Notice of a Meeting

OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday, 5 February 2025 at 10.00 am
County Hall

These proceedings are open to the public

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this Live Stream Link.
However, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Membership

Chair - Councillor Liam Walker
Deputy Chair - Councillor Robin Bennett

| *Councillors:* | Charlie Hicks | Duncan Enright | Nigel Simpson |
| | Felix Bloomfield | Susanna Pressel | Bethia Thomas |

Notes: **Date of next meeting:** *23 April 2025*

| For more information about this Committee please contact: |
| Committee Officer - *Scrutiny Team* *Email: scrutiny@oxfordshire.gov.uk* |

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

January 2025

What does this Committee review or scrutinise?
Climate change, transport, highways, planning and place-based services. Including the delivery of regulatory services, fire and rescue, community safety and community services such as libraries. NB This Committee will act as the Council's 'Crime and Disorder Committee'.

How can I have my say?
We welcome the views of the community on any issues in relation to the responsibilities of this Committee. Members of the public may ask to speak on any item on the agenda or may suggest matters which they would like the Committee to look at. **Requests to speak must be submitted to the Committee Officer below no later than 9 am 4 working day before the date of the meeting.**

About the County Council
The Oxfordshire County Council is made up of 63 councillors who are democratically elected every four years. The Council provides a range of services to Oxfordshire's 678,000 residents. These include:

schools	social & health care	libraries and museums
the fire service	roads	trading standards
land use	transport planning	waste management

Each year the Council manages £0.9 billion of public money in providing these services. Most decisions are taken by a Cabinet of 9 Councillors, which makes decisions about service priorities and spending. Some decisions will now be delegated to individual members of the Cabinet.

About Scrutiny
Scrutiny is about:
• Providing a challenge to the Cabinet
• Examining how well the Cabinet and the Authority are performing
• Influencing the Cabinet on decisions that affect local people
• Helping the Cabinet to develop Council policies
• Representing the community in Council decision making
• Promoting joined up working across the authority's work and with partners

Scrutiny is NOT about:
• Making day to day service decisions
• Investigating individual complaints.

What does this Committee do?
The Committee meets up to 4 times a year or more. It develops a work programme, which lists the issues it plans to investigate. These investigations can include whole committee investigations undertaken during the meeting, or reviews by a panel of members doing research and talking to lots of people outside of the meeting. Once an investigation is completed the Committee provides its advice to the Cabinet, the full Council or other scrutiny committees. Meetings are open to the public and all reports are available to the public unless exempt or confidential, when the items would be considered in closed session.

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting

A hearing loop is available at County Hall.

recycled paper

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**

   To receive any apologies for absence and temporary appointments.

2. **Declaration of Interests**

   See guidance note on the back page.

3. **Minutes** (Pages 1 - 10)

   The Committee is recommended to **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2024 and to receive information arising from them.

4. **Petitions and Public Address**

   Members of the public who wish to speak at this meeting can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

   To facilitate 'hybrid' meetings we are asking that requests to speak or present a petition are submitted by no later than 9am four working days before the meeting i.e., 9am on 30 January 2025. Requests to speak should be sent to the Scrutiny Officer at scrutiny@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

   If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that your views are taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9am 2 working days before the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

5. **Committee Forward Work Plan** (Pages 11 - 14)

   The Committee is recommended to **AGREE** its work programme for forthcoming meetings**,** having heard any changes from previous iterations, and taking account of the Cabinet Forward Plan and of the Budget Management Monitoring Report (BMMR).

   The BMMR from the 21st January 2025 Cabinet, can be found following the link: https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AIId=31293

6. **Committee Action and Recommendation Tracker** (Pages 15 - 26)

   The Committee is recommended to **NOTE** the progress of previous recommendations and actions arising from previous meetings, having raised any questions on the contents.

7. **Responses to Scrutiny Recommendations** (Pages 27 - 32)

   Attached are the draft Cabinet responses to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on Flood Event Response and the LTCP Monitoring Report. These are expected to be confirmed by Cabinet on 25th February 2025.

   The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the response.

8. **Network Coordination of Road and Street works and Lane Rental for Oxfordshire** (Pages 33 - 58)

   Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet member for Transport Management, Paul Fermer, Director

of Highways and Environment, and Keith Stenning, Head of Network Management, have been invited to present a report on network coordination of road and street works and the proposed Lane Rental Scheme for Oxfordshire.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and raise any questions, and to **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet arising therefrom.

9. Review of Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy framework proposals for part night lighting (Pages 59 - 68)

Cllr Dr Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader of the Council with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment & Future Generations, Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, and Sean Rooney, Head of Highway Maintenance, have been invited to present a report on the Review of Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy framework proposals for part night lighting.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and raise any questions, and to **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet arising therefrom.

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EXEMPT ITEM
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In the event that any Member or Officer wishes to discuss the information set out in the annex to Agenda Item 10, the Committee will be invited to resolve to exclude the public for the consideration of the Annex by passing a resolution in relation in the following terms: "that the public be excluded during the consideration of the Annex since it is likely that if they were present during that discussion there would be a disclosure of "exempt" information as described in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 and specified below the item in the Agenda."

THE ANNEX HAS NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC AND SHOULD BE REGARDED AS 'CONFIDENTIAL' BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS.

10. City Centre Accommodation Strategy

Report to follow

Cllr Daniel Levy, Cabinet member for Finance, and Vic Kurzeja, Director of Property and Assets, have been invited to present a report on the City Centre Accommodation Strategy.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and raise any questions, and to **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet arising therefrom.

The annex to the report is exempt from disclosure. The information in this case is exempt in that it falls within the following prescribed categories: 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and since it is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, in that a negotiation is ongoing and would prejudice the position of the authority in the process of that negotiation and the Council's standing generally in relation to such matters in future, to the detriment of the Council's ability properly to discharge its fiduciary and other duties as a public authority.

Councillors declaring interests

General duty
You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?
Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest
Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception
Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests
Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.
Other registrable interests include:
  a) Any unpaid directorships
  b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.

c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:
Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;

b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday, 13 November 2024 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.51 pm

Present:

Voting Members:	Councillor Liam Walker - in the Chair
	Councillor Robin Bennett Councillor Trish Elphinstone Councillor Charlie Hicks Councillor Susanna Pressel Councillor Nigel Simpson Councillor Bethia Thomas
Other Members in Attendance:	Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council Councillor Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader of the Council with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations Cllr Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Development Strategy
Officers:	Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways Robin Rogers, Director of Economy and Place Chloe Edwards, Local Nature Recovery Strategy Project Manager Beccy Micklem, Team Leader Landscape and Nature Recovery Nicholas Perrins, Head of Strategic Planning Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Manager

The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

38/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS
(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr Enright, substituted by Cllr Elphinstone, and Cllr Bloomfield.

39/24 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS
(Agenda No. 2)

There were none.

40/24   MINUTES
(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meeting on 25 September 2024 were **AGREED** as a true and accurate record.

41/24   PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS
(Agenda No. 4)

There were none.

42/24   LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY
(Agenda No. 5)

Cllr Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader of the Council with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations, had been invited to present a report on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (the LNRS). He was accompanied by Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, Chloe Edwards, Local Nature Recovery Strategy Project Manager, and Beccy Micklem, Team Leader Landscape and Nature Recovery. Cllr Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, was also present for the start and end of this agenda item.

Following brief introduction from the Deputy Leader, the LNRS Project Manager explained and summarised the LNRS report.

Local authorities were required to develop and adopt an LNRS was mandated for to set local biodiversity priorities and map habitat improvements. This involved collaboration with groups such as the Local Nature Partnership. The target was for the strategy to be published by July 2025, with particular focus on enhancing habitats for biodiversity. It would be reviewed and updated every three to ten years as required by the government.

Members raised a number of topics in discussion including:.

The discussion covered the budget for the LNRS, noting that initial funding was provided but follow-up funding was uncertain. The project aimed to integrate local natural capital mapping by the University of Oxford, identifying and quantifying ecosystem benefits for decision-making. Emphasis was placed on making LNRS projects investable by converting qualitative benefits into quantitative terms to attract funding. The importance of linking with climate finance work led by the Chief Executive was emphasised. It was suggested that the Council should not rely solely on Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) but that it should also leverage local initiatives like the 100 Together program for funding and support.

Members explored the LNRS' influence on the Minerals and Waste Plan despite the National Planning Policy Framework's (NPPF) strict mineral provision requirements. There was interest in aligning LNRS priorities with decisions on mineral extraction sites. The LNRS team frequently consults with the minerals planning policy team to ensure alignment. They worked with the Environmental Records Centre to assess

biodiversity net gain through mineral restoration, recognising it as a crucial nature recovery opportunity.

The LNRS team emphasised the integrating the LNRS with the Local Transport Connectivity Plan to mitigate road traffic's impact on wildlife, advocating for nature-positive infrastructure like wildlife corridors. Officers stressed alignment with the Oxford Infrastructure Strategy to support biodiversity and habitat connectivity. Collaborating with National Highways and Network Rail, they identified key areas in Oxfordshire to improve habitat connectivity. Partnering with the University of Oxford, the team used statistical analysis and mapping tools to prioritise impactful interventions for biodiversity.

Members expressed concern about whether agricultural landowners were sufficiently involved in the development of the strategy, ensuring their collaboration and realising benefits from increased biodiversity. The LNRS team had engaged farmers and landowners through meetings, informing them about funding opportunities for nature-positive actions, such as capital grants for rainwater harvesting and sustainable farming incentives. A 15% uplift in biodiversity net gain units, would increase financial returns significantly, with unit prices rising from £20,000 to £23,000. This was in addition to the long-term benefits on improved biodiversity, like better soil health, water quality, and resilience to climate change, aiding farming sustainability.

Concerns were raised about the potential Abingdon Reservoir's impact on water extraction and its damage to biodiversity in water habitats, noting that Thames Water already extracts too much. Rather than building the reservoir, recycling water in London, and other large modern cities, and fixing leaks were suggested as more sustainable solutions.

Members asked about the biodiversity impact of the Botley solar farm project. The LNRS team had discussed this project and was aware of the ecological surveys. The project aimed for significant biodiversity net gain, especially along the Evenlode corridor, aligning with some LNRS priorities. However, concerns remained about the long-term sustainability of these benefits, as the solar farm's operation period exceeded the typical biodiversity management duration.

