

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in question 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: **Budget Proposals for 2026/27 to 2030/31**

Lead Cabinet Member(s): **Cllr Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, Cllr Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation**

Date response requested:² **27 January 2026**

Response to report:

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

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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 writes to the Valuation Audit Office to raise the issue of 2000 homes without council bands	Rejected	Council Tax is the responsibility of the District Councils therefore it will be for them to write to the VOA.
2. That the Council collates and reviews direct feedback from children, where available, from schools, concerning the quality of current school meals	Accepted	The council regularly surveys both parents and students to ensure thorough engagement. The next survey is planned for the summer term in 2026 and will cover topics such as the children's preferences as well as the quality and variety of the school meals.
3. That greater detail of the contribution non-Public Health areas make to the Council's Marmot agenda is provided within the Council's budget report, particularly in relation to mitigating the negative health impacts of climate change	Accepted	<p>Paragraphs 123 and 124 have been added to the report to Cabinet on 27 January 2026.</p> <p>123. Public health grant needs to be spent within the terms and conditions of ring fence. Approximately 80% of the public health budget is spent on mandated statutory services, most of which are preventative in nature and will contribute towards reducing demand across system, particularly in the short term, across the health and care system.</p> <p>124. However, the real value and leadership is in embedding public health approach across the system and the council. To realise the ambition of becoming Marmot place, all directorates are investing on prevention and public health approach to improve health and</p>

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		<p>wellbeing outcomes, reduce inequalities and reduce health care demand. These examples include investment into early years, family hub, active transport infrastructure, food strategy, community capacity grant, mental wellbeing provision and creating libraries and other front facing settings into community hubs. Working in partnership with ICB public health has also secured significant fund for community development activities such the well together provision and physical activity programmes. All these initiatives have benefits across multiple domains from improving health and wellbeing, positive climate interventions, cost of living and managing demands across public sector. As well as delivering against the public health grant, the public health team will work with wider directorates and the wider system to build a total place offer to enhance the public health delivery across the system.</p>
4. That plans for Public Realm Improvement expenditure are brought to members at Localities meetings.	Partially Accepted	<p>The budget is limited and will be focussed on key and well used pedestrian movement corridors. Proposals to be included within these maintenance improvements will be discussed with the Local County Councillor/s and if appropriate brought to relevant Locality Meetings.</p>
5. That 2 hour parking in Oxford City in Zone 2 is included within the list of fees and charges in the Council's budget report.	Accepted	<p>The additional charge has been added to Annex A and the proposed budget. It is also noted in paragraph 160 of the Cabinet report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new 2 hour charge for Zone 2 in Oxford (including Jericho) will be implemented in 2026/27 in line with 2026L&CO23 agreed as part of the budget in February 2025. The cost will be double the 1 hour parking
6. That Council is provided with the options appraisal used when assessing to progress with the Watlington Relief Road as part of the budget report.	Partially Accepted	<p>The options appraisal and need was considered and evidenced as part of the Local Plan process and will also form part of the planning application process and consideration (specifically within the Transport Assessment).</p>

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		<p>Relevant documents can be accessed here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Plan 2035 Documents and Evidence Base• Planning Register Oxfordshire County Council <p>At each project stage and report into Cabinet (or Cabinet member as appropriate), the schemes value for money and benefit will continue to be considered as part of necessary council approvals.</p>
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NB There will be a number of observations made in the report. These are simply comments made by the committee, and do not require any formal response.

- Noting the importance of making use of in-house capacity over consultants in the implementation of the IT strategy
- Noting Public Health funding comes from a ringfenced grant, that this does not preclude other budgets within the Council from contributing to Public Health activities
- Recognising the limits to the Council's power when working with partners, reciprocal agreements with neighbouring councils to enable cross-border access to recycling centres should remain a clear priority
- With HIF1 and HIF2 upcoming, similar levels of overspend to the Watlington Relief Road would not be sustainable, and the Council's project management and monitoring of costs will need to improve