Notice of a Meeting

Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Friday, 5 December 2025 at 10.00 am
Room 2&3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

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 Glynis Phillips
Deputy Chair: Councillor Ian Middleton

Councillors:

Brad Baines	Dr Nathan Ley	Roz Smith
Will Boucher-Giles	Kieron Mallon	
Tom Greenaway	John Shiri	

Date of Next Meeting: *16 January 2026*

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

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

November 2025

What does this Committee review or scrutinise?

The purpose of the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is (i) To review and scrutinise the performance of the Council and to provide a focused review of: (a) Corporate performance and directorate performance and financial reporting (b) Budget scrutiny (ii) To monitor the performance of the Council by means of effective key performance indicators, review of key action plans and obligations and through direct access to service managers, Cabinet Members and partners; (iii) To exercise the statutory right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by or on behalf of the Cabinet;

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 12 September 2025 and to receive information arising from them.

4. Petitions and Public Address

Members of the public who wish to speak on an item on the agenda at this meeting, or present a petition, can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

Requests to speak must be submitted no later than 9am three working days before the meeting, i.e. 02 December 2025.

Requests should be submitted 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 if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9am on the day of the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

5. Business Management Monitoring Report - Public Health (Pages 11 - 18)

Cllr Kate Gregory, Cabinet Member for Public Health & Inequalities, Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, Ansaf Azhar, Director of Public Health, Kate Holburn, Deputy Director of Public Health, and Sam Read, Public Health Programme Manager, have been invited to present a report on Business Management Monitoring Report - Public Health.

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.

NB This item is to follow.

6. Devolution (Pages 19 - 38)

Cllr Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, and Kim Sawyer, Programme Director: Devolution, have been invited to present a report on Devolution.

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.

7. Parking Permits (Pages 39 - 46)

Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, Paul Fermer, Director of Environment & Highways, and Phil Whitfield, Head of Network Management, have been invited to present a report on Parking Permits.

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.

8. FixMyStreet (Pages 47 - 52)

Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, and Sean Rooney, Head of Highway Maintenance and Road Safety, have been invited to present a report on FixMyStreet.

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. Committee Action and Recommendation Tracker (Pages 53 - 62)

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

10. Committee Forward Work Plan (Pages 63 - 66)

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.

The Council's Forward Plan can be found here: Browse plans - Cabinet, 2025 | Oxfordshire County Council

11. Responses to Scrutiny Recommendations (Pages 67 - 80)

Attached are the Cabinet responses to the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee reports on the Oxfordshire Strategic Plan, Hire Bike and Scooters, and Our People and Culture. The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the responses.

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.

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Friday, 12 September 2025 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.43 pm.

Present:

Voting Members:	Councillor Glynis Phillips - in the Chair
	Councillor Ron Batstone
	Councillor Will Boucher-Giles
	Councillor James Fry
	Councillor Tom Greenaway
	Councillor Robin Jones
	Councillor Kieron Mallon
	Councillor Roz Smith
Other Members in Attendance:	Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation
	Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Officers:	Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services
	Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance
	Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways
	Phil Whitfield, Head of Network Management
	Susannah Wintersgill, Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships
	Carole Stow, Engagement and Consultation Manager
	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.

31/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS
(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr Middleton (substitute: Cllr Jones), Cllr Ley (substitute: Cllr Batstone), and Cllr Baines (substitute: Cllr Fry).

Cllr Shiri attended the meeting online as a guest of the Chair.

Apologies were also received from Cllr Leffman, the Leader of the Council, Cllr Fawcett, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, and Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer.

32/25 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS
(Agenda No. 2)

There were none.

33/25 MINUTES
(Agenda No. 3)

The Committee **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2025 as a true and accurate record.

34/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS
(Agenda No. 4)

There were none.

The Committee **AGREED** to change the order of the agenda to accommodate speaker timings: Business Management and Monitoring Report, Visitor Parking Permits, and Oxfordshire Strategic Plan.

35/25 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT - WITH A FOCUS ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES
(Agenda No. 6)

Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, and Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer, were invited to present the Business Management Monitoring Report – with a focus on Children's Services, Education and Families.

The Head of Corporate Finance presented the Business Management and Monitoring Report (BMMR), noting a near break-even position for children's services but a significant overspend on the high needs Dedicated Schools Grant, threatening the Council's financial resilience. The Director of Children's Services reported that, despite rising demand, and statutory requirements, the service had reduced overspends, invested in early help and youth support, and was preparing to expand further to address legislative changes and increased needs, especially in special educational needs and disabilities.

The Committee raised the following concerns and questions about the BMMR:

- Concerning the significant increase in Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), whether there was a correlation between low family income and the likelihood of children needing extra educational support, how Oxfordshire compared nationally regarding EHCP rates, and if the local rate of increase matched national trends. The Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services explained that Oxfordshire had seen a 32% rise in EHCPs, with a high acceptance rate for assessments. They noted some correlation between poverty and increased contact with statutory services, but did not confirm a direct causal link.

The Cabinet Member, and Director, for Children's Services also stated that Oxfordshire's EHCP numbers had continued to rise while some other areas had plateaued, and that further research was ongoing in partnership with the Department for Education to better understand the drivers behind these trends.

- Whether any Oxfordshire schools contained reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) as part of their buildings and enquired about the ongoing costs of providing education for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), specifically what was being done to bring more students back into county provision. In response, The Director of Children's Services confirmed that, to the best of her knowledge, no Oxfordshire schools had RAAC, citing comprehensive surveys. She also outlined several projects aimed at increasing local SEND provision, including new special school places, enhanced support for mainstream schools, and pilots to help children remain in their communities rather than being educated out of county.

- About the Council's plans for allocating new government funding for Best Start provision and whether additional funding would be made available for in-house youth services. The Director of Children's Services responded that targeted youth provision funding remained ring-fenced, and Oxfordshire had been selected as one of twelve pilot authorities for a youth transformation project, which aimed to develop sustainable youth activities, particularly in rural and isolated communities.

  The Director of Children's Services clarified that the pilot funding could range from £250,000 to £750,000 and would focus on organising and coordinating youth provision rather than capital projects. She also stated that Best Start funding would support services for children and adolescents, with provision extending up to age 25 where needed. The Cabinet Member for Children's Services added that the pilot aligned with the Council's strategic plan to expand youth provision.

Cllr Gaul left the meeting at this stage.

- Concerns about the existence of "youth deserts" in urban areas of the county, specifically where there were no central youth clubs despite the presence of community buildings managed by charities, and whether Council officers could support charities lacking youth work expertise. The Director of Children's Services confirmed that the Council aimed to address such gaps through its Youth Strategy, and that part of the pilot project included rebuilding youth work expertise and infrastructure. She stated that supporting training and workforce development for youth work was a priority, so officers would be able to help charities and community groups establish youth activities in available buildings.

  A comment was made suggesting that the Council should work in partnership with existing youth organisations such as scouts, guides, and cadet forces, rather than trying to provide all youth services directly. It was proposed that the Council could support these groups through grant funding and by giving them access to Council properties on a rental or leasehold basis, instead of duplicating provision.

- Regarding the number of children and young people in substance misuse treatment and the failure to meet targets, with concerns expressed that the explanation cited that a new provider starting in April 2023. The Director of Children's Services noted that the contract was managed by public health and that engagement was often low because services were delivered in a clinical setting, which could deter young people, and that most need was for prevention rather than clinical intervention. She added that efforts were underway to make support more informal and accessible, and she would provide additional information to the committee about progress and outreach.

  The Director of Children's Services also explained that Turning Point, which provided adult services, used a non-medical model that was successful, and explained that under the family safeguarding model, Turning Point practitioners were embedded alongside social workers. She indicated that this model worked well for adults and was being used to support children's services.

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

- Specifically to include within the brief of the forthcoming BMMR item with a focus on Public Health that issues around the underperformance and data issues related to substance misuse treatment for children and young people, specifically the lack of early intervention data and the appropriateness of the current provider be included.

The Committee **AGREED** recommendations under the following headings:

- It was suggested that Cabinet should consider the need for more equitable distribution of voluntary sector youth services, ensuring funding is allocated based on need rather than just supporting existing services.

36/25   PARKING PERMITS
(Agenda No. 7)

Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, and Phil Whitfield, Head of Network Management, were invited to present an oral update on Parking Permits.

The Director of Environment and Highways provided an overview of Oxfordshire's digital parking permits, stating that visitor permits have been in use since December 2024 under a contract with Unity5, which may be extended beyond May 2026. He noted technical issues such as system errors and slow performance, highlighting that these involved several components, for which the Council owned some responsibility, and not just Unity5. The Council was working with Unity5 to resolve these issues. The Head of Network Management added that the Council was prioritising solutions and ongoing improvements.

The Committee raised the following questions and concerns about the Parking Permit update:

- How could the parking permit system could be made simpler, given concerns about the complexity. The Director of Environment and Highways responded that the complexity related to how permits were issued, particularly the number of permits per batch and the complexity of the underlying scheme. He stated that this was a recent realisation and suggested that reviewing the scheme itself, not just the IT system, might help simplify the process.

  The Head of Network Management commented that the system's complexity was partly due to its adaptability to residents' needs, which presented administrative challenges.

- The Committee discussed whether the parking permit system's challenges impacted other market towns in addition to Oxford and the options available for individuals unable to use the online system. The Director of Environment and Highways explained that the same system operated countywide, suggesting that similar issues may occur elsewhere; however, Oxford had more schemes and therefore received additional attention. He clarified that non-digital alternatives are available, including phone support and assistance at libraries.

- Whether the number of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) led to efficiency or complexity, and about issues with residents being unable to check if a parked car's permit was valid for a specific CPZ. It was noted that the number of CPZs might have created complexity and inefficiency and officers recognised the difficulties residents faced when trying to verify permits online, especially since the system did not specify if a permit was valid for a specific CPZ. The Director of Environment and Highways acknowledged these concerns, explaining that the variety of permits was intended to address unique local situations, but this flexibility had resulted in a more complex system. He suggested that while simplification was possible, it would need to be balanced against the need for local flexibility.

- Members were concerned by the difficulties carers faced in obtaining permits, the issue of workers' vans using two-hour parking spots by moving within the same zone, and the notice period required for not extending the parking permit system contract. It was highlighted that carers often struggled with the process, especially when different carers visited, and noted that workers on building projects tended to rotate their vans within the same parking zone, which did not deter long-term parking.

  The Director of Environment and Highways acknowledged the challenges for carers and workers, stating that the process could be difficult for those with changing needs. He mentioned that lessons from the current system would inform future schemes, such as congestion charging, and that these concerns would be taken account of going forward.

  The Head of Network management explained that contractor permits were available and could be purchased for a week, but currently, there was no option for shorter durations. It was acknowledged that this weekly permit system was not flexible for those needing only a few hours, and the cost would likely be passed on to the customer.

- There were concerns about the cost of the parking permit contract and the overall strategy. The Director of Environment and Highways explained that Oxfordshire County Council was contracted with Unity 5 for parking management software, with the contract running until May 2026 and the option to extend for up to two years. It was noted that Unity 5 was a mature provider in the market. The strategy involved reviewing whether to address current system issues with Unity 5 or to consider retendering for a new provider, balancing the need for system improvements with the flexibility required by local schemes.

- How many people had been fined for not having a visitor's permit due to the complexity of the online system, and how many appeals had been made, as a measure of the system meeting the needs of residents. The Head of Network management stated that the Council reviewed appeals on their merits to determine if genuine difficulties with the system were involved, but specific numbers were not available at the meeting.

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

- The Head of Network Management would attempt to collate the parking permits appeals data as part of a forthcoming report.

- To request of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee that it review the protection of two-hour parking spaces, which are important for carers and short visits.

- A full paper with detailed information would be brought back to the committee, likely at the December meeting.

The Committee highlighted the following as potential recommendations following the future paper:

- Improving non-digital access to visitor permits for those not digitally enabled.

- Simplifying the permit system and proposed that the Place Scrutiny Committee examine this in more detail.

The Committee took at break at 11:24 and returned at 11:34.

