

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: **Draft Strategic Plan 2025-28**

Lead Cabinet Member(s): **Cllr Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council**

Date response requested:² **21 October 2025**

Response to recommendations

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
1. That the Cabinet more clearly draws out the links between its green agenda and local resident concerns, using clearer language and relatable examples	Partially accepted	This is ongoing work and is broader than the Strategic Plan. The council's approach to communicating the green agenda is continuously evolving, building on best practice and trialling new ways of getting messages across which relate to residents' concerns. These include developing a website - climateactionoxfordshire.org.uk - to provide practical examples of

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

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		<p>how to save energy and money; and launching the energy saving app to provide advice and money-saving tips, and the BetterPoints Oxfordshire app, which offers people rewards for doing things that are good for them and the planet.</p>
<p>2. That the Cabinet clarifies how it wishes to balance its competing desires to protect green spaces whilst also providing housing</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>This level of detail is not suitable for the Strategic Plan but a response to the committee’s recommendation is set out below.</p> <p>The Planning and Infrastructure Bill is currently passing through the House of Lords. Once the bill has Royal Assent, the council will have even greater responsibility for strategic planning. This new responsibility is an opportunity to work closely with our current and future partners and stakeholders to create effective strategic policies.</p> <p>The evidence and data we have on Oxfordshire's environment, and its Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be a key starting point. With this information, we will be able to identify future development areas away from sensitive green spaces and in sustainable locations that are not constrained by boundaries. This wider geographical approach will allow us to make well-informed decisions that benefit both our communities and the environment.</p> <p>The council will use this opportunity to embed environmental priorities such as protecting habitats, enhancing biodiversity and maintaining green infrastructure in its new strategic planning responsibility. Work has already started on collecting the evidence base for this new responsibility.</p>
<p>3. That Council members are provided with quantitative data and a plan to illustrate the deliverability of the Council's net zero ambitions when they are asked to adopt the draft Strategic Plan</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The information below will be set out in an annex to the draft Strategic Plan for Council.</p> <p>The council is committed to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Carbon Management Plan sets out how the council plans to</p>

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reduce emissions from our operations and estate which includes the council's buildings, streetlighting and highways assets (streetlighting, traffic signals and signage), fleet and staff business travel.

The plan identifies emissions reduction actions, combined with the decarbonisation of the electricity supply, that if delivered would put the council on a trajectory to reduce emissions to around 2,700 t CO₂e annually by 2030/31. This would be equivalent to a 90% reduction from our 2010/11 baseline.

There is an upcoming policy on carbon offsetting going to Cabinet in November 2025 to manage the residual emissions, primarily from the diesel fire service fleet, mileage claims from colleagues using internal combustion engine vehicles, and the grid which will still be decarbonising.

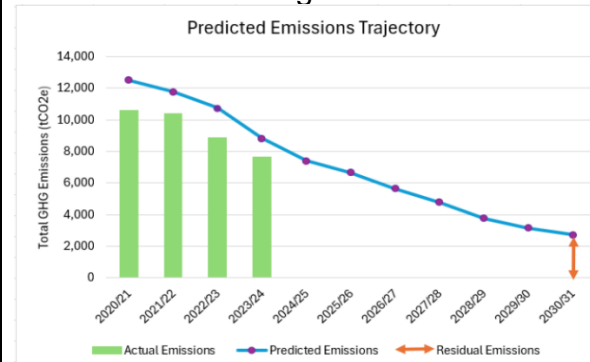


Figure 1: Decarbonisation trajectory for OCC's estate and operations as defined in the CMP assuming complete funding of works.

1. Progress to date: We have delivered buildings, fleet electrification and streetlighting energy efficiency projects which coupled with the decarbonisation of the electricity grid have led to

