

Divisions Affected – All

CABINET – 20 JULY 2021

A Fair Deal for Oxfordshire Shaping our priorities

Report by the Chief Executive

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cabinet is recommended to:
 - a) Approve the approach to the development of a new strategic plan for the period commencing 2022/23, including a programme of public consultation 'Oxfordshire Conversations' and stakeholder engagement to take place in the autumn.
 - b) Endorse the priorities of the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance as set out in paragraph 6 (and the attached annex) to form the basis of these conversations and a new strategic plan.

Executive Summary

2. Following the Oxfordshire County Council elections on 6 May 2021, a new administration was formed: the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance.
3. This report sets out the policy objectives and areas of priority for the new administration. In line with the administrations ambition to listen to our communities and to be open, transparent and ensure the organisation is more accessible to all, a clear one-page document has been developed. (see Annex 1).
4. More detailed work on how these priorities will be achieved for the period of the administration will be undertaken over the summer and set out as part of a revised strategic plan and the Budget and Business Planning process for 2022/23 to 2025/26.
5. Where the delivery of policy objectives will require funding during 2021/22, this will be brought forward as part of the monthly Business Management Monitoring Report to Cabinet. Where resources are required, it is proposed that one-off funding from General Balances is used to support the implementation of actions for 2021/22.

Introduction: the priorities of the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance

6. The Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance recognises that the delivery of its immediate and longer-term policy objectives relies on strong working relationships with colleagues and partners. Therefore, all of our priorities are underpinned by a commitment to proactively engage and develop our workforce, recognising that the better we support our people the better we can meet the needs of the citizens of Oxfordshire.

The Alliance is clear that the best outcomes for the people of Oxfordshire will rest on a foundation of action to address inequalities and promote equality of opportunity. We will put this thinking at the heart of our work.

The climate emergency is one of the most significant challenges we face. As a community leader, large local employer and a local authority delivering services we can make a difference; action to address climate change and a commitment to net-zero carbon is central to our partnership and will be reflected in each of our priorities.

The policy objectives of the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance are to:

- Tackle the Climate Emergency through rapid decarbonisation, proper accounting of carbon emissions and ambitious targets, as well as supporting climate resilience.
- Tackling inequalities and providing opportunities for everyone in Oxfordshire to achieve their full potential.
- Prioritisation of wellbeing – improved outcomes for residents and improved air quality and access to libraries, cultural facilities and the arts.
- Review and reform of the social care system to prioritise end users and carers, with a focus on co-operative and community provision of social care, helping those who want to stay in their own homes.
- Increased investment in an inclusive, integrated, county-wide active and sustainable travel network fit for the 21st century to improve choice and reduce car journeys across the county.
- Improved access to nature and green spaces for all communities, and landscape-scale nature recovery across the county.
- Supporting all our children and young people to achieve improved health, wellbeing and educational outcomes; improved provision for children with additional needs; all decision-making to have regard to impact on young people and future generations.
- The creation of a resilient local democracy, where decisions are devolved to the lowest possible level and residents are meaningfully involved in the decisions that affect their lives.
- Support for local employment and businesses, working with partners to make Oxfordshire a centre for green and sustainable technologies through a local 'Green New Deal'. We will use our purchasing power and contracts to maximise benefit to local employment and businesses.

Shaping our Medium and Longer-Term Objectives: a new strategic plan and budget priorities for the Council

7. The development of a new strategic plan (to replace the current corporate plan) will be an inclusive process comprising public engagement and a programme of 'Oxfordshire conversations', which will seek to understand the medium and long-term aspirations and concerns of residents and partners so that these can be built into future plans. Further opportunities will be sought to include all councillors and for wider stakeholder and staff engagement and to utilise data from surveys and customer feedback.
8. As well as the ongoing development of the policy objectives set out earlier in this report, Oxfordshire County Council will draw on relevant socio-economic, and environmental data, public and stakeholder feedback to develop the new strategic plan. The plan will be made widely accessible, and be presented and titled in a clear, accessible and engaging format, with residents as the key audience. This new strategic plan for Oxfordshire County Council will be used as the basis by which future performance will be evaluated and by which the council will report back to local communities and residents.
9. The new plan will be completed by end of March 2022 to reflect and complement the 2022/2023 budget. Both documents will form part of the formal consultation ahead of budget and council tax setting in February 2022.
10. Cabinet will consider the first report of the Budget and Business Planning process for 2022/23 at its meeting in October. This report will set out the context and background information as an early stage in the process that will culminate in council setting a Strategic Plan in February 2022 alongside a budget for 2022/23, a Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Capital Programme. The report will also include a process and timeline for both the Strategic Plan and the Budget and Business Planning process.

Consultation and Engagement

11. The development of a new strategic plan will be based upon public engagement and consultation. The draft plan will also form part of the formal budget consultation process prior to adoption of the budget by Council in February 2022. Consultation will be carried out utilising a variety of methods and approaches to ensure accessibility and engagement with a wide variety of stakeholders, including seldom-heard groups.

Financial Implications

12. The Council ended the 2020/21 financial year with a £5.9m underspend. This was added to General Balances, which stood at £34.6m on 1 April 2021. The performance measure for General Balances as set out in the Financial Strategy

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approved by Council in February 2021 is that General Balances should be greater than or equal to the risk assessed level. The risk assessed level for 2021/22 is £28.8m. The cost of implementing actions to deliver on the new policy objectives during 2021/22 is not expected to impair the performance measure for General Balances.

13. Any proposals for additional funding in 2021/22 or which require a virement will be brought forward as part of the monthly Business Management reports to Cabinet for approval.

Comments checked by Lorna Baxter, Director for Finance.

Legal Implications

14. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by Anita Bradley, Director for Law and Governance.

Risk Management

15. There are no immediate risks arising from this report.

Impact Assessments

Climate	No immediate impact arising from this report. The development of the new strategic plan and its accompanying actions will include action to address the climate emergency and a full impact assessment will be included in the final proposals.
Young People	No immediate impact arising from this report. The development of the new strategic plan and its accompanying actions will include specific consultation and engagement with children and young people to reflect their concerns and ambitions within the new plan.
Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion	No immediate impact arising from this report. The development of the new strategic plan and its accompanying actions will include specific consultation and engagement with all sections of the community. A full equalities impact assessment with regards to budget priorities will be included in the final proposals.

Yvonne Rees
Chief Executive

Annexes

Annex 1: Let's Begin the Conversation - A Fair Deal for Oxfordshire

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