

County Council

4 November 2025

Agenda

To: Members of the County COUNCIL

Notice of a Meeting of the County Council

Tuesday, 4 November 2025 at 11.00 am

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

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



Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

October 2025

Committee Officer: **Democratic Services**
E-mail: CommitteesDemocraticServices@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

10.30am in advance of the Council meeting

**Address by the Lord Lieutenant of
Oxfordshire, Mrs Marjorie Glasgow BEM**

The Lord Lieutenant will speak about her role as
representative on the King in Oxfordshire.

AGENDA

1. Minutes (Pages 1 - 14)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2025 (CC1) and to receive information arising from them.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Declarations of Interest - see guidance note

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

4. Official Communications

5. Petitions and Public Address

Members of the public who wish to speak on an item on the agenda at this meeting, or present a petition, can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection. Requests must be submitted no later than 9am three working days before the meeting i.e. 9am on Thursday 30 October 2025. Requests to speak should be sent to committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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

6. Questions with Notice from Members of the Public

The deadline to submit questions is 9am, five working days before the meeting i.e. 9am Tuesday 28 October 2025.

7. Questions with Notice from Members of the Council

8. Appointments (Pages 15 - 18)

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

Report by the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Council is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) **appoint a Member to the current vacant position on the Planning and Regulation Committee;**
- b) **delegate to all council committees the authority to appoint to its vacant committee seats in accordance with legislation.**

9. Report of the Cabinet (Pages 19 - 26)

Report by the Leader of the Council.

This report covers the Cabinet meetings on 10 September 2025, 16 September 2025 and 21 October 2025.

10. Strategic Plan 2025-2028 (Pages 27 - 82)

Report by the Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships

Following the county council elections in May 2025 and the formation of a new administration, a new strategic plan has been developed. The period of this plan will be November 2025 to 1 April 2028.

Council is RECOMMENDED to approve and adopt the Strategic Plan 2025-28.

11. Financial Regulations (Pages 83 - 96)

Report by the Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer

In April 2025 Council agreed a number of changes to the Constitution. As part of that the threshold for a Key Decision for capital expenditure was increased to £2.0m. Section 5 of the Financial Regulations which sets out the arrangements for Capital expenditure needs to be updated to align with the threshold for a Key Decision.

Council is RECOMMENDED to approve:

- a) **amendments to Section 5 of the Financial Regulations increasing the limit for Cabinet approval for new inclusions and variations to capital schemes from £1.0m to £2.0m to align with the key decision threshold of £2m.**
- b) **that in exceptional circumstances up to £0.500m funding for exploratory feasibility works can be approved by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer (following discussion and recommendation at, and with the support of the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board).**

12. Youth Justice Annual Plan 2025-26 (Pages 97 - 152)

Report by the Director of Children's Services

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the minimum statutory requirements for Youth Justice Services. The statutory aim of the Youth Justice system is to prevent children from offending. Section 39 of the Crime & Disorder Act requires the cooperation of named statutory partners and places a duty on them to cooperate to secure and deliver youth justice services appropriate to the area.

The Council is RECOMMENDED to adopt Oxfordshire's Annual Youth Justice Plan 2025-2026.

13. Use of Special Urgency (Pages 153 - 156)

Report by Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

The Constitution makes provision for the taking of an urgent decision. Part 8.1 Section 17.3 requires that "the Leader of the Council will submit quarterly reports to the Council on any executive decisions taken in the circumstances set out in Rule 16 (special urgency) in the preceding three months.

Council is RECOMMENDED to note the use of Special Urgency for a Key Decision taken on 1 September 2025 by the Leader of the Council.

14. Calendar of meetings 2026/27 (Pages 157 - 164)

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

The calendar of meetings for each civic year, from one Annual Council meeting to the next, is presented to Council for approval.

COUNCIL IS RECOMMENDED to approve the calendar of meetings for the 2026-27 Council year attached to the report as Annex 1.

MOTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

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

15. Motion from Councillor Liam Walker

This Council notes:

The strong opposition from some residents, businesses, and key workers to the Oxford Congestion Charge scheme and their ongoing concerns about its impact on the cost of living, local trade, and access to services across Oxford.

This Council believes:

The scheme is unfair, harmful to the local economy, and does not have public support and it's time to end the scheme.

This Council therefore resolves to:

Call on the Leader and Cabinet to immediately end the operation of the Oxford Congestion Charge scheme and ensure no further expansion or reintroduction of similar charging schemes without full public consultation and support.

Note: The motion, if passed, would constitute the exercise of an executive function in which case it will be referred to the Cabinet together with any advice the Council may wish to give, in accordance with Rule 13.5.1 (i) of the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution.

16. Motion from Councillor Gavin McLauchlan

Council notes that in July 2025 a judicial review upheld the Secretary of State for the Environment's decision to approve the proposed Thames Water Resources Management Plan which includes the South East Strategic Reservoir Option in Abingdon.

As a result, Thames Water has to have an Emergency Discharge facility in place including the ability to empty the reservoir at a rate of 1 metre per day, possibly over a period of 3 to 4 weeks. This would put water back into the Thames at a rate of 75 m³/s just south of Abingdon c.3x greater than its normal flow.

Such a discharge could cause havoc along the Thames, endangering Life, residences, businesses, wildlife and the environment, yet there is no requirement for the reservoir operator to have an emergency plan before building the reservoir, only before filling it. Dealing with the emergency in the wider area will be the responsibility of this Council as the local emergency planning authority along with the emergency services.

This Council makes clear its deep concern that we could be made responsible by default for safely managing such an emergency, leaving us with impossible decisions about which lives, homes and businesses to save in a crisis situation.

We therefore call on the Leader to write to the Secretary of State to request clarity on how such an emergency discharge would be managed and to provide a commitment that we will be provided with the resources to do so before any Development Consent Order is considered.

17. Motion from Councillor Nathan Ley

Pride in the appearance of the public realm is important to our residents. Clean and well-maintained pavements make people feel good about their neighbourhood, reduce accidents, and prevent more costly problems later. Neglect leads to uneven footways, hazards for those with mobility difficulties, and higher long-term repair bills.

Routine weed clearance on county pavements was part of highways maintenance until 2007/08, when budget cuts removed the programme. Some parishes now commission their own weed spraying and may be using glyphosate, increasingly opposed by residents because of its risks to health, pets, rivers, and biodiversity. Other parishes are now beginning to trial alternative approaches.

Council resolves to:

1. Note the historic withdrawal of routine weed clearance and the resulting concerns about accessibility, safety, and neighbourhood appearance.
2. Recognise the Council's statutory duty to keep pavements free of hazards, and that neglect increases both risks and costs.
3. Request an officer report with options for re-establishing pavement weed clearance and scheduled maintenance, including alternatives to glyphosate, and how the Council can support towns and parishes to reduce reliance on chemical spraying.
4. Request that the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation give due consideration to the findings of this report as part of the next round of budget setting.

Note: The motion, if passed, would constitute the exercise of an executive function in which case it will be referred to the Cabinet together with any advice the Council may wish to give, in accordance with Rule 13.5.1 (i) of the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution.

18. Motion from Councillor Liz Brighthouse

This Council, being deeply concerned by the impact of poor mental health on adults and children in the County, asks the Health and Wellbeing Board to request an appropriate overview and scrutiny committee to investigate and report back on how services provided by Oxford Health and other organisations are tackling this issue.

Such an investigation needs to address issues of accessibility to services including

- assessment,
- therapeutic support,
- medication,
- emergency interventions such as “sectioning” and
- inpatient beds.

How these inventions, or the lack of them, impact on other public services such as Community Safety, Public Health, Housing, Schools, Fire and Rescue and the Police also needs to be understood. Most of all, poor mental health impacts on individuals, families and communities around the County.

Council requests that the outcome of the investigation be sent to the appropriate Secretaries of State.

19. Motion from Councillor Maggie Filipova-Rivers

Motion to be seconded by Councillor Emma Markham

Council notes that:

- Oxfordshire residents have endured successive crises in recent years: Covid, the cost-of-living emergency, underfunding of public services by successive governments, leaving many residents in precarious situations, creating a climate of uncertainty and fear.
- Research shows that rising inequality fuels support for far-right movements, eroding trust in institutions and creating fertile ground for scapegoating and division.
- Against this backdrop, right-wing media and far-right groups have wrongly blamed migrant communities to further their agendas.
- Extensive research, including the Migration Observatory's 2024 study, finds that migration contributes positively to the UK economy by expanding the labour force, addressing skill shortages, and supporting productivity and growth, with little evidence of wage suppression for native workers. Migrants' net fiscal impact is generally positive, with greater contributions in taxes than cost to public services.
- Oxfordshire is proud to be the first County Council of Sanctuary, committed to ensuring that everyone who lives here, whether newly arrived or long settled, is treated fairly.

Council therefore resolves to:

- Recognise the risks to our communities if the disinformation, suspicion, and intolerance disinformation generates go unchallenged, and commit to addressing them wherever they occur.
- Work with partners to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone in our communities and that racism is confronted wherever it occurs, in schools, workplaces, and on our streets.
- Request that Cabinet supports the co-production of a community cohesion action plan with key stakeholders in consultation with councillors, including actions to support community-led dialogue and ensure appropriate resourcing is considered during budget setting.

Note: The motion, if passed, would constitute the exercise of an executive function in which case it will be referred to the Cabinet together with any advice the Council may wish to give, in accordance with Rule 13.5.1 (i) of the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution.

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

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

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

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

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

Declaring an interest

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

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

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

Members Code – Other registrable interests

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

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

Other registrable interests include:

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

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

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

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

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

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

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

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

Agenda Item 1

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 9 September 2025 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at 3.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Mark Lygo – in the Chair

Councillors:

Ted Fenton (Vice-Chair)	Emma Garnett	Gavin McLauchlan
Thomas Ashby	Sean Gaul	Lesley McLean
James Barlow	Stefan Gawrysiak	Ian Middleton
Ron Batstone	Andy Graham	Toyah Overton
Tim Bearder	Tom Greenaway	Glynis Phillips
Will Boucher-Giles	Kate Gregory	James Plumb
Liz Brighthouse OBE	Jane Hanna OBE	Susanna Pressel
Mark Cherry	Jenny Hannaby	Leigh Rawlins
Andrew Coles	David Henwood	Judy Roberts
Dr Izzy Creed	Georgina Heritage	James Robertshaw
Andrew Crichton	Ben Higgins	Paul-Austin Sargent
Hao Du	Johnny Hope-Smith	Geoff Saul
Judith Edwards	Robin Jones	John Shiri
Gareth Epps	Emily Kerr	Roz Smith
Lee Evans	Liz Leffman	Ian Snowdon
Neil Fawcett	Dan Levy	Peter Stevens
Nick Field-Johnson	Dr Nathan Ley	Bethia Thomas
Maggie Filipova-Rivers	Diana Lugova	Liam Walker
Rebekah Fletcher	Saj Malik	Tony Worgan
James Fry	Kieron Mallon	
Andrew Gant	Emma Markham	

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.

62/25 MINUTES

(Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2025 were approved.

63/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillors Baines, Brant, Cotter, Edosomwan and Hingley. Councillor Gordon was on parental leave.

64/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

65/25 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

(Agenda Item 4)

The Chair announced that the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Marjorie Glasgow, will address Council at its next meeting on 4 November 2025 to speak about the role of the Lord Lieutenant in representing the Royal Family in the county. Her address will start at 10.30 and the Council meeting itself will commence at 11.00 am. The meeting may continue until 4pm if business has not been completed by 3.30pm.

A list of events attended by the Chair, Vice-Chair and past chairs since the last Council meeting was attached in Annex 1 to the Schedule of Business.

The Chair thanked everyone who came to the charity quiz held on 27 August which raised £997 for his charities: OXSRAD, Oxford United in the Community and Abingdon RDA.

Council had been notified of the passing in August of former councillor Peter Brennan who represented the Kidlington North division as a Labour Party member between 1985 and 1989. He served on the Public Protection Committee and Kidlington Traffic Advisory Panel. Councillor Brighthouse paid tribute to the work of former councillor Brennan.

The Chair also acknowledged the passing of the Duchess of Kent. Her Royal Highness was a remarkable figure who dedicated her life to public service and the betterment of our community. Her unwavering commitment to charitable causes and her compassionate spirit have left an indelible mark on all those who knew her.

Council stood for a minute's silence.

66/25 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item 5)

The following change of committee membership was agreed:

On the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee Councillor Fletcher to replace Councillor Shiri.

67/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item 6)

The Chair accepted the following requests to present a petition or speak on an item on the agenda:

Petitions

Siobhan Lancaster:

“Make the crossing by Abingdon Road (Oxford) Tesco safe.”

Siobhan Lancaster presented the petition which had over 440 signatures. She outlined how the junction of Abingdon Road and Weirs Lane had no pedestrian crossing. With a Tesco shop adjacent to the junction, housing all around and a park, schools and bus stops in the vicinity, the junction had the effect of cutting people off from local amenities. She felt that private traffic was being prioritised over pedestrian safety.

Councillor Gant, Cabinet Member for Transport Management, thanked Ms Lancaster for the petition and for clearly stating her experiences of crossing the junction. He confirmed that officers were working on a project to provide a pedestrian crossing. This was part of a wider plan to use potential funds from the proposed Workplace Parking Levy to provide better facilities for active travel. He believed that it was necessary to reduce congestion to speed up bus times in order to provide opportunities to install better facilities for active travel.

The Chair accepted the following requests to speak on an item on the agenda:

Item 16 Motion from Councillor Hanna

Vicki Power

Barbara Shaw

Graham Shelton

Any speeches provided to the Council are published alongside these minutes.

68/25 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(Agenda Item 7)

Thirty eight questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions and responses are recorded in an Annex below.

69/25 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(Agenda Item 8)

Fifty two questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions and responses are recorded in an Annex below.

70/25 REPORT OF THE CABINET

(Agenda Item 9)

Council received the report of Cabinet covering its meeting for 15 July 2025.

On Item 1 Community Banking Hubs Motion

Councillor Fry asked that the British Banking Association and the Post Office be contacted to create badly needed joint community hubs. Councillor Fawcett responded that he concurred and would take the process forward and further responded that the system was too restrictive and a more flexible approach was needed to provide more help in more places.

Councillor Barlow asked that to make banking more accessible and to achieve climate change targets that residents be directed towards banks that prioritise climate performance. Councillor Fawcett responded that there was a limit to the role of the Council in this regard and that ultimately it was the decision of residents in terms of choice of banks. The councillor further responded that the proposal would nevertheless be given due consideration.

Councillor Middleton asked that a letter be written to Barclays to urge them to reconsider their decision to withdraw from the Exeter Hall banking hub, which also represented a disregard for customer needs. Councillor Fawcett responded that, if the contact details were provided, he will look into the matter, and that it was unfortunate that banks were not engaging with banking hubs.

Councillor Smith asked if an assurance can be given that urban areas like Headington and Quarry will also receive attention in terms of available banks and noted that the post office was also due to close. Councillor Fawcett provided reassurance that all communities where the services were disappearing would be given due attention.

On Item 3 EOTAS Policy (Education other than at School)

Councillor Filipova-Rivers asked that clarity be provided on the delivery of Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) policy and guidance. Councillor Gaul responded that a coproduced policy had been approved. He added that the EOTAS guidance was being reviewed by relevant groups, including carers and parents, and would be approved when ready.

On Item 4 Financial and land agreements relating to the conversion of Woodeaton Manor School to an academy

Councillor Hope-Smith enquired about steps to enhance the coproduction process, citing parental concerns about its effectiveness. Councillor Gaul responded that coproduction created a challenge due to its legislative and statutory nature and would welcome any Member that would be interested in the coproduction discussions currently being held.

On Item 5 Climate Action Programme update

Councillor Fry asked that the PM 2.5 (particulate matter up to 2.5 micro-metres) emissions be included in the future climate outcomes dashboard. Councillor Roberts said that the matter would be considered.

Councillor McLauchlan asked that in relation to the Climate Action programme, it would be useful to have regular updates on how the circular economy was being applied. Councillor Roberts agreed.

Councillor Lugova asked that an outline be provided of what will be included in the new Minerals and Waste Development Scheme (MWDS) to ensure that Oxfordshire was not only leading in this respect but can also achieve the goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2030. Councillor Roberts responded that Oxfordshire would become a member of the 100-Action Group across the UK and that Oxfordshire was already performing well.

Councillor Barlow asked if information could be sent showing if the recycling rates were increasing or decreasing as of the last council in July. Councillor Roberts responded that the recycling rates were complex, due to the fact that as people waste less, less was recycled.

Councillor Malik asked that, with most of the congestion occurring in Oxford Road and Church Cowley Road, cleaner air needs to be ensured in those areas. Councillor Roberts responded that a website was in place that allowed any individual to determine their carbon footprint and how they could improve it.

On Item 6 Update on Process of Producing the Minerals and Waste Local Plan

Councillor Fry asked, with the plan making system to be implemented this year, if the relevant secondary legislation was in place to ensure that work can resume on the work plan. Councillor Roberts responded that it was still awaited from national government.

On Item 7 Treasury Management 2024/25 Outturn

Councillor Phillips asked about the continuation of the Oxfordshire Green Bond and the assessment of its launch. Councillor Levy responded that it was a success, and it was oversubscribed. He added that the £500,000 that was raised was used to further the identified green projects.

Councillor Rawlins asked what impact would cuts to public expenditure have on the preparation of the budget and the scope for revenue expenditure considering the central government budget would be presented only in November 2025. Councillor Levy responded that the county council had written to MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government), and that the settlement would be announced late in December, which was after the budget. He added that the fair funding review had also been delayed. The process was therefore in flux.

On Item 8 Budget & Business Planning 2026/27 - Fair Funding Review 2.0

Councillor Phillips asked what amount was being held back in reserves to meet the changes in national government funding and would the Cabinet's response to the consultation question be published as part of the budget papers. Councillor Levy responded by confirming that the consultation question would be published subject to guidance of the Section 151 officer.

Additionally, the councillor stated that Oxfordshire maintained robust financial reserves.

Councillor Epps asked that a letter be written to MHCLG and the Treasury to detail the impact that the national government delays would have on county council staff. Councillor Levy responded that senior officers were in consultation with national government and the relevant bodies.

On Item 9 Business Management & Monitoring Report - Revenue Update and Monitoring Report

Councillor Phillips asked if the Council would be updated on the current position in relation to saving targets being met. Councillor Levy responded that the next cabinet report would contain that information and would be made public. The councillor said the county council was exceeding its budget expectations.

On Item 10 Capital Programme Monitoring Report

Councillor Middleton asked, with the spiralling costs associated with major road building, what were the cost implications of such projects. Councillor Levy responded that the capital reports to Cabinet indicated where the capital schemes were proceeding and the cost of those schemes.

Councillor Gregory asked if schooling support would be provided consistently for children under five in all parts of the county. Councillor Levy responded that the county council was not responsible for this area and could not therefore make any guarantees. Further, the councillor responded that the Council was supportive of nursery education and that St Joseph's, Thame, for example, was paid for from Section 106 funds.

On Item 11 Proposed response to the 2025 Oxfordshire Travel and Transport Citizens' Assembly

Councillor Fry asked for an indication of the annual costs of implementing the Citizens' Assembly's request for free transport for young children and young adults. Councillor Gant said bus pricing was complex and that operators would be asked for more information.

Councillor Pressel asked about the absence of timescales on the Citizens' Assembly's four accepted recommendations. Councillor Gant responded that he would look into that matter.

Councillor Brighouse asked that free bus travel be made a priority for the poorest children and their families. Councillor Gant responded that all the Council's policies worked together to ensure that such priorities were acted upon.

Councillor Kerr asked how the on-going involvement of the Citizens' Assembly is likely to work. Councillor Gant responded that members of the Citizens' Assembly expressed their willingness to stay involved which was positive but it was not yet clear what form that would take.

Councillor Ley asked about the comments made by the Leader of the Conservative group to the media, that he would expect his Members to claim the congestion charge on expenses. Councillor Gant responded that the comment should be reversed. He added that he hoped the Council policy on expenses could be amended to prevent it.

Councillor Malik asked the reason for the lack of diversity in the Citizens' Assembly. Councillor Gant responded that the composition was undertaken by a third party according to best industry practice and he was satisfied that the job was done professionally.

Councillor Henwood asked why the Citizens' Assembly meeting on 16 July 2025 only included the steering group. Councillor Gant was unaware of the details being mentioned and would seek further information.

On Item 12 Future Civil Enforcement Contract Models

Councillor Pressel inquired about the procurement process for a contract related to parking enforcement and requested clarification on why a comparable system was not being used for the digital parking permits scheme. Councillor Gant responded that the permits system would be looked at.

Councillor Coles asked that the high standards achieved by the parking enforcement team in Witney not be compromised due to retention and recruitment challenges. Councillor Gant responded that he was grateful for the acknowledgement of the parking enforcement team's work and added that the contracts were being designed to increase the number of officers. The councillor further responded that he guaranteed there would be more and better enforcement.

Councillor Middleton asked that enforcement across Cherwell be improved. Councillor Gant responded that it was the intention to increase enforcement and the Automatic Number Plate Recognition system was designed to allow local authorities to ensure traffic enforcement was applied more efficiently.

Councillor Smith asked for assurance that the new contract would address the misuse of business parking permits. Councillor Gant stated that the matter would be reviewed.

Councillor Malik asked for assurance that after the contract was finalised that there would be some enforcement in his area. Councillor Gant responded that there was enforcement and he would like even more.

71/25 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25

(Agenda Item 10)

Council had before it a report setting out the Treasury Management position at 31 March 2025. Throughout the report, the performance for the

2024/25 financial year was measured against the budget agreed by Council in February 2024.

The report was moved by Councillor Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation and seconded by Councillor Leffman, Leader of the Council.

Following discussion, the report was noted.

RESOLVED: to note the council's treasury management activity and outcomes in 2024/25.

72/25 REVIEW OF OUTSIDE BODIES

(Agenda Item 11)

The procedures and guidance around Council appointments to Outside Bodies had not been reviewed since 2013. Council considered a report summarising the procedures and proposed amendments to the way in which representatives are appointed to Category B (Non-strategic) and Category C (Local) Outside Bodies.

The Chair noted that there was one correction to Annex 3 Category A Outside Bodies: On the Corporate Parenting Panel, Councillor Gaul replaced Councillor Higgins.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Smith and seconded by Councillor Shiri, Chair and Deputy Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Following discussion, the recommendations were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- a) agree that appointments to Category B non-strategic Outside Bodies, useful to the Council's work, as they relate to Council functions, be made by the Audit and Governance Committee;**
- b) agree that appointments to Category C Outside Bodies that request Council representation or are of primary value to local councillors/the local community, as they relate to Council functions, be delegated to the Monitoring Officer;**
- c) approve the Constitutional Amendments in Annex 1 to reflect these changes;**
- d) approve the definition of a Strategic Outside Bodies in paragraph 14 of this report;**

- e) **note the Guidance for Members who are appointed to Outside Bodies adopted by the Audit & Governance Committee on 16 July 2025 (attached at Annex 2);**
- f) **endorse the list of 'Strategic' Category A Outside Bodies in Annex 3 as amended;**
- g) **confirm the appointments to Category B Outside Bodies in Annex 4;**
- h) **note the list of Category C Outside Bodies in Annex 5.**

73/25 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES - OPPOSITION GROUPS AND PARENTAL LEAVE

(Agenda Item 12)

The Independent Remuneration Panel had been asked by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to provide early recommendations on two specific matters:

- (i) The payment of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) to the Leaders and Shadow Cabinet Members of the two equally sized opposition groups recognised as the official opposition, following the May 2025 elections.
- (ii) The application of allowances for councillors taking parental leave, following the adoption of a new policy on 8 July 2025.

