

To: Cabinet
Date: 19 August 2026
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 the Cabinet:
1. Consider and respond to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee as set out in the report.

Information Exempt from Publication
Information contained within 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	Confidential summary of discussions by the Working Group	Yes

Overview and Summary

- The Scrutiny Committee met on 11 August 2026 to consider the following items:
 - Use of CIL funding to support infrastructure and public realm related to the Cowley Branch Line [Report for Cabinet]

2. Working Group meetings were also held to review a range of reports:

Climate and Environment Working Group – 6 July 2026

- Heat Network Update [Scrutiny-commissioned report]
- Local Area Energy Planning Update [Scrutiny-commissioned report]
- Local EV Infrastructure Update [Scrutiny-commissioned report]
- Community Energy Interim Policy Update [Scrutiny-commissioned report]

Finance and Performance Working Group – 15 July 2026

- ODS Group Performance Report [report for SJVG]

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, which Cabinet will consider at their meeting on 19 August 2026. Table 3 sets out one recommendation made by the Finance and Performance Working Group to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group; as it relates to the Council's clienting role, SJVG agreed to refer the matter to Cabinet for the consideration of the relevant portfolio holder.
6. 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.
7. Minutes of the Scrutiny meeting on 11 August 2026 is available [here](#).

Summary of discussions

Use of CIL funding to support infrastructure and public realm related to the Cowley Branch Line

8. The Committee welcomed the report and recognised the opportunity to open up new train stations and improve public transport infrastructure to benefit Oxford and surrounding areas. Members were broadly supportive of the Cowley Branch Line but sought further clarification and reassurance around the proposed CIL funding arrangement.
9. Members first sought clarification regarding the 1.5km development area, including a map showing the area from which 30% CIL would be ringfenced. They questioned why 1.5km had been selected when the benefits of the stations would extend across a much wider area, and asked what proportion of the city's predicted CIL would come from development within this area.
10. Members considered the impact of ringfencing this percentage of future CIL for up to 10 years. They asked what other infrastructure could potentially have received this funding if it were not ringfenced for the CBL, and whether the ringfence would affect CIL money that would ordinarily go to parish councils. Members also sought

reassurance that the proposal would not come at the expense of other much needed local infrastructure.

11. The robustness of the CIL forecast was also tested, including whether 30% is expected to cover the £2.5m contribution over the 10 year period. They asked whether landowners who would benefit significantly from the new rail infrastructure would be expected to make further or fair contributions, and how the proposal fits with the Council's transport and climate growth objectives.
12. The Committee discussed the potential for investment in the CBL to unlock further development and additional CIL. They asked whether it would be possible to estimate the additional CIL that could be generated for Blackbird Leys, Littlemore, Temple Cowley, Cowley and Lye Valley, and what those communities might be missing out on financially if the line did not proceed.
13. There were also questions about contributions from South Oxfordshire District Council given the potential for significant development beyond the southern city border. Members noted that SODC had not yet been approached about possible CIL contributions and asked how this position would be affected by LGR and transition to the Greater Oxford Authority. Particularly where parts of the relevant development in South Oxfordshire could fall within the new authority.
14. The Committee agreed four recommendations to Cabinet, covering further information on the city wide impacts of CIL, seeking contributions from SODC and other landowners who would benefit from the new lines, and considering the geographical scope of the CBL in future considerations. A further recommendation was proposed for Cabinet to assess the impacts and disruption on the Littlemore community arising from the CBL and to review the mitigations in place to address these. This recommendation was put to the vote but was not agreed by the Committee.

Heat Network Update

15. Discussion relating to this item is deemed confidential defined 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. The summary is therefore provided as an exempt appendix to this report.

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI)

16. Members received an update on the delivery of the LEVI programme, and sought information on the development of community charging hubs. They noted that work remained ongoing to identify suitable locations for 10 pilot community hubs outside the city centre, although many suggested sites were not in Council ownership and required further engagement with landowners and prioritisation work. In relation delivery timeframes, the Climate and Environment Working Group asked about previously reported milestones aimed for the end of 2027 and noted the delay in procurement due to requiring agreement from all 5 district councils, but was reassured that the programme's delivery milestones and KPI's remained in place despite the revised timeframe.
17. Members expressed the need to do further work with landowners and welcomed the suggestion to review another update once the pilot phase is completed, including identification of sites that could be taken forward. There were no recommendations.

Local Area Energy Planning Update

18. The Climate and Environment Working Group highlighted the damages created by repeated excavation of newly resurfaced roads for utility works, stressing the need for greater coordination between infrastructure projects. Members noted that this issue was being considered by the Oxford Growth Commission who were taking a strategic approach to improve the planning and coordination of infrastructure works. There were no recommendations.

Community Energy Interim Policy Update

19. In seeking clarification on how the arrangements would operate where community-owned organisations were already established and how participation in governance structure would be secured, the Climate and Environment Working Group commented on the importance of transparent governance system. Members recognised the challenges of imposing diverse participation from community groups but that engagement with community organisations, food banks and other local groups would be used to build capacity and maximise participation.
20. It was recommended that capacity-building for community groups should be supported and that diverse representation within the governance structures should be encouraged to enable a broad range of community members to participate.

