



Notice of a Meeting

Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Friday, 12 September 2025 at 10.00 am

Room 2&3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

These proceedings are open to the public

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

Membership

Chair: Councillor Glynis Phillips
Deputy Chair: Councillor Ian Middleton

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

**Date of Next
Meeting:** 5 December 2025

For more information about this Committee please contact:

Committee Officer: *Scrutiny Team*
Email: *E-Mail: scrutiny@oxfordshire.gov.uk*

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

September 2025

What does this Committee review or scrutinise?

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

How can I have my say?

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

About the County Council

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

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

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

About Scrutiny

Scrutiny is about:

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

Scrutiny is NOT about:

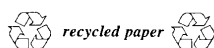
- Making day to day service decisions
- Investigating individual complaints.

What does this Committee do?

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

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

A hearing loop is available at County Hall.



AGENDA

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

To receive any apologies for absence and temporary appointments.

2. **Declaration of Interests**

See guidance note on the back page.

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

The Committee is recommended to **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2025 and to receive information arising from them.

4. **Petitions and Public Address**

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

Requests to speak must be submitted no later than 9am three working days before the meeting, i.e. 09/09/2025

Requests should be submitted to the Scrutiny Officer at scrutiny@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9am on the day of the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

5. **Oxfordshire Strategic Plan** (Pages 11 - 58)

Cllr Neil Fawcett, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources, and Susannah Wintersgill, Director of Public Affairs and Policy Partnerships, have been invited to present a report on The Oxfordshire Strategic Plan.

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

6. **Business Management Monitoring Report - with a focus on Children's Services, Education and Families** (Pages 59 - 78)

Cllr Neil Fawcett, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr Sean Gaul, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, and Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, have been invited to present a the Business Management Monitoring Report – with a focus on Children's Services, Education and Families.

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

7. Parking Permits

Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, and Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, have been invited to present an oral update on Parking Permits.

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

8. Committee Forward Work Plan (Pages 79 - 82)

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

The Cabinet Forward Plan can be found

here: <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mgListPlanItems.aspx?PlanId=433&RP=115>

The most recent BMMR, submitted to Cabinet in March 2025, can be found

here: <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=33404>

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

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

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

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

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

Declaring an interest

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

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

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

Members Code – Other registrable interests

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

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships
- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.

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

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

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

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

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

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

PERFORMANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Friday, 18 July 2025 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.38 pm.

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Glynis Phillips - in the Chair
 Councillor Ian Middleton (Deputy Chair)
 Councillor Will Boucher-Giles
 Councillor Tom Greenaway
 Councillor Dr Nathan Ley
 Councillor Susanna Pressel
 Councillor Paul-Austin Sargent
 Councillor Roz Smith

**Other Members in
 Attendance:**

Cllr Neil Fawcett, Deputy Leader of the Council and
 Cabinet Member for Resources
 Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport
 Management
 Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and
 Transformation

Officers:

Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways
 Meg Hopkins, Senior Transport Planner
 Joanne Fellows, Place Panning Manager (Central)
 Cherie Cuthbertson, Director of HR and Cultural Change
 Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance
 Pippa Corner, Deputy Director of Joint Commissioning
 HESC
 Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Manager

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

21/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS (Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr Baines, substituted by Cllr Pressel, Cllr Mallon, substituted by Cllr Sargent, and Cllr Shiri.

Apologies were received from invited attendees Cllr Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Adults, Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, Karen Fuller, Director of Adult Social Services, and Victoria Baran, Deputy Director of Adult Social Care.

22/25 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

(Agenda No. 2)

Cllr Pressel declared an interest in the Hire Bike and Scooter Update item as a member of Oxford Pedestrians Association.

Cllr Greenaway declared an interest, stating that he worked for an educational provider in Oxfordshire.

23/25 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes for the meetings held on 04 April 2025 and 20 May 2025 were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record.

24/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda No. 4)

There were none.

25/25 HIRE BIKE AND SCOOTER UPDATE

(Agenda No. 5)

Cllr Andrew Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, Meg Hopkins, Senior Transport Planner, and Joanne Fellows, Place Panning Manager (Central), were invited to present an update report on Hire Bike and Scooter.

The Cabinet Member for Transport Management introduced the hire bike and scooter update, noting the trial's extension since 2021 by the Department for Transport. He acknowledged Voi as the first operator in Oxford, followed by Lime, and highlighted the initiative's success in enhancing the transport network and noted challenges related to the increase in vehicles and the need for responsible riding.

The Director of Environment and Highways updated the Committee on the outcomes of the trial. Road safety concerns were to be discussed with Thames Valley Police at a future meeting of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee explored the following questions and concerns:

- Members questioned what would happen when, and if, the Department for Transport (DfT) ended the trial as scheduled on 31 May 2026. The Senior Transport Planner explained that if the DfT did not extend the trial, the hire e-scooters would become illegal and would have to be removed from the streets. Regarding the notice period for an extension, the Senior Transport Planner stated that it had varied previously, with local authorities and national bodies requesting as much advance notice as possible for procurement reasons, but no specific timeframe could be given due to these uncertainties.

- Members raised concerns about parking issues and trouble hotspots for e-scooters and e-bikes, noting frequent complaints about poor parking and the need for operators to monitor and address these areas more proactively. It was mentioned that while operators responded when contacted, members felt they should be checking hotspots regularly without prompting. Members suggested the use of on-road parking spaces, such as converting car spaces for e-scooter and e-bike parking.

Officers confirmed that, for e-scooters, parking in marked zones was mandatory, enforced by technology that prevented ending a ride outside these zones, though this system was not always reliable. For e-bikes, the same parking model was encouraged but not legally enforceable. The committee discussed the potential benefits of on-road parking, even at the cost of removing car parking spaces to do so.

Members also asked about the availability of a map showing all parking bays, and officers noted that such a map existed but could be improved. The possibility of expanding the operating area and increasing the number of parking sites, including working with third parties like universities and extending to park and ride sites, was also considered as a way to alleviate pressure on current hotspots and provide more options for e-bike and e-scooter users.

- Members queried the health benefits of e-scooters, doubting their contribution to active travel since they required less physical effort than walking or cycling. Officers noted that while e-scooters are less active, they offer a low-emission, space-efficient alternative to cars, aiding sustainable travel goals.
- Members asked whether the introduction of e-scooters and e-bikes had affected the wider transport network, particularly regarding their impact on bus usage and whether they encouraged people to switch from walking or public transport. Officers replied that no specific local studies or surveys had been commissioned by the council to assess these impacts, though operators conducted their own surveys and the DfT was carrying out a national evaluation of the trials. It was noted that the Council was feeding into the national evaluation but was not conducting its own detailed analysis of modal shift or the effects on other transport modes.

Cllr Pressel left the meeting at this stage.

- Members queried the council's capabilities to enforce the terms and conditions, for e-bikes and e-scooters in Oxford, on the suppliers as it was a DfT trial, specifically regarding sanctions. Officers clarified that the e-scooter operator had a formal contract which allowed the council to enforce terms and issue sanctions, including termination for any breaches. E-bikes, however, operated under a code of conduct rather than a legally binding contract, which made enforcement measures much weaker. This regulatory gap was a national issue, and local authorities were working collectively to find solutions. The differing regulatory powers between the two modes were highlighted as a significant challenge that needed addressing.

- Members asked whether there were plans to expand e-scooter and e-bike provision to park and ride sites. Officers responded that while some park and ride sites were already within the current operating area, others were not, and expansion would require agreements with third-party landowners, as the County Council was not always the landowner.

Further, it was explained that, although the County Council might have legal permission to operate across a wider area, best practice and the initial traffic regulation order required engagement and agreement with district councils and the public before expanding the scheme. Officers confirmed that such engagement had not yet taken place with all relevant district councils, and that this was a necessary step before any further expansion.

- Members asked about increasing e-scooters and e-bikes to meet demand and using congestion charge funds for expansion. Officers explained each operator was limited due to parking constraints, so more capacity depended on additional parking space. Demand is high, as missed trip attempts outnumber completed ones. Expanding the fleet or area, integrating park and ride sites, and using congestion funds could be explored, but would need further planning and agreements. More parking sites would help address demand.

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

- That the council write to the Department for Transport (DfT) to request an earlier decision regarding the continuation of the e-scooter trial beyond May 2026.
- That the council conduct its own analysis of the e-scooter and e-bike schemes to understand their impact on other parts of the transport network.
- That the council explore the possibility of integrating e-scooters and e-bikes with park and ride sites and other transport interchanges, and that the council consider increasing the capacity of e-scooters and e-bikes to meet the latent demand.
- That the council look into the feasibility of on-street parking for e-scooters and e-bikes to alleviate issues with footway parking.
- That the council seek information from the DfT about the national evaluation timeline for the e-scooter trial, and that the council share the evaluation results of the e-scooter trial with the committee once available.

26/25 OUR PEOPLE AND CULTURE STRATEGY UPDATE (Agenda No. 6)

Cllr Neil Fawcett, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, and Cherie Cuthbertson, Director of HR and Cultural Change were invited to present an update report on the progress of Our People and Culture Strategy.

The Deputy Leader introduced the Our People and Culture Strategy, which aimed for fair staff treatment and more opportunities. He noted progress in reducing voluntary departures, reducing sickness absence, and strengthening apprenticeships. Restructuring top management has also created a leaner organisation and saved costs.

The Director of HR and Cultural Change outlined the Our People and Culture Strategy's four pillars: attract, thrive, grow, and lead. She reported on progress such as forming a new recruitment team, implementing updated policies and manager training, investing in apprenticeships, launching a reciprocal mentoring scheme, restructuring top management, and hiring a leadership consultant.

The Committee discussed the following question and concerns:

- Members asked about the progress made in moving away from the traditional command structure towards matrix management within the Council. The Director of HR and Cultural Change responded that progress had been made, with matrix management beginning to take hold, particularly in areas like the Transformation Directorate, where programme management offices worked across different parts of the organisation. The Director of HR and Cultural Change noted that, although there were good examples of matrix management in practice, the transition was ongoing and would take time, as it represented a significant cultural shift for the Council.
- Members asked whether the Council had considered donating unused apprenticeship levy funds to other companies, as this is an available option, and also requested information on trends in job applications. The Director of HR and Cultural Change responded that the Council's main use of the levy has been internal, focusing on addressing skills gaps by aligning apprenticeships with anticipated organisational needs. She reported that the Council has used approximately 85% of the levy and is considering whether some remaining funds could be allocated to voluntary organisations in Oxfordshire for workforce development in the coming year.

The Deputy Leader added that, through Enterprise Oxfordshire, the Council participates in a project that gathers surplus apprenticeship levy funds from local businesses to create additional apprenticeship opportunities throughout the county, thereby supporting workforce development beyond the Council.

- Members observed that the report showed a reduction in staff absences, with the average dropping from 9.1 to 8.7 days per full-time equivalent, and asked if the report could include information on the financial savings achieved as a result, as well as analysis of whether absences were concentrated at particular levels of the organisation.
- Members also observed an increase in internal movement and promotions within the Council, from 4.8% to 7%. They inquired about the presence of quantifiable targets for internal progression, as well as the existence of an internal progression framework or specific support for professional development and secondments.

The Director of HR and Cultural Change responded that there was no formal target for internal promotions.

However, the Council ensured all roles were advertised internally and was considering introducing development secondments to assist staff in gaining experience for future roles. She also indicated that, during organisational redesigns, staff were encouraged to explore a broader range of positions, and flexible career development was being promoted to facilitate internal movement.

- Members questioned whether moving talent acquisition in-house meant all recruitment would be internal, and sought clarification on agency spend, retention data, and reliance on agency staff. The Deputy Leader responded that overall agency spend had decreased but remained necessary for temporary or specialist needs, with further reductions becoming harder as the baseline is reached. Improved controls and recruitment processes have reduced agency use.