Council had the interim report on these matters for consideration.

Recommendations a) and d) were proposed by Councillor Leffman and seconded by Councillor Fawcett, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. Recommendations a) and d) were approved with 56 votes in favour, none against and 3 abstentions.

RESOLVED:

- a) **To adopt the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Special Responsibility Allowances for the recognised Opposition Group(s) as set out in Annex A to this report; and**
- d) **To agree the Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendation that basic and any Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) should continue to be paid to any councillor taking parental leave in accordance with the Parental Leave Policy approved by Council on 8 July 2025.**

74/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR IZZY CREED

(Agenda Item 13)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Creed and seconded by Councillor Brighthouse.

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The motion was carried unanimously and will be referred to Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

This Council welcomes:

1. The Government's announcement of a programme of new Best Start Family Hubs.
2. The adoption of a national target of 75% of five-year-olds having a good level of development by 2028.

Council notes:

1. The preceding Sure Start programme was developed under the last Labour Government to provide holistic support to families with children under the age of 5. By 2010 a network of over 3,000 centres had been established.
2. A recent report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies has found that Sure Start had significant positive impacts on children's educational attainment as well as physical and mental health.

Council further notes:

1. That cuts by the Coalition Government to Local Government funding resulted in the closure of 1,168 of these valuable council-run children's centres.
2. In Oxfordshire, many children's centres were saved by being taken over by local charities and community groups. These centres continue to pay rent to the County Council and face significant financial pressures.

This Council requests:

1. The Cabinet considers how it may support existing community-operated children's centres in Oxfordshire to continue to operate, providing specialist and financial support where possible.
2. The Cabinet considers the development of a strategy to increase the range of services offered by existing children's centres in line with Government plans for new Best Start Family Hubs – prioritising those areas of greatest need.
3. The Cabinet considers if existing children's centres can help extend the reach of the County's re-established youth service.

75/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES PLUMB

(Agenda Item 14)

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Plumb and seconded by Councillor Walker.

“Council notes the increasing pressures on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services across Oxfordshire, with rising demand, complex needs, and a need for stronger local support.

Previously, Oxfordshire County Council had a dedicated Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement, reflecting the importance of this area.

This role was recently removed, diluting specific leadership and focus on one of the most challenging areas of Council responsibility.

Council believes that:

1. Children and young people with SEND deserve a dedicated champion at the highest political level within the Council.
2. A single Cabinet Member with clear and focused responsibility for SEND would enhance decision-making, oversight, and transparency.
3. Reinstating this post would demonstrate a renewed commitment to improving outcomes for families who rely on these vital services.

Council therefore resolves to ask the Leader of the Council to:

- a) reinstate the Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement as a standalone portfolio within the Cabinet.
- b) ensure this role has clear responsibility for SEND policy, provision, and engagement with parents, carers, and stakeholders.
- c) provide a written response to this motion, setting out the steps being taken to strengthen leadership and accountability within SEND services.”

Following discussion, Councillor Walker called for a named vote and was supported by at least six other councillors as required under Council Procedure Rule 17.4.1.

The motion was lost with 29 votes in favour, 31 against and no abstentions.

Councillors voted as follows:

For the motion:

Councillors Ashby, Barlow, Brighouse, Cherry, Coles, Creed, Crichton, Du, Evans, Fenton, Field-Johnson, Fry, Garnett, Henwood, Jones, Kerr, Lygo, Malik, Markham, McLauchlan, Middleton, Philips, Plumb, Pressel, Robertshaw, Sargent, Saul, Snowdon, Walker.

Against the motion:

Councillors Batstone, Bearder, Boucher-Giles, Edwards, Epps, Fawcett, Filipova-Rivers, Fletcher, Gant, Gaul, Gawrysiak, Graham, Greenaway, Gregory, Hanna, Hannaby, Heritage, Higgins, Hope-Smith, Leffman, Levy,

Lugova, McLean, Overton, Rawlins, Roberts, Shiri, Smith, Stevens, Thomas, Worgan.

There were no abstentions.

76/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON

(Agenda Item 15)

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Middleton and seconded by Councillor Jones.

“Oxfordshire hosts military air bases and training facilities, some of which are used by international forces.

Media reports have suggested that Oxfordshire air bases have been used to support Israeli Air Force actions in Gaza and that Israeli military personnel may have received training at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham.

Oxfordshire residents, faith groups and humanitarian organisations have expressed concern about the UK’s potential complicity in war crimes in Gaza and the West Bank and this has already attracted demonstrations by protest groups around some Oxfordshire military bases.

Residents deserve transparency about the use of such facilities within the County and the local resources required to protect and police them given the likelihood of further protests in response to increasing evidence of war crimes and potential genocide in Gaza.

We therefore ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner requesting information on any increased costs and resource requirements for protecting facilities in Oxfordshire that are being accessed by the Israeli military.”

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The motion was lost with 19 votes in favour, 34 against and 2 abstentions.

77/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR JANE HANNA

(Agenda Item 16)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Hanna and seconded by Councillor Epps.

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The motion was carried unanimously (56 votes in favour, none against, no abstentions) and will be referred to Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

Council notes with concern that Oxfordshire Healthwatch and local Councils of Governors of Oxfordshire hospitals are to be abolished within a new

Health and Social Care Act, and integrated into existing local departments, with queries diverted to the NHS App.

The Council endorses the work of Healthwatch Oxfordshire for listening and helping thousands of patients each year, recognising that many vulnerable residents do not use the NHS App. Their team shared patient and carer experiences in thirty eight reports influencing local improvements through the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Place Based Partnership and contributions to the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

As part of the ten year NHS plan, Health and Wellbeing Boards are required to develop neighbourhood plans with NHS partners to shift more resource to prevention and from hospitals to a neighbourhood health service model. The financial, workforce and integration challenges are significant. Patients and the public will need

- A trusted and credible local body, to speak for patients, offering constructive challenge and supporting communities' engagement
- their elected members and lower tier councils with relevant local knowledge engaged
- Safe public spaces, including scrutiny, to speak up

Council calls on the Leader and Cabinet to urgently consider how the Council working with NHS partners can safeguard and develop the Healthwatch function and engage and meaningfully consult with all local stakeholders to ensure the local delivery of national reforms at neighbourhood level best meet patient and community need.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

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Divisions Affected – N/A

COUNCIL – 4 November 2025

COMMITTEE VACANCY

Report by Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. Council is **RECOMMENDED** to:
 - a) appoint a Member to the current vacant position on the Planning and Regulation Committee;
 - b) delegate to all council committees the authority to appoint to its vacant committee seats in accordance with legislation.

Executive Summary

2. The Liberal Democrat group is entitled to seven of the twelve positions on the Planning and Regulation Committee. However, only six Members have been appointed by the political group leader leaving one vacancy on the committee.
3. Council is invited to fill the current vacancy.
4. It is also proposed that Council delegates to all council committees the authority to appoint to its future vacant committee seats in the event that a political group has not expressed its wishes in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 .

Background

5. Following the election on 1 May 2025 and the formation of political groups in the new Council, Democratic Services calculated the number of seats that each political group are entitled to on each committee. On 13 May 2025, Democratic Services wrote to the political group leaders inviting them to nominate Members of their group for their respective seats.
6. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989, Part 1, Section 15, 5(b), states:

“that the majority of the seats on the body is allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the authority’s membership;”

7. There are 12 seats on the Planning and Regulation Committee. The Liberal Democrat group is therefore entitled to 7 seats.
8. On 16 May 2025, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat group forwarded her nominations for the committees. Only six Members were nominated to the Planning and Regulation Committee, leaving a vacancy.
9. The Annual Council meeting on 20 May 2025 approved the nominations to committees and the final seat on the Planning and Regulation Committee remained vacant.
10. The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 states:

Notifications

14. For the purpose of enabling a political group to express its wishes in accordance with section 16 of the 1989 Act, the proper officer shall notify in writing the leader or, in his absence, the representative of a political group as soon as practicable after—

(a) the allocation by the authority or committee to that group of a seat on a body to which section 15 of the 1989 Act applies; or

(b) the vacation of a seat on such a body allocated by the authority or committee to that group.

Appointments where political group fails to express wishes

15. Where a political group has failed to express its wishes in relation to the appointment to such a seat as is mentioned in regulation 14 within the period of three weeks beginning with the date on which notice was given under that regulation, the authority or committee may make such appointment to that seat as they think fit.

11. As the seat remains vacant, it is proposed that Council makes an appointment to fill it.
12. If there is more than one nomination at the Council meeting, voting will take place in accordance with the Council Constitution, Part 3.1 Council Procedure Rules, paragraph 17.8, Voting on Appointments.
13. In the event that the proposed appointee is not a member of the Liberal Democrat group, Council must have regard to Section 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Section 15 of the Act sets out the principles by which committee seats are allocated proportionally to political groups. Section 17 requires that Council can only make proposals to vary from those principles:

“without any member of the authority or committee voting against them.”

Therefore in this event, the Chair must ask the meeting if Members are agreed to the appointment varying the proportionality of the committee.

14. The legislation cited above allows for a committee to appoint to its vacant committee seats. This is not reflected in the Council's Constitution so it is therefore proposed that Council delegates the appointment authority in these circumstances directly to committees and their respective members.

Financial Implications

15. There are none arising from this report.

Comments checked by: Drew Hodgson, Strategic Finance Business Partner,
drew.hodgson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

16. The recommendations in this report comply with and bring the Council's procedures into line with the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, Regulation 15 Appointments where a political group fails to express wishes and Section 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

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

ANITA BRADLEY

Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Background papers: None

Contact Officer: Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Democratic Services Manager,
colm.ocaomhanaigh@oxfordshire.gov.uk

October 2025

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Divisions- N/A

COUNTY COUNCIL – 4 November 2025

REPORT OF THE CABINET

Cabinet Member: Leader

1. Strategic Plan 2025-2028

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet had before it a report recommending the approval and adoption of the Strategic Plan 2025-2028 for Oxfordshire County Council, outlining its development, content, and implications.

The plan retained the themes of greener, fairer, and healthier Oxfordshire, with headline projects and measurable deliverables under each heading. Extensive resident consultation informed the plan, and it included ambitious targets for children's outcomes, youth provision, and environmental objectives.

Cabinet praised the plan for its clarity and alignment with residents' priorities, and it was recommended to the Council for approval.

Cabinet Member: Resources and Deputy Leader

2. HR and Cultural Change Quarterly Employee Data Report - Quarter 1 2025-26

(Cabinet, 16 September 2025)

Cabinet had before it a report which provided an overview of the progress towards delivering the Our People and Culture Strategy (as measured by the achievement of its key performance indicators) and summarised the main employee-related trends for Q1 2025/26. The report highlighted positive trends such as a decrease in agency spend and staff turnover, though challenges remained in recruitment due to market conditions. The report also highlighted the importance of detailed sickness data.

Cabinet Member: Transport Management

3. Oxford temporary congestion charging points

(Cabinet, 10 September 2025)

Cabinet received a report on proposals for six temporary congestion charging points in Oxford. In June 2025, the Cabinet approved a public consultation on the proposals, operating at the same locations and times as the six trial traffic filters approved in November 2022, along with a number of smaller schemes to address congestion in the city.

The report outlined the case for action, alternative options considered, the results of the consultation, and the expected impacts of the temporary congestion charging points.

A wide range of speakers, including business owners, residents, transport operators, advocacy groups, and councillors, presented arguments both for and against the temporary congestion charge, raising concerns about business impacts, hospital access, modelling assumptions, and public opposition, while others highlighted environmental, health, and transport benefits

Cabinet members discussed the evidence, consultation responses, and recommendations. Members reviewed the policy's alignment with the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, the need to address congestion, and the evidence from other cities, emphasising that the scheme aimed to change behaviour rather than raise revenue, and that similar measures had previously led to increased city centre footfall and improved air quality

Cabinet agreed amended recommendations to approve the implementation of six temporary congestion charging points in Oxford for a maximum of two years from the date of implementation and delegated surplus investment decisions and scheme implementation to Directors in consultation with Cabinet Members, to ensure user-friendly systems, and commit to operational readiness by 10 November 2025.

4. Future Bus Regulation Options

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet had before it a report on bus regulation and ownership options relevant to Oxfordshire. Following a motion passed by the Council in 2023, a consultant had been asked to review options for bus franchising and municipal operation. They were also asked to consider the effectiveness of the existing Oxfordshire Enhanced Partnership (EP).

Cabinet members discussed the high costs and logistical challenges of franchising, including depot purchases, and noted that current multi-operator ticketing and partnerships already delivered many benefits.

Cabinet approved the development of an Enhanced Partnership Plus approach, delegated further development to the relevant directorate, and elected not to undertake further work on franchising or municipal operation at this time.

Cabinet Member: Place, Environment and Climate Action

5. Update to the Street Lighting and Illuminated Assets Policy with respect to Part Night Lighting

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet had before it a report which presented a proposed new policy and approach to part-night lighting following stakeholder engagement and public consultation feedback. The report outlined the concerns raised regarding part-night lighting, as

well as its levels of support. Exemptions would apply in urban areas and local communities, through parish councils, would decide on adopting part-night lighting, following a process similar to the 20 mph speed limit introduction.

Cabinet members emphasised the importance of resident engagement and the flexibility for communities to choose their preferred approach.

The updated street lighting and illuminated assets policy and the implementation framework were approved.

6. Oxfordshire County Council's Biodiversity Action Framework and Action Plan

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet received a report on a Biodiversity Action Framework and Action Plan to comply with the Environment Act 2021, aiming to conserve and enhance biodiversity through council activities and partnerships. The plan set a vision for biodiversity improvement by 2030 and 2050 with specific objectives and policies to guide actions across various council departments and with external partners.

Cabinet approved the Biodiversity Action Framework, delegated authority for annual updates and emphasised the importance of embedding biodiversity in all council activities.

7. Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet had before it a report which recommended the adoption of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The LNRS vision was to achieve a resilient, well-connected network of nature that benefitted biodiversity and future generations. The strategy included a narrative description of Oxfordshire's biodiversity, a set of priority actions for species and habitats, and a mapped network highlighting key locations for nature recovery efforts. Adoption would enable formal launch and alignment with national environmental goals such as the UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan and the Environment Act 2021.

Cabinet approved the adoption of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and supported the County Council's commitment to deliver, monitor, and review the LNRS in future (post-adoption) in partnership with local people and organisations.

8. S106 Project – Accelerated Delivery and Corporate Funding

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet received a report which outlined the Council's approach to accelerating the delivery of S106 developer agreement schemes through a funded programme of infrastructure projects aimed at providing improvements and benefits to local communities.

Cabinet members discussed the pipeline for future funding rounds, the importance of having shelf-ready projects, and the challenges posed by officer capacity and the timing of Section 106 receipts.

Cabinet approved the programme of investment, delegated procurement and programme changes, and noted ongoing improvements to streamline project delivery.

Cabinet Member: Future Economy and Innovation

9. Get Oxfordshire Working Plan

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet received a report which presented the Get Oxfordshire Working Plan developed in response to the Department of Work and Pensions requirement for local plans to tackle economic inactivity. The County Council was leading on the plan with formal sign-off required from key partners including the Integrated Care Board and Jobcentre Plus.

Members referred to the county's high employment rate, the challenge of economic inactivity among specific cohorts, and the need to address entrenched inequalities and barriers to employment, such as disability, gender gaps, and transport issues.

Cabinet approved the plan, delegated authority for amendments and future revisions, and emphasised the importance of regular monitoring and linking the plan to initiatives including the Connect to Work programme

Cabinet Member: Finance, Property and Transformation

10. Delivering the Future Together - Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) Strategy

(Cabinet, 16 September 2025)

Cabinet had before it a report which provided a strategic overview consolidating Oxfordshire County Council's new Digital Strategy, Data Strategy, and Technology Strategy into a unified framework for transformation and innovation from 2025 to 2028. It supported the Council's "Delivering the Future Together" vision and aligned with its seven operating principles, focusing on efficiency, collaboration, digital-first service delivery, and proactive demand management.

The Digital, Data and Technology (DDAT) Strategies 2025-2028 were adopted.

11. Treasury Management Quarter 1 Report

(Cabinet, 16 September 2025)

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) 'Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021' requires that committee to which some treasury management responsibilities are delegated, will receive regular monitoring

reports on treasury management activities and risks. Cabinet received a report which set out the position at the end of the first quarter of 2025-6. The report highlighted that the council operated within debt indicators and had reduced Public Works Loan Board debt. Investments yielded returns above budget due to higher cash balances and interest rates. The report also highlighted the ongoing challenge of the negative High Needs Block Direct Schools Grant (DSG) balance and the need for government intervention.

12. Business Management & Monitoring Report -- Performance and Risk Quarter 1 2025-26

(Cabinet, 16 September 2025)

Cabinet received a report which set out the Quarter 1 2025/26 performance and Strategic risk overview for the council as well as an update on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The report emphasised addressing underperformance and the importance of meaningful metrics. The Council noted challenges with special educational needs and but acknowledged progress and adherence to budget plans. The report also covered the Homes for Ukraine scheme, praising community support for displaced Ukrainians and Hong Kong residents.

Cabinet noted the report and approved the allocation of Homes for Ukraine grant funding.

13. Capital Programme Update - September 2025

(Cabinet, 16 September 2025)

Cabinet had before it a report which set out changes to the capital programme requiring Cabinet approval to be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next update to the Capital Programme in October 2025.

Cabinet approved the inclusion of Grove Airfield Primary School (Phase 2 of Grove Airfield Development) into the capital programme with an indicative budget of £1.600m and £2.400m to enable the purchase of two new buildings to facilitate staff relocation.

14. Enterprise Zone Business Rates – Forecast and Update on Planned Use

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet received a report which set out background, principles and conditional proposals for the use of retained business rates funding generated through the two Enterprise Zones in Oxfordshire to support economic development in Oxfordshire.

The plan prioritised strategic site development, high-quality infrastructure, and business support activities, with allocations subject to business case development.

Cabinet noted the intention to develop a full investment plan, the need for engagement with district councils, and the conditional nature of allocations pending further strategy development.

Cabinet endorsed the investment priorities, conditionally approved funding allocations, and delegated authority for business case preparation and engagement.

15. Business Management & Monitoring Report – Revenue Update and Monitoring Report (August 2025).

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet had before it a detailed financial update report for 2025/26. It provided a comprehensive overview of the council's revenue forecast, budget updates, savings and investments, pay inflation, debt management, and specific financial challenges such as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block deficit. The report also included annexes with detailed financial data and reserves information.

Cabinet noted report and approved a number of financial adjustments.

16. Capital Programme Update and Monitoring Report

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet had before it the second capital programme update and monitoring report for 2025/26 which set out the monitoring position based on activity to the end of August 2025.

The report also updated the Capital Programme approved by Cabinet on 15 July 2025 taking into account additional funding and new schemes. The updated programme also incorporated changes agreed through the Capital Programme Approval Reports to Cabinet during the year as well as new funding.

Cabinet noted the capital monitoring position for 2025/26 and approved the updated Capital Programme set out in the report.

Cabinet Member: Community Wellbeing and Safety

17. Fire and Rescue Cover Model

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet received a report on a proposed Fire and Rescue Cover Model aimed at improving resource deployment, response times, and workforce resilience. The proposed initiatives would undergo a 12-week consultation process involving the public, employees, and stakeholders.

Cabinet agreed that the proposals should be put to consultation and noted that members would receive a further report in due course.

Cabinet Member: Children and Young People

18. Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) Annual Report

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet considered a report which highlighted the findings from the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's annual report on the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Oxfordshire.

The report described the partnership's review of arrangements, health checks, and other reviews, with priorities focused on tackling neglect and minimising risk to children outside the home.

Cabinet noted the report.

Cabinet Member: Adults

19. Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2024-25

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet had before it a report summarising the work of the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB) and its partners over the course of the year 2024-25.

The report highlighted achievements in multi-agency collaboration, national recognition for homeless mortality reviews, and ongoing work to improve frontline practice and prevention. The board's focus for the coming year included a formal risk register and continued partnership strengthening.

Cabinet noted the report.

20. Report on urgent decision by Chief Executive re supply of community equipment

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet noted a report on an urgent decision by the Chief Executive and Director of Adult Social Care to directly award a contract for community equipment supply due to the collapse of the previous provider. This action ensured continuity of essential services for vulnerable residents in Oxfordshire.

21. Report on urgent decision by Chief Executive re Telecare Monitoring and Response Service

(Cabinet, 21 October 2025)

Cabinet noted a report on an urgent delegated decision to directly award a three-year contract for Telecare Monitoring and Response following the financial collapse of the previous provider. This action ensured uninterrupted support to vulnerable residents in Oxfordshire, enabling them to live independently at home.

22. Scrutiny Reports

(Cabinet, 10 & 16 September and 21 October 2025)

Cabinet received the following Scrutiny reports:-

- a) Place Overview and Scrutiny report on Oxford temporary congestion charge
- b) Education and Young People report on School Catering and Corporate Cleaning Contract
- c) People Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on Oxfordshire Employment Services
- d) Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on Our People and Culture Strategy
- e) Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on E-bike and e-scooter contract
- f) Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on OSCP Safeguarding Annual Report

- g) Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report on Part-night Lighting

- h) Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on Strategic Plan 2025-28

LIZ LEFFMAN

Leader of the Council

October 2025

Council

4 November 2025

Strategic Plan 2025-2028

Report by the Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships

RECOMMENDATION

Council is RECOMMENDED to approve and adopt the Strategic Plan 2025-28.

Executive Summary

1. This report provides an overview of the strategic plan 2025-2028 (Annex 1) and the public engagement that has taken place around it.
2. The plan was considered by Cabinet on 21 October 2025, who recommended it to Council for approval and adoption. It was also considered by the Performance & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 September 2025, and the committee's recommendations were taken into consideration when finalising the plan.

Background

3. Following the county council elections in May 2025 and the formation of a new administration, a new strategic plan has been 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 builds on the existing 2022-2025 plan and retains the overarching vision of a greener, fairer and healthier Oxfordshire. It includes 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 are provided under each of the three themes. These include nine headline projects that will be delivered by 2027. A wider set of objectives under each theme have been included to illustrate the breadth of the council's work in each area.
7. The metrics developed for each objective 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 framework is 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. The Strategic Plan 2025-2028 is a Policy Framework document and therefore has been produced in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules set out in Part 3.2 of the Constitution and must be approved and adopted by Council.
13. There are no new legal implications nor direct legal implications arising from this report. Any such implications will be addressed when the taking of actions to deliver the priorities in the strategic plan are considered. The preparation and publication of the Strategic Plan is lawful under the general power of competence in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

Comments checked by:
Jennifer Crouch, Head of Law (Environment)
Jennifer.crouch@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff implications

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

Equality and inclusion implications

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

Sustainability implications

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

Risk management

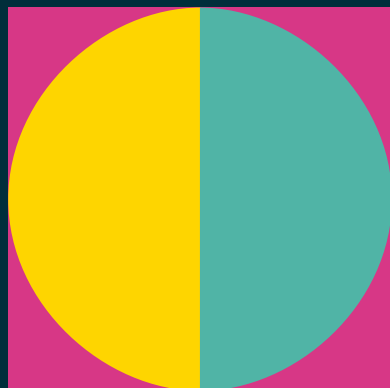
17. Once the strategic plan has been approved, risk assessments will be considered, or will already have been considered, related to specific planned pieces of work.