Questions were raised about the integration of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) in the LNRS. Areas were identified where floodplain connectivity and habitat improvements could mitigate flood risk. Although specific SUDS locations were not mapped, the LNRS supported urban rain gardens and other drainage systems to increase percolation and reduce surface water flooding. The team coordinated with the flood team to integrate LNRS priorities into the flood risk management strategy, emphasising the benefits of SUDS and natural flood management for reducing flood risk and enhancing biodiversity. The LNRS team was willing to review and include more actions related to SUDS and flood management, ensuring alignment with LNRS goals.

Members discussed turning the LNRS into reality, highlighting the need for senior sponsorship and cross-team collaboration within the Council. Emphasis was placed on strong influence at appropriate levels and ensuring budget support for LNRS priorities. Integrating the LNRS into local planning and capital delivery was crucial for

enhancing biodiversity and reducing flooding. The Leader stated that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership would collaborate significantly with district councils to advance the LNRS.

Members questioned how the success of the strategy would be measured and what the key indicators of the LNRS would be. The LNRS team would monitor habitat work locations and report on the actions taking, creating a spatial map of improvements and funding sources. Successes were to be measured by reducing the number of at-risk species and enhancing biodiversity, with particular emphasis on the list of priority species at risk within Oxfordshire. The team would also assess trust and engagement from stakeholders, including landowners and local communities, gathering feedback through events and meetings to ensure the strategy aligned with their needs.

The Committee resolved to **AGREE** recommendations to Cabinet under the following headings:

- That the Council should seek advice from the Director of Environmental Sustainability at National Highways. It was suggested that he could be a valuable contact for advancing the LNRS goals related to infrastructure for wildlife movement.

- Make explicit the implications and actions for districts, parishes, and other key partners within an annex to the document.

- Include or align the LNRS strategy with central government's five missions and their outputs.

- Ensure the Council sets an example in biodiversity net gain, particularly in relation to the Thames Path.

- Promote biodiversity in school grounds by working with schools.

- Explore the possibilities of supporting flood defences through biodiversity means, including swales, sustainable drainage systems, and rain gardens.

- Strengthen the explanations of the benefits of biodiversity net gain around physical and mental health.

- Publicise biodiversity successes through press releases, such as otter and beaver numbers.

- Investigate the cost of piling grass cuttings to enhance wildflower growth.

- Ensure alignment of the LNRS with climate finance and natural capital work, including reaching out to relevant experts and integrating with the 100 Together initiative.

- Ensure alignment with the Local Transport Connectivity Plan and the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy on the nature costs of roads and cars.

- Develop a delivery plan to ensure that teams within the County Council have integrated and adopted the LNRS.

The Committee made the following observations concerning the LNRS report:

- Need for stronger integration with local transport plans and other infrastructure strategies.

- Importance of engaging hesitant farmers through demonstration of benefits by early adopters.

- Consideration for the reintroduction of beavers as a flagship project.

43/24 INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT AND S.106 FUNDING REPORT
(Agenda No. 6)

Cllr Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Development Strategy, Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, and Robin Rogers, Director of Economy and Place, and Nicholas Perrins, Head of Strategic Planning, were invited to present a report on the Infrastructure Funding Statement and s.106 Funding.

Cllr Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, and, Cllr Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader of the Council with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment and Future Generations, were also present to answer questions Committee Members had on the report.

Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Manager, clarified that a representative from Finance had been requested, however apologies were sent by Finance due to the short notice of the request.

The Chair summarised the historical context before the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Development Strategy explained that the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) was a statutory document required to report the collection and spending of infrastructure funds, including Section 106 (s.106) and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The statement showed effective fund collection with significant receipts, and ongoing efforts were aimed at improving the management and spending of these funds. The predicted spend for the upcoming year was around £60 million, mainly on large projects like the A420 improvements. The complexity and inflexibility of the Section 106 system, due to its reliance on legal contracts, was acknowledged, highlighting the need for improvements.

The Head of Strategic Planning highlighted the urgency to speed up s.106 project delivery for community benefits. Diagnostic work had reviewed the £260 million fund, prioritising smaller projects for early release. Current system issues for fund management were identified, with improvements targeted by year-end. A dashboard trailed in locality meetings provided live data, with plans for wider use. Services were reviewing s.106 funds to fast-track capital program projects, and transport has identified about £10 million for acceleration. Flexible new agreements allowed for alternative projects, to allow a more flexible use of money. Additionally, CIL

governance changes had been proposed to align with the County Council's strategic priorities and capital programme. These changes were aimed at ensuring CIL funds were directed towards projects that supported the broader strategic goals of the Council, with West Oxfordshire and Cherwell expected to adopt CIL within a year.

Members requested an update on the progress of the promised dashboard, which would have allowed them to track projects, including timelines and funding sources for individual projects. Although the dashboard had been demonstrated at locality meetings, it had not yet been released for general use.

The delay in releasing the dashboard was primarily due to finalising a Microsoft license agreement. This issue was being addressed with urgency, aiming to resolve it as soon as possible. The objective was to have the dashboard operational by the end of the financial year, although there was a strong desire to expedite this process.

Members expressed significant concerns regarding IT failures as a major obstacle in managing s.106 funds and their utilisation in physical projects. Officers present attempted to elucidate the existing IT systems employed for handling these funds and identified their shortcomings.

The Council used three main systems to manage s.106 funds and projects: MasterGov (for planning obligations), PPM (for project management), and SAP (for finance). These systems did not communicate effectively with one another, leading to delays and inefficiencies. Owing to this lack of integration, there was a dependency on manual processes, such as using spreadsheets to transfer data between systems. This manual intervention was time-consuming and susceptible to errors.

There was an acknowledged need to enhance the integration of these systems. A solution involved creating a data warehouse system that extracted data from underlying systems to offer a comprehensive, real-time view of funds and projects. Concerns were raised about the Council's capacity to develop appropriate systems to handle s.106 funds and projects, particularly questioning whether the in-house IT staff possess the requisite skills and capacity to implement the necessary changes.

The discussion underscored that the IT system challenges were not exclusive to s.106 but were indicative of broader systemic issues within the Council. There was a pressing need for a comprehensive IT strategy to resolve widespread issues across various departments.

Concerns were raised about s.106 funds being unspent and potentially returned to developers due to project delays and system inefficiencies. Members were surprised that only £12,000 had been returned and expressed worries about how much of the s.106 money was at risk of being returned unused in the next year.

Additionally, Members feared that the money from s.106 agreements may not cover project costs because of time delays and inflation. For instance, a project initially estimated at £90,000 rose to £150,000 over time, showing the impact of these factors on costs.

Members asked if the concept of front funding projects, using Council money to start projects and then recovering the funds from s.106 contributions, had been considered. Officers confirmed that this idea had been discussed as part of broader discussions on project funding methods. The main concern with front funding projects was the need for high levels of coordination and integration between departments and systems to ensure proper initiation of projects and accurate tracking of funds.

The Deputy Leader left the meeting at this stage.

Members expressed a desire for more flexible s.106 agreements to enable more efficient and effective allocation of funds. It was anticipated that increased flexibility will expedite the process.

While striving for flexibility, it was crucial that all new agreements operated within the necessary legal parameters. This approach aimed to avoid the rigidity of older agreements, which often specify projects too narrowly and made adaptation to changing circumstances or needs difficult. The implementation of these more flexible agreements was part of ongoing efforts to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of s.106 fund utilisation.

Members highlighted concerns, within the report, regarding the absence of transparent governance for s.106 funds. It was noted that while there had been progress on the governance of CIL, the governance structure for s.106 funds were not well-defined with uncertainty around the oversight and management of the funds.

The dashboard, once fully implemented, was expected to help with member oversight by providing live data on s.106 funds, allowing members to see the status of funds and projects in their areas. The dashboard was intended to create clear lines of oversight for projects and the allocated funding. However, the dashboard had not yet available at the time of the meeting.

The responsibility for overseeing s.106 money involved multiple departments. The planning obligations team managed the initial collection and recording of funds, while the delivery teams were responsible for implementing the projects. There was agreement for a need for better integration and communication between these teams to ensure efficient use of funds.

It was also acknowledged that going forward the governance of s.106 funds was to be aligned with the County Council's strategic priorities and capital programme to ensure that funds were used effectively for projects that align with broader strategic goals.

The Committee resolved to **AGREE** recommendations to Cabinet under the following headings:

- That the Council should publish an outline of the milestones identified as requirements for the success of the project with associated deadlines.
- That the Council should identify who is ultimately responsible for driving the success of the improvement project and by what measures they will be held accountable to ensure effective utilisation of funds.

- That the Council undertakes the Local Government Association's Planning Advisory Service self-assessment toolkit – 'Improving the governance of developer contributions in order to evaluate and improve current practices.'
- That the Council commits to working closely with district councils and other partners to ensure there are holistic plans in place for infrastructure needs.
- That the Council take steps to correct favourability biases in project planning and delivery to ensure a pragmatic and realistic approach.
- That the Council uses the Government Office for Science's The Futures Toolkit in order to ensure its plans and policies are robust and realistic.
- That the data dashboard is launched without further delay to ensure that members can monitor s.106 funds and projects.
- That the Council should implement a risk rating for s.106 moneys being reclaimed if they are not spent in time so that issues can be addressed proactively.

The Committee also **AGREED** to the following actions:

- Progress updates to come to each Place Overview and Scrutiny meeting on s.106 spend and the IT systems.

The Committee made the following observations concerning the IFS and s.106 funding report:

- The integrations of the IT systems of the Council used for s.106 delivery are inadequate.

The Committee also noted its general dissatisfaction with the report due to the number of typos and financial miscalculations. This made it challenging for members to scrutinise the report effectively. Members regretted the absence of representatives from IT or finance who could explain the report and answer questions. This absence was particularly problematic given the technical and financial issues discussed.

44/24   COMMITTEE ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKER
(Agenda No. 7)

The Committee **NOTED** the action and recommendation tracker.

45/24   COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN
(Agenda No. 8)

Cllr Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, was present for the discussion of the Committee Forward Work Plan to provide insight into the Dark Skies policy, which had been scheduled for Cabinet Member Delegated Decisions the following day, and other items which affected the committee.

The Leader made assurances to the Committee that there would follow a full report into the Dark Skies item, which would come to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to be suitably scrutinised before any decision would be made on the policy. It was expected that the Dark Skies item would come to the Committee for its February meeting.

The Leader suggested that the Rail strategy would come to Cabinet in April, thus the Committee determined that the strategy would be best suited to come to the February meeting.

The verge a vegetation strategy was moved to the April meeting to make room for the Management of Utility Works/Lane Rental on the February agenda, avoiding the pre-election period allowing for a focused discussion on the item.

Subject to these amendments the Committee **AGREED** to the Committee Forward Work Plan.