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	<p>annual emissions decreasing by 5,673 tCO₂e between 2019/20 and 2023/24 (most recent complete data).</p> <p>2. Current programme: We are now delivering a £30.11 million programme up until 2030/31 to improve energy efficiency for highway assets, replace fleet and end-of-life OFRS vehicles with EVs, complete retrofit works with PSDS4 funding, and electrify vehicles used by colleagues with high mileage for council business. Delivery of aspects of these programmes has been delayed in previous years. However, timely completion would mean these measures in combination with grid decarbonisation and private EV uptake would result in a 2030/31 residual of approximately 4000 tCO₂e, whereas a fully funded programme would take this down to approximately 2700 tCO₂e.</p> <p>3. Further work: Due to the cancellation of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme there is £19 million worth of building retrofit work that is unfunded, though two capital bids worth £5 million and £1.5 million for essential maintenance work with decarbonisation benefits are being submitted for 2026/27. There is also circa £1.5 million in further LED conversions for traffic sites that is unfunded.</p> <p>The government's Clean Power 2030 programme will significantly determine the council's annual emissions by reducing the carbon factor for grid electricity. This will be one of the main determinants of the 2030 residual to be offset. There is currently a £30,000 and £80,000 annual budget for the purchase of carbon credits in advance of 2030 and to support the carbon removal market, respectively. Further investment will be required to meet the councils offset needs.</p>
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<p>4. That the Cabinet includes a commitment to improve access to renewable energy infrastructure as part of the Strategic Plan</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>In the wider objectives for 'greener', there is now a commitment to installing 1,400 electric vehicle charging sockets across 250+ locations by 2027/28.</p> <p>The council agrees the annual focus of its climate programme through reports to Cabinet. The council's climate programme includes ongoing activities to increase renewable energy generation, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A loan scheme to support maintained schools in investing in energy efficiency and renewable technologies. • A decarbonisation programme for the council's estate, including the installation of renewable energy systems. • Collaboration with district councils to support the development of their local plans that set renewable energy targets, as well as the creation of Local Area Energy Plans to identify further potential for renewables. • Delivery of capital funding programmes to support home retrofitting. • Engagement with communities through innovation programmes including the Community Action Group network and the Low Carbon Hub to promote community energy and community-led retrofit projects.
<p>5. That the Cabinet commits to improving footways to facilitate walking within the Strategic Plan</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>The council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) is referenced multiple times in the Strategic Plan including in the wider objectives for 'greener'.</p> <p>The LTCP sets out clear policies to achieve a net zero transport system, including a chapter focusing on increasing walking and cycling.</p>

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		<p>Through the delivery of the Active Travel Strategy the council is committed to an action ensuring improvements to active travel infrastructure are integrated into wider road maintenance and repair interventions by consulting schemes on a case-by-case basis across the council and with walking and cycling groups.</p> <p>In addition, one of the Strategic Plan's nine priority projects is the development of dedicated response teams to address highways enquiries and expedite repairs in towns and villages (including footway repairs) in close collaboration with local councils.</p>
<p>6. That the Cabinet commits to expanding access to bus services within the Strategic Plan</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>The council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) is referenced multiple times in the Strategic Plan including in the wider objectives for 'greener'.</p> <p>The LTCP sets out clear policies to achieve a net zero transport system, including a chapter focusing on increasing public transport trips.</p> <p>Through the council's Bus Service Improvement Plan and the Enhanced Partnership the council is working with local bus operators to deliver better bus services in Oxfordshire, including making buses easier to access.</p>
<p>7. That the Cabinet raises the profile of Best Start as a successor to Sure Start within the Strategic Plan</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>One of the Strategic Plan's nine headline projects is the development of a network of family hubs. These are funded through the government's Best Start in Life programme. Family hubs are designed to provide families with access to early help and support, including services from health, education and community sector partners.</p>

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		<p>The focus of the Strategic Plan is on setting out what the council will do, rather than promoting the names of particular government schemes.</p>
<p>8. That the Cabinet commits to increasing access to community banking and post office services as part of the Strategic Plan</p>	<p>Rejected</p>	<p>Although the council is keen to support access to local post office and community banking services, the council is unable to deliver such an outcome without active cooperation from the Post Office and banks.</p> <p>As resolved by Cabinet on 15 July 2025, the council will continue with its efforts to provide community services within library facilities and other suitable locations for areas lacking banking services.</p>
<p>9. That the Cabinet improves the accessibility of its report by the time it is published for consideration by Council, both in terms of terminology and the presentation of feedback from residents</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>The development of the strategic plan has been informed by feedback from resident focus groups and the Performance & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with particular attention to the accessibility of its content in both drafting and design.</p> <p>Following feedback from the overview and scrutiny committee, the research agency has provided an updated resident research report, and a summary of resident research is available in word format. The updated report is included as an annex to the Cabinet report.</p> <p>Communications activity is planned to communicate the council's strategic direction and key priorities. This will use clear and simple messaging focused on the three main themes, the benefits of the nine headline projects and the delivery of activities associated with these.</p>

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		<p>The council's communications, marketing and engagement team is also exploring a new way of presenting the strategic plan on the council's website, which will provide further opportunities for telling its story.</p>
<p>10. That the Cabinet focuses not only on local need or deficits, but that it also recognises and celebrates its successes to date</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>This recommendation extends beyond the Strategic Plan.</p> <p>Celebrating the council's successes is an integral part of the council's ongoing communications and engagement strategy. The communications, marketing and engagement team, in collaboration with service areas, consistently highlights positive outcomes and initiatives. In 2024/25, the council issued 270 media releases and successfully pitched stories and features to national news outlets, trade journals, local parish newsletters, and websites.</p> <p>Our newsletters reach 47,901 subscribers, and we engage with 108,792 followers across the council's main social media platforms, sharing good news and updates. Additionally, we deliver targeted local communications to ensure communities are informed about positive interventions, such as improvements to highways and other local services.</p>
<p>11. That members are engaged in the development of the Citizens portal.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Some member engagement has already taken place, and this will continue during the ongoing development of the portal.</p>