37/25 OXFORDSHIRE STRATEGIC PLAN
(Agenda No. 5)

Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer, Susannah Wintersgill, Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships, and Carole Stow, Engagement and Consultation Manager, were invited to present a report on The Oxfordshire Strategic Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation introduced the draft strategic plan as a replacement for the previous, more complex version, explaining

that the new plan aimed to simplify objectives, better align council actions with strategic goals, and improve communication with the public. The Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships added that the plan focused on three core themes: Greener, Fairer, and Healthier, with clear headline projects shaped by public feedback. It would be accompanied by an outcomes framework that included the new national measures being developed as part of the Local Government Outcomes Framework.

Councillors discussed a number of concerns they had with the strategy, such as public transport, climate planning, gully maintenance, and community banking. The Committee also discussed and questioned the following areas of the strategic plan:

- Seeking clarification on what a network of mobility hubs entailed and how the mobility hubs would function. The Cabinet Member and Officers explained that mobility hubs were intended as locations where people could switch between different modes of transport, such as hiring a bike, changing buses, taking a train, or using a scooter. The discussion also highlighted the practical need for facilities like shelter and toilets at these hubs, and it was suggested that the Place Scrutiny Committee could examine the current status, planning assumptions, and financial implications of mobility hubs.

- Whether the data on climate change impacts, such as excess deaths, could be updated and broadened to include other indicators like hospitalisations and the effects of heat on school performance. It was suggested that addressing these issues could lead to long-term savings for public services. Additionally, it was pointed out that the Council's approach to flooding focused mainly on drain cleaning and flood wardens, but in some areas, the main issue was rapid water run-off into waterways. It was recommended that the Council's role in managing run-off should be included as part of its flood prevention strategy.

  The Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships also explained that the Council's focus was now on both improving response to flooding and building resilience, as such extreme weather events were becoming more frequent. The importance of working closely with partners and preparing for these recurring challenges was emphasised.

- The committee considered the report of engagement activity which was designed to support the development of the Strategic Plan. Members questioned whether the council had engaged with a sufficiently wide range of residents as part of its engagement on the plan and whether face-to-face engagement could be used alongside online methods. Concerns were also expressed about the representativeness of the data, particularly regarding rural areas, pockets of deprivation outside Oxford, and the inclusion of hard-to-reach groups, and the readability of the resident research report.

  The Engagement and Consultation Manager explained that the research had included nine focus groups covering rural, urban, and more deprived areas (as set out in the report: drawn from the 10 wards in Oxfordshire which include small areas ranked within the 20% most deprived in England), with participants from different demographics and life stages.

- In relation to the Council's net zero target for 2030, specifically noting that the council's emissions had been reduced by a third since 2008 and querying whether it was realistic to cut the remaining two-thirds in just five years. The Committee sought assurance and quantitative data on how this target would be achieved. The Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships provided reassurance that significant work was underway, including a programme of decarbonising council buildings and fleet. It was noted that the fleet, responsible for over a third of emissions, was being switched to electric vehicles.

- How the Council matched its decisions to its strategic plan and how this information was presented to residents, noting that it was often difficult to find clear links between actions, spending, and progress towards targets. The Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships acknowledged this issue and stated that work was underway to improve accessibility, including developing a citizens' portal or dashboard to make data and progress more transparent and easier to understand. It was also mentioned that the outcomes framework would play a key role in this, and that councillors could be involved as a focus group to test these new tools.

- Councillors raised the poor condition of footways, with concerns that new cycleways were being built while existing pedestrian paths remained in disrepair, making them unsafe or inaccessible for wheelchair users, the elderly, and parents with prams. It was highlighted that this issue affected both rural and urban areas, and that lack of funding had historically limited upgrades.

- Members raised several detailed questions relating to the content in the strategic plan. They asked for a clear explanation of the process for reporting and rectifying poor highway works, including utility repairs, and sought information on the economics of different pothole repair strategies. They questioned how the Council was addressing declining primary school numbers and the impact of congestion charges and traffic filters on school staff. Members also asked about the balance between housing targets and protecting green spaces, the absence of references to improving diets, access to sports facilities in the health section, the lack of a reference to campaigns aimed at encouraging children to take regular exercise such as the "mile a day", the lack of mention of "Best Start in Life" as a successor to Sure Start, and the need to prioritise local renewable energy infrastructure.

  In response, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that Members' points were valuable, and that these issues should be considered for inclusion in the final strategy document.

  The Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships responded by explaining that the strategic plan was not intended to be a comprehensive record of all Council activities, but rather to highlight a selection of key priorities and provide a flavour of broader work. She emphasised that there was a significant amount of work happening behind the scenes on issues such as child obesity and the green agenda, but the plan was a snapshot rather than an exhaustive list.

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

- The Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships would seek further quantitative data from the climate team to provide assurances on how the council's net zero targets would be met.

- The Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships would request more recent data on excess deaths related to climate change, such as heat and flooding.

- An all-councillor briefing on resident feedback from the focus groups alongside the annual residents' survey results.

The Committee **AGREED** to recommendations under the following headings:

- To consider improving access to community banking and post office services as part of the strategic plan.

- The Council was advised to better explain the link between its green agenda and local resident concerns, using clearer language and relatable examples.

- The deliverability of the Council's net zero ambitions was to be examined with qualitative data.

- Members to be engaged in the development of the Citizens portal for better accessibility and transparency.

- There was a recommendation to increase focus on improving footways to facilitate walking.

- Expanding access to bus services was suggested as a priority.

- It was requested that more resident feedback be included in future reports, including richer qualitative data.

- Improved accessibility in terms of terminology and the presentation of feedback from residents.

- Not only to focus on the Council's deficits, but also their successes to date.

- Clarifying how the Council wishes to balance its competing desires to protect green spaces whilst also providing housing

- Raising the profile of Best Start as a successor to Sure Start within the plan

- Improving access to renewable energy infrastructure

The Committee also **AGREED** to make observations in relation to issues arising from the draft strategic plan around:

- Addressing highways issues: specifically poor repairs following utility works and the cost-benefit analysis of different approaches to types of repair.

- Plans to manage the reductions in demand for school places

- Concerns over the impact of the congestion charge on schools within the charging zone

- The fundamental importance of improving diet and exercise, particularly for young people, if a healthier Oxfordshire is to be delivered

38/25 COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN
(Agenda No. 8)

The Committee discussed future agenda items for their work programme. They agreed to review the performance of Fix My Street, focusing on usage, feedback, accuracy, timeliness, and the recent "cleansing" of old reports, which had caused concern among residents. They also decided to examine the use of AI in customer services, including resident awareness, effectiveness, and impact on response times. Councillor Mallon suggested that local government reorganisation should be a standing item, given its significant implications for council operations and finances. It was noted that local government reorganisation was already scheduled for discussion at the Place Scrutiny Committee, and officers would coordinate to avoid duplication. The Committee confirmed that public health and parking permits would return as agenda items for the December meeting.

The Committee **AGREED** to the proposed work programme with the addition of BMMR (Public Health), Parking Permits, Fix My Street, AI, and, potentially, LGR – subject to scoping a report which would not conflict with those going to Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

.... in the Chair

Date of signing   ....

PERFORMANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 DECEMBER 2025

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING REPORT & CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT

(FOCUS ON PUBLIC HEALTH)

Report by Executive Director Resources and Section 151 Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to**

    -   consider the report and raise any questions, and to **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet.

Executive Summary

2. The Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a constitutional responsibility to scrutinise 'corporate performance and directorate performance and financial reporting.'

3. The Cabinet is informed of the Council's performance via the Business Management and Monitoring Report (BMMR). The BMMR is in two section Finance in October and Performance in November. To aid the ability to scrutinise, the Committee has agreed to focus on Public Health in December. The next meeting will focus on Economy and Place.

4. To reflect this focus an abridged version of the BMMR is provided as Annex 1 (Finance) and Annex 2 (Performance).

Background

5. The paper reports on the Council's performance in terms of finance, delivery and risk, including detail at a service level. To support a focus on Public Health, there are only excerpts relating to the service included here. In that respect, the report is the same as that considered by Cabinet on 17 June 2025 with updates on the Finance position for 2025/26 consistent with the report to Cabinet in 21 October 2025, and Performance BMMR report on 18 November 2025.

Financial Position

6.   Public Health Service Area forecasting a balanced position.

7.   Further information about the council expenditure on the 2025/26 position as at the end of August 2025 is included in Annex 1.

8.   The Service Area was holding £14.6m of reserves on 1 April 2025. As part of the revenue forecast the service area is intending to drawdown £6.4m. The forecast reserves position for 31 March 2026 is £8.2m. Annex 1 outlines the reserves and purpose.

Performance

9.   Committee members should be aware that they are being provided with the scorecard of the Council's performance in relating to annual measures and specific measures directly relating to Public Health in Annex 2.

10.   Table below shows the measures that have a year to date (YTD) performance of Red or Amber.

KPI Name	Period RAG rating	YTD RAG rating
OCC03.06 % of births that have received a face-to-face New Birth Visit, by the age of 12 months old	Amber	Amber

Corporate Policies and Priorities

11.   Overall corporate performance supports all the Council's policies and strategic priorities. Whilst the work of Public Health has cross-cutting input into all the Council's strategic priorities also, its work primarily furthers the Council's ambitions to "Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire", and "Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents".

Financial Implications

12.   There are no additional financial implications beyond those outlined within the appendices to this report.

Comments checked by:

Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance
kathy.wilcox@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

13.   The Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a specific responsibility within its terms of reference, under Part 6.1A of the

Constitution 5 (1) (a) to scrutinise 'corporate performance and directorate performance and financial reporting'.

14.   There are no additional legal implications beyond those outlined within the appendices to this report.

Comments checked by:

Kim Sawyer, Interim Head of Legal and Governance:
kim.sawyer@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Lorna Baxter
Executive Director Resources and Section 151 Officer

Annex:	Annex 1: Finance – October 2025
	Annex 2: Performance section – November 2025

Background papers:	None
Other Documents:	None
Contact Officer:	Verity Royle Financial Planning and Reporting Manager verity.royle@oxfordshire.gov.uk

November 2025

Annex 1 Abridged Business Management and Monitoring Report – Finance – October 2025

Service Area forecast

Service	Cabinet Member	Director	Net Budget	Forecast	Forecast Variance	Last Reported (period 2)	Change
Public Health	K Gregory	A Azhar	£42.0m	£42.0m	£0.0m	£0.0m	£0.0m
Public Health Grant Income & Reserves	K Gregory	A Azhar	-£36.9m	-£36.9m	£0.0m	£0.0m	£0.0m
Total Public Health & Communities			£13.6m	£13.6m	£0.0m	£0.0m	£0.0m

Confirmed Government Grants

Ringfenced	Issued By	Service Areas	Budget Book 2025/26 £000	Updates from Grant letters £000	Transfers (unring to ring) £000	In year adjustments / Updated allocations £000	Latest Allocation £000
R	DHSC	Public Health Grant	34,413	2,536		149	37,098
R	DHSC	Local Stop Smoking Grant	795	0			795
R	MHCLG	Homes for Ukraine	0	0			0
TOTAL PUBLIC HEALTH & COMMUNITIES			**35,208**	**2,536**	**0**	**149**	**37,893**

Reserves

Reserves	Balance at 31 March 2025	Movement	Balance at 31 March 2026
Revenue Grants Unapplied			
Homes for Ukraine	£8.6m	-£3.5m	£5.1m
Public Health Grant	£4.6m	-£2.7m	£1.9m
Grants and Contributions reserve	£13.2m	-£6.2m	£7.0m
Domestic Abuse Grant	£1.1m	£0.0m	£1.1m
Stop Smoking grant	£0.1m	-£0.1m	£0.0m
Government Initiatives reserve	£1.2m	-£0.1m	£1.1m
Subtotal	**£14.4m**	**-£6.3m**	**£8.1m**
by Service Area:			
Public Health & Homes for Ukraine	£14.4m	-£6.3m	£8.1m

Public Health 25/26

Oxfordshire County Council

Applied Filters
Date Select: From 01 Apr 2025 To 30 Sep 2025
Scorecard: Public Health 25/26

riskonnect.