The Director of HR and Cultural Change explained recruitment is now in-house for better control, though some HR and finance tasks remained with shared services. She confirmed agency spend had stabilised after previous increases, and work continued to reduce it by improving recruitment and converting agency staff to permanent roles where possible. Retention and agency staffing data are monitored quarterly and would be shared with the committee.

- Members inquired about the future direction of the employee engagement survey. The Director of HR and Cultural Change clarified that the Council had considered transitioning from an annual, extensive questionnaire to a quarterly pulse survey with fewer questions to better track trends and respond more promptly to staff feedback. She highlighted that the previous survey's length had contributed to a lower response rate and emphasised that the proposed approach would have supported more timely and effective organisational action.

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

- The Director of HR and Cultural Change would make sure the data report, which includes detailed information on agency spend, is circulated after the meeting

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

- That the council provides a breakdown of the detail of the levels of sickness within different parts of the organisation and at different strata of the organisation.
- That the council develops a target for internal promotions.
- That the council publishes more detail over the apprenticeship levy, particularly in supporting third sector organisations.
- That the council formalises within the strategy the good working relationships with the trade union.

- That the council refers the issue of the Employee Engagement survey to the Employment Joint Consultative Committee for further discussion.

The Committee adjourned at 11:29 and reconvened at 11:40.

27/25 BUSINESS MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT - WITH A FOCUS OF ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

(Agenda No. 7)

Cllr Neil Fawcett, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance, Pippa Corner, Deputy Director of Joint Commissioning HESC, and Paul Fermer, Director of Environment and Highways, were invited to present a Business Management Monitoring Report (BMMR) with a focus of Adult Social Services.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation reported an underspend in adult social care due to strong financial management. Oxfordshire County Council outperformed most peers in helping vulnerable adults remain at home. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation also emphasised the need for government reform in adult social care despite the Council's strong performance and highlighted possible challenges linked to NHS administrative changes.

Cllr Pressel rejoined the meeting at this stage.

The Deputy Director of Commissioning HESC and the Head of Corporate Finance presented the adult social care Business Management and Monitoring report, highlighting strong collaboration between Oxfordshire County Council and the NHS amid upcoming Integrated Care Board (ICB) changes aimed at supporting frontline services. The financial overview showed an overall underspend and effective use of the Better Care Fund. They noted reduced care home use and increased home care, both linked to the Oxfordshire Way initiative.

The Committee discussed the report raising the following concerns and questions:

- Clarification on the Council's NHS relationship, noting that over 40% of Council spending goes to adult social care and citing possible effects from NHS administrative changes. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation explained that some service income is shared with the NHS, particularly for those transitioning between health and social care, and warned that changes to ICBs could disrupt current arrangements. The Deputy Director of Commissioning HESC said Oxfordshire had had strong NHS partnerships and that structural changes aimed to direct more resources to frontline services, but maintaining close collaboration is vital. She emphasised that local funding should not be affected, though ongoing cooperation remains important given the complexity involved.

- Members inquired about care home vacancies, referencing a 14% reduction in activity, and asked how this impacted the financial sustainability of care homes and their ability to fill spaces previously purchased by the Council. The Deputy Director of Commissioning HESC stated that the care market in Oxfordshire remained stable, with established relationships and a transparent care homes framework. She clarified that the Council aimed to support individuals to live independently for as long as possible, which resulted in fewer care home bed usages and shorter stays.

The Deputy Director of Commissioning HESC observed that approximately 54% of the care market is made up of self-funders, with Council use comprising only a portion. She indicated that the Council prioritises paying fair and transparent rates to providers and supporting overall market sustainability.

- Members expressed concerns about inadequate housing, particularly regarding adaptation to heat events, which could cause earlier entry into care homes. They also questioned the impact of the construction of new private care homes and the related risks if capacity was misaligned. The Deputy Director of Commissioning HESC replied that it was uncommon for people to leave care settings for their own homes; the focus had been on supporting independent living or moving individuals to more suitable housing. She highlighted that factors like housing quality and climate were outside adult social care's control, emphasising that collaboration with housing experts and the use of disabled facilities grants had been important.

On private care home capacity, The Deputy Director of Commissioning HESC stated that Oxfordshire had sufficient provision and generally did not support new applications, as the aim was prolonged independent living. Furthermore, overprovision could dilute workforce and resident distribution without clear benefits to the Council or residents.

- Members asked about the 22 new beds for individuals with learning disabilities, seeking clarification on their designation, cost savings, and County Council management. The Deputy Director of Commissioning HESC explained that the initiative was part of the Resonance Supported Homes Fund, aimed at providing permanent housing in Oxfordshire to prevent out-of-county placements. She clarified that the Council commissioned partner providers to deliver care, supporting independent living rather than direct provision.

The Deputy Director of Commissioning HESC noted this approach improved quality of life and, while sometimes more expensive, was more cost-effective than institutional care. She confirmed the Council planned to expand this model as part of its long-term accommodation strategy.

The Deputy Director of Commissioning HESC left the meeting at this stage.

- The Committee inquired whether any budget underspends in adult social care were connected to government grants, and if such was the case, whether unspent grant funds would be forfeited. The Head of Corporate Finance clarified that adult social care is financed through a combination of sources, including specific

government grants. She further explained that any underspend on ring-fenced grants would be allocated to reserves for future use rather than being forfeited and noted that only a small number of grants have conditions requiring repayment if funds are not spent within the financial year.

- Members questioned the report's claim that transport emissions are difficult to decarbonise, noting that switching to electric vehicles should help, especially since the Council has few large vehicles. They also asked whether the household waste recycling metric measures collection or actual recycling, warning it could be misleading if reduced consumption isn't considered. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation clarified the emissions figure is county-wide, not just for Council vehicles, and noted replacing specialist fleet vehicles is challenging. He agreed the recycling metric should be regularly reviewed to accurately measure performance, including both consumption and recycling.
- Members asked about delays in introducing lane rental charges for environment and highways, questioning the cause and the Council's actions. The Director explained the scheme had not been implemented because DfT had not responded to the Council's application, despite all required information being provided and an earlier decision expected. Consequently, expected scheme savings will not be realised this or next financial year.

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

- More information on the high functioning autism budget, deputyship management, and the reasons for vacant posts in adult social care. The Head of Corporate Finance agreed to provide detailed responses to these queries.
- For more information regarding the total number of people accepted into domestic abuse safe accommodation. Specifically, there was concern about the unmet need for safe accommodation, with reasons including longer stays and single people without children occupying family rooms. The request was to understand what plans are in place to build more safe accommodation to meet this need.
- There was confusion over the figures in the property strategy section of the report. Members noted a discrepancy between the capital expenditure figures: £21.9 million mentioned in the narrative and £21.7 million listed in a table. The Head of Corporate Finance agreed to investigate the discrepancy and provide a detailed explanation to the Scrutiny Manager.

28/25 COMMITTEE ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKER (Agenda No. 8)

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

29/25 COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN

(Agenda No. 9)

The Committee **AGREED** the proposed work programme, subject to discussions between the Chair and the Executive Director of Resources as to whether Committee dates should be changed to better accommodate the budget-setting process.

The committee discussed adding the issue of parking permits as a potential future agenda item. Members suggested investigating why a particular firm had been chosen for the parking permit process and why improvements had been difficult to secure. It was noted that the matter might relate to procurement or contract management, making it appropriate for the committee to consider.

30/25 RESPONSES TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

(Agenda No. 10)

The Committee **NOTED** the Cabinet responses to scrutiny recommendations on the Business Management and Monitoring Report, and Local Enterprise Partnership Integration.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

Performance & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12 September 2025

Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Report by the Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships

RECOMMENDATION

The Performance & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider and comment on:

- i. The draft strategic plan 2025-2028 (Annex 1)
- ii. The public engagement feedback on the draft plan (Annex 2).

Executive Summary

1. This report outlines the proposed structure and key elements of the strategic plan 2025-2028 and the public engagement that has taken place around it.
2. The report provides the opportunity for the Performance & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment on the proposed structure and content of the plan ahead of it being finalised for Cabinet on 21 October 2025 and Council on 4 November 2025. It also offers the opportunity for the committee to consider the public engagement feedback on the draft plan.

Background

3. Following the county council elections in May 2025 and the formation of a new administration, a new strategic plan is being developed.
4. The period of this plan will be November 2025 to 1 April 2028. This is the date when the county council will cease to exist and the new unitary authority or authorities in Oxfordshire will formally begin operating. Should the government's timetable for local government reorganisation be delayed, the period of the plan would need to be revised accordingly.

Strategic plan structure

5. The new strategic plan will build on the existing 2022-2025 plan and retain the overarching vision of a greener, fairer and healthier Oxfordshire. The new plan will include a short explanation setting out what is meant by greener, fairer and healthier, together with broader contextual information about why each is important.
6. Objectives will be provided under each of the three themes. These include nine headline projects that will be delivered by 2027. A wider set of objectives will also be included to illustrate the breadth of the council's work in each area.

7. Metrics will be developed for each objective and these will form part of the new outcomes framework that will take effect from 1 April 2026. The new outcomes framework will also include the national indicators being developed by the government as part of the Local Government Outcomes Framework. [The government's framework is currently out for consultation](#) (closing on 12 September), with the final framework due to be published in November 2025 ahead of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement.

Public engagement

8. To help shape the development of the new strategic plan, the council commissioned research agency REMind Research to conduct a series of focus groups with residents in July 2025. The feedback report is in Annex 2.
9. Nine focus groups were held between 1 and 15 July 2025, with 63 participants drawn from different geographies and demographics.
10. The feedback from the focus groups has been used to inform the development of the plan and the priorities within it. This includes addressing some of the key priorities raised by focus group participants, from more coordinated road repairs and integrated public transport to enhanced provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The plan also has a focus on tangible actions, with headline projects that have clear objectives and timescales.

Financial implications

11. Funding to deliver the priorities in the strategic plan is included within the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy agreed in February 2025. Any additional funding requirements that are not in the existing plan, such as further funding for the development of mobility hubs, will need to be identified and considered through the budget and business planning process for 2026/27.

Comments checked by:
Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance
kathy.wilcox@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal implications

12. There are no new legal implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:
Jay Akbar, Head of Legal & Governance Services
Jay.Akbar@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff implications

13. There are no new or additional staff implications arising from this report.

Equality and inclusion implications

14. There are no specific equality implications arising from this report. Once the plan is finalised, equalities impact assessments will be completed, or will already have been completed, related to specific planned pieces of work.

Sustainability implications

15. There are no specific sustainability implications arising from this report. Once the strategic plan has been finalised, sustainability implications will be considered or will already have been considered, related to specific planned pieces of work.

Risk management

16. This report provides an outline of the emerging strategic plan and so no risk management is required at this stage. Once the plan has been finalised, risk assessments will be considered, or will already have been considered, related to specific planned pieces of work.

Susannah Wintersgill
Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships

Annexes	Annex 1: Draft Strategic Plan 2025-2028 Annex 2: Oxfordshire County Council Resident Research – Strategic Plan Report
Background papers:	Nil
Other Documents:	Nil
Contact Officer:	Susannah Wintersgill, Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships susannah.wintersgill@oxfordshire.gov.uk

September 2025

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Draft strategic plan 2025-2028

This document sets out the main elements of the proposed new strategic plan, but it is still work in progress. Further elements will be added, including an introduction and the outcomes framework, before it is finalised for Cabinet in October.

Our vision

Our vision is to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. This is centred around strong and connected communities, healthy places to live, and a thriving local economy that benefits everyone.

