

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: Consultation on Proposed Changes to Adult Social Care Contributions Policy

Lead Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Rebekah Fletcher, Cabinet Member for Adults

Date response requested:² 28th July 2026

Response to report:

Thank you to Scrutiny for the recommendations and accompanying report to Cabinet. Officers valued the opportunity to discuss the proposals with Committee members. Cabinet has accepted the recommendations and has set out below how the proposals align with the Oxfordshire Way, how implementation will remain proportionate and efficient, and what safeguards will be in place for people who may be more affected by the proposed changes.

Regarding recommendation b) in the People's Scrutiny report to Cabinet – While we recognise the importance of informing Scrutiny on progress, the suggestion for officers to provide monthly written updates to Scrutiny will be resource-intensive and divert officer capacity away from the effective implementation and management of the charging policy change. We therefore suggest that officers instead provide an update to Scrutiny at least six months after the policy has been implemented. This is in line with previous practice and will ensure that there is sufficient time to draw meaningful insights from the data.

Please note this response was written prior to the completion of the consultation report. The full consultation report will be published with the cabinet papers. Our approach will be further informed by the findings of the consultation report.

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

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Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Recommendation 1 – That Cabinet demonstrates how the proposed policy changes are in line with the Oxfordshire Way.

The proposed changes to the Adult Social Care Contributions Policy are consistent with the Oxfordshire Way because they support a fair, sustainable and person-centred approach to adult social care. The Oxfordshire Way focuses on promoting independence, helping people to remain well within their communities, and ensuring that support is tailored to individual circumstances. The proposed changes maintain this principle by continuing to assess people on the basis of their individual needs and financial circumstances, while retaining safeguards for those with higher levels of need and ensuring compliance with Care Act requirements. They also support the Oxfordshire Way by making best use of public resources so that support can continue to be targeted towards people with eligible care and support needs.

In relation to telecare, the available data and operational feedback suggest that while the service provides reassurance for many residents and carers, the current model is not sufficiently evidenced as a universal preventative service. Activity data includes a high volume of false alarms and low-level activity and does not demonstrate consistent impact on hospital admission avoidance, reduced care demand or falls prevention. The proposal is therefore intended to support a more targeted and sustainable approach, while individual assessment and hardship safeguards will help protect people for whom telecare is necessary to meet eligible needs, manage significant risk or support safe discharge. It will also enable further exploration of newer technologies that may better support people to live independently.

That said, the Oxfordshire Way also emphasises the importance of making best use of public resources so that support remains available for those who need it most, both now and in the future. The proposed policy changes form part of a wider approach to ensuring the long-term sustainability of Adult Social Care services in Oxfordshire, enabling continued investment in preventative, community-based support that helps people maintain their independence and avoid or delay the need for more intensive services. By balancing fairness, personalisation, value for money and financial sustainability, the proposals support the Oxfordshire Way ambition of delivering high-quality, person-centred support while stewarding public resources responsibly.

Recommendation 2 - That Cabinet demonstrates how the proposed changes would not result in a disproportionate increase in administrative costs or complexity for either the Council or service users and represent an efficient and proportionate use of resources.

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

We recognise the importance of ensuring that any changes to the Adult Social Care Contributions Policy remain proportionate, administratively efficient and accessible to residents. The proposed changes have been developed with these principles in mind. While the revised approach may result in some additional consideration of individual circumstances, it also enables contributions to be assessed more accurately and fairly, ensuring that financial assessments better reflect actual expenditure and need. This supports a more equitable application of the policy while remaining consistent with statutory guidance and avoiding unnecessary complexity.