Print Date: 13-Nov-2025

SCORECARD: Public Health 25/26

FROM 01-APR-2025 **TO** 30-SEP-2025

Linked Items	Unit	Trend	Period Performance			YTD Performance		
			Target	Actual	Indicator	Target	Actual	Indicator
OCC02.02 Number of times refuge bedspaces have been occupied	#		39.00	36.00	AMBER	39.00	36.00	AMBER

Comments : Annual reporting pattern. Reporting period April 2024 - March 2025, data is provided 3 months in arrears.
In total, 36 adults and children have moved into refuge. This doesn't include those who declined a space. The service is facing challenges, especially with housing larger families due to space constraints and the lack of suitable long-term accommodation in Oxfordshire, which has led to some residents staying beyond their six-month limit and facing eviction.
We're working to resolve these issues. Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service is raising them through the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy and its working group to find better solutions and support.

Linked Items	Unit	Trend	Target	Actual	Indicator	Target	Actual	Indicator
OCC02.04 Female Inequality in life expectancy at Birth	#		4.40	4.80	AMBER	4.40	4.80	AMBER

Comments : Annual reporting pattern. Reporting Period 2021-2023
Oxfordshire Inequality in life expectancy at birth for females has increase by 0.2 from the previous year (4.6) and remains higher than levels reported before the pandemic (2018-20 - 4.0).

A total of 14 Community Insight Profiles have now been completed. The final profile for Bicester West is due to be published online by the end of June 2025. All reports are available on the Oxfordshire data hub along with a link to access to the new Interactive Community Insight Profile (iCIP) Dashboard. Grant funding rounds for the initial 10 priority areas and Berinsfield are now complete with grant schemes for Witney Central area, Wood Farm and Bicester West currently in the planning stages. Community Health Development Officers (CHDOs) are in place to cover 13 of the 14 profile areas, and contracts for the CHDOs in the initial 10 priority areas are being extended following an evaluation of their roles.

Analysis:
This is an annual KPI relating to 2021/23 financial years, with a three-month reporting lag. This KPI looks at the average number of additional years a female baby born in the least deprived 20% of areas can expect to live compared to one born in the most deprived 20% has exceeded its target

The target is set at 4.40, while the performance 4.80. This indicates a wider gap in life expectancy than anticipated, suggesting that life expectancy inequality between the most and least deprived areas have increased beyond the target. While performance indicates an increase, it highlights the need for continued efforts to reduce disparities in health outcomes across the county.

Although inequality increased during the 2021–2023 period, the number of community profiles produced rose by one compared to the 2020–2022 period. The final profile for Bicester West was scheduled to be published online by the end of June 2025.

Measure	Unit						
OCC02.05 Male Inequality in life expectancy at Birth	#	5.80	5.40	GREEN	5.80	5.40	GREEN

Comments : Period (2021-23)

Oxfordshire Inequality in life expectancy at birth for males has increase by 0.2 from the previous year (4.6) and remains higher than levels reported before the pandemic (2018-20 - 4.0).

A total of 14 Community Insight Profiles have now been completed. The final profile for Bicester West is due to be published online by the end of June 2025. All reports are available on the Oxfordshire data hub along with a link to access to the new Interactive Community Insight Profile (iCIP) Dashboard. Grant funding rounds for the initial 10 priority areas and Berinsfield are now complete with grant schemes for Witney Central area, Wood Farm and Bicester West currently in the planning stages. Community Health Development Officers (CHDOs) are in place to cover 13 of the 14 profile areas, and contracts for the CHDOs in the initial 10 priority areas are being extended following an evaluation of their roles.

| OCC02.06 Number of completed profiles for local communities with the greatest health inequalities | # | 14.00 | 14.00 | GREEN | 14.00 | 14.00 | GREEN |

Comments : A total of 14 Community Insight Profiles have now been completed. The final profile for Bicester West is due to be published online by the end of June 2025. All reports are available on the Oxfordshire data hub along with a link to access to the new Interactive Community Insight Profile (iCIP) Dashboard.

| OCC03.01 Proportion of opiate users in treatment who are making substantial progress to being drug-free or have sustained reduction in drug use | % | 48.00 | 0.00 | RED | 48.00 | 0.00 | RED |

Comments : Period 24-Q4

This performance is above the national average of 46%, and is achieved through the provision of extensive community-based engagement, strong partnership and multi-agency working and high-quality community treatment that is flexible, holistic and person-centred, and supports people to reduce their drug use. This measure demonstrates a focus on quality treatment, which is in line with the local and national drug strategy, and is achieved alongside a focus on increasing the number of opiate users in treatment.

| OCC03.02 % of the eligible population aged 40-74 who have been offered NHS Health Check | % | 18.00 | 18.54 | GREEN | 18.00 | 18.54 | GREEN |

Comments : Period 2024/25
The annual achievement of 18.54% is within a threshold that meets the annual targets set for Primary Care for this measure (18% - 22%).

OCC03.04 Reduce the % of women smoking in pregnancy to contribute towards Oxfordshire smokefree strategy.	%	6.00	4.60	GREEN	6.00	4.60	GREEN

Comments : Smoking cessation is now embedded in maternity services at OUH with direct support in place, alongside a new national incentive scheme. This is supported by vape provision to eligible household members.

OCC03.05 Of those residents invited for a NHS Health check, the % who accept and complete the offer	%	42.90	44.24	GREEN	42.90	44.24	GREEN

Comments : Period 2024/25

2024/25 saw an increase in the number of NHS Health Check invitations sent compared to the previous year. Of these invitations sent 44.24% of residents chose to take up the offer of an NHS Health Check either in the community or Primary Care.

OCC03.06 % of births that have received a face-to-face New Birth Visit, by the age of 12 months old	%	87.00	83.90	AMBER	87.00	83.90	AMBER

Comments : This universal review is offered to all children as they approach their first birthday. In the quarter the service completed 1,568 reviews. Due to family commitments and parents working, families may choose to have their review after the child's first birthday up until 15 months. If a family declines or does not attend an appointment the service follows them up to offer another review and this may then be outside of the 12-month timescale. In this quarter 1586 babies or 89.5% have received a review by 15 months.

OCC03.12 Numbers in treatment: Alcohol only during the financial year	#	794.00	1,002.00	GREEN	794.00	1,002.00	GREEN

Comments : Period 2024/25
In line with national strategic aims, extensive partnership work and outreach with those with health inequalities has supported the partnership to continue to increase the number of people in treatment over the last year, and rates of increase are above the England average. This demonstrates the impact of additional investment from central government linked to the national strategy.

OCC07.12 Percentage of 2 to 2½ year reviews using Age and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3 third edition of the developmental screening tool)	%	87.00	98.00	GREEN	87.00	98.00	GREEN

Comments : This indicator is well above target. The Health Visiting workforce completed 1,535 reviews in this quarter to check the development of children. If children are not at the expected level the family are offered advice and support and referred on to specialist health services where needed. This supports children to be ready to learn and thrive when they start at school.

Divisions Affected - ALL

PERFORMANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
05 DECEMBER 2025

Report by Martin Reeves, Chief Executive,
Oxfordshire County Council

Recommendation

1.   **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to**

i)   NOTE the draft Cabinet report, and
ii)   AGREE any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet

Executive Summary

2.   This report seeks the Scrutiny Committee's views on whether Cabinet should approve the decision that Oxfordshire submit an **Expression of Interest (EOI)** to Government for a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA), attached as Annex B. This item is scheduled to be reviewed at Full Council and Cabinet on 09 December 2025.

3.   The EOI is an early-stage invitation to Government to engage in discussions. It is different to our Local Government Reorganisation proposal which is a final proposal. The EOI will initiate discussion which will lead to Government to decide, firstly, whether it will accept us onto the devolution priority programme and if so initiate work to define the proposal which will lead to engagement and decisions by this Council at a later stage. At this stage, no final decisions are being made; instead, the Council is seeking to understand Government's requirements and expectations, with a commitment to make informed decisions once these are clarified through ongoing dialogue.

Key Points for Cabinet Decision

4.   The Cabinet report attached as Annex A identifies that Cabinet are asked to:

*   **Confirm commitment to devolution** as a strategic approach for Oxfordshire.
*   **Agree that a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) offers potential benefits** for the region, including stronger regional collaboration and access to additional powers and funding.

- **Support further engagement with Government** to explore what an MCA could achieve for Oxfordshire and the wider region.

5. The EOI represents a **joint proposal agreed by leaders across Oxfordshire and the wider region**. It reflects a shared ambition for greater local control and improved outcomes for residents.

6. Devolution could bring **enhanced powers and resources** for local leaders around transport, housing, skills, and economic development. An MSA would provide a **formal governance structure** to deliver these benefits collaboratively.

Next Steps

7. If Government accepts the EOI, detailed negotiations will follow. This will include opportunities for **further scrutiny and engagement** to shape the final deal.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

8. The County Council's Corporate Plan sets out a vision for a "greener, fairer, healthier Oxfordshire," with strategic priorities around climate action, reducing inequality, improving health and wellbeing, and supporting inclusive economic growth.

9. Table 1 below sets out potential contributions and outcomes that could be delivered through the formation of an MSA.

Table 1	
Strategic Priority	**MSA Contribution & Outcomes**
Greener Oxfordshire	Regional climate action, integrated transport, green infrastructure, improved air quality.
Fairer Oxfordshire	Inclusive growth, more affordable housing, better skills and employment support, reduced inequality.
Healthier Oxfordshire	Joined-up health and care, reduced health inequalities, improved wellbeing.

Financial Implications

10. All financial implications are included within Annex A (the Cabinet report).

Comments checked by:

Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance

Legal Implications

11.   All legal implications are included within Annex A (the Cabinet report).

Comments checked by:

Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Anita.Bradley@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Martin Reeves, Chief Executive Officer

Annex A: Report to Cabinet
Annex B: TV Devolution EOI Letter

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CABINET
09 December 2025

DEVOLUTION FOR OXFORDSHIRE

Report by Martin Reeves, Chief Executive,
Oxfordshire County Council

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**

   a) Endorse the benefits from the proposed devolution of powers and functions and agree to continue building on the collaborative approach across the region to date.

   b) Approve the Expression of Interest (EOI), attached as Appendix 1, to be submitted by Oxfordshire County Council as the upper-tier authority to Government, noting that the EOI is designed to proactively position our region for early consideration in the next wave of the Devolution Programme.

   c) Acknowledge the EOI as an initial invitation to Government, opening further dialogue and engagement, and not a decision to establish a Mayoral Strategic Authority.

   d) Agree that a further report will be brought to Cabinet prior to any final decision by Government on the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority.

   e) Note the informal Devolution Board will oversee discussions with Government, ensuring robust governance and stakeholder engagement by elected members throughout this process.

Executive Summary

2. This report seeks approval to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI), attached as Appendix 1, to Government. This is in response to the release of the Government's Devolution white paper and subsequent English devolution and community empowerment bill. It seeks to position our region in the next round of devolution for the purpose of creating a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA). The EOI represents an initial, exploratory step—serving as an invitation to Government to engage in further discussions about the opportunity of establishing an MSA for our region. At this stage, no final decisions are being made; instead, the Council is seeking to understand Government's requirements and expectations, with a commitment to make informed decisions once these are clarified through ongoing dialogue.

3. The primary purpose of pursuing an MSA is to provide the support network for the innovation eco-system that drives economic growth through innovation,

sustainability, and prosperity. Working within a strategic partnership can leverage our region's strengths. By providing collaborative regional governance, this Council can provide a framework to promote inclusive growth for our area for the benefit and wellbeing of our residents.

4. The principle of devolution is well-established, with Government aiming to redistribute political, social and economic power across England. With ambition now focused on universal coverage of Strategic Authorities across England following the English Devolution White Paper and the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, Leaders have been meeting across our region to explore the opportunity for devolution.

5. The Government's vision, as set out in the English Devolution White Paper, is for all parts of England to be part of regional Strategic Authorities led by a regional Mayor. These authorities will drive growth, shape public services, and deliver strategic leadership in areas such as economic growth and sustainability, planning, skills, employment, and transport.

6. This move to devolving power to regions signals a significant step change in how UK economic growth will be delivered. It places significant shift in how local government needs to develop and deliver its economic growth strategies. This will shift relations from central government to local regional strategic partnerships, working with an elected Mayor within a Strategic Authority. It will require council Leaders, supported by their Chief Executives, to form new strategic regional partnerships to drive our ambitions for place based all-inclusive growth.

