

To: Cabinet
Date: 8 July 2026
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee 30 June 2026

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 the Cabinet:
1. Consider and respond to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee as set out in the report.

Information Exempt from Publication
N/A

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

Overview and Summary

- The Scrutiny Committee met on 30 June 2026 and reviewed the following items:
 - Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy (Report for Cabinet)
 - Annual Review of the Council of Sanctuary Framework (Report for Cabinet)
- Working Group meetings were also held to consider a range of reports:

Housing and Homelessness Working Group – 24 June 2026

- HRA Policies [Report for Cabinet and Council]
 - Housing Services Performance Report Quarter 4 and Resident Engagement “You Said, We Did” Report Quarter 4 2025-26 [Scrutiny Commissioned Report]
 - Housing Consumer Standards Improvement Plan 2026-27 [Scrutiny Commissioned Report]
 - Housing Work Programme Review [Scrutiny Commissioned Report]
3. Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 grants the 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.
 4. Following the meetings, Cabinet Members, in consultation with the relevant Officers were asked to agree, agree in-part, or disagree with the recommendations.
 5. 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 8 July 2026. 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.
 6. Minutes of relevant meetings are available detailed below:
 - [Scrutiny Committee 30 June 2026](#)

Summary of Discussions from the Working Groups

7. For the HRA Policies, due to be recommended by Cabinet for Council to approve, there were questions around the Lifting Equipment and Lifting Operations Policy regarding the order of work and subsequent timescales for it to be completed. The Working Group were told the priority would be to rescue individuals stuck in lifts and then the other timeframes would be for the securing and fixing of the lift, depending on specifics determined contactors. Any defined targets for repairs were not currently suggested as the policy was proposing alternative measures to this.
8. There was a request to link with the complaints procedure, but this policy was seen as a preventative approach, with a monitoring mechanism linked to complaints and wider health and safety systems.
9. Regarding the Complaints Policy, there were questions around those received by social media from residents, which would need to be formally submitted for processing. The Working Group were told the policy had been drafted with expectations of social media trends, suggesting there could be an increase in complaints, but there was not a significant issue at present.
10. Referring to stage 2 escalation for complaints, there were queries if a full response would be received within specified 20 working days, as set out by the Housing Ombudsman Service. Officers noted that they usually respond quicker than the specified timescale, but always consider the associated risks, health and safety concerns, disrepair, vulnerability, and any repeated service failures before responding. The Housing Ombudsman Service requests that an annual report is

published, and a self-assessment is completed through the quarterly Residents' Complaints Panel, which then reports to the Tenant and Leaseholder Board.

11. There were comments regarding the work contracted to Oxford Direct Services (ODS) and evidence of the complaint statistics being on a negative trajectory. Officers noted that the policy outlined an independent oversight from the Council for ODS complaints, referring to guidance from the Housing Ombudsman Service and resident feedback. It was noted ODS would only be responsible for stage 1 complaints, and the Council would process any complaints escalated.
12. Regarding the Voids Policy, there was a suggestion to link community and mental health support where a property becomes void and requires major work as a result of a traumatic or major incident, such as a fire. Officers noted it was not yet referenced within the policy, but the current processes lend to considering community impact and exceptional void impacts.
13. For the Housing Services Performance Report for Quarter 4, there were positive comments around the compliance of safety check rates along with the value and presentation on the report.
14. There were comments on the damp and mould reporting in connection with access issues and resource pressures. It was recognised that there was a period where additional resource was required to clear the backlog, which has since been achieved. However, the Working Group were made aware this could increase again; to manage this, officers are streamlining processes and reviewing data to enable the prediction of trends. This will enable more proactive responses in partnership with ODS.
15. For the Resident Engagement "You Said, We Did" Report Quarter 4 2025-26, there were comments on the positive value of the report and on the responses from the residents. It was noted that not all policies have been approved by Council, but the tenant satisfaction measures and the perceptions of the Council as a landlord had seen a significant improvement in recent months.
16. For the Housing Consumer Standards Improvement Plan 2026-27, the Working Group commented on the quality of the report but noted a delay for the health and safety internal audits. It was noted that the initial target dates did not consider the resulting actions from the audit.
17. There were also questions about the next phase of implementing feedback within the improvement plan, including further engagement with tenants. It was commented that feedback is continually collected and actioned, with communication actions being embedded within the resident engagement strategy action plan.