46/24   RESPONSES TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS
(Agenda No. 9)

The Committee **NOTED** the Cabinet responses to the reports on the Circular Economy Strategy and the Infrastructure Funding Statement and s.106 Fund.

The Committee also **NOTED** that these responses were in draft, expected to be confirmed by Cabinet on 19 November 2024.

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Date of signing   ....

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Work Programme
Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liam Walker, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Topic	Relevant strategic priorities	Purpose	Type	Lead presenters
5 February 2025				
Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy framework	Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit; preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces.	To consider the work undertaken to review the policy; to review and feedback on the approach to developing proposals.	Overview and scrutiny	Paul Fermer; Sean Rooney
Network Coordination of Road and Street works and Lane Rental for Oxfordshire	Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit	The Committee to consider the management of utility works and the operation of the proposed Oxfordshire Lane Rental Scheme (OLRS).	Overview and scrutiny	Paul Fermer; Keith Stenning
City Centre Accommodation Strategy	Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit	To review proposals relating to County Hall	Overview and scrutiny	Vic Kurzeja
23 April 2025				

Rail Strategy	Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work; preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces; work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit	To consider progress on the the proposed strategy.	Overview and Scrutiny	Robin Rogers
Verge and Vegetation Management	Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work; preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces; work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit	To consider the Council's approach.	Overview and scrutiny	TBC
s.106 Funding Review	Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit;	To review the Council's progress of the s.106 Funding Project	Overview and scrutiny	Robin Rogers, Paul Fermer, Alastair Read, Ian Dyson
Report of the Transport Working Group	Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work; preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces; work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit	To review the report of the Transport Working Group and to approve its submission to Cabinet	Overview and Scrutiny	Scrutiny Officer
25 June 2025				
Report from Localities –the Council's approach to Place-making	Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents; put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work; preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces; work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit	The Committee to consider the impact of Localities work and to recommend areas of success.	Overview and scrutiny	TBC

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Sub-groups/Working Groups				
Name	Relevant strategic priorities	Description	Outcomes	Members
Transport Working Group	Transport, The Climate Emergency	To review lessons learnt from LTCP4 and the implementation of LTCP5. To review and feed into area transport strategies.	Task and Finish Group makes recommendations relating to the implementation of LTCP5 and the development of area transport strategies	Cllr Bennett; Cllr Haywood; Cllr Hicks; Cllr Walker

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	KEY	Delayed	In progress	Complete

Recommendations:

Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
13-Nov-24	Infrastructure Funding Statement and s.106 Funding Report		Paul Fermer; Robin Rogers; Nicholas Perrins	Due to Cabinet
13-Nov-24	Local Nature Recovery Strategy	1. That the Council should ensure the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is aligned with climate finance and natural capital work happening locally and nationally.	Chloe Edwards; Beccy Micklem	Went to Cabinet: 21-Jan-25
		2. That the Council should ensure that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is aligned with the Government's five missions and their outputs.		Went to Cabinet: 21-Jan-25
		3. That the Council should ensure the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is aligned with the Local Transport Connectivity Plan and the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy on the nature costs of roads and rails.		Went to Cabinet: 21-Jan-25
		4. That the Council should develop a delivery plan to ensure that teams within the County Council have integrated and adopted the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.		Went to Cabinet: 21-Jan-25
		5. That the Council should make explicit in an annex to the documentation the implications of the strategy for district councils, town and parish councils, neighbourhood groups, and other key		Went to Cabinet: 21-Jan-25

Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
Page 16		partners as well as the actions expected of them.		
		6. That the Council should strengthen the explanations within the strategy of the benefits to health and wellbeing of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.		Went to Cabinet: 21-Jan-25
		7. That the Council should consider how best it can publicise positive elements of nature recovery that are already happening.		Went to Cabinet: 21-Jan-25
		8. That the Council should ensure it sets an example maintaining its own land for nature recovery and biodiversity gain, as the Responsible Authority for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.		Went to Cabinet: 21-Jan-25
		9. That the Council should work with schools to support them to promote biodiversity and nature recovery in their grounds.		Went to Cabinet: 21-Jan-25
		10.That the Council should investigate the costs of collecting and/or piling mown grass to enhance wildflower growth and other biodiversity benefits.		Went to Cabinet: 21-Jan-25
		11.That the Council should explore the possibilities of supporting flood defences through biodiversity means, including swales, sustainable drainage systems, and rain gardens.		Went to Cabinet: 21-Jan-25
25-Sep-24	Flood Event Response	1. That the Council should investigate how best to retrofit sustainable drainage systems, as well as other	Paul Fermer; Terea Kirkham;	**DRAFT – Partially Accepted**

	KEY		Due to Cabinet		With Cabinet		Complete	

Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
Page 17		flood prevention measures, to Council maintained properties and streets.	Kerry Middleton	These will be investigated on a case-by-case basis and as the need arises.
		2. That the Council should improve communications to Members, raising awareness of the up-to-date Flood Toolkit generally as well as active flood measures in the event of emergencies.		**DRAFT – Accepted** There is a clear process in place for communicating key updates to members and where to signpost residents to, evidenced by a number of flooding incidents in January/February 2024 (Storm Henk) and late Sept 2024 and November (Storm Bert). However, timing of member communications can be reliant on the nature of the flooding incident and amount of heavy rainfall (Sept 2024) linked to the warnings the Met Office issue. We will continue to endeavour to issue member comms at the earliest opportunity when flooding thresholds are reached.
		3. That the Council should improve social media communication for residents during flooding and other emergencies.		Social media communications have also been in place to support warning and informing residents. Following Storm Henk, the council increased the use of social media channels (assessing the right balance with other content) in addition to X, which was being used as the main (not only) social media channel to warn and inform. While this remains the most appropriate channel to use in this capacity increased use of Facebook, Insta, Next Door, where appropriate, is widening the reach for those who might not access X. Social media is one method of reach but other channels are also used (timing dependent) including Your Oxfordshire (resident e-newsletter) and the council's dedicated news flooding page that is activated during incidents (this gives situational updates, including high level travel information). Messages (including member comms) are also shared with

Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
Page 18				the TVLRF warning and informing group, including the city and district councils, for message amplification across their channels. We also now have a more visual landing page that has been developed (again to be activated in relation to flood warnings) to support those who are being flooded or who are about to be flooded by signposting to trusted sites – gov.uk, the flood forum or sites that they link to. The focus is on providing quick and easy information to residents. To support this a number of social media assets have been developed that can be issued proactively and reactively to support and link to this page. This will also link to the newspage, and in development is a highways / roads closed page (again to be activated in a flooding emergency). All will be linked and connected. The recently created Flooding Task Force will also be reviewing communications with residents as a part of its work.
		4. That the Council should promote the benefits of creating of community emergency plans by parish councils and support the Resilience team to do that.		**DRAFT – Accepted** The Joint Oxfordshire Resilience Team provides these to communities twice a year but has low take up, as a small team attending parish meetings in the evenings is a challenge, support from locality meetings, with comms and councillors supporting this process would be beneficial. The recently created Flooding task Force will also be reviewing how there can be better community resilience and activation.
		5. That the Council should commit to working closely with partners to ensure		**DRAFT – Accepted/Partially Accepted**

Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
Page 19		that s.19 reports are completed swiftly, and recommendations can be acted upon.		Collaboration with other Risk Management Authorities has always been fostered and is further embedded in the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. In regards S19 reports these are undertaken with the District/City partners and are discussed with all authorities involved as the report progresses. There is always an initial phase of data gathering and information which is required to provide factual information. Recommendations are reviewed and will be reported. The recently created Flooding Task Force will also be reviewing this process with partners.
		6. That the Council should investigate the role and responsibilities of OFWAT and the potential for invoking s.94 measures.		**DRAFT – Accepted** Collaborative working will always be prioritised, but a clear understanding will be sought from Legal Services about what formal action could be taken if it became necessary.
25-Sep-24	LTCP Progress Report	That the Council, for the headline LTCP targets on car use reduction, should move from a car trip to car mileage reduction measure.	Paul Fermer; John Disley	**DRAFT – Partially Accepted** It is considered there is benefit in monitoring and reporting on car trips, but it is accepted that there is a benefit in having a car millage reduction target too - in particular due to the importance of reducing vehicle mileage to delivering net-zero targets. Adding to, rather than replacing, will also enable officers time to properly consider the implications that moving from trips to mileage could have on the County Council's current approach. On the 19th November 2024 Cabinet approved the recommendation to add the car mileage reduction target

KEY		Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete

Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
				recommended by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee as an additional headline target, alongside car trips.

	KEY	Delayed	In progress	Complete

Actions:

Meeting date	Item	Action	Lead	Update/response
13-Nov-24	Infrastructure Funding Statement and s.106 Funding Report	Progress updates to come to each Place Overview and Scrutiny meeting on s.106 spend and the IT systems.	Nicholas Perrins	Update received 27 January 2025: As previously reported to the committee, a S106 Acceleration Project has been launched to expedite the processes of allocating and delivering s106, improve access to information and improve communications. A review of funds held and of existing processes has now been completed to create a baseline for transformation. Phase 2 is now fully resources and underway with accountability held by the Director of Economy and Place. This high priority project comprises the following workstreams: - **S106 Accelerated Delivery**: This workstream is working to identify and package minor S106 funded transport schemes for accelerated design and delivery. In addition, through this year's business planning process, £4m has been proposed from interest accrued on balances held, to be allocated to schemes which are partly funded by s106 developer contributions but require additional funding to progress. This will release approximately £22.5m S106 funds and deliver local improvements covering a number of different types of schemes such as footway extensions, highway layout changes, pedestrian crossings and bus stop improvements. - **Capital Pre-Delivery Pipeline**: This workstream will capture and manage information regarding

Meeting date	Item	Action	Lead	Update/response
Page 22				potential capital projects before they reach the delivery stage by streamlining the process from concept to delivery. Full visibility will allow management action to prioritise and 'unblock' schemes. - **Data, systems and process**: This workstream will streamline and integrate data from into a cohesive system with associated business process re-engineers to streamline processes, reduce bottlenecks, and ensure more transparency, flexibility and accountability in the negotiation, management and use of S106 funds. - **Spatial strategy:** longer term work on strategic and local spatial plans, including economic plans and the revised Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, will provide an increasingly coherent basis for negotiating and agreeing developer contributions. Minimum delivery for end of 2024/25 is planned to include: - Identification of short-term package of small scale schemes with plans in place for delivery - Population of a single pre-delivery pipeline for section 106 schemes with agreed reporting requirements - Singe database in place for pre-delivery data with dashboard integrating data from systems including MasterGov, PPM and SAP to provide

	KEY		Delayed		In progress		Complete	

Meeting date	Item	Action	Lead	Update/response
				a comprehensive view of the pipeline and delivery - Revised process maps for end to end process, roles and responsibilities, including delivery structure and standing operating procedures

Recommendation Update Tracker
Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liam Walker, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The recommendation update tracker enables the Committee to monitor progress accepted recommendations. The tracker is updated with recommendations accepted by Cabinet. Once a recommendation has been updated, it will be shaded green and reported into the next meeting of the Committee, after which it will be removed from the tracker. If the recommendation will be update in the form of a separate item, it will be shaded yellow.