A Thames Valley MSA For Collective Regional Growth

7. Becoming an MSA represents a significant opportunity for regions in England to drive inclusive growth and prosperity for communities and businesses. With new powers and investment, MSAs can address strategic economic challenges and opportunities, in collaboration with local Leaders, business leaders and investors, with Government and increasingly, with other Strategic Authorities as part of the Council of the Nations and Regions. This is a new and exciting platform in our regional and local government landscape, creating systems based on collaboration and collective action that can work at scale to make connections, drive innovation and support growth.

8. However, failing to pursue this opportunity carries real risks. Areas that do not secure an MSA risk missing out on funding, influence, the ability to set their own strategic direction, and deliver against regional priorities. In an increasingly devolved landscape, inaction could result in diminished competitiveness, slower growth, and reduced leverage in regional and national decision-making around investment.

Regional Economy

9.   The Thames Valley economy is one of the most dynamic and globally connected in the United Kingdom contributing billions in Gross Value Added to the national economy each year. On a per-person basis, it ranks second only to London, a reflection of the area's powerful concentration of high-value industries and skilled workforce.

10.   The Thames Valley Region's prosperity has its roots in knowledge and innovation, driven by digital technology, communications, life sciences, biotech, and health including creative and professional service sectors that have flourished thanks to the regions connectivity and proximity to London and Heathrow Airport. Global companies have long chosen to locate in the region with recognised hubs for technology and business services. This includes fast growing sectors in pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, and digital.

11.   This region's economy has a critical mass of science, learning, talent, intellect and inspiration. The region also has a culture of pushing boundaries, redefining leading edge, pioneering and entrepreneurship. The universities are powerhouses of knowledge and beacons of experimental excellence as indeed are many of the businesses located across the county.

12.   The intellectual capacity of the region and talent emerging from the universities is driving the establishment of spin out businesses and the scale up of growing ones, contributing to an environment that promotes and nurtures commercialisation; a driving force for a new, science and knowledge led industrial revolution.

Regional Risk of Economic Decline

13.   Despite a track record of success, the Thames Valley economy has not been immune to the decline in productivity across the UK in recent years, suffering from underinvestment and increased global competition. In addition, continued prosperity brings challenges, including housing affordability, infrastructure constraints, and uneven growth across localities.

14.   There are considerable challenges for residents and businesses in generating a future proof transport infrastructure that supports the region's economic growth, which is struggling to cope with increased demand. Education and skill need to be developed on a regional collaborative basis to power capacity for economic growth.

15.   This means this region needs to take a lead in ensuring sustainable housing and transport, promoting green technology, repowering the economy, developing the regional connectivity and attracting inward investment. The region could do much more to benefit from the advantages generated through strategic growth planning and collaboration at a much greater scale that can be currently delivered by individual councils.

16.   This places the Thames Valley under threat of seeing economic decline as businesses and inward investment risks diverting to regions that have clear joined up regional Growth Plans and unfragmented governance arrangements, selling the region's benefits to sectors and investors.

17.   Areas that can deliver regional transportation connectivity, housing growth and other business support infrastructure such as skills training and wellbeing are better placed to secure investment.

The Opportunity

18.   There are substantial benefits in seeking devolution of powers. Devolved control over adult education and skills budgets allows authorities to better align training provision with the needs of local industries from digital technology and life sciences to creative industries, helping retain talent and businesses whilst ensuring inclusive access to opportunities.

19.   Devolved powers and responsibility over strategic transport, strategic housing and spatial planning will support growth at a wider regional level enabling authorities to better target investment in deprived or underperforming areas, address housing affordability, promote green infrastructure and ensure growth benefits reach all communities. A regional transport strategy would future proof the region's rail links, while improving access to Heathrow and London. Coordinated investment in rail, bus, and sustainable transport would reduce travel times, improve productivity and support the net zero agenda.

20.   An enhanced ability to attract private investment and innovation partnerships would support the development of the innovation ecosystem in key sectors such as IT to stem the current exodus of UK innovation overseas and help to attract more overseas investment to the region. A science partnership could form a knowledge-intensive growth region with a stronger national and international identity capable of competing with major European economic clusters.

21.   As a key driver of the UK economy, an MSA has the potential to scale up rapidly and deliver significant regional and national economic growth. Establishing an MSA will function as catalyst for growth to target funding and skills programmes where they are needed most, helping to reverse productivity decline and remove barriers to economic development.

22.   Stronger coordination through an agreed MSA regional growth plan, influenced and led by local authorities, will stimulate a larger, integrated economy that can carry more weight in negotiations with Government, securing devolved funding and national infrastructure investment. It would also present a more compelling 'investment ready' proposition to global investors seeking a region that combines cutting-edge research with commercial capability.

Expression of Interest Thames Valley Vision

23.   To unlock the opportunity for an MSA, it is proposed to submit and EOI to Government. The EOI emphasises the region's strengths in innovation and

productivity and its readiness to enter discussions for an MSA. Devolution will drive inclusive growth and unlock significant opportunities for local communities and the UK more broadly.

24.   The Thames Valley EOI highlights:

- **Economic rationale**: The region has national excellence and/or international excellence in at least 5 of the 8 key business sectors highlighted in the Modern Industrial Strategy. The Strategic Authority would provide the framework that allows businesses to leverage those sectors across a wider geography and create jobs. Our intent is to restore growth to pre-Covid levels of prosperity.
- **Collaborative governance**: There is a commitment to partnership working across constituent councils, with clear terms of reference and for the EOI to mark the start of wider stakeholder engagement across the region.
- **Strategic powers and funding**: Powers over transport, skills, housing, and economic development and the ability to provide these within a business eco-system will lead to greater investment.
- **Place-based leadership**: Greater local control to deliver national policy objectives at local level has been shown to be successful in other established Strategic Authority areas. Adapting powers and functions to meet local needs strengthens local identity, accountability, and the ability to deliver tailored solutions for residents.

25.   The EOI is the first stage towards devolution. Whilst it does not bind any Council to an MSA at this stage, it does indicate our readiness to engage further.

26.   Oversight of the proposals will be through a Devolution Board made up of elected representatives from each participating Council.

Next Steps

27.   The following show our key areas of focus in next phase: -

- **Submission of the EOI** (subject to approval) to Government by 19 December 2025, followed by further engagement and refinement based on feedback from Leaders, Chief Executives, and stakeholders.
- **Ongoing governance and oversight** via the Devolution Board, with regular updates to Cabinet and public consultation as the process evolves.
- **Build the proposal** through regular engagement, agreeing our geography and the size and scale of the MSA based upon criteria set out in the Devolution White Paper as follows:
-
    - o   Scale: Strategic Authorities should be of comparable size to existing institutions. The default assumption is for them to have a combined population of 1.5 million or above.

- Economies: Strategic Authorities must cover sensible economic geographies with a particular focus on functional economic areas, reflecting current and potential travel-to-work patterns and local labour markets. It is likely that where travel to work areas are small and fragmented, Strategic Authorities will cover multiple travel to work areas.
- Contiguity: Any proposed geography must be contiguous across its constituent councils (either now or with a clear plan to ensure continuity in the future through agreed local government reorganisation).
- No 'devolution islands': Geographies must not create devolution 'islands' by leaving areas which are too small to go it alone or which do not have natural partners.
- Delivery: Geographies should ensure the effective delivery of key functions including Spatial Development Strategies, Local Transport Plans and Get Britain Working Plans.
- Alignment: The government will seek to promote alignment between devolution boundaries and other public sector boundaries.
- Identity: A vital element of successful devolution is the ability for residents to engage with and hold their devolved institutions to account – and local identity plays a key role in this.
- **Stakeholder engagement** with residents, businesses and public sector partners to explore devolution for our region.
- **Finalise proposal** with further decisions made at key points by Cabinet supported by Scrutiny.

Analysis and consideration of alternative options

28.   The White Paper is clear that the Government intends that all of England be devolved by default and is committed to ending the deals-based approach. The Government will also legislate for a ministerial directive, which will enable it to directly create Strategic Authorities in any places where local leaders in that region have not been able to agree how to access devolved powers. Therefore the "do nothing" option could mean Government legislating on our behalf for devolution.

29.   Opting to begin further discussions with Government on devolution would allow the Council to lead the definition of the MSA for our region. This will provide choice over the geography and the ability to determine the key priorities for our area.

30.   Should this Council consent to an MSA at a future meeting, it would have a seat at the Council of Nations and the Regions influencing government policy and ensuring local community voice is heard.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

31. The County Council's Corporate Plan sets out a vision for a "greener, fairer, healthier Oxfordshire," with strategic priorities around climate action, reducing inequality, improving health and wellbeing, and supporting inclusive economic growth.

32. Table 1 below sets out potential contributions and outcomes that could be delivered through the formation of an MSA.

Table 1	
Strategic Priority	**MSA Contribution & Outcomes**
Greener Oxfordshire	Regional climate action, integrated transport, green infrastructure, improved air quality.
Fairer Oxfordshire	Inclusive growth, more affordable housing, better skills and employment support, reduced inequality.
Healthier Oxfordshire	Joined-up health and care, reduced health inequalities, improved wellbeing.

Financial Implications

33. Oxfordshire County Council has already committed £10 million from earmarked reserves, which can be used towards the cost of local government reform and devolution (£1.2 million of which will be used for devolution). To date the costs of devolution have been limited to the costs of the Programme Director role and consultants advising on the economic analysis. These costs are shared amongst the Councils participating in discussions on devolution.

34. There are no direct financial implications arising from the submission of the EOI. As discussions with Government proceed the opportunity will arise to explore how growth in our economy could create significant social and economic uplift for our area and indeed, for the whole country. The Thames Valley is a positive contributor to HM Treasury.

35. Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation offer an opportunity to reset local government finances. In this context, the EOI submission seeks discussions with Government on developing innovative fiscal solutions to support investment into the Thames Valley Region. This reference to investment funding will also look to develop a more self-sufficient strategic authority that is not reliant on revenue gainshare and seeks inward investment through the private sector and funding institutions, as part of any regional investment strategy.

    Comments checked by:
    Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance, Kathy.Wilcox@Oxforshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

36. The submission of an EOI to open discussions with Government on devolution is an executive decision of Oxfordshire County Council as the upper-tier

authority. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (The Act), Section 45 allows for areas to collaborate to create new strategic authorities. The Act, Section 46 requires constituent councils to consent to devolution, which is defined in the Act, Section 10(11) as including only upper-tier councils. This Council has participated in all discussions regarding devolution for Oxfordshire and the wider region.

37.   The English Devolution and Communities Empowerment Bill is currently under consideration by Parliament. It sets out seven competencies for MSAs: transport & local infrastructure; skills and employment support; housing and strategic planning; economic development and regeneration; environment and climate change; health, wellbeing and public sector reform and public safety. The Bill is not yet an Act of Parliament and therefore further detail on these competencies will be set out in Regulations made under the Act.

38.   The Cabinet has the authority to formulate the council's overall policy objectives and priorities, which permits it to make this decision.

39.   The English Devolution White Paper sets out the Government's intention that where the geographies of new Mayoral Strategic Authorities align with Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Authorities, Mayors will, by default, be responsible for those services. Where those boundaries do not currently align Government has said that it will look to align public sector boundaries to strategic authority boundaries.

40.   Through the English Devolution and Communities Empowerment Bill, the Government will introduce a new bespoke duty for Strategic Authorities in relation to health improvement and health inequalities. Strategic Authorities will support partners in driving public service reform and the new devolution framework will set clearer expectations for Mayors' roles in local health systems and in improving population health.

Comments checked by:

Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Anita.Bradley@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

41.   There are no immediate implications arising from submitting the EOI. Should the Cabinet make a later decision to proceed with devolution the staffing implications will be considered in full at that time.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

42.   There are no immediate equalities implications arising from this report. However, the purpose of forming an MSA is to bring an all-inclusive growth strategy to the Thames Valley Region. A strategy that ensures no one is left behind in the ambition to bring economic growth.

43. The expected benefits of devolution are to drive growth, enabling local leaders place more focus on inequality and living standards. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be developed against the different elements of devolution, as proposals progress.

Sustainability Implications

44. There are no immediate sustainability implications arising from these decisions. Government has indicated it will give strategic authorities a meaningful role in planning for our future energy system, establishing heat network zoning in England and leading on local nature recovery. The detail of these various policies are to follow as the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill proceeds through Parliament.