Susannah Wintersgill
Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships

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

October 2025

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2028

greener | fairer | healthier Oxfordshire



Leader's foreword

Page 2

I am pleased to introduce our Strategic Plan for 2025-2028 - a plan shaped by our ambition to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county for everyone.

Our vision is clear: we want Oxfordshire to be a place where everyone has the opportunity to live well, where communities thrive, and where our local economy benefits all our residents.

This plan sets out how we will work together to achieve these goals, building on our county's strengths while tackling the challenges we face.

We are committed to leading the way on climate action. Oxfordshire has already made significant progress: we have been recognised as the UK's top-performing county council for climate action and we have reduced emissions from our own operations by 70 per cent since 2010.

But we know there is more to do. The climate emergency is the defining challenge of our time and we must continue to act boldly to protect our environment, improve air quality, and help our communities adapt to the impacts of climate change, from flooding to heatwaves.

Fairness is at the heart of our approach. Oxfordshire is a prosperous county, but not everyone shares in that prosperity. Too many of our residents still face barriers to good jobs, affordable housing and essential services.

We are determined to tackle these inequalities - working with partners to address the root causes of disadvantage, supporting families and communities in need, and ensuring that everyone can access the opportunities our county has to offer.

Health and wellbeing underpin everything we do. We want all our residents to be happy, healthy and safe - whether that means giving children the best start in life, supporting older people to live independently, or helping everyone make healthy choices.

Our plan sets out how we will work with NHS partners, the voluntary sector, and local communities to improve health outcomes and reduce inequalities.

This plan builds on our previous strategic plan, taking forward our vision for a greener, fairer and healthier county. But with local government reorganisation now in train, our focus is on delivering meaningful change in the next two years.

Our plan includes nine headline projects, with specific goals, in areas that residents have said are important to them – from a more responsive approach to road repairs to greater provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Delivering on this vision will require partnership, innovation and determination. We will continue to listen to our residents, work closely with our partners, and put the needs of our communities at the centre of everything we do. Together, we are building a greener, fairer and healthier Oxfordshire - now and for future generations.

Councillor Liz Leffman
Leader of Oxfordshire County Council





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.



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 have set ourselves ambitious targets to address this: we aim to be carbon neutral in our council direct operations by 2030 and we are committed to enabling a net-zero Oxfordshire well ahead of 2050.

These efforts are making a difference. Since 2010, emissions from our own buildings, fleet and streetlighting have decreased by 70 per cent. And in 2025 we have been rated the best performing county council in the UK for tackling climate change by Climate Emergency UK as well as being named the top performing county council for recycling for the eleventh year in a row.

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; associated 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; promoting public transport, cycling and walking; and increasing electric vehicle charging infrastructure. These steps will lower emissions and make our communities healthier and safer.

Making buildings more energy efficient and powering them with clean energy helps reduce costs, improve comfort and increase resilience.

We are delivering programmes to reduce energy costs and emissions in buildings across Oxfordshire - from retrofitting homes at risk of fuel poverty and supporting schools reduce their energy demand to working with larger businesses to plan for a clean energy future.

We are also working hard to reduce the emissions across our own estate, including a major programme of energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements to our buildings.

The impact of climate change can also be seen in the frequency of severe flooding and summer heatwaves. In September 2024 the county experienced widespread flooding because of its highest 24-hour rainfall in over 50 years. During the summer of 2022 there were 65 excess deaths attributed to heat in Oxfordshire. 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 a network of family 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.

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.

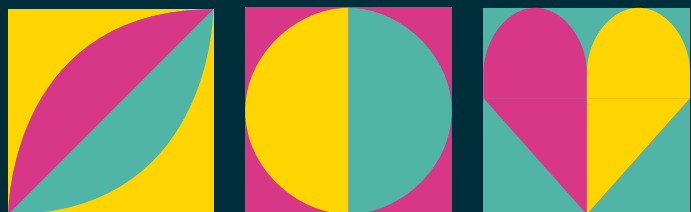
The number of residents aged 85+ is rising fastest of all. Through proactive and preventative community outreach, we can help people live well and keep their independence for as long as possible. This is our Oxfordshire Way approach, in which we are working with health and community partners to support people close to home without the need for more formal care.

We will continue to view transport policy alongside these ambitions - keeping people connected and providing choice in how they choose to move.

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



Our headline projects



Greener Oxfordshire

1. Create better spaces for residents and visitors in our town centres.
2. Work with transport partners towards a countywide integrated rail and bus offer.
3. Create two dedicated highways response teams to tackle issues in priority areas.



Fairer Oxfordshire

4. Roll out a network of family hubs.
5. Through initiatives like Connect to Work, help people overcome barriers to employment.
6. Support young people leaving care into employment.



Healthier Oxfordshire

7. Increase the number of children who reach a good level of development at age five.
8. Deliver more specialist school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
9. Support an expanded and coordinated programme of youth provision.



Greener Oxfordshire

Our headline projects

- 1.** We will create better spaces for residents and visitors in our town centres to prioritise pedestrians, improve air quality and support economic growth. We will pilot this in Banbury and Witney by December 2026, and Wantage by 2027.
- 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 carry out repairs in towns and villages that have a high number of outstanding issues, working closely with town and parish councils.





Greener Oxfordshire

Our wider objectives

- We will continue to roll out our Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, which aims to cut carbon emissions from transport. This means encouraging people to use public transport, cycling and walking instead of driving.
- We will make it easier to travel by train, bus and bike by building mobility hubs across Oxfordshire. These are places where different types of transport come together, making it simple to switch between them. They also offer better facilities like sheltered waiting areas and bike storage.
- In rural areas, we will create quiet lanes / greenways to make walking, cycling and horse riding safer and more enjoyable. This includes continued partnership working with Buckinghamshire Council to progress a greenway link connecting Thame with Haddenham & Thame Parkway Station, securing the necessary powers and permissions for a suitable route alignment and submitting a planning application by 2027.
- We will improve how we deal with flooding by hiring more flood wardens to help local communities and by cleaning roadside drains every year.
- We will continue to reduce carbon emissions from our own buildings and vehicles and deliver our wider climate action and energy efficiency programmes with businesses, partners and communities. This includes installing 1,400 electric vehicle charging sockets across 250+ locations by 2027/28.
- We will speed up efforts to protect nature and wildlife in Oxfordshire, and we are working with partners to deliver the county's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.





Fairer Oxfordshire

Our headline projects

1. We will roll out a network of family hubs across the county during 2026 and 2027 in areas of need. They will provide families with access to early help and support, including services from health, education and community sector partners, and they will be supplemented by a digital family hub.
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

- We will continue to work with local organisations to tackle the main causes of poor health, such as access to housing, education and jobs, through a joint programme called Marmot Place.
- We will make it easier for people to access local facilities and services by adding community spaces to our libraries, including 8 libraries by 2027.
- We will put our Including Everyone plan (2025-29) into action, which focuses on creating a more inclusive workplace, making sure our services are accessible, and reducing inequality in our communities.
- We will continue to improve support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) by working closely with partners through our SEND transformation programme.
- We will work with schools and other educational settings to deliver the goals of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill (2024) and the upcoming SEND White Paper, making sure all children feel included and supported to succeed.
- Through our Future Generations programme, we will give children and young people more opportunities to influence council decisions and making sure we think about how our choices affect future generations.





Healthier Oxfordshire

Our headline projects

1. We will support children to get the best start in life. Working with health partners, we aim to increase the number of children in Oxfordshire who reach a good level of development at age five from 69 per cent to 77.8 per cent by 2028. We will focus our attention on children who qualify for free school meals.
2. We will deliver 240 more specialist school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) across Oxfordshire by September 2027, with an intention to explore a further 100 places within that timeframe.
3. 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 helping people of all ages improve their mental health, updating our Tobacco Control Strategy for 2026-30, and supporting residents to remain physically active – for example by walking and cycling.
- Through our Oxfordshire Way approach, we will continue to work with our health partners to help people stay independent, healthy and active in their communities for as long as possible, and we will continue to cut waiting times for care and financial support assessments - especially for people who may be at risk of harm or abuse.
- We will continue to support unpaid carers to improve their wellbeing and make sure they get the help they need.
- We will enhance our prevention initiatives to keep communities and individuals safe, from increasing our safe and well visits to vulnerable residents to engaging with more schools on issues such as road safety and water safety.
- We aim to become a Fostering Friendly Place, supporting local families to provide safe and loving homes for children in care.
- We will continue to work with communities most at risk of poor health to better understand the causes and to create action plans to improve their health and wellbeing.





Resident perceptions of Strategic Plan

Sub-Report

PREPARED FOR OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

RACHEL MCGRAIL/
CLAIRE TYRRELL-WILLIAMS

J1096/JULY 2025

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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

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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	• 27 x men • 36 x women • 50 x White • 13 x BAME • 22 x <30 years old • 20 x 30-59 years old • 21 x 60+ years old
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	• 21 x children in household • 42 x no children in household • 9 x Cherwell • 27 x Oxford City¹ • 6 x West Oxfordshire • 13 x South Oxfordshire • 8 x Vale of White Horse
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	
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.

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"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

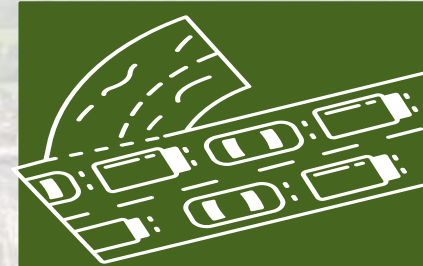
Primary priorities for the future

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:

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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

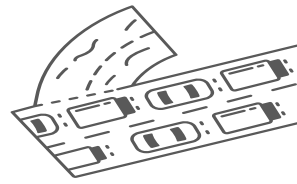


Healthcare



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

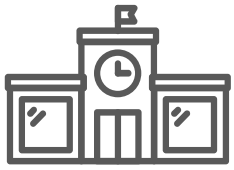
“The closure of the Botley Road has been an absolute nightmare. LTNs, I find it really stressful driving through because people that actually live there don't expect cars to be there so they just let their kids go out onto the streets.”
Female, Younger, Rural area

“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

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“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

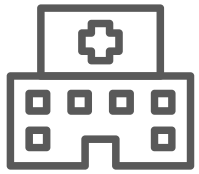
“I think you'd get better educational outcomes, if the classes were smaller and focus on SEN and all that.”

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 55

“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

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“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 57
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



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

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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.

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- 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

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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 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

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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

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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

“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

“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

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

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

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“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 whoa re 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 its 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.

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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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COUNCIL – 4 NOVEMBER 2025

Update to Section 5 of the Financial Regulations (Capital Expenditure)

Report by the Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. **Council is RECOMMENDED to approve:**
 - a) amendments to Section 5 of the Financial Regulations increasing the limit for Cabinet approval for new inclusions and variations to capital schemes from £1.0m to £2.0m to align with the key decision threshold of £2m.
 - b) that in exceptional circumstances up to £0.500m funding for exploratory feasibility works can be approved by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer (following discussion and recommendation at, and with the support of the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board).

Executive Summary

2. In April 2025 Council agreed a number of changes to the Constitution. As part of that the threshold for a Key Decision for capital expenditure was increased to £2.0m.
3. Section 5 of the Financial Regulations which sets out the arrangements for Capital expenditure needs to be updated to align with the threshold for a Key Decision. It is proposed to increase the threshold for Cabinet approval for new inclusions and variations to the programme to £2.0m (from £1.0m). The Strategic Capital and Commercial Board would approve any expenditure above £0.5m up to £2.0m.

Background

4. The Financial Procedure Rules provide the framework for managing the council's financial affairs. They apply to every councillor and officer of the authority and anyone working at the council or acting on its behalf. As part of the Constitution, the Procedure Rules are maintained on the council's public website.
5. The Procedure Rules identify the key financial responsibilities of the Full Council, the Cabinet, Chief Executive, Executive Director of Resources and

Section 151 Officer, Directors and anyone working for or at the council. They are linked to other regulatory documents forming part of the council's Constitution, for example, contract regulation procedures.

6. Financial Regulations set out the council's financial policies and the framework for managing the council's financial affairs. They provide more detailed guidance on how the Financial Procedure Rules should be implemented in practice. They also identify the high-level financial controls within which all councillors and staff must operate. Regulations are maintained on the council's intranet. Note that schools within the county (with very few exceptions) should operate within the Finance Regulations for Schools, which closely reflect the council's Financial Regulations.
7. The Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer is the Council's Responsible Officer under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and is responsible for maintaining continuous review of the Financial Regulations and updating them, where necessary, for Council to approve.
8. The changes to the Constitution agreed by Council in April 2025, increased the threshold for Key Decisions to £1m revenue, and £2m capital, expenditure in line with inflation since the thresholds were first set.
9. Section 5 of the Financial Regulations explains the council's capital governance process and the arrangements for agreeing new inclusions in the capital programme and variations to existing schemes.
10. To enable consistency with the Key Decision threshold it is proposed to increase the Cabinet approval level for new inclusions or variations to £2.0m. This approval would be via the Capital Monitoring Report or the Capital Approvals Report, based on the recommendations by the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board and the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer.
11. Where the total estimated resource bid or allocation is between £0.500m and £2.000m the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer (following discussion and recommendation at, and with the support of the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board) can agree its inclusion into the capital programme. This will subsequently be reported to Cabinet.
12. Section 5.1.1 is also proposed to be updated to align with the key decision threshold of £2m and to add the following:

“In exceptional circumstances where there is a need to do exploratory work to determine very initial options for a potential scheme, up to £0.500m funding for exploratory feasibility works may be approved by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer (following discussion and recommendation at, and with the support of the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board) and reported to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation. This expenditure would be ahead of a firm scheme being included in the

capital programme so would need to be funded from revenue in the first instance.”.

Financial Implications

13. There are no significant financial implications arising from the proposed amendments to the Constitution.

Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance, kathy.wilcox@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

14. The recommendations in this report are consistent with the Council's duty under Section 9P of the Local Government Act 2000 to have a Constitution and keep it up to date. The Constitution must contain (a) a copy of the authority's standing orders for the time being, (b) a copy of the authority's code of conduct (if any) for the time being under section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 and (c) such information as the Secretary of State may direct, and (d) such other information (if any) as the authority considers appropriate. 10.
15. The Council's Constitution complies with The Local Government Act 2000 (Constitutions)(England) Direction 2000 issued on 12 December 2000 by the then Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. Part 1.2 of the Council's Constitution at 2(a) confirms that adopting and changing the Constitution is reserved to approval by the Council

Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer, anita.bradley@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

16. There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

17. There are no equality or inclusion implications arising from the report.

Risk Management

18. The capital programme will continue to be managed as part of a clear governance process with full transparency through the Strategic Capital & Commercial Board or Cabinet, as relevant.

Lorna Baxter, Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

Annex: Annex 1 – Financial Regulations with proposed changes

Background papers: N/a

Contact Officer: Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance October 2025

5. Capital

5.1 Capital resource allocation

The council sets its capital programme as part of the annual Budget and Business Planning document and determines its capital investment priorities based on an agreed set of principles as set out in the Capital and Investment Strategy.

No capital commitment will be made unless the initial resource allocation is confirmed within the [capital programme](#) approved by the council (either as a specified individual project or as part of a planned annual programme) or through the approval levels under section 5.1.1. This is the case for all capital projects and programmes regardless of the funding source identified, i.e. including those funded partly or fully by external grants, contributions, contingencies, revenue savings or reported capital surpluses.

The Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer jointly with the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board (made up of the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer with two Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) members; the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer plus at least one SLT member are required for the meeting to be quorate) will ensure the appropriate arrangements are in place to monitor the capital programme and resources, control expenditure against approved budgets, and address any problems of overspending or resource re-allocation.

The Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer will issue guidance as needed on governance and procedures.

5.1.1 New inclusions

New inclusions (including schemes which are met from new grants/funding bids) to the approved capital programme are subject to capital prioritisation by Cabinet. New inclusions outside of the annual budget and business planning process can be agreed as follows:

- Where the total estimated resource bid or allocation is £50,000 or less, the head of service (in consultation with the Finance Business Partner and Senior Planning and Reporting Accountant) can agree its inclusion in the capital programme.
- Where the total estimated resource bid or allocation is between £50,000 and £500,000, the service director and Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer (following discussion at, and with the support of the appropriate capital programme board) can agree its inclusion into the capital programme, and this will subsequently be reported to Cabinet.
- Where the total estimated resource bid or allocation is between £500,000 and £2,000,000, the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer (following discussion and recommendation at, and with the support of the [Strategic Capital and Commercial Board](#)) can agree its inclusion into the capital programme, and this will subsequently be reported to Cabinet.

- Where the total estimated resource bid or allocation is above £2,000,000, Cabinet can agree its inclusion into the capital programme via the periodic Capital Monitoring Report or Capital Approvals Report, based on the recommendations by the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board and the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer.
- The Leader of the Council may, in consultation with the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, approve any proposed change to the capital programme in advance of a report to Cabinet, where Cabinet approval is required. In these cases, funding must be agreed by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer and reported to Cabinet in due course.
- In all circumstances, the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer (or nominated representative) must confirm that the revenue implications of the project or the programme are affordable based on the current business case under consideration.
- A project which is included in the capital programme may still require separate and additional approval by the Cabinet/Cabinet member in its own right if it is a key decision. This will be for projects involving a capital spend of over £2,000,000, or alternatively, capital projects where the effect on two or more electoral divisions is considered to be 'significant' (seek advice from key.decisions@oxfordshire.gov.uk for further details).

In exceptional circumstances where there is a need to do exploratory work to determine very initial options for a potential scheme, up to £0.500m funding for exploratory feasibility works may be approved by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer (following discussion and recommendation at, and with the support of the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board) and reported to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation. This expenditure would be ahead of a firm scheme being included in the capital programme so would need to be funded from revenue in the first instance.

- The capital governance process is currently under review and therefore the above is an interim measure whilst this is being developed.

5.1.2 Capital governance process

Capital projects are managed across a series of defined stages, each one ending in a decision stage gateway (business case) and follow the governance framework as specified in 5.2.

The service managers responsible for the project or a programme delivery must ensure robust strategic and gateway reviews are undertaken and consultations with the relevant Cabinet members and key stakeholders are carried out in advance of business case approval.

The service managers are responsible for ensuring all business cases include evidence to support all expenditure forecasts (supplier quotes etc.), evidence of

reconciliation with initial business case for any prior year expenditure in the project profile and evidence to support funding quoted within the business case (previous business cases, approval emails from the planning obligations team etc.). They should be signed off by the relevant head of service, confirming the business case is complete, prior to obtaining a review and sign off from a member of the Finance Business Partnering team.

Initial business cases for programmes of works should list individual schemes including a budget, timescales, scope and description of the works for each scheme.

Smaller value or simpler projects may request to combine stages and decision points. This requires approval from the appropriate capital programme board.

All project and programme allocations in the capital programme must have an appropriate contingency allowance based on the risks associated with the project (and programme) and the decision stage gateway.

Upon approval of the outline business case, the project's (and programme) overall budget moves from provisional to final. This is confirmation that the project (or programme) can proceed and is the baseline against which all future performance is measured.

5.2 Capital expenditure

Provisional total project (and programme) budgets are allocated, and initial project (and programme) budgets are released (capital expenditure can be incurred) following either:

- The approval of the capital programme by the council where initial business cases are considered as part of the capital budget setting process
- or
- The approval of initial business cases where these are submitted and considered in year (outside of the capital budget setting process) subject to the levels set out in 5.1.2.

Each remaining phase of funding is released following the approval of an updated business case at each subsequent gateway (stage 1 outline business and stage 2 full business case), as follows:

- Where proposed projects have entered the capital programme under points above and remain in line with the original scope and timetable and can be delivered within the approved budget agreed by Council/Cabinet, its release can be agreed by the Service Director and Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Capital Programme Board.
- Where proposed projects have entered the capital programme under the points above, but require changes to any of the agreed scope, delivery timetable and approved budget, the appropriate capital programme board

and/or Strategic Capital and Commercial Board (depending on level) is responsible for determining the level at which approval must be sought in line with section 5.2.2 below.

- For forward funded schemes, the appropriate programme board is required to give consideration to the cash flow implications and risks associated with the funding source, and for the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer and Senior Planning and Reporting Accountant to issue guidance on the required governance.

5.2.1 Contractual commitments

Once a project is approved as per 5.1.2 and enters that capital programme, contractual capital commitments for project and programme delivery can be entered into in line with the capital approval levels set out in the [Scheme of Delegation](#), when the following conditions are satisfied:

- All sign offs required by the [Contract Procedure Rules](#) (CPRs) are in place and activities are compliant with CPRs
- Complies with the council's [key decision process](#)
- The relevant decision stage gateway (business case) covering the coming stage that contractual spend will occur has been approved in line with the approval levels set out in 5.1. and 5.2.2.

In all circumstances, the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer (or nominated representative) must confirm that the revenue implications of the project or the programme are affordable based on the current business case under consideration.

Where the programmes or projects include issuing capital grants or funding to third parties, officers should seek appropriate legal and financial advice, draw up a funding agreement and specify evidence required to demonstrate the capital spend and other related output measures.

Where there are changes to the tender figures or any other variations, this will fall within the provisions of section 5.2.2 below (and see [section 9](#) Income and Expenditure - Contracts for capital works).

5.2.2 Variation in time, cost and scope

Where any decision or other variation will (or may) produce an increase to the total cost of that project or programme (and/or variation to expected delivery period or scope), a change request form must be completed, and additional approvals must be sought in advance, as follows:

- Where the cumulative cost variation is less than £50,000, the Head of Service and Finance Business Partner in consultation with the Senior Planning and Reporting Accountant must approve the change.

- Where the cumulative variation is between £50,000 and £500,000 or the project forecasts a change to an end of gateway date or there is moderate (see note below) change to the scope then the service Finance Business Partner (following discussion at and the support of the appropriate capital programme board) must approve the change.
- Where the cumulative variation is between £500,000 and £2,000,000, or the project forecasts a delay that will affect final go-live / practical completion, or there is a significant change to scope then the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer (following discussion at and the support of the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board) must approve the change.
- Where the cumulative variation is over £2,000,000 Cabinet must approve the change.

The Leader of the Council may, in consultation with the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, approve any proposed change to the capital programme in advance of a report to Cabinet where Cabinet approval is required. In these cases, funding must be agreed by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer and reported to Cabinet in due course.

- If the cost variation is requesting additional corporate funds and if below £500,000 then the Deputy Section 151 Officer must approve the funding.
- If the cost variation is requesting additional corporate funds and is over £500,000 then this must be escalated to Strategic Capital and Commercial Board for in supporting an executive decision by the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer

A cumulative cost variation is the total amount of cost change that the project has requested since the outline business case was agreed including any current request and comply with the approval levels in 5.2.2.

