

County Council

16 April 2024

Agenda



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

To: Members of the County COUNCIL

Notice of a Meeting of the County Council

Tuesday, 16 April 2024 at 10.30 am

Council Chamber - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#). Please note, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Reeves".

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

April 2024

Committee Officer:

Colm Ó Caomhánaigh

Tel: 07393 001096; E-Mail:

colm.ocaomhanaigh@oxfordshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1. Minutes (Pages 1 - 6)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2024 (**CC1**) and to receive information arising from them.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Declarations of Interest - see guidance note

Members are reminded that they must declare their interests orally at the meeting and specify (a) the nature of the interest and (b) which items on the agenda are the relevant items. This applies also to items where members have interests by virtue of their membership of a district council in Oxfordshire.

4. Official Communications

5. Appointments

To make any changes to the membership of scrutiny and other committees on the nomination of political groups and to note any changes to the Cabinet made by the Leader of the Council.

6. 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 must be submitted no later than 9am one working day before the meeting i.e., 9am on Monday 15 April 2024. Requests to speak should be sent to committeesdemocraticservices@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.

7. Questions with Notice from Members of the Public

8. Questions with Notice from Members of the Council

9. Annual Report of the Director of Public Health (Pages 7 - 76)

Report by Corporate Director: Public Health and Community Safety

Directors of Public Health have a statutory duty to publish an annual report on a subject of their choice that they feel demonstrates the state of health within their community. The purpose of this item is to share the report for 23/24.

The full Council is RECOMMENDED to note the Director of Public Health Annual Report and to take every opportunity to support actions and initiatives that will progress related work.

10. Dispensation from Attending Meetings (Pages 77 - 78)

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Full Council has the discretion to approve a dispensation, based on the circumstances of the case, which means that the councillor does not cease to be a member of the Council for failing to attend a meeting during a six-month period.

The Council is RECOMMENDED

- a) **To grant a dispensation to Cllr Yvonne Constance from the statutory requirement to attend a meeting of the Council within a six-month period from the last noted attendance due to illness.**
- b) **To approve that the dispensation last up to and including 30 November 2024.**

11. Report of the Cabinet (Pages 79 - 86)

Report from Leader of the Council.

The report summarises the decisions from the Cabinet meetings on 19 December 2023, 23 January 2024, 30 January 2024, 27 February 2024 and 19 March 2024.

12. Review of Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints against Members (Pages 87 - 120)

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

On 13 March 2024, the Audit and Governance Committee considered the revised arrangements for dealing with complaints against members and recommended that they be adopted by the Council.

Council is RECOMMENDED to approve and adopt the revised arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints against members attached to this

report together with annexes 1 to 5.

13. Audit & Governance Committee Terms of Reference - Whistleblowing Policy
(Pages 121 - 122)

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

At its meeting on 13 March 2024, the Audit and Governance Committee received an updated Whistleblowing Policy and recommended its approval.

Council is RECOMMENDED to amend the terms of reference for the Audit and Governance Committee to include the following addition:
'To monitor whistleblowing arrangements and to approve the Whistleblowing Policy'.

14. Further Draft Recommendations re Electoral Arrangements for Oxfordshire County Council (Pages 123 - 128)

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

During consultation on the draft recommendations, which were published on 3 October 2023, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England received 41 representations, most of which commented on the proposals for divisions in Cherwell District and the Vale of White Horse District. In light of these representations, the LGBCE has amended its proposals and has published further draft recommendations for all divisions in Cherwell and most in Vale of White Horse.

The Council is RECOMMENDED to support the further draft recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) relating to the division boundaries for the Cherwell District and Vale of White Horse District and to submit a response to the further LGBCE consultation confirming this position.

15. Review of Political Balance (Pages 129 - 138)

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Council is RECOMMENDED

- a) **To note the review of political balance of committees to reflect the formation of a new political group 'The Independent Voice of Oxfordshire (TIVOO)' comprising three members: Cllr Stefan Gawrysiak, Cllr Damian Haywood (Deputy Group Leader) and Cllr Sally Povolotsky (Group Leader).**
- b) **To appoint members to the committees of the Council listed at Annex 1. A fully populated list with nominations from the political groups for the vacant seats will be circulated ahead of the meeting.**
- c) **To remove the Corporate Parenting Committee from the list of Council committees.**

EXEMPT ITEM

*It is **RECOMMENDED** that the public be excluded for the duration of item 16 since it is likely that if they were present during that item there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and specified below in relation to those items and since it is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.*

THE REPORT AND ANNEXES TO THE ITEM HAVE NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC AND SHOULD BE REGARDED AS 'CONFIDENTIAL' BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS ENTITLED TO RECEIVE THEM.

THIS ALSO MEANS THAT THE CONTENTS SHOULD NOT BE DISCUSSED WITH OTHERS AND NO COPIES SHOULD BE MADE.

16. Proposed Leadership Restructuring (To Follow)

The information contained in the report is exempt in that it falls within the following prescribed categories:

1. Information relating to a particular individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

MOTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

WOULD MEMBERS PLEASE NOTE THAT ANY AMENDMENTS TO MOTIONS WITH NOTICE MUST BE PRESENTED TO THE PROPER OFFICER IN WRITING BY 9.00 AM ON THE FRIDAY BEFORE THE MEETING

17. Motion by Councillor Eddie Reeves

This Council regrets the way its retendering of services to neurodiverse families, children and young people was handled, leading to Autism Family Support Oxfordshire (AFSO) having funding for its youth groups and family support work cut from 1 April 2024.

The decision means that only funding for AFSO's Easter and Summer holiday activities will now be funded.

This Council further regrets the minimal oversight of such decision afforded to elected members and underscores the importance of democratic accountability in decisions taken in respect of services for vulnerable residents.

Specifically, one would have expected such a change to have been taken with the approval of the Leader of the Council, relevant Cabinet member and/or with pre-

scrutiny of such decision having been taken on a cross-party basis. In the latter case, this did not occur.

The effect of such an arbitrary decision by this Council is that, from 1 April 2024, two well-qualified members of AFSSO's team will be made redundant. Given that AFSSO has provided cost-effective support for children and young people from diagnosis up to the age of 25 for over a decade – managing a caseload of 4,500 families – it is reasonable to assume that cutting its services will make matters worse for families.

Given that the annual cost of maintaining these services is only £90,000, this Council requests that Cabinet review the decision and recommends that a paper be taken to the Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee explaining the chronology and governance surrounding it.

18. Motion by Councillor Mark Cherry

Council requests Cabinet to consider approving the Councils for Fair Tax declaration.

This commits Councils to

- Lead by example and demonstrate good practice in our tax conduct, right across our activities.
- Ensure IR35 is implemented robustly and contract workers pay a fair share of employment taxes.
- Not use offshore vehicles for the purchase of land and property, especially where this leads to reduced payments of stamp duty.
- Undertake due diligence to ensure that not-for-profit structures are not being used inappropriately by suppliers as an artificial device to reduce the payment of tax and business rates.
- Demand clarity on the ultimate beneficial ownership of suppliers, UK and overseas, and their consolidated profit & loss position, given lack of clarity could be strong indicators of poor financial probity and weak financial standing.
- Promote Fair Tax Mark certification especially for any business in which we have a significant stake and where corporation tax is due.
- Support Fair Tax Week events in the area, and celebrate the tax contribution made by responsible businesses that are proud to promote responsible tax conduct and pay their fair share of corporation tax.

Council also requests the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer supporting calls for urgent reform of UK procurement law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies.

19. Motion by Councillor David Rouane

Pride in the appearance of the public realm is important to our residents. Ensuring that streets and pavements are accessible, level, without hazards, clear of weeds and vegetation is essential for preventing long term damage to the footways, improving accessibility for all, visibility, reducing the chances of accidents, and also allowing people to have pride in their neighbourhood.

Council resolves to:

1. Note the difficulties in maintaining weed clearance to a high standard in view of the expanding network of highways, and in the context of over a decade of budget cuts; and
2. Acknowledge the justified phasing out of glyphosate and herbicide-based methods based on health and environmental grounds; and
3. Recognise that the Council has a statutory duty to keep pavements free of weeds and hazards; and
4. Request the Cabinet Member for Transport Management to consider options for alternative methods of weed removal, and scheduled maintenance that are both cost-effective and environmentally friendly, including supporting the work of towns and parishes, local groups and individuals, that can be developed and trialled around the county, and for ongoing consideration of other methods.
5. Request that the Cabinet Member for Finance give due consideration to the findings of this report as part of the 2025/26 budget setting.
6. Embrace collection of green matter from weeding and grass cutting and ask the Cabinet Member for Climate Change Delivery and Environment to consider the feasibility of a county owned Anaerobic digester facility.

20. Motion by Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak

In December Oxfordshire County Council removed 7 beds from the Chiltern care home. These beds were removed without any consultation with the GP's who run them, Henley Town Council and the community of South Oxfordshire and Henley. This lack of consultation by the Council is unacceptable.

These beds were originally provided as NHS beds.

Following FOI requests to the Integrated Care Board Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire Berkshire West (ICB BOB) and the Council we have firmly established that these beds are NHS Beds funded by ICB, the Council and Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and cannot be closed without consultation.

Dr Broughton interim Chief Executive of the ICB BOB states 28th February 2024

"The beds have not 'lost NHS funding', "The beds continued to be overseen by the Oxford University Hospital Hub team."

These beds are NHS beds which cannot be removed without consultation.

This Council:

1. Deplores the removal without consultation
2. Believes these beds which serve a population of 140,000 of South Oxfordshire should be reinstated.

This Council requests that Cabinet:

3. Asks partners to

- seek to reinstate the 7 Chiltern Court Beds serving South Oxfordshire.
- conduct a consultation if they still wish to remove the beds.

21. Motion by Councillor Eddie Reeves

This Council restates its commitment to improving its Children's Services following its Extraordinary Meeting almost six months to the day on 13 October 2023.

Services provided by the Local Area Partnership have not been good enough in recent years and last year's Ofsted-Care Quality Commission report makes it clear that local challenges stand to be recognised and addressed.

At the time of writing, the Council awaits the determination of its Inspecting Local Authorities' Children's Services (ILACS) inspection.

Mindful of the improvements that are needed in its Children's Services in any event, this Council resolves to ensure that there is full and proper consideration of the outcome of the ILACS inspection by elected members, with the Cabinet members for Children's Services and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Improvement meeting with the Chairs of the Education & Young People and People Overview & Scrutiny Committees to ensure that there is proper cross-party scrutiny both of the contents of the report and subsequent improvements arising therefrom.

22. Motion by Councillor Donna Ford

Councillors note the increasing number of vacant bank and building society buildings on our high streets, which are largely the result of technological change. The loss of community banking services is of concern to many residents, especially older constituents and those with disabilities and adaptive needs.

Buckinghamshire Council has set up a Banking Hub in Buckingham library for people to access banking services in the town centre.

Established in partnership with Buckinghamshire Council through its Buckingham and Villages Community Board, with the support of Buckingham Town Council and community representatives, the temporary Banking Hub provides local people with access to banking services. This offers a counter service operated by the Post Office, where customers of all major banks and building societies can carry out regular cash transactions. It also offers a Community Banker service where customers can talk to their banking provider about more complicated issues. Community Bankers work on rotation, with a different bank or building society available on each day of the week, to ensure fair and equitable access to major banking and building society customers.

Council requests the relevant Cabinet member for Community and Corporate Services and the Cabinet Member for Finance to take a lead from forward-thinking colleagues at Buckinghamshire Council and, working with its Town Council, and District Council partners, invite banks and building societies that have left – or are due to leave – our

high streets to explore opportunities to work with this Council to set up similar banking hubs within appropriate Council libraries.

23. Motion by Councillor Eddie Reeves

This Council recognises that the voice of small and medium-sized enterprises ('SMEs') have, too often, been overlooked.

This Council resolves to request the Leader of the Council to appoint a Small Business Champion to provide a single point of contact for local businesspeople, including those running Co-operatives, and advise members attending Cabinet and relevant scrutiny committees of the impact of Council policies on the county's SMEs.

24. Motion by Councillor Freddie van Mierlo

The adopted Local Transport and Connectivity Plan aims to make walking, cycling, public and shared transport the natural first choice. The Director of Public Health's Annual Report states such initiatives have benefits for both physical and mental health – directly through increased physical activity and indirectly through cleaner, less polluted air.

To achieve this important shift, walking and cycling must be made safer. In January 2022, the government introduced new rules on the 'hierarchy of road users', clarifying that pedestrians and cyclists going straight ahead at a junction have priority over traffic waiting to turn into or out of a side road, unless road signs or markings indicate otherwise.

Unfortunately, no funds were given to implement these new rules and few alterations have been made to the road network to reflect these changes on our roads in the past year and a half. This council resolves to ask the Cabinet Member for Transport Management, in conjunction with the Director of Highways and Operations, to consider the formulation of a plan to gradually migrate the signs and lines to mirror the new guidance at the same time that regular planned line refreshes are taking place.

25. Motion by Councillor Charlie Hicks

This Council believes that:

1. The Council needs to do more to increase public involvement of Oxfordshire communities on decisions around the future of transport. Too many residents feel that their views and experiences have been ignored.
2. To bring the public into the room, we need a public deliberative process to empower residents to shape the future of transport in Oxfordshire. This is now possible thanks to the 2024/25 budget amendment by Oxfordshire Labour.

Council requests Cabinet to:

3. Deliver a Citizens' Panel, made up of a representative group of local people, picked by an independent organisation using a fair and transparent process, to be a direct

public accountability function to the Cabinet for the traffic filter trial. The Panel should first meet before the traffic filters are implemented and again multiple times through the traffic filter Experimental Traffic Regulation Order trial period, conducting a deliberative process with input from a range of stakeholders. It should be focused on whether the traffic filter trial is working and should make recommendations to Cabinet on what changes should be made during the trial, whether the filters should be made permanent or not, and next steps regarding “core schemes”.

This process will ensure that the lived experiences of residents are directly factored into future decisions about the traffic filters. To bring the whole public along with the process, it should be publicised widely (e.g. via Youtube) and the wider public should have the ability to provide input.

26. Motion by Councillor Sally Povolotsky

In September 2023, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission declared their judgment post inspection that the Local Area Partnership (LAP) had multiple systemic failures.

Despite the Priority Action Plan (PAP), the Council is failing to meaningfully engage with and capture the voice of the user, our young people.

Council calls on Cabinet to consider;

1. Meaningfully involving young people and youth organisations throughout all policy-making processes within SEND improvement and the PAP. Co-management and co-creation structures are the best way to ensure direct participation.
2. Any consultations or engagement with young people by this council must have a visible public follow-up to the outcomes.
3. All Council policies and frameworks that affect young people, must include an impact assessment, and ensure there are mitigation measures in place for those youth groups that might be negatively impacted by a new policy or framework.
4. Ensuring all future events, in person/online, run by or funded by OCC, especially those related to the PAP, LAP, and SEND improvement, are open to all young people with the attendance of their parent or carer.
5. Launching a rapid task force for the voice of the young person and SEND users, and task them to create a framework for a Youth Forum within 3 months of this meeting date.
6. The leader to appoint a SEND Champion to enable seldom heard voices in the SEND community to feed into SEND improvement and services, and that person to sit on the SEND Improvement board.

27. Motion by Councillor Ian Middleton

In 2018 this council passed a motion stating that it was opposed to the licensing of a badger cull in Oxfordshire.

When DEFRA announced that badger culling would be phased out by 2025, many people believed that the cull had ended. Sadly, culling in Oxfordshire intensified, seemingly with the intent of shooting as many badgers as possible before the deadline. Over 50% of the county is in the killing zones.

A new DEFRA policy now allows epidemiological culling or 'epi-culling', which involves killing up to 100% of badgers across a large area in response to a new cluster of herd breakdowns. Epi-Culling was first introduced in Cumbria, and has been adopted on a trial basis in parts of England over the past five years. Oxfordshire is now being considered by DEFRA for future epi-culling programmes.

A recent scientific report shows that epi-culling is ineffective as a control measure. However, DEFRA, Animal and Public Health Agenda, the bTB Hub/NFU and British Cattle Veterinary Association, continue to advocate its use.

This council therefore :

1. Re-affirms our opposition to badger culling and condemns the introduction of epidemiological culling which has been shown to be an ineffective control measure for bTB.
2. Asks the cabinet to consider a specific policy that badger culling will not be permitted on council owned land.
3. Requests that the leader writes to DEFRA making clear our continued opposition to the cull and any extension of it in size and scope, especially with regard to epidemiological culling.

28. Motion by Councillor Ian Middleton

Many people in Oxfordshire who live in flood prone areas watch the skies with trepidation. In some communities even moderate amounts of sustained rainfall can cause significant flooding that overwhelms outdated flood relief infrastructure. This is often poorly maintained and constructed with no central plan for water management. Sewers are also regularly overwhelmed with infiltration from surface water, causing sewage to leak: putting public health at risk as well as properties.

As the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), the Council has a responsibility to respond to these risks and work with other local authorities to develop flood management plans. We also assess how any new developments will impact on flood prone areas. That role is now more crucial as climate change increases the likelihood and frequency of heavy downpours and flooding across the county.

In the face of these urgent pressures, our powers of intervention are limited by out of date and inadequate guidelines set by central government. These include developers only having to prove that they won't make flooding worse, rather than helping to alleviate the problem in known flood risk areas.

Council calls on the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and other responsible agencies to work with us to :

1. Urgently review national planning guidance and legislation on flood prevention.
2. Provide more powers to LLFAs to prevent or limit developments in known flood risk areas
3. Require developers to contribute to reducing existing risks in flood prone areas as part of any new development.

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.

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.

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Agenda Item 1

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 20 February 2024 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at 8.00 pm

Present:

Councillor Felix Bloomfield – in the Chair

Councillors:

Alison Rooke	Donna Ford	Michael O'Connor
Juliette Ash	Andrew Gant	Glynis Phillips
Brad Baines	Stefan Gawrysiak	Sally Povolotsky
Hannah Banfield	Andy Graham	Susanna Pressel
David Bartholomew	Kate Gregory	Eddie Reeves
Tim Bearder	Jane Hanna OBE	G.A. Reynolds
Robin Bennett	Jenny Hannaby	Judy Roberts
Liz Brighouse OBE	Damian Haywood	David Rouane
Kevin Bulmer	Charlie Hicks	Geoff Saul
Mark Cherry	John Howson	Les Sibley
Andrew Coles	Tony Ilott	Nigel Simpson
Ian Corkin	Bob Johnston	Roz Smith
Imade Edosomwan	Liz Leffman	Ian Snowdon
Trish Elphinstone	Dan Levy	Dr Pete Sudbury
Duncan Enright	Dr Nathan Ley	Bethia Thomas
Mohamed Fadlalla	Mark Lygo	Michael Waine
Arash Fatemian	Kieron Mallon	Liam Walker
Neil Fawcett	Ian Middleton	Richard Webber
Ted Fenton	Freddie van Mierlo	
Nick Field-Johnson	Calum Miller	

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.

1/24 MINUTES

(Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023 were approved as a correct record.

2/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillors Champken-Woods, Constance, Leverton and Murphy.

3/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

4/24 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

(Agenda Item 4)

Charlotte Stacey, Information Services Manager, was awarded a British Empire Medal in the New Year Honours for her services to the community.

The full list of Oxfordshire residents who received honours is in Annex 1 of the Schedule of Business.

Chair's events

- Princess Royal Visit 4th January the Oxford Farming Conference.
- Attended Wallingford school assembly to deliver the winner of the Christmas card competition gift.
- 11th February at the Ashmolean Museum opening the One World Family Festival.
- 20th February Charity cake sale in the Common Hall, all money will be going to the ten chosen charities.
- 15th March Chair's drinks fundraiser evening at County Hall

Invitations received:

- 6th February Civic Party invitation from Christ Church.
- 11th February Cherwell District - Chairman's Sunday lunch and auction
- 15th February Oxfordshire Scouts and Guides show 2024.
- 18th February Civic Service for Henley on Thames.
- 18th February Lunar New Year celebrations at Oxford Town Hall.
- 19th February The Romanes Lecture.
- 1st March Lord Mayor of Didcot's Charity Dinner.
- 7th March celebration and launch of the Didcot Powerhouse Fund 2023 impact report.
- 13th March Mamma Mayor – Mayor of Henley's fundraising dinner
- 16th March fundraising quiz from the Chair of SODC.

Alan Brown CBE DL, who was county chief executive from 1973-1988, sadly passed away on the 13 December at the age of 95. He leaves a wife, Marie, and two daughters.

Also in December our former Chief Education Officer Sir Tim Brighouse passed way at the age of 83. Sir Tim served in the role from 1978 to 1989.

5/24 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item 5)

Council approved the following changes to Committees:

Education & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Cllr Corkin to replace Cllr Simpson

Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Cllr Simpson to replace Cllr Constance

Council noted a change made by the Leader of the Council to one of the Cabinet positions:

Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Pete Sudbury, is now responsible for Climate Change, Environment & Future Generations. The detailed responsibilities for this portfolio are as follows:

- climate change mitigation
- climate adaptation and resilience
- lead flood authority including Oxford flood alleviation
- planetary boundaries and circular economy
- ecology, nature recovery and enhancement
- future generations
- minerals strategy, waste disposal and recycling centres
- Countryside operations and volunteers
- ecology/archaeology/heritage
- water strategy including Thames Water (TW) reservoir
- energy strategy
- tree strategy
- highways verge and vegetation management strategy

6/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item 6)

The following requests to speak were agreed by the Chair:

Lyndsey Caldwell
Tammy Heavens
Amanda Edwards-Day
Philippa Jackson Gibbons
Edward Hayter
David Henwood
John Center
Bernadette Evans
Richard Parnham
Sharon Jeacock
Claire Brenner

The text of any speeches supplied to the Council are attached to the minutes.

7/24 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024/25

(Agenda Item 7)

The Localism Act 2011 ('the Act') requires all councils to agree and publish a Pay Policy Statement every financial year. The statement, attached to the report, had been recommended for approval by the Remuneration Committee at its meeting on 17 January 2024.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Neil Fawcett, Cabinet Member for Community & Corporate Services, and seconded by Councillor Liz Leffman.

Members of the Remuneration Committee informed Council that there had been agreement at their meeting that, in future reports to Council seeking approval of a salary for a chief officer, it should be stated if a pay rise was likely to be applied in the months following the appointment.

The recommendation was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to consider and approve the 2024/25 Pay Policy Statement following approval at Remuneration Committee on 17 January 2024.

8/24 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLANNING 2024/25 - 2026/27

(Agenda Item 8)

Council had before it the Cabinet's proposed budget for 2024/25, medium term financial plan to 2026/27 and capital programme to 2033/34, together with a number of strategies and policies that the Council was required to approve for the 2024/25 financial year.

Amendments had been submitted by the Conservative Independent Alliance and by the Labour & Cooperative Group. The Chair decided to hear the debate on the Cabinet proposals first, followed by the debate on the amendments from the Conservative Independent Alliance and finally the debate on the amendments from the Labour & Cooperative Group. The Chair proposed that the meeting then be adjourned for discussions between the groups to formulate proposals that would achieve majority support.

The Cabinet recommendations were proposed by Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, and seconded by Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance. The recommendations were debated.

The amendments in Addenda 1 were proposed by Councillor Eddie Reeves, Leader of the Opposition, and seconded by Councillor David Bartholomew, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance. The amendments in Addenda 1 were debated.

The amendments in Addenda 2 were proposed by Councillor Liz Brighouse, Leader of the Labour & Cooperative Group, and seconded by Councillor

Brad Baines, the group's spokesperson on Finance. The amendments in Addenda 2 were debated.

The Chair proposed an adjournment at 5.10pm.

The meeting resumed at 7.10pm.

The following Members had left the meeting: Councillors Fadlalla, Haywood, Reynolds and Simpson.

A new proposal, with amendments published in Addenda 4, was proposed by Councillor Liz Leffman and seconded by Councillor Liz Brighthouse. The new proposal was debated and put to a vote.

Councillors voting for the proposal (37):

Baines, Banfield, Bennett, Brighthouse, Cherry, Coles, Edosomwan, Elphinstone, Enright, Fawcett, Gant, Gawrysiak, Graham, Gregory, Hanna, Hannaby, Hicks, Howson, Johnston, Leffman, Levy, Ley, Lygo, Middleton, van Mierlo, Miller, O'Connor, Phillips, Pressel, Roberts, Rooke, Rouane, Saul, Smith, Sudbury, Thomas, Webber.

Councillors voting against the proposal (0)

Councillors abstaining (18):

Ash, Bartholomew, Bearder, Bloomfield, Bulmer, Corkin, Fatemian, Fenton, Field-Johnson, Ford, Ilott, Mallon, Povolotsky, Reeves, Sibley, Snowdon, Waine, Walker.

RESOLVED to:

- a. have regard to the statutory report of the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer set out in Amended Section 3.1 in approving recommendations b to d below;
- b. (in respect of the budget and medium term financial strategy – at Section 4) approve the following:
 - (1) the council tax and precept calculations for 2024/25 [at Cabinet Section 4.3] and in particular:
 - (i) a precept of £498,633,415;
 - (ii) a council tax for band D equivalent properties of £1,820.56;
 - (2) a budget for 2024/25 [at Amended Cabinet Section 4.4 which incorporates the changes set out in Labour & Co-operative Group Section 4.2];
 - (3) a medium term financial strategy for 2024/25 to 2026/27 [at Amended Cabinet Section 4.1 (which incorporates changes to the existing medium term financial strategy as set out in

- Cabinet Section 4.2 and amended by Labour & Co-operative Group Section 4.2)];**
- (4) the Financial Strategy for 2024/25 [at Cabinet Section 4.5];**
 - (5) the Earmarked Reserves and General Balances Policy Statement 2024/25 [at Amended Cabinet Section 4.6 which incorporates Labour & Co-operative Group Section 4.6]. This includes:**
 - (i) the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer's recommended level of General Balances for 2024/25 [at Amended Cabinet Section 4.6], and**
 - (ii) the planned level of Earmarked Reserves for 2024/25 to 2026/27 [at Amended Cabinet Section 4.6.1 which incorporates Labour & Co-operative Group Section 4.6].**
- c. (in respect of capital – at Section 5) approve:**
- (1) the Capital & Investment Strategy for 2024/25 to 2033/34 including the Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Methodology Statement [at Amended Cabinet Section 5.1 which incorporates Labour & Co-operative Group Section 5.3];**
 - (2) a Capital Programme for 2023/24 to 2033/34 [at Amended Cabinet Section 5.4 which includes new capital proposals set out in Cabinet's Section 5.3 which incorporates Labour & Co-Operative Group Section 5.3].**
- d. (in respect of treasury management – at Section 5) approve:**
- (1) the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2024/25 [at Cabinet Section 5.2] including the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and the Specified Investment and Non-Specified Investment Instruments.**
 - (2) that any further changes required to the 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy be delegated to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance.**

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

Divisions Affected -

COUNTY COUNCIL

16 APRIL 2024

Annual Report of Director of Public Health

Report by Corporate Director: Public Health and Community Safety

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The full Council is RECOMMENDED to note the Director of Public Health Annual Report and to take every opportunity to support actions and initiatives that will progress related work.**

Executive Summary

2. Directors of Public Health have a statutory duty to publish an annual report on a subject of their choice that they feel demonstrates the state of health within their community. The purpose of this item is to share the report for 23/24.
3. In summary, this Director of Public Health Annual Report shines the spotlight on the impact of climate change on health and the health and wellbeing benefits of positive climate action. It recognises that climate change is one of the most significant threats to our population at a local level as well as globally.

Director of Public Health Annual Report Overview

4. Directors of Public Health have a statutory duty to publish an annual report on a subject of their choice that demonstrates the state of health within their community. The purpose of this item is to share this report with full Council.
4. Health is the untold story in the climate emergency. This is concerning given that the adverse impacts of our deteriorating climate on the health and wellbeing of our residents are immediate. Equally, immediate and positive health benefits for individuals, families and communities can be delivered through climate action. Climate action means better health across the life course – whether we are talking about newborn babies, children, teenagers, working age adults or older people. It will also benefit the building blocks of health: providing homes which can be heated and cooled affordably, infrastructure for people to walk and cycle to keep communities active, connected, and healthy, and green spaces to boost mental health and store carbon.

5. Despite progress to reduce fossil fuel use and polluting greenhouse gas emissions, climate change is happening now in Oxfordshire, posing a real and current threat to health and wellbeing. We are all experiencing the effects of the climate emergency with increased frequency and severity of adverse weather events. Since 2007, there have been 18 severe flood events, 10 named storms, 8 severe cold snaps, 4 major heatwaves and 3 periods of drought. These events are having direct and harmful impacts on our health and wellbeing and will continue to lead to premature deaths and preventable suffering unless necessary climate action is taken.
6. This report has been developed and refined by an interdisciplinary steering group, with collaboration between colleagues in public health, data intelligence, climate action, emergency planning and food policy. It seeks to help reframe the debate: to look through the lens of the positive co-benefits of climate action and enable residents to see the individual benefits to their health and wellbeing. It celebrates the great work we have already done, but we urgently need to do more, and it recommends actions for all of us. We cannot do this alone; everyone and every organisation has an important role to play. The report encourages individuals to make positive behaviour changes and system partners to prioritise actions that are good for wellbeing and the climate. It aims to bring our partners in Oxfordshire together under one key ambition to make Oxfordshire a healthier place for all of us.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

8. This report supports the current Oxfordshire County Council Strategic Plan for working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. Particularly the priorities which aim to improve the health and wellbeing of residents, tackle the climate emergency and reduce inequalities. Recommendations for system actions also support delivery of priorities to invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network and to preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces as well as working with local businesses for environmental economic and social benefit.

Financial Implications

6. There are no financial implications arising from this report. The Officer resource required to develop this work has required and will continue to require contribution from colleagues in the public health, data intelligence, climate action, emergency planning and policy teams; there are no additional costs associated with this support.

Comments checked by:

Stephen Rowles, Strategic Finance Business Partner,
Stephen.rowles@oxfordshire.gov.uk

7.

Legal Implications

8. The Health and Social Care Act 2012, sets out a requirement for all Directors of Public Health to produce an annual independent report on the health of their local population and the county council is required to publish it under the National Health Service Act 2006. This report will enable the Director of Public Health and the County Council to comply with these statutory duties.

Comments checked by:

Jennifer Crouch, Principal Solicitor (Environment Team)
Jennifer.crouch@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality & Inclusion Implications

9. From the outset, health and social inequalities, and barriers to inclusion across Oxfordshire have been considered in the planning and delivery of this year's DPHAR report. This follows on from work undertaken through the 2019/2020 DPHAR on inequalities in health outcomes across the county "Some are more equal than others: hidden inequalities in a prospering Oxfordshire".

Sustainability Implications

10. This paper relates to climate and sustainability directly, as it focuses on the intersection between climate and health. This work has been undertaken in collaboration with the climate action team at Oxfordshire County Council.

Consultations and Communications

11. 'The key messages and insights from this annual report have been presented for discussion to a number of stakeholders including: Portfolio Holders for public health and climate action; County Council Strategic Leadership Team; Climate Action Programme Board; County Council Informal Cabinet; Public Health Whole Team Meeting; Future Oxfordshire Partnership Environmental Advisory Group; the Districts Chief Executives Meeting; Oxfordshire's Health & Wellbeing Board; Full Members briefing, prior to the launch of the report at Full Council on 16 April 2024.

Throughout the development of the draft report, clear and concise language has been used which avoids jargon. The communications team have been involved from the outset to ensure the Annual Report is accessible and widely available to the general public when it is launched in April 2024. The draft

report builds on the Health and Wellbeing Board public consultation with respect to climate and health.

Annex: Director of Public Health Annual Report

Anzaf Azhar, Corporate Director of Public Health and Community Safety

March 2024

Contact Officer: Rosie Rowe, Head of Healthy Place Shaping, Public Health
Rosie.rowe@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Healthier, Cleaner, Faster:

Climate Action for Health in Oxfordshire

Director of Public Health

Annual Report on climate
change and health

Page 11
2023/24



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**



Foreword from Ansaf Azhar

Every year I use my Director of Public Health Annual Report as a vehicle to shine the spotlight on a significant issue that is relevant to Oxfordshire partners and public, with a view to creating a strong call to action.

My report last year focused on what is arguably one of the biggest lifestyle public health risks at a population level for Oxfordshire residents, the increasing prevalence of excess weight and physical inactivity. We talked about how addressing this issue is not simply limited to individual choice but largely governed by socioeconomic and environmental factors. In doing so, we talked about the role of healthy place-shaping in creating a place that promotes healthy behaviours in the first place. We also know these same interventions and place-shaping initiatives create a sustainable environment that is good for our climate.

