

Divisions Affected – All

CABINET 17 June 2025

Business Management and Monitoring Report – Environment and Highways Focus Report of Performance and Corporate Services 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 Performance and Corporate Services 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 Performance and Corporate Services 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 Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the Council's Business Management and Monitoring Report at its meeting on 04 April 2025. The report was largely the same as issued to Cabinet, but with some service-level data removed to ensure focus by the Committee on the overall picture and the specific performance of Environment and Highways.
4. The Committee would like to thank Cllr Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, Cllr Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader of the Council with responsibility for Climate Change, Environment & Future Generations, Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management,

Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, and Robin Rogers, Director of Economy and Place, for attending the meeting and responding to questions.

SUMMARY

5. The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report, highlighting the positive direction in which the Council's performance was trending, and the prudence and effectiveness with which the Council was being managed.
6. In response to the introduction, the Committee began its questioning. Topics explored by the Committee included: the progress made on spending s.106 monies collected, the suitability of waste and recycling key performance indicators, maintaining understanding of customer satisfaction levels, the level of support for the Council's 'core schemes', the key financial and strategic risks faced by the Council, the success of the mitigations taken and its underlying resilience, as well as queries over spending on Growth Deal funding.
7. The Committee makes four recommendations. These seek to improve business monitoring and management reporting through suggested alterations to what is measured, and greater justification of its assessments with regards to risk.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. One area of discussion by the Committee concerned the Council's measure over the percentage of household waste which is reused, recycled or composed. With a year to date performance of 56.87%, the committee was informed that Oxfordshire is the best-performing county in England for recycling. However, the target is for 61.5% meaning the performance is judged to be red.
9. This position does not appear to be particularly helpful. If the Council is outperforming all other counties in England and yet the key performance indicator suggests that it is failing, the fault is not with the Council but with the measure. The Committee appreciates the importance of having stretch targets and high levels of ambition, but it does not believe the current target is realistic and should therefore be reviewed accordingly.
10. Further to this, the Committee accepts the views of the then Deputy Leader, who argued that the measure itself represents 'a legacy indicator'. Central government movements towards Extended Producer Responsibility alters the whole context and discussion around recycling, and new measures which take into account this significant change would be valuable. At a minimum, therefore, the Committee wishes the current measure to be reviewed and a more realistic level set, but it also suggests that the Cabinet consider an alternative, updated

measure which reflects the changes made by central government to the recycling landscape.

Recommendation 1: That the Council, as a minimum, reviews its targets over the percentage of household waste which is reused, recycled or composted, or, preferably, that the Council draws up a new measure which will measure performance better in light of Extended Producer Responsibility measures.

11. The BMMR report received by the Committee provided advice that the Council intended to remove the following measures on the basis that it was implementing a new telephony platform, which would make comparisons between the pre and post change impossible:
 - OCC 10.03 Overall customer satisfaction rate for the Customer Service Centre – telephony
 - OCC10.04 Answer 80% of calls to the Customer Service Centre within 30 seconds (exclude SHCT)
 - OCC10.13 The percentage of customer telephone calls abandoned at the Customer Service Centre.
12. The view of the Committee is that this is a mistake. It accepts that moving from one system to another makes comparing like with like impossible owing to the absence of a baseline figure. However, that is not a justification simply to cease to monitor customer satisfaction. Indeed, the Committee is of the view that if the Council is making the significant change of moving to a new system it is all the more vital that there is monitoring and feedback to be assured that the change is adequately meeting customer needs. As such, the Committee recommends that the Council maintain some measurement of customer satisfaction in relation to the Customer Service Centre.

Recommendation 2: That the Council maintains a measure of customer satisfaction in relation to the Customer Service Centre specifically because of the move to a new telephony system.

13. One of the Key Strategic Risks managed and reported on by the Council in the BMMR report is identified as 'Failure to deliver Oxford Core Schemes (Traffic Filters, Workplace Parking Levy, Zero Emissions Zone and associated city area schemes such as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods) with public support.'
14. Discussion and focus on this risk tends to be on the delivery element, whether the schemes are being implemented or not. However, discussion in Committee raised an important point. The risk the Council has identified is not that these schemes will simply not be delivered. Rather, the risk is that they will not be delivered *with public support*. The risk makes it clear that it is not enough simply to impose these schemes on an unwilling public, but that the Council must also win over the public to the benefits of these schemes. In exploring this issue, the Committee was not satisfied that the Council was measuring this support sufficiently to know whether or not it was avoiding a Key Strategic Risk. Its recommendation, therefore, is that the level of support for the

Council's Oxford Core Schemes is measured and reported as part of the BMMR to assure members and the public that the Council is carrying the local public with it in relation to its implementation of the core schemes.

Recommendation 3: That the Council measures and reports on the level of local public support for Oxford Core Schemes within its Business Management and Monitoring Report.

15. A further observation relating to the way that the Council reports on the management of its Key Strategic Risks is that it highlights both inherent risks and the residual risks which remain after mitigation. What is not clear, however, is the rationale or justification for the residual risk score. The Council's assessment must simply be taken as 'read' and cannot be subject to independent scrutiny or challenge. Consequently, the level of assurance provided is lessened. The Committee recommends that this is addressed, partially to provide that assurance, and partially to ensure that the document is 'live' and reflects the most current status of risk and mitigation activity.

Recommendation 4: That the Council provides commentary on the recent actions taken to mitigate its Key Strategic Risks and the impact on the residual score within the Business Management and Monitoring Report.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION

16. It is anticipated that the Committee will continue to provide scrutiny of the Council's BMMR report with similar focus areas throughout the next civic year.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

17. 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.
18. Under Part 4.2 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Procedure Rules, s 2 (3) iv) the Cabinet will consider any reports from Scrutiny Committees.

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Annex: Pro-forma Response Template

Background papers: None

Other Documents: None

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