

Oxfordshire County Council

Labour and Co-operative Group Proposed Budget Amendments 2025/26

Overarching Equality Impact Assessment

Context and Purpose

Oxfordshire County Council's vision is to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. This includes working to ensure that our policies and services support equality and inclusion.

This assessment sets out the equalities impact of the Labour and Co-operative Group's proposed budget amendments for 2025-26.

We can look to legislation to support our understanding of the council's equalities impacts. The Equality Act (2010) states that all public bodies need to take extra steps to stop discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations: this is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Act defines discrimination as the less favourable treatment of a person because of a protected characteristic, as compared to others who do not share that characteristic. The legislation also applies where there is a belief that the person who is disadvantaged has a particular protected characteristic, even if it is not the case.

These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership

Including Everyone – an inclusive Oxfordshire

The council has set out its approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion, including how we meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, in the [Including Everyone framework](#), which was refreshed in October 2024.

Including Everyone sets out how the council goes further than the protected characteristics in the Equality Act by also considering the impact our decisions might have on:

- People living with social deprivation
- Rural communities
- Those leaving care
- Carers
- Those in our armed forces community

This Overarching Equality Impact Assessment shows how budget amendments might impact the nine protected characteristics and the five additional areas above, and what we are doing to reduce or remove any potential negative impacts.

Equality Impact Assessments

All council decisions are reviewed for equality impact at the appropriate level of detailed analysis, depending on the potential service impact of the proposed change. This allows for the review of the potential impacts of new and updated policies and service delivery decisions on those with protected and/or additional characteristics. Where there is potential for material service impact, a formal Equality Impact Assessment is completed.

This Overarching Equality Impact Assessment is made in support of the council's overall budget for 2025/26. It provides summary information on the equalities impacts which the Labour and Co-operative Group's proposed budget amendments might have if they are approved and implemented. It also gives an indication of how we might mitigate any potential negative impacts.

Assessing equality impacts does not guarantee that a change will never have a negative impact. Rather it is intended to ensure that our policies are designed and implemented to meet the diverse needs of individuals, groups and communities in Oxfordshire. Equality Impact Assessments also help to ensure that the outcomes of a proposal are carefully considered, with the potential benefits maximised and possible challenges mitigated, within the overall funding available.

Overarching Equality Impact Assessment – approach

The following pages show how we have approached the assessment of impacts on equalities and diversity, setting out at a summary level what impacts our budget proposals might have on the protected characteristics listed above.

If potential impacts are assessed as significant, individual Equalities Impact Assessments are completed to aid understanding and outline mitigations.

Following the public consultation, impact assessments will be reviewed and updated as necessary to take into account consultation responses, and to further develop strategies to minimise material negative impacts on protected groups.

Capital Budget – Proposed Amendments

The Labour and Co-operative Group's proposed capital budget amendments are not expected to have significant negative impacts on equalities. Consequently, no detailed Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been published with the proposed budget amendments at this time.

Some impacts have been identified for capital proposals, which are outlined in the summaries below:

- Phase 2 East Oxford Mini-Holland Project
 - This proposal (2026L&CO13) entails funding for the development of Phase 2 of cycling schemes that give priority to cyclists and pedestrians priority over motorists whilst improving green spaces, i.e. emulating the active travel preferences in Holland. This has positive impacts on all characteristics.
- Expanding School Streets Programme
 - This proposal (2026L&CO12) entails the expansion of the School Streets programme to add five more schools. The School Streets programme is an active travel measure to encourage walking, wheeling, cycling and scooting to schools with the objective of creating a safer and healthier car-free environment outside schools. This has positive impacts on all characteristics.
- Witney High Street
 - This is an active travel measure to encourage walking, wheeling, cycling. The proposal is an extension of the Public Realm Improvements, which will support connectivity and promote healthier options to travel. This has positive impacts on all characteristics.
- Reduce capital investment in Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) to fund Greenways cross-country cycle routes
 - This proposal (2026L&CO20) entails reducing the administration's proposal for additional funding of LCWIPs (CORP113), which focuses on Oxfordshire's rural communities and market towns, to fund instead cycle routes to access Oxford (see point 3.2 in revenue proposals above). This proposal diverts the focus on enhancing connectivity and accessibility across Oxfordshire towards developing cycles routes for accessing Oxford. Whilst both proposals emphasise active travel, the amendment would divert the benefits to central Oxfordshire at the expense of rural communities.