Today, as I reflect on the biggest public health challenges to our population's wellbeing, climate change stands out as one of the most significant threats to our population both at global and local level, with strong tangible links to other public health threats we have previously discussed. Therefore, I want to use this year's annual report to focus on the health impacts of climate change, and the health and wellbeing benefits of positive climate action.





For too long, we have tended to focus on major challenges to our wellbeing in their individual silos. Their positive impacts have been seen as individual benefits in terms of improving the environment or health or helping with the cost of living crisis or tackling health inequalities. This silo thinking has caused polarisation of the debate, when in reality all the initiatives to tackle the above challenges, executed effectively, will complement each other and lead to a synergistic effect in their benefits to the population.

This is particularly evident in the interaction between our health and the environment. The adverse impacts of our deteriorating climate on the health and wellbeing of our residents are immediate. This came into sharp focus during the recent flooding in Oxfordshire, where the loss of livelihood and the consequent impact on our mental health and overall wellbeing was unprecedented. These events are going to be more common going forward.

We also know what we do to mitigate climate change also has immediate benefits to our health and wellbeing and these benefits are felt by individuals and communities, creating healthy places where healthy behaviours will be the norm. This approach is both nationally and

internationally recognised, leading to the first declaration on climate and health at the COP 28.

This report seeks to help reframe the debate. To look through the lens of the positive co-benefits of climate action and enable our residents to see the individual benefits to their health and wellbeing. It celebrates the great work we have already done, but we urgently need to do more, and it recommends actions for all of us. We cannot do this alone, everyone and every organisation has an important role to play. It encourages individuals to make positive behaviour changes and system partners to prioritise actions that are good for wellbeing and the climate.

I believe it will bring our partners in Oxfordshire together under one key ambition to make Oxfordshire a healthier place for all of us. Our anchor institutions through our partnership network have a particularly important role in delivering this ambition. We must act now for the benefit of the health and wellbeing of our population.

I hope you enjoy this report, and it inspires you to join this exciting journey to make Oxfordshire a great place for all our residents.

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- Adam Briggs
- Ivana Thomas
- Members of the DPHAR steering group
- OCC Climate Action Team
- OCC Emergency Planning Team
- South Central Ambulance Service

Introduction

Health is the untold story in the climate emergency.¹ This is staggering given the immediate and positive health benefits for individuals, families and communities which can be delivered through climate action.

Climate action means better health for everyone whether we are talking about newborn babies, children, teenagers, working age adults or older people. Amidst mounting pressure in our NHS, tackling the impacts of the changing climate across Oxfordshire will save lives and money and conserve resources for those most in need. It will also benefit the building blocks of our health: providing homes which can be heated and cooled affordably, infrastructure for people to walk and cycle to keep communities active, connected, and healthy, and green spaces to boost mental health and store carbon.

To date there has been progress toward ambitious goals to mitigate and adapt to the changing climate in Oxfordshire. We are a national leader on climate action, with a countywide strategy and action plan that has

already contributed to major reductions in emissions among residents, businesses and the transport sector.² Total emissions in the county fell by more than one third (34 per cent) between 2008 and 2021, whilst emissions per capita fell by 42 per cent.³ Over the same period, there were reductions in greenhouse emissions across all sectors with a 70 per cent reduction from businesses, 35 per cent reduction from residents and their homes and 16 per cent reduction from transport sources.³

Despite some progress to reduce fossil fuel use and polluting greenhouse gas emissions, climate change is happening now in Oxfordshire, posing a real and current threat to health and wellbeing.¹ We are all experiencing the effects of the climate emergency with increased frequency and severity of adverse weather events. Since 2007, there have been 18 severe flood events, 10 named storms, eight severe cold snaps, four major heatwaves and three periods of drought (see figure 1 on next page).⁴

These events are having direct and harmful impacts on our health and wellbeing and will continue to lead to premature deaths and

preventable suffering unless necessary climate action is taken. Of real concern, many infectious diseases are sensitive to the climate, and with warmer temperatures we can expect a greater risk of new and emerging infectious diseases on our doorstep.⁵ The impact of climate change on individuals will vary, with the worst effects on disadvantaged and more vulnerable populations, and without necessary action this will further widen health inequalities.⁵

This report sets out just how important a connected health, wellbeing and climate strategy is in Oxfordshire. There is a clear link between healthier, happier communities and sustained climate action, and it is time we made the most of this opportunity. This report raises awareness of the immediate and longer-term health benefits of local climate action and aims to maximise these health benefits in every climate action, policy and strategy undertaken across the county.

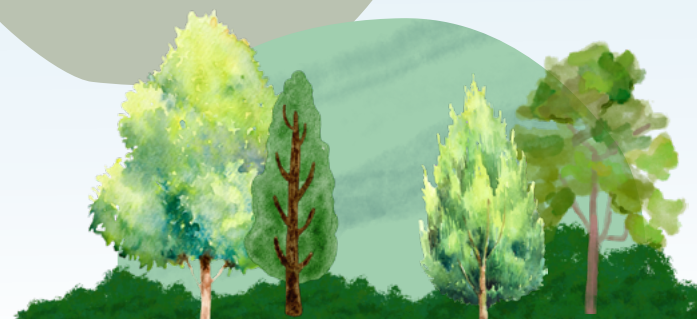
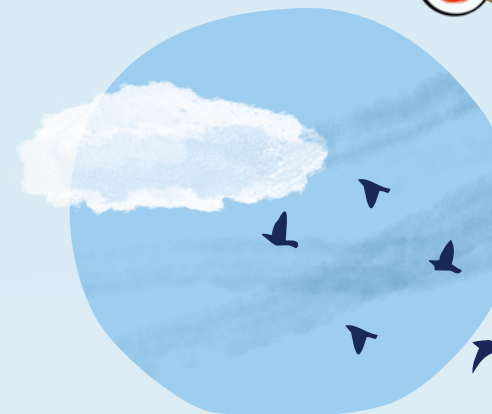
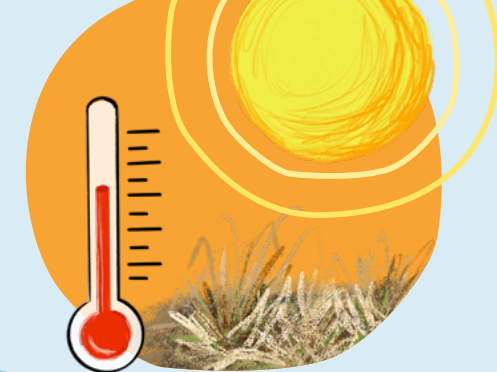
Section 1:

Why the focus on the impact of climate change on health now?

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1.0 Introduction

We all need to take urgent climate action in Oxfordshire to protect and improve our health. There are five key areas of the climate emergency with implications for our health: **temperature, air, water, food, and nature**. Current evidence describes the local health impacts of our changing climate across these five areas in Oxfordshire. The evidence is currently strongest for adverse impacts of climate on health due to heat and cold, flooding and vector-borne infectious diseases.⁵





1.1 Temperature

Temperatures are increasing in Oxfordshire, the UK and globally. Hotter weather has also been accompanied by increasing numbers of adverse weather events, such as storms, freezing conditions and snow.⁶ Hot weather and heatwaves now occur frequently in Oxfordshire, affecting the health, lives and livelihoods of people across the county.⁷ The summers are drier and the rain that does fall is more likely to occur in heavy rainfall events.⁵

Although hot weather has positive connotations for many, in the absence of necessary climate adaptation, higher temperatures increase the risk of heart attacks, stroke, lung disease and severe mental illness.⁵⁻⁶ Hot weather can also impact indirectly on health by increasing the transmission of food, vector and waterborne infectious diseases.⁵⁻⁶

There is robust evidence that as temperatures increase above a certain level the risk of death increases.⁶

In the summer of 2022 alone, there were 65 excess deaths during periods of higher temperature across Oxfordshire.⁷

The effects of hot weather

Direct effects:



dehydration



dizziness & fainting



heatstroke



heat exhaustion



heat cramps



heat rash



heart attacks



severe breathing difficulties

Indirect effects:



Increased demand on healthcare services



Power outages, affecting homes and healthcare services



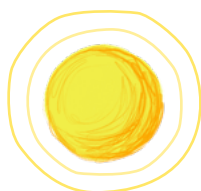
Wildfires, and by association smoke inhalation

Increasing temperature in excess of 25°C are associated with severe illness and excess heat-related deaths in vulnerable people. Higher temperatures can affect your health in different ways.



Specific groups including babies and young children, older people, people experiencing homelessness, outdoor and manual workers and people with longer term medical conditions are especially at risk because they are more exposed to heat and/or less able to compensate under these conditions.⁶

For example, older adult social care users (living at home) are more likely to be living in deprived urban areas of Oxfordshire which are more likely to retain heat than surrounding rural areas during periods of hot weather, particularly at night.⁸



Average temperatures are increasing in Oxfordshire

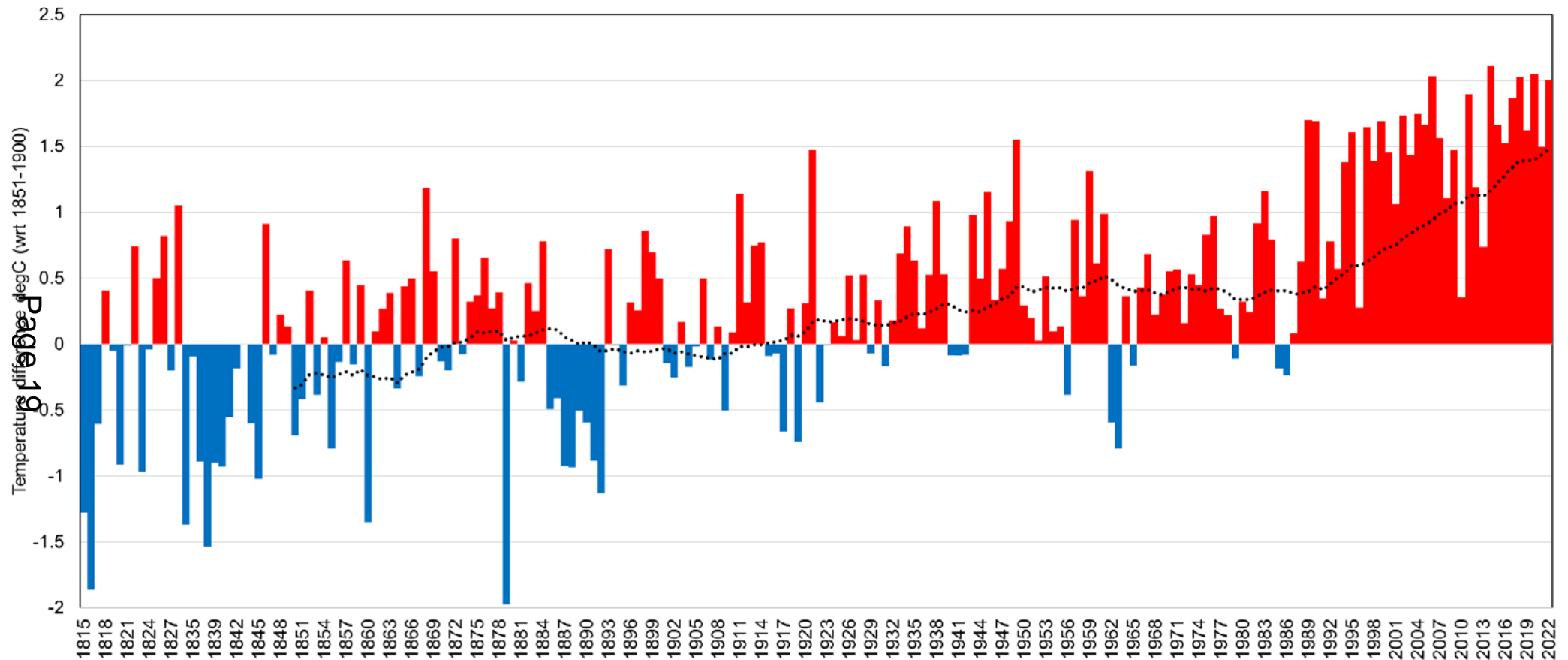


Figure 1 Average annual mean temperature anomalies for Oxford (top) and climate stripes (bottom) for Oxford and across Oxfordshire (OCC) relative to a pre-industrial 1851-1900 baseline (data from OUCE Radcliffe Observatory and Met Office HadUK).

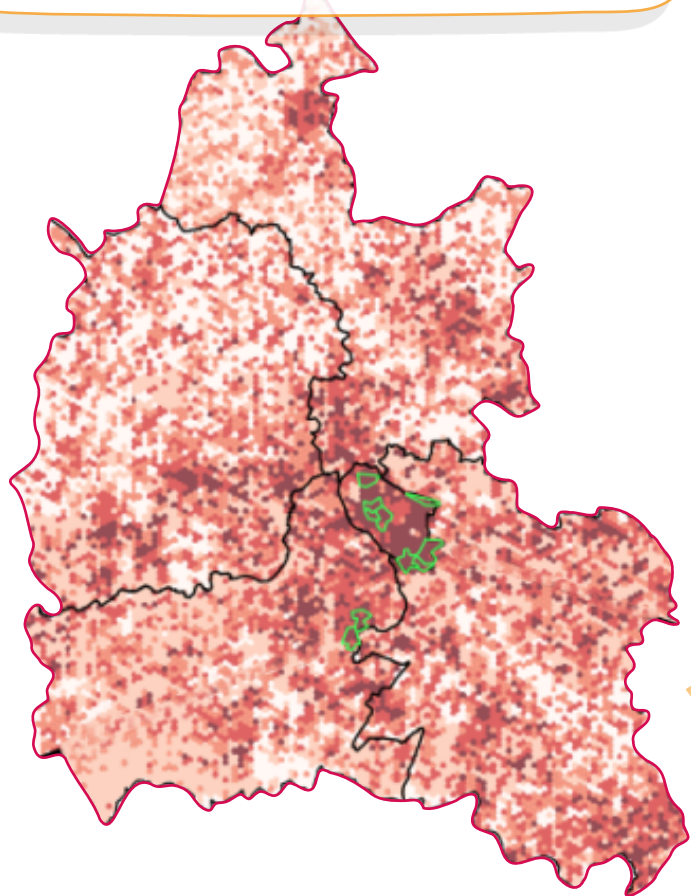
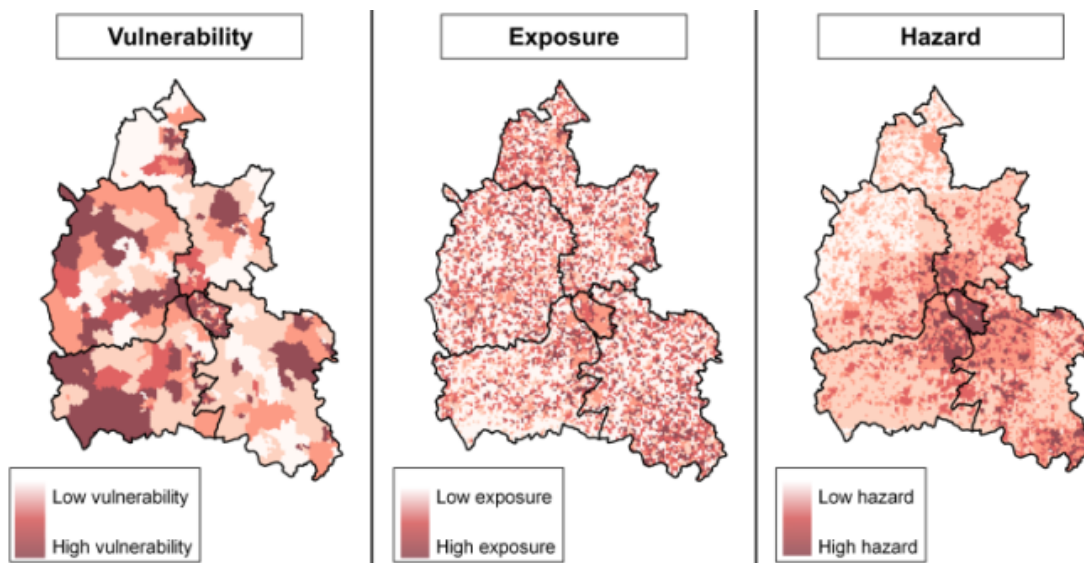
Source: Oxford Weather and Climate since 1767 by Stephen Burt and Tim Burt, published by Oxford University Press, 2022.



Source: Atkins Health Impact Assessment



There are particular areas, some of which experience among the highest levels of deprivation in Oxfordshire, which are at higher risk of adverse effects of heat.



The higher risk areas for heat severity in Oxfordshire:

Abingdon Abbey Northcourt,
Abingdon Caldecott,
Barton and Sandhills,
Blackbird Leys,
Carfax and Jericho,

Cotteslowe and Sunnymead,
Holywell,
Northfield Brook,
Littlemore,
Walton Manor.⁴

Figure 3 Current Heatwave risk in Oxfordshire and ten wards with the highest heatwave risk.

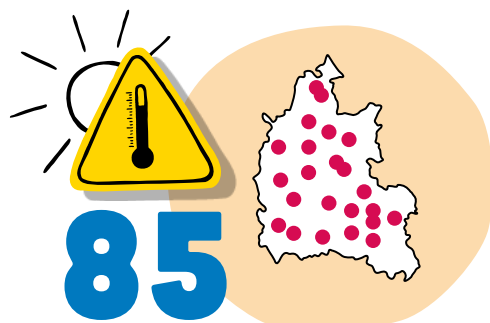
Source: Atkins Health Impact Assessment

Hot weather also impacts on health and social care services, and the health care system's ability to respond and provide routine care. Nine in 10 UK hospitals, including hospitals in Oxfordshire, are currently susceptible to overheating due to their architectural design, poor ventilation, and lack of cooling systems. This has doubled in the past five years.⁹ Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust reported the highest burden of overheating events across the southeast region in 2022 and was ranked sixth in England with 85 events across four sites.⁹

Across England, total costs of heat-related deaths from climate change and related socioeconomic change has been estimated at £6.8 billion per year in the 2020s, rising to £14.7 billion per year in the 2050s.⁵

9 in 10

UK hospitals are susceptible to overheating



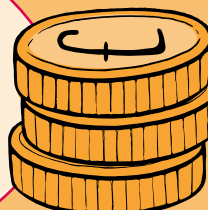
85
overheating occurrences in Oxfordshire in 2022



51
Oxfordshire care homes at risk of overheating

Cost of socioeconomic change due to heat related deaths across England

£6.8 billion



2020



2050

£14.7 billion







At least 51 care homes, four hospitals and 40 GP and healthcare facilities are located in areas of high current heat risk. In addition, at least 130 educational establishments are located in areas of high current heat risk.⁴

Figure 4 shows projected heat risks faced by care homes, GP practices and hospitals across Oxfordshire.⁹

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-  Districts
-  Care homes
-  GP and healthcare facilities
-  Hospitals

Heatwave hazard

-  Low hazard
-  High hazard

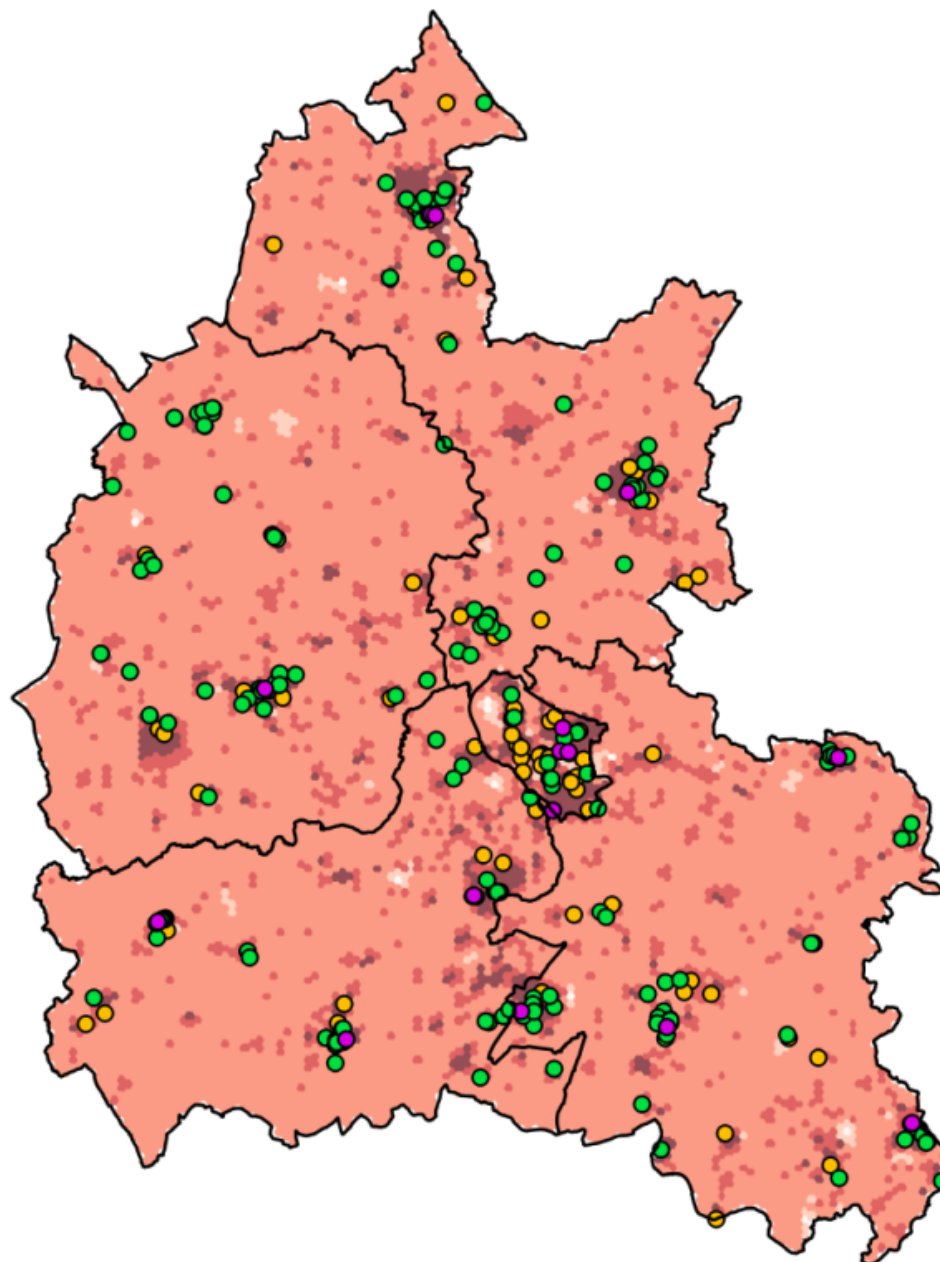


Figure 4 Healthcare facilities and future heatwave hazard.

Source: Atkins Health Impact Assessment



During the September 2023 heatwave, total ambulance demand across Oxfordshire increased by 8.6 per cent the week of the heatwave compared to the preceding 7 days – see figure 5.¹⁰

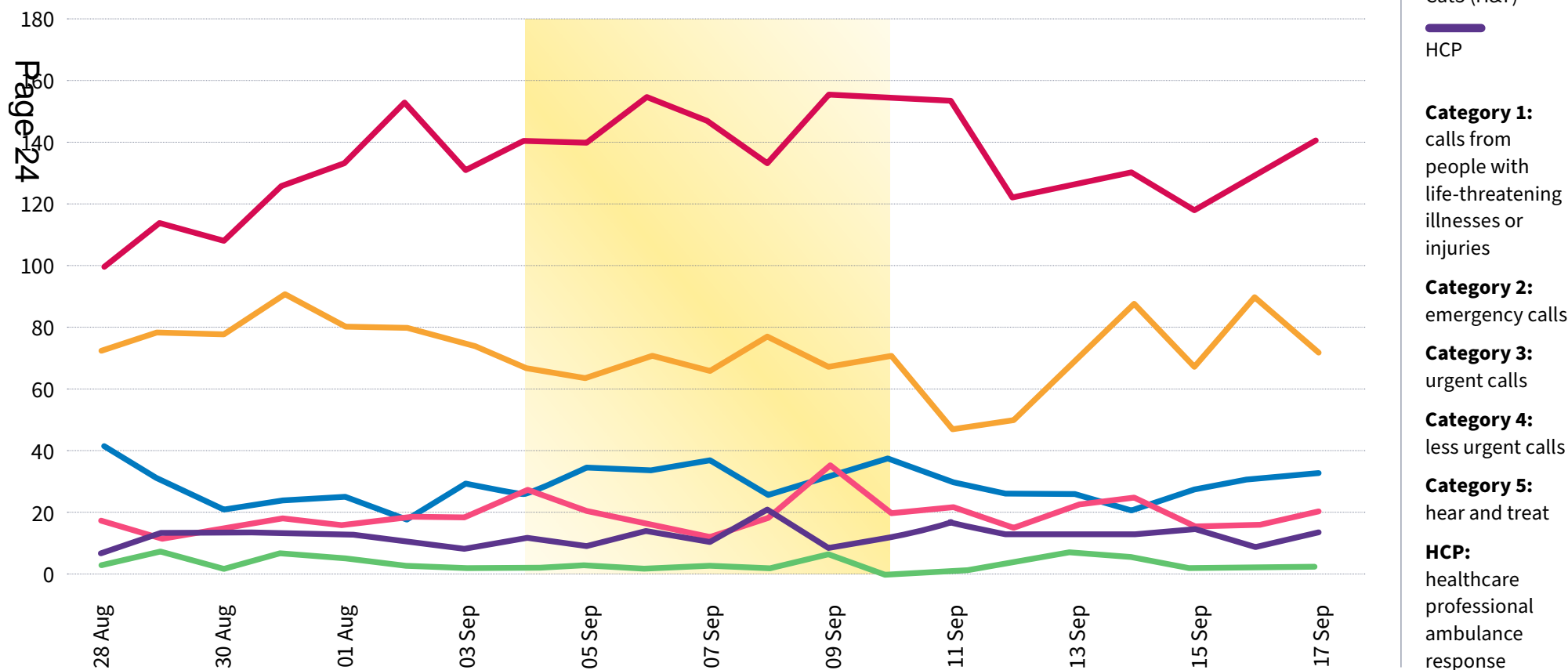
Patient acuity also increased with higher numbers of category 1 (life threatening) and 2 (emergency) calls, with a relative reduction in category 3 (urgent) calls.¹⁰

Figure 5
999 incidents demand by category of call during the September 2023 heatwave, Oxfordshire.

Source:
South-Central Ambulance Service

999 incidents demand - Oxfordshire CCG

Heatwave 4 - 10 September 2023





During the unprecedented July 2022 heatwave, patient acuity also increased during the week of the heatwave, with higher numbers of category 1 and 2 calls – see figure 6.¹⁰

This pattern of more severe patient acuity persisted for one week following the heatwave.¹⁰

999 incidents demand

Unprecedented heatwave 16 - 19 July 2022

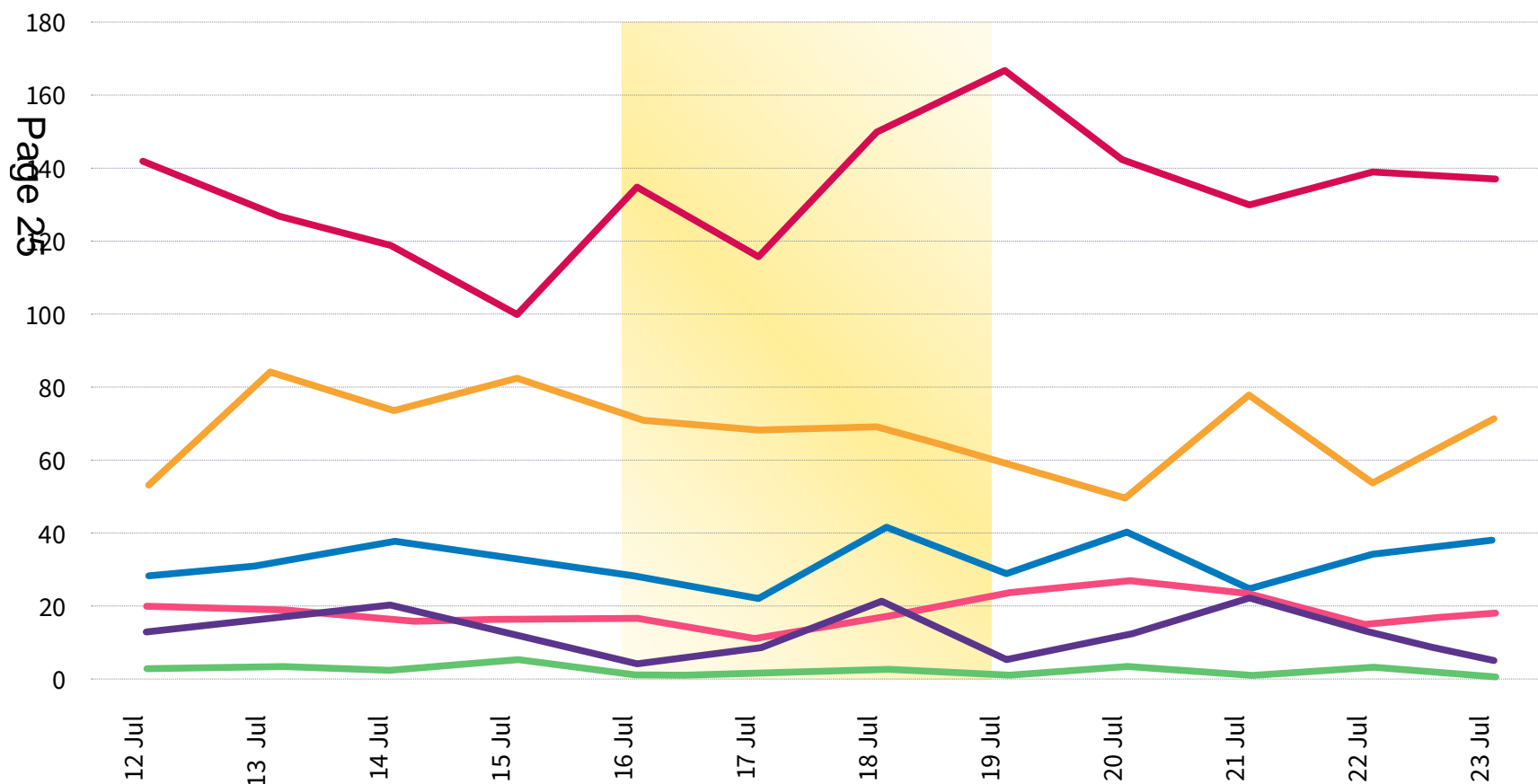


Figure 6
999 incidents demand by category of call during the July 2022 heatwave, Oxfordshire.

Source:
South-Central
Ambulance Service



Category 1:
calls from people with life-threatening illnesses or injuries

Category 2:
emergency calls

Category 3:
urgent calls

Category 4:
less urgent calls

Category 5:
hear and treat

HCP:
healthcare professional ambulance response

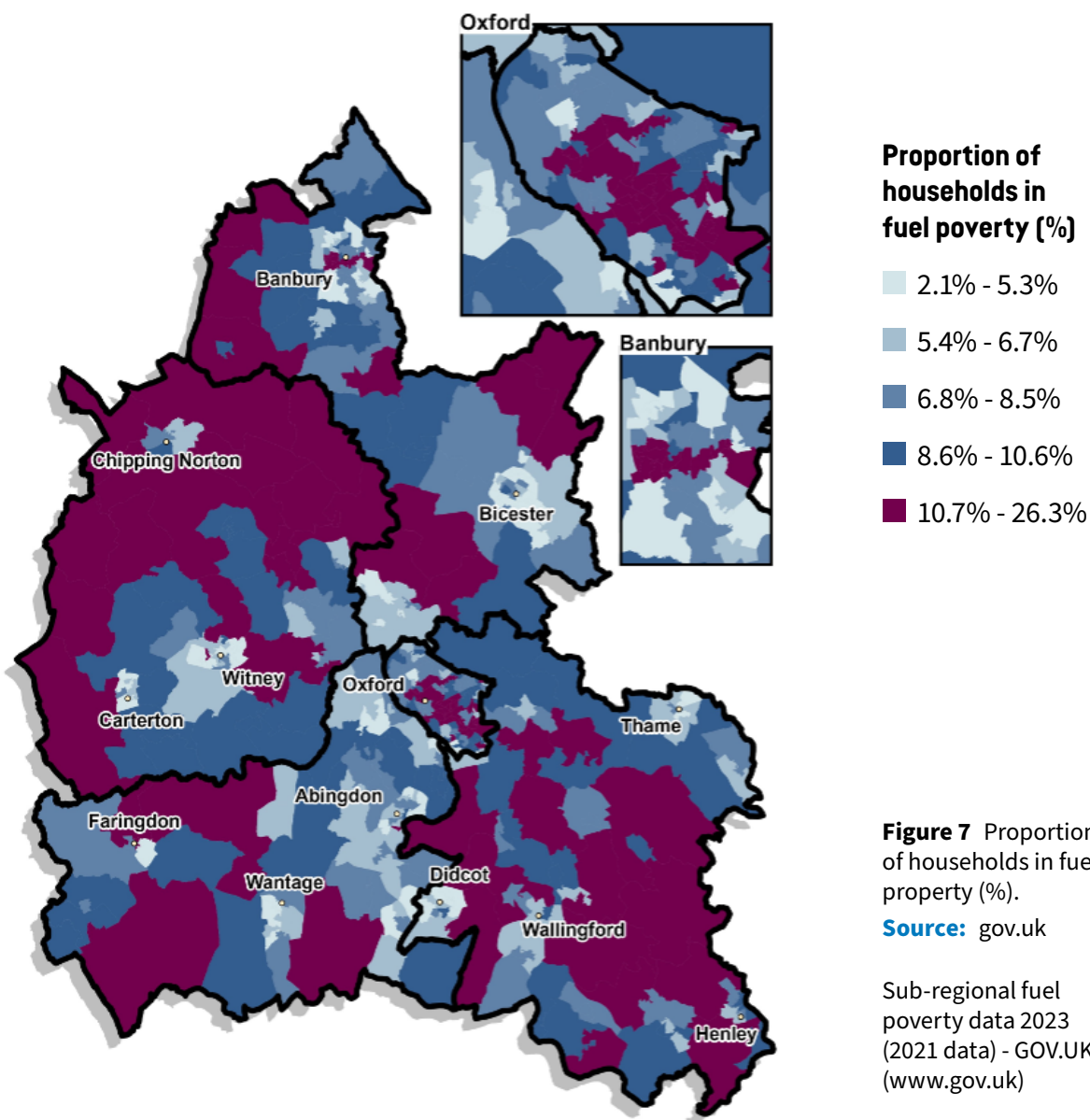


Despite the effects of climate change, cold-related ill-health and premature deaths are still significant (although these are expected to decrease over time).⁴⁻⁶ Cold-related deaths are currently linked in part to poor quality housing, fuel poverty, seasonal infections like flu and norovirus, physical hazards like snow and ice and underlying health inequalities.⁶ Fuel poverty particularly impacts the ability to stay warm, well and healthy through the seasons.

