

To: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 2 December 2025
Report of: Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Recommendations from the Working Groups for endorsement at the Scrutiny Committee

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To endorse the recommendations from the Working Groups.
Key decision:	No
Lead Member:	Chairs of the Scrutiny Working Groups
Corporate Priority:	A Well-Run Council
Policy Framework:	None

Recommendation(s): That the Scrutiny Committee resolves to:
1. Endorse the recommendations from the Climate and Environment, Housing and Homelessness, and Finance and Performance Working Groups.
2. Note the recommendations to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group.

Information Exempt From Publication
Information contained in or appended to this report is deemed exempt from publication under Schedule 12A paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	Recommendations to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group - 1 December 2025	Yes
Appendix 2	Recommendations to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group - 4 December 2025	Yes

Overview and Summary

1. The Scrutiny Committee is asked to endorse the recommendations from the following Working Groups held since the previous meeting:

Housing and Homelessness Working Group – 13 November 2025

- Housing Complaint Handling Performance (Q1 and Q2)
- Building Safety & Compliance (Q1 and Q2)
- Draft Resident Involvement Strategy 2025-28
- Decarbonisation update: Impact of Energy Efficiency Funding programmes (LAD1b and SHDF) and EPC programme

Climate and Environment Working Group – 17 November 2025

- Net Zero Tracker
- Air Quality Action Plan
- Biodiversity Strategy and Environment Act update

Finance and Performance Working Group – 26 November 2025

- Treasury Management Annual Report
- OxWED – Oxpens Delivery Options (SJVG)
- ODS Group Performance Report (SJVG)

2. The recommendations due at Shareholder and Joint Venture Group on 1 December 2025 were endorsed through delegated authority to the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor, in consultation with the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee. They have been included as an exempt appendix (Appendix 1) for the Committee to note.
3. Another set of recommendations to the SJVG for their meeting on 4 December 2025 is supplied as Appendix 2 for the Committee to endorse.
4. Cabinet Members, in consultation with the relevant Officers, will either, agree, agree in-part, or disagree with the recommendations. The tables below detail the Working Groups' recommendations for endorsement by the Committee. No table was produced for items where no recommendations were suggested.

Summaries of Working Group discussions

5. Housing and Homelessness

- **Housing Complaint Handling Performance (Q1 and Q2)**

The Working Group acknowledged the positive feedback from the Ombudsman regarding the Council's complaint handling. It noted the current backlog and sought assurance that sufficient resource is in place, with Officers confirming new staff are being trained and the backlog is expected to be cleared by the end of Q3. Members raised questions about escalation routes when officers do not respond, and highlighted the need for clear communication pathways for residents who wish to raise concerns without entering the formal complaint process.

- **Building Safety and Compliance Performance (Q1 and Q2)**

The first point noted by Members was regarding subcontracted fire risk assessors not appearing on the professional register, which was raised by external auditors in their report to the Audit and Governance Committee. The Working Group was reassured that an internal fire assessment team has

been established following recommendations from the auditors and that auditors were positive about this progress. Members also discussed the anticipated impact of Awaab's Law and the likelihood of increased reporting and resource need. Lastly, the Working Group sought clarification on stairlifts provisions and implications for vulnerable residents to whom these were provided. It was clarified that stairlift provisions for residents are not legally required under LOLER, however as a result of this oversight, the Council agreed arrangements with residents and will reassess future arrangements.

- **Draft Resident Involvement Strategy 2025-28**

A strong expression of support for the Strategy was offered, with the Working Group welcoming the significant resident influence throughout its design. The Working Group welcomed the opportunity to track that the strategy's intentions are reflected in the way policies are delivered, and any plans to strengthen feedback loop from the Tenant Board.

Other points raised included resident involvement which often intersects with other areas of work such as EPC inspections. Members highlighted the importance of making sure that feedback from residents are captured consistently and channelled effectively across workstreams, including the work of Scrutiny. The Working Group also noted the need to avoid duplication of work and to ensure resident voices are not diluted. They welcomed the confirmation that efficient governance arrangements are being reviewed with these considerations in mind.

- **Decarbonisation update: Impact of Energy Efficiency Funding programmes (LAD1b and SHDF) and EPC programme**

Discussions centred around the risk of large numbers of EPCs expiring simultaneously with Members noting the need to manage assessment cycles more evenly. The Working Group also sought clarity on progress towards EPC targets and whether the Council remains on track to reduce properties below Band C by 2030. Other concerns raised pertained to resilience and future external funding, and tenant refusals to retrofit work. It was noted that these often stemmed from disruption, health issues, or misconceptions particularly surrounding insulation and air source heat pumps, which prompted the Working Group to highlight the importance of educating residents on these topics.

There were no recommendations from the Housing and Homelessness Working Group.

6. Climate and Environment

- **Air Quality Action Plan**

The Working Group noted the Air Quality Action Plan consultation booklet has effectively incorporated previous scrutiny feedback on ensuring information for the public is clear and easily digestible.

Points were raised regarding the extent to which delivery of the AQAP may be affected by county-level policies and measures, including the congestion charge. They queried whether the document sufficiently accounted for potential inconsistencies between administration and whether these differing positions were acknowledged. In the context of Local Government Reorganisation, the Working Group emphasised the need to maintain strong commitment to the excellent work being done, and to ensure that this positive

trajectory continues. Some concerns were also noted from areas such as Woodstock Road and Hollow Way about potential displacement effects arising from temporary congestion measures, and the Group considered whether additional monitoring in these areas might be beneficial. The Working Group accepted the clarification that the 44 diffusion tube monitoring points previously assessed in relation to traffic filters align with those areas predicted to experience the most significant impacts from congestion related measures. Overall, the Working Group expressed general support for the draft Air Quality Action Plan.

- **Biodiversity Strategy and Environment Act Update**

Firstly, the Working Group wished to ensure that the newly appointed Ecologists have the resources required to meet the Council's biodiversity commitments and duties. It noted that the team is still assessing its needs and would be in a position to forecast these in due course. Members queried Section 106 allocations and whether parameters should be set, however it was understood that a deliberate decision had been taken to retain simpler guidance to avoid placing unnecessary limitations on the biodiversity team. The Working Group also discussed the robustness of enforcing biodiversity policies within the Local Plan, and the potential to link certain elements to Section 106, both of which will need to be worked out within the forthcoming Biodiversity Net Gain document to formalise the Council's approach.

The Working Group welcomed and expressed thanks to Richard Hill and Sarah Hawes, both of whom joined the Council recently as Principal Ecologists, and extended its appreciation to the wider Environment Sustainability team for their contributions to the meeting.

7. Finance and Performance

- **Treasury Management Annual Report**

There were no recommendations from the Finance and Performance Working Group.

8. The Working Groups wish to thank Cabinet Members and Officers who contributed to the meetings.

Financial implications

9. Financial implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Working Groups.

Legal issues

10. Legal implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Working Groups.

Level of risk

11. Risk Registers, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Working Groups.

Equalities impact

12. Equalities Impact Assessments, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Working Groups.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

13. Consideration for Carbon and Environmental impacts, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Working Groups.

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**Table 1 – Recommendations of the Climate and Environment Working Group –
Biodiversity Strategy and Environment Act Update**

The table below sets out the recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Working Group on 17 November for endorsement by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 2 December 2025. The Cabinet will be asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>1) That Cabinet draw on the expertise of community and voluntary groups to provide input and support the delivery of the Biodiversity Strategy; and actively inform the public about the criteria for good habitat, clearly promoting what good biodiverse habitat looks like so as to strengthen public understanding and support for practices (such as leaving verges uncut) that protect local species.</p>		