Greener, fairer and healthier

What do we mean by a greener Oxfordshire?

We want our communities to enjoy clean air, access to green space, and safe and sustainable ways to move around. This means reducing traffic congestion and investing in public transport, cycling and walking; protecting our natural environment; and helping Oxfordshire respond and adapt to a changing climate.

Why is greener important?

A healthy environment serves as the foundation for communities to thrive – it supports health and wellbeing, economic stability and long-term sustainability.

The climate emergency is the biggest challenge the planet faces and so we've set ourselves ambitious targets to address this: we aim to be net zero in our council operations by 2030 and we're committed to enabling a net-zero Oxfordshire well ahead of 2050.

These efforts are making a difference. Since 2008 we've cut our carbon emissions by over a third; we've been named as the top performing county council for recycling for the eleventh year in a row; and we've been rated the best performing county council in the UK for tackling climate change by Climate Emergency UK.

But we need to do more. Transport accounts for 38 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions in Oxfordshire and is the highest emitting sector; air pollution directly affects people's health, particularly in congested urban areas. Our Local Transport and Connectivity Plan sets out actions to create a net zero transport system, reducing the number of private car journeys and promoting public transport, cycling and walking. These steps will lower emissions and make our communities healthier and safer.

The impact of climate change can also be seen in the frequency of severe flooding and summer heatwaves. During the summer of 2022 there were 65 excess deaths attributed to heat in Oxfordshire. In September 2024 the county experienced widespread flooding as a result of its highest 24-hour rainfall in over 50 years. These events highlight the importance of improving our resilience and response to significant weather events.

What do we mean by a fairer Oxfordshire?

We want all our residents to benefit from the advantages our county has to offer. This means supporting a local economy that benefits everyone; assisting people who face challenges in finding work; making our services as easy to access as possible; and helping communities in need.

Why is fairer important?

Oxfordshire is a wealthy county, but that prosperity is not equally shared. We benefit from one of the strongest local economies in the UK, which generates approximately £23.5 billion of economic output each year from over 430,000 jobs and 32,000 businesses. Yet some of our residents still face real challenges.

Twelve neighbourhoods in Oxfordshire are among the poorest 20 per cent nationally, according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation. About 20,000 children in Oxfordshire live in poverty, nearly 10 per cent of all children locally. And that rate exceeds 24 per cent in some of our most deprived areas, such as Rose Hill, Blackbird Leys and parts of Banbury.

Housing affordability poses another challenge. Oxfordshire is one of the least affordable areas to live in England. Average house prices are more than ten times the typical local salary, with a knock-on impact on rents. High housing costs increase the risk of homelessness and make daily life harder for many residents, including key workers.

Employment opportunities also vary. The overall unemployment rate in the county is around 3.6 per cent, but it varies by area - ranging from 1-2 per cent in parts of South Oxfordshire to over 5 per cent in some Oxford City wards. Some groups, including disabled people, certain ethnic minorities and care leavers, face additional barriers to employment and services.

Inequality is starkest in health outcomes. On average, a person from a wealthier part of Oxfordshire can expect to live about eight years longer than someone from a poorer area. The gap in years lived in good health is even larger, at twelve to fifteen years. Where you live should not determine your health, but at present it does, and this must change.

To help address these issues, we are working with health partners, businesses, voluntary and community sector organisations and the city and district councils to tackle the root causes of health inequalities, including housing, education and employment. This is our [Marmot Place](#) programme of work. We are also ensuring that our services are easier to access and support is available locally through network of family and community hubs. And for those facing hardship, we are providing financial support through our cost of living programme.

What do we mean by a healthier Oxfordshire?

We want all our residents to be happy, healthy and safe. This means helping children get the best start in life; creating opportunities for young people to reach their full potential; supporting older people to age well and stay independent for as long as possible; and encouraging everyone to make healthy choices.

Why is healthier important?

Good health is essential for individual and community wellbeing. Oxfordshire has a higher-than-average life expectancy, with men living to about 81 and women to 84. We also have lower rates of smoking and adult obesity than the England average. However, these averages hide significant differences. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed some of these, especially for deprived neighbourhoods and certain ethnic minorities.

Children's health is a particular concern. While most children in Oxfordshire have a good start, this is not universal. By the age of four or five, around 7 per cent of children in the county are obese; by the age of ten or eleven this rises to around 16 per cent. In our most disadvantaged communities, childhood obesity can reach 28 per cent.

We are responding with our YouMove programme, which helps children from lower-income families be more active, and by strengthening school health and nutrition initiatives. Support for early years development is also being increased, especially for children who qualify for free school meals, as evidence shows early intervention brings lifelong gains.

Oxfordshire has an ageing population. About 18 per cent of our residents are over the age of 65 and this is set to rise to over 21 per cent by 2031. The number of residents aged 85+ is rising fastest of all. Through proactive and preventative community outreach, we can help people live well and keep their independence for as long as possible. This is our Oxfordshire Way approach, in which we are helping support people close to home without the need for more formal care.

A healthier Oxfordshire is directly related to our other goals. By becoming a greener county, we will have cleaner air and more opportunities for physical activity, which reduces illness and improves wellbeing; while a fairer county will result in lower levels of poverty and higher rates of employment, improving people's physical and mental health.

Delivering our vision

Greener Oxfordshire: our headline projects

1. We will create better spaces for residents and visitors in our town centres, including Banbury and Witney by December 2026, and Wantage by 2027. The aim is to prioritise pedestrians, improve air quality and support economic growth.
2. Together with transport partners, we will work towards a countywide integrated rail and bus offer, including better connectivity and combined timetables and ticketing. To support this we will produce a new rail plan by November 2025 and develop business cases for new stations and services, including Begbroke and Wantage & Grove by 2027.
3. We will create two dedicated response teams by November 2025 to assess highways enquiries and fix issues in towns and villages with a high number of outstanding issues, working closely with town and parish councils.

Greener Oxfordshire: our wider objectives

- We will continue to implement our Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, which sets out actions to create a net zero transport system, reduce the number of private car journeys and promote public transport, cycling and walking.
- We will make journeys by rail, bus and bike easier and more seamless by creating a network of mobility hubs across Oxfordshire.
- We will develop a network of quiet lanes/greenways in rural areas to prioritise walking, cycling and horse riding to increase and improve safe and attractive routes.
- We will help prevent flooding, and strengthen our response to flooding, by carrying out annual gully cleaning and recruiting additional flood wardens to support local communities.
- We will continue our programme of decarbonising our own buildings and fleet of council vehicles, and we will deliver our wider climate action and energy efficiency programmes with businesses, partners and communities.
- We will accelerate our work to conserve and enhance biodiversity and support nature recovery in the county, working with partners to deliver the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Oxfordshire.

Fairer Oxfordshire: our headline projects

1. We will roll out a network of family and community hubs across the county during 2026 and 2027 in areas of need. Our family hubs will provide families with access to early help and supported, including services from health, education and community sector partners. These will be supplemented with a digital family hub in 2027. Our community hubs will provide residents with access to services in their local area, with 8 libraries developing community hub facilities by 2027.
2. Through supported employment initiatives such as Connect to Work, we will address health-related barriers to work and support individuals facing significant barriers to employment to get into and stay in work. We aim to support 900 participants on the Connect to Work programme by August 2027, and 2,000 over the five-year programme.
3. We will support young people leaving care into secure employment, creating 30 supported work placements within the council by March 2027.

Fairer Oxfordshire: our wider objectives

- Working with local partners, we will deliver a shared approach to tackling the root causes of health inequalities, including housing, education and employment ([the Marmot Place programme](#)).
- Working with partners, we will identify and address the barriers people face in securing work and create practical plans to help more people find sustainable jobs.
- We will implement our *Including Everyone* framework (2025-29), building an inclusive workplace culture, delivering inclusive services, and tackling disadvantage in our communities.

- We will work with schools and other educational settings to deliver the outcomes of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill (2024) and the upcoming SEND White Paper to ensure inclusivity and support all children to thrive.
- We will deliver our SEND transformation programme, working with partners to meet the needs of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Through our Future Generations programme, we will increase opportunities for children and young people to help shape council policy and ensure that council decision-making considers the impact on future generations.

Healthier Oxfordshire: our headline projects

- We will support children who qualify for free school meals to get the best start in life. We aim to increase the number of children who reach a good level of development at age five from 42% to 45% by November 2027.
- We will deliver more specialist school places for children with SEND, including 120 places in Faringdon by January 2027 and 120 places in Oxford by September 2027.
- Working with the voluntary and community service and local authority partners, we will support an expanded and coordinated programme of youth provision by 2026/27 to support teenagers' wellbeing. This includes the launch of our integrated adolescence and prevention service in September 2025, which will support young people at different stages of their adolescent years.

Healthier Oxfordshire: our wider objectives

- We will continue to deliver the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy, including promoting better mental wellbeing across all ages and renewing our Tobacco Control Strategy 2026-30.
- Using our [Oxfordshire Way](#) approach, we will continue to help people live independently within their communities, remaining fit and healthy for as long as possible.
- We will continue to reduce waiting times for care and financial assessments, prioritising people who are at risk of harm and abuse.
- We will continue to work with unpaid carers to improve their wellbeing.
- We will secure Fostering Friendly status, becoming a Fostering Friendly Place and supporting local families to provide loving homes for local children.
- Working with those communities most at risk of poor health, we will gather insight to understand the causes of poor health and develop action plans to improve residents' health.

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Resident perceptions of Strategic Plan

Sub-Report

PREPARED FOR OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY
COUNCIL

RACHEL MCGRAIL/
CLAIRE TYRRELL-WILLIAMS

J1096/JULY 2025

Contents

Background	Page 3
Exploring attitudes and priorities of residents	Page 6
Reactions to draft strategic vision	Page 15
Strong and Connected Communities	Page 20
Healthier Oxfordshire	Page 23
Fairer Oxfordshire	Page 27
Greener Oxfordshire	Page 31
Conclusions & Recommendations	Page 35

Page 22

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Background

Background

Following the local elections in May 2025, Oxfordshire County Council is starting to shape its overarching vision and strategic priorities for the period 2025 – 2029. Parallel to this, the council is also developing its preferred proposal for local government reorganisation in the county, which must be submitted to government by late November.

To support this work, Oxfordshire County Council commissioned REMind Research, an independent research agency, to carry out a series of focus groups with Oxfordshire residents.

The primary objectives for the sessions were to:

- explore current behaviours and attitudes towards local government and services among residents from across the county and representing different living situations/ life stages
- identify any gaps in understanding, provision or future requirements
- examine reactions to draft strategic vision, statements and potential actions
- deliberate benefits and concerns regarding future structure

This sub-report provides a comprehensive and impartial account of resident opinions on the aspects of the strategic plan discussed specifically within the sessions. As a qualitative study, some of the opinions and inferences may not be factually correct, however, they are the perceptions of those participating.



