

Divisions Affected – All

CABINET

19 June 2026

Minerals and Waste Planning Report of Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to —
 - a) Note the recommendations contained in the body of this report and to consider and determine its response to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and
 - b) Agree that relevant officers will continue to update Scrutiny for 12 months on progress made against actions committed to in response to the recommendations, or until they are completed (if earlier).

REQUIREMENT TO RESPOND

2. In accordance with section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee requires that, within two months of the consideration of this report, the Cabinet publish a response to this report and any recommendations.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

3. The Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the Council's responsibilities for Minerals and Waste Planning at its meeting on 22 April 2026.
4. The Committee was grateful to Cllr Judy Roberts, then Cabinet member for Place, Environment, and Climate Action, Robin Rogers, Director of Environment and Place, Jason Sherwood, Head of Regulatory Planning Enforcement, David Periam, Planning Development Manager, Matthew Case, Team Leader: Applications, Charlotte Sims, Team Leader: Minerals and Waste Policy, and Neal Richmond, Team Leader: Enforcement, for attending to present the report and to answer the Committee's questions.

5. An item on Minerals and Waste Planning had initially been suggested to the Committee by parish councils in Appleford-on-Thames and in Sutton Courtney. The Committee was grateful to them for the suggestion and agreed to place such an item on its work programme.

SUMMARY

6. The then Cabinet member for Place, Environment, and Climate Action introduced the report and provided an overview of the Council's statutory responsibilities. The Committee was reminded that Minerals and Waste Planning was a specialist function, distinct from district planning responsibilities, and was delivered through three interrelated functions: namely, Minerals and Waste Policy and Strategy, Minerals and Waste Development Management, and Minerals and Waste Monitoring and Enforcement.
7. Given the scale, operational complexity, and long-term nature with development sites often operating over several decades, Minerals and Waste Planning differs significantly from other planning functions. Officers highlighted that decisions had to operate within national planning policy and enforcement frameworks, and that failure to determine or enforce decisions lawfully and in a timely manner could expose the Council to appeals and potential intervention.
8. During the course of the discussion, the Committee explored resourcing and staffing pressures including workforce skills and service resilience; monitoring, enforcement, and performance measures; site liaison arrangements and councillor support; landfill use, restoration, and future waste planning.
9. The Committee makes six recommendations. The six recommendations are intended to strengthen the Council's Minerals and Waste planning function and focus on three themes: capacity and performance, governance and engagement, and transparency and assurance. Taken together, they are intended to ensure that the Council has the capacity, oversight, transparency, and assurance necessary to discharge its statutory responsibilities effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Capacity and Performance

10. Minerals and Waste monitoring and enforcement activity is inherently complex, involving long-running sites, phased operations and a combination of informal resolution and formal enforcement. It can also involve multiple agencies. Officers advised that there are no nationally prescribed KPIs for this function and that it has proven challenging to formulate meaningful ones locally.
11. The Committee nevertheless considers that the absence of locally defined, proportionate KPIs limits transparency and makes it difficult for Members to

understand performance, pressures and emerging risks. Appropriately designed indicators can support oversight while respecting professional judgement and case complexity.

12. Acceptance of this recommendation would strengthen governance and evidence-based scrutiny whereas not doing so would be to risk continued uncertainty, reduced accountability, and diminished public confidence.

Recommendation 1: That the Council should develop and implement proportionate and meaningful KPIs for Minerals and Waste monitoring and enforcement activity, recognising case complexity, and report back on the proposed measures and reporting arrangements.

13. The Committee was concerned by staffing pressures across Minerals and Waste Planning, including an apparent reliance on temporary and agency support. The Committee also heard of difficulty recruiting to specialist roles. Given the context of needing to ensure that statutory plan-making requirements must be met, the Committee considers this regrettable.
14. Minerals and Waste Planning relies on expertise that is not readily interchangeable with other planning disciplines. The Committee would not seek to become overly involved in operational matters but is aware that the Council is currently undertaking organisational reorganisation. The Committee considers it essential that these functions are explicitly assessed within organisational change to ensure resilience and continuity.
15. Acceptance of this recommendation would reduce legal and operational risk and support sustainable service delivery. Failure to do so risks backlogs, appeal exposure, and increased pressure on already scarce specialist capacity.

Recommendation 2: That the Council should ensure that its ongoing organisational reorganisation and workforce planning explicitly assess whether Minerals and Waste planning functions are adequately resourced, including succession planning for specialist roles, to meet statutory duties and the 30-month plan-making timetable.

Governance and engagement

16. The Committee heard that liaison arrangements for major Minerals and Waste sites in Oxfordshire vary significantly in formality, frequency, membership and effectiveness. Whilst some sites benefit from structured and constructive liaison groups, others rely on informal or voluntary arrangements that are inconsistently supported. The Committee considers that this variation risks undermining community confidence and potentially limits the effectiveness of liaison as an early problem-solving mechanism.
17. The Committee notes that other mineral planning authorities have adopted more structured approaches. For example, Derbyshire County Council

supports quarry liaison committees through regular officer attendance, planned site-monitoring updates and formally recorded minutes, ensuring continuity over long operational lifetimes. In Staffordshire, liaison arrangements for major sites have been formalised through clear terms of reference which were set down as a legal condition of the planning application for the site. These councillor-chaired meetings give communities greater clarity on engagement routes and escalation pathways.