KEY	Update Pending	Update in Item	Updated

Cabinet Response Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update
17-Sep-24	Vision Zero	1. That the Council should work to establish a partnership board to monitor progress on Vision Zero with Thames Valley Police being fully involved as a key partner.	Paul Fermer	Update due: 23-Apr-25
		2. That the Council should continue to engage with Thames Valley Police in order to encourage enforcement of speed limits.		Update due: 23-Apr-25
		3. That the Council should identify additional powers that would support delivery of responsibilities and Vision Zero ambitions and request of the Secretary of State for Transport that Government considers implementing them.		Update due: 23-Apr-25
		4. That the Council should engage with other local authorities particularly those with similarly diverse counties and learn from them as well as to take learning from best practice in other authorities.		Update due: 23-Apr-25

KEY		Update Pending	Update in Item	Updated

Cabinet Response Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update
Page 25		5. That the Council should add greater emphasis on the five pillars as integral to the Vision Zero Key Areas		Update due: 23-Apr-25
		6. That the Council should ensure that its Vision Zero ambitions should be led by evidence and not be overly focused on behaviour		Update due: 23-Apr-25
		7. That the Council should continue to prioritise its infrastructure projects on the basis of data and evidence, taking account of the insights of local members.		Update due: 23-Apr-25
		8. That the Council should publish the danger hotspots on its website clearly linked to the underlying evidence.		Update due: 23-Apr-25
		9. That the Council should publish the numbers of road deaths of children and teenagers, and also by sex, clearly linked to Vision Zero.		Update due: 23-Apr-25
		10. That the Council should add SUVs and motorcycle categories to its safer vehicles section. It should also delineate the number and proportion of collisions involve SUVs		Update due: 23-Apr-25
		11. That the Council should set out, in as much detail as possible, information relating to the budget for this strategy and the costs associated with it, as well as the associated ongoing revenue costs.		Update due: 23-Apr-25
		12. That the Council should ensure that existing road layouts are considered as material planning considerations in its responses to applications for new residential developments		Update due: 23-Apr-25
		13. That the Council should undertake a safety audit of past road safety initiatives to learn from what has – or has not – worked previously		Update due: 23-Apr-25
19-Nov-24	Circular Economy Strategy and Action Plan	1. That the Council should arrange for improved communications, particularly about reuse, at Household Waste and Recycling Centres and in publicity about the same.	Rachel Burns	Update due: 23-Apr-25

	KEY	Update Pending	Update in Item	Updated

Cabinet Response Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update
		2. That the Council should ensure that the outworking of the Circular Economy Strategy results in reduced costs and can demonstrate the scale of savings achieved.		Update due: 23-Apr-25
		3. That the Council should work to introduce cross-border arrangements with neighbouring authorities so that Oxfordshire residents can use Household Waste and Recycling Centres outside the county.		Update due: 23-Apr-25
		4. That the Council should make explicit its role in the Circular Economy Strategy as a lead partner and set out how it will build partnerships both within the county and across county borders.		Update due: 23-Apr-25

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 requested[1] 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: Flood Event Response

Lead Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Dr Pete Sudbury, Deputy Leader of the Council with Responsibility for Climate Change, Environment & Future Generations

Date response requested:[2] 19 November 2024

Response to report:
Enter text here.

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
That the Council should investigate how best to retrofit sustainable drainage systems, as well as other flood prevention measures, to Council maintained properties and streets.	Partially accepted	These will be investigated on a case by case basis and as the need arises.

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

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

That the Council should improve communications to Members, raising awareness of the up-to-date Flood Toolkit generally as well as active flood measures in the event of emergencies.	Accepted	There is a clear process in place for communicating key updates to members and where to signpost residents to, evidenced by a number of flooding incidents in January/February 2024 (Storm Henk) and late Sept 2024 and November (Storm Bert). However, timing of member communications can be reliant on the nature of the flooding incident and amount of heavy rainfall (Sept 2024) linked to the warnings the Met Office issue. We will continue to endeavour to issue member comms at the earliest opportunity when flooding thresholds are reached.
That the Council should improve social media communication for residents during flooding and other emergencies.	Accepted	Social media communications have also been in place to support warning and informing residents. Following Storm Henk, the council increased the use of social media channels (assessing the right balance with other content) in addition to X, which was being used as the main (not only) social media channel to warn and inform. While this remains the most appropriate channel to use in this capacity increased use of Facebook, Insta, Next Door, where appropriate, is widening the reach for those who might not access X.

Social media is one method of reach but other channels are also used (timing dependent) including Your Oxfordshire (resident e-newsletter) and the council's dedicated news flooding page that is activated during incidents (this gives situational updates, including high level travel information). Messages (including member comms) are also shared with the TVLRF warning and informing group, including the city and district councils, for message amplification across their channels.

We also now have a more visual landing page that has been developed (again to be activated in relation to flood |

		warnings) to support those who are being flooded or who are about to be flooded by signposting to trusted sites – gov.uk, the flood forum or sites that they link to. The focus is on providing quick and easy information to residents. To support this a number of social media assets have been developed that can be issued proactively and reactively to support and link to this page. This will also link to the newspage, and in development is a highways / roads closed page (again to be activated in a flooding emergency). All will be linked and connected. The recently created Flooding Task Force will also be reviewing communications with residents as a part of its work.
That the Council should promote the benefits of creating of community emergency plans by parish councils and support the Resilience team to do that.	Accepted	The Joint Oxfordshire Resilience Team promotes these to communities twice a year but has low take up, as a small team attending parish meetings in the evenings is a challenge, support from locality meetings, with comms and councillors supporting this process would be beneficial. The recently created Flooding Task Force will also be reviewing how there can be better community resilience and activation.
That the Council should commit to working closely with partners to ensure that s.19 reports are completed swiftly, and recommendations can be acted upon.	Accepted/Partially accept	Collaboration with other Risk Management Authorities has always been fostered and is further embedded in the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. In regards S19 reports these are undertaken with the District/City partners and are discussed with all authorities involved as the report progresses. There is always an initial phase of data gathering and information which is required to provide factual

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		information. Recommendations are reviewed and will be reported. The recently created Flooding Task Force will also be reviewing this process with partners.
That the Council should investigate the role and responsibilities of OFWAT and the potential for invoking s.94 measures.	Accepted	Collaborative working will always be prioritised, but a clear understanding will be sought from Legal Services about what formal action could be taken if it became necessary.

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 requested[1] 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: LTCP Monitoring Report

Lead Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, and Cllr Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Development Strategy

Date response requested:[2] 19 November 2024

Response to report:

Cabinet welcomes the recommendations from the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the LTCP Monitoring Report. The recommendations were reviewed prior to the LTCP Monitoring Reports consideration at Cabinet on 19th November 2024 so that any changes required to the LTCP or LTCP Monitoring Report could be made to the documents. The full response to the recommendations can be found below.

Cabinet also welcomes the comments and suggestions made by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the LTCP Monitoring Report at their meeting on 25th September 2024. Many of these have been incorporated into the final version of the LTCP Monitoring Report. The suggestions made, officer responses and summary of changes can be found in paragraph 20 of the LTCP Monitoring Report Cabinet report, available here. It was not possible to include all of the suggestions for this year's report and there is ongoing work to investigate and collate information for next year.

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

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
That the Council, for the headline LTCP targets on car use reduction, should move from a car trip to car mileage reduction measure.	Partially accepted	It is considered there is benefit in monitoring and reporting on car trips, but it is accepted that there is a benefit in having a car millage reduction target too - in particular due to the importance of reducing vehicle mileage to delivering net-zero targets. Adding to, rather than replacing, will also enable officers time to properly consider the implications that moving from trips to mileage could have on the County Council's current approach. On the 19th November 2024 Cabinet approved the recommendation to add the car mileage reduction target recommended by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee as an additional headline target, alongside car trips.

PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
5 February 2025

Network Coordination of Road and Street works and Lane Rental for Oxfordshire

Report by the Director of Environment and Highways

RECOMMENDATION

1.   **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to**

   note the content of the report.

Executive Summary

2.   This report provides information on the management of utility works (street works) on the highway network and the operation of the proposed Oxfordshire Lane Rental Scheme (OLRS).

3.   There are currently three types of works that take place on the highway. Street works (utility works), Road works (local authority works) and Private works (developers or other private organisations) all of which are considered as works on the highway under the County Council's Network Management Plan (Annex 1).

4.   Notwithstanding the origin of the works, they are all considered under the requirements of the New Roads and Streets Works Act 1991 and the Oxfordshire Permit Scheme approved by Cabinet (Annex 2). Utility and private works attract a charge form the Works Promoter on a scale of charges determined by the Department for Transport (DfT). Local authority works are exempt from charges. Permit Scheme charges are cost neutral and should not generate an income surplus to the County Council.

5.   Where works do not comply with the NRSWA or the OPS then fines can be levied against the Works Promoter.

6.   The County Council, via the Network Coordination Team, part of Network Management, deals with circa. 30,000 Permit applications each year.

7.   Many applications (Permits) require traffic management (TM) on the network up to and including road closures. These applications are dealt with as part of the Permit application process. The Council deals with circa 450 road closure applications each year.

8. The County Council has applied for powers to deploy a Lane Rental Scheme for Oxfordshire. This would enable higher charges to be applied to works on the busiest roads on the network at the busiest times. Our application is with the Department for Transport (DfT) for assessment and the current indications are that it will be implemented in October 25. OLRS does allow for surplus income to be generated and DfT guidance applies on how this surplus should be spent.

Network Coordination Stages

9. The processing and management of Permits for roadworks is managed in three phases:

    (a) **Forward Planning (larger works)**
        Works Promoters provide a programme of the work to the County Council for assessment. These works programmes are then considered against other programmes of work and agreed in principle (or are subject to further discussion where necessary).