The proposals build on existing financial assessment processes rather than introducing a wholly new system. Most assessments will be carried out through online financial assessments, so no further ongoing resources are expected to be required. Any additional activity is expected to be a short-term transition piece during implementation; once the changes are embedded, financial assessments and any follow-up activity will be managed as business as usual as people come through the process. The Council will provide clear information and support to residents who may find the process difficult, including people with more complex circumstances, so that the approach remains accessible as well as efficient. The Council will monitor implementation to ensure that any additional administrative requirements remain proportionate. The anticipated financial benefits of the policy changes contribute to the long-term sustainability of Adult Social Care services and help ensure that limited public resources can continue to be directed towards supporting residents with eligible care and support needs. The Council will keep the operational impact of the changes under review and will report on implementation and outcomes through existing governance and scrutiny arrangements.

Recommendation 3 - That Cabinet considers the potential disproportionate impact of the proposed telecare and transport charges on more vulnerable groups, and sets out the mitigations or safeguards available, considering the risk of additional administrative burden.

We recognise that telecare and transport services play a role in supporting independence, wellbeing, safety and access to community-based support, particularly for older people, disabled people and others with care and support needs. We have therefore carefully considered the potential impact of the proposed charges on vulnerable groups, including the risk that some people may reduce or stop using services because of affordability concerns. The proposals have been developed within the framework of the existing equality impact assessment, which identifies potential impacts and sets out mitigations to ensure that individuals are not unfairly disadvantaged.

A range of safeguards will remain in place should the proposals be approved. All affected individuals will continue to be subject to a means-tested financial assessment, ensuring that contributions are based on a person's ability to pay and that everyone

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

retains at least the minimum income guaranteed under the Care Act. Individual Disability Related Expenditure assessments will continue to be available where people incur additional disability-related costs, and hardship provisions, discretionary adjustments and review mechanisms will remain available where appropriate. These safeguards are particularly relevant to people affected by telecare or transport charges, as they provide routes to consider individual circumstances, essential expenditure and affordability. The Council will also provide clear information and support to help people understand the changes, complete assessments and access review or hardship routes where needed. Our data shows that around 1966 people only receive an alert service from the council and currently do not pay towards this service provision and around 732 have an assessed contribution for other services. Around 33 people will be affected by all the proposed changes. There are safeguards in place to ensure that all those affected will be provided with the relevant information and mitigate any risks.

Category	Number of People
Alert Service Only	1,966
Alert Service & DRE	732
Transport Only	429
Transport & DRE	240
All clients DRE	3,522
DRE, Transport and Alert Service	33

Cabinet further notes the concern that some individuals may reduce their use of telecare or transport services as a result of the proposed charges. To mitigate this risk, the Council will monitor service uptake, outcomes, feedback, hardship requests and any emerging equality impacts following implementation. This approach enables the Council to balance the need for a fair and sustainable charging framework with its commitment to supporting independence, prevention and wellbeing, while avoiding the introduction of complex new administrative arrangements that could create additional burdens for residents or the Council.

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
1. That Cabinet demonstrates how the proposed policy changes are in line with the Oxfordshire Way.	Accepted	The above response sets out how the proposals support independence, prevention, personalisation, fair access and the sustainable use of public resources. Implementation will continue through the policy approval and delivery process.
2. That Cabinet demonstrates how the proposed changes would not result in a disproportionate increase in administrative costs or complexity for either the Council or service users and represent an efficient and proportionate use of resources.	Accepted	Implementation will use existing financial assessment processes wherever possible. Any additional activity is expected to be a short-term transition requirement, with business-as-usual arrangements in place once the policy is embedded. Any emerging issues will be escalated through Directorate governance arrangements, with a fuller implementation update provided to Scrutiny after the policy has been embedded. An update to Scrutiny in March 2027 is recommended if the proposals are implemented from October 2026.
3. That Cabinet considers the potential disproportionate impact of the proposed telecare and transport charges on more vulnerable groups, and sets out mitigations or safeguards available, considering the risk of additional administrative burden.	Accepted	The Council will retain means-tested assessment, Disability Related Expenditure, hardship, discretionary adjustment and review routes. Uptake, outcomes, feedback, hardship requests

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		and equality impacts will be monitored following implementation, with issues escalated through existing governance arrangements where required.
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