Risk Management

45. Risks are considered in the report.

Consultations

46. The EOI was developed collaboratively, with input from local authority Leaders and Chief Executives.

47. The EOI is a strategic step to initiate formal discussions with Government, with public and stakeholder engagement planned should the Government accept the Council onto the devolution programme.

48. Devolution is a collaborative process which will require continuous engagement and collaboration between local authorities and with residents, public sector institutions including the NHS, Police and Fire Authorities, businesses, and further and high education providers and other key local organisations and businesses.

49. It is also vital that residents are involved at the earliest opportunity to inform and shape the process. It will not be possible to carry out resident engagement prior to submitting an EOI but it is expected that resident engagement would begin after Government agrees to further discussions.

Appendix 1:   Expression of Interest (EOI)

Background papers: English Devolution White Paper
                            English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

Contact Officer: Martin Reeves Chief Executive Officer
                            Kim Sawyer Programme Director Devolution

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Dear Secretary of State,

We, the leaders of the local authorities in the Thames Valley, are writing to you in your capacity as Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding our desire for devolution and our inclusion on a future Devolution Programme.

We have carefully considered our rationale and case for devolution to this region and see a significant opportunity to drive growth and prosperity as a Mayoral Strategic Authority. Our £97 billion economy is already a core contributor to the national economy and will continue to add economic value through our highly productive and innovative businesses, constituting the sectors prioritised in the Modern Industrial Strategy and a large part of the Ox-Cam Corridor, a key national growth proposition. However, the region's post-pandemic recovery has been slower than the national trajectory, and our globally recognised clusters face increasingly strong competition. We will use the powers, investment and platform as an MSA to unlock constraints on growth, with the potential for the Thames Valley economy to be up to £18.7 billion a year larger by 2040, which corresponds to a £7 billion annual uplift in tax revenue contributions to the exchequer.

We have come together as strong local Leaders to pursue the significant opportunities of devolution for our communities. Whilst we acknowledge and respect our differing political and local priorities, together we recognise and collectively support the core economic rationale and strategic intention for delivering inclusive growth within a Thames Valley MSA. We stand ready with the strength of relationships, trust, track record, collective governance and ways of working required to work with Government and implement a successful MSA. We would like to work towards a first mayoral election in May 2027, in line with the current timeline for local government reorganisation.

Importance of the Thames Valley for the UK Economy

The Thames Valley serves as an innovation-driven and export-focused catalyst for UK economic growth, accounting for approximately 5% of England's total economy while comprising just 3.4% of its population. Our economy comprises world-renowned universities, respected research centres, and leading science parks filled with forward-thinking companies, driving innovation ecosystems that spur new ideas and growth across UK supply chains. Oxford University is a jewel in the UK's global research offer, and our partnerships with Reading University creates value for residents, businesses, and investors through key assets such as the Thames Valley Science Park, which hosts research facilities and archives for the Natural History Museum, British Museum and Kew Gardens. Our region is a globally compelling investment case, with major global companies such as Microsoft, Oracle, Redwood Technologies, Virgin, Vodafone, and Hewlett-Packard located in the UK's Silicon Valley along the M4 corridor, with direct links to London and Heathrow Airport. From the region that gave the world the Oxford–AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, the Ellison Institute of Technology in Oxford is now investing over £10 billion in research and development to facilitate further globally significant advancements in artificial intelligence, robotics, and life

sciences. Major investment in AI infrastructure has been secured across the region, with the second largest concentration of data centres in the world in Slough and the first AI Growth Zone in Culham. We have high-performance manufacturing capabilities along the M40 corridor, exemplified by Plant Oxford, home to BMW Mini, extending into Banbury and the UK Motorsports Valley into the Midlands. We are home to world-famous tourist attractions, from Windsor to the Cotswolds, Oxford, Blenheim Palace and Bicester Village. We are known world-over as a great place to visit, live, innovate and invest. Our investment proposition is already backed by Government, with continued global promotion of the Oxford-Cambridge corridor, of which we are a core part, investment in East-West Rail, high-profile support through the Oxford Growth Commission and recent investment in the Cowley branch line.

The industrial composition of the Thames Valley directly aligns with almost all the sector strengths outlined in the Industrial Strategy – our economy is anchored by professional and business services, with notable capabilities in digital technologies, life sciences, advanced manufacturing and a prominent finance sector. The strength of the region's visitor economy not only supports our foundational sectors but also positively impacts our creative industries, especially our growing film and television cluster around Shinfield Studios. Proposed visitor economy investments, including the Puy du Fou Bicester, together with significant heritage landmarks would remain substantial contributors to export growth. Importantly, the Thames Valley demonstrates a strong orientation towards export activities: approximately 48% of the workforce is employed in exporting industries, and 40% hold positions within tradable sectors, both figures exceeding national averages. Exceptional productivity and economic complexity facilitate the dissemination of innovation across key sectors and strengthen supply chains nationwide. Furthermore, growth in GVA and household income in the Thames Valley has surpassed national rates, thereby improving local living standards and contributing positively to Exchequer revenues.

Signs of risk and stagnation

Despite the Thames Valley's underlying strength, the region has not re-established its pre-pandemic growth path. Post-Covid productivity indicators show mixed fortunes, even as the UK aggregate edged up through 2023, evidence that recovery here has been shallower than the national trend. If the region were to return to the pre-pandemic growth trajectory from 2027 onwards the Thames Valley economy would be up to £18.7bn a year larger by 2040. This matters for residents: a weaker trajectory means fewer high-value job opportunities and slower wage progression than would otherwise have been the case. Slower growth in the Thames Valley reverberates through national supply chains and weakens spillovers to other regions, putting at risk delivery of the Industrial Strategy's IS-8 ambitions on productivity, exports and business investment. It limits the pace at which discoveries are commercialised, dampens the pipeline of high-value FDI into the UK, and slows diffusion of technologies across the wider economy. Crucially, restoring the Thames Valley's growth trajectory would result in an estimated £7 billion increase in tax revenue contributions from residents and

businesses, directly strengthening the Government's ability to fund essential services and invest in long-term national priorities.[1]

Scale and agglomeration to drive growth

To address these risks and realise our full economic potential, we need to leverage our potential for scale and agglomeration across our economic geographies. While each authorities' economy is individually strong, travel-to-work analysis reveals largely self-contained labour markets with currently limited cross-boundary matching and knowledge transfer across the region. In this current fragmentation lies a clear opportunity: given the region's complementary sector strengths the absence of integrated governance and coordinated connectivity means the Thames Valley is under-leveraging innovation adoption and diffusion and the opportunity to create a more unified labour market to scale economic growth.

Establishing an MSA with a growth mission at its core

We propose the establishment of a Thames Valley Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) as a decisive step towards realising inclusive growth across our region. By harnessing devolved powers, the MSA will transform thriving yet separate labour markets into a unified innovation economy, ensuring that prosperity is accessible to all communities. Through the implementation of a Local Growth Plan, we can extend and enhance the efforts of the Oxford Growth Commission to systematically address housing quantity, quality, and affordability across the Thames Valley, one of the key constraints on inclusive growth and a key driver of deprivation. MSA powers would enable accelerated delivery of affordable and social homes, around employment hubs. Integrated multi-modal, low carbon transport solutions could be expanded and expedited along the M4/M40 corridors, into Heathrow and across the Ox-Cam corridor, and critical investment in digital, water and energy infrastructure facilitated, strengthening connections between urban and rural residents and key economic growth nodes, and beyond. This infrastructure delivery would align with targeted skills and employment initiatives, developed with spatial awareness of our IS-8 strengths and a commitment to tackling deprivation and untapped potential within our communities. Enhanced collaboration and coordination enabled by the MSA would also position the region to more effectively address environmental priorities, including climate change and biodiversity.

Collectively, these measures would result in improved job opportunities, reduced commute times, and provide greater access to affordable housing for residents, supported by an aligned skills programme and transport system that matches talent to opportunity. For the UK, it means the Thames Valley driving national growth through faster innovation, stronger exports, and a bigger boost to the public purse.

We recognise the highly interconnected nature of the Thames Valley, with London, across the Ox-Cam Corridor and into the Midlands. A Thames Valley MSA will be a strategic

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[1] This estimate is based off the ratio of GDP to national taxation (UK taxation as 37% of GDP) established by Institute for Fiscal Studies research

platform from which to go further and faster on pan-regional collaboration with our neighbours, including working on joint projects, spatial development and investment to drive wider economic growth. We are determined to use our Thames Valley partnership to further capitalise on economic scale and complementarity and compete across the globe.

If granted MSA status, the Thames Valley would be a fundamentally different kind of strategic authority – the largest by GVA outside of London, the MSA will be focused on unlocking constraints on an already high-performing economy so that all areas of the Thames Valley, and indeed beyond, benefit. We are therefore actively exploring innovative approaches to securing private investment and financing. Work is already underway to develop robust and viable propositions that match the scale and ambition for a Thames Valley MSA, and we look forward to working with Government to shape this more sustainable growth financing model.

Next steps

A Thames Valley MSA would unlock constrained, high-value growth, accelerate innovation diffusion across IS-8 sectors, and strengthen national fiscal headroom. We therefore ask that the Thames Valley be considered for inclusion in the next Devolution Programme, and we would welcome an early meeting to discuss this opportunity. We are ready to work in open dialogue with MHCLG and your officials to implement a new phase of devolution and make the best impact for our businesses, communities, and the country.

PERFORMANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

05 December 2025

Digital Parking Permits Review

Report by Paul Fermer, Director of Highways and Environment

RECOMMENDATION

The Performance & Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

NOTE the plan from Officers to extend the existing parking permit software, recognising some improvements have and will continue to be made.

RECOMMENDED to consider the report and raise any questions, and to **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet.

Background

1. Digital parking permits have been operational in Oxfordshire since November 2022 and digital parking permits for visitors have been operational since December 2024.

2. The procurement of the system was carried out via a competitive tender process where 19 expressions of interest were received and a single bid received, which was subject to full and comprehensive evaluation. The procurement was weighed 58% quality, 30% cost and 12% on societal benefit. The evaluation also included a demonstration of the Unity 5 system to ensure it was able to deliver on the specific requirements for Oxfordshire.

3. The move to a digital approach is supportive of the County Councils commitments set out in its 'Digital, Data and Technology Overview 2025 – 2028' to have a 'digital first customer offer' and to ensure digital filing of records and data. Where digital is not an option for some residents, by exception, paper 'scratch card' permits are still offered.

4. The contract with Unity 5 to provide a digital parking permits solution is also used to deliver the traffic filter trial and subsequently congestion charge permits, Unity 5 were the only bidder capable of providing a suitable system for traffic filter trials. The current contract runs until May 2026 with the ability to extend for up to 2 more years, extensions are at the discretion of the council.

5. Unity 5 are considered mature player in this sector providing parking permit software for several other authorities in the UK. The difference which is believed to be creating the issues for Oxfordshire which isn't seen elsewhere,

is the complexity of the scheme itself.

6. Whilst the permit scheme could be simpler on the ground for residents, visitors and businesses would lose benefits. Our scheme recognises not only the different users we need to cater for, but also that different areas have different needs.

Data for parking permits appeals

7. The September committee requested data be provided showing parking appeals related to permit parking. Data from December 2024 to September 2025 is provided below.

Total number of on-street PCNs issued	50,130
Total number of PCNs issued in residents bays	13,034
Total number of PCNs issued in shared use bays (limited waiting and permits)	6,064
Total number of PCNs cancelled in Shared use bays (all reasons)	701
Total number of PCNs cancelled residents bays (all reasons)	2,044
Total number of PCNs cancelled as recorded Visitor Permit issues (paper and digital)	257
Total number of Visitor Permits activated	74,639

8. The data suggests c. 26% of all penalty charge notices (PCN's) were issued in CPZ areas, and 12% of all PCN's were issued in relation to contravention of conditions of shared bays specifically (though please note this does include pay and display bays also).

9. Current reporting tools do not allow for a detailed quantitative assessment of reasons PCN's were issued in relation to parking permits as specific reason is given via 'free text'. However, qualitative assessment through discussions with parking officers suggests a significant proportion of PCN's are issued due to overstaying the 2-hour window without a valid permit, a small minority of PCN's are issued due to incorrect dates being put on visitor permits or incorrect vehicle registrations being used.