Acknowledgements

18. The Scrutiny Committee would like to thank Councillor Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities) and Councillor Mike Rowley (Cabinet Member for Regulation of the Private Rented Sector and Preventing Homelessness) for their contributions. The Committee was also grateful to Nerys Parry (Director of Housing), Stephen Cohen (Refugee and Resettlement Manager), Richard Wood (Head of Homelessness and Housing Need), Sharan Thompson (Housing Strategy and Performance Lead), James Watkins (Housing Policy and Projects Officer), Neil Schofield (Head of HRA), Courtney Bennett (Regulatory Services Manager), Katherine Coney (Residential Regulation Team Area Manager) and Hannah Carmody-Brown (Committee and Member Services

Officer) for their participation in presenting reports, responding to questions and supporting the Scrutiny function.

Financial implications

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

Legal issues

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

Level of risk

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

Equalities impact

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

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

- 27. Consideration for Carbon and Environmental impacts, where appropriate, were linked to the reports presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Groups.
- 28. Where appropriate, the Carbon and Environmental impacts were reviewed when considering the recommendations.

Report author	Jonathan Malton
Job title	Committee and Member Services Manager
Service area or department	Law, Governance and Strategy
Telephone	07485 396185
e-mail	jmalton@oxford.gov.uk

**Table 1 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee –
Annual Review of the Council of Sanctuary Framework 2025-2028**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 30 June 2026 concerning the Annual Review of the Council of Sanctuary Framework 2025-2028. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) The updated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be published as part of the updated report and circulated to the Scrutiny Committee	Yes	Officers will share the updated KPIs with members of the Committee once prepared.
2) Further, localised data and information regarding the refugees housed in Oxford, to be included within the report next year and to be shared with the Scrutiny Committee	Yes	Officers will prepare and circulate available data with committee members shortly
3) To include Community Associations within the updated Action Plan	Yes	The Action Plan will be amended to include this
4) A bench-marking exercise against similar authorities to the City Council have succeed in positive housing outcomes, linked to government data	Yes	Officers will seek to benchmark our outcomes for homelessness duties for people leaving Home Office accommodation. This will only be possible if national government collects this level of detail, or similar LAs are willing to share their information. Officers will update this work in next year's report.

5) The No Recourse to Public Fund (NRPF) protocol, once finalised with Oxfordshire County Council, to be returned to the Scrutiny Committee for review	Yes	Agreed, with acknowledgment that Oxfordshire County Council are the document owner and scrutiny committee may only be able to provide comment
6) Measure the impact of the Council comms team regarding myth busting against misinformation	Yes	Officers will seek to develop measures of success and report back in next year's report

**Table 2 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee –
Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 30 June 2026 concerning the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) Tenants Unions to be involved in the evaluation of the implementation of the policy	Yes	Officers will engage with tenant unions and relevant third sector organisations as part of the ongoing evaluation of the policy's implementation, drawing on their insight into the experience of private renters in Oxford
2) Further and regular data to be provided regarding the enforcement of the policy to be shared with the committee and included within future reports brought to the committee	Yes	From 2027/28, MHCLG will require mandatory quarterly reporting from local authorities on private sector housing enforcement activity under the Renters' Rights Act. In the interim, the Council is voluntarily providing this data. Officers will share this with the committee on a regular basis and ensure relevant enforcement data is included in future reports brought to scrutiny.
3) For further information to be brought to Councillors regarding Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, including a briefing to be scheduled	Yes	Officers are very happy to provide members briefings on their work including property licensing, the Renter's Rights Acts, private sector housing enforcement activities or any other subjects that might be helpful to members.

Table 3 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Working Group – HRA Policies

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 2026 and endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 30 June 2026 concerning the HRA Policies. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) Within the Voids Policy, for there to be consideration for the wider community and social impact	Yes	The specific recommendation was for an exceptional void to be addressed with urgency so that, for example, a burnt down property does not blight the local community. It was agreed at the meeting this will be written into the voids procedures
2) Within the Lifting Equipment and Lifting Operations Policy, to ensure complaints for Oxford Direct Services (ODS) have a robust oversight procedure and to ensure the timescales within the policy are clearly defined	Yes	This recommendation was made in respect of the Complaints Policy and was agreed to.
3) Within the Complaints Policy, to ensure there is clarity on repeated complaints and tightening the wording for public clarity	Yes	This recommendation was agreed and the amendment was made to the policy