Oxford City experiences significantly worse levels of fuel poverty (10 per cent of households) than the regional average (8.4 per cent) and in 2023, there were estimated to be 23,197 households in Oxfordshire experiencing fuel poverty. See figure 7.⁸

This is likely to be due to a combination of factors including the quality of local housing and financial pressures of the cost-of-living crisis. Better quality housing not only helps keep housing warm in the winter and cool in the summer, improving health and wellbeing and reducing household bills, but overall means that less energy is needed in the first place to run households, therefore reducing emissions.⁵ **One study found that improved insulation may offer the greatest health benefit of all actions taken to reach net zero,** however in the absence of appropriate household ventilation this intervention could result in over 200,000 life-years lost by 2050 and over one million lost by 2100 due to indoor air pollution.¹¹

The proportion of households in fuel poverty varies across Oxfordshire





The direct effects of cold weather include heart attacks, stroke, lung disease, flu outbreaks, falls, injuries and hypothermia.⁵⁻⁶ The indirect effects of cold weather include disruption to local infrastructure and healthcare services by snow and ice, the impacts of cold homes and fuel poverty on mental health, reduced educational attainment and success at work and carbon monoxide poisoning from poorly maintained or ventilated boilers and/or heating appliances with a combustion source.⁶ People with dementia or cognitive impairment are more at risk, as they may not readily recognise that they are feeling cold.⁶ Increases in cold related deaths may be observed for up to four weeks following the cold snap.⁶

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Testimony on housing:

"Especially last winter when it was getting really cold, it was - our front door, I could see light, so I knew that [cold air] was coming in, but it was gaps everywhere and so that proved to be an issue, both in the winter and in the summer. In the summer, I've got to put sheets up on my windows to keep the heat out."

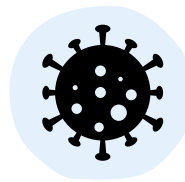
The direct and indirect health effects of winter weather

The human body responds in several different ways to exposure to cold weather, even at temperatures that might be considered relatively mild: **4 to 8°C**

Direct effects



heart attack



influenza



stroke



hypothermia


respiratory
disease

falls &
injuries

Indirect effects



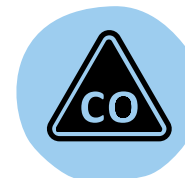
snow and ice may cause disruption to healthcare services



cold homes and fuel poverty are linked with poor mental health and social isolation



reduced education and employment success



carbon monoxide poisoning



Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service testimony:

“I’ve been in the service for twenty years. We are such an agricultural county, it is not uncommon to go to field fires, house fires, agricultural incidents – whether it’s people knocking over telegraph poles while they are combine harvesting, refracted light through glass bottles, careless fire handling in fields, or malicious arson. That’s not unusual for the fire service. Farmers understand a lot of this they already do a lot to help themselves and keep things safe.

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During the major heatwaves, we went to 8 wildfire incidents across the county – because they were out of control.

The danger with wildfires is they can travel unrestricted – we got close to that but managed to contain it.

I was sent down onto the M25 to deal with a grass fire. **We heard that there was a firefighter receiving an intravenous drip due to heat exhaustion. In field fires, you can experience heat exhaustion because you’re chasing, you’re running against the fire.** The effects of heat exhaustion and heat induced stroke really come to the forefront. You have all this kit on and you’re chasing long distances. You have to be physically fit. If you’re caught in the wrong wind direction, in a standing crop fire, it can have fatal consequences. It can be quite bad. Recently, there’s been a lot of work about classifying firefighting as a carcinogenic employment – you’re going from job to job because you want to be there, make a difference, help the general public – but suddenly you’re covered with ash and sweat – there’s a big knock-on effect on your health. That’s a big health consideration. We haven’t struck the balance right yet.



Every time there’s a fire, it has the potential to make or break people. People are losing their yield, their crops – whether it’s food or animals. And, if there are animals involved, that’s traumatic. If machinery is burnt, people could lose their farm, they could lose everything. If the fields are flooded in the spring and then there’s a large fire that takes multiple fields out – it might take years to recoup that money.



1.1.1 Fires

There were **477 total fires in 2023**, **726 total fires in 2022** and **436 total fires in 2021** (Source: Fire and safety live reporting platform).

Between 2022-23, **1451 emergency incidents** attended were related to fire. Fire accounted for 22% of the total incidents the fire and safety service responded to (an increase from 17.86% compared to the year before). The extreme summer temperatures saw more outdoor fires than normal between 2022/23.

During the unprecedented heatwaves of 2022, fire services surrounding Oxfordshire declared major incidents after multiple fires broke out, including classified wildfires.

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service have made some further improvements with the introduction of GENFO firefighting backpacks which hold 18 litres of water. These can be carried by firefighters to extinguish and damp down small pockets of fire and hot embers, preventing further ignition and reducing the chance of fire spread. The packs have been issued to all front-line appliances and to 4x4 vehicles. Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service have increased the number of fogging systems on 4x4 off-road vehicles. They have also made available a high volume pump and water carrier if access to water supplies becomes a challenge in more remote areas.

Most recently drought and high temperatures have contributed to fires. Figure 16 shows major wildfire incidents in Oxfordshire between April 2022 and September 2023.

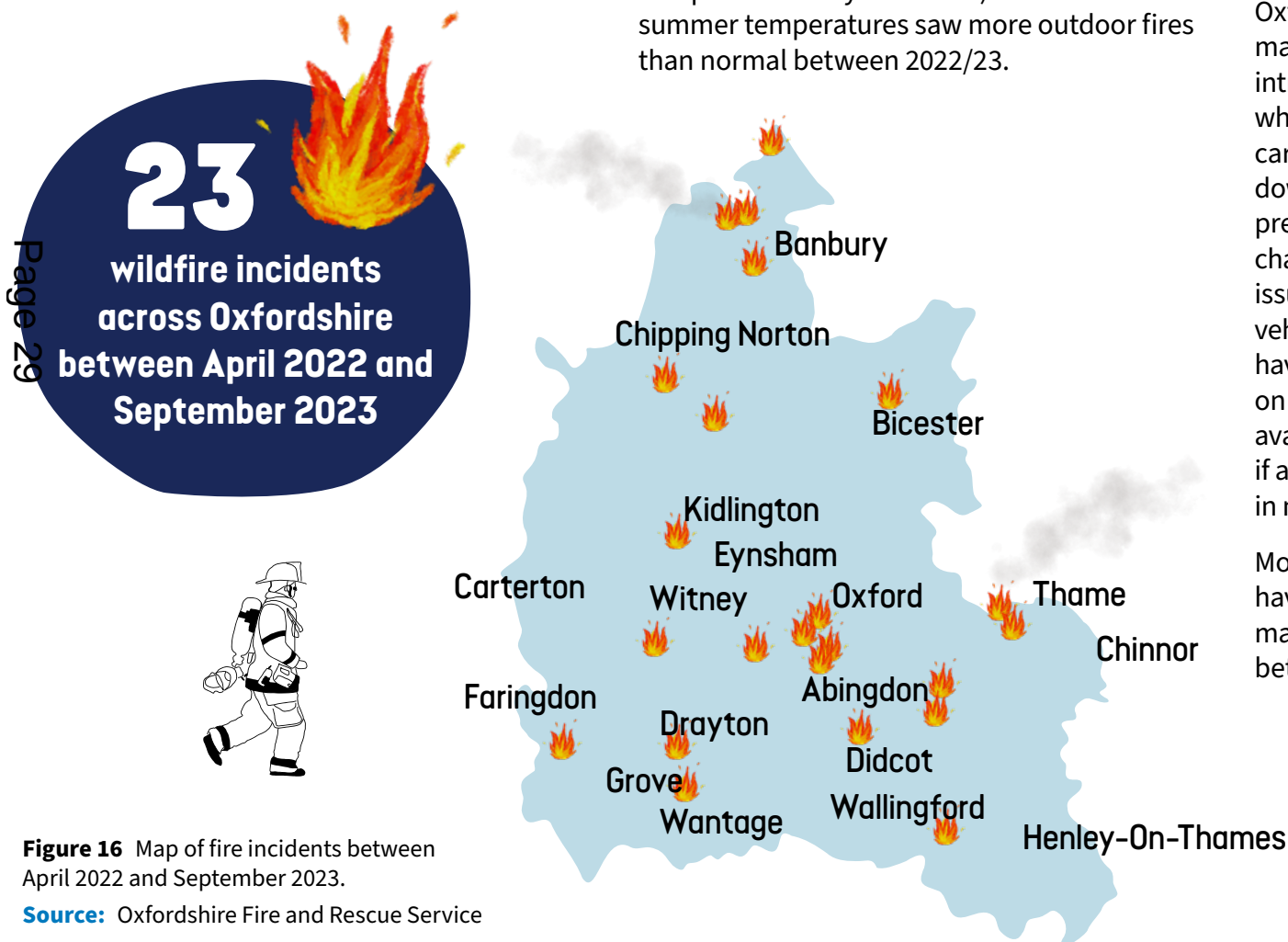


Figure 16 Map of fire incidents between April 2022 and September 2023.

Source: Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

1.2 Air

Poor indoor and outdoor air quality present a significant threat to public health in Oxfordshire, and the UK.¹² As well as human health, air pollution also threatens the natural environment and the economy.¹³ It poses the greatest health risks for children, people with existing heart or lung conditions, pregnant women and older adults. People who live and work in more urban and often deprived – areas next to busy roads are at particularly high risk of being exposed to higher levels of air pollution.^{5-6,8,12}

Short term increases in air pollution can have immediate health impacts, including impaired lung function, exacerbation of asthma and increases in respiratory and cardiovascular hospital admissions and deaths.^{6,8,12}

Health effects of air pollution

Short-term effects

exacerbation of asthma

cough, wheezing & shortness of breath

Episodes of high air pollution increase respiratory and cardiovascular hospital admissions and mortality

Long-term effects

stroke

lung cancer

respiratory conditions

cardiovascular disease

reduced life expectancy



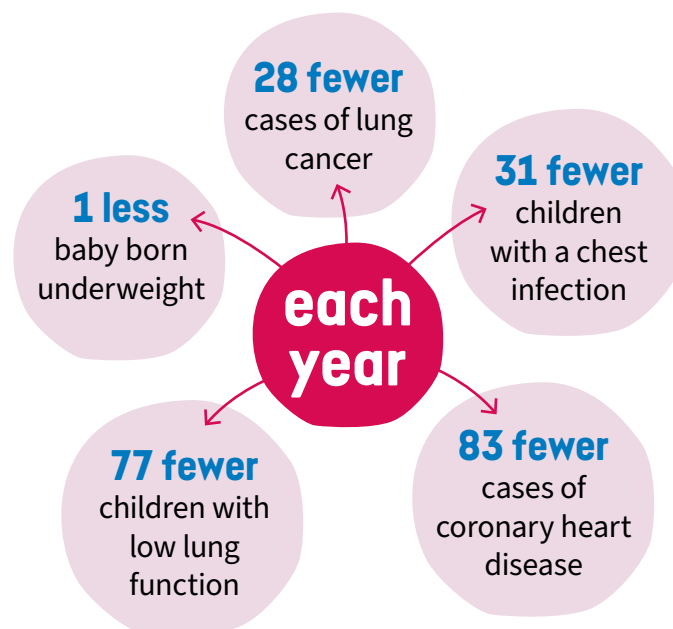
In Oxfordshire, there have been significant improvements in air quality over the past few decades, primarily due to reductions in coal burning which predate the COVID-19 pandemic – see figures 8-10 on page 22. However, indoor and outdoor air pollution remain dangerous to human health. It has been estimated that over 2,300 years of healthy life were lost due to ambient particulate matter (small toxic solid particles and liquid droplets which are not visible to the human eye which may be produced by burning fossil fuels, construction and waste products) in Oxford in 2019 alone.⁸

These premature deaths were mainly attributed to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, kidney disease and chronic respiratory disease.⁸ Each year on average, higher air pollution days in Oxford are responsible for:

- six more cardiac arrests outside hospital,
- five more people admitted to hospital for cardiovascular disease and
- four more people admitted to hospital with a stroke, compared to low air pollution days.¹⁴

Air pollution also has economic implications – sustained reductions in NO₂ in Oxford, consistent with those observed in the first COVID-19 lockdown, could have prevented 48 lost life years with a total economic benefit of £1.83 million as compared to the 2019 baseline.¹⁵

Cutting air pollution in Oxford by a further 20 per cent may result in:¹⁴



Roadside air pollution in Oxford is estimated to stunt lung growth in children by

14.1 %

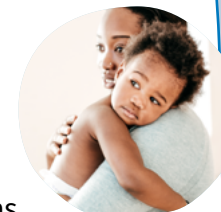
Pregnancy

- low birth weight



Children

- asthma
- slower development of lung function
- development problems
- more wheezing and coughs
- start of atherosclerosis



Adults

- asthma
- stroke
- lung cancer
- diabetes
- coronary heart disease
- chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (as chronic bronchitis)



Elderly

- asthma
- accelerated decline lung function
- lung cancer
- diabetes
- dementia
- heart attack, heart failure and strokes





Air quality testimony:

“Air quality was never good. When I first came back to Oxford, I suffered quite a lot from asthma that I didn’t suffer from before. I was on Ventolin and Beclometasone inhalers. I’d never had respiratory problems before. That wasn’t necessarily just to do with air pollution, but coming back to the Thames Valley where it’s such a bowl of damp air. Pollen has definitely got worse too – I never had hay fever in the past – but now I experience hay fever in the summer. I think that’s an indication of how loaded the air is.

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"I dream about Oxford becoming like various places in Europe which have made radical changes to manage motorised traffic to make them pleasant environments for the inhabitants and for visitors too – it's an ancient city and it's just not working. We need to take radical steps to change things."

Over the years, I really noticed the build-up of traffic where I used to live before. It was unbelievable, I couldn’t have the windows open at night – the traffic noise was terrible. It was made worse by the air direction. I really feel as though I have a haven where I am now. Even the windows are cleaner. It’s ironic that I’m in the city, but this is a good spot to be. **I am aware of noise all the time though – it is very difficult to go on a country walk in Oxfordshire and not hear noise.**

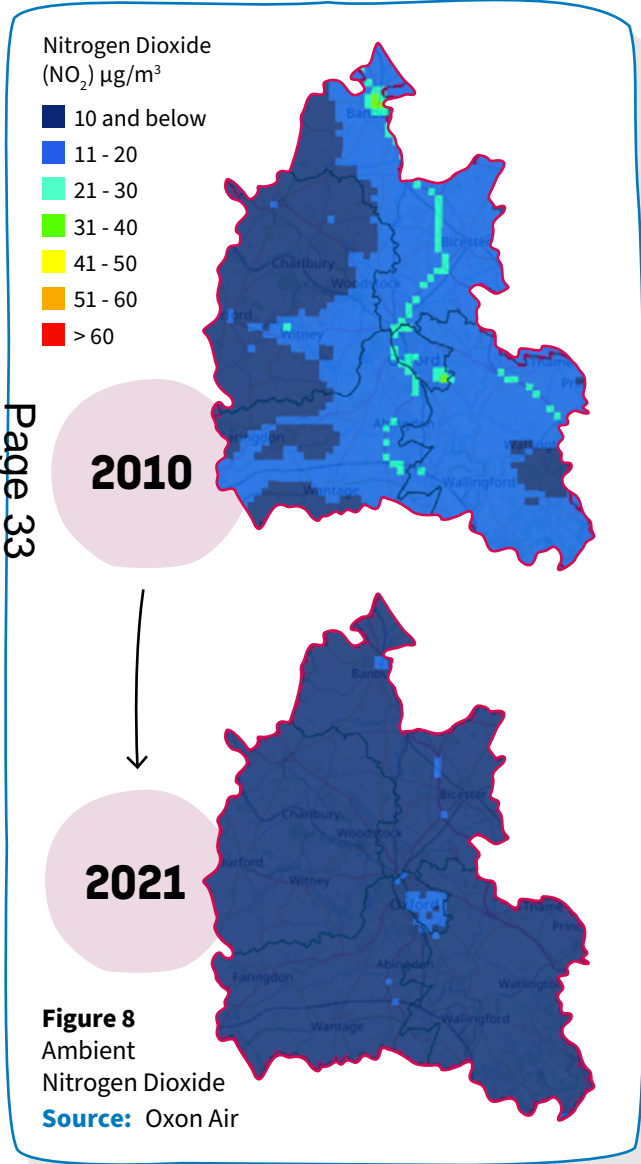


I was aware of it [air pollution] when I had young children. I suppose with the girls it was trying to weigh up where we could live – I needed to be near with amenities, and sadly to be near amenities you had to put up with pollution. When they were teenagers, it was great, there was that bus service and it used to run almost twenty four hours a day. I know of people now who have grandchildren who encourage them not to visit because of the air quality.

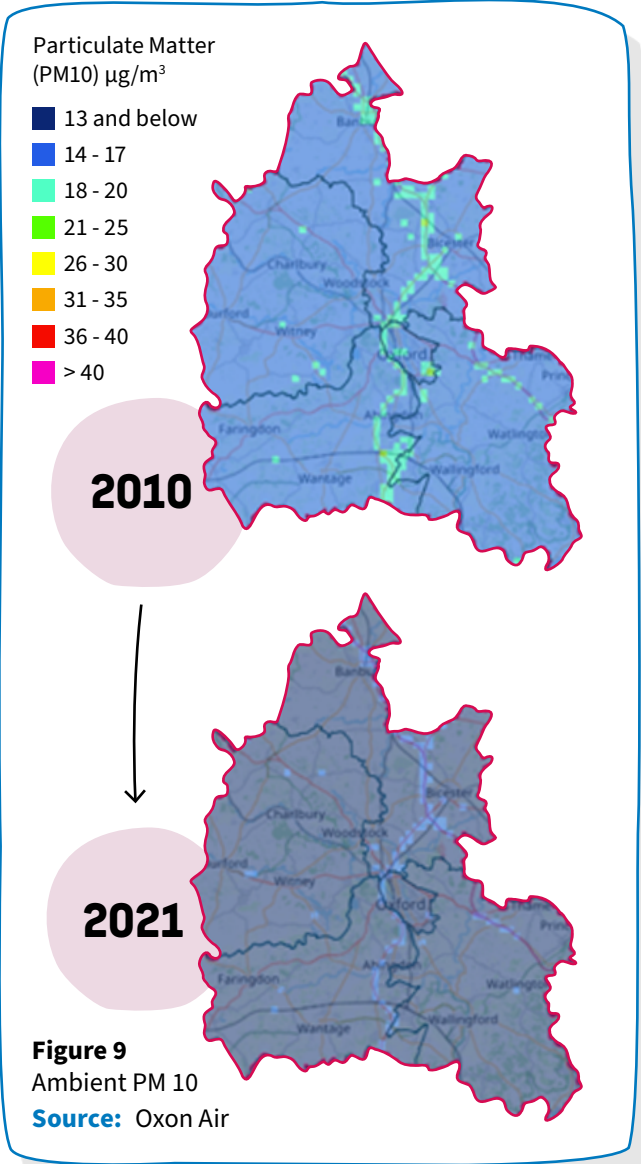
It can be quite daunting to look at the local air quality, and if I were to look online and to see how bad it is, that’s quite alarming. I really worry about it with Oxfordshire – I dream about Oxford becoming like various places in Europe which have made radical changes to manage motorised traffic to make them pleasant environments for the inhabitants and for visitors too – it’s an ancient city and it’s just not working. We need to take radical steps to change things. I wish there were more plans for a better public transport structure and for cycling and walking. I feel that Oxford is going to be choked.”



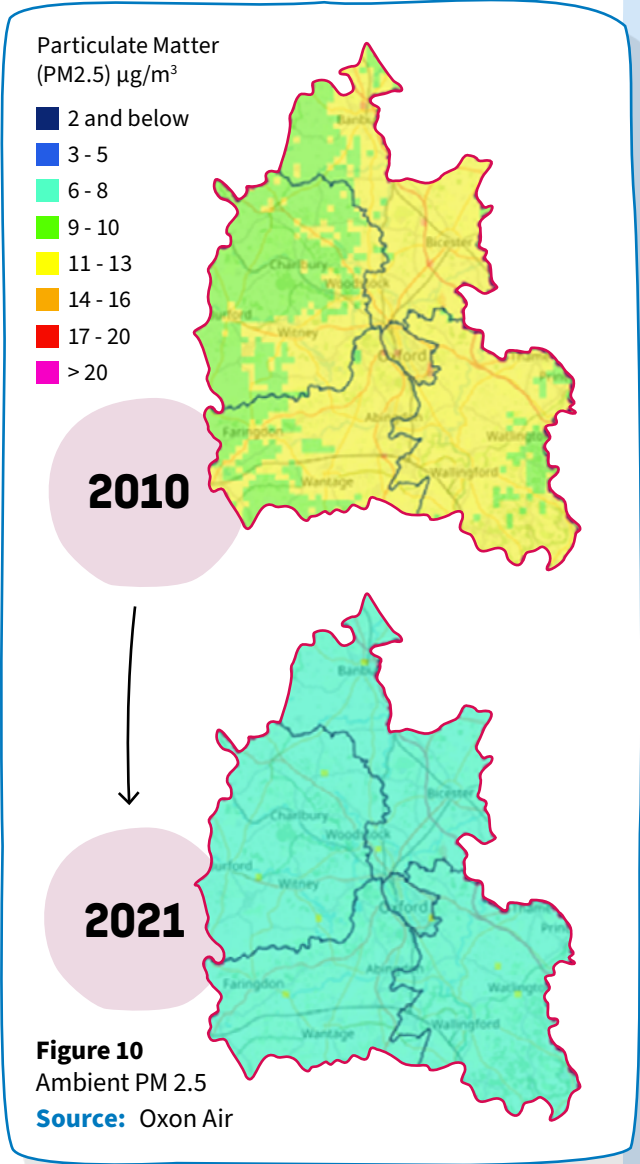
Relative overall reduction in ambient **nitrogen dioxide** across Oxfordshire, as measured between 2010 and 2021



Relative overall reductions in ambient **PM 10** across Oxfordshire, as measured between 2010 and 2021



Relative overall reductions in ambient **PM 2.5** across Oxfordshire, as measured between 2010 and 2021





Increasing air temperature, alongside higher levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, may also impact on the severity of airborne allergens such as pollen.¹⁶

The health effects of higher pollen levels during summer months have already been seen in Oxfordshire.

Pollen may sound harmless, but it can be life threatening for people with underlying or undiagnosed respiratory conditions.¹⁶ When it is dry and hot, with little wind, pollen is not dispersed as readily and can cause dangerous irritation to the eyes, throat, and lungs.

In June 2023, the Met Office and UKHSA issued warnings regarding severely high pollen levels in the region, in association with higher temperatures (described as the 'Pollen Bomb').¹⁰



When it is dry and hot, with little wind, pollen is not dispersed as readily and can cause dangerous irritation to:



eyes



lungs



throat

Pollen Bomb:
severely high pollen levels in association with higher temperatures



31.7
per cent increase
in life-threatening ambulance calls
in June 2023

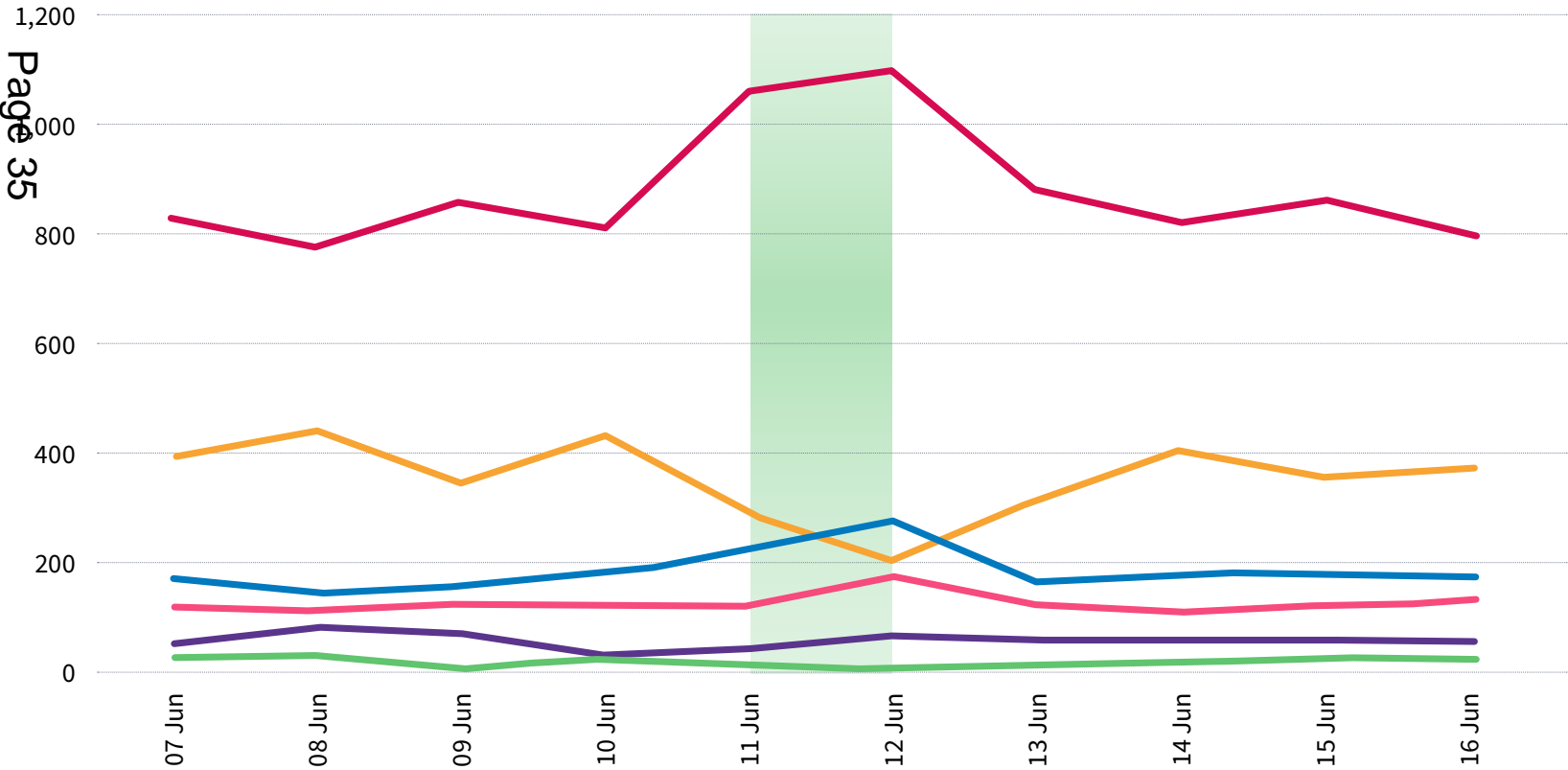
In June 2023 at the time of the pollen bomb, there was an 31.7 per cent increase in category 1 (life-threatening) ambulance calls (from 41 to 54 calls) and 44.4 per cent increase in category 2 (emergency) ambulance calls (from 288 to 416 calls) – see figure 11.¹⁰ A higher proportion

of these calls were due to respiratory distress than usual.¹⁰ This impacted on the local ambulance service’s ability to respond in a timely way, in particular for category 2 and category 3 calls.¹⁰

Figure 11
999 incidents demand by category of call during the June 2023 Pollen Bomb, Oxfordshire.
Source: South-Central Ambulance Service

999 incidents demand - Oxfordshire CCG

Pollen Bomb 11 - 12 June 2023



- Pollen bomb days
- Cat 1
- Cat 2
- Cat 3
- Cat 4
- Cat5 (H&T)
- HCP

Category 1:
calls from people with life-threatening illnesses or injuries

Category 2:
emergency calls

Category 3:
urgent calls

Category 4:
less urgent calls

Category 5:
hear and treat

HCP:
healthcare professional ambulance response



1.3 Water

The changing climate in Oxfordshire has implications for our risk of flooding, in addition to the safety, quality and supply of local water.

1.3.1 Flooding

Flooding is becoming more common across Oxfordshire and the UK. In Oxfordshire, there have been 18 significant flood events since 2007, which have caused serious disruption to people's homes, lives and livelihoods.⁴ In January 2024, there has been major flooding across the county with 170 properties flooded during storm Henk. Areas of specific higher flooding risk include Abingdon, Witney and parts of Oxford due to their locations on the Thames, Ock and Stort in Abingdon, and River Windrush in Witney – although this list is not exhaustive – see figures 2 and 12.^{4,17-18}

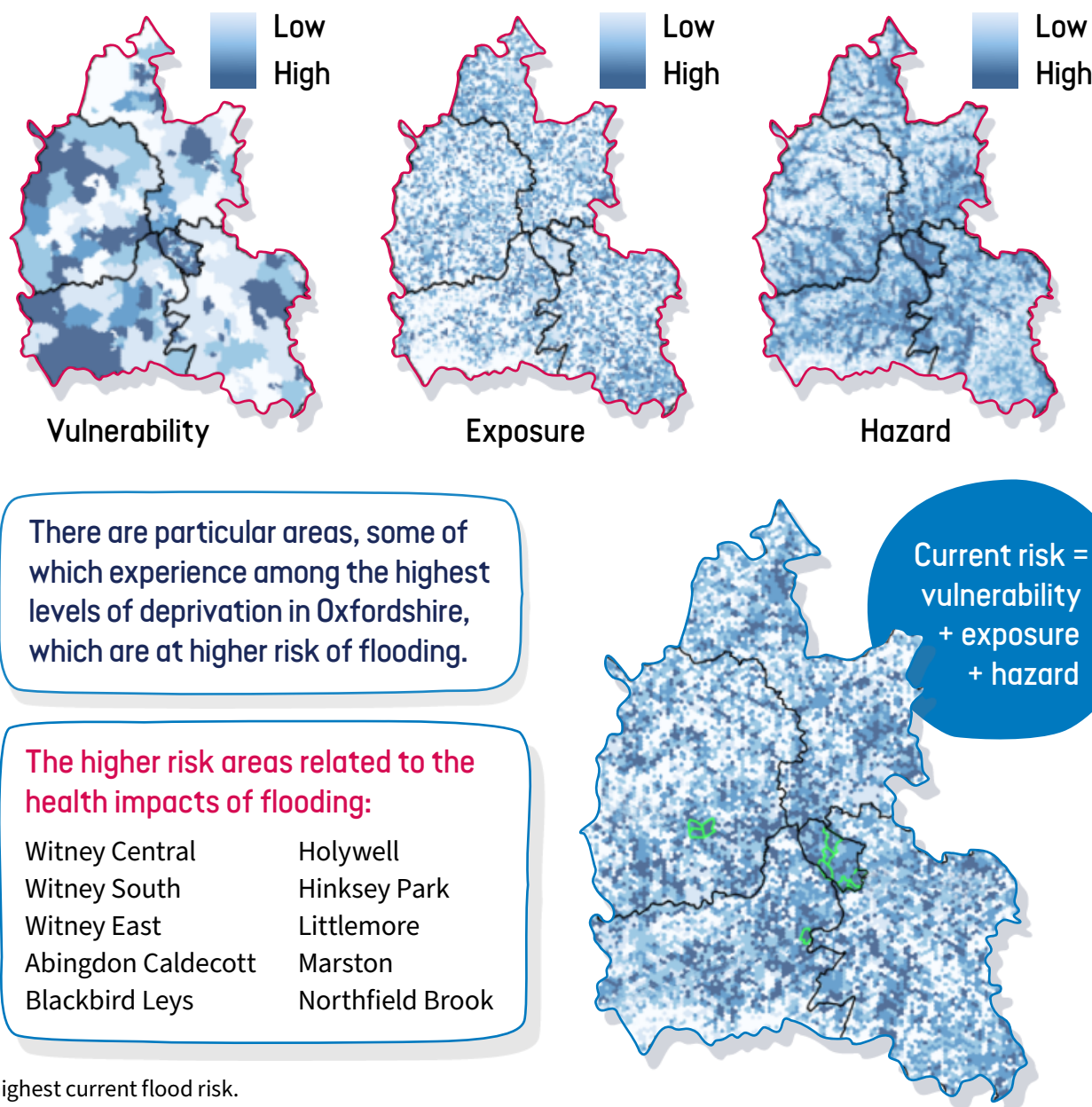


Figure 12 Current flood risk in Oxfordshire and ten wards with highest current flood risk.