Software Considerations and updates on improvements

10. At the September committee residents experiences of using the software were discussed. There are c. 124,000 users of the system with several placing calls with the customer service centre with queries on how to operate the system. The key issues being reported as of September 2025 were related to:

   a. Getting stuck in a 'loop' after using the single sign on function
   b. Slow speeds when loading pages on the system
   c. Difficulty in loading documents and submitting payment

d. Not receiving reminders that permits are due to expire

11. Of the above issues, the single sign on function and accessing the system are controlled by Oxfordshire County Council.

12. Based on this feedback the county council has worked closely with Unity 5 to deliver a series of system and experience upgrades, seeking to improve user experience (UX) and 'flow' of customer journey.

13. Key improvements tested and delivered between September 2025 and December 2025 include:

a. The implementation of a new 'single sign on' function where users now only need to log in once to access the Unity 5 system via the Oxfordshire County Council website (previously two separate sign on's were required). This implementation has removed the 'loop' experienced by residents when trying to access the system. This now means as long as a resident has a log in for the Oxfordshire County Council website (for any service, not limited to parking) then they will now automatically be logged into the Unity 5 system.

b. As discussed at the September committee, the speed of the website was compromised by the number of parking permits which were available to residents. Officers have supported Unity 5 to deliver an overhaul as to how the Unity 5 system accesses/ loads permits. This has reduced the time taken to significantly, with system pages now loading in line with the loading of a typical webpage.

A review of permit types was undertaken as part of this exercise by officers however in order to provide an 'inclusive' experience where permits are designed to meet the varying needs of Oxfordshire residents it was determined a reduction in the variety/ duration lengths of permits would reduce flexibility currently afforded to residents.

c. Considering resident feedback on areas of challenge using the Unity 5 system an Oxfordshire County Council customer service led UX overview has been carried out with wording changes made/ additional text added to address areas of concern. In addition to this written and video-based user guides are being developed to act as an extra support to those who are using the system and may be unsure, providing a step-by-step guide to enable users to independently operate the system.

14. As part of the investigation for this scrutiny paper it can be confirmed for all permit types (with the exception for individual visitor permits) emails are sent to account holders advising them their permits are due to expire. Emails to advise when an individual use of a visitor permit are not sent as the number of emails could be overwhelming for users. When a visitor permit is enabled, users are explicitly told of the start time/ date and end time/ date and that all

visitor permits are valid for 24 hours only.

15. Other improvements have included the simplification of system pages to only allow users to only see permit types directly applicable to them and the reordering of the county council public webpages to ensure areas of the process which receive the most questions/ most common types of permits applied for are more clearly located.

16. Officers are in continual dialogue with Unity 5 to seek out further UX and system enhancements to improve resident experience. However, as discussed at the September committee, any radically different user experience would require the reprocurement of a new system.

17. Officers have explored the idea of integrating the Unity 5 system into the councils GOSS platform to create an 'OCC style' front end to the permit system. However, it was found to do so would significantly increase the risk of processing error and the need to manually post data, adding unnecessary risk into an already complex process.

Digital Inclusivity

18. The parking permit system supports the council's commitment to a digital first approach to customer interactions. Similarly, by adopting a digital approach the efficiency of how parking contraventions are managed is improved, reducing the number of incorrectly issued PCN's and allowing officers to provide greater levels of enforcement over a larger geographic area, ensuring value for money for the council.

19. To ensure inclusivity, support on how to apply for a parking permit can also be provided through contacting the council's customer service team and through staff at the county's libraries. Where digital is not an option for some residents, by exception, paper 'scratch card' permits are still offered.

20. To support residents applying for temporary congestion charge permits a series of 'drop in' sessions in community settings are being delivered. These sessions have been extended to also ensure those facing challenges applying for other parking permits can also speak to and be guided by a council officer in successfully applying for permits.

Protection of two-hour bays for short visits

21. The September committee discussed difficulties experienced by carers in using the system. For carers across Oxfordshire whose organisations are registered with Oxfordshire County Council a free permit which allows them to park for up to 3 hours in any of the Oxford City permit zones. If evidence of care provision can be provided by unregistered carers e.g. demonstrate they are in receipt of carers allowance or a supporting letter from GP, the free carers parking permit will also be issued. Please note for carers working for a registered organisation permits will cover all CPZ's, for unregistered carers the

permit will be specific to a CPZ.

22. The committee also raised queries around the use of contractor parking permits for those who need to visit a permit zone to carry out work, it was felt the council's minimum offering of a weeklong pass was not appropriate for a single short visit to carry out work. Whilst in most cases the 2-hour free pass is sufficient to carry out work, a single day contractor pass will be introduced from April 2026, to cater for these instances. A fee will be levied to cover the cost of administering the permit, whilst the cost of this permit may be passed to the customer, a visitor pass could also be used to avoid the cost.

23. For visitors, once the visitor arrives at a property a visitors permit should be promptly issued, however it should be noted, in many cases a 2-hour grace period is automatically applied as many bays allow for a 2-hour window for parking without a permit. Visitor permits can also be set up in advance. For shared use bays a minimum observation period before a PCN can be issued is 10 minutes and for resident only bays the observation period is 5 minutes, this allows time for visitor permits to be registered. The only permit zones not to offer 2-hour windows are those where short-term parking is at a premium and would be subject to abuse e.g. near hospitals.

24. It should be noted the move to a digital solution also helps protect two-hour bays. The digital solution allows for a targeted approach to enforcement to be taken with enforcement officers being able to scan vehicle registration numbers whilst on a motorcycle and targeting those which are in breach of their permit conditions rather than individual inspections. This allows enforcement officers to be dispatched to enforce genuine contraventions. This approach frees capacity allowing enforcement checks to be made on a more frequent basis.

Contractual arrangements

25. The contract with Unity 5 to provide parking permit software expires in May 2026 with the option to extend the contract for a further 2 years in either annual increments or a 2-year block to April 2028. The extension is at the discretion of the council and decision delegated to the Director for Environment and Highways.

26. It is considered that the timelines for a reprocurement exercise is anticipated to be a 12-month process. This timescale includes allowance for specification to be finalised, a competitive procurement exercise to be completed (deemed necessary given the specific complexities of the temporary congestion charge/ future traffic filters trial requirements) and the testing, implementation and migration of permit data. These timescales are based on the assumption a permit system capable of managing a range of permit types (including Traffic Filters) is available on the market as an existing product (any product needing development is likely to extend this period), noting as of 2025 only Unity 5 were capable of offering this type of system.

27. Taking an approach of not extending the current contract and looking to procure a new system at this time, given the implications for the temporary congestion charge and traffic filters trial in particular, would bring create further public frustration. With the demonstrable commitment from both county council officers and Unity 5 to the delivery of improvements to the system it is considered that the best approach is to extend the existing contract by 2 years and to continue to make improvements.

28. The county council is set to reprocure the majority of its civil enforcement operations, including its 'back end' enforcement system in 2026, with the new contracts being operational in Q2 2026/2027. For both operational and resource reasons, it is preferable for a replacement permit system to be procured following this.

Financial Implications

29. The Unity5 permit system contract is funded through revenue into the Parking Account. Further extensions to the contract will continue to be funded via the Parking Account thus placing no additional revenue pressures on the County Council's budget.

Comments checked by:

Filipp Skiffins, Asst. Finance Business Partner (Finance)

Legal Implications

30. The proposed extension is permissible under clause 2.2 of the terms of the Contract. The extension is also permissible under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 ("PCR 2015"), provided that no material variations to the terms of the original contract are being contemplated. On the same basis, there should be no subsidy control implications of the proposed extension.

Comments checked by:

Busola Akande, Contract Solicitor (Legal)

Staff Implications

31. No staffing implications have been identified through the recommendations in this paper.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

32. No Equality and Inclusion implications have been identified through the recommendations in this paper.

Sustainability Implications

33. No sustainability implications have been identified through the recommendations in this paper.

Risk Management

34. Failure to award an extension to the Unity5 contract will result in risk to the Oxford Temporary Congestion Charge and Traffic Filters Trial as no other bidders came forward to provide a permitting solution capable of managing these types of restrictions.

Paul Fermer
Director for Environment and Highways

Contact Officer: Phil Whitfield, Head of Network Management, 07354165199

December 2025

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Divisions Affected – ALL

PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
05th of December 2025

Fix My Street Usage and Satisfaction Report

Report by the Director of Environment and Highways

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to**

   Review the information from the officers' report and use as a basis for further discussion within the Scrutiny session planned for 5 December 2025.

Executive Summary

2. The purpose of this report is to outline the usage and satisfaction levels associated with the Fix My Street platform in Oxfordshire, summarises areas of dissatisfaction, benchmarking challenges, and details the Council's response to feedback. It also explains prioritisation, repair processes, trend identification, and liability management in the context of highway defect reporting and resolution.

Background

3. Since 1 January 2025, the council, (the Council) has received over 37,000 enquiries via Fix My Street. In parallel, nearly 41,000 highway defects have been identified and actioned, with approximately 25% originating from Fix My Street, (FMS) reports.

4. As Fix My Street serves primarily as a public-facing reporting mechanism for highway maintenance issues, satisfaction levels are typically assessed through our annual resident survey, rather than through the platform itself. Once a report is investigated and resolved, it is formally closed within the system, limiting opportunities for direct follow-up feedback.

5. Analysis of escalated feedback received via the Fix My Street platform has identified the following key areas of dissatisfaction among users:

   a. <u>Delays in Response or Resolution:</u> Users have expressed concerns regarding the time taken to investigate and resolve reported issues. Delays in communication or action can lead to frustration and reduced confidence in the service.

   b. <u>Enquiries closed down when no action has been taken:</u> Users have noted that in some instances, enquiries have been closed with no action being taken. There are a number of reasons for this including incorrect closure message being given It is often the case that a case is closed

and reopened with a more detailed explanation to allow contractors to view the actual works required or reassign.

c. <u>Localised Concerns Not Meeting Intervention Thresholds</u>: Some reports relate to issues that do not meet the intervention criteria set out in the Council's Highway Safety Inspection Policy. This can result in dissatisfaction where residents feel their concerns are not being addressed.

Benchmarking

6. While the Fix My Street platform provides valuable operational insights into highway defect reporting and resolution, it is important to recognise that the data generated is not sufficient for robust national benchmarking. Several factors contribute to this limitation:

a. <u>Variations in Platform Integration:</u> Local authorities differ in their adoption and integration of the Fix My Street platform. For example, some councils utilise the enhanced Fix My Street Pro version, while others operate with the standard platform or alternative systems. This inconsistency makes direct performance comparisons unreliable.

b. <u>Disproportionate Reporting by Highly Active Users</u>: The dataset may be skewed by a small number of users who submit a disproportionately high volume of reports. This can distort overall usage statistics and affect the representativeness of satisfaction and performance metrics.

c. <u>Exclusion of Alternative Reporting Channels</u>: The Fix My Street data does not account for reports received through other channels, such as telephone, email, or social media. As a result, the platform's data alone does not provide a comprehensive view of all defect reporting activity within the Council.

Service Improvements in Response to User Feedback

7. There has and will continue to be an ongoing review and improvements made to the FMS system itself and processes of use by officers. Working with colleagues from customer contact centre and as part of Improving the Customer Experience Board, the use of automation including Zoom and AI in the future are being explored and developed where appropriate and able to integrate into wider improvement programmes. Relative recent changes over the last 12 months, have been made such as:

a. <u>Enhanced Categorisation</u>: The council has conducted a comprehensive review of the categorisation structure within the Fix My Street platform. This process has resulted in a streamlined and expanded set of categories and sub-categories, enabling users to more accurately identify and report issues. The revised structure reduces the risk of misclassification and ensures that reports are efficiently routed to the appropriate operational teams for timely resolution.

b. <u>Improved Visual Guidance:</u> To facilitate more effective reporting, the Council has introduced additional visual aids and guidance within the platform interface. These enhancements include clearer descriptions of issue types and more detailed instructions regarding the submission of photographic evidence. The improved guidance supports internal teams in conducting thorough investigations and contributes to faster resolution of reported defects. By optimising resource allocation and improving response times, these changes are expected to increase public confidence and satisfaction with the service.

c. <u>Aerial Mapping Integration</u>: A new aerial mapping layer has been incorporated into the reporting interface, allowing users to pinpoint the precise location of issues. This enhancement supports more accurate inspections and expedites the resolution process by providing operational teams with improved spatial information.

d. <u>Expansion of the Super Users Programme:</u> The Council has expanded its network of trained local volunteers, known as 'Super Users'. These individuals play a vital role in inspecting and escalating priority issues, such as potholes and drainage concerns. By leveraging their local knowledge, Super Users help to identify defects that meet intervention criteria and facilitate faster repairs. Additionally, they serve as a conduit between residents and the Council, ensuring that community concerns are effectively communicated and addressed.

e. <u>Integration with the National Street Gazetteer (NSG):</u> The Fix My Street platform is now integrated with the National Street Gazetteer, enabling the Council to more accurately determine maintenance responsibilities, particularly in distinguishing between publicly and privately maintained roads. This integration reduces delays in processing reports and enhances transparency in communications with residents.

