



Recommendations and updates from other committees to Cabinet on 18 April 2024

Joint Scrutiny Committee

The committee met on 25 March to discuss the waste vehicle purchasing strategy, and the Didcot Garden Town delivery plan update, both of which are on Cabinet's agenda for 18 April.

(1) Waste Vehicle Purchasing Strategy

The committee noted the report and put forward the following comments for officers' and Cabinet member's consideration. The committee:

- asked for confirmation that the councils' standard approach to business cases would be used, with review points along the way, noting that there are legal requirements to assess all expenditure on the latest information available at the final decision point;
- asked that paragraphs 15 and 16-20 of the report to Joint Scrutiny Committee were reviewed to avoid contradiction of procurement factors; and
- asked Cabinet to think about maintenance of vehicles during procurement (issues such as depot location and frequency, vehicle routing, and size of bins).

In order to be transparent and open, here is a summary of the officer advice and actions in relation to the above, to aid consideration by Cabinet:

- Officers can confirm that all points raised by the Joint Scrutiny Committee were considered and have been taken account when finalising the Cabinet report and have been discussed with the Cabinet member.
- Officers can confirm that they always follow the relevant legislation and council policy and process on procurement and business cases. This approach ensures that all procurements are undertaken holistically. In this example, this would include consideration of the lifetime cost and impact of any vehicles that the council procures, including their maintenance, their routes, and where they will be based and supported.
- Before issuing any procurement into the 'live' environment, officers always undertake a final assessment, or Gateway, to confirm that the item being procured still represents best value, and the approach being taken remains the best route to meet the requirement.
- Officers believe that they have resolved any contradiction between the relevant paragraphs.

(2) Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan Update and Next Steps

The committee put forward these comments for Cabinet's consideration:

- Members endorsed the use of metric measurements on signage;
- Members suggested that signage had reflectors, lighting and braille factored into design;

- At the next phase, can Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board members look into large-scale country nature parks, referencing the area of influence;
- On rain gardens, can this project work be accelerated, considering the local flooding issues this year. Liaise with Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board and Oxfordshire County Council as the lead flood authority.
- The timetable for active travel projects can be further informed by the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, noting that Oxfordshire County Council is the lead transport authority.

In order to be transparent and open, here is a summary of the officer advice and actions in relation to the above, to aid consideration by Cabinet.

- On signage, officers confirm that this will be considered as part of the next phases of the project and will take regard of national guidance and standards for the measurement of distances and designs to maximise accessibility for all.
- The inclusion, or otherwise, of proposals for potential country parks as part of the wider Garden Town programme is a matter for the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board, rather than Cabinet at this time. Officers will work with Cabinet members to bring this request from Joint Scrutiny Committee to the board's attention at its next meeting.
- Regarding rain gardens, officers will bring the comments of the Joint Scrutiny Committee to the attention of the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board. Officers will recommend that these comments are considered as part of the wider green infrastructure projects as these are taken forward, noting the need to work with relevant agencies to secure their support for this.
- Oxfordshire County Council is an active member of the Didcot Garden Town Advisory Board. Its formal views, as the local transport authority, have helped inform the development of the strategies. However, following the comments from the Joint Scrutiny Committee, and further review, some minor amendments have been made to the Green Infrastructure Strategy to better reflect this. Documents such as the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan are also taken into account in a wide range of activities, such as the developing joint local plan.

Joint Audit and Governance Committee

The committee is due to meet on 15 April to discuss the following matters. An update will be provided at the Cabinet meeting:

- the new external auditor's plans for the council's 2023/24 audit;
- a review of the council's investigatory powers;
- the internal audit plan for 2024/25;
- the draft code of corporate governance;
- an update on progress with the statement of accounts audit for 2022/23; and
- a review of the council's risk register.

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