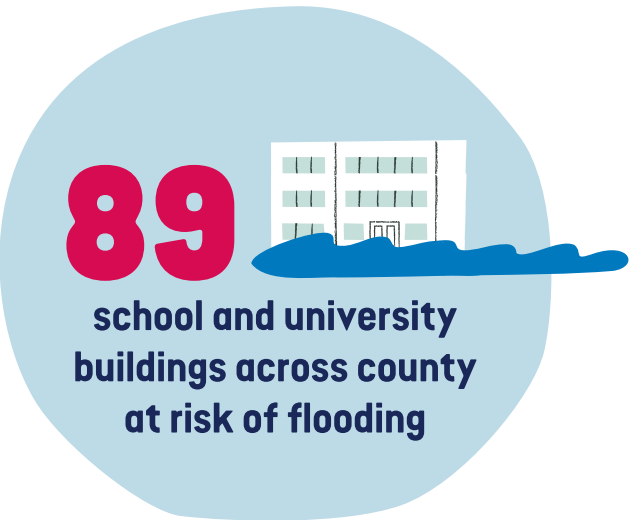
Source: Atkins Health Impact Assessment



In the short term, flooding can lead to injuries, acute infections, exposure to chemical hazards and disruption to local health and social care services.¹⁹ Longer term, flooding has significant impacts on mental health among those whose homes are flooded and the communities that surround them – see Figure 13.¹⁹

Evacuation and displacement, especially without warning, increase the risk of longer term anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.¹⁹

Recent estimates suggest that 19 per cent of the population are currently exposed to high flooding risks due to rivers and surface water.⁴ This includes 89 school and university buildings across the county.⁴



Impacts of flooding are large, prolonged and extend beyond just those whose homes are flooded

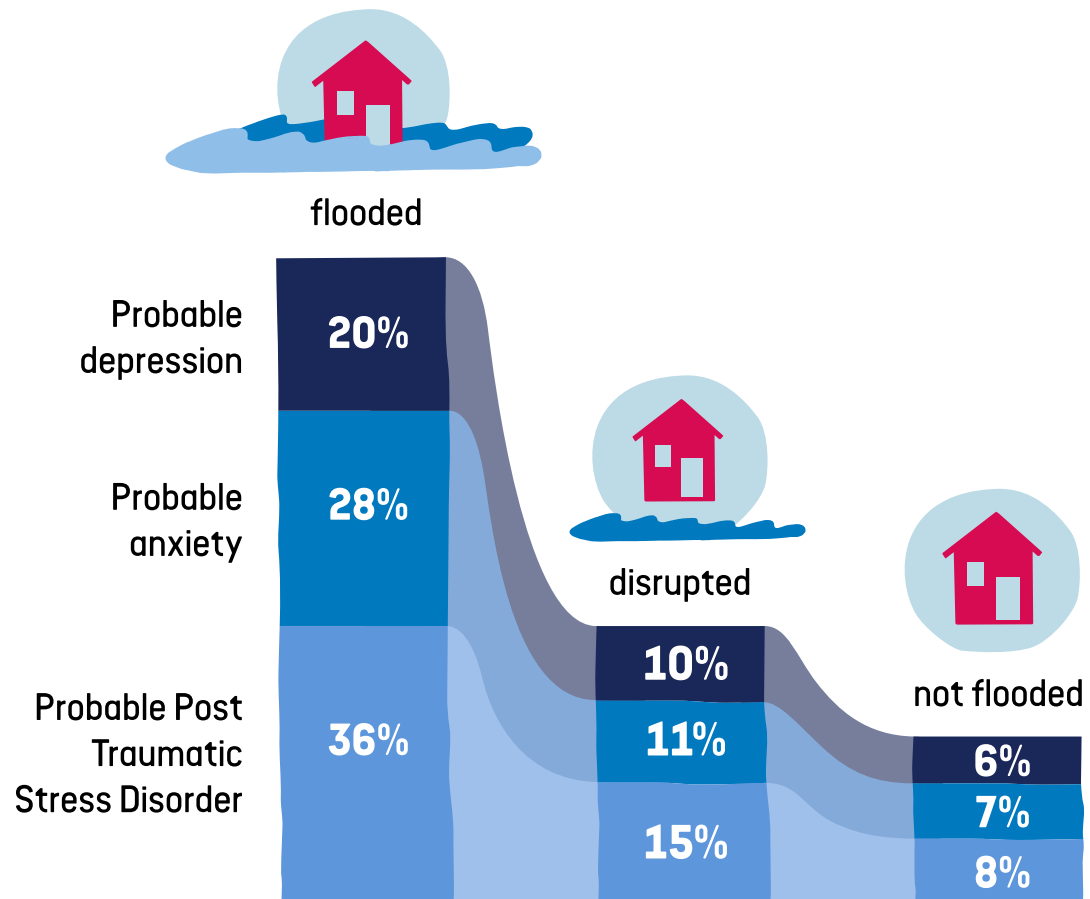
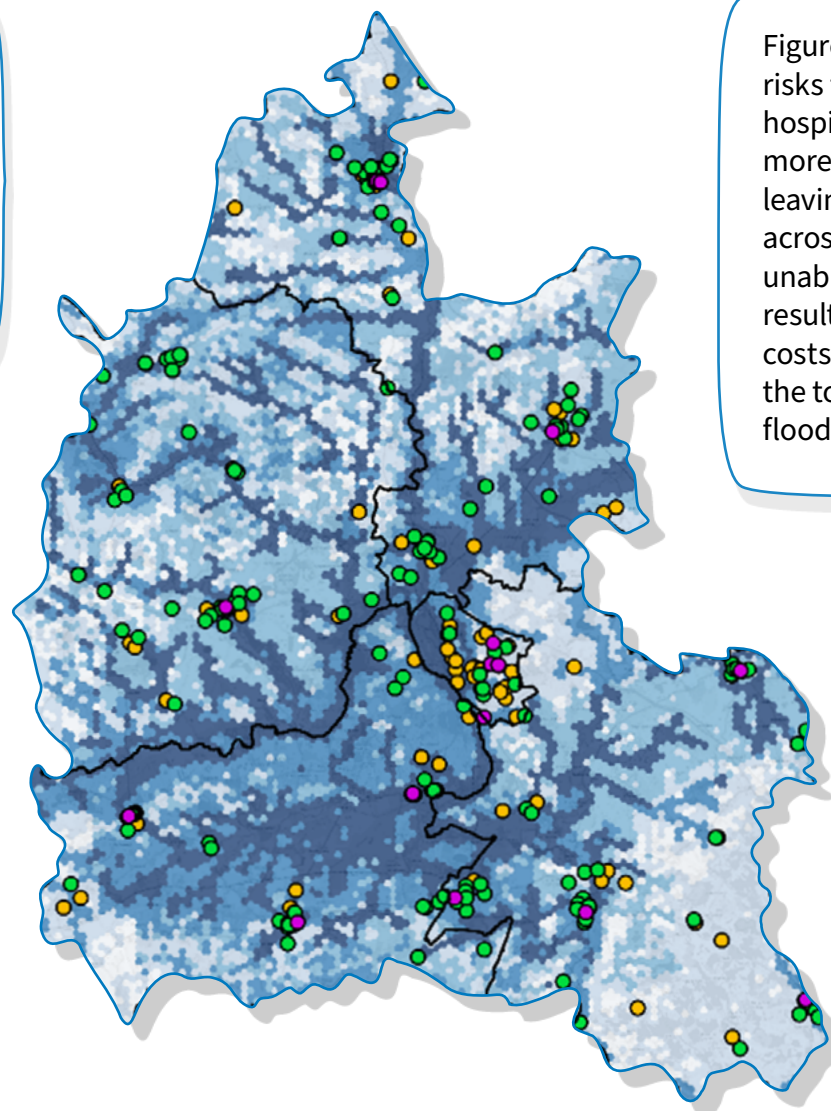





Figure 13a PHE Public Health Data Science Team, PHE Publications gateway number: 2016575



At least **63 care homes**, **seven hospitals** and **29 GP and healthcare facilities** are located in areas of higher current flood risk. In addition, **139 educational establishments** are located in areas of high current flood risk.

Figure 14 shows potential future flooding risks for care homes, GP practices and hospitals across the county. In July 2007, more than 50mm of rain fell in 24 hours leaving an estimated 1,600 homes flooded across the county with 200 families still unable to return home a year later.¹⁷ This resulted in a cost of £4.5 million in direct costs to Oxfordshire County Council, but the total direct and indirect costs of the flooding were likely far greater.⁴



-  Districts
-  Care home
-  GP and healthcare facilities
-  Hospitals

Flooding hazard



-  Low hazard
-  High hazard

Figure 14 Healthcare facilities and future flood hazard.

Source: Atkins Health Impact Assessment



Flooding / contaminated water testimony #1:

"With the climate, we have seen a change. Last year, there was a heavy storm, and it caused several houses in our area to flood. The flooding in our house was exacerbated by having sewage in the house as well as dirty water. As a consequence, we will have been living in temporary accommodation for at least thirteen months. We're lucky we had good insurance and recently put flood prevention measures on the house to prevent a reoccurrence.

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"The flooding in the house has certainly affected my mental health. At first, I felt absolutely helpless, and just didn't know where to start."

At first, I felt absolutely helpless, and just didn't know where to start. Then there's also the long-term effect. We want to continue to live in the house, but we worry that we'll never be able to sell it and from a health point of view whenever we get heavy rain, we're going to wonder whether that's going to happen again.

There's that anxiety that you don't know whether all those things we have done will protect the house and us if it were to rain again. In the aftermath of the flood, everyone was remarkably nice. Neighbours that we hardly knew before have been so nice and supportive. They've offered for us to use the washing machine. There's a sense of camaraderie among the families affected by the flooding. We've formed much closer bonds with them because of that, and that's a real positive.

I had to rip out all my vegetables from my vegetable patch, and that was quite heartbreaking really. But when it's been contaminated with sewage you don't really fancy eating that lettuce. I can't say that it's affected me hugely, or particularly badly, I haven't shed a tear. **I've been frustrated, bordering on anger occasionally. I desperately want to be back in the house.**



In the scheme of what other people have to go through, it's nothing though. I've been reflecting on it – we love the house, and it's our home and that's different to anything else. The thing that really matters is people, our family, our sons, their wives. So, if I find anything harder, it's that bit. We can't have them over easily. It's just being able to say just come over for Sunday dinner."



1.3.2 Water quality

Water quality, flooding and climate change are all interconnected.²⁰

More frequent and severe weather events, such as storms and flooding, in the absence of necessary upgrades to the system, have the potential to overwhelm existing sewage systems and water treatment facilities. In turn, this can result in sewage overflow with contamination of water sources and water quality across Oxfordshire.²¹

The bacteria in raw sewage and animal slurry can cause infectious disease outbreaks and sickness in humans, with negative impacts on wellbeing and mental health too. Traditionally, the rivers of Oxfordshire offered a popular recreational space for swimming, rowing, punting, kayaking and angling – but these activities are now often undertaken with apprehension or avoided altogether due to unsafe levels of water pollution.²²

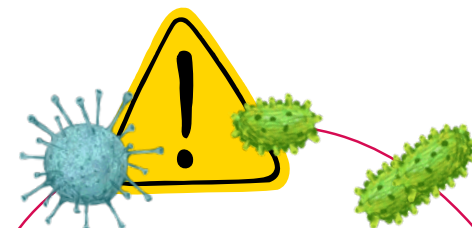
Past examples of climate change and harmful water pollution include an outbreak of the parasite cryptosporidium in Oxfordshire and Swindon. A combination of heavy rainfall, warmer weather, and increased local cattle grazing likely led to an unusually high level of the parasite entering the water treatment works in water originating from the Thames.²³

Local wildlife may also be damaged by water pollution – agricultural fertilisers can lead to dangerous algal blooms²⁴ and fish kills may be seen in these areas of higher water pollution, amidst hotter temperatures and heavy rainfall.⁴

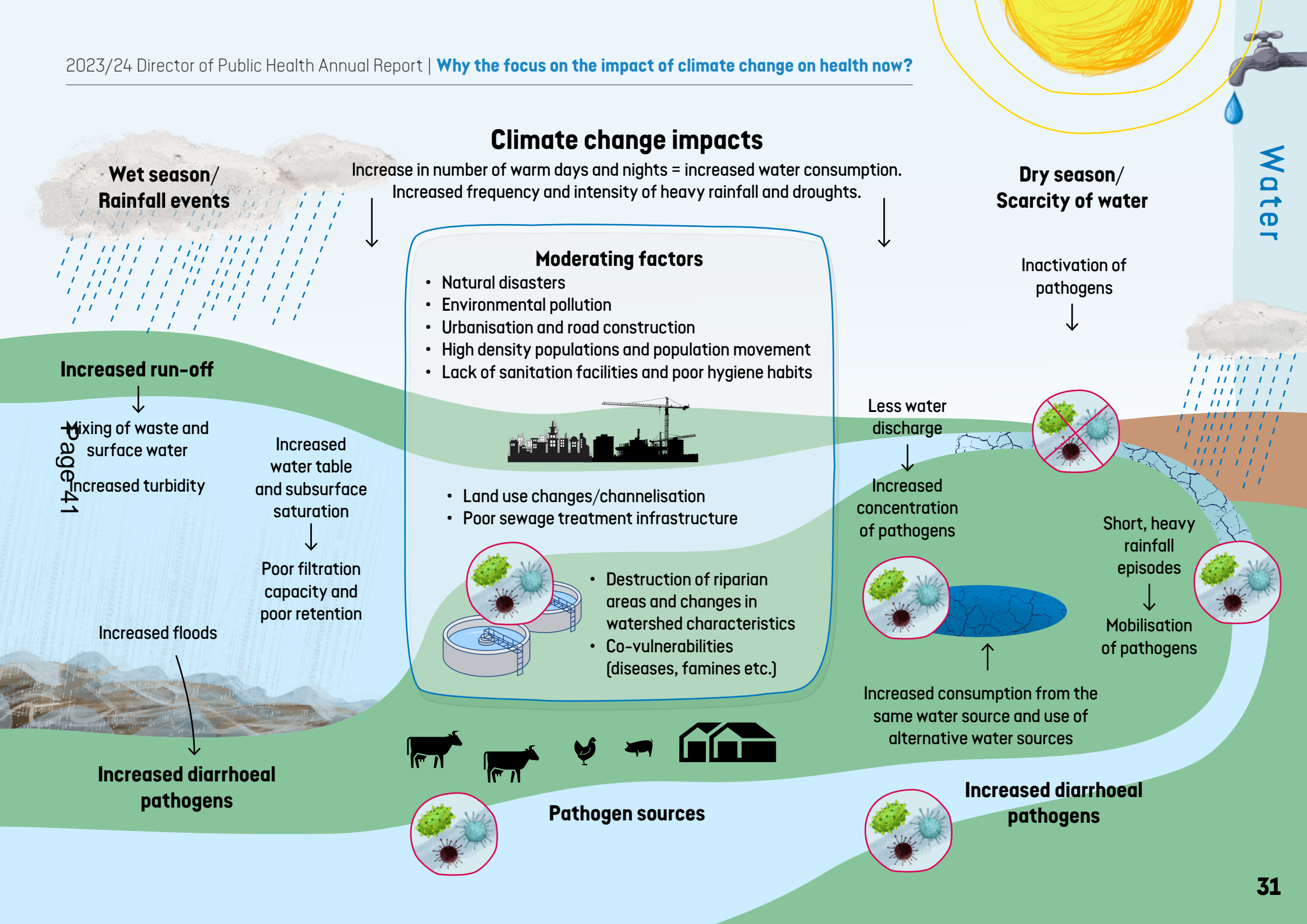
Pollution generated from sewage and contaminated water contributes to greenhouse gas emissions through the breakdown of faeces and other waste products, exacerbating global warming and climate change.²⁵

Agricultural slurry leaks and run off from chemicals and fertiliser spread on the land may also negatively impact on water quality. Contaminated water worsens the broader effects of climate change as it harms biodiversity and agriculture.

In 2021, 18 river locations in Oxfordshire were sampled by the Oxford Rivers Project.²² This assessment identified that only one of eight recreational sites had safe levels of bacteria to allow for swimming and bathing – see figure 15 for all sites surveyed.²² The sources of these bacteria were likely sewage inputs, although some sites such as The Windrush, Cherwell and upper Thames sites were likely impacted by agricultural and other diffuse inputs.²²



In 2020, over ten sewage works across Oxfordshire reported over 100 overflow events each – with some works discharging raw sewage into rivers for over 2,000 hours through the year.²⁶





18 river locations in Oxfordshire, in and surrounding Oxford City were sampled over the period January – December 2021.

This figure shows the locations of these sites. Eight of the sample sites were situated at popular recreational locations (e.g. for wild swimming, rowing, punting, kayaking and angling), primarily within Oxford's city boundaries. 10 sample sites were situated on upstream locations, including on Thames tributaries Windrush (two sites), Evenlode (two sites) and Cherwell (four sites), as well as two further sites on the main River Thames.

Samples were taken approximately once a month April–December from 14 sample sites. Four central recreational locations (labelled J, M, P and Q on maps) were sampled weekly January–April 2021, and then monthly until December 2021, resulting in 23 samples at each. This arrangement was due to restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Samples were tested in an independently accredited microbiology lab using a standard culturing method for bacteria species E Coli and intestinal enterococci ('faecal indicator organisms' or FIOs). The results obtained were compared to the standards for bathing waters set out in the Bathing Waters Directive (2013)

This assessment identified that **only one of eight** recreational sites had safe levels of bacteria to allow for swimming and bathing

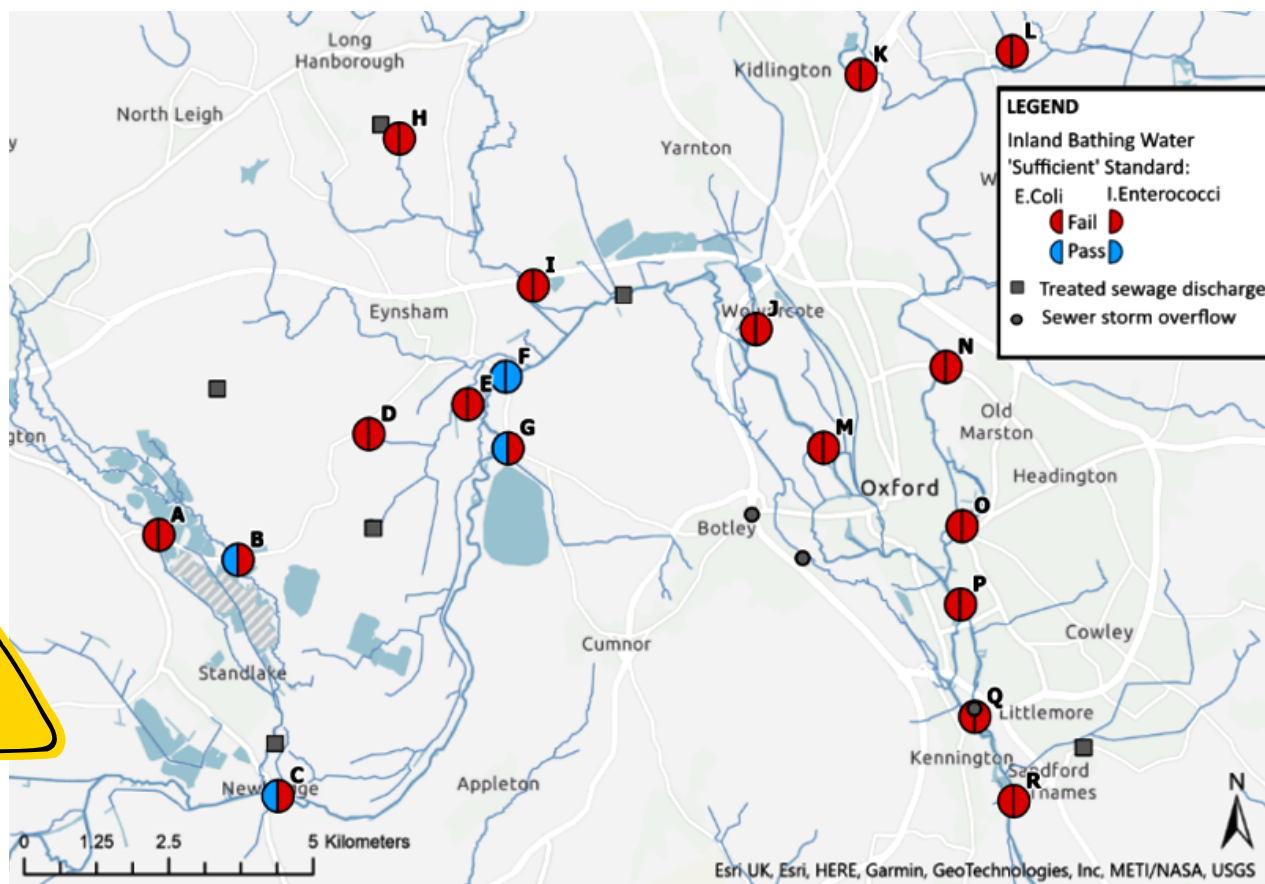


Figure 15

Sample sites map and bathing water quality assessment result in Jan-Dec 2021.

Source: Oxford Rivers Project





1.3.3 Water supply

In Oxfordshire, there have been three major periods of drought (2012, 2018, 2022) since 2012.⁴

These have had impacts on residents and the surrounding natural environment. Drought can occur when a prolonged period of drier weather leads to low groundwater levels, low soil moisture levels and reduced river flow. This results in a significant reduction in the water available locally for human use.

Droughts usually develop over longer intervals of time, during which there may be signs of increasing risk.¹⁸ Droughts may also lead to wildfires which have complex physical and mental health impacts.

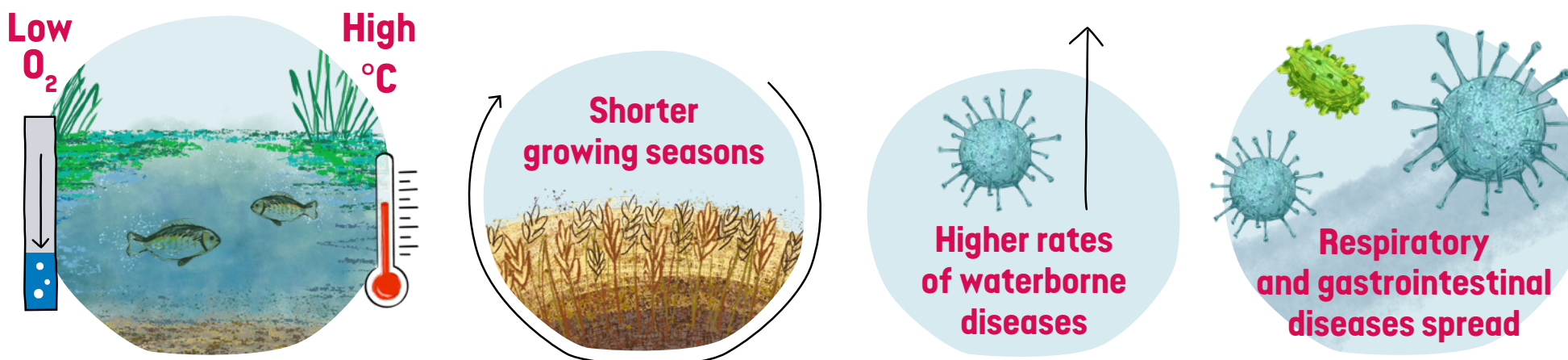
The South-East already faces significant challenges to water resources – most of the region already has insufficient water resources for local people's needs throughout the year.²⁷ Drought and hot weather may contribute to fires, including wildfire incidents. Droughts are dangerous for health – with impacts on nutrition, infectious disease outbreaks and mental health.²⁸

- Reduced river flows may increase the levels of pollutants in water and cause stagnation, with higher water temperatures in lakes and reservoirs impacting on water oxygen levels and water quality.²⁸
- Droughts can affect the length of the growing season for crops and lead to conditions

which favour pests and infectious diseases.²⁸ Livestock raised for food may also be adversely affected by drought.

- There may also be higher rates of waterborne diseases due to warmer water temperatures which encourage the growth of dangerous pathogens.²⁸
- Acute respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases may also spread more easily when handwashing is compromised by a perceived or real lack of clean water.²⁸

The indirect health impacts of drought are not necessarily easy to anticipate or track, but affect people's health and wellbeing profoundly in the longer term.²⁸





1.4 Food

In Oxfordshire, our food supply chains are complex and span continents – figure 17.

It has been recognised that climate change will make it more challenging to ensure the resilience of these food supply chains across the county.

Adverse weather may destroy or damage crops, livestock, fish and farming infrastructure.²⁹

Farming equipment may also be damaged by adverse weather, impacting on productivity.²⁹

Lack of biodiversity will also harm the composition of soil which is needed to grow food.²⁹

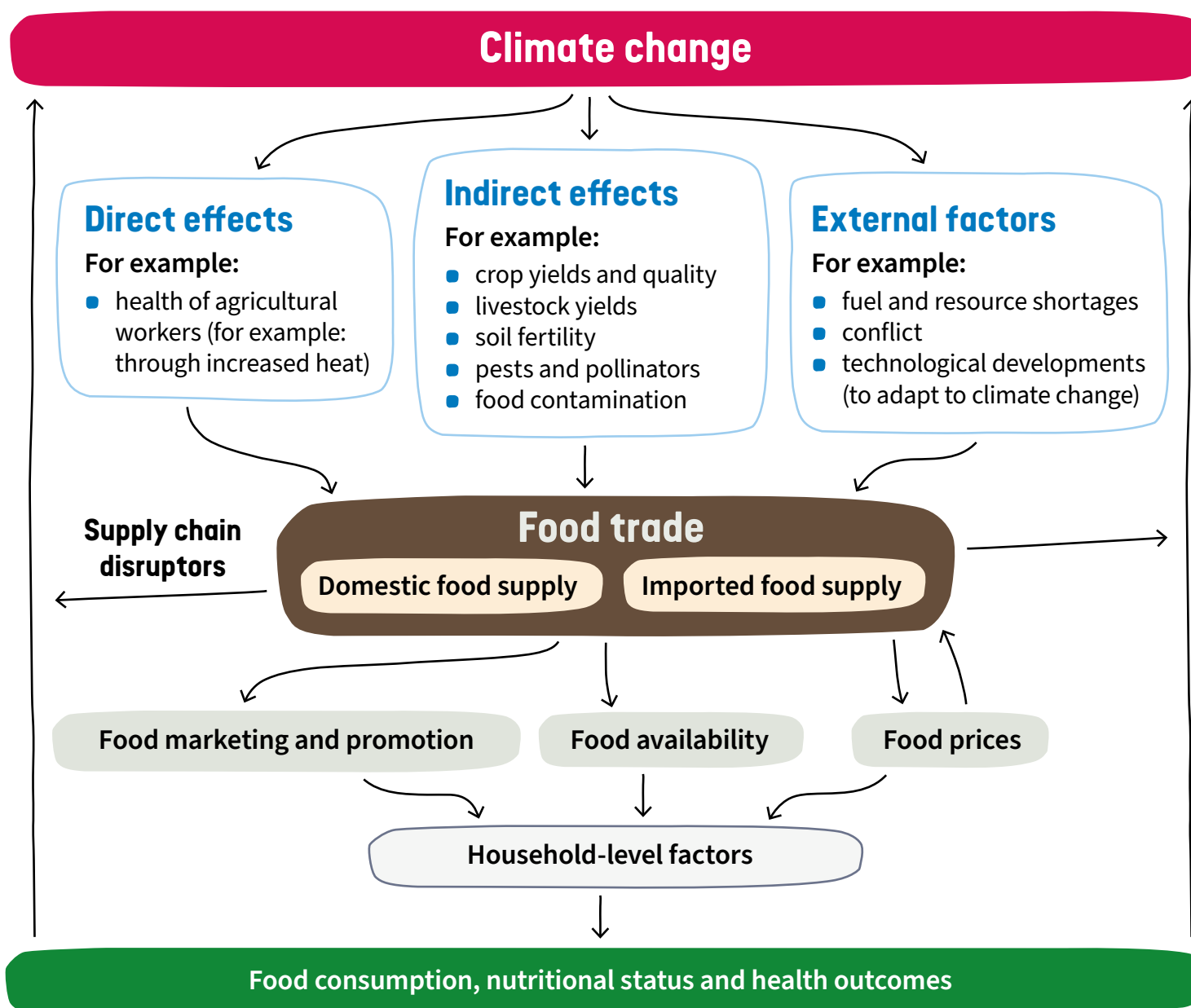
Domestic food prices have the potential to become more volatile as a result.²⁹

Figure 17

Simplified framework of climate change impacts on the food system.

Source:

Redrawn from UKHSA Health Effects of Climate Change Report





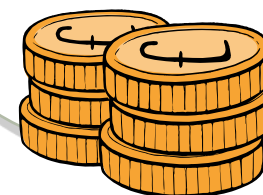
Globally, food prices are projected to increase by 20 per cent on average by 2050 in the absence of necessary climate adaptation.²⁹

When food becomes more expensive, it exacerbates food insecurity and malnutrition, especially among more deprived populations who may experience limited access to affordable and nutritious diets. This can also lead to other trade-offs in household budgets, meaning that individuals compromise on necessities like housing, heating and use of electricity. The mental health impacts of uncertainty around

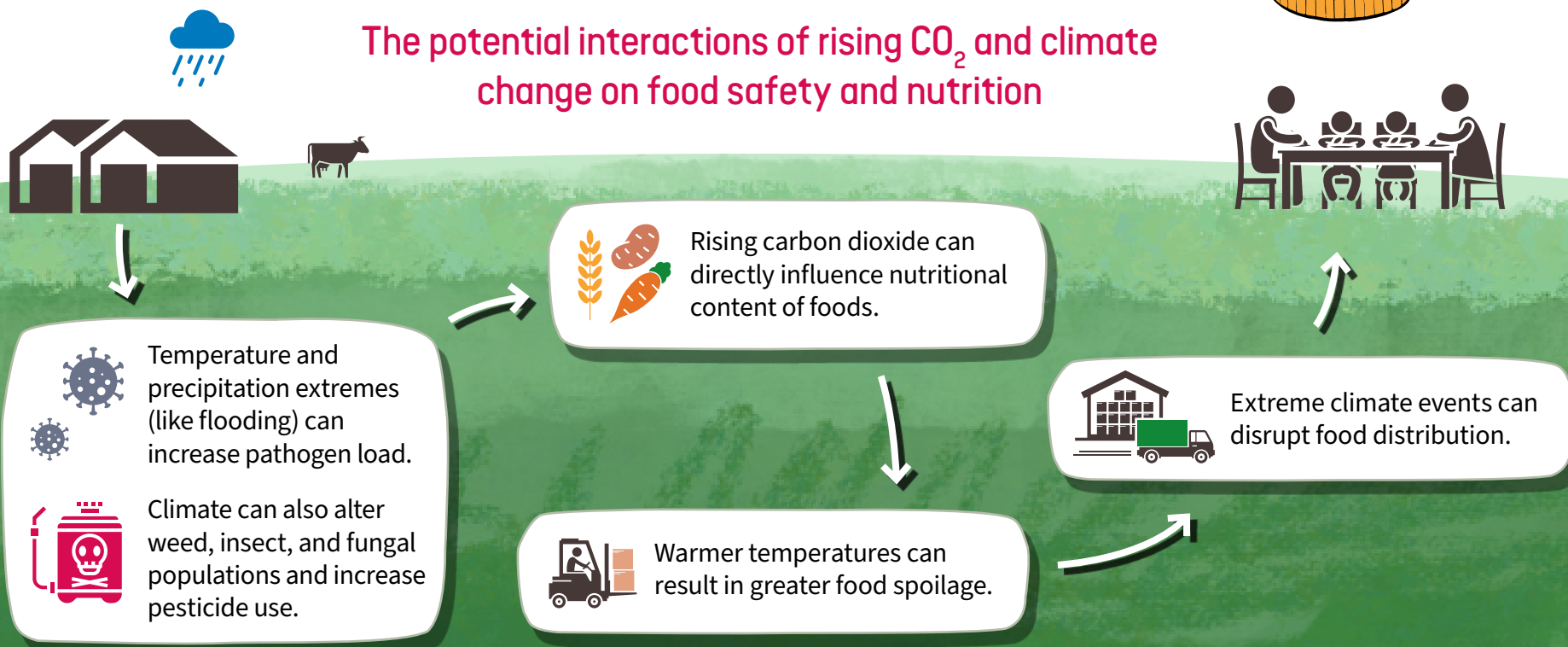
food availability and affordability should not be underestimated – especially for young children and vulnerable adults.³⁰⁻³¹

Many aspects of healthy diets are more sustainable for the planet.^{5,32} Balanced diets can have positive impacts on all aspects of health, in particular the burden of obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, some cancers, and premature mortality. Examples of foods which are both healthy and sustainable include wholegrains, legumes, nuts, fruit, and vegetables.