Acknowledgements

21. The Scrutiny Committee would like to thank Cabinet Members Cllr Anna Railton (Deputy Leader, Planning and Zero Carbon Oxford), Cllr Ed Turner (Deputy Leader (Statutory), Finance and Asset Management). Scrutiny is also grateful to Martin Kerslake (Environmental Sustainability Business Lead (Interim)), Rose Dickinson (Environmental Sustainability Manager), Alec Sims (Energy and Carbon Manager), Vikki Robins (Environmental Sustainability Manager) and Uswah Khan (Committee and Member Services Officer) for their participation in presenting the reports, responding to questions and supporting the Scrutiny function.

Financial implications

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

Legal issues

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

Level of risk

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

Equalities impact

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

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

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

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

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

Implications of Local Government Reorganisation

32. Implications of Local Government Reorganisation for the reports listed above were outlined within the report when presented at Scrutiny Committee or Working Group.

33. Where appropriate, any further implications were reviewed when considering the recommendations using the linked guidance from Government: [Financial decisions before local government reorganisation - GOV.UK](#)

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**Table 1 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee –
Use of CIL funding to support infrastructure and public realm related to the Cowley Branch Line [Report for
Cabinet]**

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee on 11 August 2026 concerning the Use of CIL funding to support infrastructure and public realm related to the Cowley Branch Line. 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 ask the Director of Planning and Regulation to provide supplementary information that further clarifies the impacts on city-wide CIL.	Yes	The total wide CIL level predicted to come in to the City was estimated in the CIL charging review and is around £106m. Such figures will always be estimates as we do not know the timing or nature of development that will come forward. CIL levels will be different for different land uses on any given site. Clearly, the Oxford Growth Commission has an aspiration that CBL will unlock additional growth over and above allocated sites. The margin of error in relation to estimates for any such sites would be greater until those aspirations become policy. The £2.5m ringfencing sought through this paper is capped at that figure and is limited to 30% of any single CIL receipt.
2) That Council approach South Oxfordshire District Council for some portion of contribution toward the funding of CBL given the benefits it will unlock for the area.	No	The decision being sought by Cabinet does not relate to direct Council funding for CBL, it seeks to ringfence an element of CIL to meet the local public realm and infrastructure costs of the scheme and benefit local communities. Therefore, in relation to this specific decision, it is not appropriate to seek a contribution from South Oxfordshire. CBL will unlock future economic growth in South Oxfordshire as well as the City. As proposals for LGR progress, all of the land within the immediate environs

		of CBL will come within the geography of the new Greater Oxford Council and future CIL contributions, should the new authority decide to have a CIL charging policy, and decisions relating to those contributions will be made the that new authority. We are encouraging the County Council to secure S106 contributions from landowners across both Oxford and South Oxfordshire.
3) That Council also approach other landowners who would benefit from new rail lines for fair contribution towards the funding of the project.	Yes	These discussions are already taking place. What is absolutely vital is that we be in a position in the autumn where all local funding for the CBL is definitively in place which this decision will achieve. The private sector is making a significant contribution to the delivery of CBL but officers will continue to push for further support. The use of S106 and CIL to repay the Enterprise Zone funding does mean that local landowners will eventually fund the line and free up that EZ funding for other uses.
4) That Cabinet look at the geographic scope around which the development impacts are considered when making future considerations relating to the Cowley Branch Line.	No	The rational for 1.5km from each of the two stations is aligned to planning policy which uses this radius so this is appropriate.

Table 2 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Climate and Environment Working Group – Heat Network Update [Scrutiny commissioned report]

The table below sets out the recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Working Group on 6 July 2026 endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 11 August 2026. 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 advocates for the creation of a social value fund, acknowledging the previously agreed recommendation to explore and embed social value in the delivery of Heat Network.	Yes	The Council is advocating for the establishment of a social value fund to support a range of carbon reduction and fuel poverty initiatives as part of the Mandatory Requirements (developed by the Council with partners), which would apply to any future HN scheme.
2) That Cabinet recommends highways disruption is minimised in the delivery of Heat Network, noting any potential delays arising from the traffic filter trial is avoided where possible.	Yes	The Council has developed (in collaboration with County Highways) detailed Mandatory Requirements on highways, to ensure disruption is minimised and to align with the Traffic Filter trials.

Table 3 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Climate and Environment Working Group – Community Energy Interim Policy [Scrutiny commissioned report]

The table below sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Working Group on 6 July 2026 and endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 11 August 2026 concerning the Community Energy Interim Policy. Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That Cabinet supports the capacity-building of community groups, and in setting up the governance structure for the scheme, encourages diversity within the governance structures to enable a broad range of community members to participate effectively.	Yes	Officers will work with internal colleagues in public and community- facing roles as well as community groups with whom we have strong partnerships (Low Carbon Hub, Community Action Group) to extend the council's reach to other smaller diverse groups to encourage a wide and broad level of participation in community energy opportunities.

Table 4 – Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Finance and Performance Working Group – ODS Group Performance Report [Report for SJVG]

The table below sets out the recommendations made by the Finance and Performance Working Group on 15 July 2026 concerning the ODS Group Performance Report (Report for SJVG). As it related to the Council’s clienting role, SJVG agreed to refer the matter to Cabinet for consideration by the relevant portfolio holder. 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, in its role as Shareholder and client, works with ODS to develop a mutual understanding of how social value should be recognised and applied.	Yes	This recommendation is supported. The portfolio holder is working with ODS to establish a shared understanding to further recognise and apply social value, and ensure there is clarity around how this can be reflected in practice. Further details informing this work will be shared in due course.