoint on timing will be added to the project brief template, ensuring officers actively consider and, where possible, avoid launching consultations during peak holiday periods.</p>
3) That every consultation document undergoes an inclusivity check by an officer, resident panel, or elected member prior to release for readability and understandability by all audiences.	Yes	<p>We agree that accessibility and readability are essential. Officers will continue to carry out inclusivity checks (including plain English review and digital accessibility compliance).</p> <p>In practice, all consultation questionnaires are already reviewed to ensure readability and clarity. This includes checking that questions are written in plain English, that the length of the questionnaire is appropriate, and that the content is easy to follow for a wide audience. We will continue to apply this standard.</p> <p>The readability issue is usually observed more in supporting documents or policy papers that sit alongside the consultation.</p> <p>Looking ahead, we will strengthen the process by embedding it in the project brief template. Requesting officers will be asked to self-check all supporting materials and documents for readability and inclusivity before submission, with a checkpoint added in the template to make this explicit.</p>

		Where needed, we will also ask the Communications Team to provide an additional check to further support clarity and accessibility.
4) That Cabinet ensures the Policy is applied in a manner that maximises the inclusion of disabled people in the Council's consultation processes.	Yes	<p>This will be reinforced through both officer training and practical measures such as offering alternative formats, using accessible venues, and ensuring interpreters/support workers are available where needed.</p> <p>We will also add guidance re engaging with relevant community groups that can support with engagement.</p>
5) That Cabinet requests officers to undertake exploratory work to incorporate a system for ranking the importance of each consultation, and to investigate whether the use of incentives could effectively increase participation and engagement.	In part	<p>Regarding the suggestion to rank the importance of consultations, this would be difficult to implement in practice. Consultation projects vary widely in purpose, scope, and target audience — some focus on local residents on specific local issues, while others target the general public. Each consultation is equally important to its intended audience, making it challenging to compare projects and quantify "importance." Therefore, we propose continuing the current case-by-case review process, ensuring that each consultation is promoted effectively to its relevant audience.</p> <p>Regarding the use of incentives, this can be included as a checkpoint in the project brief template. However, any use of incentives must consider the project budget and potential impacts. While incentives can help boost response rates, they may also introduce bias by attracting participants who are more motivated by the incentive rather than the consultation topic itself. Careful consideration would be required before implementing this approach.</p>

Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That Cabinet ensures the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy incorporates a degree of flexibility to take account of extraordinary employment circumstances including those who work irregular hours or on variable contracts, in order to support fairness and further clarity.	Yes	The policy ensures that when placements are being considered that each case will be considered on its merits, having regard to employment, caring responsibilities, medical needs, and education of the household. This includes households which have people working variable hours.

Heat Network Update

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That social value creation is explored and embedded in the delivery of the heat network, with particular focus on mitigating the negative impacts of construction, including compensation for any disruptions to local businesses, safety concerns, damage to properties, and other community impacts, and that income generated through the network is directed toward addressing fuel poverty through measures such as insulation and energy efficiency upgrades.	Yes	<p>We agree that the Council will explore all opportunities for social value creation and to mitigate any negative impacts of the scheme, noting that a balance will need to be struck between a) partner requirements (including social value delivery), b) the cost of heat and c) commercial viability of any heat network.</p> <p>Social value creation is a core work package of the due diligence work being undertaken by the DHN Partnership, chaired by Oxford City Council. All aspects of social value delivery will be explored, including those mentioned by the panel and employment opportunities etc.</p>
2) That Council ensures there is further scrutiny specifically around the ownership models of the infrastructure under consideration for the heat network.	Yes	Delivery models, including co-investment and golden share, are being reviewed as part of the due diligence work.
3) That concerns around potential monopoly are duly noted, and that commercial arrangements include mechanisms that will ensure long-term public benefit and enable public oversight; that any profits or financial	Yes	We agree that the Council will explore all potential delivery models as part of the due diligence work, noting again that a balance will need to be struck between a) partner requirements b) the cost of heat and c) commercial viability

turnover generated through the network are shared with the City Council and used to directly benefit residents; and that where possible, infrastructure is retained in public ownership or alternative safeguards are implemented to ensure dependency on a single private provider is prevented.		<p>of any heat network</p> <p>The results of the comprehensive due diligence will set out the key requirements for the City from a Heat Network. This will provide the Council and its Partners with the information on whether to proceed with the heat network option offered by 1energy.</p>
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Local EV Infrastructure

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That OX Place, as a council-owned company, ensure that EV charge points in new developments are accessible to the wider community; and that further work is undertaken to explore the use of workplace EV charging points by local residents during evenings and weekends, potentially through planning conditions.		<p>It would be difficult to impose such a condition (or require it through Section 106 agreement), and the Council would not be in a position to monitor or effectively enforce it. There is currently no relevant policy supporting this, and the provision of EV charging points for general public use is not the responsibility of applicants, unless an applicant was volunteering to do so. This can be included in considerations for the Local Plan, however there are practical challenges with implementing such a requirement.</p>