

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 11 February 2026  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee

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

| <b>Recommendation(s): That the Cabinet:</b>   |  |
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| 1. Consider and respond to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee as set out in the report. |  |

| <b>Information Exempt From Publication</b> |   |
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| <b>Appendix 3</b>                          | Relating to financial sensitivity/business of the Council |

| <b>Appendix No.</b> | <b>Appendix Title</b>                                      | <b>Exempt from Publication</b> |
|---------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Appendix 1          | Report of the Budget Review Group                          | No                             |
| Appendix 2          | Budget Review Group Recommendations                        | No                             |
| Appendix 3          | Written response to questions from the Budget Review Group | Yes                            |

## Overview and Summary

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 3 February 2026 and reviewed the following items:
  - Debt Recovery Procedure

- Noticeboards Update
- AI Strategy
- Budget Review Group Report

2. Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 grants power to the Scrutiny Committee to make reports or recommendations to the Cabinet with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the Executive; and on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.
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 Scrutiny for each report, which Cabinet will consider at their meeting on 11 February 2026. Cabinet has provided commentaries to inform the Committee of the rationale behind its decision. No table was produced for items where no recommendations were suggested.
5. In light of discussions relating to the effective use and management of noticeboards, the Committee had made a recommendation to proceed with Option 3 of the options presented by officers as potential way forward. Given there are cost implications to this recommendation, the Committee resolved to include it as an addition to the Budget Review Group Report for consideration as part of the budget review process.

### **Budget Review Group**

6. The Budget Review Group held five meetings in December 2025 and January 2026 to examine the draft budget proposals, as approved by Cabinet for consultation in December 2025. The Group's findings and recommendations are appended to this report which have been endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 3 February 2026.
7. In consultation with the relevant Officers, the budget recommendations (Appendix 2) were forwarded to Cabinet Members to either agree, agree in-part, or disagree. Together with the report, it will be formally considered by Cabinet on 11 February 2026 and then presented to Full Council on 23 February 2026.
8. The Budget Review Group is grateful to all officers, working group members and cabinet members who have all contributed to the process, responding to questions in advance and attending the evening meetings.

### **Acknowledgements**

9. Minutes of the Scrutiny meeting held on 3 February 2026 can be viewed [here](#).
10. The Scrutiny Committee would like to thank the Cabinet particularly Cllr Nigel Chapman (Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies) and Cllr Ed Turner (Deputy Leader (Statutory) – Finance and Asset Management) for their collaborative engagement with Scrutiny. The Committee was also grateful to Nigel Kennedy (Group Finance Director), Phil McGaskill (Revenues Service Delivery Manager), Tom Hook (Deputy Chief Executive – City and Citizens), Helen Bishop (Director of Communities and Citizens Services) and Becky Willis (People Programme Manager) for their work on the reports presented and responding to questions raised by members.

### **Financial implications**

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

### **Legal issues**

13. Legal implications for the reports listed above were outlined within the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Group.
14. Where appropriate, any further legal implications were reviewed when considering the recommendations.

### **Level of risk**

15. Risk Registers, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Groups.
16. Where appropriate, the risk register was reviewed when considering the recommendations.

### **Equalities impact**

17. Equalities Impact Assessments, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Groups.
18. Where appropriate, the Equalities Impact Assessments was reviewed when considering the recommendations.

### **Carbon and Environmental Considerations**

19. Consideration for Carbon and Environmental impacts, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Groups.
20. 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 –  
Debt Recovery Procedure**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 3 February 2026 concerning the Debt Recovery Procedure. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

| <b>Recommendation</b>   | <b>Agree?</b> | <b>Comment</b>   |
|---|---------------|--|
| 1) That a summary report on council debt recovery activities at all stages is provided to Scrutiny and Cabinet at a future meeting to ensure there is awareness in this area of the council's work. | Yes           | A complete summary report of debt recovery stages will be presented at the next available scrutiny meeting; here is a breakdown of the current number of accounts in recovery and the stage. |

| Recovery Stage                    | Jan 2026      |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| No - Reminder 1 - RM1             | 2333          |
| value                             | £1,451,097.12 |
| No - Reminder 2 - RM2             | 593           |
| value                             | £275,657.81   |
| No - Reminder 3 - RM3             | 31            |
| value                             | £9,949.99     |
| No - Final - FIN                  | 5989          |
| value                             | £5,293,928.37 |
| No - Summons - SUM                | 470           |
| value                             | £427,840.92   |
| No - Liability Order - LO         | 1004          |
| value                             | £1,043,312.30 |
| No - Arrangement - ARG            | 705           |
| value                             | £457,762.94   |
| No - Attachment of Benefits - AOB | 669           |
| value                             | £330,238.48   |
| No - Attachment of Earnings - AOE | 249           |
| value                             | £204,631.57   |
| No - Enforcement Agents - BLF     | 4226          |
| value                             | £4,116,804.41 |
| No - Charging Order - CHO         | 117           |
| value                             | £127,559.20   |

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| No - Charging Order Application - CA            | 42          |
| value   | £59,383.39  |
| No - Submitted for Write Off - SWO              | 82          |
| value   | £38,169.62  |
| No - Information Request - INF                  | 69          |
| value   | £40,499.84  |
| No - Attachment of Benefits Pending - ABP       | 358         |
| value   | £200,612.39 |
| No - Attachment of Earnings Pending - AEP       | 235         |
| value   | £164,173.88 |
| No - Cases with Senior Officer - CWS            | 90          |
| value   | £109,328.74 |
| No - Cases with Court Officer - PRL             | 228         |
| value   | £359,763.47 |
| No - Cases referred for Legal Proceedings - RTL | 28          |
| value   | £22,027.44  |

It is important to note that we have no cases at committal stage.