- Complex Needs Accommodation for Adults of Working Age
 - The proposal seeks to invest in resources to provide accommodation to adults aged 18-65 with additional complex needs, where arrangements may require services outside of Oxfordshire. The investment is linked to the development of specialist and complex needs accommodation within the county. This has positive impacts on those with disabilities. Additionally, the programme will enhance availability of dedicated accommodation and improve choice for those in rural areas and those in areas of deprivation.

Public Consultation

Public consultation on specific proposals is one of the tools which OCC can use to help understand and mitigate the potential impacts of proposed savings on equalities (the nine protected characteristics) or wider community areas (rural communities, areas of deprivation, carers, care leavers, armed forces community, social value).

Section 1: Summary details

Service Area	All Service Areas
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	This assessment sets out the overall impact that the budget proposals have on a range of equality and diversity characteristics, including the nine protected characteristics defined under the Equality Act 2010. The assessment also summarises any mitigations that have been planned or put in place to reduce or remove any potentially negative impacts.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	This impact assessment provides an overview of the 2025/26 Labour and Co-operative Party Group's proposed budget amendments and so comments on existing programmes as well as new proposals.
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>This assessment covers the Labour and Co-operative Party Group's proposed budget amendments. It is an opportunity to highlight key evidence and intelligence that the council has used to assess the impact of its budget proposals on the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>In line with our equalities, diversity and inclusion (EDI) framework, the council has also assessed the impact on those living in rural areas, those living with social deprivation, armed forces communities, carers and those leaving care, and social value.</p> <p>This assessment has not identified any bias, unfair advantage or disadvantage to any groups or individuals. Where potential negative impacts have been identified, mitigations have been put in place to reduce impact.</p> <p>A summary of the impacts of the budget proposals on climate change outcomes have been set out in a separate overarching Climate Impact Assessment.</p>
Completed By	Jamie Kavanagh
Authorised By	Susannah Wintersgill
Date of Assessment	February 2025

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p><u>Oxfordshire County Council's vision</u> is to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county.</p> <p>We want to make sure that everyone in Oxfordshire can take advantage of what the county has to offer. Our strategic plan explains our cross-cutting priorities and commitments to achieve our vision and sets out our areas of focus.</p> <p>In recent years Oxfordshire County Council has delivered significant savings both in response to reductions in government funding and to release funds to reinvest in meeting rising demand. This budget planning round has been affected by increased pressure as a result of estimated inflationary increase to the cost of social care, and government change to employers' national insurance, as well as contract inflation.</p> <p>The council also continues to experience demand-led pressures and the effects of the growing nationwide costs of supporting children and young people; the rising cost of social care and care placements for both children and adults; and a national shortage of social care workers leading to a reliance on agency staff and higher costs.</p> <p>The last Census confirms Oxfordshire has a growing and ageing population, which will continue to increase demand on services.</p>
<p>Proposals Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>This impact assessment covers proposed budget amendments across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Social Care • Children's Services • Environment & Highways • Property and Assets • Financial and Commercial Services • Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships <p>Details of proposals are set out in the main budget papers.</p>

<p>Evidence / Intelligence List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact</p>	<p>In considering the impact of budget proposals before they are formally agreed, the council undertakes a detailed process of democratic and community engagement. For equalities this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA 2023) of health and wellbeing needs, and the associated Equalities Briefing, to consider the impact of proposals as they are drawn up and in the development of this overarching assessment. The council's JSNA can be found here. • Census 2021 data analysis and insight, which is used to understand the demography of Oxfordshire and benchmarked statistics in relation to national and county level data, which can be found here. • Using data and intelligence gathered through developing our refreshed Including Everyone Framework on equalities, diversity and inclusion, which can be found here. • Services follow the council's approach to undertaking Equalities Impact Assessments (EIA). This can include considering at an early stage what impacts each proposal might have on the nine protected characteristics or on wider inequalities, and subsequently setting out greater detail, including any actions identified to mitigate negative impacts. If potential impacts are assessed as significant, individual Equalities Impact Assessments are completed and published to aid understanding and outline mitigations. • A democratic process including agreement of proposals by Cabinet, analysis and comment on those proposals by the Performance Scrutiny Committee, and adoption of a budget by Full Council. Each of these stages provides an opportunity to invite comment and engagement from the public and representatives of particular organisations or population groups.
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Section 3: Impact Assessment