Approach

Page 25

METHOD

- 2-hour focus group sessions with Oxfordshire residents
- Conducted online via Zoom
- Independently recruited by Simply Field
- Independently designed, moderated and analysed by REMind Research
- Fieldwork conducted between 1 July and 15 July 2025
- 9 groups completed; 63 participants participated
- Participants welcomed the opportunity to participate and appreciated the opportunity to be part of the study and share their views

PROFILE

Group composition (9 focus groups overall)	Overall breakdown of participants
1. Younger adults, drawn from urban geographies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 27 x men• 36 x women
2. Younger adults, drawn from rural geographies	
3. Younger adults, drawn from the 10 wards in Oxfordshire which include small areas ranked within the 20% most deprived in England	
4. Families, drawn from urban geographies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50 x White• 13 x BAME <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 22 x <30 years old• 20 x 30-59 years old• 21 x 60+ years old
5. Families, drawn from rural geographies	
6. Families, drawn from the 10 wards in Oxfordshire which include small areas ranked within the 20% most deprived in England	
7. Empty nesters/older adults, drawn from urban geographies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 21 x children in household• 42 x no children in household <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 9 x Cherwell• 27 x Oxford City¹• 6 x West Oxfordshire• 13 x South Oxfordshire• 8 x Vale of White Horse
8. Empty nesters/older adults, drawn from rural geographies	
9. Empty nesters/older adults, drawn from the 10 wards in Oxfordshire which include small areas ranked within the 20% most deprived in England	

1. A greater number of Oxford City Council residents were included not because of oversampling, but because three sessions included residents from wards including areas ranked within the 20% most deprived nationally—six out of ten of these wards fall within the Oxford City Council boundary



Exploring attitudes and priorities of residents

Awareness of local government structure

Residents show interest in being involved and consulted on policies affecting them and the county's future, even if local government structures and council strategies aren't foremost in their thoughts.



Not top of mind

Residents often think about local services or issues but rarely consider the council's strategic aims or government structure.

"I knew [different councils] existed but it's probably not something I give that much thought to."
Female, Younger, Urban area

"Surprised there's three [tiers]. I'm even surprised there's more than one, because I never pay attention."
Male, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation



Confusion over services

Many are not aware how responsibility for services within the county are distributed between the different tiers.

Services like education and libraries are more readily linked to the county council due to visible references.

"Just too many people trying to organise stuff. Better if it was just two or one [tiers]."
Male, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation



Complicated structure

Once residents understand Oxfordshire's local government structure, with different tiers delivering services side by side, many question its complexity.

They often express a spontaneous preference for a single council.

"It just seems like it's 1 big pot of funding, lots of different levels of the council pulling for that. It seems like it's quite a complex system."
Male, Family, Urban area



Importance of consultation

Despite the county council itself not being top of mind, residents show a keen interest in what future policy could look like.

They welcome consultation as a sign of transparency.

"I'd like to see some transparency about the budget, how it's allocated don't feel it's shared openly."
Female, Family, Urban area

"Involving communities so people feel like their voice is being heard, listened to and acted upon rather than people saying, we're going to do this."
Female, Older, Urban area

A lack of awareness of how services are currently divided between the different tiers can lead to queries including:

- what is the reasoning for certain services being the responsibility of the district or county council?
- wouldn't it be more logical for the county council to handle planning and housing to ensure a county-wide perspective and avoid inconsistent policies in neighbouring areas?
- is the tiered system responsible for a lack of coordination of roadworks/traffic measures across the county?

"It doesn't necessarily feel like there's a cohesive pattern to this.....Where's the overarching equality here to ensure that all areas are treated equally? Especially from the planning authority perspective, something might be allowed in one District Council and then a mile down the road, different District Council would be different."
Male, Family, Urban area

"Why separate waste and recycling disposal from collection? It should be under one."
Female, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

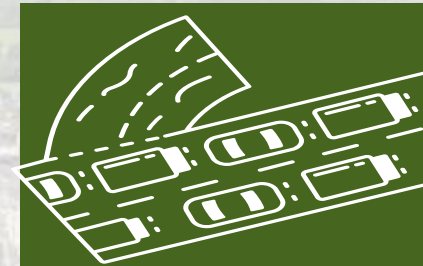
Primary priorities for the future

Residents identified multiple priorities spontaneously, but certain themes consistently emerged as areas where they feel the council should be focussing its efforts. These themes can be divided into primary and secondary areas of desired future focus:

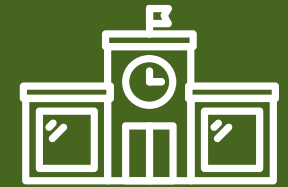
Page 28

Firstly, four primary priorities emerged as key areas which were consistently and strongly advocated for by residents regardless of age or background

PRIMARY PRIORITIES



Transport/
Traffic



Education

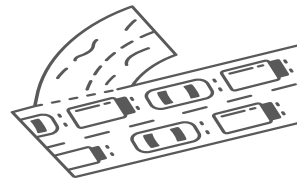


Healthcare



Social/
Community

Primary Priorities explored: Transport/Traffic



PERCEPTIONS

- Potholes causing damage to vehicles / low quality repairs of potholes leading to repeat works
- Lack of planning of roadworks making it difficult to navigate diversions (especially Botley Road/Train Station works)
- Congestion in and around Oxford
- Bus network not reaching all areas/significant hubs such as John Radcliffe
- Affordability and reliability of buses
- Difficulties navigating Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

SUGGESTED TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Better coordination/planning of essential roadworks
- Ensuring quality of repairs to roads/potholes are sufficient to avoid redoing
- Better transparency over impact and plans for improvements/developments including expected benefits for residents
- Consideration of improved/new transport options such as more extensive bus network or introducing trams
- Review of possible schemes/ discounts to make bus journeys more affordable

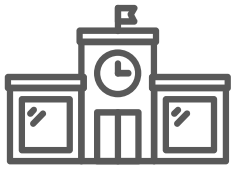
“The closure of the Botley Road has been an absolute nightmare. LTNs, I find it really stressful driving through because people that actually live there don't expect cars to be there so they just let their kids go out onto the streets.”
Female, Younger, Rural area

“My car broke down the other week, and I had to use public transport, and it opened up my eyes to trying to get somewhere, it's just a headache.”
Male, Family, Rural area

“Buses in particular, because it's a big form of transport within the county, so might as well just make it more frequent or just more convenient to use.”
Female, Younger, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

NB: Congestion was not a specific focus of the research but given the consistent references, additional analysis is included within the appendix

Primary Priorities explored: Education



PERCEPTIONS

- Insufficient support for children with special needs cited within all groups regardless of personal experience
- Schools becoming over-populated, with class sizes too big
- Teacher and support staff not paid enough to stay within the sector
- Not enough opportunities to support young people into work or staying within the county
- All generations demonstrated concerns for the quality of education in the future

SUGGESTED TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Focus resources into supporting those with additional needs
- Increase pay for teachers and support staff to attract and retain them within Oxfordshire schools
- Ensure the infrastructure is in place to support increased population with access to relevant education
- Offer more vocational courses and/or apprenticeships for young people

Page 30

“The lack of SEN provision and the coverage for, like those type of children. I think that's a massive issue at the moment.”

Female, Younger, Rural area

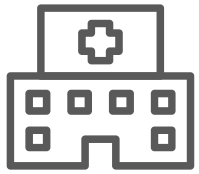
“I think you'd get better educational outcomes, if the classes were smaller and focus on SEN and all that.”

Male, Older, Urban area

“Paying teachers properly. That's like a fundamental going forward. If we're educating kids in Oxfordshire properly, they might stay around.”

Male, Family, Urban area

Primary Priorities explored: Health



PERCEPTIONS

- Prohibitively difficult to get GP appointment
- Impossible to join NHS dentist
- Concerns over the pay of NHS employees
- Mental Health services are insufficient or challenging to access when needed

SUGGESTED TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Council to work with health partners to identify gaps and plan improved access
- Ensure the infrastructure is in place to support increased population

Page 31

“Banbury is losing so many medical facilities. There's no maternity unit here. Any specialist, we have to go down to Oxford, which is fine if you've got a car, but it's not very easy for a lot of elderly people.”

Female, Older, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“They're so overworked and just need a pay rise because what they do is incredible, and they don't get the recognition for it.”

Female, Younger, Urban area

“Mental health services for children....there's a massive waiting list for people that need support.”

Female, Family, Rural area

“Doctor surgeries very, very difficult to get appointments. I think there's a shortage of NHS workers which is a shame.”

Male, Older, Urban area

Primary Priorities explored: Social/Community



PERCEPTIONS

- Loss of community through entertainment/retail closures
- Communal spaces such as community centres/youth clubs not well maintained
- Lack of reasons to come together
- Transient populations create difficulties in developing cohesion and integration
- Annual events no longer being hosted
- Commonly felt that strengthening community is a way to support improvement to secondary priorities

SUGGESTED TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Organise community-based initiatives
- Reinstate or introduce events for local residents
- Include residents in decision making of what should be happening within local areas
- Help to restore/regenerate social spaces such as community spaces

Page 32

“Getting involved in like community spaces, with like allotments and growing things. And you know, being outdoors. Working and feeling a sense of community so doing something to actually bring the community together.”
Female, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“An inclusive community. I think bits of these could be achieved by getting to that stage.... clean up the parks, have a chippy tea at the end of it. I just think you could tick a load of boxes by getting that real community aspect.”
Male, Family, Urban area

“Community centres need a fresh identity. To be inclusive of everybody and not just, we're running a food bank today. I know they're needed but we need other things as well to attract more interest for people to use them.”
Female, Older, Urban area

“Carnival that was on most summers, that's not been on for a few years. We used to have like a festival in central Oxford around summer, that doesn't happen anymore.”

Female, Younger, Rural area

Secondary priorities for the future

Secondary priorities are also important to residents and often interlink with the primary areas of focus identified. Once again, there is notable consistency in the aspects being raised regardless of age or place of residence.

SECONDARY PRIORITIES



Housing



Social care



Family support



Safety



Anti-social
behaviour



Decline of
High Streets

Page 33
Six secondary priorities emerge as areas which unquestionably deserve focus but not as urgently as the four primary priorities.

Residents feel that addressing some of the primary priorities could also automatically help to improve these issues.

Secondary priorities explored



Page 34



Housing

- Create more affordable housing
- Improve rent controls
- More protection of green spaces from development
- Ensure infrastructure to support housing development
- Balancing needs of current residents and new residents/students

“Looking at more schemes to keep people that have lived in that area for so many years. Capping the prices of housing so that the next generation of local people, can afford the houses around the local area.”
Female, Family, Rural area

“Me and the wife rent but I know people that are trying to buy houses here and they're struggling.”
Male, Younger, Urban area



Social care

- Review levels of in-home support/ services for older people
- More affordable care home options
- Increased support for adults with additional needs

“The social care seems to be a massive issue for the Council...The social care is so expensive, you know, surely there must be a way of collectively having a ceiling for how much it costs.”
Female, Older, Rural area

“The Council have a duty of care, and they wriggle out of it. I've seen it many, many times, and it's just disgraceful.”
Female, Older, Ward with areas of higher deprivation



Safety

- Better street lighting/active for longer periods
- Dealing with areas of high crime rate (especially cited by those living in wards with areas of higher deprivation)
- Police visibility countywide
- Provision of night bus service
- Safer/ dedicated cycleways

“It's more so winter time. We've got a dog, it's just not very nice walking around again for safety, but also just, you know, it's not very nice not having clearly lit street lights.”
Female, Family, Urban area

“There's quite high crime rate around my area.”
Female, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation



Family Support

- Increase support for poorer families (e.g. reduced rates for activities)
- Provide more youth support/facilities & engagement e.g. youth workers and youth clubs etc.
- Decrease waiting times for SEN diagnoses (e.g. autism)

“Things like the expense of going to a swimming pool. If you've got children or going to the facilities, but people can't afford them.”
Female, Older, Urban area

“You have to fight so hard to get that extra support that your child absolutely needs to be able to learn on par with another child in the same class.”
Female, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation



Anti-social behaviour

- Controls to limit damage & litter
- Provide more things for youths to do
- Limit rough sleeping
- Crack down on misuse of e-bikes/scooters (licenses needed/checked etc.)