Reducing food loss and waste can also have a significant environmental benefit and may save the average family up to **£700** per year.³³



The potential interactions of rising CO₂ and climate change on food safety and nutrition





Oxfordshire food testimony #1:

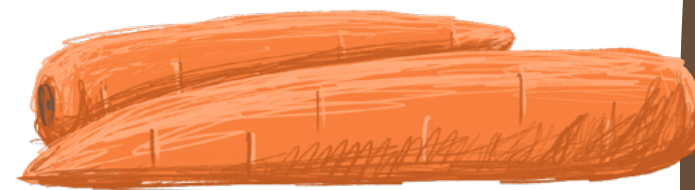
"I worked with M for years at a local school in an art club. She'd been talking about this larder and saying you should come along. I instantly liked the idea of it. In some ways, I volunteer there more for my own benefit than the benefit for others – because I enjoy being in contact with such a variety of people who are there. There is a sense of belonging to a community. You pay a weekly fee for £3.50. That gets you 10 items. They do refills from large tubs. It reduces packaging. The point about the £3.50 is you get a lot of food."

We have a café and serve hot/cold drinks and a lot of hot food and cakes. That's for people while they're waiting to come in. Lots of people take the food as they're waiting to come in. It's all stuff that's made in the kitchen. Lots of it is made from produce that's donated to the kitchen. When school comes out at 3pm, we serve the kids hot food and a hot drink. It's good food. The chefs work really hard, and it's a good team. There's a level of respect that people are showing to those who are coming to get the food. There's a great sense of camaraderie. We're volunteering and pulling together, in somewhat difficult circumstances.

During the summer, the local allotment also donates surplus goods. The food we grow on our allotment is as local as can be. We are in control of the environment – we get some manure, but no fertilisers, no pesticides. It's a lot more labour, but there's a connection to it and the place. Understanding what it means to hand pick something, I'm bent over and trying to pick something that I've grown. It makes you think who are the people doing this day to day for the food in the supermarket? How does anybody make a living growing food? Food is not just about subsistence, it's about pleasure. I really hate food waste. I'm notorious for refusing to throw food out. Part of it comes from my parents. This is a totally different generation. Food was inherently local then and my parents hated wasting food. Leftovers and using leftovers were a part of growing up in my family. I read things in the newspaper about the vast amounts of food waste – and there is a culture of food waste. One of the things that I like about the allotment, is the food scraps that we can't eat goes back round [into the compost]."



"During the summer, the local allotment also donates surplus goods. The food we grow on our allotment is as local as can be. We are in control of the environment – we get some manure, but no fertilisers, no pesticides. It's a lot more labour, but there's a connection to it and the place."





Oxfordshire food testimony #2:

“When I think about the food and environment, I think it’s probably primarily the supply chains, and the cost of transporting food and the carbon footprint of the supply chains and how it’s been transported. Whether you’ve flown in mangos or are eating greens from Oxfordshire.

What you’re eating matters too – the calorie/energy cost is different – the kind of meat you’re eating as compared to eating vegetables or grains. You need less land and water resources to get one or the other. I imagine that flooding impacts farming too, and droughts.

It’s been very noticeable that the food prices [in Oxfordshire] have increased, and I think what’s particularly difficult living in Oxford – if you don’t have a car you can only really access express shops or small shops. The prices that you get there are still more expensive than if you’re able to go to big shops. I’m lucky

because I’ve got a car so I can go and do a big shop. I get a vegetable box delivered, and that is advertised as being more local.

If you asked me where is a local market I wouldn’t know. I don’t think I have seen anything that’s marketed as being locally sourced recently, or that I’ve been able to identify. Lots of the food in the supermarkets doesn’t even appear to be seasonal – you can get anything all year round.”

"It's been very noticeable that the food prices [in Oxfordshire] have increased, and I think what's particularly difficult living in Oxford – if you don't have a car you can only really access express shops or small shops. The prices that you get there are still more expensive than if you're able to go to big shops."

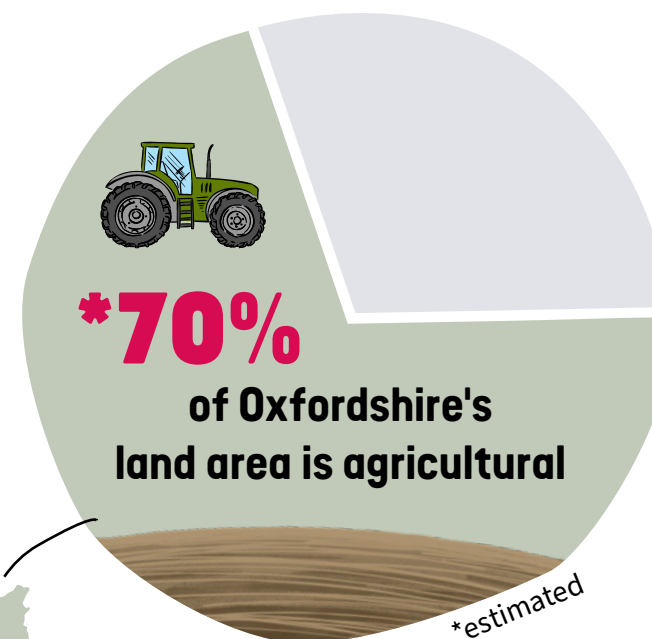
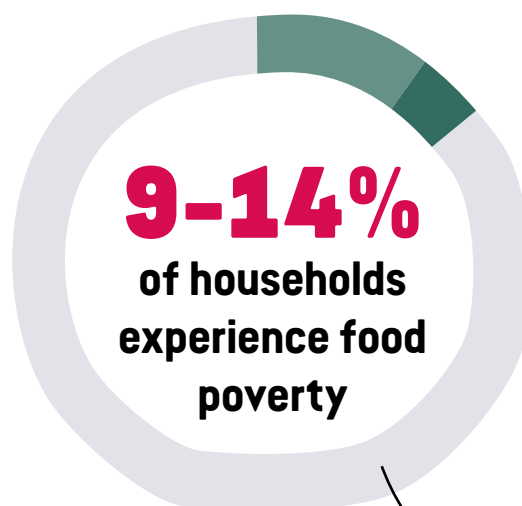




Oxfordshire's food economy accounts for 10 per cent of jobs, and in 2020 the sector generated a turnover of £2.2 billion or 10 per cent of the local economy.³⁴ It is estimated that 70 per cent of Oxfordshire's land area is agricultural (43 per cent of land used for arable farming and 27 per cent for improved grassland).³³

However, between 9-14 per cent of households across the county currently experience food insecurity.³⁴ With current diets, there is only enough farmland in the county to produce the hypothetical equivalent of 74 per cent of our food requirements.³³

Based on the most recent statistics from 2013, half of Oxford City's food came from the UK, a third came from the EU, and 15 per cent was imported from further afield. Less than 1 per cent was sourced directly from the region.³⁴





1.5 Nature

Nature is essential to our health and wellbeing. The positive effects of the natural world may be enhanced by access to green space and clean waterways for all.³⁵⁻³⁶

Potential benefits include:

- improved mental health,
- reduced social isolation,
- boosted physical activity and improved cardiovascular and physical health.

There is evidence that greener neighbourhoods and more exposure to green space correspond to:

- better self-assessed general and mental health;
- reduced all-cause and cardiovascular mortality;
- reduced stress;
- reduced incidence of low-birth weight;
- maintaining a healthier weight.⁵

Yet access to nature and associated health benefits is currently unfairly distributed, with specific groups consistently missing out.³⁸⁻³⁹

These include people living in areas of high deprivation, those on low incomes or unemployed, older people, black and minority ethnic groups and people with a long-term health condition or disability. It is not a coincidence that many of these groups also experience significant health inequality. Barriers to accessing and engaging with green-space and nature are associated with a range of physical, practical, and sociocultural factors.⁴⁰

Green social prescribing – a practice that involves prescribing nature-based interventions or activities as part of a patient's treatment plan – is one specific method to enable individuals and communities to access nature-based interventions and activities which benefit their physical and mental health and wellbeing.³⁷

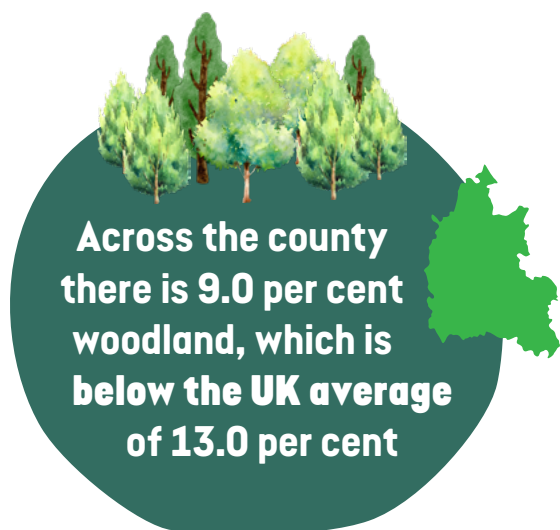




Additionally, around half of emissions produced from greenhouse gases may be absorbed by land and water ecosystems, providing nature-based solutions to our changing climate.⁴¹ Whether land acts as a 'source' or 'sink' of greenhouse gas emissions depends on how it is managed.

Currently land in Oxfordshire is predominantly used for intensive farming, with only 7.5 per cent for green space and gardens, see figures 18-19.³³ Arable land is typically a source of carbon emissions due to 'carbon loss' as soils are disturbed during cultivation.³³ Across the county there is 9.0 per cent woodland, which is below the UK average of 13.0 per cent.³³

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Currently land in Oxfordshire is predominantly used for intensive farming, with only 7.5 per cent for green space and gardens

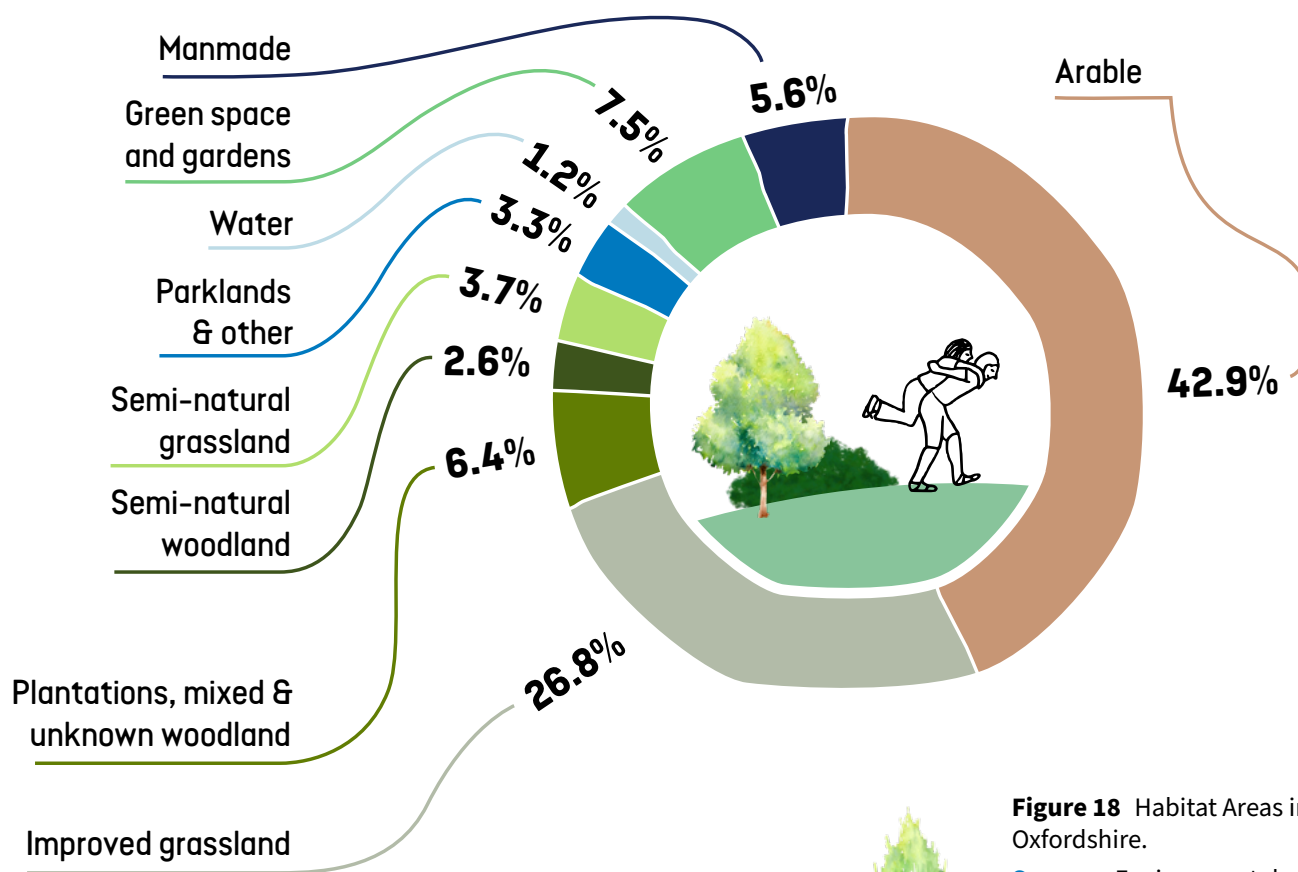


Figure 18 Habitat Areas in Oxfordshire.

Source: Environmental Change Institute, Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire



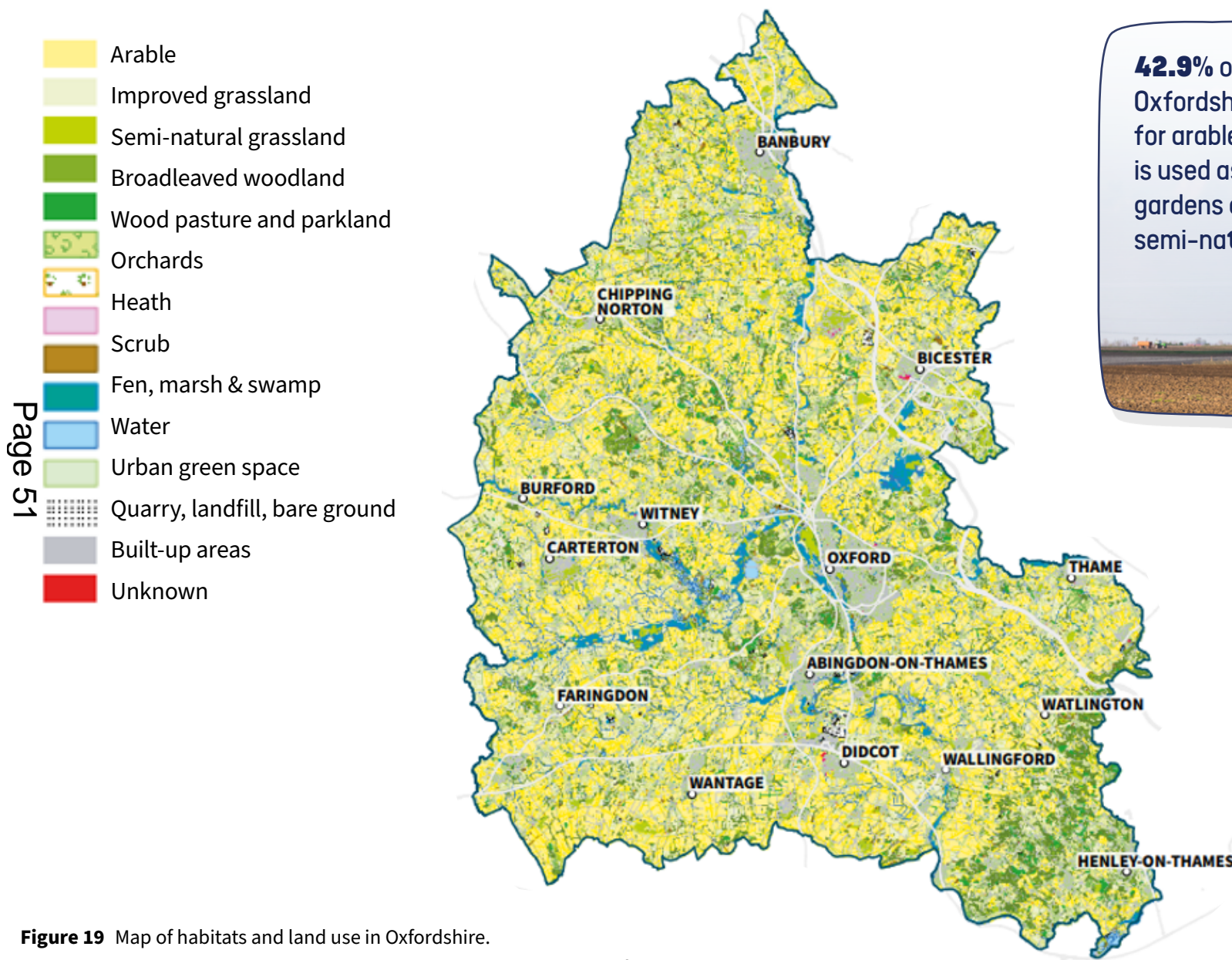
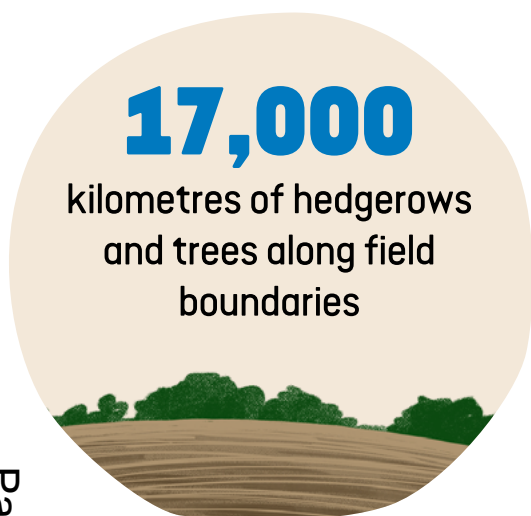


Figure 19 Map of habitats and land use in Oxfordshire.

Source: Environmental Change Institute, Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire



There are, however, already natural assets in Oxfordshire which store and sequester significant amounts of carbon and simultaneously provide opportunities to improve our health and wellbeing. Green spaces may provide shade and cooling, improve flood management, expand opportunities for active travel and improve biodiversity.⁵ The natural world therefore forms an integral part of our county's effective climate mitigation and adaptation strategy.^{33,41}

However, careful consideration should be taken when implementing green infrastructure to ensure that it does not inadvertently reduce air flow in urban streets, therefore leading to pollution build-up at a pedestrian level.⁵



Additionally, increasing the density of trees in urban places without consideration of tree species may lead to increased levels of pollen, with consequences for health.⁵

There are 17,000 kilometres of hedgerows and trees along field boundaries in Oxfordshire and as many as 800,000 trees situated on or beside public highways in Oxfordshire.³³ It is estimated that 23 million tonnes of carbon are currently stored in Oxfordshire's soil and vegetation, with an additional 115,000 tonnes sequestered each year – see figure 20.³³ By contrast, emission sources in Oxfordshire accounted for 4,309,600 tonnes of carbon in 2021, equivalent to 5.9 tonnes of carbon per person.³



**23 million
tonnes**
of carbon are currently
stored in Oxfordshire's soil
and vegetation



The woodland areas stand out for their role in carbon storage. The higher levels of carbon storage for grassland compared to arable land can also be seen. Arable land is a source of emissions due to carbon loss as soils are disturbed during cultivation. It is offset by sequestration, primarily by woodlands and hedgerows (from PAZCO).

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Figure 20 Carbon storage in soils and vegetation in Oxfordshire.

Source: Environmental Change Institute, Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PAZCO).



Nature testimony:

“Bridewell Gardens – a community garden in Oxfordshire – offers a supportive environment and green space for many. One local resident joined Bridewell with very high levels of anxiety. For their first months they did not join others to eat and did not feel able to speak with their support worker. However, by working in the gardens and with the support of staff and volunteers, this all started to change. This resident has gone on to offer their gardening services to neighbours, as well as transforming their initial garden to grow vegetables and flowers. They have continued to pursue work in the outdoors and to maintain friendships with people they met at Bridewell.”

“Bridewell gave me time and peace. Here everything grows and I grew. My favourite job was potting on, which stopped the chaos in my head and felt like I was nurturing something. I’ve learned not to suffer in silence but to speak out. I’ve still got a long way to go but I’ve found out how far I’ve come and I’m glad I am where I am.”

"Bridewell
gave me time
and peace."



"Here everything
grows and
I grew."



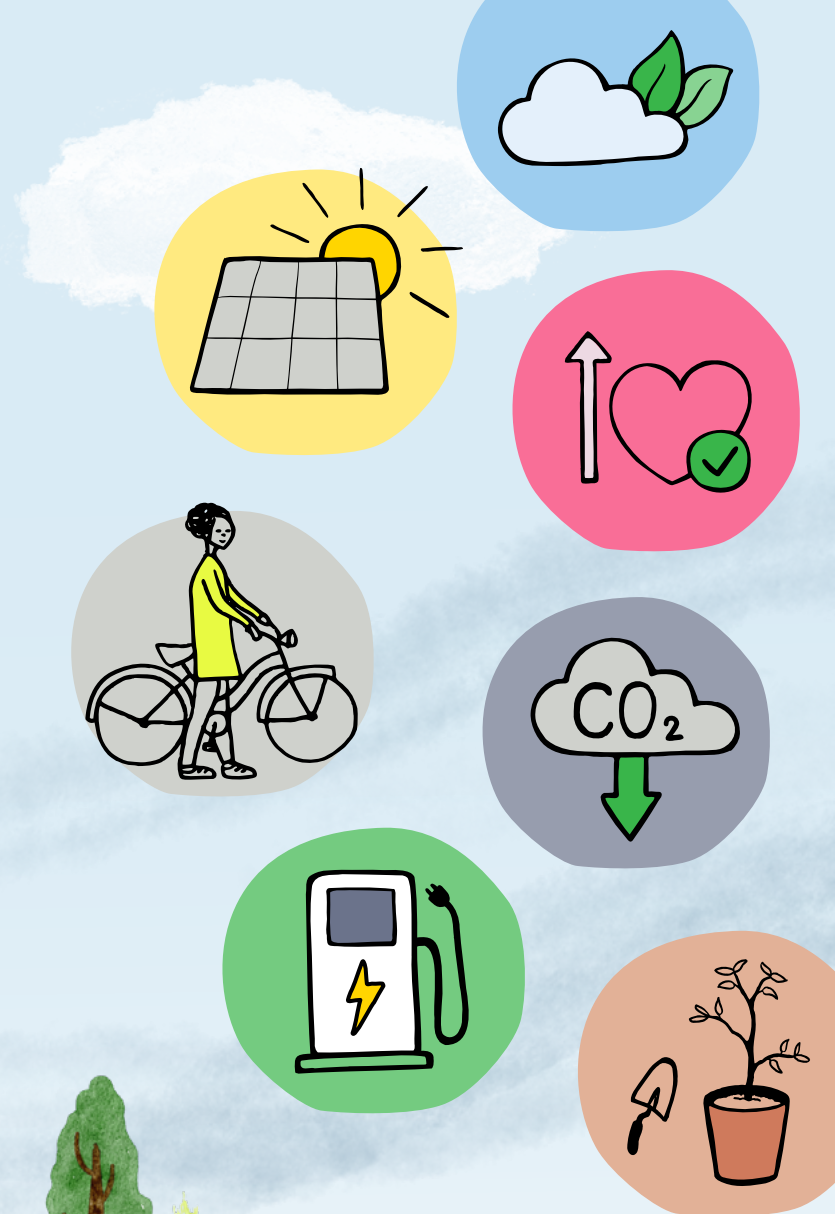
Section 2:

What are we doing now?

2.0 Introduction

This section explains what Oxfordshire County Council, local anchor institutions⁴³, system partners and community action groups are currently doing to address our changing climate – with immediate and longer-term positive benefits for health and wellbeing.

The national evidence base is currently strongest for benefits from nature-based solutions, mainstreaming climate-health considerations across sectors, interventions targeted for vulnerable populations and priority settings, undertaking early planning and action, enhancing community resilience by addressing existing inequalities, promoting adaptative behaviours and embedding climate education into health, care, and public health practice.⁵ Many of these actions work towards promoting a robust, local circular economy.

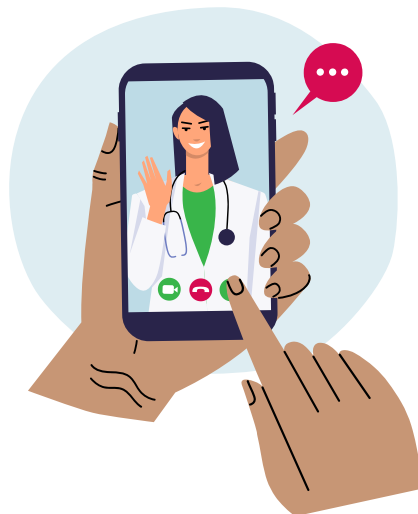


In this report, there are five themes on which climate initiatives with positive health benefits focus, including:

Energy efficient healthy homes and buildings



Green health and social care



Sustainable travel and clean air



Accessible green spaces, clean water and nature



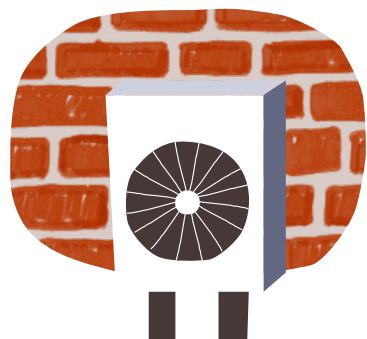
Healthy and sustainable diets



2.1 Energy efficient healthy homes and buildings

How we heat and cool our homes has an impact on our health, financial wellbeing and local climate. From a health perspective, more energy efficient and environmentally friendly heating and approaches to cooling can improve indoor and outdoor air quality, reduce exposure to toxic pollutants such as carbon monoxide, better regulate household temperatures for health and reduce pressures on local health services by doing so. These same principles apply to core local facilities, such as hospitals, prisons, GP practices, schools and libraries.

Through the climate action framework, Oxfordshire County Council has committed to prioritising action on climate change across the council's corporate estate and to reducing emissions from all its areas of influence.



What are we doing with homes in Oxfordshire?

- Better Housing Better Health.** The Better Housing Better Health (BHBH) service is a longstanding initiative commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council and the five district and city councils across Oxfordshire. The programme's objective is to support residents, those with health conditions and lower incomes and those in receipt of care, to stay warm, well and independent in their homes. New support also includes 'cooling' packs during summer months to support residents on short-term strategies to keep cool during periods of hot weather.

Examples of support include:

- understanding and accessing financial support to help pay for energy
- understanding energy bills, tariffs and heating controls
- accessing grants and funding for home improvements and heating system upgrades
- free home energy visits which offer personalised energy advice and support with bills and referrals
- signposting to local organisations to access additional support.

“I have heating and hot water again! I can't tell you how happy and relieved me and the kids are”

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OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

“The solar panels have already made a massive difference to our electricity costs, which has been hugely beneficial to me as a single parent with two small children.”

Liz, Abingdon

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

What are we doing with schools in Oxfordshire?

- The schools energy efficiency loan. Oxfordshire County Council has set aside a budget of £800,000 over two years to establish an **energy efficiency recycling fund**. The fund will provide schools maintained by the county council with an interest free loan to finance up to £70,000 for LED lighting and/or solar panels depending on the school's specific needs and priorities. Battery storage is also available with advice and support for the whole scheme available from Action on Carbon & Energy in Schools (ACES), an energy efficiency support service.

What are we doing with our communities in Oxfordshire?

- **Project LEO smart and fair neighbourhood trials.** Project LEO prioritises local energy solutions which are focused on testing new ways of delivering and using clean energy to the best possible advantage of households and their communities. This project works with a range of partners in collaboration with communities. For example, in Deddington and Duns Tew, the potential for use of **heat pumps** (devices which transfer heat from a cooler area to a hotter area using mechanical energy) to deliver clean, affordable energy for a rural community was tested and evaluated.
- Meanwhile, in Rose Hill the **solar saver** initiative trialled whether it would be possible for tenants in urban apartment buildings to modify their use of energy throughout the day to avoid peak hours of energy usage and to be better synchronised with peak levels of clean energy provided by solar panels.

Positive health impacts (associated with these examples)

- Reduce financial pressures of heating costs (and likely future cooling costs) for occupants and core local facilities⁵
- Reduce burning of fossil fuels (including through open fires or poorly ventilated stoves) which significantly and negatively impact our health, primarily through air pollution – both indoor and outdoor⁵
- Reduce air pollution which contributes to cardiovascular and respiratory morbidity and mortality along with other illnesses⁵
- Reduce carcinogenic and developmental health risks associated with fossil fuel extraction⁵
- Reduce cold-related mortality and morbidity by improving indoor temperatures during winter for occupants and core local facilities⁵
- Improve health of those with existing respiratory and chronic disease, with benefits for disease symptoms, mental wellbeing, reduced health service contacts and fewer days of absence from school and work, by improving home warmth⁵
- Improve community cohesion, resilience and adaptation in case of extreme weather events which may cause disruption to national energy supplies



2.2 Sustainable travel and clean air

Across the county, there are efforts to promote active, more sustainable travel. These initiatives have benefits for both physical and mental health – directly through increased physical activity and indirectly through cleaner, less polluted air. **Oxon Air** (www.oxonair.uk) now provides outdoor air quality monitoring maps and air quality forecasts across the county.



What are we doing with our schools?

The **School Streets** pilot scheme which is now being rolled out further, trialled the restriction of motor traffic at the school gates during drop off and pick up times. The project sought to improve road safety, by allowing school roads to be open for walking and cycling.

Nine school street trials took place between March and July 2021. Active travel to school increased by 6 per cent, with a majority of pupils surveyed describing feeling much safer or safer during trials than before. By contrast, there was a 7 per cent reduction in pupils being driven to school. Approximately 1 in 5 parent, resident and teacher drivers said that they were driving less since the school street trial had started. Almost half agreed that the air quality had improved at drop off and pick up times during the closures.



What are we doing with our bus services?

In support of the government's road to zero strategy for transition to zero emission transport by 2050, Oxfordshire was granted £32.8 million to support the local **zero emission bus regional areas (ZEBRA)** scheme. The initiative seeks to cut air pollution, reduce noise pollution, and provide more reliable bus services for local people.

The Oxfordshire County Council bid secured 159 zero emission buses now incrementally operating on 34 routes across Oxford City and nearby surroundings. This area has been defined through consideration of three core air quality management areas. All of these buses will be in operation by the end of June 2024 on services in and around Oxford City.

These new vehicles will have zero emissions at the point of operation and will be virtually silent. The impact on both air and noise pollution is expected to be significant. The ZEBRA proposal also supports wider policy proposals for Oxford, including **Connecting Oxford**, which will deliver a zero emissions zone and traffic filters to remove traffic from congested city centre routes.

What are we doing with cyclists?