8. In addition to improvements to FixMyStreet, there has been a new approach and resources allocated to deal with some of the smaller issues that are important locally but may not be classed as a safety defect. This initiative is included within the Council's Strategic Plan.

9. It sets out a strong emphasis on responsive and community-focused highway maintenance. In alignment with the Council's priorities, and the Council has introduced the **Highways Asset Response Team (HART**) initiative to address issues raised through Fix My Street and other reporting channels. See link - https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hart-of-the-community-new-teams-target-areas-most-in-need-of-highway-work/

Prioritisation of Requests

10. The Council prioritises Fix My Street reports through a structured, risk-based assessment framework. Photographic evidence submitted with a report does assist Highway Officers and Customer Service Centre (CSC), colleagues in evaluating

the severity and precise location of a defect, but it is not the primary factor in determining priority.

11. The initial triage of the enquiry is carried out by colleagues in the CSC. The use of photographs vastly improves the ability for enquiries to be correctly categorised and assigned to the appropriate party. If there is any uncertainty, CSC colleagues can assign to the operations team colleagues within the Highways Service.

12. The location and context of the defect play a critical role in prioritisation. For example, issues situated near schools, on junctions, roundabouts, or on high-speed or strategic routes are assessed as higher risk due to their potential impact on public safety and traffic flow Where there is a higher level of pedestrian activity, these locations are also prioritised.

13. Each report is reviewed in line with the Council's Highway Safety Inspection Policy, which outlines the criteria used to assess and respond to defects. For further details on how pothole risk is evaluated, please refer to the Council's guidance here: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/street-maintenance-z/road-repairs

14. We aim to investigate Fix My Street reports within 10 working days which aligns the county council's enquiry response policy requirements.

Repair Delivery and Quality Assurance

15. The Council's highway maintenance services are delivered in partnership with MGroup, who operate a mixed delivery model comprising both direct labour crews and approved subcontractors. All defect repairs are carried out in accordance with the Council's Highway Safety Inspection Policy and associated standards.

16. To ensure the quality and consistency of repairs, the Council conducts post-completion inspections on 20% of all works. These inspections are selected randomly and are designed to assess both the completeness and workmanship of the repair. Where a repair is found to be substandard or incomplete, it is recorded as a non-chargeable defect, requiring rectification at no additional cost to the authority.

17. This process provides a structured opportunity for both the council and MGroup to review, challenge, and evaluate the methods and materials used at each location of concern. It also supports continuous improvement by identifying trends in poor practice and ensuring corrective actions are taken.

18. Where recurring issues or poor performance are identified, this can result in financial adjustments to the overall contract value and may negatively impact the contractor's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). This performance-linked approach ensures accountability and reinforces the Council's commitment to delivering high-quality, safe, and cost-effective highway maintenance services.

Trend Identification and Liability Management

19. The Council adopts a multi-layered approach to highway defect identification and resolution, combining reactive reporting through Fix My Street with proactive inspection and asset management strategies.

20. When investigating a Fix My Street report, Highway Officers routinely assess the surrounding area for additional safety-related defects. However, certain issues may be missed due to temporary obstructions such as parked vehicles or adverse weather conditions. To mitigate this, our delivery partner, MGroup, plays a critical role in identifying and addressing further defects while on site. Through a "**find and fix**" approach, crews are empowered to repair additional issues not originally specified in the initial instruction. These are documented with before-and-after photographs and uploaded to our internal systems for audit and quality assurance.

21. In line with our commitment to value for money and long-term asset resilience, Highway Officers also have the authority to escalate sections of carriageway for future surface treatment consideration. These referrals are assessed by our Highway Schemes Team for inclusion in planned maintenance programmes.

22. Furthermore, the Council utilises advanced technologies such as road scanning vehicles, which detect subsurface and surface-level deterioration before defects become visible (prevention better than cure). This enables a targeted and cost-effective approach to maintenance, optimising operational efficiency and reducing long-term costs.

Financial

23. Financial: Maintenance funded from the Highway Operations revenue budget; costs vary with weather and growth rates. The current annual subscription for FMS is funded through revenue budgets and equates to £31,500

24. Comments checked by Filipp Skiffins Assistant Finance Business Partner, filipp.skiffins@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal

25. The activities described above comply with the highway authority's rights and duties under Highways Act 1980 and associated policies such as The Highway Safety Inspection Policy.

26. The use of Fix My Street and MGroup and other third parties such as the Super Users is lawful under the general power of competence in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

27. Comments checked by: Jennifer Crouch, Principal Solicitor, jennifer.crouch@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff

28. Staff: Managed within existing resources.

Equality

29. Equality & Sustainability: No discrimination identified; maintenance regime supports biodiversity and climate action.

Paul Fermer
Director of Environment and Highways

Annex:

https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/transport-policies-and-plans/highway-maintenance

Contact Officer: Matthew Timms – Team Leader – Highways Engagement

November 2025

Recommendation Tracker
Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Chair | Tom Hudson, Principal Scrutiny Officer, tom.hudson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The action and recommendation tracker enables the Committee to monitor progress against agreed actions and recommendations. The tracker is updated with the actions and recommendations agreed at each meeting. Once an action or recommendation has been completed or fully implemented, it will be shaded green and reported into the next meeting of the Committee, after which it will be removed from the tracker.

KEY	Due to Cabinet	Presented to Cabinet	Complete

Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
18-Jul-25	Hire Bike and Scooter	1. That the Council writes to the Department for Transport to request an earlier decision regarding the continuation of the e-scooter trial beyond May 2026.	Paul Fermer	*Accepted* See agenda item 11
		2. That the Council seeks information from the Department for Transport about the national evaluation timeline for the e-scooter trial, and that the council share the evaluation results of the e-scooter trial with the committee once available.		*Accepted* See agenda item 11

Recommendation Tracker
Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

KEY	Due to Cabinet	Presented to Cabinet	Complete

Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
Page 54		3. That the Council conducts its own analysis of the e-scooter and e-bike schemes to understand their impact on modal shift and the wider transport network.		*Accepted* See agenda item 11
		4. That the Council explores the possibility of integrating e-scooters and e-bikes with park and ride sites and other transport interchanges, and that the Council considers increasing the supply of e-scooters and e-bikes to meet the latent demand.		*Accepted* See agenda item 11
		5. That the Council investigates the feasibility of on-street parking for e-scooters and e-bikes to alleviate issues with footway parking.		*Accepted* See agenda item 11
18-Jul-25	Our People and Culture Strategy	1. That the Council reports to Cabinet greater detail of the levels of sickness within different parts of	Cherie Cuthbertson	*Accepted* See agenda item 11

Recommendation Tracker
Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

KEY	Due to Cabinet	Presented to Cabinet	Complete

Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
Page 55		the organisation and at different strata of the organisation.		
		2. That the Council commits to reviewing whether to pass on unspent apprenticeship levy funds to local voluntary sector organisations with presumption it will do so.		*Accepted* See agenda item 11
		3. That the Council is more proactive in promoting its work around redirecting unspent apprenticeship levies to create opportunities.		*Accepted* See agenda item 11
		4. That the Council recognises formally its good relations with the unions, and updates its Our People and Culture Strategy to reflect this.		*Accepted* See agenda item 11
		5. That the Council discusses its plans to replace the existing annual Employee Engagement Survey with the Employment Joint		*Accepted* See agenda item 11

Recommendation Tracker
Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

KEY	Due to Cabinet	Presented to Cabinet	Complete

Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
		Consultative Committee before making a final decision.		
12-Sept-25	BMMR – CEF Focus	That in its forthcoming Youth Strategy the Cabinet should ensure a more equitable distribution of voluntary sector youth services, particularly making sure that funding is allocated based on need rather than simply supporting existing services.	Lisa Lyons	Sent to Cabinet on 18-Nov-25
12-Sept-25	Oxfordshire Strategic Plan	1. That the Cabinet more clearly draws out the links between its green agenda and local resident concerns, using clearer language and relatable examples	Susannah Wintersgill	*Partially Accepted* See agenda item 11
		2. That the Cabinet clarifies how it wishes to balance its competing desires to protect green spaces whilst also providing housing		*Partially Accepted* See agenda item 11
		3. That Council members are provided with quantitative data and		*Accepted*

Recommendation Tracker
Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

KEY	Due to Cabinet	Presented to Cabinet	Complete

Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
Page 57		a plan to illustrate the deliverability of the Council's net zero ambitions when they are asked to adopt the draft Strategic Plan.		See agenda item 11
		4. That the Cabinet includes a commitment to improve access to renewable energy infrastructure as part of the Strategic Plan.		*Accepted* See agenda item 11
		5. That the Cabinet commits to improving footways to facilitate walking within the Strategic Plan.		*Partially Accepted* See agenda item 11
		6. That the Cabinet commits to expanding access to bus services within the Strategic Plan.		*Partially Accepted* See agenda item 11
		7. That the Cabinet raises the profile of Best Start as a successor to Sure Start within the Strategic Plan.		*Partially Accepted* See agenda item 11
		8. That the Cabinet commits to increasing access to community		*Rejected* See agenda item 11

Recommendation Tracker
Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

KEY	Due to Cabinet	Presented to Cabinet	Complete

Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
Page 58		banking and post office services as part of the Strategic Plan.		
		9. That the Cabinet improves the accessibility of its report by the time it is published for consideration by Council, both in terms of terminology and the presentation of feedback from residents.		*Partially Accepted* See agenda item 11
		10. That the Cabinet focuses not only on local need or deficits, but that it also recognises and celebrates its successes to date		*Partially Accepted* See agenda item 11
		11. That members are engaged in the development of the Citizens portal.		*Accepted* See agenda item 11

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Action Tracker
Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Chair | Tom Hudson, Principal Scrutiny Officer, tom.hudson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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KEY	Delayed	In progress	Complete

Meeting date	Item	Action	Lead	Update/response
There are no outstanding action items.				

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Recommendation Update Tracker
Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Chair | Tom Hudson, Principal Scrutiny Officer, tom.hudson@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

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Cabinet Response Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update
25-Feb-25	Commercial Strategy Update	1. That the Council develops and shares with the committee on a regular basis a more detailed project plan for the Commercial strategy, outlining specific commercial opportunities in development, enabling activity, timelines, targeted savings or expected income generation, risk and RAG ratings	Ian Dyson	Progress update to be provided
		2. That the Council ensures that future iterations of the Strategy clarify how it intends to help the Council make money, how money will be used more efficiently, and how it will be used more effectively.		Progress update to be provided

	KEY		Update Pending	Update in Item	Updated

Cabinet Response Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update
		3. That the Council gives consideration to seconding staff to exemplars of good commercial practice to the private sector.		Progress update to be provided
		4. That the Council invests in greater capacity to undertake strategic and mid-contract management of contracts.		Progress update to be provided
		5. That the Council includes representatives of Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care on its Commercial Board		Progress update to be provided
Page 61 25-Feb-25	Community Asset Transfer Policy	1. That the Council ensures that local members are involved with next-step discussions with VCS groups and the social value provided by these organisations be considered as part of the discussions.	Vic Kurzeja; Michael Smedley	Progress update to be provided
		2. That the Council improves communications around empty properties, including: i) sharing with members a clear statement of the aspiration and timeline for disposing of properties listed for disposal, ii) a quarterly report/update summarising recent events and developments with Council land/property ensuring all parties are kept up to date, and iii) regular updates for those residents neighbouring vacant Council properties to keep them up to date with ongoing developments and plans.		Progress update to be provided
		3. That the Council develops processes for sharing with both members and sister organisations in the county, i) lease requests by VCS organisations, ii)		Progress update to be provided

Cabinet Response Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update
		land available for VCS leases, and iii) any planned leases.		