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| <p>2) That Cabinet considers incorporating clear, plain language summary within letters issued to individuals in addition to links to further information online, given the prevalence of digital exclusion and unfamiliarity with local government terminology. This would reduce reliance on residents needing to follow online links to understand the purpose and implications of the letters.</p> | <p>In part</p> | <p><b>Billing and Recovery Documents Local Taxation</b></p> <p>Every element of our billing and recovery documentation, including SMS messaging, has been developed using evidence based behavioural insights provided by Dr Amy Jones, a behavioural scientist and recognised expert in local taxation communications. In designing these materials, careful consideration was given to the strict legislative requirements governing the content of local taxation documents, ensuring that all mandatory information remained fully compliant.</p> <p>While further amendments through supplementary inserts is possible, Dr Jones emphasised the importance of keeping all key information within the main billing and recovery documents themselves. She advised that, wherever possible, the most important messages should be presented prominently on the front page to maximise clarity, comprehension, and customer engagement. We think this is in line with the spirit of the scrutiny recommendation.</p> <p>We have included a link which makes clear her thoughts and our response to how our document should be presented:</p> <p><a href="#"><u>The Insights of Dr Jones</u></a></p> <p>Members also asked for information on translation services in considering this matter so it is provided below:</p> <p><b>Availability of Translation and Interpreting Services</b></p> <p>Oxford City Council offers a full range of translation and interpreting services through its provider Word360. These services include telephone interpreting, face-to-face interpreting (including British Sign Language), video interpreting and document translation.</p> |
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|  | <p>Residents can access these services by contacting the Council's main switchboard on 01865 249811 or by visiting the Customer Service Centre, where staff can arrange the required language support.</p> <p>In addition to English, the recovery team is multi-cultural, with the following languages also spoken:</p> <p>Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and Gujarati</p> <p><b>Translation Services in the Oxford City Complaints Process</b></p> <p>These translation and interpreting services are available to support residents when making a complaint. The services are intended to ensure that all residents can communicate effectively with the Council and access services regardless of language barriers.</p> <p><b>Translation Services Provided by Enforcement Agents Engaged by the City Council</b></p> <p><b>XL Enforcement</b></p> <p>Offer a range of in house language support through their multilingual team.</p> <p>In addition to this internal capability, the organisation can produce written communications in over 100 languages using Google Translate and works with Cymon for high quality Welsh translations. These tools also support their digital engagement channels, including Telsolutions campaigns, and are being built into the development pipeline for the bespoke DebtorApp. To ensure full accessibility for all service users, XL Enforcement also provides large print documents, Braille, dyslexia friendly formats, British Sign Language interpreters, and RelayUK for hearing impaired customers. They are further enhancing real time communication by moving towards the</p> |
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|   |            | <p>use of Samsung Translate across all enforcement agents' Samsung smart devices while on the road.</p> <p><b>Jacobs Enforcement</b></p> <p>provides a full translation service for customers across all contact points, supporting communication in any language through its partnership with <b>TheBigWord</b>, a professional provider offering telephone, online, and in person translation on demand.</p> <p>Agents also carry language identification tools on their iPads, enabling them to quickly identify a customer's preferred language and arrange a translator as needed.</p> <p>Where appropriate and authorised by the debtor, translation can also be facilitated through trusted community groups.</p> <p>In addition to these services, the organisation benefits from the wide language skills of its Enforcement Agents and can provide accessible formats such as sign language interpretation, Braille, and other specialist communication support.</p> |
| <p>3) That the timescales of meetings with advice centres is revisited to ensure they correspond to their capacity and availability, noting that critical role of advice centres as both a key contact point for residents and a source of specialist advice and support.</p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>We have asked advice centres about this; so far, the Council has not yet received a response with regards to reinstating these meetings at times that align with capacity and availability of advice centres. Once this is confirmed, Council will ensure the meetings can be scheduled accordingly. Advice centres are indeed valued partners and points of contact.</p>   |

## **Table 2 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee – Noticeboards Update**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 3 February 2026 concerning the Noticeboards Update. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

| <b><i>Recommendation</i></b>   | <b><i>Agree?</i></b> | <b><i>Comment</i></b>                 |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1) Subject to the agreement that Council will commit to actively managing and operating the noticeboards as recommended in the budget review process, that clear guidelines are developed for the use of noticeboards, including how new items and updates are managed, and the responsibilities of key holders. | In Part              | Agreed, subject to budget discussion. |

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