18. The Committee considers that Oxfordshire could adopt a proportionate model by establishing minimum expectations for liaison arrangements on major or long-running sites. This could well include defined terms of reference, agreed meeting cycles, clear membership as well as structured officer briefings for councillors. In some cases, liaison arrangements could appropriately be secured through planning obligations or conditions to ensure their continuation across changes in site ownership or personnel.
19. Acceptance of this recommendation would benefit the Council by enabling earlier identification and resolution of issues, reducing escalation to formal complaints or enforcement, and better supporting councillors in their representational and scrutiny roles. Failure to strengthen and standardise liaison arrangements risks continued inconsistency, community frustration and missed opportunities to manage cumulative impacts constructively.

Recommendation 3: That the Council should strengthen and standardise liaison arrangements for major Minerals and Waste sites, including where appropriate through planning obligations, and improve officer support and briefings for councillors who chair or attend liaison groups.

20. Enforcement is a core non-executive regulatory function requiring appropriate all-Member oversight. The Committee was concerned that the absence of routine reporting limits transparency and reduces Members' ability to understand enforcement trends, outcomes and pressures.
21. The Committee established that such routine reporting had previously been made to the Planning and Regulation Committee but that this had lapsed over recent years. The Committee considers that reinstating regular reporting would strengthen governance without interfering in operational decision-making. It would be consistent with oversight arrangements in other regulatory areas. It would also, given that it is an area of high public interest, enable visibility of enforcement activity and give assurance to both residents and to members.

Recommendation 4: That the Council should reinstate regular reporting of formal Minerals and Waste enforcement activity and outcomes to the Planning and Regulation Committee, to support effective oversight of this non-executive function.

Transparency and assurance

22. Minerals and Waste Planning is frequently misunderstood owing to its specialist nature and separation from district planning functions. The Committee heard that existing online information does not consistently explain the Council's role, powers, limitations or engagement routes.
23. The Committee is of the view that clearer and more accessible information would support better-informed public engagement and reduce avoidable enquiries and frustration. Failure to update online guidance risks continued misunderstanding and reputational harm to the Council.
24. The Committee, therefore, calls for the webpages to be revamped and revised.

Recommendation 5: That the Council should review and update its online information on Minerals and Waste planning responsibilities, policies and enforcement arrangements, to improve accessibility and clarity for members and the public.

25. The Committee perceived that concerns relating to Minerals and Waste Planning are systemic rather than case-specific. In particular, concerns were raised about repeated extensions to permissions, cumulative use of section 73 applications, the visibility and consistency of enforcement practice, and whether resources are adequate to manage long-running and complex sites effectively. These concerns arise within an evolving legal context that places increasing emphasis on clarity and lawfulness in the use of section 73 permissions.
26. The Committee notes that other councils facing comparable concern have commissioned proportionate, time-limited independent reviews or inquiries to examine governance, processes and capacity. For example, Staffordshire County Council and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council supported an independent Committee of Inquiry into regulatory arrangements at a quarry in that area, examining enforcement practice, governance and inter-agency working without re-determining individual live decisions. Elsewhere, examples of councils which have undertaken the Local Government Association's Planning Advisory Service's Peer Challenges include Allerdale Borough Council¹, Wirral Council², and Cornwall Council³.
27. The Committee recognises that a Peer Challenge/Review does come at a cost but observes that these Reviews have been undertaken in other parts of the organisation previously and that their benefits have been highlighted. The Committee believes that a modest cost for taking part in this one would be of benefit.

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<https://cumberland.moderngov.co.uk/Data/ABC%20Council/201405141830/Agenda/Agenda%20reports%20pack.pdf>

² <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-peer-review>

³ <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/pas-case-studies/cornwalls-planning-peer-challenge>

28. The Committee envisages that any review commissioned by the Council could be tightly scoped and sample-based, focusing on process, governance and capacity rather than individual determinations. Possible outputs could include recommendations on the use of extensions and variations, enforcement pathways, resource alignment and good practice in managing cumulative impacts, alongside learning to inform future plan-making and service reorganisation.
29. Acceptance of this recommendation would benefit the Council by strengthening public confidence, providing independent assurance to Members, and identifying opportunities to improve resilience and consistency within Minerals and Waste Planning functions. The Committee considers that not exploring the option of an independent review risks continued erosion of trust, increased challenge and reputational harm if longstanding concerns remain unexamined.

Recommendation 6: That the Council should consider commissioning an independent review of Minerals and Waste planning processes, including a sample review of enforcement practice, the use of extensions and section 73 applications, and the adequacy of resources to discharge the Council's statutory responsibilities.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION

30. The Committee does not currently anticipate revisiting this topic during this municipal year.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

31. Under Part 6.2 (13) (a) of the Constitution Scrutiny has the following power: 'Once a Scrutiny Committee has completed its deliberations on any matter a formal report may be prepared on behalf of the Committee and when agreed by them the Proper Officer will normally refer it to the Cabinet for consideration.'
32. Under Part 4.2 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Procedure Rules, s 2 (3) iv) the Cabinet will consider any reports from Scrutiny Committees.

Anita Bradley, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex:	Pro-forma Response Template
Background papers:	None
Other Documents:	None
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