<p>Assessing the evidence and impact on those with the protected and additional characteristics</p>	<p>The 2021 Census records that Oxfordshire has a population of 725,290. Demographic data below has been taken from the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2023 and through analysis of Census 2021 data.</p>
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The summaries below outline where a proposal has a positive or negative impact on those with protected and additional characteristics.

Age: The median age of Oxfordshire increased slightly from 38 years as of 2011 census to 39 years at 2021 census. In 2021 census, the median age was lowest in Oxford City (31 years) and highest in West Oxfordshire (44 years). At a small area level, wide areas of rural Oxfordshire had a median age above 47. Over the past 20 years (between 2001 and 2021), there was an increase in the population of Oxfordshire from 605,400 to 725,200, a growth of 119,800 (+20%). The younger age group, aged 0-15, increased by 10%. The older age group, aged 65 and over, increased by 48%. Rural districts have a much higher proportion of older people than Oxford City. In 2021, older people aged 65+ made up 20% of the estimated population of Oxfordshire's four rural districts, compared with 12% of the population of Oxford City. Oxford City had a much higher proportion of people in younger age groups (including students) and a higher number of people aged 20-24 than living in Oxfordshire's four rural districts.

- Education Commission Outcome Delivery (2026L&CO2): Positive impact by narrowing the educational gap for disadvantaged children, embedding best practice within a new legislative environment and providing support to partnership work.
- SEND early intervention support Early Years (2026L&CO3): Positive impact by extending SEND early-intervention support, which is funding for SEND early-intervention support in Early Years and primary school settings to respond to SEND needs and proactively support the transition into mainstream education. However, the proposal seeks to fund this proposal by reducing investment within the administration's budget (2026CS37), which is aimed at developing services to support under 5s to provide funding for 2026L&CO3, which will mean a reduction in the service available to those under 5 years old.
- Early prevention (2026L&CO4): Positive impact by supporting families at the earliest stage, strengthening safeguarding and tackling school absence.
- Free Breakfast Club (2026L&CO6): Positive impact by identifying barriers to a countywide roll-out of the government scheme of providing Free Breakfast Clubs for children.

- New Youth Futures (2026L&CO7): Positive impact by creating Youth Futures Hubs for additional support and opportunities for young people.

Disability: 14.5% of people in Oxfordshire consider themselves disabled as defined in the Equality Act 2010, compared to 17.5% of people nationally. Of those 14.5%, approximately 35% feel limited 'a lot' by their disability in day-to-day activities, with 65% limited 'a little'. Since 2011, the proportion of disabled people in Oxfordshire has increased by 0.7%. The most common types of disability for older people are mobility, breathing/stamina issues and hearing. The main type of disability experienced by working age adults relates to mental health, with children experiencing the most social/behavioural and learning disabilities. As of March 2021, there are 20,000 blue badge holders in Oxfordshire, 2.9% of Oxfordshire residents (source: Department for Transport), compared with 4.2% of England's population. In November 2022 there were 52,169 disability-related benefits claimed in Oxfordshire.

- SEND early intervention support Early Years (2026L&CO3): Positive impact by extending SEND early-intervention support, which is funding for SEND early-intervention support in Early Years and primary school settings to respond to SEND needs and proactively support the transition into mainstream education
- SENDIAS (2026L&CO5): Positive impact by investing in Special Educational Needs Information Advice and Support to support parents/carers accessing SEND services.
- Complex Needs Accommodation for Adults of Working Age (2026L&CO1): The investment is linked to the development of specialist and complex needs accommodation within the county. This has positive impacts on those with disabilities. Additionally, the programme will enhance availability of dedicated accommodation and improve choice for those in rural areas and in areas of deprivation.