“Litter and stuff just drags the place down a little bit..... nowadays, groups of youth, and you can feel quite intimidated. I feel for them, because, you know? Are they just hanging about because there's lack of stuff for them to do.”
Male, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“My little lad has just learned to do hand stands. You take it into the park to do it but if the grass is not very well kept, you don't really know what's in there.”
Male, Family, Urban area



Decline of high streets

- Schemes to regenerate high streets
- Ensure rents/opportunities are attractive to new businesses
- Attract restaurants to areas outside the City
- Give Oxfordshire residents reasons to visit other towns/villages in the county (not just tourists)

“Oxfordshire's one of the most renowned and idyllic and beautiful places. It's a bit disheartening when you're walking down the street and another shop's closed or another business has gone under, it kind of takes away from the beauty of it.”
Female, Family, Urban area

“People from Botley are just going well, we don't go into Oxford anymore. They go to the outskirts...The shops that were family-owned businesses, they've all shut up and gone.”
Female, Older, Urban area



Reactions to draft strategic vision

Introducing the draft strategic vision

Residents were shown a draft strategic vision for the county council

Page 36

Draft Vision

Our vision is to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. This is centred around strong and connected communities, healthy places to live, and a sustainable and inclusive economy that benefits everyone.

Response to draft vision

Overall, there is positivity that the council is demonstrating a willingness to take action. However, a minority are more cynical about intentions and ability to deliver, particularly older residents.

Page 37



- Feels aspirational
- Language is very positive
- Focusing on issues which resonate with the whole of UK
- Matches priorities raised by residents
- Shows a council that cares and is seeking to improve residents' lives

“I do like the bit where they've, you know, a strong and connected community. But it's all building blocks, isn't it, to make a house? So, they've got to start somewhere, I suppose.”
Female, Older, Urban area

“I think they say healthier counties. So that's encouraging, you know, because there's so many things they can do to make us healthier.”
Female, Older, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“It's, you know, it's always good to have a vision and nothing's ever perfect. It's always good to sort of strive for the next thing or the next improvement or to tackle issues as they come.”
Female, Family, Urban area

“You can't disagree with anything here, because it's all good stuff, but the devil's in the detail. It's like, how are they actually going to achieve that? What do you really mean by fairer?”

Male, Older, Urban area



- Too impersonal, vague and lacking in specifics or relevance to Oxfordshire itself
- Does not include measurable aims and can therefore be interpreted as the council overpromising to try and tick the boxes
- Confusion around some phrases e.g. 'inclusive economy'; 'healthy places'; 'strong and connected communities'
- Suspicion this is a covert means of referencing greater restrictions on car use

“Healthy spaces to live. Everyone will sort of say that's obviously a good thing, and they obviously want that. But it's how would you go about doing that.”
Male, Younger, Rural area

“What we do [to be green] doesn't matter and they're spending all this money on [being greener] when we've got other problems like education, NHS is struggling, and then you've got the military 3 big things. So, you know, I think it's like lip service.”
Male, Older, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“Because the thing with the statement, it was like greener, fairer. What's the marker? It's not really a target. It's like it wasn't stating that we want to be the best or there's no defined target. It's just, want to be greener. That could be one more blade of grass and that makes us greener.”
Male, Family, Urban

“I look at this statement, and I feel as if it could be around restricting cars in certain areas.”
Female, Older, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

Taking the draft vision forward

Residents' reflections on the statement offer clear signals for refining and strengthening the vision, ensuring it not only addresses their concerns but also engages and resonates with them from the outset



Critical aspects to monitor during further development:

- Use direct terms rather than 'buzz words'
- Reference specific priorities of residents (e.g. congestion, education, being safe) in measurable terms
- Ensure it sounds Oxfordshire specific
- Caution in referencing 'greener' as it is not a spontaneous priority of residents and ideally should not be the leading aim
- Claims of benefitting everyone seem impossible

Page 38



In residents' own words

“I love the first bit because I love the rural side of it, so making it greener, fairer.”
Male, Younger, Urban area

“About the economy that benefits everyone. If that's in the lines of you know, cost the cost of the living. That's important.”
Female, Family, Rural area

“It's interesting about the sustainable and inclusive economy that benefits everyone as that picks up some of the things we've said about.”
Male, Family, Urban area

“It's being treated fairly instead of one community getting everything.”
Female, Older, Urban area

“I'd be concerned how some of this is measurable, how do they measure the impact of inclusivity, how are they going to measure an impact of fairer.”
Male, Family, Urban area

“It seems a bit wishy washy, its sort of seems like they've said everything a person would want to hear but ideally any community would be like this but it doesn't specify Oxfordshire.”
Female, Younger, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“Well, can I just say, if they want to build 40,000 new houses. How is that going to be healthier with the amount of cars and better for the environment?”
Female, Older, Rural area

“This statement here is probably a bit layered and coded, you just have to read into it and also I'd like them to be specific, what do you mean by greener, fairer and healthier, what does that look like?”
Female, Older, Ward with areas of higher deprivation


“What's inclusive economy mean?”
Male, Older, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“I just find its fancy words, as though it's a statement to appease.”
Male, Older, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

Stronger and connected communities

How do people feel about 'stronger, connected communities'?

Residents like the reference to community within the vision, however, there is uncertainty on what 'strong and connected' means, leading to confusion and mixed interpretation



Place-based

Most interpret this aspiration in terms of locality and building stronger individual communities through:


- Good communications between local councillors and the residents represented
- More community-based initiatives/ events
- Feeling heard and supported by the council
- Encouraging more opportunities to share resources between residents
- Designed into the planning of new developments

"Being really integrated and connected in different ways. So, like sports, music, events... like physically allowing people to connect with each other."

Female, Young, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

"Proper money put into the community starting with community centres and organised youth clubs, design and tech or cooking or environmental education.... If you talk to the children and give them options."

Female, Older, Urban area



County networks

Others interpret it as an aim to build stronger networks across the county:


- Better transport links between towns, villages and key services
- Providing more events/things to do across different parts of the county
- Bringing different communities together
- Fairness across the county and bridging the wealth divide

"Strong, connected. We go back to transport. You know, how are we gonna be strong? How are we gonna be connected? Are they going to revamp the bus services?"

Male, Older, Rural area

"Connected communities is what we're talking about with transport and just reaching those places. Also, such a divide between poorer people and richer people, and it would be really nice to sort of like bridge that gap."

Female, Younger, Rural area



Critical aspects to consider if having stronger and connected communities is to be included in the vision:

- Term needs to be more explicit if council has specific interpretation
- If unclear, people will make their own assumptions and this may not match with council intentions leading to a disconnect and disappointment
- Most residents focus on their immediate place of home/work when thinking of community
- Some believe you cannot make people be community-minded

In residents' own words

“This is very appealing isn't it, we have talked quite a lot about communities and this is centred around strong and connected communities.”

Female, Older, Urban area

“I would read that as like they're going to do things that make the sense of community stronger so perhaps events or community engagement.”

Female, Younger, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“I want someone to explain to me what is a strong and connected community, what is that, no idea.”

Female, Older, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“You feel an area where the people in charge have people's best interest....people need to have a sense of enjoyment of where they live. And then, you know, that's about being with friends, it's about being happy in your day to day.”

Male, Younger, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“So maybe not a divide between rich and poor. Maybe a Council that listens to everyone.”

Male, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“It's what they mean, connected in terms of transport or a strong community that's connected like to one another? I don't think it's very clear what that actually is.”

Female, Younger, Urban area

Healthier Oxfordshire

Strategic Priority: Healthier

Draft statement

We want all our residents to be happy, healthy and safe. This means enabling children to get the best start in life, creating opportunities for young people to reach their full potential, helping older people to age well and remain as independent as possible for as long as possible, and supporting everyone to make healthy lifestyle choices.

Draft Actions being explored

1. Continue to work with partners to support adults to live independently at home rather than going into care. This is an approach called the Oxfordshire Way.
2. Work with communities and partners to make local town centres vibrant, welcoming and accessible for everyone. This includes improving walking, wheeling, and public transport opportunities. Areas of focus include Witney, Banbury and Wantage.
3. Purchase and refurbish four new children's homes so that we can meet the needs of more children we care for in Oxfordshire, rather than out of county.
4. Build three new special schools for children with special educational needs and disabilities to help meet increasing demand, including one in Faringdon and two in the Didcot area.

Having a healthier Oxford viewed as a sound and positive aspiration for the council but knowing the detail is integral to resident advocacy

- Addressing health shows understanding of resident concerns
- Positive aspiration for the council
- Mixed expectations on whether this means service improvements or attempting to improve conditions to avoid need for services
- Including reference to 'safe' is welcomed
- Acknowledgement of different generations is important, but question why disability isn't referenced
- Council is showing it wants to embed building blocks to being healthier
- Wording can feel too ambiguous, particularly 'enabling children to get the best start in life'; 'helping older people to age well'

“I think safe's the one that the council can really focus on and have an influence over more so I'm happy with that.”
Female, Family, Urban area

“It is a positive statement that there's nothing wrong with it, like it's all good things they want to do.”
Female, Younger, Rural area

“It's idyllic. But again, helping older people to age well, remain as independent as possible for as long as possible. It's just like how?”
Female, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“Nice to know how they're gonna do this as well. What are their plans to achieve it?”
Male, Family, Rural area

“What does it look like for children to get the best start in life?”
Female, Older, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

- Healthier actions receive the most positive reaction across the statements from residents
- Real intention and specific examples which the council can be measured against is reassuring
- Actions match key areas of priority for residents (e.g. SEN needs; regenerating local town centres)
- Building new special schools identified as a key priority, reflecting earlier concerns
- References to partners raises rather than answers queries
- Minor concerns that adults living independently is cost cutting exercise to keep people out of care homes

“Some of these things aren't actually that relevant to me, but they stand out as being more beneficial...this feels more worthwhile.”
Female, Younger, Urban area

“Special schools for children with special educational needs. I mean, that's like building free new schools. I mean, that would be amazing.”
Female, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“I think just generally all 4 of those points recognise that the Council have a good understanding of the disconnect in the community.”
Male, Younger, Ward with areas of higher deprivation



Critical aspects for Healthier aim

Retaining a focus on a healthier Oxfordshire strongly resonates with residents and should form an integral part of the future vision for the county



Critical aspects to monitor in refining the detail:

- Statement could be perceived as offering empty promises if phrases not fully understood
 - Use more explicit and universal language
- Having detailed objectives is integral to providing reassurance of plans which can be measured
 - Retain references to actual plans and locations of development as these provide reassurance and engagement with residents
- People want to know more about partners and distribution of responsibility
 - Outline who partners are and how responsibilities are distributed



In residents' own words

“I like how positive it is, it gives you hope.”
Female, Family, Rural area

“I think it demonstrates some ownership here, certainly in the latter three.”
Male, Family, Urban area

“I would definitely say that the actions on this one are probably the best out of the ones we’ve seen.”
Female, Younger, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“I think to be honest, I think three and four, I think that like we’ve said that’s very specific so you can hold them accountable.”
Female, Younger, Rural area

“There is more detail there isn’t there, which is what we’ve been saying.”
Male, Older, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“What I like about these actions here are that they are a lot more specific than some of the other actions.”
Male, Older, Urban area

“I think they all sound very good and it’s like we’ve mentioned, it’s having a plan in place of what they mean by their vision.”
Female, Family, Urban area

“It’s tricky. So, if they make cycle paths I’d actually like them to be so separate from the path.”
Female, Older, Urban area

Fairer Oxfordshire

Strategic Priority:
Fairer

Draft statement

We want all our residents to benefit from the advantages our county has to offer so they can thrive. This means addressing social and health inequalities, providing equitable access to services, fostering an inclusive local economy whose benefits are felt by everyone, and supporting the creation of good-quality secure jobs in all sectors of the local economy.