There are now an increasing range of community led organisations which promote safe, accessible cycling across the county. **Windrush Bike Project** is one example, which operates as a not-for-profit social enterprise based in Witney, West Oxfordshire. The programme empowers individuals to improve their mental and physical health through cycling and developing skills in repairing bikes. The community bike workshop is run from Witney, with children and adults upskilled to repair and fix donated bikes through mechanics courses.

Additionally, the organisation runs **bikeability training** across 48 schools, with a weekly inclusive cycling activity and fortnightly social bike rides. Last year, 27 adults completed the 12 hour bike mechanics for wellbeing course – 19 asylum seekers were involved in the programme and were able to make use of the repaired bikes at the end of the course. The programme has also loaned 92 bicycles to children from low income families through the bike library, in addition to 19 trike and adapted cycles for children with additional needs.

27 

adults completed bike mechanics for wellbeing course

19 

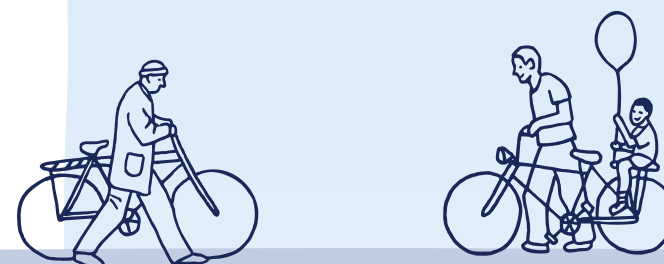
asylum seekers were involved in the programme

92 

bicycles loaned to children from low income families

Positive health impacts (associated with these examples)

- Shift unnecessary journeys from private vehicles, reducing emissions and improving air quality⁵
- Reduce risk of many chronic health conditions (such as obesity, respiratory disease and cardiovascular disease) by adopting more active, cleaner transport⁵
- Reduce harmful noise pollution through electrification of vehicles
- Improve physical health, mental health and wellbeing by adopting more active, cleaner transport⁵
- Improve equity and access to work and educational opportunities through more affordable and accessible public transport⁵
- Improve connection and engagement among and between communities



2.3 Green health and social care

In Oxfordshire, there are climate actions, policies and networks among health and care professionals working in primary care, secondary care, mental health services, out of hours services and social care. These all have a role to play in the health and wellbeing of patients, staff, and residents across the county. In particular, by greening and increasing biodiversity of estates and sites managed by healthcare providers, we can boost access to green spaces and nature across the county.

What are colleagues doing in general practice?

Greener Practice Oxfordshire is a new group bringing together like-minded primary care clinicians from across the county with the aim of supporting each other and their practices to make local healthcare more sustainable, improve the lives of local patients and communities and to be advocates for climate health. The group meets regularly and shares practical resources and solutions. Increasing numbers of GP practices across Oxfordshire can also now signpost and refer patients to green spaces for social prescribing interventions which improve mental health.

What are colleagues doing in secondary care?

In 2022, Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) NHS Foundation Trust launched the **‘Building a Greener OUH’ plan** which sets out the trust’s intention to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040, in line with NHS England’s carbon neutral target.⁴² From April 2023, the NHS will require all suppliers with new contracts above £5 million per annum to publish a carbon reduction plan for their direct emissions. From April 2024, this will be a requirement for all new contracts irrespective of value.

OUH are one of the largest NHS teaching hospital trusts in the UK and one of the largest employers in Oxfordshire. This strategy focusses on key areas including travel and transport, procurement and supply chains, estates and facilities, medicines and digital transformation.

Oxford University Hospitals have pledged

- To invest in active travel, to support the electrification of the NHS fleet and help reduce unnecessary journeys to hospital
- To build sustainability into the scoring for award of tenders and choosing which products are purchased, to focus on inventory and supply chain management and to work to reduce single use plastics
- To review anaesthetic gases and to reduce the proportion of desflurane to sevoflurane used in surgery, to promote the appropriate prescription of low carbon inhalers and encourage taking medicine in tablet form where possible (liquid medicines require refrigeration and have shorter expiration dates)
- To care for patients closer to, or at home, to be a truly paperless organisation and be mindful of the true carbon footprint associated with digital services
- To build sustainably, to encourage biodiversity and green space for patients and staff and to promote greener cleaning and catering.

Examples of progress already made include:

- The John Radcliffe Hospital and Oxford and Horton General Hospital, Banbury, have recently been awarded **£29.8 million** across both hospitals as part of the government's public sector **decarbonisation scheme**, which supports the aim of reducing emissions from public sector buildings and estates. Oxford University Hospitals will also contribute £7.5 million toward the wider scheme, meaning that the total expenditure is £37.3 million over a three year period. Both hospitals will undergo replacement of existing pipework and plumbing with modern, cleaner and more efficient infrastructure. Existing gas boilers will be replaced with lower carbon electric heat pumps and additional energy efficiency measures. Solar panels, insulation, double glazing and draught proofing will also be installed.
- Oxford University Hospitals are currently piloting a carbon accounting methodology called **E-Liability**. This technology was developed by academics from Harvard and Oxford. It consists of an accounting algorithm that allows organisations to produce real-time, accurate and auditable data on their total direct and supplier emissions (referred to as 'cradle-to-gate'). This methodology is intended to help inform purchasing decisions by providing reliable emission impacts of making a product or delivering a service.
- Electric vehicle charging points** have been installed at the John Radcliffe Hospital, in Headington. This supports staff to charge and park their electric vehicles at work. There is a plan to roll out more electric vehicle charging points across clinical sites.
- Local bike couriers** were partnered with to deliver chemotherapy and parenteral nutrition from the local depot at the John Radcliffe and Churchill hospitals. In the first ten months of the partnership, over 36,000 products were delivered. The new OUH Swindon radiotherapy centre opened in Spring 2022, with the goal of providing patients and families with a service closer to home which will reduce their travel time (more than 13,000 journeys to Oxford each year) and features 60 solar panels to help power the building.

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What are colleagues doing in community and mental health services?

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust provides essential services across Oxfordshire, not limited to district nursing, out of hours services, minor injuries units and core mental health services. Oxford Health is prioritising climate action across its sites, with examples including:

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust planted its first **Tiny Forest** at Littlemore Mental Health Centre on 6 December 2021.

The Tiny Forest is home to approximately 600 saplings of 18 different tree species and includes a range of features such as paths and rest areas for patients, staff, and visitors. It also provides a great spot to watch wildlife as a Tiny Forest can attract over 500 animal and plant species within the first three years.

As part of regular monitoring of the Tiny Forest, the team complete science days with staff and patients to find out more about how nature can have a positive impact for patients, staff, and visitors to the hospital. Both the learning disability and child and adolescent mental health services have used the Tiny Forest as part of patient therapy. Tiny Forest brings the benefits of a forest – connecting people with nature, raising awareness of the environment,

and helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change, as well as supporting urban wildlife.

Tiny Forest science days include learning about:

- Wildlife in the forest including butterflies, bees and bugs
- How trees can capture and store carbon from the air we breathe
- The forest's ability to store water
- The cooling benefits of the trees

Feedback from staff and patients has been positive. One staff member described “I enjoy going there not just with the people we support but also going on my own. I like going round there as I find it relaxing, it takes you away from other things and lets you focus on nature”.

A young patient said, “I look forward to going to the Tiny Forest, I feel excited when I go there and nice and chilled out”.

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust completed a successful six month **trial of e-bikes for the district nursing team** in 2023. The team recognised that transport of clinical staff is essential to deliver high quality community care and wanted to use this as an opportunity to take climate action. The team adopted e-bikes as a strategy to help low carbon goals, improve local air quality and boost the mental and physical health of staff.

The project involved a scoping exercise, review of governance procedures, engagement with the community team and involvement of volunteers, implementation, and evaluation. Through this process, the team also recognised the need for more safe cycling infrastructure across the county, access to changing facilities and safe cycle storage. They also acknowledged a need for alternative forms of active, sustainable travel as e-bikes are not suited to everyone.



What are colleagues doing in social care?

Alongside the commitment to realise net zero emissions from the corporate estate by 2030, Oxfordshire County Council is committed to working with its **supply chain** to reduce emissions and ensure they are increasingly aligned to science-based targets for net zero emissions. Current work is being undertaken with Oxfordshire County Council's top 10 suppliers (by spend), including the council's main care home provider, Order of St John.

Oxfordshire County Council's business mileage is around 4 million miles a year, with 66 per cent accounted for by children's services and 15 per cent by adult social care. Progress is being made to roll out a **fleet decarbonisation programme** for council owned vehicles (including those that might be used by social service teams). This will be electrification by default but will also involve proactive work on innovation projects for hard to electrify fleet (for example heavy vehicles). E-bikes and electric pool cars are also being trialled for social care delivery.

In addition to this, Oxfordshire County Council is expanding its **supply chain emissions report**. This includes the main care home provider, Order of St John. The initial estimates suggest that social care suppliers make up a quarter of supply chain emissions and work is currently underway with suppliers to calculate actual emissions. Aligned with this work, the following policy position was adopted by cabinet in June 2023:

- Engage with our suppliers on their carbon emissions and expand supply chain emission reporting.
- Collaborate with our suppliers, partners and purchasing organisations on decarbonisation opportunities.
- Implement low carbon principles and specifications in future council contracts.
- Maximise the effectiveness of Oxfordshire County Council's social value policy to realise further supply chain emission reduction opportunities.

Positive health impacts (associated with these examples)

- Reduce the significant contribution of emissions accounted for by the NHS, and in doing so reduce longer-term demand for health and social care services⁵
- Shift unnecessary journeys from private vehicles, reducing emissions and improving air quality⁵
- Reduce risk of many chronic health conditions (such as obesity, respiratory disease and cardiovascular disease) by adopting more active, cleaner transport to and from work⁵
- Improve quality of health care through more stable power supplies for refrigeration, lighting, and medical equipment⁵
- Improve quality and sustainability of social care services, especially for our ageing population
- Improve access to digital care for patients with limited mobility or living in remote areas⁵
- Improve air quality, mental health of staff and patients, natural cooling and carbon storage by maximising use of green space for health⁵
- Contribute to the circular economy of Oxfordshire by influencing positive social change among staff and patients on climate and health action

2.4 Healthy and sustainable diets

Food and nutrition are implicitly linked to our health. Accessible, healthy and sustainable food has the potential to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and several cancers. As discussed in last year's annual report, in Oxfordshire, over half of adults and one third of children in year 6 are overweight or obese and the burden of obesity is higher in the most deprived wards of the county.

Tandem, the number of people using services to address food poverty is significant – a snapshot of 40 providers of community food services in Oxfordshire reported over 23,000 beneficiaries on average per month in 2021.²⁴

To overcome the combined challenges of health, food poverty and our changing climate, Oxfordshire must strive toward a sustainable food system. Most recently, the war in Ukraine, COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit have all impacted on the cost and availability of food in the county and have emphasised the importance of resilient local food chains and community led programmes to tackle food poverty.

What are we doing within local authorities?

The Oxfordshire food strategy champions the importance of healthy and sustainable diets across the county and represents a joint commitment to tackling local food insecurity



and climate related food impacts.²⁴ The strategy was developed in partnership with **Good Food Oxfordshire**, an organisation which represents over 150 organisations working to create a better food system across the county.

Oxfordshire was awarded a prestigious **Sustainable Food Places silver award** in November 2023. This award acknowledges the work across Oxfordshire to build a local food system that is good for people, communities and climate.



The award recognises the work of the food partnership – Good Food Oxfordshire – and of stakeholders (communities, food and farming businesses and institutions) across the local area in promoting healthy, sustainable and local food. It also acknowledges work to tackle some of today's greatest social challenges; from food poverty and diet related ill health to the disappearance of family farms and the loss of independent food retailers. Sustainable Food Places commended Oxfordshire's excellent example of transitioning from city to county scale, promoting representation and encouraging participation through District Food Action working groups.



What are volunteer groups doing?



The Cherwell Collective. This umbrella organisation aims to empower their local community to reduce waste and their carbon footprint. The organisation was founded during COVID-19 due to concerns that families and individuals were facing unprecedented hardship and adversity, in particular families with young children reliant on free school meals.

The Cherwell Collective is based in Kidlington, but the community encompasses all of Oxfordshire. Actions include the direct distribution of food surplus via the **Cherwell Larder Marketplace**, the repurposing of surplus food via the **Climatarian Kitchen** and by growing food for the community in **Harvest@Home**. A new related project includes the Waste Innovation Station, which repurposes non-food items.



OX4 Food Crew. OX4 Food Crew is an alliance of nine grassroots organisations working collaboratively toward a common goal: – that everyone living in OX4 has enough food, is well nourished and can thrive. These organisations came together during the COVID-19 pandemic to tackle the high levels of food inequality experienced by people living in OX4. During 2021, this partnership developed and expanded, responding to diverse needs and a shift in emphasis with a focus on community led recovery and resilience.

Collectively, the OX4 Food Crew has distributed 20,000 food parcels and 20,000 cooked meals to people living in OX4. 'Pay as you feel' community meals are also run every Monday, across different venues in OX4. Cooking for health and wellbeing courses are run in conjunction with the programme, with some focussing on family cooking and people experiencing homelessness.

Positive health impacts [associated with these examples]

- Reduce the health burden and related costs of obesity-related illness to the NHS for both children and adults ⁵
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions attributed to food waste in households and communities, and their indirect impacts on health ⁵
- Improve support for low-income families and provide affordable nutritious options
- Improve social cohesion and community resilience





2.5 Accessible green spaces, clean water and nature

Nature is an important asset for our communities, and biodiversity allows the natural world to be productive, resilient and adaptable. Time spent in green space and nature is linked to reduced stress, improved mood, boosted self-esteem and better mental health. However, the indirect health co-benefits of the natural world are far greater. In the absence of biodiversity and crop biodiversity, we are more reliant on pesticides and fertilisers to compensate for lowered crop resilience and less rich soil.²⁹

Some pesticides and fertilisers have negative impacts on human health, depending on their composition – these effects may include the nervous system, irritation of the skin or eyes, altered hormone production and increased risk of developing certain cancers.

In the UK, the greatest benefits from green space are generally seen for those living in the most deprived areas.⁵ Barriers to accessing and engaging with green space and nature are associated with a range of physical, practical, and sociocultural factors.

Green spaces, clean water, nature and biodiversity are increasingly prioritised across Oxfordshire, as demonstrated through the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership. Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership is an organisation of key partners working together to radically enhance nature, its positive impact on our climate and the priority it is given, helping to make Oxfordshire a county where people and nature thrive.

What are we doing with district councils?

Our district councils are each prioritising access to green space and nature for residents:

- **Cherwell District Council** began their partnership with walking app **Go Jauntly** in 2022 to digitise and make more accessible local countryside walks and health routes. Walks are available in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington and more are added all the time. Print ready guides are also available.
- **South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils** have recently launched a nature recovery project called **Let it Bee**, which aims to increase biodiversity of council land by allowing wildflowers and plants to grow on specific sites. The councils have

chosen locations which do not impact on pedestrians or sightlines for drivers and are also near shorter grass areas and pathways for people wishing to exercise, play or relax.

- **Oxford City Council's GO Active Outdoors** programme aims to provide the public with all the information they need to be more active outdoors. The programme has dedicated web pages on green spaces and nature, including links with information on how to access city parks, local nature reserves, walking routes and wellbeing walks, and is a provider and licensor of Forest School activities.
- **West Oxfordshire District Council** has **funded the planting of wildflower meadow bulbs, plug plants and seed** through the UK shared prosperity fund as part of its commitment to enhance green spaces within the district. Thirty volunteers turned out to help in a planting session at Carnival Meadow, an area of Eynsham's playing fields owned by the town council, to provide colour and bring wildlife to the space. West Oxfordshire District Council has also installed **two brand new wooden footbridges** at Deer Park South in Witney with further developments planned for the area. The new footbridges will provide a safer and more accessible route across Colwell Brook.

What are volunteer groups doing?

- Children's allotment.** This is a volunteer run community space in East Oxford. The site hosts Forest Schools, family music sessions, a Growing Group and more. The site had been disused for 10 years and was overgrown with brambles. A group of parents, community members and educators formed a cooperative and transformed the dilapidated plant nursery into a positive green educational space for families to be outside and connect with nature. The site offers child and community education, for early years foundation stage children and older, with a focus on Forest School, food growing, outdoor play and self-directed learning.
- Oxford Urban Wildlife Group.** Oxford Urban Wildlife Group manages **Boundary Brook Nature Reserve**. The reserve was created in 1990 when local community members formed Oxford Urban Wildlife Group, rescuing a plot of disused allotments to create a tranquil, wild space in East Oxford. The reserve includes mixed woodland, meadows, a nature pond and butterfly glade. It has been described as a vital green lung in East Oxford. Events include mindfulness in nature, singing in nature, weekly conservation work and grassland restoration work.



- International Trees Foundation (ITF)** with partner Refugee Resource. This project coordinates a series of visits for refugees and asylum seekers to local nature sites across the county. The project focusses on adults, children and young people who are currently in receipt of psychological, social or practical support from Refugee Resource to engage them in a series of woodland activity sessions. The aim of this initiative is to improve physical and mental wellbeing, build confidence, reduce social isolation and give individuals the opportunity to be immersed in nature. The project builds on a series of taster sessions for families during the summer of 2022. The first event was held at the Oxford Botanic Gardens: **'Healing in the Outdoors'**.

Positive health impacts (associated with these examples)

- Improved self-assessed physical and mental health⁵
- Improve maintenance of a healthier weight⁵
- Improve wellbeing and cognition in children⁵
- Reduce all-cause and cardiovascular mortality⁵
- Reduce incidence of low birth weight⁵
- Reduce demand for (carbon intensive) healthcare⁵
- Improve availability of natural cooling and carbon storage provided by natural environments⁵
- Reduce flooding risk, and secondary health effects, through sustainable drainage systems and tree planting along rivers⁵

Section 3:

Call for action

Page 69

This report identifies both the opportunities and threats posed by the climate emergency to health. We highlight exciting climate actions, policies and strategies which are underway in Oxfordshire and show why we all need to take urgent climate action now to improve our health and wellbeing and protect our environment.

This report mandates urgent climate action for health across Oxfordshire.

We have shown the immediate and positive health benefits of taking action to address our changing climate, and we need to ensure that we accelerate and facilitate these measures across our county.

Every climate action, policy and strategy should identify and maximise the opportunity to improve our health and wellbeing.

By the same token, every health action, policy, and strategy should mitigate for and prevent the negative health impacts of our changing climate.

3.1 System actions

This responsibility cannot and should not be shouldered by individuals alone. We need real structural changes, and system wide actions to mitigate and adapt to our changing climate and to improve health.

Based on this report, our main priorities for system partners are:

1



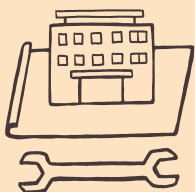
Work together for cleaner indoor and outdoor air by promoting active, sustainable travel and adopting low-carbon energy and supply chains

2



Increase and improve access for all to safe, inclusive green spaces and clean waterways with positive impacts on wildlife, biodiversity and adaptation

3



Adapt and upgrade buildings, estates and facilities to ensure high-quality services can be delivered now and in the future as resources are made available

4



Work with suppliers and the supply chain to reduce carbon emissions, ensure decisions consider carbon impacts, and encourage suppliers to develop more sustainable practices, including maximising social value and environmental standards for food and catering

5



Ensure partnership working through existing forums and networks to accelerate action on climate mitigation and adaptation, whilst maximising benefits for health and wellbeing, with a particular focus on delivery of system wide action to address the risks of extreme weather events

6



Build and continuously bolster community resilience by adapting infrastructure to meet the needs of our changing climate

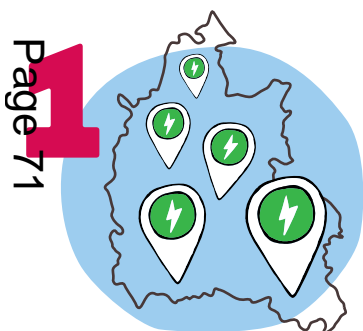
3.2 National policy and funding

With the right national policy framework, local authorities could achieve so much more. The recent report by Chris Skidmore MP, [The Future is Local](#), sets out the key opportunity for local authorities working in partnership with central government to deliver low carbon solutions.

With favourable policy from central government, local authorities will be able to deliver more, faster than under the current national policy and legislative framework. Based on this report, our main priorities for central government are aligned with the [Blueprint Coalition](#).

The Blueprint Coalition is an influential group of local government organisations, environmental groups and research institutions who are calling on the government altogether to support local authorities in delivering climate action with a joined up approach:

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Reduce air pollution by investing in low carbon and climate resilient infrastructure including public transport, renewable energy and electric vehicle charging



Create good, secure employment and reduce inequalities by supporting reskilling, retraining, remote working and research to accelerate the move to a net zero economy



Improve our residents' health and wellbeing by upgrading our homes, healthcare facilities and schools to ensure they are fit for the future



Boost our physical and mental health by making it easy for people to walk, cycle, and use active, sustainable transport



Improve our mental and physical health, capacity for natural cooling and air quality by ensuring access for all to green spaces and other green infrastructure

3.3 Individual actions

Last, but not least, there are many practical things that each of us can do, with very little time and effort. Some of these are free and many save money. Almost all improve our own health and the health of others. These small changes can add up to big action.

Take a look at [Climate Action Oxfordshire](#) or [Home | Cag Oxfordshire | Community Action Group Network | England](#) where there are plenty of suggestions to get started.

There are also [resources and support available](#) if you are experiencing the effects of climate anxiety, or eco anxiety (often defined as a longer-term fear of environmental doom, and worries about what might happen if we do not take action to avert disaster due to the climate emergency). There is also [tailored support](#) available for young people.

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Appendix A

Health and Wellbeing in Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire is the most rural county in the South East region. Oxfordshire's population is relatively healthy.

Oxfordshire does better or similar to the national average on most Public Health indicators. Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy in Oxfordshire are each significantly higher than national and regional averages for both males and females.

Oxfordshire's population is ageing, a trend that is forecast to continue.

House prices are continuing to increase, and the cost of renting remains well above average. The future increase in the population (especially the numbers of young people) is very dependent on levels of house building in future and will vary across the county.

For 2019 to 2021, Cancer was the leading cause of death in Oxfordshire, followed by Heart Disease for males and Dementia & Alzheimers Diseases for females. The prevalence of Cancer and Depression in Oxfordshire in 2020-21 were each above the national average.

The latest ONS measures of personal wellbeing (2020-21) for Oxfordshire show a decline in reported happiness and an increase in anxiety. The average level of anxiety in Oxfordshire has remained above the England average. Mental health rates of diagnosis and referrals are continuing to increase.

According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2019), Oxfordshire was ranked the 10th least deprived of 151 upper-tier local authorities in England (up from 11th in 2015). Oxfordshire had 1 out of 407 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) ranked within the 10% most deprived areas nationally, part of Northfield Brook ward, south east Oxford. A further 16 areas were ranked in the 20% most deprived areas nationally, 9 in Oxford City, 6 in Banbury and 1 in Abingdon.

As a result Oxfordshire has wide inequalities in health and wellbeing. Males living in the more affluent areas of the county are expected to live around 11 years longer than those in poorer areas. For females the gap in life expectancy is around 12 years.

For more detailed live information on Oxfordshire's health and wellbeing please see the [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2022](#).

Oxfordshire
JSNA



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Footnotes:

‘Anchor institutions’ are large organisations that have a strong and long term tie to the area and who make a significant and lasting impact to the prosperity and wellbeing of the community. Examples include NHS trusts, Oxford Health, GP practices, councils, care homes, universities and colleges, housing groups and large established companies. Anchor institutions have a significant stake in a region, in terms of spaces they occupy, their environmental impact and the direct and indirect jobs they sustain. They also have significant economic and social influence through the budgets they manage, the supply chains they use and their approach to development.

Testimonies were gathered from individual interviews with Oxfordshire residents completed in November and December 2023. People agreed to share their lived experience of the impacts of climate change on the basis that their account would remain anonymous.

Divisions affected – N/A

COUNCIL

16 APRIL 2024

DISPENSATION FROM ATTENDING MEETINGS

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Council is RECOMMENDED

- a) To grant a dispensation to Cllr Yvonne Constance from the statutory requirement to attend a meeting of the Council within a six-month period from the last noted attendance due to illness.
- b) To approve that the dispensation last up to and including 30 November 2024

Background

- 2. Full Council has the discretion to approve a dispensation, based on the circumstances of the case, which means that the councillor does not cease to be a member of the Council for failing to attend a meeting during a six-month period.
- 3. Meetings of the authority include meetings of full Council along with committees and sub-committees of which the councillor is a member. In certain circumstances attendance by a Councillor in person as an observer at a meeting where that meeting is undertaking functions of the County Council would also be a qualifying attendance in compliance with Section 85(2) of the Local Government Act 1972
- 4. Councillor Yvonne Constance who represents the Shrivenham Division has been unable to attend meetings due to illness. The last meeting that she attended was full Council on 7 November 2023.
- 5. The Monitoring Officer has been contacted by Cllr Constance's Group Leader, Cllr Eddie Reeves, seeking Full Council's approval to grant a dispensation until 30 November 2024. It is anticipated that Cllr Constance may be able to return to Council duties before that date and will be well enough to attend in person Council and committee meetings.
- 6. If the dispensation is not granted by Council, Cllr Constance will automatically cease to be a member of the Council on 6 May 2024 unless she attends a qualifying meeting in person before that date.

Financial implications

7. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

Comments checked by: Lorna Baxter, Executive Director Resources and Section 151 Officer

Legal implications

8. Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that 'if a member of a local authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, they shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the authority'.
9. The Monitoring Officer is satisfied that the granting of a dispensation is a reasonable and appropriate use of those powers, having regard to the circumstances, and the Council would be justified in granting the dispensation until 30 November 2024.

Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Equality and inclusion implications

10. There are no direct equality and inclusion implications arising from this report

Sustainability implications

11. There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report

Risk management

12. There are no direct risk management implications arising from this report

Anita Bradley

Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Contact officer: Simon Harper, Head of Governance
Email simon.harper@oxfordshire.gov.uk

April 2024

Divisions-N/A

COUNTY COUNCIL – 16 April 2024

REPORT OF THE CABINET

Cabinet Member: Leader

1. Future Council Governance Group - Final Report

(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report and recommendations from the Future Council Governance Group. The report had been presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 29 November 2023 by Cllr Stefan Gawrysiak, chair of the cross-party group. Members of the committee welcomed the findings and recommendations.

The group's recommendation relating to the formation of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee was supported at the full Council meeting on 12 December 2023. The terms of reference for the new committee were developed ahead of Council and were approved at the meeting.

The other recommendations made by the group, including the inter-relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny, participatory process, locality working and futures planning, would need to be taken forward by the Cabinet, Leader of the Council and individual Cabinet Members.

Cabinet approved the recommendations which included an evaluation of the cost and processes for a citizens' panel with a view, subject to budget, to selecting one topic in 2024-25 and to review its success or otherwise before committing to any future panels.

2. Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Functions: Transition Arrangements

(Cabinet, 27 February 2024)

Cabinet considered a report on the transfer of Local Enterprise Partnership core functions to the Council. The Government had announced that from 31 March 2024, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) would cease to have official recognition and that existing LEP functions would transfer to upper-tier local authorities or combined authorities, where they exist.

Cabinet approved the recommendations including the creation of a County Council controlling interest in the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP Ltd), subject to agreement by OxLEP Ltd's board and gave consent to a change to OxLEP Ltd's governance to amend the Articles of Association and By-Laws to enable the County Council to take a controlling interest, if agreed by the OxLEP board.

Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care

3. Award for All-Age Advocacy Contracts

(Cabinet: 19 December 2023)

Cabinet had before it a report recommending an approach for the procurement of the future provision for the All-Age Advocacy contracts.

Advocates are independent professionals who are qualified to help people understand their rights, communicate their needs and preferences, and ensure that their voices are heard in decisions about their care and support. They provide help and guidance to people who are experiencing difficulty accessing or using social care services. Local Authorities had a duty to provide independent advocacy under the Care Act 2014, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and The Advocacy Services and Representations Procedure (Children) (Amendment) Regulations 2004.

Cabinet approved the recommendations and agreed the approach for the procurement of the future provision for the All-Age Advocacy contracts.

Cabinet Member: Community & Corporate Services

4. Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) 5G Innovation Region Funding

(Cabinet: 19 December 2023)

A report regarding the successful bid for 5G Innovation Region funding was presented to the Cabinet.

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) is the central government department responsible for improving the nation's fixed and mobile connectivity. Under the broad category of the £5bn Project Gigabit, was a sub-section focussing on 5G Connectivity. As part of that, a competitive funding bid for setting up ten 5G Innovation Regions was submitted and for which Oxfordshire had been successful in being awarded the maximum grant of £3.8m. Oxfordshire County Council would be the lead authority with Buckinghamshire, Central Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, & all Berkshire councils forming the Region. 5G Innovation Regions focus on developing innovative commercial models withing specific targeted sectors and 'England's Connected Heartland' will deliver outputs in two sectors - Rail Connectivity and Research & Development/Science Parks. The project would deliver outputs described in the report.

Cabinet welcomed the award of grant funding and the benefits that would be achieved for public services as a result of improved connectivity within Oxfordshire and across the country as a whole.

5. Workforce Report and Staffing Data - Quarter 2 - July to September 2023

(Cabinet: 19 December 2023)

Cabinet had before it a report providing the workforce profile for quarter 2 including an overview of headcount, agency spend, sickness, turnover and other relevant management information and performance indicators set out in Annex A. The report also set out some of the actions being taken to address the trends identified.

Cabinet noted the report and highlighted that several of the statistics compared favourably with other similar local authorities.

6. People and Culture Strategy

(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)

Cabinet considered a report introducing the “Our People and Culture Strategy” which set out the vision for developing and maintaining high performing, innovative, highly engaged, and agile teams, employing the best people, and reflecting the communities that the Council served. The strategy referred to the importance of nurturing an environment that supported diversity, equality, and inclusion, and allowed all employees to bring their whole selves to work to deliver great services for our Oxfordshire residents.

Cabinet approved the strategy and noted that the proposed KPI measurements would subject to further development.

7. Report on the authority's policy for compliance with the Regulation of the Investigatory Powers Act 2000, the use of activities within the scope of this act and the recent inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office

(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report providing a summary of the covert activities undertaken by the council between April 2022 and March 2023 under the provisions of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and supporting Codes of Practice. The Council's existing Policy for Compliance with the Investigation of Regulatory Powers Act 2000 was updated annually but had not been subjected to a full refresh since 2017. The report provided Cabinet with an opportunity to review and approve the council's Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Policy. The policy required Cabinet approval in the absence of a delegation in the Constitution to another body or committee for approval.

Cabinet approved the recommendations including the revised Policy for Compliance with the Act set out in the report.

8. Workforce Report and Staffing Data - Q3 October - December 2023

(Cabinet: 27 February 2024)

Cabinet considered a report which provided the workforce profile for quarter 3 2023/24 including an overview of headcount, agency spend, sickness, turnover and

other relevant management information and performance indicators. The report also set out some of the actions being taken to address the trends identified.

The report was noted.

Cabinet Member: Infrastructure & Development Strategy

9. Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23

(Cabinet: 19 December 2023)

A report on the Infrastructure Funding Statement was considered by the Cabinet. This was a statutory statement of fact to be reported annually, by 31 December 2023 on developer contributions secured, spent or received during the previous financial year, 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

Cabinet approved the publication of the statement and welcomed the improved processes outlined in the report, including increased liaison with district council partners.

Cabinet Member: Finance

10. Capital Programme Update and Monitoring Report

(Cabinet: 19 December 2023)

Cabinet considered the third capital programme update and monitoring report for 2023/24 which set out the monitoring position based on activity to the end of August 2023. The report also provided an update to the Capital Programme approved by Council in February 2023 taking into account additional funding and new schemes. The updated programme also incorporated changes agreed through the Capital Programme Approval Reports to Cabinet during the financial year as well as new funding.

Members highlighted the range of social, environmental and economic benefits for Oxfordshire arising from the initiatives within the capital programme and, in particular, the rollout of 20mph speed limit schemes across the County.

Cabinet noted the latest capital monitoring position for 2023/24 and approved the updated Capital Programme noting the return of £3.8m corporate funds from the 20mph Programme; a budget increase of £5.965m to £13.959m for the new primary school in Wallingford (St Nicolas Church of England Primary School); the inclusion of the capital grant of £17.330m towards the A34 Lodge Hill scheme and the inclusion of £3.8m from the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) 5G Innovation Region funding to implement a project to be known as 'England's Connected Heartland'

11. Business Management & Monitoring Report - October/November 2023

(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)

Cabinet considered a report presenting the September 2023 performance, risk, and finance position for the council. The business management reports were part of a suite of performance, risk and budget documents which set out the council's ambitions, priorities, and financial performance.