Gender Reassignment: 0.6% of Oxfordshire residents over the age of 16 identify with a gender which differs from their sex registered at birth, compared with 0.5% of over 16s in England. Of this population, 16% identify as a trans woman, 17% as a trans man and, 17% identified as non-binary and 49% as other gender identities. Oxford City has the largest trans and non-binary population outside of London.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific issues relating to gender reassignment have been identified as a result of these proposed budget amendments. <p>Pregnancy and maternity: There were 7,380 live births in Oxfordshire in 2021. The general fertility rate (GFR) for Oxfordshire (51.2) is lower than in England (54.3), and the birth rate among mothers aged 30-39 is higher than the England average. The biggest increases in birth rates from 2020-2021 are in South Oxfordshire (11% increase) and Cherwell (9%), with a 2% decrease in live births in Oxford. 4.2% of Oxfordshire maternities took place at home, higher than the UK average of 2.4%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early prevention (2026L&CO4): Positive impact by supporting families at the earliest stage, strengthening safeguarding and tackling school absence; specifically this scheme supports pregnant women and expecting families. <p>Marriage and civil partnership: At the time of the 2021 Census there were 132,060 households of married couples or couples in a civil partnership (47% of the Oxfordshire population, 3% higher than national average). 0.8% of Oxfordshire married couples or those in a civil partnership are same-sex couples.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific issues relating to marriage and civil partnership have been identified as a result of these proposals. <p>Race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality: JSNA records that the largest ethnic group in Oxfordshire is White “English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British” at 83.63% of the population. Aside from that group the largest ethnic groups in Oxfordshire are “Other White” (6.16%), “Indian” (1.25%), “Pakistani” (1.20%) and “African” (1.08%). Oxford City is proportionately more ethnically diverse than England and Wales, whereas all other Oxfordshire districts are less ethnically diverse than England and Wales. West Oxfordshire is the least ethnically diverse Oxfordshire district.</p> <p>56% of school pupils in Oxford are of an ethnic minority, double the rate of Oxfordshire as a whole, and 33% have a first language which is not English. 18.7% of Oxfordshire residents were born outside of the UK, of which those born in Poland are the largest group, followed by India and Romania. As of 2021 there</p>
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were 652 'White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller' residents and 1,229 'White: Roma' residents in Oxfordshire. The majority of Roma residents reside in Oxford and Cherwell, with the highest proportion of Gypsy and Irish Traveller population residing in West Oxfordshire. Nearly a quarter of Oxfordshire residents are of an ethnic group other than White British (and almost half the population in Oxford). Oxfordshire has a higher proportion of residents that are of a mixed-race or of multiple ethnicities than the England and Wales average (3.1% compared to 2.9%).

- Education Commission Outcome Delivery (2026L&CO2): Positive impact by narrowing the educational gap for disadvantaged children, embedding best practice within a new legislative environment and providing support to partnership work. This scheme looks at addressing educational disparities among different ethnic groups.

Religion or Belief: JSNA data on religion and belief is based on the 2021 Census where this question was voluntary. 65% of Oxfordshire residents chose to disclose a religion. Of those stating a religion, 47% of Oxfordshire residents are Christian, 3% (23,500) are Muslim, 1% (6,332) are Hindu, 1% (3,257) are Buddhist, 1% (2,716) Other Religion, and less than 1% of residents are Jewish (1,893) or Sikh (1,192).

- No specific issues relating to religion or belief have been identified as a result of these proposals.

Sex: As of mid-2020 there were 347,569 (49.9%) males and 349,311 (50.1%) females living in Oxfordshire. Females in Oxfordshire have a higher life expectancy (84.9) than males (81.5).

- No specific issues relating to sex have been identified as a result of these proposals.

Sexual Orientation: The 2021 Census shows that 3.4% of Oxfordshire residents (21,428) describe their sexual orientation as something other than Straight or Heterosexual. Of this group, 47% are bisexual, 41% are gay or lesbian, 7% are pansexual, 2.5% are asexual, 1.3% are queer and 0.7% other sexual orientation.

- No specific issues relating to sexual orientation have been identified as a result of these proposals.