Where a variation occurs at the very end of a stage, the change request can form part of the next business case document. Where such a change happens (or is foreseen) during a business case gateway, a change request document must be submitted for approval and comply with the approval levels in 5.2.2.

Services should explain (with evidence) the reasons for the reported variation and confirm their support to any scope changes in their change request form and provide proposed funding options to address the increased cost where relevant. Guidance and arbitration on what constitute a moderate or significant change of scope should be sought by the service from the appropriate capital programme board and/or Strategic Capital and Commercial Board (depending on level, in line with decision making).

Approval can be sought at a higher level in the Scheme of Delegation (such as escalating to the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer and the

Strategic Capital and Commercial Board) in all cases and where the viability and value for money of the scheme are threatened.

5.3 External contributions

All external funding applications for capital resources should be in line with the [Strategic Plan](#) objectives and be assessed against the agreed set of prioritisation principles for capital investment as set out in the Capital and Investment Strategy.

Service managers responsible for the application should seek approval from the respective capital programme board and the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board and/or Cabinet (in line with the approval thresholds as set out above at 5.1.1) about the proposed use of these resources and related implications prior to making an application.

In all circumstances, the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer (or nominated representative) must be notified and agree to all external funding applications and review the proposal on any implications to the council's asset and infrastructure base or the [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#). If external funding applications are successful, these will be reported to Cabinet for inclusion in the council's capital programme.

Where external contributions are restricted for specific purposes, they should be used for the purposes for which they are issued in line with the relevant funding agreements or grant conditions. Where external contributions are partially or fully flexible, their use is subject to capital prioritisation by Cabinet and approved subject to the levels set out at section 5.1.1.

Capital programme entry for externally funded programmes and projects requires, in addition to the requirements at section 5.1.1, a formal notification by or a formal agreement with the relevant funding body or third party. Where there is a need to expend resources in advance of receiving such notification or agreement, approval must be sought from the Executive Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer based on a risk assessment.

Approval and variation thresholds stated in sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 above also apply to programmes or projects that are fully or partially externally funded.

5.4 Contract insurance and caps on liabilities on capital design and construction contracts

The level of professional indemnity insurance required for each capital scheme is dependent upon the value of the project, the risk and potential value of any financial loss to the council and the cost for putting right.

The level of public liability insurance required for each capital scheme depends on the value of the project, the risk and potential value of any potential claim of compensation in respect of injury or property damage to a third party.

Indemnity clauses should be included within contracts for the design and construction of capital schemes to protect the council against any claims arising out of the contractor's failure to use the skill and care normally used by professionals providing the services.

Where possible limits of liability should not generally be capped within the contract. However, where there are any exceptions to this, a risk paper with an embedded financial risk assessment should be completed to determine the correct level of cover. Any cap must be agreed with the [Insurance Manager](#), [Deputy S151 Officer](#) and Finance Business Partner, and signed off by the service director.

As a preference the insurance policy held by the provider of the service should be on an 'each and every' claim basis. However, in an increasingly difficult insurance market contractors are finding it difficult to obtain such cover and therefore if required an alternative acceptable wording is; "in respect of any one claim or claims originating from the same source and in the aggregate in any annual policy period".

Where such wording 'in the aggregate', or wording to that effect is used it risks placing the Council at an increased financial risk and therefore where the supplier insists on such a policy this must be agreed with the Insurance Manager, Deputy S151 Officer and Finance Business Partner, and signed off by the service director based on a completed risk paper and risk assessment. [Risk assessment \(docx format, 22Kb\)](#).

Confirmation that the supplier holds and is maintaining the relevant levels of insurance detailed within the tender document must be confirmed before the contract starts and throughout the life of the contract.

5.5 Disposals of land and property

In respect of disposals of land and property, the processes followed should be robust and transparent and in accordance with current legislation. Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 specifies that surplus property should be sold on the open market for the best consideration that can reasonably be achieved.

5.5.1 Approval limits

The Director of Property Services should seek appropriate financial and legal advice before any disposal. The council's protocols concerning member engagement will be followed for all land and property disposals. Then, depending on the value of the disposal, different levels of approval are needed, as follows:

- Where the estimated disposal value is less than £500,000, the Director of Property Services may arrange for the disposal of land or property, in consultation and support with the Property Capital Programme Board, subject to complying with the requirement to record decisions by officers, as set out in the Constitution.

- Where the estimated disposal value is greater than £500,000, a decision by the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board is required to proceed with the disposal.
- Where the estimated disposal value of individual property assets is £1million or more, a decision by Cabinet is required to proceed with the disposal.

5.5.2 Discounted approval limits

Disposals may be at a discounted or 'undervalue' level, below the 'best consideration that can reasonably be obtained'. The General Disposal Consent 2003 gives local authorities the power to dispose of property at less than the full open market value without seeking the consent of the Secretary of State where such a sale contributes to the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the areas, and where the undervalue does not exceed £2m. Full market value can also include non-monetary consideration if:

- The service or accommodation contributes to one of the council's priorities
- Provided that a case is made that in effect justifies the 'expenditure' of the foregone receipt in accordance with the normal processes for the allocation of capital resources.

In these cases, disposals can be controversial therefore local circumstances and the scale of the discount in price should be considered when deciding who should make the final decision to sell and additional financial and legal advice should be sought.

In general:

- Where the 'undervalue' is less than £50,000, the Director of Property Services may arrange for the disposal of the land or property.
- Where the 'undervalue' is between £50,000 and £500,000, the Director of Property Services must prepare a report to the Property Capital Programme Board requesting approval to proceed with the disposal.
- Where the 'undervalue' is £500,000 or more a report to the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board requesting approval to proceed with the disposal is required.
- Where the 'undervalue' is over £1m Cabinet must approve the disposal. Approval can be sought at a higher level in all cases as agreed by the Director of Property Services and the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board.

All capital receipts generated through the disposal of land or property assets are treated as a corporate resource and used to support the capital programme unless it is specifically agreed otherwise by Cabinet based on recommendations by the Strategic Capital and Commercial Board. Capital: Oxfordshire County Council - Financial Regulations
November 2024

5.6 Transfers of property assets (land and property)

The process followed for the transfer of property and land assets should be robust and transparent and in accordance Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 and any related council's policies ([Community Asset Transfer Policy](#)).

The Director of Property Services should seek appropriate financial and legal advice before any transfer. Then, depending on the estimated loss of income due to the transfer of the property assets, different levels of approval are needed. These are through the approval levels under section 5.5.2.

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Divisions Affected - All

FULL COUNCIL 4 November 2025

Youth Justice Annual Plan 2025-26

Report by the Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Council is RECOMMENDED to adopt Oxfordshire's Annual Youth Justice Plan 2025-2026.

Executive Summary

2. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the minimum statutory requirements for Youth Justice Services. The statutory aim of the Youth Justice system is to prevent children from offending. Section 39 of the Crime & Disorder Act requires the cooperation of named statutory partners and places a duty on them to cooperate to secure and deliver youth justice services appropriate to the area. These partners are:
 - The Local Authority (inclusive of Children's Social Care & Education)
 - The Police
 - The Probation Service
 - Health
3. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act sets out the youth justice partnership's statutory responsibility to produce a youth justice plan. The local Youth Justice Partnership Management Board governs and owns the process of producing this plan to collectively shape the direction of youth justice delivery so that it best meets the needs of the locality, children, families, victims and communities.
4. The youth justice plan structure is proscribed by the Youth Justice Board statutory guidance and must outline progress against the previous year's priorities, performance data, a plan for the forthcoming year and how the partnership is meeting its statutory responsibilities against the Youth Justice National Standards for Children and the national Key Performance Indicators.

The core priorities for Oxfordshire's youth justice service for 2025-26 are:

- Working in partnership to develop the prevention & diversion offer in Oxfordshire, which will support a reduction in First Time Entrants.

- Working in partnership to improve outcomes for children with SEND in the youth justice system in Oxfordshire.
- Working in partnership to improve support for arrested children.
- Working in partnership to address over-representation and disproportionality for justice-involved children in Oxfordshire.
- Working in partnership to effectively support victims of youth crime in Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Annual Plan 2025-26

5. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Plan 2024-25 was agreed at Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Management Partnership Management Board and approved by its previous Chair. It covers both strategic and operational delivery arrangements and the agreed key strategic priorities for 2025-26. The plan was submitted to the Youth Justice Board for the deadline on 31st June 2025.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

6. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice plan aligns with delivery of the council's corporate strategy priorities to:
 - Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire
 - Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential
 - Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents

Financial Implications

7. The production of Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Annual Plan is a statutory requirement of the Youth Justice Board's grant terms and conditions. The Youth Justice Board grant provision is outlined in Section 41 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Comments checked by:

Lewis Gosling, Assistant Finance Business Partner,
Lewis.gosling@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

8. Section 40(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 ("the Act") provides that: (1) It shall be the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the relevant persons and bodies, to formulate and implement for each year a plan (a "youth

justice plan") setting out: (a) how youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded; and (b) how the youth offending team or teams established by them (whether alone or jointly with one or more other local authorities) are to be composed and funded, how they are to operate, and what functions they are to carry out.

In accordance with Regulation 4(1) and Schedule 3 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 the Plan is to be referred to Full Council for ultimate consideration and adoption.

There are no direct potential legal implications contained within this report.

Comments checked by:

Craig Cochrane, Head of Law and Legal Business Partner,
craig.cochrane@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

9. There are no direct HR implications contained within this report.

Comments checked by:

Michelle Higgs, Strategic People Partner Children's and Education,
michelle.higgs@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality & Inclusion Implications

10. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice partnership is committed to addressing disproportionality and overrepresentation of minoritized groups of children in the justice system in Oxfordshire. We are duty bound to consider and be responsive to the protected characteristics of all children receiving Youth Justice services in Oxfordshire.

Sustainability Implications

11. There is no current sustainability implications associated with either the contents or recommendations of this report.

Risk Management

12. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Partnership Management Board reviews its Risk Register on a quarterly basis as set out in the Annual Plan on pages 23-25.

Lisa Lyons
Director of Children's Services

Annex: Oxfordshire Youth Justice Service Annual Plan

Contact Officer: Jessie Dobson
Service Manager: Adolescence and Prevention
jessie.dobson3@oxfordshire.gov.uk

October 2025

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1. Introduction, vision and strategy

Chair's Foreward

I have great pleasure in presenting this foreward to the Oxfordshire Youth Justice Plan for 2025-26. The plan sets out our priorities for the coming year and beyond, and at a practical level describes how we will go about responding to the challenge of providing excellent youth justice services by harnessing the potential of the whole partnership of agencies who have responsibilities in this area.

The government and our regulators have spelt out in some detail what they expect of us from a national perspective. We are still required to demonstrate in all our action that we are aware that the children with whom we work are first and foremost children, the impacts of which are clearly laid out in the four tenets of 'Child First' in Chapter 4 of this plan. However, at the same time the government has increasingly required us to ensure we have a strong focus also on victims. We already have excellent 'Restorative Justice' services to bring victims and children who have offended together to build understanding, reconciliation, and repair. But we are now required to go beyond this and ensure that, across the partnership, first rate services and responses are available to victims of youth crime. This is a challenge on which we are enthusiastically embarked.

Another priority, as it has been in past years, is to understand why some groups of children are more prone to be represented in the youth justice system and to ensure there is no bias in our system. This is what we call the 'over-representation challenge' and our plan describes fresh initiatives to address this, to understand why some groups of children are over-represented at various stages in our services, and to reduce this where it is a result of unfair prejudices.

We will be more focused than previously on preventing offending and diverting children from crime. Our proportions of children becoming part of the formal youth justice system are higher than comparable areas and we are alert to the dangers that unnecessary exposure to the formal system can have for children in terms of their self-identity and development. So, reducing the number of children entering our system, our 'first time entrants', is a central aspect of our plan and we will not rest until we are out-performing comparative areas.

We also aim to improve outcomes for children who offend, particularly in terms of the clusters of their needs which we can broadly describe as 'health' needs. We freely acknowledge that there is more that we need to do to ensure such needs are identified and then met by our partners, with the ambition that by so doing we will reduce some of the root causes of children's offending behaviour.

We will also focus more closely this coming year on what happens to children after initial contact with the Police, again with the aim of ensuring that we learn from best practice elsewhere to ensure that such work is purposeful, free from unnecessary delays, and contribute to our aim of reducing further offending and delivering a high-quality service to victims.

In all of this we aim to support and resource our excellent staff well in undertaking this most difficult of work, and we will ensure we are open to the messages from the front line of our services, as well as listening to the voices of children, their families, victims of crime and our communities.

Therefore, our overarching partnership priorities for 2025-26 are:

- Working in partnership to develop the prevention & diversion offer in Oxfordshire, which will support a reduction in First Time Entrants
- Working in partnership to improve outcomes for children with SEND in the youth justice system in Oxfordshire
- Working in partnership to improve support for arrested children
- Working in partnership to address over-representation and disproportionality for justice-involved children in Oxfordshire
- Working in partnership to effectively support victims of youth crime in Oxfordshire

John Drew, CBE

Introduction

1. Oxfordshire's Youth Justice Service has the highest aspirations for Oxfordshire's children, and we will support them to achieve their full potential whilst protecting them, their families and the public from harm. We will achieve this by working in a restorative and relational way:
 - Listening to children, parents/carers, victims of crime and our communities and ensuring their feedback informs service delivery
 - Providing solutions to youth justice issues at an individual and local level and through collaboration with partners
 - Working in partnership to ensure the best possible outcomes for our children and victims of crime and to ensure that their individual needs are met
 - Identify and address disparity and disproportionality within the youth justice system in Oxfordshire and in collaboration with regional partners
2. This Youth Justice Plan 2025-26 has been developed in collaboration with those who use our service, our staff and volunteers and our Youth Justice Partnership Management Board through whole-service workshops and a digital survey. The plan reflects our 'Child First' thinking and ambitions to improve the life chances of children in all our communities through an integrated and effective partnership approach.
3. Our children and their families/carers come from a wide range of diverse backgrounds with varied lived experience that shape their identity. We understand our responsibility in responding to diversity through inclusive, anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice. Improving our engagement with children and families/carers

will support them to feel more empowered in their interactions with our organisations and build trust and confidence in our services. Our strengths-based and person-centred approach recognises the rights and needs of our children and families, as well as the rights and needs of victims of crime and our local communities.

4. This plan represents our commitment in Oxfordshire to continually challenge ourselves to improve the quality of services and provision for children who offend in our county and ensure that Child First principles are embedded in all that we do.

Vision & Strategy

5. Our organisational values underpin everything we say and do. They mean we are:
 - Always learning
 - Kind and caring
 - Treating each other equally and have integrity in all we do
 - Taking responsibility
 - Daring to do things differently
6. We are committed to providing the right support from the right service at the earliest opportunity to intervene and divert children away from the Criminal Justice System. We recognise the interdependencies of the youth justice agenda within wider strategies such as the Early Help & Prevention and Harm outside the Home Strategies, which are underpinned by Oxfordshire County Council's Children & Young People's Strategic plan 2024-28.
7. Oxfordshire is a Marmot County and the underpinning principle of tackling social determinants of health inequalities supports our partnership priorities to give every child in our County the best start in life and address root causes of disparity and disproportionality. Oxfordshire's Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2024-30 sets out how the Health & Wellbeing Board will help Oxfordshire's residents stay healthy, well and cared for. The Children's Trust Board oversees key areas of multi-agency strategic planning for children, and reports into the Health & Wellbeing Board. The issue of First Time Entrants has been highlighted as a key priority for the Children's Trust Board in overarching governance over the Youth Justice Service.
8. Oxfordshire County Council has been a Family Safeguarding Approach authority since 2020. The core pillars of the approach, discussed later in the plan, are already well-embedded within Youth Justice where multi-disciplinary teams use motivational interviewing and restorative practice to support children, families and victims of crime.
9. In 2024-25 Children's Services in Oxfordshire re-aligned the former Youth Justice & Exploitation Service alongside the Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS) and developed a model of three distinct teams to form a new Adolescence & Prevention Service. The service includes youth justice, harm outside the home, our National Referral Mechanism devolved decision-making pilot and targeted youth work. Although each team has its own unique functions, this new model will support the alignment and strengthen delivery of prevention and diversion of children at risk of

entering the criminal justice system in our County and provide a comprehensive and evidence-based response to harm outside the home. The service offer reduces potential duplication and will provide children with consistent relationships with trusted adults, evidence-based interventions and support at times they need it most. The vision for the service moving forwards is for the teams to work to shared priorities to provide a preventative, integrated offer across a child's journey through adolescence, regardless of starting point, so they receive the right support at the right time.

Local Context

10. Most recent data from the Office for National Statistics (2023) estimated that there were 171,655 children aged 0–19 living in Oxfordshire. Of these, 90,859 were aged 10–19 and therefore above the age of criminal responsibility. This represents a 2.78% increase in the number of children over the age of criminal responsibility compared to 2022.
11. Oxfordshire generally has lower levels of deprivation and child poverty compared to other areas in the Southeast. However, there are significant variations across the county, with some areas experiencing notable deprivation. Recent challenges affecting families and children include:
 - Rising unemployment
 - Increased rental costs
 - Growing numbers of households in fuel poverty

These factors are likely to negatively impact children living in affected households. In 2023–2024, a total of 19,591 children in Oxfordshire were living in low-income households. Of these, 9,624 children (49%) were aged 10–19 (source: JSNA, 2023).

12. Between 2018 and 2023, the most common age group for committing offences in Oxfordshire was 18 to 21 years old. However, in 2024, there has been a noticeable shift. The peak age group for several serious offence types—including criminal damage, sexual offences, and violence (both with and without injury)—has dropped to children aged just 13 to 15. For anti-social behaviour, the most affected age group is even younger, at 11 to 14 years old. At the same time, the age profile of victims has also changed. In 2024, there was a sharp rise in the number of 10 to 18-year-olds who were victims of violent crimes. This was followed by an increase in sexual victimisation among children aged 10 to 15. Together, these trends suggest that child-on-child offending is becoming more common and is emerging at younger ages in Oxfordshire (Oxfordshire Strategic Needs Assessment, 2025). This has implications for the youth justice partnership in the paramount importance of prevention and early intervention.
13. The most prevalent offence types by children in Oxfordshire continues to be violence against the person and drug offences, continuing the trend from previous years. The two most urbanised districts in the county, Oxford and Cherwell, had the highest count of crimes per capita in 2024, with acquisitive crime and violence with and without injury being the most prevalent crime types.

14. In the year ending 2024, a total of 207 children in Oxfordshire received a caution or sentence. The majority - 82% - were White, followed by 9% of mixed heritage, 4% Black, and 3% Asian. While White children made up the largest proportion of those involved in the youth justice system in Oxfordshire, it is children of mixed heritage who were the most over-represented when compared to their share of the general 10–17-year-old population. They accounted for 9% of the offending group but only 7% of the wider age group in Oxfordshire. Despite this over-representation, the Youth Justice Board's Disparity Toolkit does not flag it as statistically significant. This pattern reflects a broader trend seen across the Thames Valley, where both Black and Mixed heritage children are over-represented in the youth offending population. However, in both cases, the differences remain below the 5% threshold used by the YJB to indicate significant disparity between the offending and general populations of 10–17-year-olds.

15. Children of mixed heritage were 1.4 times more likely to be cautioned or sentenced than white children in Oxfordshire. White children were most likely to have committed a serious offence, whilst the most frequent proven offence committed by Black children were violence against the person offences (YJB Disparity Toolkit, 2023-24). 82% of children within the youth justice cohort in 2023-24 were children of White ethnicities.

16. Rising support needs in schools:

- The number of children receiving school support for special educational needs (SEN)—particularly for social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH)—has been steadily increasing.
- This rise is seen both nationally and in Oxfordshire, with Oxfordshire's growth outpacing the national trend.

School attendance:

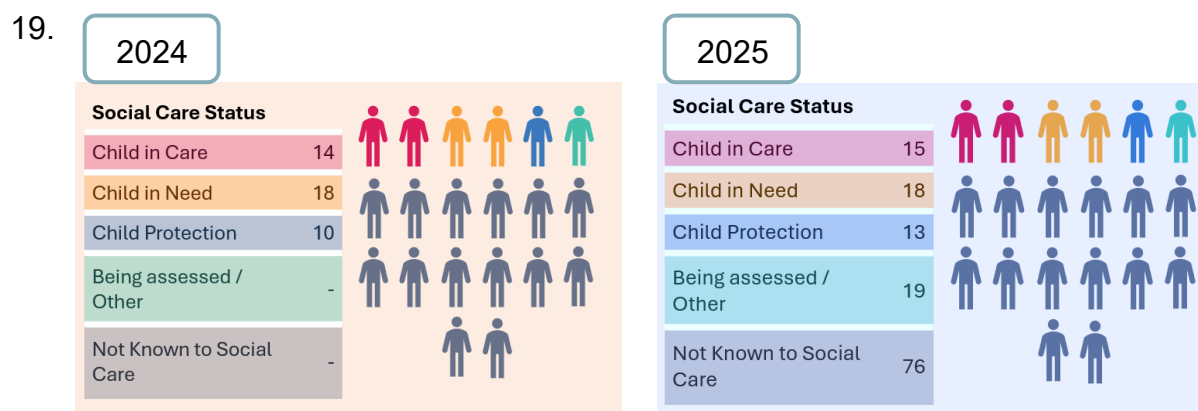
- In 2022–2023, over 22,000 pupils (20%) in Oxfordshire were classified as persistent absentees.
- This is an increase from 13.5% in 2020–2021.
- Mental health remains a key factor contributing to low attendance across schools.

Post-16 education and employment:

- In 2024, Oxfordshire achieved a lower percentage of 16- and 17-year-olds not in education, employment, or training (NEET) compared to both regional and national averages.
- Boys were more likely to be NEET than girls (source: JSNA, 2023).