Cabinet noted the report and the financial adjustments set out in the annexes.

12. Capital Programme Approvals - January 2024

(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report setting out requests for changes to the Capital Programme requiring Cabinet approval that would be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next quarterly update to the Capital Programme in March 2024.

Cabinet approved the recommendations including the inclusion of 'Great Mead', a Children's Residential Home, into the Capital Programme, releasing £3.1m of funding agreed by Council in February 2023; 'Willow Bank', a Children's Residential Home, into releasing £1.8m of funding agreed by Council in February 2023, and a new Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) School for Social and Emotional High Needs (SEMH) and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), located in Didcot, with an indicative capital budget of £14.4m to be met by section 106 funds and High Needs grant 2021/22 to 2023/24.

13. Freehold Disposal Chilterns End Former Care Home, Henley on Thames

(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report on the proposed disposal of land comprising the former elderly persons' home at Chilterns End. The property had been considered for several uses within OCC since late 2019, but with no viable business case forthcoming. It had been allocated in the Henley on Thames Neighbourhood Plan for a mix of open market and affordable housing.

Cabinet approved the freehold sale of the property which supported the Council's Property and Asset Strategy agreed in November 2022.

14. Oxford City Centre Accommodation Strategy

(Cabinet: 23 January 2024)

Cabinet considered a report regarding the options for the Council's office accommodation in Oxford City Centre which were being considered as part of the Property and Assets Strategy approved in November 2022. This strategy set out the Council's 10-year ambition for its property portfolio driven by the need to repurpose the estate to enable new ways of delivering services, support agile working and decarbonise existing buildings.

The Strategy had confirmed the continued need for a core central office and democratic facilities in Oxford city centre based on its central location, historical significance, strong public transport links, access to a larger workforce and the range of facilities in the city.

Members referred to the need for careful consideration of the future use of the County Hall site in view of its historic social and value and the benefits for residents and staff resulting from the move to a refurbished building more suited to present day needs. They also referred to the economic factors involved in the consideration of the options and the need to ensure that best value was taken into account.

Cabinet approved the recommendations to progress Option 2: 'Consolidation in Speedwell House and disposal of County Hall' as the preferred option and progress the project through the Council's capital governance and reporting processes, noting the financial position and to engage the market to assess interest in both New and Old County Hall to inform a final decision on Old County Hall's future.

15. Budget & Business Planning Report - 2024/25 - January 2024

(Cabinet: 30 January 2024)

Cabinet had before it a report setting out the Cabinet's revenue budget for 2024/25, medium term financial strategy to 2026/27, capital programme to 2033/34 plus supporting policies, strategies and information.

This report included the budget engagement and consultation 2024/25 findings the Cabinet's proposed Revenue Budget Strategy and the Capital & Investment Strategy (Section 5). Alongside this, the report also set out the Review of Charges for 2024/25 and the High Needs budget changes for 2024/25 to 2026/27

The Cabinet's revenue budget proposals took into consideration the latest information on the council's financial position outlined in this report. In finalising the proposals, Cabinet had taken into consideration feedback from Phase 1 of the public consultation on the revenue budget proposals and council tax increase. Feedback from Phase 2 was broadly consistent with Phase 1 and would be used to develop plans for 2025/26 onwards.

Cabinet recommended that Council adopt the proposed strategies and financial measures detailed in the report and annexes.

16. Capital Programme Approvals - February 2024

(Cabinet: 27 February 2024)

Cabinet considered a report which set out changes to the Capital Programme requiring Cabinet approval that would be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next update to the Capital Programme in March 2024.

Cabinet approved the inclusion of a 3 Form Entry Primary School, located in Didcot, into the Capital Programme with capital budget of £2.19m, to be fully funded from secured S106 contributions.

17. Commercial Strategy

(Cabinet: 19 March 2024)

Cabinet had before it a proposed Commercial Strategy which set out the Council's commercial ambition and pathway to embedding commercial thinking as part of its culture and governance.

The strategy set out the vision to leverage Oxfordshire's unique assets and strengths to optimise organisational efficiency, generate sustainable revenue, support the development of a more inclusive local economy and enhance public services through innovative and responsible commercial activities.

Cabinet approved the strategy as set out in the report.

18. Treasury Management Quarter 3 Performance Report (2023/24)

(Cabinet: 19 March 2024)

Cabinet considered a report on the Council's Treasury Management performance at the end of the third quarter of the year 2023-24 (measured against the budget agreed by Council in February 2023). The report covered the management of the organisation's borrowing, investments, and cash flows, including its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities, and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.

The report was noted.

19. Business Management & Monitoring Report - January 2024

(Cabinet: 19 March 2024)

Cabinet considered a report presenting the January 2024 performance, risk, and finance position for the council. The business management reports were part of a suite of performance, risk and budget documents which set out the council's ambitions, priorities, and financial performance.

Members welcomed performance improvements in a number of areas including the library service; the number of Education and Health Care plans completed in the SEND service (where performance had exceeded the national average) and the increase in the number of residents satisfied with the service provided by the customer service centre.

Cabinet noted the report and approved a number of financial adjustments.

20. Capital Programme Update and Monitoring Report

(Cabinet: 19 March 2024)

Cabinet had before it the fourth capital programme update and monitoring report for 2023/24 which set out the monitoring position based on activity to the end of January 2024. The report also provided an update to the Capital Programme approved by Council on 20 February 2024 taking into account additional funding and new schemes. The updated programme also incorporated changes agreed through the

Capital Programme Approval Reports to Cabinet during the year as well as new funding.

Cabinet approved a number of budget changes including the inclusion of a programme of work to replace prefabricated classrooms with permanent provision at North Hinksey CE Primary School into the Capital Programme, at a cost of £1.443m to be funded by s106 developer contributions, the remaining cost of the scheme will be met by the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust; the expansion of Mabel Prichard Special School into the capital programme with an indicative budget of £2.230m to be funded from the Special Educational Needs (SEN) High Needs capital allocation 2021/22-2023/24; an increase in budget of £3.6m from £6.897m to £10.497m for the Tramway Road Accessibility Improvement scheme funded through the Housing & Growth Deal and the inclusion of Redbridge Household & Recycling Centre (HWRC) stabilisation works into the capital programme at a cost of £1.400m to be funded by corporate resources.

Cabinet also noted the release of an initial development budget of £1.813m to redevelop Speedwell House and approved the inclusion of the £3.1m Decarbonisation Grant into the capital programme and the release of a total budget provision of £8.2m to commence carbon reduction measures in the Council property portfolio to progress measures towards the 2030 Climate Action Framework.

21. Reports received from Scrutiny Committees

(Cabinet: 19 December 2023, 23 January 2024 & 27 February 2024)

Cabinet received reports on, and will respond formally to, the following:

Reports of the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on:-

Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health of Children
Support for People Leaving Hospital; the Oxfordshire Way

Report of the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee report on the Oxfordshire Education Commission report.

Report of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee report on the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23.

Reports of the Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee on:-

Employee Engagement Survey
Capital Asset Disposal Process
Social Value Policy
City Centre Accommodation Strategy
Draft Customer Experience Strategy

Divisions affected – All

COUNCIL
16 APRIL 2024

REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. **Council is RECOMMENDED** to approve and adopt the revised arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints against members attached to this report together with annexes 1 to 5.

Executive Summary

2. On 13 March 2024, the Audit and Governance Committee considered the revised arrangements for dealing with complaints against members and recommended that they be adopted by the Council.
3. The Localism Act 2011 (the Act) requires all local authorities to adopt a code of conduct setting out the standards of behaviour expected from local councillors (Section 27(2)).
4. Oxfordshire's revised Member Code of Conduct was approved at the Council meeting on 5 April 2022 and adopted with effect from 1 May 2022. The same Code of Conduct has been adopted by the County Council and the City and District Councils in Oxfordshire.
5. Under Section 28(6)(b) of the Act a local authority is required to put in place arrangements for dealing with allegations of breaches of the code of conduct and for making decisions upon allegations.
6. These 'Arrangements' have been reviewed by the Monitoring Officer in light of the experience of operating the previous arrangements which had not been reviewed since they were implemented in 2012. The arrangements set out how a complaint that an elected or co-opted member of this Council has failed to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct will be dealt with, and how the Council will deal with allegations of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct.

7. The Audit and Governance Committee supported the revised arrangements which include the following key changes:
- a) From the outset, when completing the complaint form, the requirement for a complainant to identify the parts of the Member Code of Conduct that they consider have been breached.
 - b) Formalising the criteria against which a complaint will be assessed.
 - c) Changes to the timeframes for dealing with member complaints to provide the Monitoring Officer with 30 working days within which to complete the assessment of the complaint, and 30 working days in which to complete the preparation for a Members' Hearing Panel.
 - d) Detailing the support available to Subject Councillors.
 - e) A more detailed hearing process which is before a Members' Hearing Panel which replaces the Members' Advisory Panel. The significance of this is that rather than providing recommendations to the Monitoring Officer, the Members' Hearing Panel will take the decisions as to whether there is a finding of breach of the code of conduct or not and any sanctions to impose if applicable.
 - f) The hearing process has been set out in greater detail in annex 3. This includes clarity on timescales and a presumption that the hearing will be held in public.

Financial implications

8. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report

Comments checked by: Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Chief Finance Officer

Legal implications

9. The Localism Act 2011 requires all local authorities to adopt a code of conduct setting out the standards of behaviour expected from local councillors. These arrangements set out how the Council will deal with allegations of and decisions relating to breaches of the code of conduct. The specific legislative provisions are set out in paragraphs 3 and 5 of the report.

Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Anita Bradley

Director of Law & Governance & Monitoring Officer

Annex: Arrangements for dealing with complaints against members

Background papers: Report to the Audit and Governance Committee on 13 March 2024 – Review of arrangements for dealing with complaints against members.

Contact officer:

Sarah Smith, Senior Governance Lead
governance@oxfordshire.gov.uk

April 2024

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**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints Against Members

Review date: April 2026

March 2024

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1. The Code of Conduct

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires all local authorities to adopt a code of conduct setting out the standards of behaviour expected from its councillors.
- 1.2 The Council has adopted a [Members' Code of Conduct \(oxfordshire.gov.uk\)](http://oxfordshire.gov.uk), which can be found at Part 9 of the Constitution, on the Council's website or can be provided on request.
- 1.3 These "Arrangements" set out:
- a) how to make a complaint that an elected or co-opted member of Oxfordshire County Council has failed to comply with the Members' Code of Conduct and;
 - b) how the Council will deal with such complaints.
- 1.4 The Monitoring Officer may depart from any of these arrangements where, in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, it is necessary to do so in order to secure the effective and fair consideration of any matter.

2. Making a Complaint

- 2.1 Complaints must be submitted in writing to Oxfordshire County Council's Monitoring Officer using the [Code of Conduct complaint form](#). The complaint form (see annex 5) can be downloaded from the Council's website and is also available on request.
- 2.2 Your completed form should be sent to the Monitoring Officer by post or email (preferred). If you wish to make a complaint, please write, or email to:

By Post: Monitoring Officer
 Law & Governance
 Oxfordshire County Council
 County Hall
 New Road
 Oxford OX1 1ND

Email: standards.monitoringofficer@oxfordshire.gov.uk

- 2.3 The Monitoring Officer is the Director of Law & Governance who has statutory responsibility for maintaining the Register of Members' Interests and is responsible for administering the system in respect of

complaints of Member misconduct.

2.4 Please provide us with your name and a contact address or email address, so that we can acknowledge receipt of your complaint and keep you informed of its progress. If you want to keep your name and address confidential, please explain your reasons in this space provided on the complaint form.

2.5 The Monitoring Officer will not normally consider a complaint unless it is in writing and a complaint form has been received. This is to ensure that all of the relevant information is provided and, where necessary, consent to share information has been obtained so that the complaint can be processed. However, if you require any assistance in completing the form, please contact the council via the postal and email addresses detailed above at paragraph 2.2.

3. The complaints process

3.1 Receipt of your complaint will be acknowledged on behalf of the Monitoring Officer within **5** working days.

3.2 The Monitoring Officer is entitled to dismiss the complaint at the outset if:

- a) the Subject Councillor is no longer a councillor;
- b) the complaint is made anonymously;
- c) the same, or substantially the same issue has been the subject of a previous Code of Conduct allegation and there is nothing further to be gained;
- d) the complaint is essentially against the action of the council as a whole and cannot properly be directed against individual councillor(s);
- e) the complaint does not relate to the conduct of a councillor and is a service complaint or other matter;
- f) the complaint is against an officer of the Council.

3.3 If the complaint identifies criminal conduct (including a failure to register disclosable pecuniary interests) or breach of other regulations by any person, the Monitoring Officer will refer the complaint to the police or other regulatory agencies. No further action will be taken in relation to such complaints until any related criminal/regulatory investigation, proceedings or processes have been concluded.

3.4 Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated, unless there is clear public interest in doing so and the Monitoring Officer considers that a fair investigation can be carried out.

3.5 Requests from Complainants for the Monitoring Officer to withhold their identity so that they remain anonymous to the Subject Councillor, are not ordinarily granted. The Monitoring Officer has to balance the right of the Subject Councillor to properly understand the complaint against them and

respond to it, with the rights of the Complainant. This normally means that the Subject Councillor will need to be told who is making the complaint.

3.6 The Monitoring Officer will usually write to the Subject Councillor complained of and provide them with a copy of your complaint (having removed your contact details), asking them for comments and any further information that the Monitoring Officer considers necessary. In exceptional cases, where it is appropriate to keep your identity confidential or disclosure of details of the complaint to the Member might prejudice any investigation, the Monitoring Officer can delete your name from the papers provided to the Subject Councillor.

3.7 The complainant is encouraged to, and the Subject Councillor is required to, respond promptly to any correspondence in relation to the complaint. The complainant and Subject Councillor will be kept updated as to how the complaint is progressing. If at any stage in the complaint process the Complainant fails to respond, the complaint may be treated as withdrawn; if the Subject Councillor fails to respond, the complaint will be determined on the basis of the information available. Failure by the Subject Councillor to engage with this process may amount to a breach of the member's code of conduct under paragraph 6.8.2: *[A Councillor] Shall cooperate with any Code of Conduct assessment, investigation, hearing and/or determination.*

4. Will your complaint be investigated?

4.1 The Monitoring Officer, or their appointee, will review every complaint received and, after consultation with an Independent Person (either in person or electronically), take a decision as to the following:

- a) That no further action should be taken,
- b) Refer the complaint for local resolution (which might involve an apology or training or some other form of mediation or informal resolution),
- c) Refer the complaint for investigation.

4.2 This is known as the Assessment stage and its purpose is to establish if there are valid grounds to investigate the complaint or take informal action. At this stage there is no consideration or decision about whether or not there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct.

4.3 When reviewing Code of Conduct complaints, the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with an Independent Person, will have regard to the following assessment criteria:

Adequate information:	<p>The Monitoring Officer must be satisfied that there is sufficient information available at the “initial test and assessment stage” to decide whether the complaint should be referred for investigation or other action.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer may provide other information which is readily available, and which may assist in the consideration of the complaint “initial test and assessment stage”. This may include details of attendees at events, copies of agendas, reports and minutes of meetings or copies of the Members’ entry in the Register of Members’ Interests or other readily available information. It will not include conducting interviews with witnesses.</p> <p>If insufficient information is available, the Monitoring Officer will not normally refer the complaint for investigation or other action.</p>
Official Capacity	The Monitoring Officer must be satisfied that that the Subject Councillor was acting in an official capacity.
Timescale	The Monitoring Officer will take into account when the events subject to the complaint took place and will not normally investigate or pursue other action if the events occurred more than 6 months prior to the complaint being submitted other than in exceptional circumstances, such as where the conduct relates to a pattern of behaviour which has recently been repeated.
Seriousness	<p>The Monitoring Officer will not normally refer a matter for investigation or other action if it is considered trivial, malicious, vexatious, politically motivated or tit-for-tat.</p> <p>If something is politically motivated, it is carried out in the interests of a particular government or political party or individual.</p> <p>Where a complaint appears to relate to the “rough and tumble of political debate” and pertains to conduct between Members or Members and co-opted Members rather than between Members and the public or officers, in most instances no further action will be taken.</p>
Public interest	Consideration will be given as to whether the public interest ¹ would be served by referring a complaint for

¹ used when talking about people's rights to know the facts about a particular situation.

	<p>investigation or other action.</p> <p>The public interest would not normally be served where, for instance, a member has died, resigned or is seriously ill.</p> <p>If the complaint has already been the subject of an investigation or other action relating to the Code of Conduct or the subject of an investigation by other regulatory authorities, it is unlikely that it will be referred for investigation or other action unless it is evident that the public interest will be served by further action being taken.</p> <p>If the complaint relates to a former Member of Oxfordshire County Council who is now an elected member of another Council, the Monitoring Officer may refer the matter to that Council for consideration.</p>
Multiple Complaints	<p>A single event may give rise to similar complaints from a number of complainants. Where possible these complaints will be considered by the Monitoring Officer at the same time. Each complaint will, however, be determined separately. If an investigation is deemed to be appropriate the Monitoring Officer may decide that, in the interests of efficiency, only one complaint should go forward for investigation, with the other complainants being treated as potential witnesses in that investigation.</p>

4.4 Before reaching a decision, the Monitoring Officer may request further information from the Complainant and the Subject Councillor or obtain information which is readily available such as minutes of Council meetings. This may extend the timescale for dealing with the complaint.

4.5 In appropriate cases, the Monitoring Officer may seek to resolve the complaint informally, without the need for a formal investigation. If, in the Monitoring Officer's view, the Subject Councillor makes a reasonable offer to settle the complaint informally, but the Complainant is not willing to accept that offer, the Monitoring Officer will take account of this in deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation.

4.6 The Monitoring Officer will normally reach an assessment within 30 working days following receipt of all the information required to assess the complaint. Where the Monitoring Officer has taken a decision, they will inform the complainant and Subject Councillor of this decision and the reasons for that decision. The Monitoring Officer's decision is final and cannot be appealed.

5. How is the investigation conducted?

- 5.1 The Monitoring Officer will determine the procedure to be adopted if a decision is taken to undertake a formal investigation. This may involve the appointment of an Investigating Officer, who may be another senior/appropriately qualified officer of the Council, an officer of another Council or an external investigator.
- 5.2 The Investigating Officer will usually need to speak to the Complainant to discuss the complaint or correspond in writing with the complainant and may need to see relevant documents or interview other witnesses. The Complainant will be able to suggest what documents the Investigating Officer should review, and which witnesses the Investigating Officer should consider interviewing.
- 5.3 The Investigating Officer will also normally interview the Subject Councillor and provide them with the same opportunity to identify sources of evidence and witnesses. The Investigating Officer retains the discretion to conduct the investigation as they see fit including whether to interview witnesses.
- 5.4 At the end of their investigation, the Investigating Officer will produce a draft report and share it with the Monitoring Officer for their consideration. The Monitoring Officer must satisfy themselves that the investigation is of an acceptable standard and has covered all aspects of the complaint.
- 5.5 If the Monitoring Officer is not satisfied that the investigation has been conducted satisfactorily, they may ask the Investigating Officer to reconsider aspects of the report or to take further investigatory action including interviewing additional witnesses.
- 5.6 Once the Monitoring Officer is satisfied that the investigation has been conducted fully, the draft report will be sent by the Investigating Officer to the complainant and Subject Councillor with a deadline for each of them to comment upon it.
- 5.7 The Investigating Officer will consider any comments the Complainant and/or the Subject Councillor make before sending the final report to the Monitoring Officer. The report will reach a conclusion as to whether the Investigating Officer considers that there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct or not, on each allegation, and the reasons for this conclusion.

6. What happens if there appears to be no evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct?

- 6.1 The Monitoring Officer will write to you and the Subject Councillor giving you both a copy of the final report.
- 6.2 In considering the Investigating Officer's report, the Monitoring Officer may

consult with an Independent Person if they consider it appropriate to do so.

6.3 The Monitoring Officer may consider that there are “learning points” which should be shared with the Subject Councillor and/or the Audit & Governance Committee.

7. What happens if there appears to be evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct?

7.1 The Monitoring Officer will review the Investigation Report and any other relevant documentation supplied by the Investigating Officer and consult an Independent Person. The Monitoring Officer will then either send the matter for local hearing before the Members’ Hearing Panel or seek local resolution.

Local Resolution

7.2 If the Monitoring Officer thinks that the complaint can reasonably be resolved without the need for a hearing they will consult with an Independent Person and with the Complainant and seek a fair resolution. It is important though that any resolution also helps to ensure higher standards of conduct for the future. Possible local resolutions may include the Subject Councillor accepting that their conduct was well below the standard expected and offering an apology to the satisfaction of the Monitoring Officer. If the Subject Councillor complies with the suggested resolution, the Monitoring Officer will report the outcome in the annual statistical report to the Audit & Governance Committee but will take no further action. That will be the end of the matter.

Local Hearing

7.3 If the complaint cannot be resolved through local resolution and/or the Monitoring Officer considers that local resolution is not appropriate, particularly if the allegation relates to serious misconduct, then the Monitoring Officer will convene a Members’ Hearing Panel (the Panel) who will conduct a local hearing to determine whether or not the Code of Conduct was breached.

7.4 The Panel will comprise a maximum of three Members of the Council drawn from at least two different political parties together with the Monitoring Officer and such other Officers as they may designate. The Panel may include not more than one Member of the Authority’s Cabinet

7.5 The Independent Person will attend all meetings of the Panel and their views will be sought and taken into consideration before any finding is made by the Panel.

7.6 The Monitoring Officer will select the membership of each Member Hearing Panel.

7.7 This is not a Court process but, in order to be fair to everyone, formalities are followed so that a clear and lawful decision can be reached.

7.8 The procedure to be followed is detailed at Annex 3.

7.9 The Panel may conclude that the Subject Councillor did not fail to comply with the Code of Conduct, and so dismiss the complaint, which would conclude the matter.

8. What action can the Members' Hearing Panel take where a member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct?

8.1 If the Panel after hearing and/or reading all representations and having heard from an Independent Person, concludes that the Subject Councillor did fail to comply with the Code of Conduct, the Chair will inform the Subject Councillor of this finding and the Panel will then consider what action, if any, it should take as a result of the failure to comply with the Code of Conduct. In doing this, the Panel will give the Subject Councillor an opportunity to make representations.

8.2 The Panel may decide to:

- a) Censure or reprimand the member;
- b) Publish its findings in respect of the Member's conduct;
- c) Report its findings to Council for information;
- d) Recommend to the Member's Group Leader (if applicable) that they be removed from any or all Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council;
- e) Recommend to the Leader of the Council that the Member be removed from the Cabinet, or removed from particular Portfolio responsibilities;
- f) Recommend to Council that the member be replaced as Leader of the Council;
- g) Instruct the Monitoring Officer to offer training for the Member;
- h) Withdraw facilities provided to the Member by the Council, such as a computer, website and/or email and Internet access, or
- i) Exclude the Member from the Council's Offices or other premises, with the exception of meeting rooms as necessary for attending Council, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings.

8.3 The Panel has no power to suspend or disqualify the Member, to withdraw Members' basic or special responsibility allowances, or to recommend other outcomes.

9. What happens at the end of the hearing?

9.1 At the end of the hearing, the Chair will state the conclusion of the Panel as to whether the Member failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and the Panel will then consider what, if any, sanctions to impose on the Subject Councillor and/or actions to require as to any actions.

9.2 Before any sanctions are considered, the Panel will provide a further opportunity to the Subject Councillor to make further representations and hear further from the Independent Person before taking a decision as to any sanctions (if any) to impose from those set out in paragraph 8.2. As soon as reasonably practicable after the hearing, the Monitoring Officer shall prepare a formal decision notice, in consultation with the Chair of the Panel, and send a copy to the Complainant and the Subject Councillor.

9.3 The decision notice will be published as part of the minutes of the Panel meeting and will be placed on the Council's website unless the Monitoring Officer determines that it should remain confidential, or it contains exempt information.

10. Public Access to Hearing and Documents

10.1 There is a presumption that hearings will be held in public and that reports for the Hearing Panel will be available before and during the hearing. However, there may be reasons, as detailed under below, which would prevent public access to the hearing (or part of the hearing) and documents (or parts of documents) to be considered by the Hearing Panel.

11. Confidentiality in advance of Hearing

11.1 Throughout the arrangements for dealing with complaints against members there is a presumption that all steps and correspondence prior to any formal hearing will be exempt, and any documentation will remain exempt from disclosure. This is in accordance with Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

11.2 Where the Monitoring Officer considers that the Investigating Officer's report and/or Subject Councillor's written statement in response to the Investigating Officer's report and/or the Investigating Officer's reply to that response is likely to disclose "exempt information", and in consequence that it is likely that the Hearing Panel will not be open to the public during consideration of these papers, they shall not provide copies of these papers to the press or public or permit inspection of them by the press or public in advance of the meeting.

11.3 Where the Monitoring Officer considers that the Investigating Officer's report and/or the Subject Councillor's written statement in response and/or the Investigating Officer's reply to that response is likely to disclose "exempt information" falling within Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, they will not provide copies of such papers to, nor permit inspection by any Councillor of the Authority other than the members of the Hearing Panel and the Subject Councillor concerned in advance of the meeting.

11.4 "Exempt information" is defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

11.5 The Monitoring Officer in weighing up the public interest and whether any documentation or part of the arrangements should be made available to the public will take into consideration the wellbeing of the Subject Councillor.

12. Timescales

12.1 The timescales quoted at Annex 4 are indicative. They are not guaranteed and are included in that annex to illustrate the likely duration of the complaints process. Actual timescales may be significantly shorter or longer depending on the complexity and content of the complaint, and availability of all parties.

13. Appeals

13.1 There is no right of appeal for you as complainant or for the Subject Councillor against a decision of the Monitoring Officer or the finding of the Members' Hearing Panel.

13.2 If you believe that the Council has failed to deal with your complaint properly, you may make a complaint to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman:

Telephone: 0300 061 0614
www.lgo.org.uk/make-a-complaint

14. Support for Councillors

14.1 Being subject to a complaint can be a very stressful experience for a Subject Councillor. Recognising this, during the complaints process support is available to a County Councillor who is subject to a complaint in the form of access to:

- a) One of the Council's Independent Persons who they can speak to.

- b) The Council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which is made available to all Councillors;

<https://intranet.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/employee-assistance-programme>.

Vita Wellbeing Telephone: 0800 111 6387
Email Helpline: Wellness@vhg.co.uk

- c) The Monitoring Officer or in their absence the Deputy Monitoring Officer who will be available to discuss the wellbeing of any Subject Councillor and signpost them to the relevant Independent Person.

15. Document retention

15.1 The documentation relating to a complaint will be retained for 6 years from the conclusion of the complaint, irrespective of the outcome of the complaint.

15.2 Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee will be retained in the same way as the minutes of other council decision making bodies.

16. Revision of these arrangements

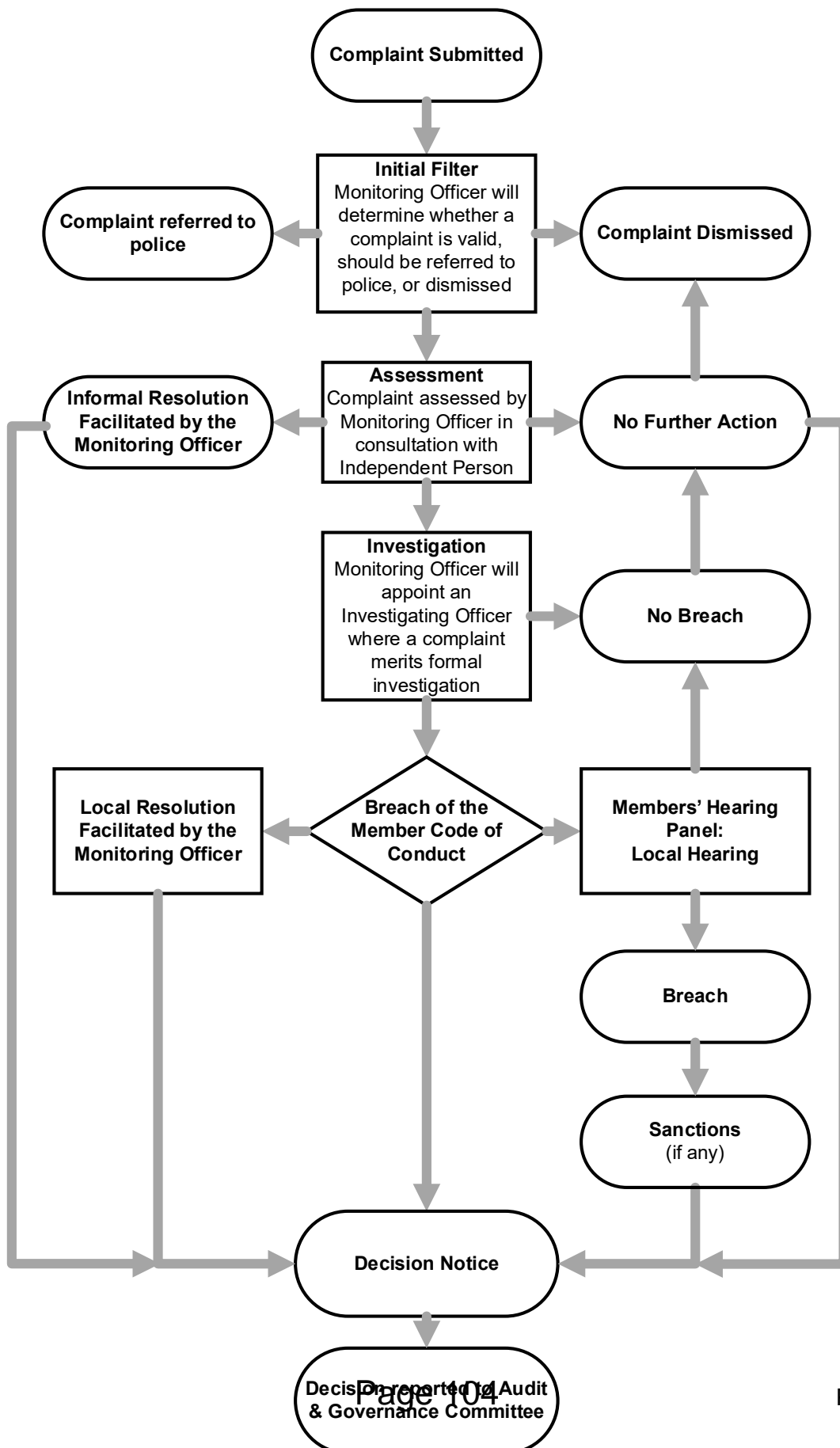
16.1 The Council may by resolution agree to amend these arrangements. The Monitoring Officer will review the arrangements every 2 years from the date of approval by Council.

Anita Bradley
Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Date: March 2024

ANNEX 1

Arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints against councillors: Complaint Process Map



Annex 2

Arrangements for dealing with code of conduct complaints against Councillors: Glossary of terms.

Apology	Acknowledgement by the Subject Councillor that their Conduct fell short in some way of the standard expected of them written to the satisfaction of the Monitoring Officer.
Complainant(s)	The person/people making the complaint.
Initial tests and assessment stage	A meeting or discussion between the Monitoring Officer and an Independent Person to consider a complaint against the initial tests and assessment criteria.
Local Hearing	A meeting of the Members' Hearing Panel of the Audit & Governance Committee at which they consider whether the "Subject Councillor" has breached the code of conduct.
Independent person	The Council must appoint at least one Independent Person and seek that person's views before it takes a decision on a complaint that it has decided to investigate. The Independent Person's views can also be sought by the council on any other issue in the complaints handling process. The Independent Person will also provide, on request, procedural advice and support to a Subject Councillor.
Investigating Officer	The person appointed by the Monitoring Officer to undertake a formal investigation. This may involve the appointment of an investigating officer, who may be another officer of the council, an officer of another council or an external investigator.
Legal advisor	The officer responsible for providing legal advice to the Members' Hearing Panel of the Audit & Governance Committee. This may be the Monitoring Officer, another legally qualified officer, or someone appointed for this purpose from outside the council.
Monitoring officer	The Monitoring Officer is a senior officer of the council who has statutory responsibility for maintaining the register of councillors' interests and who is responsible for administering the system in respect of complaints of councillor misconduct. The Monitoring Officer may also act as the Legal Advisor to the Members' Hearing Panel.
Public interest	Public interest considerations are at the heart of this process. The Monitoring Officer must balance the appropriate use of public resource in dealing with complaints with the extent to which it may be in the public interest to take further action, and what that further action should be.

Subject Councillor	The councillor, or co-optee, against whom an allegation has been made.
Sanction	An official action imposed on a Councillor who is found to have breached the Code of Conduct for members.