Draft Actions
being explored

1. Work with partners to reduce social, economic and health inequalities in Oxfordshire, particularly inequalities in rural areas. This includes projects aimed at giving every child the best start in life, creating fair employment and good work for all, and ensuring a healthy standard of living for all.
2. Create more supported internships positions at the council and create more inclusive employment opportunities across Oxfordshire working with local partners.
3. Provide further support to young people as they leave local authority care and help them to become independent. This may include free transport, inclusive employment opportunities, free leisure passes etc.

Having a fairer county resonates with residents as they identify issues around cost of living, rich/poor divide, affordability of housing and public transport

- Statement references aspects viewed as big issues being experienced by residents
- Those living in wards with areas of higher deprivation particularly reference a need to know that there are intentions to help encourage a fairer way of living
- Reassuring to see the council aiming for a fairer society
- Mixed reactions to language; some feel it is too 'wordy' and 'difficult to digest', others strongly advocate the aims being outlined
- Some believe it is trying to be all things to all people and too much ambition can seem unrealistic
- Can struggle to interpret phrases such as 'inclusive local economy'; 'good-quality secure jobs'
- Scepticism that the council can influence or support creation of jobs in all economic sectors

“I think the statement is quite well put together in terms of being specific in its objectives.”
Female, Young, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“It's about things that we've brought up that needs more action taken. And it's actually some of those things included here.”
Female, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“What's a good quality secure job?”
Male, Younger, Urban area

“It's a bit of a mouthful. I found it a bit hard to digest. I like the way it's focusing on the idea of addressing inequalities like, that's a good thing to do.”
Male, Family, Rural area

“Give people credit for being able to understand what you're going to do, and just speak to people in straightforward terms.”
Female, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

- In favour of supporting children and young people but important to state how this will be achieved
- Terms such as 'partners' are too vague/ ambiguous
- References to projects without naming them is too indistinct
- Mixed opinion on council internships; creating opportunities is a positive but are they paid?
- Greater support for children leaving care recognised as important priority for the council



“This looks like some proper KPIs that they can work to.”
Male, Family, Urban area

“What's the specific service they're going to provide to give a child a good start in life because otherwise I don't know what that means.”
Male, Younger, Urban area

“Who were the partners would be good to know, especially across all of these different areas.”
Male, Family, Urban area

Critical aspects for Fairer aim

Residents do desire a county which supports those who are more affected by the cost of living or struggling to find employment, housing etc. and the aim is therefore meaningful to them



Critical aspects to monitor in refining the detail:

- Statement could be perceived as offering empty promises if phrases not fully understood
 - Use more explicit and universal language
 - 'Supporting skills development' may resonate more than creating 'good quality secure jobs in all sectors'
- Having fewer and more direct aims may be more powerful
 - Keep ambitions realistic to ensure they resonate with residents
- Having detailed objectives is integral to providing reassurance of plans which can be measured
 - Provide more references to existing plans and locations of development to provide reassurance and engagement with residents
- People want to know more about partners and distribution of responsibility
 - Outline who partners are and how responsibilities are distributed



In residents' own words

“You can sort of picture what they're trying to achieve here. I feel like it's probably the most positive and the most sort of action drive statement.”

Male, Younger, Rural area

“There's no such thing as a secure job so what people need really is I suppose generic skills.”

Male, Older, Urban area

“One thing that has struck me throughout this is that the word 'partners' is used a lot but who are they? Who are the partners?”

Male, Family, Urban area

“It's not something the council can do. You know, everybody wants a good quality secure job but there's no such thing as a secure job nowadays.”

Male, Older, Urban area

“It's okay saying these things but there's no substance behind it. It's almost like they've copied it from Government policies and procedures and just pasted it on.”

Male, Older, Rural area

“I'm a bit confused about what some of it means, so what does that inclusive employment opportunities actually mean? What does that actually look like sort of thing? Same with giving every child the best start in life, everyone can agree with that but what does that actually look like? What are they going to implement? What's the specific service they are going to provide to give a child a good start in life cos otherwise I don't know what that means.”

Male, Younger, Urban area

Greener Oxfordshire

Strategic Priority:
Greener

Draft statement

We want our communities to have clean air, access to green space and the ability to move around safely and sustainably. This means cutting our carbon emissions, preserving and enhancing our natural environment, making Oxfordshire more resilient to a changing climate, and investing in an integrated and sustainable transport network.

Draft Actions
being explored

- Page 52
1. Work with partners to improve the bus network in Oxfordshire and people's access to it, including in rural areas.
 2. Deliver initiatives and infrastructure to help people make more journeys in way that is physically active such as walking, wheeling or cycling use. For example, by delivering new cycle ways.
 3. Work with partners to make it easier for people to switch between different types of transport. For example, creating 'mobility hubs' at major railway stations, which bring together trains, buses and active travel such as cycle parking.
 4. Take action to tackle localised flooding, for example through increasing the capacity of community flood wardens. Flood Wardens are volunteers who play an important role in the warning and prevention of flooding within their community.

Most understand and agree with aspirations to be greener, but it is not an instinctive priority

- Most challenged of the statements
- People want to do the right thing for the environment and understand why the council references being greener
- Reference to an integrated transport network is liked as it reflects earlier concerns
- Concerns by some that the main focus is on car use and not providing the necessary infrastructure to support alternative modes of transport
- Assumptions that this is ultimately leading to congestion charging and penalising car users
- Can be seen as contradictory – focusing on being greener but losing natural environments to housing and development

“I like all of it, because it means a better place for us all to live. But you know, can I afford to pay for it [emission/congestion charging] if that's what's going to happen? And the answer to that is, no, I can't.”
Female, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“It just sounds like an excuse to charge.... emissions. It just means you're going to have to pay to go into that zone.”
Male, Family, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“Cutting our carbon emissions, it's so much demonising the driver the person that uses their car as their main form of transport. The transport network would need such a massive overhaul to become truly integrated.”
Male, Younger, Rural area

- ?
- Good intentions but a lack of detail and actual plans on what/where things may happen
 - Concerns over creation of more cycle ways rather than firstly encouraging people to cycle
 - Desire for cycle ways to be clearly defined away from pedestrians/ cars
 - Improving bus network viewed as a key priority, but has to be affordable or will not be used
 - Dealing with flooding not viewed as a priority by most and some feel it shouldn't be left to volunteers

“It's not like cycle ways don't exist today. There has to be a want for them to be used.”
Female, Younger, Urban area

“I like the way they've put a lot of inclusion as regard to public transport. You can see they've thought about that and put a lot of effort and focused in on it, points 1, 2, and 3 are all around the area. So that's good.”
Male, Family, Rural area

“It concerns me where they say working with partners. Because does that mean that the prices of buses are gonna go even higher.”
Female, Younger, Rural area

Critical aspects for Greener aim

There is awareness and an affinity with the desire to have a greener county, however, the council needs to be cautious given it is not a spontaneous priority and can raise suspicion about its intentions



Critical aspects to monitor in refining the detail:

- Have more specificity about aims
 - Do not only focus on what is needed but how council will achieve it
- Referencing reducing carbon emissions generally can cause concerns regarding means to do this
 - Ensure transparency around how the council intends to achieve this
- People want to know more about partners and distribution of responsibility
 - Outline who partners are and how responsibilities are distributed
- Residents do have their own ideas on how being greener could be achieved, especially the younger demographic
 - Utilise resident consultation and deliberation around ideas such as more EV charging points, smart housing and more affordable public transport
- Concerns that introducing additional cycle ways is not enough to encourage people to cycle more
 - Residents prefer more of a focus on improving public transport links and affordability



In residents' own words

“I thought it was kind of contradictory. They want more green space but then they're building all the new houses on the green space that currently exists.”
Male, Younger, Urban area

“It's about things that we've brought up that need action taken, it's actually some of those things included.”
Female, Younger, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“So, improving a bus network to be able to get to those areas, I think would be fantastic.”
Male, Younger, Urban area

“So, they've got to be really careful that they don't alienate the people who are trying to get around these cities.”
Female, Older, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“Well, to me it just smacks of congestion charging Oxford coming our way.”
Female, Older, Ward with areas of higher deprivation

“They could raise the prices [of buses] and make the service perfect but then it's gonna suddenly make loads of people drop out of using them cos of the cost. So I think there's a fine line in getting it right and I think getting that right will be difficult.”
Female, Younger, Rural area

“Working with partners, I mean in the first one yeah that's fine but who are these partners and if it's the bus services, they have commercial aspirations as well so I don't know practically how that actually works.”
Male, Older, Urban area



Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusions

Residents want to be engaged with the county council's vision and goals. They value living in Oxfordshire but seek clear and detailed plans for future direction to secure their support and trust.

RESIDENT PRIORITIES

- Notable consistency of opinion among Oxfordshire residents when identifying priorities for future focus
- Key issues which they would like to see addressed include:
- coordinated and higher quality road repairs
 - a need for more integrated, dependable, and cost-effective public transport, particularly bus services
 - improved education provision, particularly infrastructure to support a growing population, increased SEN services and staff pay rises
 - greater access to healthcare, including; GPs, dentists and mental health services
 - a stronger focus on community engagement—empowering residents to help address local issues and rebuild a sense of pride and shared responsibility for the county

RESPONSES TO STRATEGY

- Residents understand the need for a vision, but it can become meaningless if not referencing issues relevant to them or the county specifically
- Having a healthier county resonates strongly with residents and having tangible actions demonstrates thought, planning and accountability
- Having a fairer county is welcomed as a sentiment but too broad an agenda can lead to confusion and cynicism
- Having a greener county is a more challenging aim. People want to do the right thing but concerns of covertly leading to additional charges alongside having alternative priorities around cost of living overshadow its resonance
- Strong and connected communities demonstrates understanding of a desire for greater community cohesion but lack of detail could lead to disconnect between resident expectations and council intentions
 - Most interpret it as supporting local communities with youth activities, improving social spaces and providing residents with the right skills/tools/services/events to help themselves etc.

Recommendations

Ensure county council vision links to resident priorities and is credible

- Make it personal by referencing the big issues identified by residents
- Ensure it feels specific to Oxfordshire
- Have aims which are specific and can be measured
 - If too broad, people interpret and imagine outcomes in different ways leading to expectations not being met and disappointment
- Avoid 'buzz words', or vague references to demonstrate transparency
 - Use clear, direct and universal language
 - Provide details of partnerships and services if referenced

Focussing on being Healthier, Fairer and having connected communities does resonate

- Important to retain these areas of focus
- Provide greater detail and specifics to ensure meaningful for residents
 - People want specifics and aims which they can instantly understand and interpret
 - Avoid broad references such as 'ageing well' or 'benefitting everyone' as viewed as too intangible leading to mistrust

Further consideration regarding the inclusion of being greener as a priority

- Not top of mind for residents given perceptions of more pressing issues and cost of living
- If it is integral to the council to continue to include in its vision, ensure aims are transparent and have clear reasoning/benefits for residents
 - Address concerns regarding potential additional charges in relation to motor vehicles
 - Clearly outline plans and actions rather than broad aims

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PERFORMANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 SEPTEMBER 2025

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING REPORT & CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT (FOCUS ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

Report by Executive Director Resources and Section 151 Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to

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

Executive Summary

2. The Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a constitutional responsibility to scrutinise 'corporate performance and directorate performance and financial reporting.'
3. The Cabinet is informed of the Council's performance via the Business Management and Monitoring Report (BMMR). To aid the ability to scrutinise, the Committee has agreed to focus on Children's Services in September. The next meeting is expected to focus on Environment & Highways.
4. To reflect this focus an abridged version of the BMMR as at the end of 2024/25, plus the summary finance position reported to Cabinet in July 2025 is provided as Annex 1a. Information regarding capital expenditure is included below. Information on performance and risks can be found in Annex 2 & 3.