Rural Communities: Oxfordshire is a rural county, with 2.8 people per hectare, and is the most rural county in the South East. Rural areas have a higher proportion of elderly (aged 85+) residents than urban areas: higher rates of over 65s live in one of four rural districts (20%) compared to 12% in Oxford City. 40% of Oxfordshire residents live in small towns and villages. 85 out of 407 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Oxfordshire are ranked within the most deprived 10% nationally on the geographical access to services (defined as road distance to a post office, primary school, GP and supermarket).

- Education Commission Outcome Delivery (2026L&CO2): Positive impact by narrowing the educational gap for disadvantaged children, embedding best practice within a new legislative environment and providing support to partnership work. This also includes delivery to rural and disadvantaged communities.
- Free Breakfast Club (2026L&CO6): Positive impact by identifying barriers to countywide roll-out of government scheme of providing Free Breakfast Clubs for children. The strategy delivery will identify barriers within rural and deprived communities.
- New Youth Futures (2026L&CO7): Positive impact by creating Youth Futures Hubs for additional support and opportunities for young people. This will include Youth Future Hubs in rural and deprived areas.
- Complex Needs Accommodation for Adults of Working Age (2026L&CO1): The investment is linked to the development of specialist and complex needs accommodation within the county. This has positive impacts on those with disabilities. Additionally, the programme will enhance availability of dedicated accommodation and improve choice for those in rural areas and in areas of deprivation.
- Greenways Cross-Country Cycle Routes (2026L&CO10): An investment for the development of a full business case for cycle routes connecting rural villages and market towns to/from Oxford. The amendment is proposing to fund the capital component of this scheme by defunding active travel schemes that increase connectivity between Oxfordshire's rural and market towns (2026L&CO20). Whilst both proposals have positive impacts on all protected characteristics, defunding the LCWIP limits the geographical scope of active travel schemes to the central Oxfordshire area at the expense of market towns and rural areas.

Armed Forces: In April 2022 there were 9,350 regular armed forces personnel stationed in Oxfordshire and there are a number military bases in Oxfordshire including Vauxhall Barracks, Dalton Barracks, RAF Brize Norton, RAF Benson and Bicester Garrison. There are 23,541 armed forces veterans in Oxfordshire and as of March 2022 there were 6,718 recipients of pensions/compensation under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme, War Pension Scheme and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme in the county. There are an estimated 3,500 military families in the county, of which there are 3,043 school-aged children.

- No specific issues relating to the armed forces have been identified as a result of these proposals.

Care leavers: As of March 2021, Oxfordshire has 129 care leavers aged 17-18 and 301 care leavers aged 19-21. Care leavers face many challenges as they move into adulthood, such as those relating to careers, education and training, accommodation, finances and personal change. Our Care Leavers Local Offer explains the services which can be accessed by those who have been in OCC's care.

- No specific issues relating to care leavers have been identified as a result of these proposals.

Areas of Social Deprivation: Oxfordshire is one of the 10 least deprived counties in England, However, four of Oxfordshire's wards are in the most 10% deprived nationally. Oxfordshire's ten most deprived areas have higher rates of children (under 16s) in poverty than across England (24.6%), while increasing numbers of households experience fuel poverty, with more households in Oxford experiencing fuel poverty than the rest of Oxfordshire. Nearly 20,000 children and 12,000 older people in Oxfordshire live in poverty.

- Education Commission Outcome Delivery (2026L&CO2): Positive impact by narrowing the educational gap for disadvantaged children, embedding best practice within a new legislative environment and providing support to partnership work. This also includes delivery to rural and disadvantaged communities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Youth Futures (2026L&CO7): Positive impact by creating Youth Futures Hubs for additional support and opportunities for young people. This will include Youth Future Hubs in rural and deprived areas. • Free Breakfast Club (2026L&CO6): Positive impact by identifying barriers to countywide roll-out of government scheme of providing Free Breakfast Clubs for children. The strategy delivery will identify barriers within rural and deprived communities. • Complex Needs Accommodation for Adults of Working Age (2026L&CO1): The investment is linked to the development of specialist and complex needs accommodation within the county. This has positive impacts on those with disabilities. Additionally, the programme will enhance availability of dedicated accommodation and improve choice for those in rural areas and in areas of deprivation.
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