Annex 3

Arrangements for dealing with code of conduct complaints against councillors:

Local Hearing Procedure

Introduction

- 1 Where the Monitoring Officer considers that it is in the public interest for a complaint to be considered by the Members' Hearing Panel (the Panel), a Local Hearing will be convened to determine whether the Subject Councillor has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct for Members.
- 2 The Monitoring Officer will seek to convene the Local Hearing within 25 working days of receipt of the final Investigator's report.
- 3 The Panel will comprise a maximum of three Members of the Council drawn from at least two different political parties together with the Monitoring Officer and such other Officers as they may designate. An Independent Person will attend the Panel whose view will be taken before any finding is made by the Panel. The Monitoring Officer will select the membership of each Panel.

Pre-hearing processes

- 4 The Monitoring Officer will invite the Subject Councillor to give their response in writing to Investigator's report. This is done to establish what is likely to be agreed and what is likely to be in dispute at the hearing.
- 5 The Panel, taking account of the advice of the Monitoring Officer, may issue directions about the way in which the Local Hearing will be conducted, for example agreeing the number and identity of witnesses. Such directions may be given either before or at the Local Hearing and may be decided at a meeting or by correspondence involving all members of the Panel. Any meeting to deal with pre-hearing process issues will be held in private without the Complainant or the Subject Councillor present.
- 6 At least 15 working days before the date of the Local Hearing the Subject Councillor must provide to the Monitoring Officer:
 - a) any written response to be considered by the Panel at the hearing;
 - b) details of any witnesses they wish to attend the Hearing (the Subject Councillor will be responsible for liaising with these witnesses as to availability and arranging their attendance at the Hearing);
 - c) suggestions as to any directions they believe the Panel should consider setting to assist the effective running of the Hearing;
 - d) notification of any reasonable adjustments they require to enable them to participate fully in the Hearing;

Documentation

- 7 Local Hearing meetings of the Members' Hearing Panel are subject to the normal rules for publication of council agendas and access to information.
- 8 The agenda papers for the Local Hearing will include:
 - a) Monitoring Officer report
 - b) Complaint form and documentation
 - c) Investigator's report
 - d) Subject Councillor's written response, if provided
 - e) For reference: Code of Conduct, Local Hearing procedure and sanctions available (in the event of a finding of breach of the Code of Conduct).
- 9 The agenda and documents will be published under the Council's rules for exempt information. Prior to the Local Hearing, any documentation issued or exchanged during the process must be treated by all recipients as confidential unless and until the Panel agrees that the press and public should not be excluded from the meeting at which the allegations are going to be heard.
- 10 If the Panel agrees that the meeting should be held in public, the investigator's report (subject to any redactions required in respect of any exempt information) will be made available to the press and public.

Local Hearing procedure

- 11 The Local Hearing will follow normal committee procedures for apologies, selection of a Chair for that meeting and declarations of interest.
- 12 At the Local Hearing, the Monitoring Officer or Legal Adviser will introduce the case that the Subject Councillor has failed to comply with the code of conduct.
- 13 The Investigator will present their report, call such witnesses as necessary (which may include the Complainant) and make representations to substantiate the conclusion that the Councillor has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct.
- 14 The Subject Councillor (or appointed representative) will then have an opportunity to give their evidence, to call witnesses and to make representations about why they consider that they did not fail to comply with the code of conduct.
- 15 Normal hearing rules will apply in terms of providing opportunities to question witnesses and test evidence, subject to the principles of natural justice.
- 16 If the Subject Councillor (or appointed representative) is not present, then the Panel will consider whether to proceed to hear the case and make a decision in absence, or whether to adjourn the hearing to another time or date. If the Subject Councillor has indicated that the hearing should carry on without them being in attendance this will normally happen.

- 17 The Panel may take legal advice from its legal advisor at any time during the meeting or while they are considering the outcome. The substance of any legal advice given to the Panel would be shared in the public domain with the Subject Councillor and the Investigator if they are attending the hearing.
- 18 The Panel will request that all persons leave the room while they consider whether or not there has been a breach of the code of conduct.

If there is no evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct

- 19 If the Panel concludes that the Subject Councillor did not fail to comply with the code of conduct it will dismiss the complaint and no further action will be taken.
- 20 In that event, the Panel may still make general recommendations to the Council on any remedial actions if considers necessary to address the issues raised.

If there is evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct

- 21 If the Panel determines that the Subject Councillor has failed to comply with the code of conduct, the Chair will inform the Subject Councillor of this finding. Prior to the Panel reaching a decision the Independent Person will give their views on the matter, which will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The Chair of the Panel will explain the reasons why any advice from the Independent Person has or has not been followed in giving its decision.
- 22 The Panel will then consider what action, if any, it should take as a result. The Panel will give the Subject Councillor an opportunity to make representations about that and will consult the Independent Person deciding what action, if any, to take.
- 23 The Panel will request that all persons leave the room while they consider whether or not to impose a sanction on the Subject Councillor and, if so, what the sanction should be.

Remedies

- 24 The Council has delegated to the Audit & Governance Committee powers to take action in respect of individual councillors as may be necessary to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. Accordingly, the Panel may:
- a) Censure or reprimand the Subject Councillor;
 - b) Recommend to the Subject Councillor's group leader (or in the case of ungrouped members, recommend to Council or to Committees) that they be removed from any or all Committee or Sub-Committees of the Council;
 - c) Recommend to the Leader of the Council that the Subject Councillor be removed from the Executive Board, or removed from particular portfolio responsibilities;
 - d) Recommend to Council that the Subject Councillor be replaced as Executive

Leader;

e) Instruct the Monitoring Officer to arrange training for the Subject Councillor.

f) Publish its findings in respect of the Subject Councillor's conduct;

g) Report its findings to Council, for information;

25 The Panel has no power to suspend or disqualify the member or to withdraw or suspend allowances or restrict access to or use of Council facilities.

Recommendations to the Council

26 The Panel will consider whether it should make any recommendations to the Council with a view to promoting high standards of conduct among councillors.

The Decision

27 The Monitoring Officer will, within 10 working days of the Local Hearing, prepare a formal decision notice, in consultation with the Chair of the Panel, and send a copy to the Complainant, to the Subject Councillor.

28 The decision notice will be published as part of the minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee Local Hearing meeting and will be placed on the Council's website unless the Monitoring Officer determines that it should remain confidential, or it contains exempt information.

29 The Monitoring Officer will be responsible for the implementation of the decision of the Panel. The findings and recommendations of the Panel (as implemented by the Monitoring Officer) are final.

Departure from these arrangements

30 The Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee or the Chair of the Panel has the right to depart from this procedure, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer or Legal Advisor, at any hearing where they consider that it is sensible to do so to deal with the case fairly and effectively.

Annex 4

INDICATIVE TIMESCALES FOR EACH STAGE OF COMPLAINT PROCESS

Stage in complaints process	Indicative Timescales
Acknowledge receipt of complaint or dismissal of invalid complaints	within 5 working days of receipt of complaint
Assessment stage decision	Issued to Subject Councillor and Complainant within 30 working days following receipt of all the information required to assess the complaint.
Investigation	A formal investigation normally takes around 8 - 12 weeks from the appointment of an appropriate investigator
Local Hearing	<p>Local Hearing within 30 working days of receipt of the final investigation report – which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 working days before the date of the Local Hearing to prepare hearing papers and hold any pre-hearing meetings; • 15 working days before the date of the Local Hearing the Subject Councillor must provide to the Monitoring Officer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) any written response to be considered by the Panel at the hearing. b) details of any witnesses they wish to attend the Hearing (the Subject Councillor will be responsible for liaising with these witnesses as to availability and arranging their attendance at the Hearing) c) suggestions as to any directions they believe the Panel should consider setting to assist the effective running of the Hearing. d) notification of any reasonable adjustments they require to

	<p>enable them to participate fully in the Hearing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 working days for agenda publication.
Local Hearing Decision	<p>Issued to Subject Councillor and Complainant and published within 10 working days of the Hearing Panel meeting.</p>

Annex 5

MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT FORM

Please use this form if you wish to make a Code of Conduct complaint against Oxfordshire County Councillors or co-opted members.

If you have any questions or difficulties filling in this form or if for any reason you are in need of support in completing this form, please contact the Council via email: standards.monitoringofficer@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Please note

- Complaints can only be accepted in writing;
- An officer from the Council may contact you personally to go through the details of your complaint;
- The Council is unlikely to be able to keep your identity or the information you have provided confidential. If you have serious concerns about disclosure of your name and a summary of your complaint, please complete Section 4 on the confidential information;
- Please read the guidance document "Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints Against Members" prior to completing this form.

Section 1: Your details

Title	
First Name	
Surname	
House Number/Name	
Road/Street	
Town/City	
Postcode	
Telephone/Mobile Number	

Email Address	
----------------------	--

Please double click on (or tick) the box which complaint type best describes you:

- ☐ Member of the public
- ☐ Elected/co-opted member of the Council
- ☐ Local Authority Monitoring Officer
- ☐ Local Authority officer/employee
- ☐ Other (please specify)

--

Section 2: Your complaint

Who are you complaining about?

Please give the name(s) of the County Councillor or Co-opted Member(s) of Oxfordshire County Council that you consider has broken the Code of Conduct.

Name of individual(s) (include both first and last names)

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Section 3: What are you complaining about?

Please provide us with as much information as you can about your complaint to help us decide what action to take. Include the date and details of the alleged misconduct, and any information that supports the allegation.

Please identify in the table below which parts of the code of conduct you consider have been breached, with reasons why. Without this the Monitoring Officer is unable to assess your complaint.

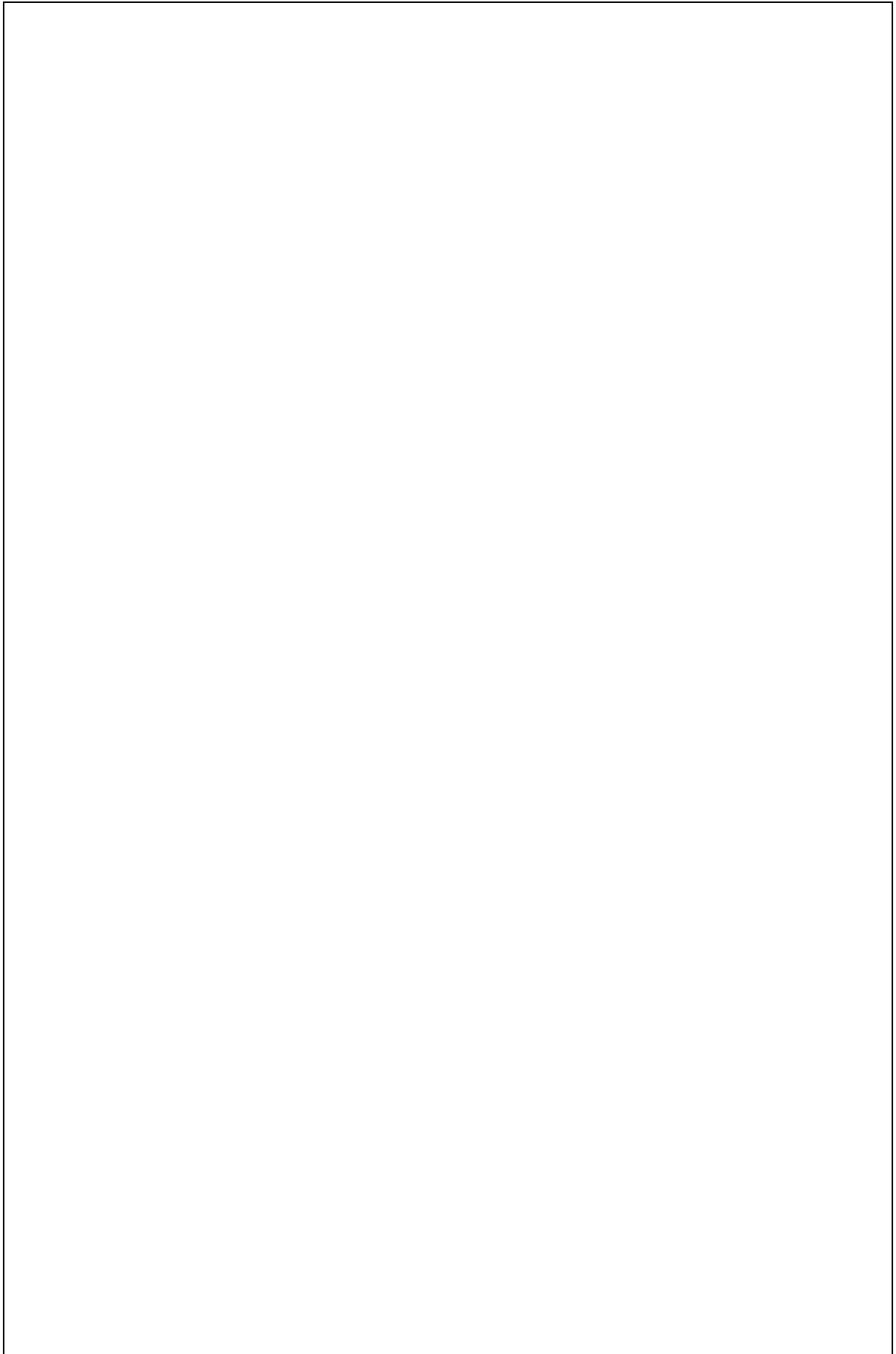
If you are complaining about more than one Member you should clearly explain what each individual Member has done that you believe has breached the Code of Conduct identifying which parts of the Code, you consider have been breached by each.

We can only investigate complaints that a Member has broken the Members’ Code of Conduct (please see the guidance document “Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints Against Members” referred to above).

You can continue on a separate sheet if there is not enough space on this form.

Paragraph	Behaviour

Details of complaint



Evidence (if this applies)

Please attach to this form copies of any correspondence, documents, names and details of witnesses, and any other evidence that you feel is relevant to your complaint. Please avoid sending us large amounts of background information that only relates indirectly to your complaint.

Please briefly describe the documents you will be enclosing:

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

☐ Check this box if you would like us to return the evidence to you.

Witnesses (if this applies)

Please tell us the names and details of any witnesses:

	First Name	Last Name	Address/Phone Number
1.			
2.			
3.			

Section Four: Resolution of your complaint

As explained in the document “Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints Against Members”, in appropriate cases the Monitoring Officer may seek to resolve the complaint informally, without the need for a formal investigation. For example, this may involve the member accepting that their conduct was unacceptable and offering an apology, or other remedial action by the authority, or some form of mediation. Where the member or the authority makes a reasonable offer of local resolution, but you are not willing to accept that offer, the Monitoring Officer will take account of this in deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation.

Please use this box to tell us whether you feel that there may be a way to resolve your complaint without the need for a formal investigation and, if so, how:

Section 5: Confidential Information (this part only applies if you are asking for your identity to be kept confidential)

In the interests of fairness and natural justice, we believe members who are complained about have a right to know who has made the complaint. We also believe that they have the right to be provided with a summary of the complaint. We are unlikely therefore to withhold your identity or the details of your complaint unless there is good reason. For example, where the disclosure of personal details may result in the evidence being compromised or destroyed by the Subject Councillor or if there is a real possibility of intimidation of the complainant or witnesses by the Subject Councillor.

Please note that requests for confidentiality or requests for suppression of complaint details will not automatically be granted. The assessment of your request will be undertaken by the Panel who will carry out the initial assessment of your complaint. We will then contact you with the decision. If your request is not granted, we will allow you the option of withdrawing your complaint. It is important to understand that in certain circumstances where the matter complained of is very serious, we can proceed with an investigation or other action and disclose your name even if you have asked us not to.

Please provide details below of why you believe we should withhold your name and details of your complaint:

Please consider the complaint I have described above, and the evidence attached. I understand and accept that the details will normally be disclosed to the Member and any parties involved in the complaints procedure or outside authorities required to monitor the Council's complaints procedure by law. It may also be shared with the Police in the prevention or detection of crime.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please send this form together with any attachments to:

**The Monitoring Officer
Oxfordshire County Council
County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND**

Or by email to: standards.monitoringofficer@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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Divisions affected – All

COUNCIL

16 APRIL 2024

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE - WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. To amend the terms of reference for the Audit and Governance Committee to include the following addition:
'To monitor whistleblowing arrangements and to approve the Whistleblowing Policy'.

Background

2. At the meeting on 13 March 2024 the Audit and Governance Committee received an updated Whistleblowing Policy and recommended that the terms of reference of the committee be amended to include 'To monitor whistleblowing arrangements and to approve the Whistleblowing Policy'.
3. Oversight of the Whistleblowing Policy fits well the committee's wider terms of reference around governance, risk and control.
4. In recent years, the Audit and Governance Committee has received an annual report that provides summary information on whistleblowing incidents without allowing individuals to be identified. To aid members' understanding, background information is also provided in the report. This includes the definition of a whistleblowing incident as confusion can arise with other types of complaint.
5. Areas for improvement have been reported to members and a new Whistleblowing Policy was presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 13 March 2024.
6. The new policy provides greater clarity around the six categories set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996 that make a complaint a qualifying disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. It recognises the importance of keeping an employee updated and an Investigating Officer reporting back to the Monitoring Officer on progress and if a complaint raised through the

whistleblowing route is investigated through another council policy, once that process has been concluded. It sets out how a complaint that does not fall within the strict definition of a whistleblowing incident may be investigated.

7. The Monitoring Officer intends to raise awareness of the new Whistleblowing Policy across the Council and will ensure that training is available for all Council employees.

Corporate policies and priorities

8. The Whistleblowing Policy supports the Council's organisational values, most notably 'equality and integrity in all that we do' and 'taking responsibility'.

Financial implications

9. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report

Legal implications

10. Under the scheme of delegation in the Constitution, the Monitoring Officer has authority to agree and adopt the governance policies for the Council, including the Whistleblowing Policy, following consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Director of Finance now the Executive Director of Resources.

Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Equality and inclusion implications

11. The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to give confidence to all who wish to raise an allegation of wrongdoing and not to disadvantage any individual that has one or more protected characteristic.

Anita Bradley

Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Background papers: Report to the Audit and Governance Committee 13 March 2024 – Whistleblowing Policy

Annual Whistleblowing Report to the Audit and Governance Committee – 28 November 2023

Contact Officer: Simon Harper, Head of Governance

Email simon.harper@oxfordshire.gov.uk

April 2024

Divisions affected – All

COUNCIL

16 APRIL 2024

ELECTORAL REVIEW:

**FURTHER DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEW ELECTORAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL IN THE
DISTRICTS OF CHERWELL AND THE VALE OF WHITE HORSE**

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Council is RECOMMENDED** to support the further draft recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) relating to the division boundaries for the Cherwell District and Vale of White Horse District and to submit a response to the further LGBCE consultation confirming this position.

Background

2. The Electoral Review is formally split into two phases:
 - a) Council size including development of electorate forecasts
 - b) Division electoral arrangements setting the boundaries for each county division.
3. The Commission has decided that the Council size should be increased by six members from 63 to 69 members. It has also agreed that there should be 69 County divisions meaning that there will no longer be any multi-member divisions. The Commission's decisions are in line with the response made by the Council on 13 December 2022.
4. The Council agreed its response to the LGBCE draft recommendations on boundaries and names for 69 single-member divisions at its meeting on 12 December 2023.
 - a) The Council response highlighted concerns around the proposed division boundaries in and around Banbury in line with the recommendations of the cross-party working group established to respond to each stage of the Electoral Review. The majority of members of the working group

supported boundaries following the arterial routes into Banbury with adjustments to division boundaries in Cherwell District to reflect population figures. This was in line with recent Community Governance Reviews (CGRs) undertaken by Cherwell District Council and was considered by the majority of the cross-party working group to better reflect local communities than the LGBCE draft recommendations at that time.

Timeline

5. Timeline:

LGBCE consultation on division arrangements – 28 February to 8 May 2023.

LGBCE consultation on draft recommendations – 3 October to 11 December 2023.

LGBCE consultation on further draft recommendations – 27 February to 22 April 2024

LGBCE Final recommendations published – 30 July 2024

Recommendations laid before Parliament and become effective for the next County Council Election in May 2025.

Further draft recommendations: Cherwell and Vale of White Horse

6. During consultation on the draft recommendations, which were published on 3 October 2023, the LGBCE received 41 representations, most of which commented on the proposals for divisions in Cherwell District and the Vale of White Horse District.
7. In light of these representations, the LGBCE has amended its proposals and has published further draft recommendations for all divisions in Cherwell and most in Vale of White Horse. Detailed information which set out the boundaries for each division is available at www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/oxfordshire
8. The LGBCE believes that it has received sufficient evidence relating to the rest of the county to finalise its recommendations, so this consultation is focused only on the Cherwell District and the Vale of White Horse District.
9. The further draft recommendations largely reflect the response of the Council on 12 December 2023 relating to the divisions in and around Banbury in Cherwell District. The Council had not identified any specific changes relating to the Vale of White Horse District and the LGBCE's changes reflect responses objecting to the proposed divisions in the Wantage area. These submissions primarily oppose

the inclusion of the Charlton area of the parish in a division with the rural parishes of Ardington, Blewbury, Chilton, East Hendred, Lockinge and West Hendred. Respondents considered that Charlton was an integral part of Wantage which has little in common with the rural parishes.

Council response

10. The cross-party working group established to develop the Council response to each phase of the electoral review comprises the following members:

Liberal Democrat Green Alliance –	Cllrs Robin Bennett, Neil Fawcett, Freddie van Mierlo and Alison Rooke
Conservative Independent Alliance –	Cllrs Kieron Mallon, Ian Snowdon and Ted Fenton
Labour and Cooperative Party Group –	Cllrs Brad Baines and Andrew Coles (later replaced by Cllr Michael O'Connor)
Non-aligned Independent –	Cllr Stefan Gawrysiak

Cllr Stefan Gawrysiak was appointed as chair

11. The working group met on 6 March 2024 to consider how the Council should respond to the LGBCE's further draft recommendations which relate to Cherwell District and the Vale of White Horse District.
12. The majority of members of the working group support the changes made to the division boundaries for Cherwell District. Whilst the Council had not identified any specific concerns relating to the Vale of White Horse, members acknowledged the concerns expressed in the submissions relating to the Wantage area. They were pleased that the LGBCE had taken account of local views in Cherwell District and the Vale of White Horse and welcomed the consultation on further draft recommendations.
13. If the LGBCE'S further recommendations are adopted, they will inform the recommendations for future electoral reviews for the District Councils in Oxfordshire and any Community Governance Reviews relating to Parish and Town Council boundaries.

Corporate policies and priorities

14. The electoral review is an essential part of good governance for the Council and will ensure that the electorate is represented fairly across the county.

Financial implications

15. There is no specific budget for undertaking the review so costs are being met from General Balances as a supplementary estimate – it is unplanned expenditure but necessary. The costs will be monitored by the Head of Governance and reported through the Business Management Monitoring report.

Costs incurred for the specialist support are approximately £48,000 split over the financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24.

16. The increase in Council size from 63 to 69 members in May 2025 will result in additional costs relating to members including allowances, travelling and officer support. Based on the 2023-24 Basic Allowance of £13,356, the minimum additional cost will be £80,136 which is equivalent to six extra Basic Allowances. This will be addressed as part of the Budget and Business Planning process for 2025-26.

Comments checked by: Lorna Baxter, Executive Director for Resources and Section 151 Chief Finance Officer

Legal implications

17. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is established under Section 55 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Consultation Act 2009 (the 2009 Act) and under Section 56 of the 2009 Act must from time to time conduct a review of the area of each principal council and recommend whether a change should be made to the electoral arrangements for that area. The Council is requested by LGBCE to respond to the electoral review and in doing so must meet the deadlines set by LGBCE for each phase of the review including this further Consultation.
18. Following the completion of the full consultation process and review LGBCE will under section 58(4) of the 2009 Act publish a report stating its recommendations for changes to the electoral arrangements for the county of Oxfordshire. This will in due course be brought into legislation by laying an Order before both the House of Commons and the House of Lords using the Negative Procedure. The Order will automatically become law unless there are objections to it within a specified period (usually 40 days). It is anticipated that the changes will become effective at the County Council elections due in May 2025.

Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Staff implications

19. Limited staff resources are available in Law and Governance to support the review. Extra capacity has been sourced from the Association of Electoral Administrators to allow a specialist with electoral review knowledge to be engaged on a part-time basis to coordinate activities and ensure that critical deadlines are met.

Equality and inclusion implications

20. The electoral review will help in ensuring that the electorate in Oxfordshire, including minority and protected groups, are fairly represented.

Anita Bradley

Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Background papers:

- a) Electoral Review report to Council on 7 October 2022
- b) Council size report to Council on 13 December 2022
- c) Division patterns report to Council on 28 March 2023
- d) Draft recommendations to Council on 12 December 2023
- d) Local Government Boundary Commission for England website
– www.lgbce.org.uk

Contact officer: Simon Harper, Head of Governance
Email simon.harper@oxfordshire.gov.uk

April 2024

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Divisions affected – All

COUNCIL

16 APRIL 2024

REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. Council is RECOMMENDED

- a) To note the review of political balance of committees to reflect the formation of a new political group 'The Independent Voice of Oxfordshire (TIVOO)' comprising three members: Cllr Stefan Gawrysiak, Cllr Damian Haywood (Deputy Group Leader) and Cllr Sally Povolotsky (Group Leader).
- b) To appoint members to the committees of the Council listed at Annex 1. A fully populated list with nominations from the political groups for the vacant seats will be circulated ahead of the meeting.
- c) To remove the Corporate Parenting Committee from the list of Council committees.

Background

- 2. The last review of political balance took place at the Council meeting on 12 December 2023 to reflect the establishment of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the appointment of two more county councillors on the Pension Fund Committee and changes in the membership of the political groups.
- 3. Seats are allocated to political groups in accordance with the groups' proportionate strength on the Council as a whole. Any seats left over are then distributed to any non-aligned Independent members who are not members of a political group.
- 4. The following rules, in priority order, apply for political proportionality:
 - (i) Where a group has an overall majority on the Council, that group is entitled to a majority of the seats on each committee and sub-committee.

- (ii) Each political group is entitled to its proportion of the total number of seats on all the committees added together, according to the ratio of the number of members of the group to the number of members of the Council.
 - (iii) Subject to (i) and (ii) above, each group is entitled to its proportion of the number of seats on each individual committee.
 - (iv) For sub-committees and some other bodies, a group is entitled to its proportion of the number of seats regardless of the total number of seats involved (but still subject to the majority rule in (i) above).
5. As the Council does not have a majority administration, (i) is not applicable but (ii), (iii) and (iv) do need to be applied to the allocation of seats.

Implications of the formation of a new political group

6. The total number of committee places is 97. Of those, the Liberal Democrat Green Alliance (LDG) is entitled to 36 seats, the Conservative Independent Alliance (CIA) to 34 seats, the Labour and Co-operative Party Group (Lab Coop) to 21 seats and The Independent Voice of Oxfordshire (TIVOO) to 5 seats. There is one non-aligned Independent councillor, Cllr Hannah Banfield, and one seat is available to them after the seats have been allocated to the political groups.
7. The political proportionality calculations are shown at Annex 2 with notional entitlements shown alongside the number of seats allocated to each political group and the non-aligned Independent councillor.
8. Annex 1 shows the current committee representation with the seats previously held by members of The Independent Voice of Oxfordshire shown against that group. There is no need for any changes to the seats held by the Liberal Democrat Green Alliance, the Conservative Independent Alliance and the Labour and Cooperative Party Group. There is one seat remaining for Cllr Hannah Banfield as a non-aligned Independent councillor; this means that she can continue to be a member of the Horton Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Corporate Parenting Committee

9. The committee was established in May 2023 relating to undertake the Council's role as Corporate Parent for children-in-care and care leavers.
10. The members appointed to the committee have met informally on a number of occasions to consider the best approach to Corporate Parenting. Following advice from the Director of Children's Services and senior colleagues in Children's Services, committee members recognise that a formal committee is not the right forum for the Council to undertake its role as Corporate Parent.

11. A more informal arrangement is required to allow members to engage effectively with children we care for-in-care and care leavers. This will take the form of a cross-party Corporate Parenting Panel which will provide nominated members with an opportunity to work more informally with children and young people and representatives from partner organisations. Work is currently being undertaken to develop the new arrangements.

Legal Implications

12. The rules on political balance are contained in Sections 15, 16 and 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ('the Act') and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. The applicable rules from Section 15(5) of the Act are summarised in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the report and these have been applied to the calculations in the annexes. Other legal considerations are contained in the main body of this report.

Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Financial Implications

13. There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Anita Bradley

Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex 1 – Committee membership

Annex 2 – Political proportionality calculations

Contact officer: Simon Harper, Head of Governance,
simon.harper@oxfordshire.gov.uk

April 2024

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Committee membership

	LDG	CIA	Lab Coop	TIVOO	NA Ind
Audit & Governance (9)	4	3	2		
	Roz Smith	Ted Fenton	Brad Baines		
	Jenny Hannaby	Yvonne Constance	Glynis Phillips		
	Richard Webber	Nick Leverton			
	Ian Middleton				
BOB HOSC (7)	3	2	1	1	
	Jane Hanna	Nick Leverton	Michael O'Connor	Damian Haywood	
	Jenny Hannaby	Nigel Champken-Woods			
	Freddie van Mierlo				
Charlotte Coxe Trust (5)	2	2	1		
	Robin Bennett	Felix Bloomfield	Geoff Saul		
	Freddie van Mierlo	Jane Murphy			
E&YP OSC (9)	3	3	2	1	
	Andy Graham	Eddie Reeves	Liz Brighthouse	Sally Povolotsky	
	Jenny Hannaby	Michael Waine	Trish Elphinstone		
	Roz Smith	Ian Corkin			
Horton HOSC (8)	3	3	1		1
	Jane Hanna	Arash Fatemian	Mark Cherry		Hannah Banfield

	Vacancy	Kieron Mallon			
	Vacancy	Eddie Reeves			
Oxfordshire Joint HOSC (7)	3	2	2		
	Jane Hanna	Nick Leverton	Mark Lygo		
	Jenny Hannaby	Nigel Champken-Woods	Michael O'Connor		
	Freddie van Mierlo				
Pension Fund (7)	3	2	2		
	Bob Johnston	Nick Field-Johnson	Imade Edosomwan		
	John Howson	Kevin Bulmer	Michael O'Connor		
	Ian Middleton				
People OSC (9)	3	4	2		
	Andy Graham	Ian Corkin	Trish Elphinstone		
	Jenny Hannaby	Michael Waine	Imade Edosomwan		
	Alison Rooke	Nigel Simpson			
		Nick Leverton			
Performance & Corporate Services OSC (9)	3	3	2	1	
	Ian Middleton	Eddie Reeves	Brad Baines	Damian Haywood	
	Calum Miller	Kieron Mallon	Glynis Phillips		
	Bob Johnston	Donna Ford			

Place OSC (9)	3	4	2		
	Richard Webber	Nigel Simpson	Charlie Hicks`		
	Freddie van Mierlo	Ted Fenton	Duncan Enright		
	Robin Bennett	Kieron Mallon			
		Liam Walker			
Planning & Regulation (12)	4	4	3	1	
	Richard Webber	Les Sibley	Geoff Saul	Stefan Gawrysiak	
	Judy Roberts	Ted Fenton	Mohamed Fadlalla		
	David Rouane	Ian Snowdon	Imade Edosomwan		
	Robin Bennett	Yvonne Constance			
Remuneration (6)	2	2	1	1	
	Liz Leffman	Eddie Reeves	Liz Brighthouse	Stefan Gawrysiak	
	John Howson	Yvonne Constance			

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Political proportionately calculations

The political groups' notional entitlements to membership of committees is shown in red below. The proposed number of seats is in black.

Committees	LDG	CIA	Lab Coop	TIVOO	NA Ind
Audit & Governance (9)	3.29 4	3.14 3	2.00 2		
BOB HOSC (7)	2.56 3	2.44 2	1.56 1	0.33 1	
Charlotte Coxe Trust (5)	1.83 2	1.75 2	1.11 1		
Education and Young People OSC (9)	3.29 3	3.14 3	2.00 2	0.43 1	
Horton HOSC (8)	2.92 3	2.79 3	1.78 1		0.13 1
OJHOSC (7)	2.56 3	2.44 2	1.56 2		
Pension Fund (7)	2.56 3	2.44 2	1.56 2		
People OSC (9)	3.29 3	3.14 4	2.00 2		
Performance & Corporate Services OSC (9)	3.29 3	3.14 3	2.00 2	0.43 1	
Place OSC (9)	3.29 3	3.14 4	2.00 2		
Planning & Regulation (12)	4.38 4	4.19 4	2.67 3	0.57 1	
Remuneration (6)	2.19 2	2.10 2	1.33 1	0.29 1	
Overall entitlement	35.41 36	33.87 34	21.56 21	4.62 5	1.54 1

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