        Once agreed Provisional Permits are approved to 'book' the road space. Where a road closure is required for the works, this is considered as part of the forward planning piece. This work stage includes ensuring suitable mitigations are put in place based on the hierarchy of users (see below)

    (b) **Processing of Permitting (Permits) and Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTRO)**
        is where provisional permits are formalised and road closure notices are provided. It can also be the starting point for smaller works not requiring closures.

        These applications are considered against the existing needs and activities already on the network. Charges for works are generated within the part of the Service. Generally, we have 600+ sites in the network at any one time.

    (c) **Review & Enforcement**

        This is the last stage and deals with when works are live and operational as well as ensuring reinstatements are done properly Sites are checked for compliance with Permit conditions, fines issued, finish dates complied with: and live issues resolved on site. Post works, reinstatements are monitored for compliance.

Network Coordination Powers

10. Under NRSWA and the OPS the County Council has powers to approve, refuse or modify Permits, depending on the circumstances, existing activity on the network and existing forward plan.

11. We take a proactive approach to works based on the Network Management Plan hierarchy of works:

   1. Emergency repairs to facilitate safe conditions, ensure utility supplies or to prevent an "emergency situation"
   2. Works of national importance (HS2 and EWR)
   3. County Council new and improved infrastructure projects
   4. Digital connectivity infrastructure projects
   5. Large scale public events
   6. Major utility infrastructure and works
   7. Small scale utility works (minor and standard)
   8. Highway maintenance activities

12. Where possible, mitigations are introduced to minimise disruption to the travelling public based on the hierarchy of users defined in the Network Management Plan.

   (a) Walking and wheeling (including running, mobility aids, wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs)
   (b) Cycling and riding (bicycles, non-standard cycles, e-bikes, cargo bikes, e-scooters, and horse riding)
   (c) Public transport (bus, scheduled coach, rail, and taxis)
   (d) Motorcycles
   (e) Shared vehicles (car clubs and car-pooling)
   (f) Other motorised modes (cars, vans, and lorries)

13. Most common issues:

   (a) Emergency/Urgent works – By definition, these start without any notice to the County Council and are approved by default.
   (b) Planning Approvals/Developments – This come from planning approvals with dates within which the works must be started.
   (c) Electric supply – There is a shortage of supply to connect new developments with developers promoting, at high level, the need to fast track works to provide supplies.
   (d) Community engagement – many schemes have juxtaposition support from communities either for or against.
   (e) Funding – schemes come with fixed end dates for funding requiring an accelerated timeline for implementation.

(f)   Congestion – All schemes require some form of TM causing delays and congestion on the network.

Financial Implications

14.   Management of roadworks generates income through fees and fines. The 24/25 budget income allocation expectations for Network Coordination are (per annum):

Permit applications	£1,110,400
Enforcement and Compliance	£2,154,100
TTRO	£1,503,800
Total	**£4,768,300**

The staffing budget for this part of the service is £2,068,400

Lane Rental Proposal

15.   Having operated a successful Permit Scheme for three years, the County Council is now able to apply for a Lane Rental Scheme on the highway network in Oxfordshire. This proposal was submitted to DfT in April 2024 following local engagement and consultation with the industry and approval from Cabinet (Annex 3)

16.   Lane Rental allows for increased charges to apply for work on our busiest roads and core times (generally the rush hours periods and can apply at weekends and bank holidays) at a rate of £2,500 a day. Identifying streets for Lane Rental is dependent on an up-to-date list of Traffic Sensitive Streets (TSS) having been identified and agreed with Works Promoters.

17.   Following feedback from the DfT on the council's application, an update to the Traffic Sensitive Streets was requested. The consultation response to this will be issued in January 2025. Following this, Officers will issue the updated consultation response on Lane Rental in February 2025. Officers can then confirm to DfT that all the required steps have been completed to support the updated Lane Rental application. An update was required following Utility representations to DfT on Lane Rental as a concept and our application in particular.

18.   DfT have indicated that our updated application will be batched with others and considered in April 2025, with a view to implement from October 2025.

19.   Unlike the Oxfordshire Permit Scheme, Lane Rental is permitted to make a surplus, which should be ringfenced and spent in accordance with the DfT guidance.

Lane Rental Financial Implications

20. Using data from the OPS, the updated TSS and guidance from the DfT we are anticipating a surplus of £4m per annum from Lane Rental, after costs. The budget line for this has been established at £2.1m with the possibility of additional income being achieved. Costs include additional staffing to support and enforce the Scheme (including weekend and bank holiday working), additional technical support and systems and the costs associated with setting up running the governance of the surplus funding allocation process.

21. Allocating surplus funding requires a governance group made up from the County Council and utilities with a Chair independent from both groups. Updated guidance from DfT indicates that by Summer 2025, legislation will be amended to ensure that a minimum for 50% of surplus funds is allocated to what is described as pothole repairs. Further bids from highway maintenance can be made for the remaining 50%.

22. Bids can also be received under the following headings:

   - Investment in innovation
   - Disruption saving techniques
   - Transportation
   - Access to utility infrastructure
   - Improvements to reduce noise, pollution or safety related measures
   - Congestion and mitigation measures
   - Enabling infrastructure

23. Officers are in the process of setting up the governance that will apply to the Surplus Funds group.

24. Progress on the development of the Oxfordshire Lane Rental Scheme is reported on a regular basis to Portfolio Holders.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

25. Establishing a Lane Rental; Scheme for Oxfordshire supports the corporate policies and priorities as detailed in the Cabinet Report (Annex 3).

Financial Implications

The financial implications section should be completed by a member of the finance service

26. Financial implications were considered as part of the Cabinet report on Lane Rental for Oxfordshire. (Annex 3)
Comments checked by:

Rob Finlayson Strategic Finance Business Partner
Rob.finlayson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

The legal implications section should be completed by a member of the legal service

27. The coordination of roadworks takes places under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 and associated Codes of Practice. Legal implications for Lane Rental were considered as part of the Cabinet report (Annex 3)

    Comments checked by:

    Jennifer Crouch Head of Law (Environment Team)
    jennifer.crouch@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

28. Additional staffing will be required in order to support the implementation of the Oxfordshire Lane Rental Scheme, as detailed in the Cabinet Report (Annex 3). These will be funded as part of the costs of the Lane Rental Scheme. Numbers of additional staff are being considered following DfT guidance on establishing weekend and bank holiday enforcement for both Lane Rental and Permit works as there will be an overlap of activity.

29. Development of the Scheme is being undertaken by staff within the existing Service. Officers are supported by external consultants, who are currently funded from the Oxfordshire Permit Scheme. These costs can be recharged to the OLRS once implemented.

    Risk Management

30. Risk has been considered as part of the Cabinet report on Lane Rental (Annex 3). For Permit works, Officers take a risk managed approach based on road hierarchy and the size of the scheme to determine the level of enforcement to be applied, guided by the relevant Codes of Practice.

Keith Stenning – Head of Network Management

Annex:

1 Network Management Plan Cabinet Report
   https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MID=6889#AI25242

2. Oxfordshire Permit Scheme Cabinet Report
   https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s48408/CA_SEP1719R09%20-%20Streetworks%20Permit%20Scheme.pdf

3. Oxfordshire Lane Rental Scheme Cabinet Report

Contact Officer: Keith Stenning – Head of Network Management.
07584581214 keith.stenning@oxfordshire.gov.uk

January 2025

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Divisions Affected - All

CABINET
21 February 2023

Oxfordshire Network Management Plan

Report by Corporate Director of Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**

   a) Approve the adoption the 'Oxfordshire Network Management Plan 2023-2028' at Annex 1

   b) Approve the Oxfordshire Network Management Plan Summary document at Annex 2

   c) Approve the delegation of authority to amend the Network Management Plan to the Corporate Director of Environment and Place in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Highway Management for the life of the Plan to ensure it is kept up to date with related Council policies and any government guidance or legislative changes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Whilst not a statutory document the Department for Transport encourages the production of a Network Management Plan to assist those working on the network, developers, utilities and the highway service, to plan, coordinate and implement works. In addition, the plan provides information for users of the network on the strategies deployed to manage the network.

3. The Plan for the period 2023-28 is a challenging one with the scale of works taking place on Oxfordshire's network as a result of new infrastructure projects and developments taking place across the county.

4. It is an operational document that supports delivery of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, as well as helping to deliver and provide a framework to ensure alignment of decisions and actions in line with the corporate plan and Council priorities. The Plan provides for a hierarchy of transport methods, a hierarchy of works (taking into account statutory duties), how the Network will be managed.

Key elements of the Plan

5. The next five years sees considerable activity on the network across the county, from the provision of new highway & transport infrastructure as well as the considerable investment in housing development, projects of national importance (such as HS2 and East/West Rail), investment in digital infrastructure as well as the activity from routine maintenance of utility and highway infrastructure.

6. The plan explains how these will be managed against the vision, objectives and priorities of the County Council.

7. Key elements of the Plan include:

    - Legislative and Policy framework
    - Hierarchy of road users: Pedestrians, cyclists, buses, freight, others
    - Hierarchy of works: Emergencies, Works of National Importance, Active Travel, major new highway infrastructure, Broadband infrastructure, major utility works, major maintenance works, small scale utility works and general highway maintenance activity.
    - Decision making framework
    - Implementation planning for works
    - Communications
    - Team synergies
    - Ambitions

Corporate Policies and Priorities

8. The Network Management Plan will help to support the delivery of the County Council priorities to create and manage an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network. It also supports and takes forward principles and policies set out in the emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.

Financial Implications

9. There are no direct financial implications arising from the adoption of Network Management Plan.

    Comments checked by: Rob Finlayson, Finance Business Partner
    rob.finlayson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

10. The Traffic Management Act 2004 (Part 16) places a duty on the Local Traffic Authority (Oxfordshire County Council) as follows:

(1)   It is the duty of a local traffic authority or a strategic highways company ("the network management authority") to manage their road network with a view to achieving, so far as is reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and objectives, the following objectives:

(a)   Securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's network; and

(b)   Facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority

(2)   The action that an authority may take in performing that duty includes, in particular, any action that they consider will contribute to securing –

a)   The more efficient use of their network; or

b)   The avoidance, elimination or reduction of road congestion and or other disruption to the movement of traffic on their road network or a road network for which another authority is the traffic authority.

11.   The Network Management Plan details how the statutory duty will be achieved.

Comments checked by: Jennifer Crouch, Principal Solicitor (Legal Services)
Jennifer.crouch@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

12.   There are no direct staffing implications arising from the adoption Network Management Plan.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

13.   The Network Management Plan, and the activities associated with it, looks to safeguard all users of the highway network whilst incorporating local policies and objectives, whilst maintaining the ability for utilities, developers and highway maintenance activities to take place. The Traffic Management Act allows for the provision of local policies as identified by the Fair Deal Alliance for a hierarchy of users of the network.