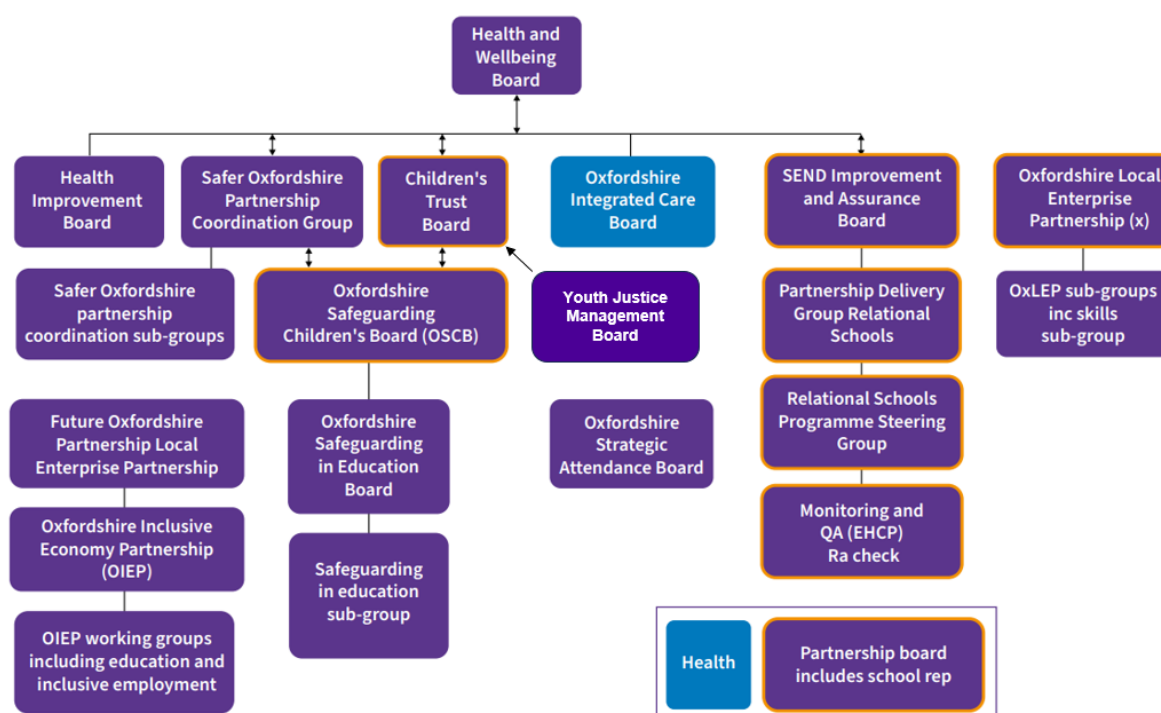
17. As of May 2025, Oxfordshire has 796 children in Local Authority care, 74 of which are unaccompanied children. This figure is 4% higher than last year but is still average compared with our statistical neighbours. Oxfordshire has 546 children on Child Protection plans which is a 4% increase on this time last year. Again, this is average when compared to our statistical neighbours.

18. As of 31st March 2025, 65 of the 141 children open to Youth Justice were also receiving support from Children's Social Care, representing 46% of the cohort. However, the largest proportion of these children were either under assessment or recorded with a status of 'other' —a category not included in last year's data. The 'other' category includes children who technically have an open referral but don't fit into a standard category. Excluding this group, 32% of the Youth Justice cohort were on statutory plans, compared to 27% the previous year, indicating an increase of 5%.

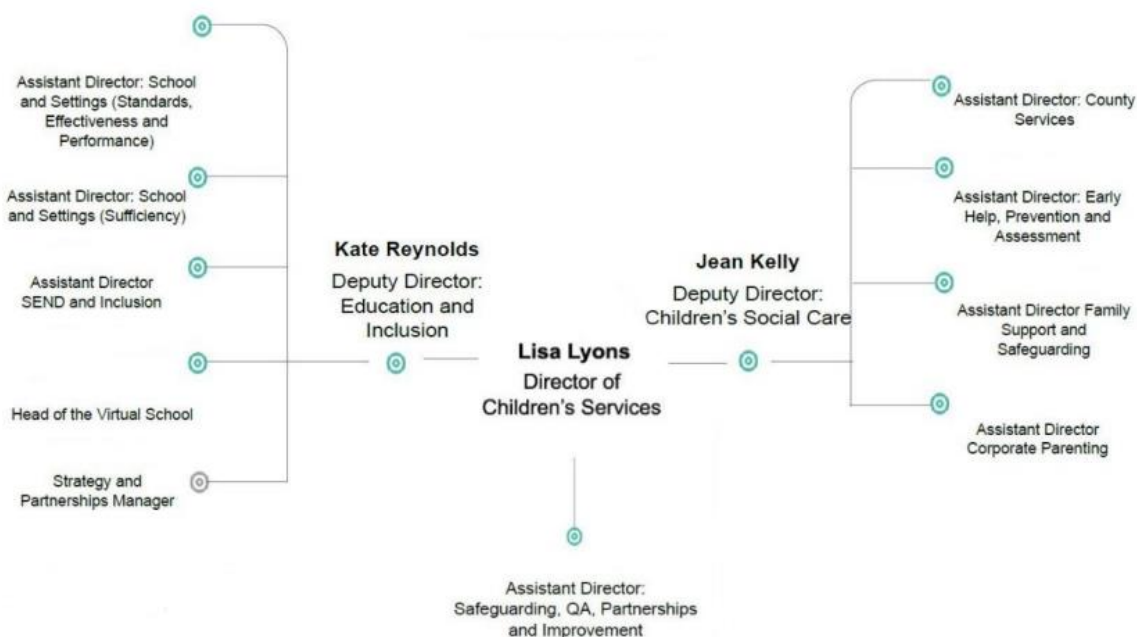


2. Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

Key Strategic Partnerships & Boards



Children's Service's leadership structure



Service location

20. The Youth Justice Service (YJS) is located within Oxfordshire's Children Education and Families Directorate (CEF) under the Assistant Director for Early Help, Prevention and Assessment. The YJS has been moved into a new Adolescence & Prevention Service alongside Children's Services' harm outside the home and targeted youth work teams.

Strategic Partnerships

21. Oxfordshire Youth Justice Management Board is a multi-agency partnership and is currently chaired by an Independent Chair. Its membership comprises key stakeholders from: the Local Authority, Thames Valley Police (TVP), Oxford Health NHS Trust, The Probation Service (PS), Fire & Rescue, the voluntary & community sector (VCS) and Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunal Service (HMCTS).
22. The service and Board priorities are aligned with key strategic partnership priorities for preventing offending and re-offending by children and tackling serious violence and exploitation in the county, including the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Violence & Vulnerability strategy, the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's response to exploitation, and the Police and Crime Commissioner's Plan for 2021-25.
23. The service is strategically represented on the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership Coordination Group (SOPCG), which oversees the County's Violence and Vulnerability strategy and delivery plan. Through this, the Youth Justice Service

plays a statutory role in implementing violence reduction approaches under the Serious Violence Duty.

Head of Service remit and responsibilities

24. The designated senior manager for Youth Justice is the Service Manager for the Adolescence and Prevention Service, who has a portfolio including Youth Justice, Targeted Youth Support and harm outside the home. The Service Manager reports to the Assistant Director for Prevention, Early Help & Assessment in Children's Services. The Service Manager is the strategic lead for Youth Justice, Exploitation and Missing Children within Oxfordshire's Children's Services. The Service Manager represents Children's Services at the Thames Valley Violence Prevention Partnership Strategic Board and Safer Oxfordshire's Partnership Co-ordination group.

Operational partnerships

25. Between 2022 – 2024 the County's Violence Reduction Coordinator was co-located within Youth Justice. The focus of the role was to align key strategic and operational plans across the local partnership around the youth crime and violence reduction agenda, and support partnership readiness in implementation of the Serious Violence Duty. Oxfordshire now has a well-developed response under the Duty and the functions of this temporary role have been mainstreamed into the work of our Community Safety partners for sustainability. The Adolescence and Prevention Service will be a key partner in delivery of preventative approaches around children in the County's Violence & Vulnerability strategy and delivery plan.
26. Thames Valley Police, Health, Children's Social Care, Education and Family Help are represented at the Youth Justice Safety Panel and Joint Decision-Making Panel, supporting effective information-sharing, oversight, partnership-working and accountability in keeping children and our communities safe. As a result of the SEND Quality Mark process, we now have a representative from SEND at YJ Safety Panel which has improved discussions and planning around children with Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCP). An example of this has been ensuring there is effective and timely information sharing when a child moves in and out of County and their EHCP is transferred between authorities, which can cause delays in the child's access to appropriate provision.
27. The Youth Justice and Exploitation Service has been a long-standing member of the Sexual Violence & Exploitation Network (SVEN) led by local victim support charity SAFE! Representation in this network will continue via the new harm outside the home team within our Adolescence & Prevention Service. The YJS has many useful links to voluntary and community sector organisations (whose social impact commitments are aligned with our Child First principles) through our Turnaround Programme, Reparation and Unpaid Work placements to support children's access to interactions, activities and roles for positive identity development.

28. Berkshire Health NHS Trust provide delivery of Liaison and Diversion services in Oxfordshire in providing assessment and some interventions to children at the point of contact in Police custody for diverting children into health or other services, as appropriate. The service benefits from longstanding collaboration and child-centred partnership working with Oxfordshire's Forensic CAMHS teams.
29. Oxfordshire YJS made a successful bid in 2023 for Oxfordshire to become part of the National Referral Mechanism devolved decision-making pilot. Our local panel is chaired by the NRM Coordinator whose role sits within the new harm outside the home team (and previously within the combined Youth Justice & Exploitation Service) and involves training and participation of statutory partners in Police, Health and Social Care.
30. The Education, Employment and Training (EET) Service provide post-16 tracking of participation in EET and support one to one casework opportunities for post-16 young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of NEET up until the September after their 18th birthday. The YJS works closely alongside the EET service in support of our children's needs, and we regularly share our caseload data to ensure outcomes for justice-involved children are effectively tracked and monitored.
31. The service is integrated into wider children's services with strong joint-working arrangements across Children's Social Care and Education for children with voluntary and statutory plans and intervention. This includes joint supervision, multi-agency auditing and inspection readiness activity and development of integrated performance reporting.

3. Update on the previous year

a. Progress on priorities

32. The service has a comprehensive Service Improvement Plan which is reviewed and updated on a quarterly basis which includes outcome-focused actions, leads and timescales. The service is also working to a YJB Improvement Plan for assurance and oversight of our work to improve our First Time Entrant performance.

Key outcomes:

17% reduction in
FTE rate from
June 2024

SEND Quality
Mark achieved
Dec 2024

Turnaround target
of 104 children
reached

NRM decision-making period reduced to 50 days through local pilot (stat guidance states 90 days)

84 NRM referrals received in 2024-25, 31 Positive Conclusive Grounds decisions made at local panel to date

30 deferred cautions approved since TVP pilot went live in March 2025

Delivered training on Youth Justice to over 200 students and apprentices and newly qualified Social Workers

Rolled out Act Now project in Jan 2025 to support children arrested for knife crime

Hosted an Educational Psychology placement to support the service's review of SEND practice

Oxfordshire YJS worked with Coram BAAF & Sylvia Ikomi to develop resources to raise awareness of adultification – these will be shared in spaces such as Police stations

The YJS Restorative Justice lead has supported the roll-out of Oxfordshire's Relational Schools programme which has now reached 43 schools

Effective practice submissions from our Turnaround project recognised by the Ministry of Justice

Service Priorities 2024-25	Agreed Actions	Progress in June 2025	RAG	Barriers & mitigation
Disproportionality	Refresh of Partnership Disproportionality Action Plan.	Consultation with Liminality Group on refresh of Disproportionality Action Plan in July 2025.	Partially achieved	Delay in securing partnership facilitation for refresh of Action Plan. Action Plan scheduled for review in July 2025.
	Stand-up task and finish group responsible for driving activity to ensure Board oversight and partnership accountability.	Board/Service away day held in June 2024 with focus on disproportionality and adultification.	Partially achieved	Delay in securing partnership facilitation for task-and-finish group. Board Chair to drive partnership accountability and ownership of this strategic priority.
		Liminality Group commissioned to delivery disparities training to service in June 2025.	Completed	Disproportionality training has taken place with the service June 2025.
First Time Entrants	In July 2024, Oxfordshire launched an Improvement Plan after being placed in quadrant 3 of the YJB Oversight	YJS' and TVP collaborated on development of Joint Decision-Making Panel (JDMP) guidance for consistency	Completed	Improvements made in relation to FTE locally, but ongoing improvement work is taking place with YJB to monitor impact and reduce rate in line with statistical family.

	Framework, primarily due to persistently high First Time Entrant rates.	across Thames Valley.		
		Thames Valley Police have agreed a 12-month pilot for deferred cautions which went live in March 2025. Oxfordshire's JDMP has recommended deferred cautions for 30 to date.	Ongoing	This pilot is a positive step towards evidence-based diversion for children in Oxfordshire and impact and outcomes will be closely monitored and reported to Board.
		Oxfordshire YJS participation in Thames Valley Scrutiny Panel of out-of-court decision making for feedback and learning.	Completed	Oxfordshire YJS continues to participate in the Thames Valley Scrutiny Panel and share learning back into the service to inform practice.
		Oxfordshire was successful in reach of MOJ	Completed	Funding secured through OPCC for 2 years until 2027

		Turnaround target of 104 children and has successfully bid to the OPCC for 2-year funding to continue the model.		
		The service has been brought in alignment with Targeted Youth Work and Exploitation to develop an adolescent service offer from prevention through to specialist support.	Completed	Alignment of the YJS into a new Adolescence & Prevention Service is focusing plans for an integrated prevention response.
		Since June 2024 Oxfordshire's FTE rate has reduced by 17% from 215 to 178, though it remains higher than our statistic family	Partially achieved	To gain a better understanding of our high FTE rates we have scrutinised our data and done deep-dive into individual children who received Youth Cautions or Youth Conditional Cautions in the last quarter, to scrutinise decision-making. This information has been shared with the YJB, who have also observed one of our Joint Decision-Making Panels, with positive feedback on our child-centred approach and robust multi-agency discussions.

		and regional rate.		
Participation	Align Youth Justice participation with wider Children's Services approaches	Youth Justice has worked closely with the Principal Social Worker in Children's Services to develop a YJ Participation Strategy to ensure alignment with other youth voice and engagement forums.	Ongoing	Work to continue as part of participation approaches within new Adolescence & Prevention Service.
		The Participation Strategy and a term of reference for a Youth Shadow Board were ratified at the YJ Board in Jan 2025.	Completed	Next steps will be to progress key aims of our Participation Strategy for 2025-26.
Exploitation	Continue impact and outcome reporting on local National Referral Mechanism devolved	Oxfordshire's NRM devolved decision-making pilot continues to be successful in achieving positive	Completed	Our local devolved decision-making pilot will continue to report outcomes and impact into the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Child Exploitation sub-group. The NRM Coordinator role will sit within the new harm outside the home team.

	decision-making pilot.	outcomes for children and we have presented data on our local pilot to the Thames Valley Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) and the LCJB Children's sub-group.		
	Embed harm outside the home strategy within Children's Services.	Children's Services are developing an adolescent offer with a clear framework for contextual safeguarding and extra-familial harm.	Completed	New offer for children experiencing harm outside the home to be launched July 2025 in line with refreshed strategy – progress and impact will be monitored for across Children's Social Care and as part of the wider prevention agenda.
Education & SEND	Complete the SEND Quality Mark self-assessment.	The service completed the SEND Quality Mark self-assessment in December 2024 and achieved Quality Mark status.	Completed	The SEND Quality Mark has been achieved, and improvement plans are incorporated into our Service Improvement Plan for 2025-26.

Policing	Work with TVP to raise awareness and ensure consistent use of overnight remand thresholds and support appropriate bail condition planning.	YJ Team Manager now attends Children in Custody meetings to review and scrutinise data on overnight remands. Work is underway to bring this data to Board quarterly.	Ongoing	There is renewed commitment from TVP to provide quarterly data on Oxfordshire children held overnight in Police custody to the Board for oversight and scrutiny.
		The YJ Team Manager has engaged with the Oxfordshire Custody Inspector to review and discuss application of remand thresholds.	Completed	Discussions have taken place to provide clarity of understanding around application of remand thresholds under PACE in Police custody and under LASPO (2012) in Court. Closer joint-working between the partnership is due to be taken forward within the Remand Working Group for 2025-26 to support TVP risk assessments around bail.
	Deliver OPCC (Office of Police and Crime Commissioner) 'Act Now' as early intervention response for to	We have been running 'Act Now' since Jan 2025 and in June 2025 will have two full-time practitioners in	Ongoing	The Act Now project began in January 2025 and will be fully staffed by June 2025. Demand quickly exceeded capacity and, as a result, the Youth Justice Service implemented and notified the OPCC of interim measures to prevent any negative impact on statutory service delivery. Notably, the demand projected using 2023–24 data increased by two-thirds within the first quarter of 2025.

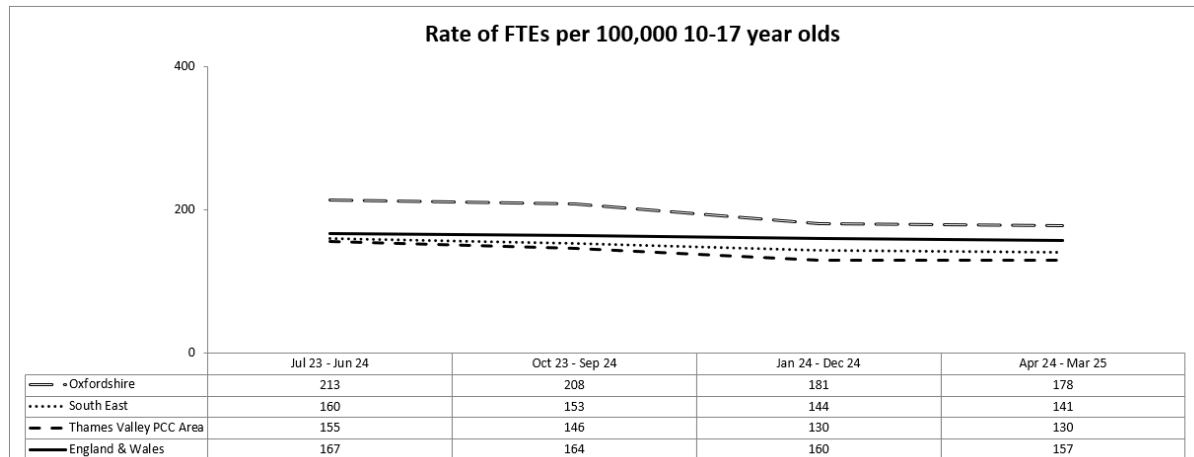
	children in Police custody for knife possession.	post. We are currently supporting 36 children under this project.		Act Now is a fixed-term project and ongoing delivery will depend on future funding arrangements. Consideration will be given to any contingency and sustainability planning moving forward.
	Embed pathway for effective use of 'Outcome 22' in Oxfordshire's Pre-Court decision-making.	Outcome 22 was approved for use in Thames Valley in June 2024.	Completed	Outcome 22 was included as an available outcome for children within the Thames Valley Police Out of Court Decision Making Guidance, published in 2024.
	Ensure effective interface between YJ and the new TVP Harm Reduction Unit in child-centred decision-making and practice.	Youth Justice ATM has delivered training to HRU Sergeants and Schools PCs on out-of-court diversion and child-centred practice	Ongoing	The YJS has established positive working relationships with new colleagues within the Oxfordshire Harm Reduction Unit (HRU). HRU Sergeants have attended our JDMP to learn and observe, and we have delivered training to the Harm Reduction Unit (inclusive of Schools PCs) on children and out-of-court decision-making.
Workforce Development	Targeted recruitment campaign to improve diversity of volunteers.	We currently have 39 volunteers and have recruited 18 volunteers over the last year. This includes some existing volunteers who have taken on	Ongoing	Recruitment of volunteers is an ongoing task, and we remain committed to reflecting our diverse local population within the workforce that see and interact with our children. We have had success in recruitment in 2024 despite significant national challenges in volunteering.

		additional roles to include Referral Order Panels and Appropriate Adults.		
	Undertake a skills audit of youth justice staff to inform a new Workforce Development Plan.	Due to the service alignment under a new Adolescent Service umbrella of teams, the Workforce Development Plan is pending, to be informed by review of the needs of this new adolescent workforce.	Ongoing	Workforce Development plan to be aligned under new Adolescence & Prevention service.
Evidence-based and effective practice	Using learning from Turnaround evaluation and FTE audit - build on our learning around effective prevention and diversionary practice informing targeted	YJB Improvement Plan to reduce FTEs and develop our prevention offer has been monitored since Sept 2024 with monthly progress reporting to YJB.	Partially achieved	Learning from FTE data and Turnaround is informing our developing prevention offer. Our YJB Improvement Plan remains under regular scrutiny for impact.

	approach of interventions to reduce FTE's.			
	Implement Relational Case Management.	We have not renewed our local Relational Case Management pilot. Our practice continues to be informed by formulation with Forensic CAMHS.	Completed	Reduction in FCAMHS capacity in 2024 has led to review of need for pilot and adaptation of offer within resource constraints. We continue to work very closely with an excellent offer of support from our FCAMHS colleagues, and clinical case formulation is already embedded within our practice. We have reviewed the impact reporting from the Enhanced Case Management and alongside FCAMHS incorporated the Trauma Recovery Model into our existing formulation framework.

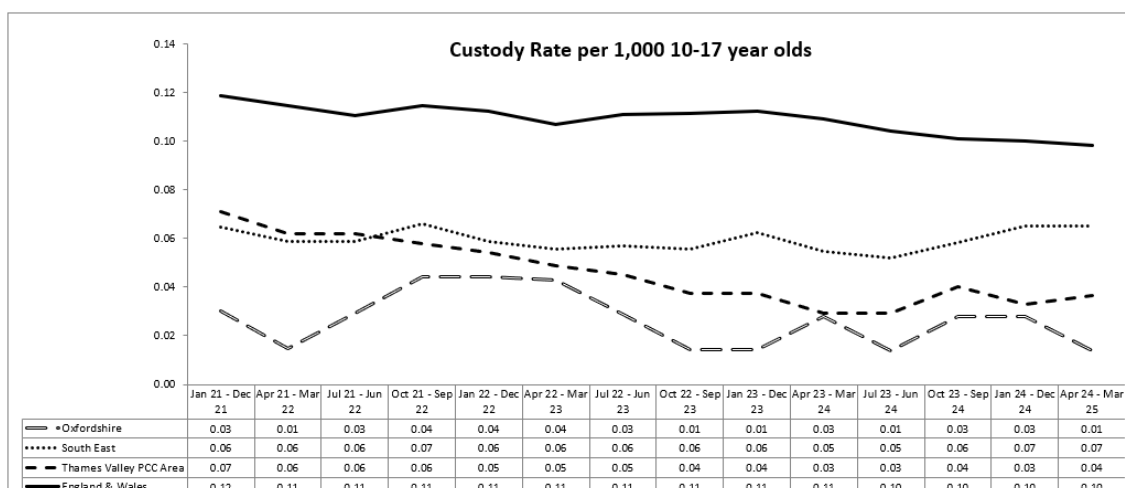
b. Performance over previous year

First Time Entrants



33. Since June 2024, Oxfordshire's First Time Entrant (FTE) rate has declined each quarter, resulting in a 17% overall reduction—from 215 to 178. This equates to a decrease from 154 to 128 individual children. For this duration Oxfordshire Youth Justice Service has been implementing an Improvement Plan in response to the YJB moving the service from Performance Quadrant 2 to Performance Quadrant 3 under its Oversight Framework. The Improvement Plan has seen progress made across staffing capacity, managerial capacity, success in reaching Turnaround targets, the availability of deferred cautions in Thames Valley and the alignment of the service under a new Adolescence & Prevention service area, which will increase and enhance the prevention offer to children in Oxfordshire. The Board Chair and service managers are meeting with the Centre for Justice Innovation (CJI) in June 2025 to explore enhanced support from the CJI to Oxfordshire YJS and Thames Valley Police around effective diversion. The service has a target to bring our FTE rate in line with the regional rate by December 2025.