Background

5. The paper reports on the Council's performance in terms of finance, delivery and risk, including detail at a service level. The 2024/25 Outturn report BMMR report submitted to Cabinet was considered on 17 June 2025, containing data up to March 2025. To support a focus on Children's Services, there are only excerpts relating to the service included here. In that respect, the report is the same as that considered by Cabinet on 17 June 2025 with updates on the Finance position for 2025/26 consistent with the report to Cabinet in July 2025.

Performance

6. Committee members should be aware that they are being provided with the scorecard of the Council's performance in relating to annual measures and specific measures directly relating to Children's Services (either directly or indirectly through services provided by Public Health) in Annex 2. A summary of the KPIs included in the annex is provided below:

Children's Services

- OCC07.02 Number of children we care for who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.
- OCC07.03 % of children we care for placed out of county and more than 20 miles away from home.
- OCC07.04 Number of Children and Young People accessing the Music Service
- OCC07.05 The number of children subject of a child protection plan
- OCC07.06 Number of Oxfordshire children we care for.
- OCC07.07 % of Education Health & Care Plans completed within 20 weeks
- OCC07.08 The number of Education Health Care Plans maintained by the local authority.

Public Health

- OCC03.06 Percentage of births that have received a face to face New Birth Visit.
- OCC03.07 Reduce the levels of children overweight and obese in year 6 (NCMP data).
- OCC03.13 Numbers in substance misuse treatment: Children and young people during the financial year.

Financial Position

7. As a result of action taken during the year, Children's Services overspent by £0.1m against a budget of £202.1m.
8. Expenditure on High Needs DSG was £36.5m higher than the ringfenced grant funding in 2024/25 and increased the cumulative deficit to £92.3m. Based on the forecast shared with Cabinet in July this will increase to over £130m in 2025/26.
9. Further information about the council expenditure and High Needs DSG in 2024/25, along with an update on the 2025/26 position as at the end of May 2025 is included in Annex 1.

Capital Programme

10. Updates on the Capital Programme are provided in the Capital Monitoring and Outturn Reports to Cabinet.
11. Actual expenditure on pupil places was £26.0m in 2024/25 and is forecast at £59.2m in 2025/26. The **Pupil Place Plan** includes 3 main programmes:

Basic Need - these are usually school expansion projects that are funded by central government grant and/or Section 106 developer funding to

ensure there are enough school places for children within Oxfordshire. The Basic Needs Programme invested £8.1m during 2024/25. This created 140 additional pupil places and 16 additional Special Education Needs & Disability (SEND) pupil places. Anticipated spend is £12.0m in 2025/26.

Growth Portfolio – these are usually new school projects within large housing sites allocated in local plans that are funded from contributions sought from developers via a Section 106 agreement towards the costs of providing community and social infrastructure. The Growth Portfolio programme invested £12.2m during 2024/25. One new school opened during 2024/25 creating 210 additional primary school places. Spend of £38.1m is forecast in 2025/26.

Schools Annual Programmes – this includes the School Structural Maintenance Programme (SSMP) which addresses the highest condition based priorities within the school estate enhancing the school stock condition and reducing the backlog maintenance, and the School Access Programme which ensure that mainstream buildings are accessible for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The Schools Annual Programmes invested £5.5m, delivering projects mainly through the Schools Structural Maintenance Programme. A total of 19 projects were completed during the year, with a further 10 projects on site. The School Structural Maintenance Programme for 2025/26 has highlighted a total of 25 projects to be completed over a two-year programme. A further 33 projects are in various stages of progression of delivery. The latest spend forecast is £8m in 2025/26

12. Projects were also delivered via the School Access Programme which ensure that mainstream buildings are accessible for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. In total, accessibility improvements were made to 13 primary schools and nine secondary schools enabling disabled pupils to attend their preferred school.
13. Projects in the basic need and growth portfolio programmes are either delivered directly by the Council, delivered by a housing developer or by a third party (usually an Academy Trust or Diocese) via a funding agreement. Regardless of how they are delivered, each project brings benefits to residents living in Oxfordshire by improving the quality and facilities at existing schools; providing additional pupil places allowing greater parental choice and ensuring that housing developments have the infrastructure necessary for them to become thriving communities.

Schools' Energy Loans

14. The council has allocated over £1.8m between 2023/24 and 2026/27 as loan financing available to maintained schools to install retrofit measures (LED lighting, solar photovoltaics and battery storage).
15. In 2024/25 the council issued loans totalling £0.3m to seven maintained schools to install retrofit measure such as LED and Solar PV. An additional 18

schools applied for a further £1.0m of which £0.8m is forecasted to be delivered in 2025/26.

Children's Social Care

16. Within the council's **Property Strategy** Corporate Estate Development included the Children's Homes Programme for which Children's Services successfully secured DfE match funding to purchase and refurbish four new children's homes (12 additional beds) at a total cost of £10.450m.
17. A revised delivery date of 31 March 2026 has been agreed with the Department of Education (DfE). It is expected that all four homes will achieve practical completion by December 2025, with occupation to follow pending successful Ofsted registration.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

18. Overall corporate performance supports all the Council's policies and strategic priorities. Whilst the work of Children's Services has cross-cutting input into all the Council's strategic priorities also, its work primarily furthers the Council's ambitions to "Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire", "Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents", and "support carers and the social care system".

Financial Implications

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

Comments checked by:

Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance
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Legal Implications

20. The Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a specific responsibility within its terms of reference, under Part 6.1A of the Constitution 5 (1) (a) to scrutinise 'corporate performance and directorate performance and financial reporting'.
21. There are no additional legal implications beyond those outlined within the appendices to this report.

Comments checked by:

Kim Sawyer, Interim Head of Legal and Governance:
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Lorna Baxter
Executive Director Resources and Section 151 Officer

Annex: Annex 1: Abridged Business Management and Monitoring
Report – Finance section – March 2025 + May 2025

Annex 2: Abridged Business Management and Monitoring Report – Performance section – March 2025

Annex 3: Management and Monitoring Report – Strategic Risk Register section – March 2025

Background papers: None

Other Documents: None

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August 2025

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Children's Services (General Fund)

- Children's Services overspent by £0.1m against a budget of £202.1m in 2024/25.

Service Area	Final Budget £m	Total Spend £m	Year end Variance £m	Variance March Cabinet £m	Change £m
Education & Learning	54.7	55.1	0.4	1.0	-0.6
Schools	0.2	0.0	-0.2	0.0	-0.2
Subtotal Education	54.9	55.1	0.2	1.0	-0.8
Children's Social care	133.2	131.4	-1.8	-1.5	-0.3
Safeguarding, Quality Assurance, Partnerships and Improvement	5.6	4.6	-1.1	-0.7	-0.3
Children's Social care	138.8	136.0	-2.8	-2.3	-0.5
Children's Services Central Costs	8.4	11.2	2.7	2.6	0.1
Subtotal Children's Social Care & Central costs	147.2	142.1	-0.1	0.3	-0.4
Total Children's Services	202.1	202.3	0.1	1.3	-1.2

Education

- Education Services and Schools overspent by £0.2m against a budget of £54.9m. Within this total, the overspend of £0.4m for Education & Learning was offset by an underspend on Schools of £0.2m.

Children's Social Care & Central costs

- Children's Social Care and Central Costs underspent by £0.1m against a budget of £147.2m. Children's Social Care underspent by £2.8m, which was offset by an overspend of £2.7m for Children's Services Central Costs.
- Activity for Children's Social Care, related to Children We Care For is shown below:

	Q2 2022/23	Q4 2022/23	Q2 2023/24	Q4 2023/24	Q2 2024/25	Q3 2024/25	Q4 2024/25
Oxfordshire born children	778	735	677	624	643	650	655
Disabled children	61	58	51	49	43	45	48
Sub Total	839	793	728	673	686	695	703
Unaccompanied	69	108	94	95	99	100	90
Total	908	901	822	768	785	795	789

- The service is continuing to manage demand. The number of cared for children for during 2024/25, excluding Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, continued to broadly stabilise at around 700. This is in line with the numbers forecast for the budget in 2024/25.
- As at 31 May 2025 the service was forecasting a breakeven position in 2025/26 against a budget of £210.9m.

Reserves

	Balance at 31 March 2024	Movement	Balance at 31 March 2025
Schools reserves	-£13.1m	£2.4m	-£10.7m
Held within Grants & Contributions reserve:	-£3.2m	-£1.0m	-£4.2m
Held within Government Initiatives reserve:	-£1.3m	-£2.7m	-£4.0m
Held within Partnership reserve:	-£0.2m	-£0.1m	-£0.3m
Held within Trading Accounts reserve:	-£0.0m	-£0.1m	-£0.1m
Held within Capital & Equipment Reserves:	-£0.2m	£0.1m	-£0.0m
Held within Budget Priorities reserve:	-£0.1m	-£1.0m	-£1.1m
Overall Service area earmarked reserves	-£18.2m	-£2.3m	-£20.5m

7. Total service earmarked reserves were £20.5m as at 31 March 2025 and increased by £2.3m during the financial year. £10.7m of the total relates to maintained school balances which decreased by £2.4m in the year. The movement in 2024/25 related to
- -£1.4m – Schools balances that started as a surplus at the beginning of the year but deteriorated to deficits. Resolution actions are being implemented.
 - -£1.2m – School that have converted to academies and their balances transferred out of the council's reserves.
 - Offset by +£0.2m other schools contributing movements.
8. Grants and Contributions reserve and Government Initiatives mainly relate to ringfenced grants and that are expected to be spent in future years.
- £4.2m Children's Services grants relating to £1.2m unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and £1.2m supported accommodation reform grant, and £1.8m other grants.
 - £4.0m support the provision of accommodation-based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children and the graduate trainee programme in future years and other social care and education grants

Ring – fenced Government Grants

9. Ring - fenced government grants received by Children's Services in 2024/25 totalled £339.9m. £301.6m of this was Dedicated Schools Grant and £36.0m was other school grants including the Pupil Premium (£8.1m) and £3.9m for Universal Infant Free School Meals. Other grants included £6.8m for Asylum (UASC and Post 18).

Savings

10. The 2024/25 budget for Children's Services included planned savings of £12.3m, offset by a risk adjustment of £4.1m, to give net budgeted savings of £8.2m. Actual delivery of savings achieved in year was £7.1m. The resulting net unachieved savings total was £1.1m.