Sustainability Implications

14.   Oxfordshire County Council is committed to action to tackle climate change and the Network Management Plan will support these objectives by supporting work promoters with new methods of working to reduce emissions, assisting communities introduce EV charging points, managing the parking asset to support greater use of public transport and active travel, mitigating works to support public transport and active travel and supporting initiatives to

maximise traffic reduction. We are working with a wide range of partners to deliver projects at the cutting edge of their field. The use of innovative technology within the county will significantly reduce local emissions and improve air quality, boosting the quality of life for residents and benefiting businesses. The Network Management Plan provides for clear hierarchies in terms of users and works to support the climate change agenda.

Risk Management

15. With increasing growth and associated development in the County, there is a clear risk that the existing infrastructure will be unable to cope with the increasing demand for road space to travel and the requirement for new utility work, development and maintenance (currently we have 600+ live sites on the network each day).

16. The Network Management Plan identifies clear priorities for the use of the network and a hierarchy for development and maintenance over the next 5-year period. Whilst the booking of road space for works is based on a first come first served principal, the Plan allows for the prioritisation and coordination of works to reduce clashes. Promoting a common-sense approach to works, on the basis of the 'deepest dig' goes first, ensures that reinstatement works meet the specifications and reduces the need for additional maintenance activity. The Plan allows for emphasis on community-based parking requirements, supports activity travel as an alternative and supports innovation in traffic control to prioritise active travel projects and public transport.

Consultations

17. The Oxfordshire Network Management Plan was subject to a public consultation during November and December 2022, aimed at key stakeholders, including utilities and bus companies. Prior to this, informal consultation was undertaken, and their responses used to help develop the draft Network Management Plan.

18. Two responses were received to the consultation: one from Oxfordshire Cycling Network and one from a statutory undertaker. Both responses supported the content of the plan. The statutory undertaker email provided additional technical information and references to relevant codes of practice which needed to be adjusted in the Network Management Plan. These technical point references have been included into the draft plan.

19. Whilst the plan covers a fixed period, it will be subject to annual review (in April) to consider the evolution of the network, changing travel behaviours, government policy developments, local policy initiatives and new opportunities for innovation. As adjustments and amendments are made to the relevant Codes of Practice, these will immediately replace those in the plan by default.

BILL COTTON

Corporate Director of Environment and Place

Annex 1   Oxfordshire Network Management Plan 2022-27
Annex 2   Network Management Plan – Executive Summary

Background papers: Nil

[Other Documents:]   Web link to: [Traffic Management Act 2004 Network Management Duty Guidance (DfT)](#)

Contact Officer: Keith Stenning – Head of Network Management. 07584581214 keith.stenning@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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CABINET– 17 SEPTEMBER 2019

IMPLEMENTATION OF A STREET WORKS PERMIT SCHEME FOR OXFORDSHIRE

Report by Director of Community Operations

RECOMMENDATION

1.   **Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**

    (a)   Approve in principle for a Street works permit scheme for Oxfordshire to be implemented.

    (b)   Approve the contents of the Street works permit scheme document at Annex 1 which has considered feedback from public consultation.

Executive Summary

2.   Oxfordshire County Council was advised by the Department for Transport on 18/07/2018 to implement a street works 'permit' scheme to replace the existing 'noticing' scheme currently in operation. See letter at Annex 1.

3.   In response to this, there has been preparation to move to a Street works permit scheme. A scheme document stating the terms and conditions of a scheme has been developed supported by an external consultancy, "Geoplace".

4.   This scheme document has been publicly consulted upon. Overall the proposal has been well received. The comments received have been considered and were appropriate the draft has been amended with the proposed final scheme document as at Annex 2.

Introduction

5.   This report presents responses received to the formal consultation on the contents of the permit scheme document and the proposed final scheme document for consideration to ensure it is both suitable for Oxfordshire and manageable for those who operate the scheme.

Background

6.   A feasibility study and cost benefit analysis were completed which confirmed a scheme would be beneficial to Oxfordshire. A 'scheme document' detailing proposals has been developed and its contents have been consulted upon both informally and formally with works promoters and wider stakeholders.

See Annex 2 for a copy of the proposed scheme document.

7. A permit scheme will assist the County Council in achieving tighter management of roadworks on the highway, including reduction of durations which will enable more works to be completed, supporting the delivery of developments and increased infrastructure programmes.

8. As part of developing the scheme, Officers have completed a series of benchmarking exercises with other authorities including Cambridgeshire, West Sussex, Warwickshire and have worked closely with external consultants to ensure best practice was proposed as part of the scheme for Oxfordshire. The outcome of this is a scheme document which operates in line with the majority of schemes in England.

9. The scheme is expected to show a Benefit Cost ratio of 2.05:1 which exceeds the Department for Transport's value for money expectation of 2:1 for a scheme and also represents a positive return to both the residents and businesses of Oxfordshire.

Consultation

10. Following a period of informal consultation with works promoters reviewing the terms of the scheme, a public formal consultation took place between 19 July and 23 August 2019.

11. The consultation was sent to a broad range of key stakeholders. Consultees included emergency services, passenger transport providers, surrounding local authorities, town and parish councils, County Councillors, utility companies, major local employers and other interest groups.

12. 41 responses were received. 28 responses with no objections / support for the scheme document, 6 responses proposing amendments to a scheme, 2 responses which were neutral towards a scheme and 1 response which was unrelated to a street works permit scheme. Responses have been broken down by individual point with officer comment and can be found at annex 3.

13. County Councillors, town and parish councils, and neighbouring local authorities are broadly supportive of the proposed scheme.

14. Responses were also received from the emergency services and public transport providers who were supportive of the implementation of a scheme.

15. The Utility Companies and work promotors submitted specific requests for changes and where considered appropriate amendments have been made.

16. Copies of the full responses are available for inspection by County Councillors and have been shared with consultees.

Responses to objections and other comments.

17. Proposed changes were received from 5 works promoters/ utilities. The basis for the proposed changes were surrounding referral to and updating of legislation stated within the document and technical amendments to the scheme document including references to future software solutions and clarification of points raised within the scheme document.

18. In response to the changes proposed, all requests were reviewed by our external consultant, Geoplace alongside Council Officers, to determine whether they would be suitable for Oxfordshire. Where accepted changes have been made to the permit scheme document reflecting these proposals.

Key risks and benefits

19. If a permit scheme is not progressed, using our own developed terms for local needs, then there is a risk that a national scheme will be imposed.

20. The benefits that the scheme is expected to achieve include:

    - Reduction in roadwork duration - removal of 8,934 days of works from counties roads annually. (c. 10% reduction).
    - Improved quality of works completed and enforcement of failed works.
    - Improved coordination and management of works.
    - Reduction in the 'hassle factor' (such as additional journey planning) and inconvenience works put on the travelling public.

Financial and Staff Implications

21. Anticipated income and expenditure associated to the scheme have been calculated using tools provided to us by the Department for Transport and have been benchmarked against comparable authorities (Cambridgeshire & West Sussex) to ensure suitability and robustness.

22. The forecasted income realisable through the charges agreed with the DfT and based on known works from 2019/20, is estimated to range from between £1.1m - £1.2m per annum. This income will recover the full cost of administering the scheme and includes direct administration costs, service management indirect costs as well as corporate overheads.

23. The current year net upfront costs of the scheme are estimated to be £90k and this pressure will be managed within current revenue budgets.

OWEN JENKINS
Director for Community Operations

Background papers: NONE
Contact Officer: Keith Stenning, 07584581214   September 2019

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Divisions Affected – All

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CABINET

20 June 2023

Lane Rental for Oxfordshire

Report by Corporate Director of Environment and Place

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RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**

   a) **Approve the submission of an application to the Department of Transport for Lane Rental in Oxfordshire.**

   b) **Delegate decision making on the timing and specific content of the Scheme and application to the Corporate Director of Environment and Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highway Management.**

Executive Summary

2. Oxfordshire County Council, as the Traffic Authority, has been running a successful Permit Scheme for road and street works since 2020. As a result, a further opportunity is now available to apply to the Department for Transport (DfT) for an Order to allow for the introduction of Lane Rental in Oxfordshire.

3. The Lane Rental Scheme (LRS) allows for additional charges to apply to works on our busiest roads at the busiest times. This encourages those working on the highway to avoid peak times (to avoid the charges) or pay the charges (completing the works in shortest possible timeframe), the maximum for which is £2,500 a day.

4. Fees arising from Lane Rental must be invested in works operations to reduce impacts, improving the highway network, and compensating society for disruptive works. In accordance with the Department for Transport guidance, it is proposed to set up joint working arrangements between the highway authority and works promotors to manage the allocation of funding arising from Lane Rental.

5. The introduction of Lane Rental was identified as a key ambition of the Network Management Plan 2023-2028, adopted by Cabinet in February 2023.

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Page 51

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6.   Subject to central government timetables, the intention is to introduce Lane Rental from September 2024.

Exempt Information

7.   Not applicable.

Background

8.   Network Management receives in the region of 30,000 requests to work on the network per annum and these are coordinated, inspected, and enforced to reduce the impact on the travelling public.

9.   The Oxfordshire Permit Scheme is required, under DfT guidance, to be cost neutral to the Authority. The Oxfordshire Permit Scheme generates approximately £1m of activity per annum.

10.   Lane Rental allows the Authority to impose specific charges on those requesting to work on the network on our busiest roads at the busiest times (traffic sensitive streets at traffic sensitive times).

11.   Lane Rental is the next stage in the evolution of the Network Management Service for Network Coordination, by imposing charges designed to promote behavioural change in the industry. The busiest 5% of the network will be subject to Lane Rental (in accordance with the guidance coming from DfT). Unlike the Permit Scheme, the DfT accept that Lane Rental will generate a financial surplus to the Authority which should be invested into mitigation measures, highway improvements and associated societal benefits.

12.   Key benefits of Lane Rental include:
*   Incentivising collaborative working between works promoters
*   Improving the quality of works (to avoid return fees)
*   Works are undertaken outside of key times
*   Working smarter will reduce the time taken to complete works
*   Provide increased resource to manage the network, offset by income generated by the scheme

13.   Brighton Traffic Management Limited, were commissioned to undertake a scoping exercise in 2022 to explore the potential benefits of a scheme in Oxfordshire, the results of which are shown at Annex 1, and to support officers in the preparation of an application to DfT.