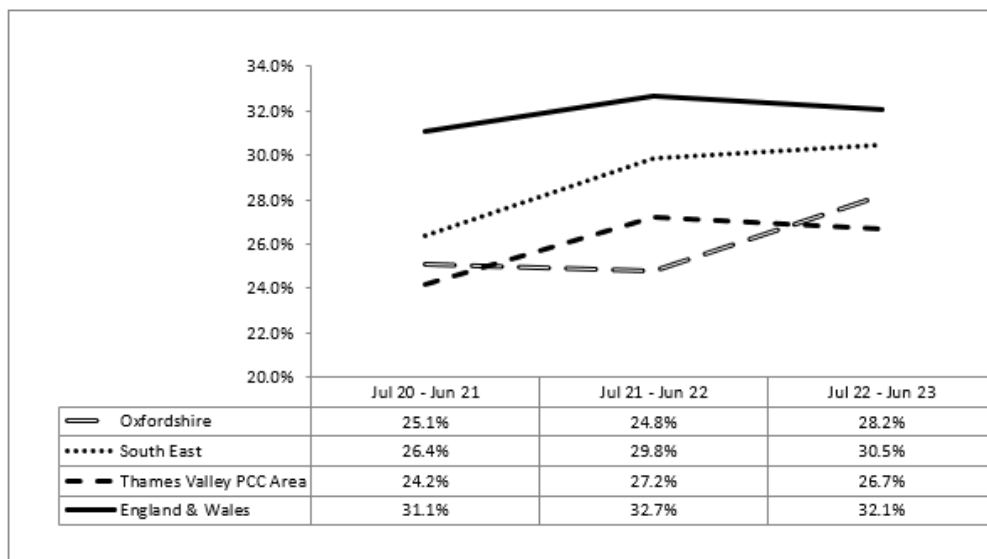
Use of Custody



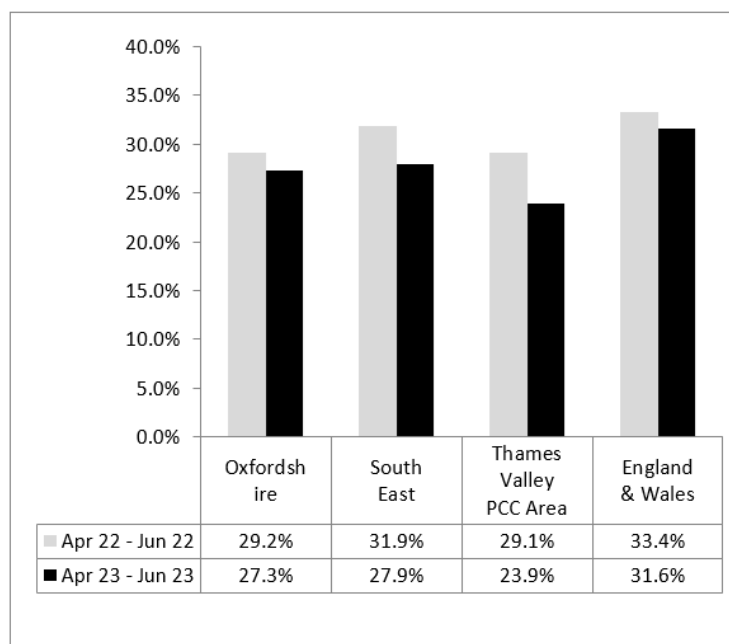
34. Oxfordshire's custody rate has remained consistently lower than the national and regional rates and lower or equal to the Thames Valley average since 2021. Between 2024 – 2025 Oxfordshire has had one child remanded into the secure estate for serious violence offences. This child initially went to Oakhill Secure Training Centre but is now in Vinney Green Secure Children's Home following representations from the YJS and reports shared with the Court about his significant vulnerabilities.

Re-offending rate

Annual Weighted Average



Quarterly cohort – year on year comparison



35. The re-offending rate (annual weighted average) for Oxfordshire increased by 4% from 24.8% in 2021-2022 to 28.2% in 2022-2023. This was lower than the South-East and national rates, but slightly higher than the Thames Valley rate of 26% at the time. To identify if a child has reoffended, they need to be tracked for a 12-month period following their original outcome. In addition, there is a further 6 month waiting period to allow the offence to be proven in court. The date refers to the quarter in which the child received their original outcome, at which point they became eligible for tracking, so the most recent data will refer to a period from 18 months to 2 years ago.

c. Risks and issues

Risk	Mitigation	Action	Desired Outcome
FTE rate continually higher than regional and national rates	Implementation of YJB Improvement Plan which is monitored monthly.	Reporting and monitoring on progress done via quarterly reporting to Board for strategic partnership oversight and action. Quarterly Monitoring meetings with YJB Regional Oversight Manager for support and challenge.	Oxfordshire's FTE rate to be in line with the current regional rate (142) by December 2025.
Partnership funding reduction	Horizon-scanning to identify funding opportunities for the service and pro-active approach to bid-writing.	Applications submitted for Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) funding and other funding opportunities identified during 2025-26. Issues in change to OPCC funding eligibility criteria are raised at Board level for senior leadership oversight and follow-up.	Funding opportunities are identified and where appropriate applied for to contribute to resource in 2025/6.
Building a stronger partnership for youth justice services	Asking all partner agencies to review their engagement with the youth justice service,	Introducing a new format for partners to explain the challenges they face and how they	Quarterly reporting in place, strong support for the Youth Justice Management Board and the multi-disciplinary planning and decision-

	whether it be in terms of financial support, policies or assistance in kind.	can, and do, support the overall youth justice partnership.	making forums where all partners come together for children and victims.
Workforce capacity & resources	Prioritise recruitment activity and ensure learning from retention issues is understood and mitigated.	Use learning from staff survey to inform service planning and improvements. Review and improve the staff work bases as part of OCC building strategy.	Service establishment is in place and the annual staff survey shows the progress we are making to support our staff.
Serious Incidents	Use of YJB Serious Incident Notification processes.	Critical Learning Reviews inform partnership response and improvements.	Partnership trust and confidence in Youth Justice response to serious incidents. Learning is used to mitigate future incidents occurring.
Practice & system improvement	Inspection Readiness meetings in place and partnership Board planning underway. Share learning and information with CSC staff and wider partners around HMIP inspection framework.	Service policies and partnership/service-level agreements reviewed for update/refresh. Audit activity against new framework – for Domain 2 and Victim Standard – learning fed into remedial improvement work. Inspection Readiness briefings taking place across Children, Education & Families Directorate to include YJ Inspection.	Assurance that the service knows what ‘good’ looks like in securing the best outcomes for children and victims. Service and partnership Board readiness for HMIP new inspection framework and programme from 2025.

Business continuity	Plans in place for business continuity in line with organisational policies and procedure; regularly reviewed.	Implementation of business continuity in the event of disruption taking account of environment i.e. Pandemic or other threats.	Service business continuity plan in place to mitigate risks to service delivery within Adolescent Service and for risks unique to youth justice.
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4. Plan for the forthcoming year

The Child First principle is made up of the following four tenets (Youth Justice Board, 2022):

As children	Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
Building pro-social identity	Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
Collaborating with children	Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
Diverting from stigma	Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

a. *Child First*

As Children

36. We are working with our District Judge and Youth Bench to prepare child-friendly letter templates that can be used to explain difficult or complex decisions to children, which staff can then use to help children and parents/carers make sense of what has happened. We have seen this work effectively and support child-centred communication where a child has been remanded, so that the child has a clear record of what has happened, why decisions were made and what will happen next.
37. We are working closely with a Speech and Language therapist in the Children's Integrated Therapies service to adapt our speech, language and communication screening tool and process, so it is more robust and supports practitioners with what to do next where issues are identified. Current tools are very school-focused, whereas youth justice practitioners are mostly seeing children in the community and at home, or with peers, who may not attend school, so we are keen to adapt our assessment to reflect observations of children in these different contexts.

38. In 2024 we implemented regular Intervention Workshops for the youth justice team to have a space to reflect on practice, share their experiences of different resources and approaches and look at effective practice research to ensure all work is child-centred and developmentally informed. These have since been opened up to staff across the wider Adolescence & Prevention Service and our next workshop will focus on interventions around knife and weapon carrying. This is a space for learning and reflection as well as upskilling practitioners across our new service area.

Building Pro-Social Identity

39. The service works closely with charity and community sector groups to give our children fresh 'AIR' - activities, interactions and roles for positive identity development. Oxfordshire YJS used Turnaround funding to commission Inspire Sounds' 'Inspiring Change Through Music' project, which supports children who have experienced adversity through bespoke mentoring and music sessions in a professional recording studio, to promote children's well-being, inclusion and access to music. Our children have taken part in lyric-writing, poetry, beat-making and production workshops and access 1:1 mentoring aimed at building their confidence and resilience.
40. We are working closely with our Youth Justice Police Officers to develop a child-centred intervention pack for the Police to use when delivering sessions with children. Primarily these will be used for informal and formal pre-Court disposals and be based on best practice in diversion, but we are keen to focus on positive relationship-building between our children and Police through our YJ Police Officers and widen this out to our statutory cohort. The YJ Police Officers are keen to cascade this child-centred approach to child-facing teams across TVP.
41. The service is reviewing our volunteer offer and in 2025-26 will be developing an ETE Mentor role. We are working with two current volunteers who have links locally with construction companies to develop a proposal for a skills-based vocational pathway for children. Building on the social value commitments of companies we are seeking to develop 'Exploration Days' a local construction company with parallel support from an ETE Mentor; upon completion the company would 'interview' the child with a view to moving them into pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programmes.

Collaborating with Children

42. Our service Participation Lead has worked closely with the Principal Social Worker in Children's Services to develop our Participation Strategy to ensure our approach is aligned with wider participatory approaches and youth engagement work across Social Care and Education. We have produced a Terms of Reference for a new Youth Shadow Board which was ratified at our Management Board in January 2025. Establishment of the Shadow Board will be a priority for 2025-26.
43. Many of our placements used for Reparation and Unpaid Work are focused on social inclusion for children and supporting investment into their local communities.

Children undertake reparative activities at their local community centres, and some have chosen to continue volunteering beyond the end of their formal Reparation. Oxford Wood Recycling and Bicester Green are placements that support children to engage with environmental issues and sustainability practices, equipping them with skills for the future.

44. The Adolescence & Prevention Service is developing a harm outside the home framework which will work with community stakeholders to ensure children's voices shape service delivery, including through detached youth work, recognising this as a key tool in capturing children's lived experiences. The harm outside the home response will also use insights from youth engagement and partnership-working to co-design positive activities for children who live in areas identified as contexts of concern.
45. Listening to the voices of the children we support—and the victims affected by their actions—is a top priority. We aim to ensure their perspectives shape future service development and help us better understand patterns of offending, risk, and trauma. This insight allows us to identify and secure the right support for each child.
46. Across Oxfordshire County Council, there are various ways children can share their views, with multiple participation and engagement opportunities in place. Our Targeted Youth Support Service recently received positive feedback for its SEND Youth Forum. We're now working with voluntary and community sector partners to explore how this model can be expanded countywide.

Diversion from Stigma

47. Oxfordshire has worked very closely with Thames Valley Police and the YJB in the development of the Youth Diversion Programme (YDP); this is a 12-month pilot in the use of deferred cautions in Thames Valley. Our Joint Decision-Making Panel advocates strongly for proportionate diversionary outcomes for our children and since the Youth Diversion Programme went live in March, this outcome has been agreed for 26 children.
48. Thames Valley Police are developing a Child-Centred Policing Strategy and are committed to treating children as children. Thames Valley Police have been working with partners in the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Courts (HMCTS) and Youth Justice to develop a streamlined process for 'on the day diversion' from Court for children to be considered for out-of-court disposals. A Section 10 admission form is now being used in Court, and this has improved timeliness of referral back from Court and of decision-making.
49. Thames Valley Police are undertaking work around admissions from children considering the evidence around child and adolescent development, neurodiversity in the youth justice cohort and disproportionality in eligibility for diversion for black and mixed heritage children. This includes consultation with clinical psychologists on appropriate documentation used with and about children to improve its accessibility.

50. We will continue to deliver diversionary support as part of the Turnaround Project. We made a successful bid to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner to continue this work for 2 years beyond the current end of Ministry of Justice funding. We are working closely with the Targeted Youth Support Service to align preventative and diversionary approaches and are carefully reviewing triage and eligibility criterion so that children receive sustainable support at the right level by the right service based on their presenting needs.

b. Resources and Services

51. The service has 1fte nurse from the Phoenix Team in Oxford Health Children's Integrated Therapies. The Phoenix Nurse offers a public health nurse health assessment to children on statutory Court Orders; this is currently 33% of our total caseload. If consent is given the nurse can work with children on any issues that are identified, alongside completing onward referrals as necessary. The offer for children on pre-Court disposals, currently 87% of our caseload, is liaison between the Phoenix Nurse and case-manager for advice on signposting and referrals and to connect professionals to named School/College Nurses.

52. As the YJS work with young people who can present with more complex needs, Forensic CAMHS offers consultation, liaison and triage for Oxfordshire YJS via a link worker. This facilitates direct access to assessments and intervention as well as improving access to a range of CAMHS provisions, including advising on NHS or welfare secure accommodation provision where appropriate.

53. There is an identified CAMHS/YJS Mental Health Liaison clinician who is based within the forensic CAMHS team. This post holder has close working arrangements with the 3 locality CAMHS teams and other Specialist CAMHS Teams.

This results in:

- YJS having access to regular triage and consultation.
- Liaison and Diversion offering a triage service to children & young people before the criminal courts.
- Advice and signposting to enable YJS staff to help young people to access appropriate services.
- Joint and CAMHS assessments where appropriate.
- Clinical Supervision of children who display harmful sexual behaviour.
- Access to specialist knowledge and training.
- Access to a range of specialist provisions including tier 4 services, as required.

54. The CAHBS service (child and adolescent harmful behaviour service) is also part of the wider forensic CAMHS service and will offer input to cases where sexually harmful behaviour is of concern. An additional resource is the nationally commissioned Liaison and Diversion project within the Forensic CAHMS Team. This aims to assess young people at point of contact with the Youth Justice System/Police and can provide input at the arrest/ court/ bail support stages.

55. Oxfordshire YJS does not have any enhanced working arrangements with Speech and Language therapies. Professionals can refer into the Speech and Language team but there is currently a 2-year waiting list. The Management Board is aware of this gap in provision for justice-involved children in Oxfordshire. The Head of Children & Young People's Community Services has completed a Quality Impact Assessment to inform a commissioning review, outlining the risks and consequences of lack of investment and significant shortfall in capacity in these services. This also informs Oxfordshire County Council's SEND Improvement Plan. This is an area of ongoing work between partners and, in lieu of provision, the service is working with a Speech & Language therapist from Oxford Health to improve our screening tool and identify suitable training to upskill practitioners.
56. Thames Valley Police provide the YJS with two Youth Justice Police Officers, 1 permanent full-time and one full-time 6-month secondment. The Police Officers are involved in delivery of pre-Court disposals and intervention sessions to learn about the law, the 'criminal justice ladder' and disclosure and barring. We are keen to develop the intervention pack delivered by YJS Police Officers for the coming year to upskill them in child-centred and trauma-informed practice.
57. The YJS bids for OPCC funding to commission young person's drug & alcohol service Cranstoun (Here4Youth) to deliver the Drug Diversion Scheme in Oxfordshire. Children who receive a Community Resolution for drug possession offences can be referred to Cranstoun for a treatment-based response to identified substance misuse concerns, with the aim of reducing criminalisation of children for lower-level drug offences.
58. The Probation Service provided Oxfordshire YJS with a regular secondee until October 2023. Due to recruitment challenges, a replacement did not start until January 2025 but was withdrawn in April 2025 because of a range of complex challenges within Probation. Contingency plans, which include improved collaboration with our Probation colleagues, are now in place to ensure that all eligible children continue to receive transition support in line with national guidance until we can fill this role within the team. The Probation Secondees commitment to the YJS remains a high priority for our Probation Board representative.
59. Our core YJB grant is spent in its entirety on staffing costs, and we use partner contributions and available internal resources to deliver our statutory and voluntary services. The service receives funding from the Home Office to deliver our local devolved decision-making NRM pilot, the Ministry of Justice to deliver Turnaround and the OPCC to deliver the Drug Diversion Programme and Act Now knife crime project. Finance is reported on quarterly at the Board for oversight and scrutiny.

c. Board Development

60. We will continue to enhance our quarterly Management Board governance meetings by the addition of deep-dive workshops to examine key issues we are facing. We will continue to enhance our quarterly Management Board governance meetings by the addition of deep-dive workshops to examine key issues we are facing. We will improve the level of key performance data coming from our partners about children both at risk of entering and within the youth justice system, to

improve our performance reporting, collective oversight and scrutiny of data. This will include Stop & Search data and data on children in custody overnight from Thames Valley Police.

61. Board membership is regularly reviewed to ensure that we have the right representation from partners with the necessary seniority and rank for effective challenge, decision-making and shared accountability. Board members have been tasked to provide data relevant to their organisations connected to children both at risk of entering and within the youth justice system to improve our performance reporting, collective oversight and scrutiny of data.
62. Board attendance and contribution is an area of focus for the Board Chair to ensure the Board can effectively identify and tackle barriers across the system which may be adversely and disproportionately impacting justice-involved children.
63. In 2024 the service developed refreshed Induction Packs for Board Members, and these were shared as part of an Inspection Readiness workshop with the Board in November 2024.

d. Workforce Development

64. In 2024-25 the service has undertaken a range of training including AIM3 refreshers for case-managers, Bail and Remand and PSR training with the Youth Justice Legal Centre, Protective Behaviours and Disproportionality. New staff members have undertaken the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate and one of our Senior Practitioners returned to the service having completed a Social Work qualification.
65. All staff and volunteers have access to OSCP's training and development offer and that of Oxfordshire County Council's Children's Services. These provide a wide and varied learning and development offer that includes safeguarding, exploitation, motivational interviewing, restorative approaches, trauma-informed practice, working with children with mental health difficulties and thematic practice areas such as domestic abuse and neglect. The Children, Education & Families Directorate regularly undertakes staff engagement sessions and briefings on key organisational and practice developments, and a monthly staff newsletter keeps staff informed of Directorate-wide updates and opportunities. This is a forum to keep staff appraised of everything related to children, but equally a space for positive staff recognition and feedback.
66. Our Senior Practitioners support inductions of new starters and learning opportunities for the wider team through buddying arrangements and delivery of workshops and training. One of our Senior Practitioners works closely with Oxford Brookes University to deliver talks on Youth Justice to Social Work and Criminology students and assists Children's Services' Social Work Development Centre by arranging shadowing and observation opportunities for students and apprentices.
67. Members of the team have benefitted from internal promotion opportunities in filling Assistant Team Managers and Senior Practitioner roles, providing continuity and consistency for the service as well as clear pathways for professional development.

We have also benefitted from a secondment from the Targeted Youth Support Service to fill a Youth & Family Practitioner role within our Turnaround project. Upskilling practitioners from across the Adolescence & Prevention in youth justice prevention approaches will develop resilience in the workforce and facilitate the sharing of skills and expertise.

68. Quarterly meetings are held for all our volunteers, featuring themed presentations from guest speakers from the YJS service and wider partnership. These sessions support volunteer learning and development, and feedback shows they value the opportunity to stay informed about service updates and best practices.
69. The service is working to align our internal audit processes with wider children's services' 'Driving Quality, Improvement, Practice and Performance' (DQIPP) cycle; this will ensure consistency in audit and quality assurance activity and senior leadership oversight of youth justice performance.

e. Evidence-based Practice and Innovation

70. Oxfordshire's Children's Services are built on three interconnected strands of evidence-based practice. Together, they emphasise the importance of building strong relationships, actively listening, empowering individuals, understanding both need and capacity for change, and focusing on strengths through a collaborative "doing with" approach.

- **Restorative Practice** is at the heart of what we do, it is how we interact with children, families, each other, and partner agencies. It incorporates respect, honesty, kindness, and empathy. Restorative practice promotes the importance of building relationships and resilience and sees all behaviour as an unmet need. Restorative practice can be used to ensure people are heard and to repair relationships.
- **Trauma-informed practice** is our strengths-based approach which understands and responds to the impact of trauma on people's lives and the trauma we can cause when we intervene. The approach emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone and aims to empower individuals to re-establish control of their lives.
- **Motivational Interviewing** is our person-centred communication approach to behaviour change, designed to focus on understanding and working with resistance. Motivational interviewing can be a powerful tool to strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to change.

71. The service actively learns from effective practice across the sector, fostering a culture where staff feel confident sharing new and innovative ideas with the management team—ideas that often lead to tangible outcomes. In 2024–25, a team member proposed delivering a First Aid course for children, with a focus on active bystander skills and responding to knife-related injuries. A local provider offered to deliver two courses per year at no cost, and the first session took place in March 2025, receiving positive feedback from the children involved. We are now

exploring opportunities to expand this offer across the Adolescence and Prevention Service.

72. Another member of staff has developed a proposal for a Driving Intervention, following consultation with the YJB, Youth Endowment Fund and our Board Chair. The scope of this will be to utilise intervention sessions for eligible children to give them driving lessons, developing a key life skill that can improve social mobility, help with employment and build self-confidence and self-efficacy.
73. Our Board Chair and service managers are meeting with the Criminal Justice Institute in June 2025 to explore their offer of consultation and support for effective diversion, to drive our improvement work around Oxfordshire's high First Time Entrant rates.

f. Priorities for 2025 – 2026

Standards for Children

74. **Out of Court:** Oxfordshire YJS has undertaken a significant amount of work in partnership with the YJB, our 9 neighbouring Thames Valley YJS' and Thames Valley Police to improve the diversionary offer available for children as part of pre-Court decision-making in Thames Valley. In June 2024, partnership guidance was released that introduced the use of Outcome 22 in Thames Valley. In March 2025 a 12-month pilot on the use of deferred cautions, known locally as the Youth Diversion Programme or 'YDP', was launched. We will be monitoring the impact and outcomes for children of the YDP pilot closely to inform ongoing service delivery.
75. We will also be working closely alongside Thames Valley Police to review timeliness from point of arrest to outcome for children, particularly for those children approaching 18 who may lose their opportunity to appear in a Youth Court if statutory time limits are not met. We are mindful of recommendation by HMIP in our 2020 inspection around outcome timeliness, and support for arrested children is a key priority for the youth justice partnership.
76. **At Court:** The service undertook the last YJB Self-Assessment against this standard in October 2023 and implemented a subsequent action plan. A progress report was shared with the Management Board in April 2025. We have seen significant improvements in 'on the day diversion' for children with a process agreed and implemented between the YJS, TVP, CPS and Court staff which has reduced delays for children and families.
77. **In the Community:** The service is undertaking a review of Referral Order practice with a view to ensuring approaches are in line with the Child First evidence base, and volunteers have the training and support to work with our increasingly complex cohort of children. Our Senior Practitioners have undertaken training for staff on the new YJB Prevention & Diversion Tool and have provided feedback into regional and national forums on how this new tool is functioning in practice, as well as recommendations for a review of Assetplus, to ensure assessment practice is in

line with the evidence-base. One of our Senior Practitioners has implemented quarterly Intervention Workshops for the team which have covered topics including Identity Development (the AIRS model), knife and weapon carrying and Court. These workshops will continue to draw on underpinning theory and research in youth justice to support high quality intervention delivery.