Investments

11. The 2024/25 budget included investments of £6.4m in Children's Services. Actual spend was £1.7m with £0.5m carried forward to be applied to investment delivery planned in future years. The total planned underspend against investments was £4.1m, due to prudent budget management of the overall budget, savings delivery risk and the demand-led challenges within placement budgets.
12. Underspends against investments offset the balance of unachieved 2024/25 savings, as well as prior-year unachieved savings which were permanently addressed as part of the 2025/26 budget.
13. A summary of the delivery of investments in 2024/25 is provided below:

Service Areas	2024/25 Planned Investments	Delivery in 2024/25	Transfer to 2025/26	Unspent	
Additional capacity in the SEND service	£1.5m	£1.1m		£0.4m	
Extend the Family Safeguarding model to reduce demand	£0.9m	£0.1m		£0.8m	*
Recruitment & Retention Strategy	£1.0m	£0.2m		£0.8m	
Home to School Transport to improve data and systems and increase independent travel	£0.8m	£0.0m		£0.8m	*
Digital innovation to assist customer pathways and user experience in information finding and advice	£0.5m	£0.1m		£0.4m	*
Develop the Oxfordshire Way approach	£0.4m	£0.0m		£0.4m	
Other investments (Family services, Foster Care and technological improvement)	£1.3m	£0.9m	£0.5m	£0.4m	
TOTAL	£6.4m	£1.8m	£0.5m	£4.1m	

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

14. Variations against the Dedicated Schools Grant blocks in 2025/25 are summarised in the table below.

Summary of DSG funding	2024/25 Final Budget £m	2024/25 Outturn £m	Variance at P12 £m	Variance at P10 £m
Schools block	126.8	126.8	0.0	0.0
Central Services Schools block	5.2	5.3	0.1	0.0
High Needs block	89.5	125.9	36.5	31.9
Early Years block	80.2	78.2	-2.0	0.0
Total	301.6	336.2	34.6	31.9

High Needs DSG

15. There was an in-year deficit of £36.5m for High Needs DSG in 2024/25. This was £15.3m larger than the £21.2m deficit agreed as part of the budget for 2024/25.
16. Some of the key issues impacting on High Needs DSG spend in 2024/25 were the cost of placements from September 2024, tribunal challenges to placement decisions, and the impact of inflation on providers' fees.
17. Due to growth in the number of Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) from 4,000 in 2021/22 to over 8,000 in 2025/26, and their cost, in comparison to the funding allocated by Government, the forecast deficit continues to grow, despite local actions within the Deficit Management Plan agreed with the Department for Education. Continued increases in demand and inflationary pressures are proving to be considerably more significant than reductions in expenditure that can be achieved through efficiencies and demand management.
18. Some of the mitigations in the Deficit Management Plan are:
 - New Special Schools scheduled 2023/24 to 2029/30
 - New Special Educational Needs (SEN) Units/ Resource Bases
 - Transfer of Resource Bases to Schools – to be piloted from 2025/26
 - Implementation of a Banding System from 1 April 2026
 - Savings through contract renegotiation
 - Review of internal services
 - Reduction in the use of Agency workers
 - General Housekeeping and the creation of efficiencies
19. Following the 2024/25 outturn position and further assessments, the High Needs Budget for 2025/26 has been revised to a forecast in-year deficit of £44.8m driven by continuing demand outstripping grant funding increases.

Unusable Reserve (holding the deficits for High Needs DSG)

20. The CIPFA code of practice requires negative High Needs DSG balances to be held in an unusable reserve. The existing statutory override was due to end on 31 March 2026 but the Government has now extended this until 31 March 2028.
21. The 2024/25 deficit increased the cumulative negative High Needs DSG balance held in this reserve from £55.8m as at 31 March 2024 to £92.3m at 31 March 2025.
22. While the council is continuing to take action to manage the cumulative deficit through the Deficit Management Plan, it is continuing to grow in line with demand and is expected to exceed £130m by 31 March 2026.
23. Based on analysis the draft Statement of Accounts for 2024/25 other county councils are experiencing similar issues with a similar upward trajectory to Oxfordshire.

24. Schedule 2 to the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023, requires a deficit on the Dedicated School's Grant to be carried forward to be funded from future DSG income unless permission is sought and received from the Secretary of State for Education to fund the deficit from general council resources.

25. Further information on how cumulative and on-going deficits will be managed in future is expected later in the year along with a White Paper on SEND reform and also the Provisional Local Government Settlement expected in November 2025 and will need to be considered as part of the 2026/26 budget process.

Schools' Reserves

26. Maintained schools' balances were £13.1m at 1 April 2024 and decreased to £10.7m at 31 March 2025. This was made up of surpluses of £15.9m (for 111 schools) and deficits of £2.8m (for 22 schools).

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Annex 2 Performance

Business Management & Monitoring Report March 2025 – Focus on children, Education and Families (CEF)

This Annex sets out the end of year 2024/25 performance for corporate performance measures linked to children, education and families (CEF). 10 performance measures were included in the BMMR linked to directly to outcomes for children, education and families. Of these measures three sit under Priority 3: **Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents** and 7 sit under Priority 7 **Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential**. As at the end of the reporting year 2024/25 the performance measures reported the following performance

- 3 measures rated as Green (meeting or exceeding target).
- 1 measure rated as Amber (narrowly missing target for 2+ months)
- 1 measure rated as Red (significantly off target)
- 5 measures rated as Monitoring only (Monitoring only with no target)

KPI Name	Target	Actual	RAG rating	End of year target	End of year actual	End of year RAG rating	Commentary
OCC03.06 Percentage of births that have received a face to face New Birth Visit	95	95	Green	95	95	Green	Reporting Period: Q3-24 This indicator is performing well and is on target. In this quarter the Health visitors saw 1,752 families in person during a face to face visit which typically takes place in the home.
OCC03.07 Reduce the levels of children overweight and obese in year 6 (NCMP data)	29.7	32	Amber	29.7	32	Amber	Reporting Period: 2023-24 In Oxfordshire, latest data (23/24) shows for year 6 there has been a very slight (not statistically significant) increase in excess weight over the last year though trend is fairly level. For this age group excess weight fell from 34% to (21/22) to 31% (22/23) then to 32% 24/25. Oxfordshire performs well against the England average generally, but there are some areas in

							Oxfordshire where children have experienced excess weight over a long period. A new all age healthy weight service launched in September with a focus on addressing inequalities associated with weight. For children, there is the option of both group sessions within the community and remote Programmes to support them and their family to create healthy habits. Work to support more healthy environments continues.
OCC03.13 Numbers in substance misuse treatment: Children and young people during the financial year	149	79	Red	149	79	Red	New provider started April 2023, with new approach which focuses more on earlier intervention that is not recorded in this figure. Additionally, overall fewer children and young people are being seen by the provider, because pathways into the new service are still developing. Improvement Plan Partners are working together to make sure that children and young people who need this service are referred. We have a comprehensive action plan that we are monitoring regularly. Timeframe Numbers are already increasing. We will continually review the appropriateness of the current target in light of

							the different service approach. Finance Impact Children and young person's substance misuse service are covered within the contract for Oxfordshire.
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Annex 2 Performance

Business Management & Monitoring Report March 2025 – Focus on children, Education and Families (CEF)

							Risk Impact Risk that children and young people who need the service are not being supported.
OCC07.02 No of children we care for who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children	0	80	N/A	0	80	N/A	Since the decline in figures in January, a result of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) turning 18 the number of UASC has remained a steady figure since February. We remain under 0.1% of our under 18 population.
OCC07.03 % of children we care for placed out of county and more than 20 miles away from home	0	38	N/A	0	38	N/A	Children are being placed out of area due to a lack of suitable provision closer to home. The issue of out of area placements is most pronounced for residential placements and our new internal residential placement provisions continue to develop. We will always take steps to place children with relatives or their extended network, which could be further than 20 miles away from home, where appropriate, and in accordance with their individual care plan.
OCC07.04 Number of Children and Young People accessing the Music Service	8500	8833	Green	8500	8833	Green	
OCC07.05 The number of children subject of a child protection plan	618	528	Green	618	528	Green	
OCC07.06 Number of Oxfordshire	N/A	704	N/A	N/A	704	N/A	Since February (698) there has been a reduction of 6 children that we care for.

Annex 2 Performance

Business Management & Monitoring Report March 2025 – Focus on children, Education and Families (CEF)

children we care for							This is a reflection of children being permanently adopted.
OCC07.07 % of Education Health & Care Plans completed within 20 weeks	N/A	28	N/A	N/A	28	N/A	
OCC07.08 The number of Education Health Care Plans maintained by the local authority	N/A	7544	N/A	N/A	7544	N/A	There are 900 (13.5%) more EHCPs maintained by Oxfordshire in March 2025 than there were during the same month in the previous year.

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Strategic Risk Management Overview

1. A strategic risk is a risk to the council's strategic priorities or long-term outcomes; or a risk with a significance that has an impact at the corporate level.
2. Strategic risks are being developed with the services for Devolution and Local Government Reform and Section 106 Agreements.
3. The table below provides an overview of the current strategic risk position. Strategic risks are reviewed monthly as part of the business management and monitoring process. Risks can be added and escalated at any time during the year.
4. All nine strategic risks remained static in their residual risk scores from February 2025 to March 2025.







Status Indicator	Status Description
	Residual risk rating is high (Score 16 and above)
	Residual risk rating is medium (Score 10 - 15)
	Residual risk rating is low (Score 1 – 9)
	Residual risk rating has decreased
	Residual risk rating has maintained
	Residual risk rating has increased

Table 17: Strategic Risk Key for March 2025

Risk name	Risk Description	Inherent Score	Previous Residual Risk Score
01. Financial resilience	The council is not financially sustainable in the immediate/medium term.	25	12
02. Cyber security	A successful and significant Cyber-attack leading to disruption, damage or compromise of any of the council's computer services, information systems, infrastructure or data.	25	15
03. HIF1 & HIF2	HIF1 and HIF2 become undeliverable and/or potential financial risk to the council.	16	12
04. Managing Demand across Adults' and Children's Services	Fluctuating demand of community across Oxfordshire can result in varying requirements in resource.	15	8
05. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	Local area SEND partnership inspection outcomes found widespread systemic failure. Delay for children having their SEND needs met. Reputational damage (locally, regionally, and nationally).	20	8
06. Oxford Core Schemes	Failure to deliver Oxford Core Schemes (Traffic Filters, Workplace Parking Levy, Zero Emissions Zone and associated city area schemes such as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods) with public support.	20	16
07. Strategic Workforce Planning	A risk that the county council's workforce does not have capacity, capability or resilience to deliver key functions, statutory services or transformational changes required to ensure the council's objectives and long-term priorities are met. Further, that the diversity of the workforce satisfies statutory requirements.	16	12
09. Delivering the Future Together	Failure to deliver organisation wide transformation.	25	8
10. Climate Impact	Increasing vulnerability to climate impacts leads to failure of key infrastructure and services with a direct impact on health, safety, environment, and businesses.	25	20

Table 18: Strategic Risk Overview for March 2025

Work Programme

Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Topic	Relevant strategic priorities	Purpose	Type	Lead Presenters
12 September 2025				
Strategic Plan	Play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy, to tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire.	To ensure that the council's long-term priorities are transparent, evidence-based, and aligned with public needs and accountability.	Overview	Cllr Leffman; Lorna Baxter; Susannah Wintersgill
Business Management Monitoring Report, with a focus on Children, Education and Families	All, but particularly - Support carers and the social care system, and Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To review performance, assess progress against strategic priorities, and hold decision-makers accountable for effective service delivery and resource use. The review will take a focused look at Children, Education and Families.	Scrutiny	Cllr Gaul; Cllr Levy; Lorna Baxter; Lisa Lyons
Parking Permits	Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit	Verbal Update to feed in on public feedback regarding the user-friendliness of the Council's parking permit system.	Scrutiny	Cllr Gant; Paul Fermer
05 December 2025				
TBC				



16 January 2026

Budget Proposals	Underpins all	To consider the robustness and suitability of the Council's draft budget.	Overview	All Cabinet members and directors
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17 April 2026

Business Management Monitoring Report, with a focus on Resources and Law and Governance, and Economy and Place	All	To review performance, assess progress against strategic priorities, and hold decision-makers accountable for effective service delivery and resource use. The review will take a focused look at Resources and Law and Governance, and Economy and Place	Scrutiny	Cllr Leffman; Cllr Fawcett; Cllr Levy; Cllr Higgins; Lorna Baxter; Robin Rogers
Local Enterprise Partnership Integration Update	Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit, to tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire	To review the progress and accomplishments of the Local Enterprise Partnership having been integrated into the wider Council	Scrutiny	Cllr Leffman; Cllr Higgins; Robin Rogers; Nigel Tipple
Commercial Strategy Progress Update	Underpins all	To review the progress of the Council's Commercial Strategy	Scrutiny	Cllr Higgins; Cllr Levy; Lorna Baxter; Ian Dyson

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

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

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