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Work Programme
Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Chair | Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Manager
tom.hudson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Topic	Relevant strategic priorities	Purpose	Type	Lead Presenters
05 December 2025				
Business Management Monitoring Report, with a focus on Public Health	All, but particularly - Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire and Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents.	To review performance, assess progress against strategic priorities, and hold decision-makers accountable for effective service delivery and resource use. The review will take a focused look at Public Health.	Scrutiny	Cllr Gregory; Cllr Levy; Lorna Baxter; Ansaf Azhar; Kathy Wilcox; Rachel Brolly
Devolution	All	To consider the Cabinet's report on whether to request to be included in the first tranche of devolution.	Overview	Cllr Leffman, Kim Sawyer
Parking Permits	Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit	Follow-on report from verbal update on the Unity5 contract. May be of benefit to have a pre-briefing also.	Scrutiny	Cllr Gant; Paul Fermer
Fixmystreet	Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network.	To review performance, issues and mitigations for issues on the fixmystreet platform.	Scrutiny	Cllr Gant; Paul Fermer

16 January 2026				
Budget Proposals (all members invited)	Underpins all	To consider the robustness and suitability of the Council's draft budget.	Overview	All Cabinet members and directors
17 April 2026				
Business Management Monitoring Report, with a focus on Resources and Law and Governance, and Economy and Place	All	To review performance, assess progress against strategic priorities, and hold decision-makers accountable for effective service delivery and resource use. The review will take a focused look at Resources and Law and Governance, and Economy and Place	Scrutiny	Cllr Leffman; Cllr Fawcett; Cllr Levy; Cllr Higgins; Lorna Baxter; Robin Rogers
Local Enterprise Partnership Integration Update	Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit, to tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire	To review the progress and accomplishments of the Local Enterprise Partnership having been integrated into the wider Council	Scrutiny	Cllr Leffman; Cllr Higgins; Robin Rogers; Nigel Tipple
Commercial Strategy Progress Update	Underpins all	To review the progress of the Council's Commercial Strategy	Scrutiny	Cllr Higgins; Cllr Levy; Lorna Baxter; Ian Dyson
AI benefits	Play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy, to tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire.	To review the Council's use of AI: its cost, its usage, the mitigations against dangers, the monitoring of value. An in-depth look at the use of AI within the customer service centre is requested.	Overview	Cllr Fawcett; Lorna Baxter; Other leads to be confirmed

Sub-groups				
Name	**Relevant strategic priorities**	**Description**	**Outcomes**	**Members**
There are currently no sub-groups				

Briefings/Other					
Date	**Topic**	**Relevant strategic priorities**	**Description**	**Outcomes**	**Presenters**
There are no scheduled member briefings					

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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: **Hire Bikes and Scooters**

Lead Cabinet Member(s):   **Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management**

Date response requested:[2]   **16 September 2025**

Response to report:

Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet welcomes the report from the Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee on this matter. The response to the recommendations is set out below.

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)

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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

1. **That the Council writes to the Department for Transport to request an earlier decision regarding the continuation of the e-scooter trial beyond May 2026.**	Accept	Since the Scrutiny Committee meeting, the Department for Transport announced a two-year extension to the e-scooter trial to take the end date to 31 May 2028. Cllr Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, attended and spoke at the Micromobility All Party Parliamentary Group meeting on 03 September 2025, pushing for future legislation to provide long-term certainty. Within the same meeting, reference was made to the government outlining its intention to create a new vehicle class for Low-Speed Zero Emission Vehicles (LZEV) but no timeline for this has been set.
2. **That the Council seeks information from the Department for Transport about the national evaluation timeline for the e-scooter trial, and that the council share the evaluation results of the e-scooter trial with the committee once available**	Accept	Officers have requested an update from the Department for Transport on the timescales for their national evaluation and reporting that is currently underway. A response has not yet been received.
3. **That the Council conducts its own analysis of the e-scooter and e-bike schemes to understand their impact on modal shift and the wider transport network.**	Accept	In addition to the national evaluation and reporting that is currently underway for the e-scooter trial, the Cabinet agrees that local analysis of the e-scooter and e-bike schemes operating in Oxford should be conducted. As part of a new contract which is due to go live in Spring 2026, additional resource and funding is to be secured to conduct such research.

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

4. **That the Council explores the possibility of integrating e-scooters and e-bikes with park and ride sites and other transport interchanges, and that the Council considers increasing the supply of e-scooters and e-bikes to meet the latent demand.**	Accept	The Cabinet agree that integrating micromobility with the Park & Ride sites in Oxford is a positive step towards embedding micromobility into the wider transport network and commits to progressing discussions with the landowners and leaseholders for the Park & Ride sites to provide parking on-site. E-scooter and e-bike parking is currently provided at Thornhill Park & Ride, and officers will continue to explore opportunities to provide micromobility parking at the Park & Ride sites across Oxford.
5. **That the Council investigates the feasibility of on-street parking for e-scooters and e-bikes to alleviate issues with footway parking.**	Accept	County Council officers have started to identify a potential on-carriageway parking locations for micromobility. There is desire to progress an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order for the introduction of on-carriageway bays once a new joint e-scooter and e-bike contract is live in Spring 2026.

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Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

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Issue: **Our People and Culture Strategy**

Lead Cabinet Member(s): **Cllr Neil Fawcett, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources**

Date response requested:[2] **16 September 2025**

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
1. **That the Council reports to Cabinet greater detail of the levels of sickness within different parts of the organisation and at different strata of the organisation.**	Accepted	We will provide a report on sickness and wellbeing, including main reasons for sickness and the support that is available. This will come to Cabinet for Quarter 4.

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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

2.	**That the Council commits to reviewing whether to pass on unspent apprenticeship levy funds to local voluntary sector organisations with a presumption it will do so.**	Accepted	We recognise the importance of supporting local voluntary sector organisations with our unspent apprenticeship levy funds. Historically, the Council has prioritised transferring these funds to identified voluntary sector organisations, particularly those supporting youth workers. Our intention is to broaden this support to include a wider range of sectors, especially groups within the local community. As part of our early careers strategy, we are reviewing the process with the presumption of passing on unspent levy funds. We will identify and transfer a set amount each year to ensure consistent and meaningful impact.
3.	**That the Council is more proactive in promoting its work around redirecting unspent apprenticeship levies to create opportunities.**	Accepted	In partnership with Enterprise Oxfordshire, we will support local organisations to access our unspent levy funds. This will ensure that voluntary sector groups and community organisations can create new opportunities. Enterprise Oxfordshire specialises in helping local organisations navigate and obtain apprenticeship levy funding – by working in partnership, the Council aims to increase uptake, maximise the impact of unspent funds, and strengthen the local workforce.
4.	**That the Council recognises formally its good relations with the unions, and updates its Our People and Culture Strategy to reflect this.**	Accepted	We do recognise the good relations with our Trade Unions and this will be reflected in our refreshed Our People and Culture Strategy.
5.	**That the Council discusses its plans to replace the existing annual Employee Engagement Survey with the Employment Joint Consultative Committee before making a final decision.**	Accepted	A new quarterly pulse survey will be introduced in November, following engagement with UNISON and SLB. This is a shorter survey with no more than 10 questions, replacing the previous annual survey. Analysis and insights will be presented back via the EJCC at the next meeting. The survey will be iterated and refined following EJCC's feedback.

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

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

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

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

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

Response to recommendations

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

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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

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

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

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

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

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

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

annual emissions decreasing by 5,673 tCO2e between 2019/20 and 2023/24 (most recent complete data).

2. **Current programme:** We are now delivering a £30.11 million programme up until 2030/31 to improve energy efficiency for highway assets, replace fleet and end-of-life OFRS vehicles with EVs, complete retrofit works with PSDS4 funding, and electrify vehicles used by colleagues with high mileage for council business. Delivery of aspects of these programmes has been delayed in previous years. However, timely completion would mean these measures in combination with grid decarbonisation and private EV uptake would result in a 2030/31 residual of approximately 4000 tCO2e, whereas a fully funded programme would take this down to approximately 2700 tCO2e.

3. **Further work:** Due to the cancellation of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme there is £19 million worth of building retrofit work that is unfunded, though two capital bids worth £5 million and £1.5 million for essential maintenance work with decarbonisation benefits are being submitted for 2026/27. There is also circa £1.5 million in further LED conversions for traffic sites that is unfunded.

The government's Clean Power 2030 programme will significantly determine the council's annual emissions by reducing the carbon factor for grid electricity. This will be one of the main determinants of the 2030 residual to be offset. There is currently a £30,000 and £80,000 annual budget for the purchase of carbon credits in advance of 2030 and to support the carbon removal market, respectively. Further investment will be required to meet the councils offset needs.

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

4. That the Cabinet includes a commitment to improve access to renewable energy infrastructure as part of the Strategic Plan	Accepted	In the wider objectives for 'greener', there is now a commitment to installing 1,400 electric vehicle charging sockets across 250+ locations by 2027/28. The council agrees the annual focus of its climate programme through reports to Cabinet. The council's climate programme includes ongoing activities to increase renewable energy generation, such as: • A loan scheme to support maintained schools in investing in energy efficiency and renewable technologies. • A decarbonisation programme for the council's estate, including the installation of renewable energy systems. • Collaboration with district councils to support the development of their local plans that set renewable energy targets, as well as the creation of Local Area Energy Plans to identify further potential for renewables. • Delivery of capital funding programmes to support home retrofitting. • Engagement with communities through innovation programmes including the Community Action Group network and the Low Carbon Hub to promote community energy and community-led retrofit projects.
5. That the Cabinet commits to improving footways to facilitate walking within the Strategic Plan	Partially accepted	The council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) is referenced multiple times in the Strategic Plan including in the wider objectives for 'greener'. The LTCP sets out clear policies to achieve a net zero transport system, including a chapter focusing on increasing walking and cycling.

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

<table>
<tr>
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<td>Through the delivery of the <u>Active Travel Strategy</u> the council is committed to an action ensuring improvements to active travel infrastructure are integrated into wider road maintenance and repair interventions by consulting schemes on a case-by-case basis across the council and with walking and cycling groups.

In addition, one of the Strategic Plan's nine priority projects is the development of dedicated response teams to address highways enquiries and expedite repairs in towns and villages (including footway repairs) in close collaboration with local councils.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. That the Cabinet commits to expanding access to bus services within the Strategic Plan</td>
<td>Partially accepted</td>
<td>The council's <u>Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP)</u> is referenced multiple times in the Strategic Plan including in the wider objectives for 'greener'.

The LTCP sets out clear policies to achieve a net zero transport system, including a chapter focusing on increasing public transport trips.

Through the council's <u>Bus Service Improvement Plan and the Enhanced Partnership</u> the council is working with local bus operators to deliver better bus services in Oxfordshire, including making buses easier to access.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. That the Cabinet raises the profile of Best Start as a successor to Sure Start within the Strategic Plan</td>
<td>Partially accepted</td>
<td>One of the Strategic Plan's nine headline projects is the development of a network of family hubs. These are funded through the government's Best Start in Life programme. Family hubs are designed to provide families with access to early help and support, including services from health, education and community sector partners.</td>
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		The focus of the Strategic Plan is on setting out what the council will do, rather than promoting the names of particular government schemes.
8. That the Cabinet commits to increasing access to community banking and post office services as part of the Strategic Plan	Rejected	Although the council is keen to support access to local post office and community banking services, the council is unable to deliver such an outcome without active cooperation from the Post Office and banks. As resolved by Cabinet on 15 July 2025, the council will continue with its efforts to provide community services within library facilities and other suitable locations for areas lacking banking services.
9. That the Cabinet improves the accessibility of its report by the time it is published for consideration by Council, both in terms of terminology and the presentation of feedback from residents	Partially accepted	The development of the strategic plan has been informed by feedback from resident focus groups and the Performance & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with particular attention to the accessibility of its content in both drafting and design. Following feedback from the overview and scrutiny committee, the research agency has provided an updated resident research report, and a summary of resident research is available in word format. The updated report is included as an annex to the Cabinet report. Communications activity is planned to communicate the council's strategic direction and key priorities. This will use clear and simple messaging focused on the three main themes, the benefits of the nine headline projects and the delivery of activities associated with these.

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

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