78. **In Secure Settings:** Oxfordshire has low rates of children entering custody on either remand or sentence. The service plans to work with colleagues in Quality Assurance and Inspection Readiness, as well as Education, to undertake audits of children who entered custody for serious violence offences where Elective Home Education was a key feature in their histories. Findings of these audits will be shared with the service and Management Board, as well as at the Children's Services' DQIPP meeting. The partnership is sighted on the concerns around the introduction of PAVAspray for use in Youth Offending Institutes and we will continue to keep this under close review.
79. **Transitions & Resettlement:** In 2024, Oxfordshire YJS developed a new Resettlement Policy and staff guidance, drawing on best practice from other areas. The service is also collaborating with the Probation Service on a Thames Valley-wide audit of transitions practice. Findings and recommendations from this audit will be shared with the Management Board and the wider service by our Probation Board representative. In the absence of a Probation Officer secondee, a Senior Practitioner leading on transitions is working closely with a linked Senior Probation Officer to hold monthly transitions meetings for eligible children, ensuring coordinated and effective support is in place. Transitions data is also incorporated into our Quarterly Board Performance reporting which assists the close monitoring of this area of practice.

Service Improvement Plan

Priority area	Actions	Outcome for children/victims	Lead	Timescales
Prevention & Diversion				
Reduction in First Time Entrant rate	Delivery of targeted Year 6-7 transition programmes for at-risk children as recommended in FTE Audit Report	Reduction in identified vulnerable children becoming FTEs	TYSS Team Manager	Review for impact in October 2025
	Continued implementation of YJB Improvement Plan	Oxfordshire moves out of Performance Quadrant 3 due to positive reduction in FTEs	YJS Service Manager, Jessie Dobson	Reviewed in monthly assurance meetings with YJB
	Monitor impact of Youth Diversion Programme pilot (deferred cautions)	More children receive informal diversion in line with evidence-base for reducing First Time Entrants	YJS Team Manager, Alison Brookman	Monitored via quarterly Board performance reporting
	Quarterly observation of Joint Decision-Making Panel for quality assurance	Assurance of consistent, high quality multi-agency decision-making in line with Child First principles	Jessie Dobson Alison Brookman Andrea Whittall (YJB)	Quarterly
Aligned prevention offers across the Adolescence & Prevention Service	Using data and insights about adolescents to inform triage decisions and	Consistent decision-making for children at the right level Ensures sustainability of the effective Turnaround approach by improving	Jessie Dobson Alison Brookman	Review for impact in December 2025

	apply thresholds appropriately	reach to children on the cusp of criminality Reduction in duplication across offers to adolescents		
	Develop a consistent set of resources for practitioners and families working with adolescents	Delivery of consistent, high-quality evidence-based practice in working with adolescents	Youth Justice Senior Practitioners & Senior Youth Workers	September 2025
	Ensured shared KPIs and aims for adolescents at risk are aligned across relevant Boards	More effective service delivery for children, families and victims through a shared vision and well-understood approach across teams	Jessie Dobson	July 2025
Restorative Practice & Victims				
Ensure practice meets HMIP Victims Standard	Case-work audits	Assurance of high-quality casework and positive outcomes for victims well evidenced	Pete Wallis	August 2025
	Capturing the voice of victims to inform pre-Court decision-making at JDMP	Victim's views and impact of offence/s inform proportionate decision-making to build trust and confidence in criminal justice system Children open to Youth Justice have a better understand of the impact of their behaviour on others	Pete Wallis	August 2025
	Implementation of 2025-26 RJ	The YJS provides high-quality service for all victims in line with Victim's Code and best practice evidence	Pete Wallis	December 2025

	Improvement Plan	Increase wider team knowledge base and confidence in Restorative Justice and victim work – evidenced through staff surveys and audits		
Improve visibility of Restorative Justice and victim work to the Board	Development of RJ performance dashboard for oversight, scrutiny and support of victim work	Shared understanding and partnership appreciation of needs of victims and required provision to provide high quality services in Oxfordshire This will inform accountability for responsibilities to victims across the youth justice partnership	Jessie Dobson	October 2025
Disproportionality				
High quality partnership Disproportionality Action Plan driven through shared accountability	Review of Disproportionality Action Plan with clear recommendations and actions for the partnership to take forward in 2025-26.	Accountability across the Board and appropriate escalation mechanisms in place to respond to identified areas of concern	YJ Board	October 2025
Education & SEND				
Increasing attendance and attainment for children open to youth justice	Termly meeting with relevant Education and SEND colleagues to review children of concern	Reduction in drift and delay Children have access to appropriate, high-quality provision in line with their needs	Kate Reynolds (Deputy Director for Education) Deb Smit (Assistant Director for SEND & Inclusion) Jessie Dobson	For quarterly review in Board Performance

Increased oversight and scrutiny of suspension and exclusion data for children open to YJ	Raise at Strategic Attendance Board	Use of data to support school leaders' understanding of the needs of children open to YJ Partnership practice is inclusive and consistent Suspensions and exclusions for justice-involved children are scrutinised	Kate Reynolds (Deputy Director for Education) Deb Smit (Assistant Director for SEND & Inclusion) Jessie Dobson	For quarterly review in Board Performance
Ensure YJ Board is sighted on relevant aspects of SEND Improvement Plan and shared aims for children in youth justice	Education /SEND Board reps to present on SEND Improvement Plan as relevant to youth justice children	Aligned governance and shared aims for justice-involved children with SEND Consistent understanding of all partners at the YJ Board with learning cascaded across partner organisations	Deb Smit (Assistant Director for SEND & Inclusion)	Reporting into YJ Board as relevant to justice-involved children
	Across 2025 - 2026 all Board members to report on their relevant organisation's response to children with SEND in youth justice	Organisations can share good practice in relation to working with children with SEND	Board Chair to ensure	Reporting into YJ Board as relevant to justice-involved children
Arrested Children				
Work to reduce delay from arrest to outcome for	TVP have created toolkit to	Improved monitoring and scrutiny of timescales that would adversely	TVP Board Rep	Being monitored for impact over next 6 – 12 months

children in Oxfordshire	monitor timeliness	impact children and outcomes for victims		
	Implement robotics to flag children whose cases have less than 6 weeks remaining on their statutory time limit	Enables appropriate escalation where issues identified	TVP Board Rep	TVP Board Rep to report to Board as appropriate on progress
	Review all current children's files where they are approaching 18 years old and focus resources to progress these whilst still a youth	The child is first seen in a Youth Court which may mitigate adultification and ensure response is proportionate to their developmental age		
Develop partnership offer of support for children post-arrest and subject to Bail/RUI	FCAMHS to undertake review of current offer of support for children after arrest	FCAMHS to present findings of review to YJS with recommendations with a view to create a partnership working group and action plan to take to Management Board	FCAMHS (Dr Mat Lister, Board Rep) Service Manager, Jessie Dobson	To be presented to Management Board in October 2025

5. National priority areas

a. Children from Over-represented Groups

80. The service and performance colleagues have worked to develop our quarterly performance reporting to improve oversight and scrutiny of disproportionality and over-representation within our data. This has helped us identify an increase in the number of girls within our pre-Court cohort, and a regional audit across the 9 Thames Valley YJS' has been proposed to scrutinise our data and identify themes, trends and any appropriate mitigating action. Work undertaken will be reflected within our refreshed Disproportionality Action Plan.
81. We are very mindful of the high proportion of children within the youth justice service who have both identified and identified SEND needs. We understand that unmet need and inadequate support or provision can compound the difficulties these already vulnerable children are experiencing within our system. Improving outcomes for these children is a key priority for the partnership for 2025-26.
82. Although children of mixed heritage are not statistically over-represented in the overall cohort, our data shows they are 1.4 times more likely to receive a court sentence than to be diverted at the pre-court stage. This mirrors national research highlighting disparities in diversion outcomes for Black and mixed heritage children. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) uses the term 'mixed' to describe a broad range of dual ethnicities, backgrounds, and cultures. It is therefore essential that we seek to understand the unique identities and lived experiences of these children. This evidence strengthens our commitment to ensuring proportionality and maintaining rigorous multi-agency scrutiny in both pre-court and court decision-making.

b. Policing

83. Thames Valley Police has undergone a major Force-wide review during 2024–25, leading to changes in how youth justice is structured. Youth justice responsibilities now sit within newly established Harm Reduction Units across the region. Since the launch of Oxfordshire's Harm Reduction Unit, the Youth Justice Service (YJS) has worked closely with its leadership to maintain effective practice, share key learning on child-centred approaches, and coordinate efforts across youth justice, exploitation, and risk management. As Oxfordshire develops its new Harm Outside the Home framework and introduces Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) arrangements, the YJS Service Manager is collaborating with the TVP Harm Reduction Unit Inspector to co-chair these meetings. This partnership ensures that practice and processes concerning children are well-aligned and clearly understood.
84. In June 2025, the Youth Justice Service (YJS) participated in a Court User Group meeting attended by representatives from the District Judge, Youth Bench Chair, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and Thames Valley Police (TVP). During the meeting, TVP presented ongoing work related to children, particularly around improving outcome timeliness. These developments have directly informed the

YJS Service Improvement Plan for 2025–26, ensuring alignment with TVP’s priorities and reinforcing our shared commitment to timely and effective outcomes for children and victims.

c. Prevention

85. The Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS) plays a vital role in supporting children and young people identified as vulnerable to offending or exploitation. TYSS typically works with individuals facing multiple risk factors, such as school exclusion, family breakdown, poverty, or exposure to criminal influences.
86. The approach is often multi-agency, involving collaboration with schools, social care, police, and community organisations to provide tailored interventions that address the root causes of vulnerability for children. These may include group work or 1-2-1 intensive support on themes such as protective behaviours, healthy relationships, self-regulation, identity, and misogyny. TYSS youth workers support children to identify their own goals and aspirations, and access diversionary activities aimed at building resilience, making positive choices and identity. These interventions are designed to support social and emotional development, reduce risk-taking behaviours, and help young people access community-based support for sustainable change.
87. Following the First Time Entrants audit completed by the YJS in 2024 and adoption of FTEs as a partnership priority within Children’s Services, TYSS has developed targeted transition programmes for children moving from primary to secondary education provision, where vulnerabilities around risk of exclusion or managed moves are identified.
88. Oxfordshire’s Turnaround project has continued to work with children who received Community Resolutions, were on Bail / Released under investigation or were referred by partners due to concerns about police contact such as anti-social behaviour or a ‘No Further Action’ outcome. The work of our Youth & Family Practitioners focuses on the areas recommended in the Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit, particularly social and emotional interventions, music and sporting activities, mentoring and restorative justice. At the close of Year 3 (31.03.25) Turnaround in Oxfordshire had successfully completed work with 95 children and was still supporting a further 9 children which meant we met our Ministry of Justice target to support a total of 104 children. Of our 95 completions, the outcomes were:

Children who have reoffended (convicted at court or received police youth caution or other outcome)	7 (7%)
Children with no further contact with the police / Youth Justice	67 (71%)
Children who have had further contact with police or Youth Justice (including those on the YJ caseload due to receiving a statutory outcome for a pre-Turnaround offence, and children still under investigation for a new offence).	21 (22%)
TOTAL	95

89. The Ministry of Justice acknowledged case studies of good practice that we submitted for inclusion in their evaluation evidence, and one of our Youth & Family practitioners was recognised at the Oxfordshire County Council Staff Awards for her work supporting girls in the Turnaround cohort.
90. Work with Turnaround children has been an important part of the development of Oxfordshire's diversionary offer. When children engage and complete work to address their offending on a voluntary basis with Turnaround, they are more likely to receive lower outcomes at our Joint Decision-Making Panel or Court. A recent example is a young person who was convicted of Robbery and sentenced at Youth Court in April 2025. Recognising his previous progress under Turnaround whilst on bail, the Court decided to issue a Conditional Discharge rather than a Referral Order. This had the benefit of allowing him to progress with an RAF apprenticeship which would not have been possible were he received a Referral Order.
91. The Ministry of Justice has confirmed funding for Turnaround for the year 2025-2026, and that we were successful in a bid to the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) who have granted 'top-up' funding for the years 2025-2027 to address the shortfall in Ministry of Justice funding. This allows us to continue with our current offer of Turnaround Support whilst we integrate into a new Adolescent Service alongside Targeted Youth Work and harm outside the home. We have used the learning from an audit of our First Time Entrant cohort in 2024 to better target children based on indicators of vulnerability, which will support a phased approach to prevention and diversion across the new Adolescent Service.
92. For sustainability we will be upskilling practitioners across the Adolescent workforce in preventative approaches for children at risk of entering the criminal justice system and will be using evidence and insights to ensure that vulnerable children have the right support at key stages in their lives be that transition points in schooling or into adulthood, exclusions from school or any other significant life events.

a. Diversion

93. The Thames Valley Police Harm Reduction Unit (HRU), Liaison and Diversion Service (L&D), and Youth Justice Service (YJS) are core members of the Joint Decision-Making Panel (JDMP). Contributions also come from the Education, Training and Employment service (EET 16+), Locality Community Support Service (LCSS), and Children's Social Care where appropriate.
94. These panels are recognised as good practice for enabling healthy discussion, challenge, and decision-making among a dedicated and diverse group of partners. They aim to achieve proportionate outcomes for the child, victim(s), and community. The Panel considers the child holistically, reviewing previous interventions, the child's individual circumstances and needs, offence details, professional involvement, and the impact on the victim(s) and their safety needs.

95. This approach allows panel members to gain a deeper understanding of the child and their victim(s) in a timely manner, enabling informed and varied views on the most proportionate and fair outcomes. Oxfordshire YJS has contributed to a Thames Valley set of shared guidance regarding JDMP processes and procedures to ensure consistency in decision-making across the TVP Force area.

96. Since 2021, we have seen an increase in outcomes through our JDMP in Oxfordshire, with a slight reduction in 2023-24. We are observing more children with high levels of need and complexity, particularly concerning mental health, neurodiversity, social care histories, and education experiences. Panel Chairs report seeing more children on Child Protection plans, Children We Care For, and those with positive conclusive grounds National Referral Mechanism (NRM) decisions.

97. Key points:

- Increase in the number of girls in 2024: We are planning an audit to explore themes and trends to understand the reasons behind this increase and identify potential interventions.
- Community Resolutions: These remain the most common outcome, with support offered to children in most cases through Turnaround or voluntary sessions, aligning with our plan to reduce First-Time Entrants (FTEs).

98. Development of Out of Court data for 2025 – 26:

We aim to expand our data and reporting on out-of-court disposals and the Joint Decision-Making Panel for 2025-26. We are exploring how to include data breakdowns of:

- Proportion of children for whom the outcome was their first offence
- Number of children who re-offended within the year

99. Youth Diversion Programme (YDP):

In March 2025, the Thames Valley Chief Constables Management Team (CCMT) approved the use of deferred Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions as an available disposal option for children. These deferred cautions, referred to as the Youth Diversion Programme (YDP), will be piloted for 12 months across Thames Valley and evaluated after March 2026.

The YDP allows for diversion and intervention to be completed by the child without a formal outcome being recorded in local police systems or the Police National Computer (PNC). The programme reflects child-first principles, current research, and best practices for reducing re-offending and addressing youth crime.

100. Eligibility for the YDP:

- Possible First-time entrant to the youth justice system
- The offence must be eligible
- The child must agree and be willing to participate in the scheme

The YDP serves as an alternative to a Youth Caution or Youth Conditional Caution, with eligibility criteria consistent with these disposals. All eligible children will be discussed at the JDMP and will have a YJB Prevention & Diversion Assessment to inform the intervention plan. In Oxfordshire, the YDP will run for 16 weeks, aligning with the timescale for Youth Conditional Cautions (YCCs). At the end of the YDP, the child will meet with the Youth Justice Police Officer for a closure appointment, where the officer can confirm that the offence has been filed as 'no further action' or NFA.

101. Between April 2025 and June 2025 our JDMP has approved 30 YDPs. It is anticipated that this programme will positively reduce our number of First-Time Entrants (FTEs) and provide early and targeted diversionary support to children.

d. Education

102. As of March 2025, Oxfordshire has 367 educational settings:

- 45 independent schools and sixth form colleges
- 28 Special schools (13 Special Independent Schools, 3 maintained schools, 10 academies, 1 Pupil Referral Unit and 1 Hospital school)
- 39 secondary schools (1 maintained school and 38 academies)
- 2 All through schools (academy)
- 243 primary schools (113 maintained schools and 130 academies)
- 7 state-maintained nursery schools
- 3 Further Education colleges

103. Data on the **162** children open to Youth Justice in June 2025:

Academic year 24/25 Terms 1-5	No.	%
Average % Attendance (n=79)		49%
Persistent absence >=10%	69	75%
Severe absence >=50%	36	45%
1 or more suspensions	42	53%
Average no. suspensions per pupil	4.4	
Permanent exclusions	3	4%

Of the 162 children in the cohort, 79 are currently on a school roll, with an average attendance rate of 49%. Nearly half (45%) meet the criteria for severe absence, defined as attendance below 50%. Additionally, 42 children (53%) have experienced one or more suspensions, and 3 have been permanently excluded.

104. Within the cohort:

- 10% are Children We Care For (Looked After)
- 10% are not in education, training, or employment (NEET)
- 4% are electively home educated
- 2% are identified as Children Missing Education

A total of 34 children have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), and 44 receive SEN Support. The most common primary need is Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH).

105. Speech and language needs remain under-identified, consistent with findings from our July 2024 First Time Entrant audit and national evidence. These needs often emerge only at the point of assessment, highlighting the importance of early screening and access to appropriate support. Strengthening partnership arrangements to fully understand the education and health needs of justice-involved children in Oxfordshire—and taking action to improve their outcomes—is a central priority in our 2025–26 plan in alignment with OCC’s SEND Improvement Plan.

	No.	%
Children we care for	17	10%
NEET	16	10%
Elective Home Education- end of term 5	6	4%
Elective Home Education - any point in terms 1-5	10	6%
Child Missing Education - end of term 5	3	2%
Child Missing Education - any point in terms 1-5	11	7%

	EHCP SEN	
EHCP status	No.	No.
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	7	7
Hearing Impairment		1
Moderate Learning Difficulty	3	3
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	22	24
Specific Learning Difficulty		5
Speech, Language and Communication Needs		2
Not Recorded	2	2
Total with EHCP/SEN	34	44
Total youth justice cohort	162	92

e. Restorative Approaches and Victims

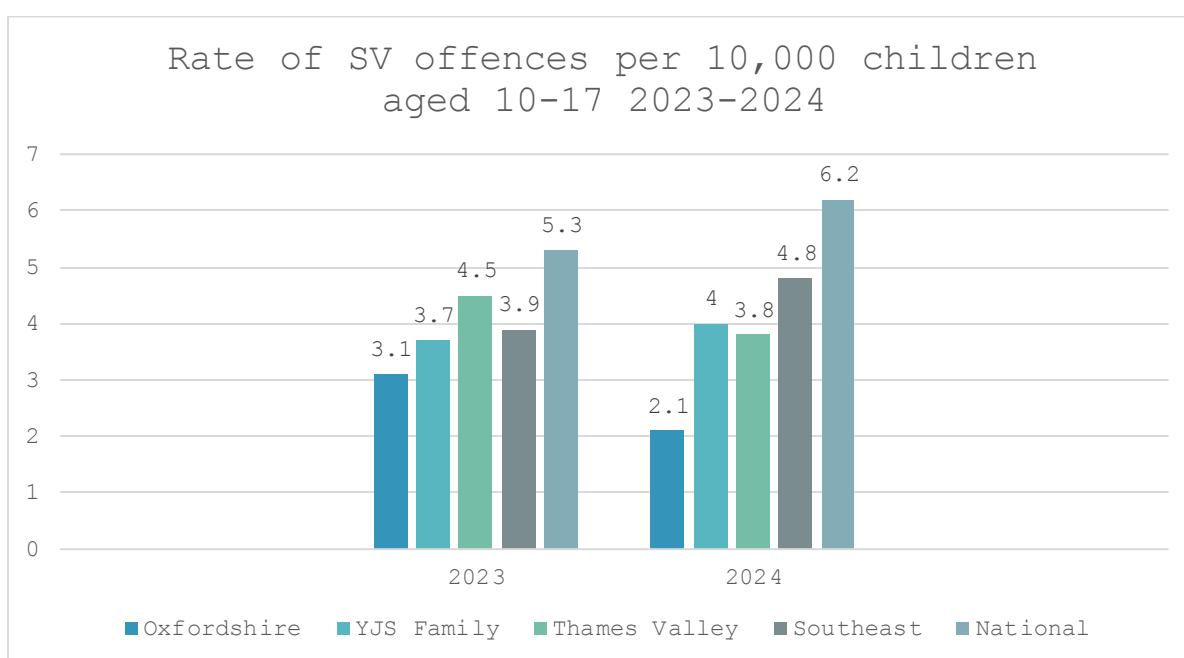
106. Youth Justice Services have a duty under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime to contact individuals affected by youth crime to provide information and updates about their case and opportunities for restorative justice. Oxfordshire YJS seeks to contact and consult with all those affected by the offences committed by children referred to the service. We take their opinion into consideration, hear about the impact of crime and enable them to have a voice if they wish. Consideration is made of the safety to individuals and communities, and any diversity needs are identified and addressed to ensure that the service is appropriate and inclusive.

107. Services for people affected by youth crime are tailored to their needs and wishes, and may include keeping them up to date with their case and answering any questions, offering involvement in restorative justice (which provides an opportunity to communicate safely with the child who caused harm), giving them a voice in the type of reparative activity the child undertakes and providing information about other support services. As a significant proportion of those affected by crime are themselves young people, Oxfordshire YJS also offers a brief intervention to help them cope and recover, including protective behaviours and safety planning. Youth Justice staff keep up to date information about other services offering support to victims of crime, ensuring that victims are made aware of support available outside of the service.
108. The service works in close partnership with local charity SAFE! who run the Thames Valley wide Support After Crime and Abuse service. The charity SAFE! began within Oxfordshire YJS when a gap was identified in provision of support for children who have experienced victimization. SAFE! has since grown to cover the whole of Thames Valley offering a range of victim services and support for children and families. Interventions for children, and their parents/carers range from one-to-one emotional support and counselling, targeted and thematic group work, digital support, and advocacy through the criminal justice system. Oxfordshire children and families have access to Children's Independent Domestic Abuse/Sexual Violence Advocates via SAFE! as well as the Building Respectful Families programme which provides specialist support for families experiencing child and adolescent on parent violence and abuse. The CEO of SAFE! is a long-standing member of the Youth Justice Management Board bringing expertise to the Board around victims.
109. Youth crime can have a lasting and in some cases life-changing impact on those affected, including the child responsible. Restorative justice is a sensitive area of work, which has the potential to bring enormous benefits to all those involved. Oxfordshire YJS is a Registered Service Provider with the Restorative Justice Council (RJC) and works to RJC principles and best practice to ensure a safe and appropriate restorative justice service. Where those involved wish to meet face to face, there is a rigorous process of preparation and assessment to ensure that the encounter will do no further harm.
110. The YJS receives consent and contact details for individuals affected by youth crime from the Police. Sensitive and personal information is recorded securely on ChildView and kept separately from the child's records. The Victims Code states that practitioners must not excessively record victim information if it has no purpose toward protecting the victims, future victims or the young person, and the YJS works within the council's data protection procedures.
111. Restorative justice is about repairing harm caused by crime and is one element of restorative practice which also seeks to build and maintain relationships. Restorative practice has been adopted as the practice approach for Oxfordshire's Children's Services, and the YJS seeks to embed this way of working within the staff team and across its partnerships to ensure a consistent approach for children, families and communities.