Outline of Oxfordshire Lane Rental Scheme (LRS)

14.   The specifics of the scheme need developing; much will be based on other successful schemes but using Oxfordshire specific evidence. Initial thinking on some of the core principles for the scheme includes:

*   That the Scheme will apply to:

- All work on roads identified as Traffic Sensitive specifically for Lane Rental, taken (as a sub-set) from the current list of Traffic Sensitive Streets from Oxfordshire's National Street Gazetteer. Draft plan of the Traffic Sensitive Sites is due from Brighton Traffic Management by end of July 2023.
- Work undertaken outside of core off peak times (09:30 – 15:00) on roughly 5% of the highway network - determined as the busiest by traffic volume/bus frequency/critical infrastructure).
- That there will be one charge set at the maximum allowed daily charge of £2,500, with specific discount criteria to be determined.
  - Lane Rental Traffic Sensitive Streets will be reviewed as part of the scheme development to encompass local conditions beyond those required by the Department for Transport, to maximise the potential network management benefits to the network
  - The aim is to increase collaboration with all works promotors on the highways to reduce congestion at peak hours using financial incentives
  - Governance will be developed, in accordance with the Department for Transport requirements, for the allocation of surplus funds generated by the scheme

15. It is hoped that the scheme will bring about behavioural changes from works promotors for the benefit of road users such as:
    - Immediate works completed faster - more immediate works done within 2 days (free period) to avoid the charges
    - Reduced works impact - more resources applied to works to reduce the time taken or carry out works outside of charging hours (though this will mean longer works durations)
    - Improved collaborative working - more works will be done collaboratively by promoters to share the costs and/or charges
    - Increases use of technology - greater use of new technology to speed up the works or reduce their impact, such as 'mole' systems

16. There will also potentially be some impacts that could be considered as negative which will need to be considered when developing the specific details of the scheme, such as:
    - Out of Hours Working - more works undertaken out of hours, including overnight (potentially an increase of 10% based experience of others)
    - Works Taking Longer - Some works will take longer if there are done during a shorter day between busy periods to avoid the charges
    - Highway Works - the Councils own works are potentially chargeable, which may impact on programmes or budgets

Corporate Policies and Priorities

Strategic Plan

17. Introducing Lane Rental principally supports the following strategic priorities for Oxfordshire:

- Priority 1 - <u>Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work</u> - by reducing congestion on the network at key times, promoting innovation in the industry to use innovative techniques and support climate emergency mitigation measures through the use of surplus revenues

- Priority 3 - <u>Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents</u> - by reducing congestion, supporting innovation and support climate emergency mitigation measures through the use of surplus revenues

- Priority 5 - <u>Invest in an inclusive, integrated, and sustainable transport system</u> - by increasing our ability to manage the network to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on the network, support active travel and other key objectives via the use of surplus revenues

- Priority 9 - <u>Work with local business and partners for environmental, economic, and social benefits</u> – by working with key stakeholders, as required by the DfT, to formulate a bespoke LRS for Oxfordshire which supports local and national transport policies, improvements to the highway network and local policy initiatives

Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP)

18. Introducing Lane Rental supports the ambitions of LTCP, in particular Policy 31:

- Undertake network management as part of an integrated approach, utilising emerging technologies to maximise its ability to tackle congestion issues in the county
- Continue to work closely with all stakeholders, partners, and communities to minimise the adverse impact of disruptions on the entire road network within Oxfordshire and beyond
- Balance the needs of all network users, whilst promoting and prioritising walking, cycling and public transport at every opportunity

Network Management Plan

19. A new Network Management Plan was adopted by the council on 22nd February 2023 and progression of Lane Rental will especially help to deliver the plan by:

- Minimising disruption to those travelling on the network
- Provision of quality information to the travelling public, taking direct and proactive action to reduce disruption
- To support active travel schemes
- Increase journey time reliability and minimise end-to end public transport journey times
- To effectively coordinate all network activity to maximise the effective use of road space

Financial Implications

20. The Scoping Report at Annex A provides details of the financial assumptions made for Lane Rental. The key headlines from this are:

    Costs:
    Annual operating costs for the scheme has been calculated at £910k per annum (see Annex 1). This is made up of additional staff to manage and enforce Lane Rental in Oxfordshire, system improvements and refunding lost permit revenue where works are reassigned as Lane Rental.

    A breakdown of the scheme's costs is summarised below:

Ongoing Annual Operating Costs	
Start-up Cost Centre	Year 1+
KPI Production / Evaluation	£80,000
Invoicing	£100,000
IT Support	£50,000
Unauthorised / Abandoned	£30,000
Management Overhead	£50,000
Staff Costs (Permit Scheme recharge + additional staff)	£600,000
Total	£910,000

    A contingency amount of £90,000 (10%) has been allocated on top of the £910k estimate to ensure there is some coverage over the costing to provide assurance around any sensitivity on the estimates, this revises the overall estimate of costs to £1m.

    Income:
    Depending on the potential behavioural change within the industry, fees from the scheme is estimated between £3m to £12.5m per annum. Note there are restrictions set out by DfT as to how this can be spent and reinvested. This estimate is based on traffic sensitive streets data sourced from Brighton Traffic Management.

21. One off start-up cost for scheme is £69,600 and is to be funded from the surplus from the Permit Scheme. The cost has been determined on a day rate of £800 per day for 87 days for Consultancy costs via Brighton Traffic Management.

22. Payments for fees will be received in advance from all users and coded to a dedicated cost centre for Lane Rental. The reporting of income and expenditure will be governed under the usual finance governance framework as well as in the 'Street Manager System' (a DfT system operated by OCC).

Financial Governance

23. Once the LRS goes live, we will need to have the Governance Group set up and running within 3 months. Invitations will go out asking for nominees. Recommended plan is 4 representatives from stakeholder utility side, 4 representatives from Oxfordshire County Council and an independent chair. Also supported by additional resources within the authority to help with the bidding process, documentation, cost benefit analysis. There is an existing model for the Governance Group with supporting documents. The group's role will be to receive bids, make decisions on how to spend and maximise opportunities.

24. The LRS is relatively new and Oxfordshire County Council would be one of the leaders. Examples of authorities who have recently adopted it are Surrey and West Sussex. Kent Council were the initial leaders of the first scheme and have it up and running for several years. All following approval by the Secretary of State and are live schemes. Next will be East Sussex in a few months' time. The consultants are developing a pipeline of authorities that are scheduling Lane Rental projects. There is an ambition that DfT will require all Highway Authorities to adopt this scheme in the future; this paper looks to ensure we have the governance in place to accommodate such a change.

25. The schemes that are currently in operation are working well and having the desired impact on behavioural change. Utilities have fed back that when planning works on a lane rental street the works progress to an enhanced coordination and design team. There is greater awareness within promoters about cost of working on a Lane Rental Street, so they are doing more on how to mitigate the costs by working at different times / ways.

Comments checked by:
Rob Finlayson, Finance Business Partner
rob.finlayson@oxfordshire.gov.uk (Finance)

Legal Implications

26. The New Roads and Streets Works Act 1991 (NRSWA), as amended by the Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA), contains provisions for highway authorities to operate Lane Rental Schemes that involve charging promoters for the time their works occupy the highway (Section 74A of NRSWA)

27. Operation of a LRS is subject to a successful application to the Department for Transport. To make a successful application the following criteria must be met:
    - Operation of a successful Permit Scheme
    - Permit fees are proportionate
    - Discounts are offered for joint working
    - Full compliance with the regulations can be shown
    - The scheme fully supports the delivery of national infrastructure projects

28. The LRS application must demonstrate that:
    - The Scheme is applied to the authority's own works

Page 56

- Charges are used to provide incentives to work outside peak times
- Charges are waived for joint works
- Caps are put in place for major works to replace apparatus

29. Implementation of the LRS must include a process where:
    - Promoters are notified (12 weeks) of the planned implementation date
    - The scheme is trialled for a period of time before going live
    - The scheme is reviewed annually to ensure impacts are being realised


Comments checked by:

Jennifer Crouch, Principal Solicitor (Environmental)
jennifer.crouch@oxfordshire.gov.uk   (Legal)

Staff Implications

30. Additional staff will be required to operate the LRS - approving applications for works and inspecting, monitoring and enforcing. Exact numbers of staff will be determined during the planning phase and will be fully funded by the scheme income.

Equality & Inclusion Implications and Sustainability Implications

31. A 'Climate Impact Assessment' and an 'Equalities Impact Assessment' has been completed and is attached at Annex 2 & 3.

32. The CIA indicates a net benefit of +24, based on the anticipated benefits of Lane Rental for Oxfordshire.
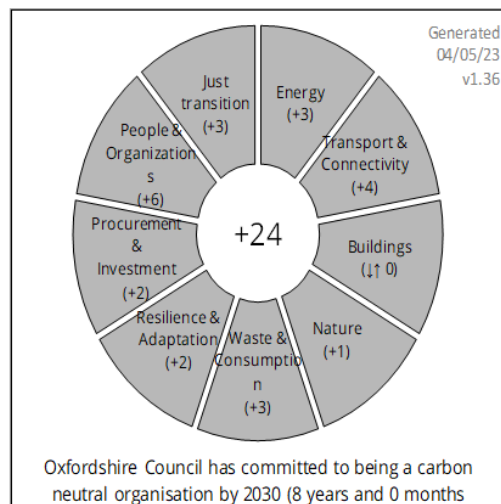
Risk Management

33.   The key risks to the delivery of a successful project are:

- Establishing a scheme that is acceptable to the industry
- A successful bid to the DfT
- Establishing an effective Board to deal with surplus income from the scheme

34.   Introducing a LRS provides for the following opportunities to the county:

- Enhanced network management
- Behavioural change in the industry to avoid peak times working on the busiest routes
- Network activity is compensated for by increased charges
- Work durations are shortened
- Encourages innovation in the industry
- Generates income for highway improvement works

Consultations

35.   Introduction of a LRS for Oxfordshire is subject to industry specific consultation which will be undertaken as part of the implementation plan, the results of which will be reported to the Corporate Director for Environment and Place and the Cabinet Member.

Bill Cotton
Corporate Director for Environment and Place

Annex:	1. Scoping Document for the introduction of a LRS for Oxfordshire
	2. EIA
	3. CIA
Background papers:	Nil
Contact Officer:	Keith Stenning - Head of Network Management 07584 581214 keith.stenning@oxfordshire.gov.uk

PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
– 5 FEBRUARY 2025

Review of Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy framework proposals for part night lighting

Report by the Director of Environment & Highways

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to

a) Note the work being undertaken to review the council's Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy.

b) Review and feedback on the approach to developing proposals for part-night lighting in Oxfordshire, specifically with regards to the approach to engagement and consultation.