*f. Serious Violence, Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding*¹*

112. In the year ending December 2024 there were 15 serious violence offences committed by children from Oxfordshire. This is a decrease of -7 compared with 2023 which saw the number double from 11 in 2022 to 22 in 2023. In the year ending December 2024 the rate of serious violence per 10,000 children aged 10-17 was 2.1 for Oxfordshire, which is a decrease of -1 compared with 2023. The proportion of serious violence offences has also decreased from 2023 by 1% to 4% of all offences committed by children in 2024.

113. Oxfordshire's rate of serious violence offences committed by children is lower than our YJS family, Southeast region, Thames Valley PCC area and national rates.



114. All youth serious violence offences committed in Oxfordshire between April 2023 – March 2025 have been by boys. The offence types have been variable between this same period, with a mix of drug, robbery and violence against the person offences. After a significant spike in knife possession offences in July – September 2023 with 19 offences, this significantly reduced in the same period in 2024 with 6 offences. This has reduced further with 2 possession of knife offences recorded in October – December 2024. Possession only (knife and weapon) offences remain the most common with threats with a knife/weapon less prevalent.

115. Between April 2023 – March 2024 6 serious violence offences were committed by children aged between 10-14. As of May 2025, 1 serious violence offence committed in Oxfordshire was by a child aged between 10-14 years old. The most

¹ Contextual safeguarding, which has been developed by Dr. Carlene Firmin at the University of Bedfordshire, recognises that as young people grow and develop, they are influenced by a whole range of environments and people outside of their family. For example, in school or college, in the local community in their peer groups or online. Children and young people may encounter risk in any of these environments. Sometimes the different contexts are inter-related and can mean that children and young people may encounter multiple risks. Contextual safeguarding looks at how we can best understand these risks, engage with children and young people and help to keep them safe (NSPCC).

common age group who committed serious violence offences in 2024 – 2025 has been 15 years old which is of concern, and our longitudinal data shows an increase in serious violence offences committed by children aged 16 or below since 2021.

116. Oxfordshire's Serious Violence Coordinator role has been relocated from the YJS into the Targeted Youth Support Service (TYSS) as of October 2024. This role continues to support the development of Oxfordshire's annual Strategic Needs Assessment to inform place-based responses to serious violence in the county. An extensive youth provision mapping exercise has been undertaken to identify gaps in support and interventions for children most at risk of serious violence. This work has supported funding bids for youth engagement provision based on the Youth Endowment Fund toolkit.
117. Using the data gathered through youth provision mapping and the YJS' First Time Entrant audit, TYSS are now implementing transition support programmes for children moving from primary to secondary education, as this presents a particular point of vulnerability for children at risk of entering the criminal justice system. TYSS have also introduced a peer-on-peer violence programme for delivery in schools and communities.
118. Through joint-work in partnership with statutory and voluntary partners, the YJS and TYSS have led on the place-based approaches to address contextual risk; this has included detached youth work in local 'hot-spots' or in response to incidents and establishing targeted youth activities in communities that meet the needs of children and young people.
119. Now TYSS, the YJS and harm outside the home teams are aligned under one Adolescent Service, work is ongoing to develop Oxfordshire's prevention and harm outside the home framework for adolescents. This will continue to include our successful National Referral Mechanism (NRM) devolved decision-making pilot which has yielded positive outcomes for Oxfordshire's children.
120. Between 2023-24 the exploitation types identified at point of referral were broken down as follows:
 - 57% child drug exploitation
 - 24% 'other type' of exploitation (including trafficking, forced labour, kidnap for ransom)
 - 14% child sexual exploitation
 - 5% child criminal exploitation
121. Between 2023 – June 2025 out of a total 130 referrals, 74 children have received Positive Conclusive Grounds decisions at our local panel. 24 children have received Negative Reasonable Grounds decisions, which means their case does not proceed. The remaining children are still awaiting decisions. When referrals were made to the Single Competent Authority (SCA) children could be awaiting anywhere between 6 months to 24 months for a decision, whereas the Oxfordshire panel has reduced decision-making timescales down to 50 days (the national statutory guidance is 90 days). This has had a positive impact for our children in Oxfordshire who are receiving decisions more quickly made by

professionals who know them well, and this has then gone on to inform Police and Court processes and decision-making.

g. Detention in Police Custody

122. The YJS delivers an Appropriate Adult service for children who are arrested and taken to Police custody. The YJS has a team of 36 volunteers, of which 25 are trained Appropriate Adults. All have received in-house training to ensure compliance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) and NAAN guidelines. The volunteers receive safeguarding training, regular supervision, access to support group meetings to raise any concerns / issues regarding their role, hear relevant service updates and receive specific training to enhance their skills and knowledge in the role. Refresher Appropriate Adult training is available, and Appropriate Adult full-day training is offered to Children's Services staff and Adult Social Care staff. The service also delivers an Appropriate Adult Awareness course twice yearly, open to all Oxfordshire County Council staff including partner agencies working with children and vulnerable adults to help them to understand this vital role. Experienced volunteers provide shadowing for new volunteers wishing to experience custody before working independently.
123. In the year 2024-25 our Appropriate Adult volunteers supported children in custody on 67 instances, which is a 49% decrease from last year when Appropriate Adults attended on 132 occasions.
124. The YJS monitors the number of strip-searches that a volunteer Appropriate Adult attends, including the ethnicity of the children who are strip-searched. In 2024-25 there was 1 strip-search where the YJS provided an Appropriate Adult. The child was White British, and this was a negative search in which nothing was found.
125. The YJS Team Manager also attends a police-led Children in Custody Data Review meeting each quarter where data on children who are held overnight in custody suites across Thames Valley is scrutinised and discussed with partners including YJS', Emergency Duty Teams, Health colleagues and Social Care. We are working with TVP to ensure data on Oxfordshire children is presented to the Management Board each quarter.

h. Remands

126. The Youth Justice Service (YJS) has collaborated with partners across Children's Services to establish a new pathway for remanded children. This pathway ensures that children who are not already known to Social Care are swiftly allocated to a Social Work team. It also includes an urgent notification process to alert senior leaders across Children's Services of a newly remanded child. The process was formally approved by the Children's Senior Management Team in April 2025. Since then, the Team Manager has delivered briefing sessions to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), with additional briefings planned for key teams across Children's Services. These sessions aim to embed the new pathway and ensure it is consistently understood and applied.

127. The Youth Justice Service (YJS) recently delivered a presentation to the Board on the newly published Remand Concordat for children, outlining its implications and the associated responsibilities for partner agencies. Following this, the Board endorsed the value of conducting a self-assessment against the Concordat's recommendations. To support this work, a dedicated Remand Working Group has been established and will lead the implementation of recommendations and learning throughout 2025–26.

i. Use of Custody and Constructive Resettlement

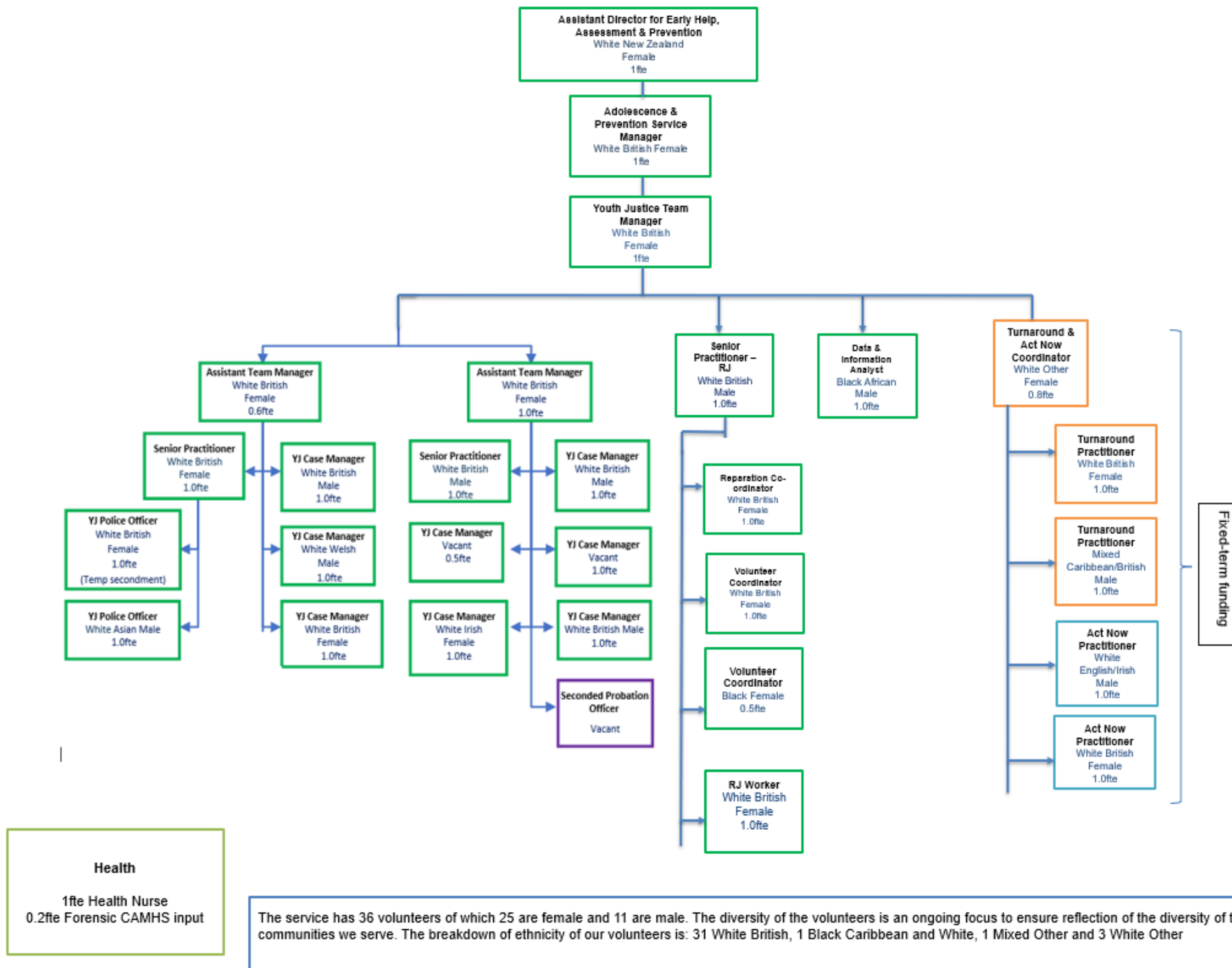
128. Partnership working across Children's Services, Health, Housing, Police and third sector will support robust resettlement planning for our children from the point of entry into custody. In 2024 Oxfordshire YJS produced a new local Resettlement Policy with practice guidance for the service. As part of a series of training workshops with partners, the YJS is presenting on areas on partnership practice which will include custody and resettlement, to raise awareness of our collective responsibilities and duties to children.

j. Working with Families

129. When supporting children, we take a whole-family approach, recognising that meaningful, lasting change happens through connection and collaboration. We are currently reviewing how we support parents and carers to help them better understand and respond to the challenges of adolescence. Families can also access a range of group programmes through our Family Help offer.

130. We are using data to guide early support for siblings of children working with the Youth Justice Service, helping inform the work of our Targeted Youth Work and Harm Outside the Home teams. Our Family Bridges team offers intensive, preventative support to help families stay together, working closely with practitioners to understand the impact that harmful behaviours, exploitation, and external risks can have on children and their families.

131. As a Family Safeguarding authority, we are committed to relational practice—working alongside children and families with empathy and respect for where they are in their journey of change. Our restorative approach recognises the impact of harmful behaviour not only on those directly involved, but also on the wider family and community.



Sign off, submission and approval:

Signed by Chair of Board: John Drew (CBE)	 <i>John Drew, CBE</i>
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Divisions Affected – N/A

COUNCIL – 4 November 2025

THE USE OF SPECIAL URGENCY FOR A KEY DECISION

Report by Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. Council is **RECOMMENDED** to note the use of Special Urgency for a Key Decision taken on 1 September 2025 by the Leader of the Council.

Executive Summary

2. The Constitution makes provision for the taking of an urgent decision. Part 8.1 Section 17.3 requires that “the Leader of the Council will submit quarterly reports to the Council on any executive decisions taken in the circumstances set out in Rule 16 (special urgency) in the preceding three months. The report will include the number of decisions so taken and a summary of the matters in respect of which those decisions were taken”.
3. In accordance with Rule 16 the following key decision was brought to the attention of the Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee who agreed that the taking of the decision could not be reasonably deferred and could be taken under the Special Urgency Procedure.
 - Woodeaton Manor Academy Funding
4. Decisions taken under Special Urgency are exempt from Call-in (Constitution Part 6.2, Section 19 (z)(iii)).

Reasons for Special Urgency

5. The Constitution specifies procedures and timescales that have to be followed where a local authority executive, committee or individual is taking a Key Decision. A Key Decision is defined in the Council’s Constitution (Part 1.3, Section 3 (b)) “as being 25% of the annual revenue budget for the relevant service block (i.e. that part of the Council’s total revenue budget allocated to the Cabinet Member for the service area concerned) or £1m, whichever is the lower figure, and £2m in the case of capital expenditure; or 25% of the people living or working in the area affected; or 25% of the capacity, frequency or hours of operation of a service or facility.”

6. Local Authorities are legally required to publicise Key Decisions in their forward plans a minimum of 28 clear days prior to the decision being taken.
7. As is common practice, the Constitution makes provision for decisions to be taken, as a matter of urgency, where it is impracticable to give the requisite notice. The General Exception rule allows Key Decisions to be taken within the 28 day period, providing the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee has been informed by notice of the decision to be taken, the Council has made publicly available a copy of that notice and five clear days have elapsed since the publication of that notice.
8. In exceptional cases where a Key Decision is required to be taken even sooner and it is impracticable to wait for the five clear days required under general exception provisions, then the special urgency rules can be applied. In such instances, the decision may only be made if the decision-maker has obtained the agreement of the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee, that the decision is urgent and cannot be reasonably deferred.
9. In the case of the decision on Woodeaton Manor Academy Funding, on 15 July 2025, Cabinet approved a key decision paper “Financial and land agreements relating to the conversion of Woodeaton Manor School to an academy”. The [report](#) included an exempt annex setting out the financials to be agreed with the academy trust.
10. On 22 August 2025, the Director of Financial and Commercial Services notified Democratic Services that further clarification had been sought with regards to the finances for the conversion and as a result an amendment (circa £300k) was necessary for the funding agreement. As this was a change to the original sum set out in the key decision paper approved in July, it was necessary to seek approval for this change.
11. The timescale for the academisation (1 October 2025), meant that all agreements had to be in place by the end of August and signed by 1 September as set out by the Department for Education.
12. Given the Bank Holiday on 25 August 2025, it was not possible to arrange a decision meeting in accordance with the General Exception provision which would require at least five clear working days before a decision meeting. A decision was therefore required under the Special Urgency provision.
13. The Chair of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee was appraised of the situation and was asked to agree to the use of the Special Urgency provision in this case. The Chair gave her agreement.
14. The Leader of the Council was asked to take the urgent decision. The Leader may discharge any executive functions in accordance with Section 9E 2(a) of the Local Government Act 2000.

15. On receipt of a report into the item, the Leader of the Council made the decision on 1 September 2025. The decision was published on the Council website [Decision - Woodeaton Manor Academy Funding | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Financial Implications

16. There are none arising from this report which is noting decisions previously taken.

Comments checked by: Ian Dyson, Director of Financial and Commercial Services, ian.dyson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

17. Regulation 19 of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 requires that the executive leader submits a report to the authority at least annually on executive decisions taken in cases of special urgency (Regulation 11), including the particulars of each decision.

This report is fulfilling both the legal and Constitutional duty to inform Council.

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

ANITA BRADLEY
Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Background papers: None

Contact Officer: Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Democratic Services Manager, colm.ocaomhanaigh@oxfordshire.gov.uk

October 2025

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Division(s): N/A

COUNCIL – 4 November 2025

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2026-27

Report of the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

COUNCIL IS RECOMMENDED to approve the calendar of meetings for the 2026-27 Council year attached to the report as Annex 1.

Executive Summary

1. The calendar of meetings for each civic year, from one Annual Council meeting to the next, is presented to Council for approval.
2. There is an established pattern of meeting dates that is generally followed, although adjustments are made to reflect known events that clash with certain meetings. For example, efforts are made to avoid meetings during the main school holidays. Important religious dates for the main religions represented in the UK, have also been taken into consideration.
3. The Chair and Vice Chair of Council, Group Leaders, Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Committees, Cabinet Members and the Strategic Leadership Team have been consulted on the dates proposed and have raised no objection.

Cabinet

4. Cabinet meetings are normally held on the third Tuesday of the month, except that there is no meeting in August due to the school holidays.
5. In July 2026 the third Tuesday is the first day of school holidays, therefore the Cabinet meeting is moved to the second Tuesday.
6. In January 2027, Cabinet is a week later to facilitate the timings around the budget decision.

Council

7. A recommended pattern of Council meetings is set out in the Constitution (Part 3.1, paragraph 2.1). In July 2026 it is proposed to have the Council meeting on

the first Tuesday, rather than the second, to facilitate bringing Cabinet meeting forward as above.

8. The February 2027 meeting is proposed to be brought forward to the second Tuesday, rather than the third, to avoid school holidays.

Financial Implications

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

Comments approved by: Drew Hodgson, Strategic Finance Business Partner,
drew.hodgson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

10. S101 of the Local Government Act permits the Council to arrange for the discharge of its functions by a committee or sub-committee. Executive functions are undertaken by the cabinet or a single member as established under the Local Government Act 2000.
11. The Constitution sets out the rules relating to the frequency of meetings:
Part 3.1 - Council Procedure Rule 2
Part 4.2 - Cabinet Procedure Rule 1.5
Part 5.1A - Regulatory and Other Committees Procedure Rule 3
Part 6.2 - Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8

Comments approved by: Jay Akbar, Head of Legal and Governance Services,
jay.akbar@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality and Inclusion Implications

12. In setting out the dates, the school holidays have been avoided as far as possible as many Members have extra child-minding responsibilities during the holidays.
13. Important religious holidays for the main religions represented in the UK population have also been taken into consideration, that is Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Jewish.
14. This is to ensure that meetings of the Council are inclusive.

Sustainability Implications

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

Risk Management

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

Anita Bradley

Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex: Annex 1 2026-27 Calendar of Meetings

Contact Officers: Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Democratic Services Manager
Email colm.ocaomhanaigh@oxfordshire.gov.uk

October 2025

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Oxfordshire County Council Calendar of Meetings 2026/27

Council	Cabinet	Cabinet Member Decisions for Leader, Resources and Deputy Leader and Children & Young People	Cabinet Member Decisions for Adults	Cabinet Member Decisions for Community Wellbeing & Safety	Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation	Cabinet Member Decisions for Future Economy & Innovation	Cabinet Member Decisions for Place, Environment and Climate Action	Cabinet Member Decisions for Public Health and Inequalities	Cabinet Member Decisions for Transport Management
Tuesday 10.30am	Tuesday 2.00pm	Tuesday 3.00 pm or on the rise of Cabinet	Tuesday 9.00am	Thursday 9.30am	Friday 9.30am	Monday 10am	Thursday 2.00pm	Tuesday 1.00pm	Thursday 10.00am
2026 12 May – Annual Council 7 July 8 Sept 3 Nov 8 Dec 2027 9 Feb 23 Mar 18 May – Annual Council	2026 19 May 16 Jun 14 Jul 15 Sept 20 Oct 17 Nov 15 Dec 2027 26 Jan 23 Feb 16 Mar 20 Apr	2026 19 May 16 Jun 21 Jul 15 Sept 20 Oct 17 Nov 15 Dec 2027 26 Jan 23 Feb 16 Mar 20 Apr	2026 19 May 16 Jun 21 Jul 15 Sept 20 Oct 17 Nov 15 Dec 2027 26 Jan 23 Feb 16 Mar 20 Apr	2025 7 May 4 Jun 9 Jul 3 Sept 1 Oct 5 Nov 10 Dec 2026 7 Jan 11 Feb 11 Mar 8 Apr 6 May	2026 8 May 5 June 3 July 4 Sept 9 Oct 6 Nov 4 Dec 2027 8 Jan 5 Feb 5 March 9 April	2025 11 May 8 June 6 July 7 Sept 5 Oct 9 Nov 7 Dec 2026 11 Jan 8 Feb 8 Mar 12 Apr 10 May	2026 21 May 18 Jun 16 Jul 3 Sept 8 Oct 19 Nov 17 Dec 2027 21 Jan 25 Feb 25 Mar 29 Apr	2026 5 May 9 Jun 14 Jul 1 Sept 6 Oct 10 Nov 1 Dec 2027 5 Jan 2 Feb 2 Mar 13 Apr 11 May	2026 21 May 18 Jun 16 Jul 3 Sept 8 Oct 19 Nov 17 Dec 2027 21 Jan 25 Feb 25 Mar 29 Apr

Oxfordshire County Council Calendar of Meetings 2026/27

Education & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee	People Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Tuesday 10.00am	Thursday 10.00am	Thursday 10.00am	Friday 10.00am	Wednesday 10.00am
2026 30 June 22 Sep 24 Nov 2027 19 Jan 27 Apr	2026 11 Jun 10 Sep 26 Nov 2027 4 Feb 15 Apr	2026 4 Jun 17 Sep 3 Dec 2027 11 Feb 22 Apr	2026 12 Jun 18 Sep 4 Dec 2027 15 Jan 16 Apr	2026 24 Jun 23 Sep 25 Nov 2027 3 Feb 21 Apr

Oxfordshire County Council Calendar of Meetings 2026/27

Audit & Governance Committee	Oxfordshire Health & Wellbeing Board	Pension Fund Committee	Planning & Regulation Committee	Employees Joint Consultative	Fire Service Joint Consultative	Teachers Joint Consultative	Local Pension Board	Corporate Parenting Panel
Wednesday 1.00pm	Thursday 1.00pm	Friday 10.00am	Monday 2.00pm	Thurs 2.00pm	Friday 10.00am	Thursday 2.00pm	Friday 10.30am	Wednesday 4.30pm
2026 20 May 15 Jul 16 Sept 18 Nov 2027 13 Jan 17 Mar	2026 14 May 9 Jul 24 Sep 10 Dec 2027 18 Mar	2026 5 Jun 4 Sep 11 Dec 2027 5 Mar	2026 1 Jun 20 Jul 7 Sept 19 Oct 30 Nov 2027 18 Jan 1 Mar 12 Apr	2026 23 April 16 July 15 Oct 2027 25 Feb 22 Apr	2026 26 Jun 25 Sep 18 Dec 2027 19 Mar	2026 2 Jul 12 Nov 2027 11 Mar	2026 3 Jul 16 Oct 2027 22 Jan 23 Apr	2026 8 Jul 7 Oct 2027 20 Jan 14 Apr

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