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide a high-level overview of the council's revised approach to developing proposals for part-night street lighting in Oxfordshire to support the council's beyond net zero ambitions and improve the natural environment from a carbon and biodiversity perspective.

- Demonstrate how the council will work closely with stakeholders and communities to develop these proposals into a framework.

Executive Summary

2. Following the decision in November 2024 to defer the previous part-night lighting proposals, this report outlines a proposed revised approach, which includes a commitment to review the associated street lighting policy.

3. The proposal includes extensive stakeholder and community group engagement to review the adopted policy and develop a part-night lighting framework, including a formal consultation and approval process for those communities who wish to have part-night lighting considered.

4. This revised approach to part-night lighting within an updated policy will be the focus of the paper for Cabinet in July 2025.

Background & Context

5. Oxfordshire County Council, in its capacity as the highway authority, operates approximately 60,000 streetlights across the county.

6. The council's current Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy was agreed by Cabinet on 18 October 2022 and is due for review. This policy contains statements with regards to part-night lighting, namely under policy SLP 2:

> **Policy: SLP2**
>
> Oxfordshire County Council will provide or ensure provision of adequate and appropriate levels of lighting to ensure safe passage to all users of the highway network. This will include dimming of equipment during low traffic periods and enables the reduction in running hours due to the instant switch on of LED equipment. Dynamic (real-time demand/usage) control of the lighting can also be implemented and retrofitted where required. We will review and, where appropriate, de-illuminate or provide off-grid solutions for signage where possible and practical.

7. On 14 November 2024, "Proposed highway street lighting profiles, specifically with regard to operational hours and illumination levels (part-night lighting)", were presented for decision at Cabinet Member Decisions (CMD). These were standalone proposals, outside of a wider review of the council's Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy.

8. Specifically, these proposals were designed to enact the provisions made in the existing policy for part-night lighting, to support the council's net zero ambitions and reduce the negative impacts of light pollution on the natural environment from a carbon and biodiversity perspective.

9. Prior to the CMD meeting it became clear from the many written representations from councillors, community groups, stakeholders that the council should pause implementation of their proposals to reconsider the approach. Specifically, it was identified that a revised approach working closely with a wider range of stakeholders needed to be undertaken. It was also accepted by officers that the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) accompanying the proposal did not truly represent the views and concerns of the wider community and diverse groups within Oxfordshire, nor did it reflect the existing EIA already associated with the council's Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy. Whilst the meeting went ahead, the decision was deferred.

10. Since the November 2024 CMD meeting, the council have taken the opportunity to review, to take stock of the wide range of views expressed and to map out next steps considering lessons learnt.

11. This paper sets out how the council plan to move forward with refining proposals for a part-night street lighting framework for the county and review the wider Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy, engaging with stakeholders and communities.

12. New proposals are expected to be presented for decision by Cabinet in July 2025, alongside any wider changes to the council's existing Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy.

Policy Review

13. A decision has been made to review the council's overall Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy. This is a business-as-usual activity and is standard practice for council policies. This work will take place alongside the development of new proposals for part-night lighting.

14. As part of the council's reset, the term "dark skies" has been changed to "part-night lighting" to better reflect the reality of the proposals. The primary aim of these proposals is to improve the natural environment from a carbon and biodiversity perspective but with personal and community safety being a priority consideration.

Part-night lighting proposals

15. The council's aim is to set a new framework for part-night lighting for Oxfordshire that supports the council's net zero ambitions and reduces the negative impacts of light pollution on the natural environment from a carbon and biodiversity perspective.

16. Central to the development of the council's proposals is giving communities the choice to introduce part-night lighting in their local area and recognising that one size does not fit all. Different operating hours, levels of light intensity and exemptions will all form part of the council's proposals to match the diversity of the county's geography and communities. Importantly, the council are proposing that part night-lighting will be a community choice requested through the parish/town council and the county councillor/s for that area (*for areas of Oxford that are not parished, this would only be through the county councillors*). Following such a request, the revised street lighting scheme for that community will be consulted upon, with a final decision being made at the relevant Cabinet Member Decision meeting (similar to the principle and approach to 20mph schemes).

17. As part of the work to develop these proposals officers will focus on four key strands:

    a) Data and insights
    b) Engagement and consultation
    c) Understanding impact and risk
    d) Implementation, if proposals are agreed

Data and insights

18. Good progress is being made to analyse relevant accident data, crime data and safety data from across the county. Successful relationships have been formed with stakeholders and council service areas to support this work.

19. Insights are being drawn from the council's data hub and stakeholder engagement management system to inform the planning of engagement and consultation activities, and to update the supporting Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy equalities impact assessment.

Engagement and consultation

20. The council will take a two-phase approach to consultation and engagement. Phase one will focus on engaging stakeholders and communities to update the policy and develop a suitable part-night lighting framework. The groups officers propose to reach in this first phase are detailed in **Annex A** to this report.

21. This will include, but not be limited to:

- sharing the council's emerging plans for a part-night lighting framework for Oxfordshire based on community choice, including operating hours, levels of light intensity and exemptions and how these might apply to different areas
- hearing people's views and concerns on introducing part-night lighting in different circumstances, with a specific emphasis of understanding potential impacts on different groups of people who are perceived as being 'at risk' from crime or harm
- sharing the council's early thoughts on the process for consideration of part-night lighting to ensure the choice to opt-in is community led
- developing the formal consultation process for specific locations which will be taken through the CMD approval process for decision.
- sharing the council's initial findings from the data analysis phase and exploring any gaps
- listening to ideas and feedback on the council's plans
- exploring the potential benefits and impacts on carbon and biodiversity of not introducing part-night lighting.

22. In this phase one engagement the council will also seek views as part of the wider review of the council's Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy.

23. Phase two will be a formal public consultation on the proposed framework and approach to part-night lighting in Oxfordshire, which has been developed by working closely with communities and stakeholders. Should any substantial changes be required to the overall Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy as a result of the review, these will also be formally consulted upon.

Understanding impact and risk

24. Understanding impact and risk is central to the development of council's part-night street lighting proposals. Views will be actively sought in the engagement and consultation phase and identified through data analysis.

Implementation

25. Part-night lighting will only be implemented if it has been locally requested and, following a formal consultation process, approved at the relevant Cabinet Member Decision meeting.

26. A communications and engagement plan will be developed to support the implementation of part-night street lighting proposals, and officers are already learning from best practice from authorities who have previously implemented schemes.

Timeline for engagement

27. An outline timeline for engagement and consultation on part-night street lighting proposals is listed below:

   a) January and February 2025
      Working between the various Engagement, Equalities, Communications Teams and Members to develop the scope, format and questions of the Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation.
      Internal engagement of colleague inclusion networks.

   b) March and April 2025
      Targeted external stakeholder engagement, which will be designed to ensure pre-election period compliance.

   c) April and May 2025
      Development of consultation.

   d) Middle of May to Middle of June 2025
      Consultation period (post election commencement).

   e) Middle of June to beginning July 2025
      Consultation result report review and Street lighting Policy updated.

   f) 17 July 2025
      Cabinet Decision on updated policy and proposed part-night lighting process.

Financial Implications

28. There are no new budgetary implications arising from this report. The development of part-night proposals is being funded through existing service budgets.

Matthew Kocak, Management Accountant, matthew.kocack@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

29. There is no general requirement or obligation for the county council to light the highway. Oxfordshire has set its own policy based on the council's priorities and general guidance and good practice.

30. The legislation and guidance to which the council must have regard when exercising its power to light the highway includes:

   a. Section 97 of the *Highways Act 1980* gives the County Council the power to provide street lighting.
   b. Regulation 5 of *The Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1999* requires that road humps are illuminated.
   c. Section 17 of the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998* places on the County Council the duty to consider crime and disorder implications of exercising its various functions.
   d. Section 39 of the *Road Traffic Act 1988* imposes upon the County Council a responsibility for taking measures to prevent road traffic accidents.
   e. The *Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016* require some traffic signs to be directly illuminated when within a system of street lighting. Traffic sign illumination will not be affected by this initiative.
   f. The design requirements in BS 5489 allow road lighting levels to be lowered during periods of low traffic volumes

31. The proposed changes to the operational provision of street lighting are within the powers of the County Council.

Staff Implications

32. There are no new staffing implications arising specifically from this report. The development of part-night street lighting proposals is being funded through existing service budgets.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

33. The council recognise the implications that these proposals may have on the physical and psychological safety of marginalised and vulnerable residents.

34. The council accept that the EIA, in its current form, did not capture the needs of marginalised and vulnerable residents.

35. The consultation and engagement with stakeholders and communities, as set out in this report, will inform and update to the current EIA.

36. The updated EIA will include robust and proportional mitigations and interventions to reduce any negative impact of this proposal may have on Oxfordshire's communities.

37. The EIA is a living document, and the council will continue to engage with communities to ensure that it is truly reflective of the diversity within Oxfordshire.

Sustainability Implications

38. There are no sustainability implications arising specifically from this report.

39. There is already a climate impact assessment associated with the council's Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy. This is a living document and will need ongoing updates to reflect the implementation of the proposed new framework for part-night street lighting.

Risk Management

40. The council recognise the crime and safety risks associated with developing proposals for part-night lighting. Officers are already working closely with stakeholders and other council services to review available data.

41. The council also recognise the risks of working with vulnerable stakeholders and community groups. Through stakeholder mapping, seeking professional advice, adhering to data governance and accessibility legislation and completing risk assessments, as appropriate, the council will aim to protect the interests and wellbeing of all participants.

Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways

Annex: Annex A – Stakeholder engagement list

Background papers: Street Lighting Policy

Other Documents: None

Contact Officer: Sean Rooney, Head of Highways & Road safety

January 2025

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Annex A

Proposed Stakeholder & Engagement Groups

Review of Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets policy framework proposals for part night lighting

The following list includes the main categories of community representatives and stakeholders who may be affected by changes in how Oxfordshire County Council manages streetlighting operations. This is not a comprehensive list, and each category may encompass multiple stakeholders or smaller groups. Officers are currently developing a definitive list, which will be used as part of the on-going stakeholder and engagement work.

1. Oxfordshire County Council colleague inclusion networks
2. Disability access groups
3. Women's groups
4. LGBTI+ groups
5. Minority ethnic groups (which may include white minority groups)
6. Faith groups
7. Cultural and heritage groups
8. Community safety teams
9. Emergency services
10. Cyclist groups
11. Pedestrian groups
12. Transport operators
13. Public transport user groups
14. Large employers of shift workers
15. Groups representing the nighttime economy
16. Universities