

Oxfordshire County Council

Budget and Business Planning 2024/25

Overarching climate impact review of 2024/25 budget proposals

Context & Background

1. This document provides an overview of the potential climate action impact of proposed changes to the budget.
2. As many schemes are in early development, further climate assessment will be undertaken as more detailed business cases are developed through the capital governance process.
3. The [strategic plan 2022 - 2025 \(pdf format, 3.6Mb\)](#) sets out the council's vision to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. This commitment is strengthened further by the Councils' priority to 'put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work'. The council's adopted climate action framework also commits the council to:
 - Being carbon neutral in its operations by 2030
 - Enabling a zero-carbon Oxfordshire well ahead of 2050
4. The council has a cross-organisational work programme to deliver on these commitments. The latest report on this programme can be found at <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=9894>
5. In the 2023/24 budget setting process the council made additional investment of £23m in climate action and resilience measures including:
 - Transitioning of the council's fleet to electric vehicles
 - Reducing the impact of the council's front line business travel
 - Delivering the council's property strategy which supports the council's commitment to be net zero by 2030.
 - Piloting an energy efficiency loan scheme for maintained schools to support schools to invest in energy efficiency improvements.
 - A Tree Planting scheme; in line with the council's Tree Policy.
 - Staff resource to continue the decarbonisation and resilience of its estate particularly in buildings and fleet.
 - Replacement of ICT with more efficient equipment
6. It is unclear what the impact of the national financial position will be on delivery of the national Net Zero Strategy (both through financing and bringing forward supportive

policy). This is outside the scope of this report but will be a key factor in enabling the delivery of local climate objectives as the council bids for both capital and revenue funding for climate action. Decisions made by central government in this context will also influence private sector investment in this area.

Revenue Proposals Climate Impact Review

7. A number of proposals are included in the budget that support delivery of our Climate Action commitments including:
 - 2025EP641 - Delivering the new Environment Agency guidelines on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). All domestic soft seating containing POPs will now be incinerated at our waste to energy recovery site. This prevents escape into the environment where they persist in water courses.
 - 2025EP647 - The development of a circular economy strategy. A circular economy approach to our internal and external business is critical to delivery of the Councils net zero carbon aspirations. More carbon is used through the delivery of services and goods to residents than through any other means. Moving to a circular economy approach will reduce that impact.
 - 2025EP654, 2025EP744 - Investment in a range of policy areas integral to the delivery of Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and associated decarbonisation targets including Sustainable Travel to School Strategy.
 - Measures to reduce flooding risks including gully and ditch clearing and repairs in recently flooded areas. Boosting the capacity to work with landowners and parish councils to help them clear ditches and implement sustainable drainage systems.
 - Resources to ensure vegetation around footways and cycleways is well maintained to support active travel.
8. 2025EP692 - Within Environment and Circular Economy, pressures have been identified across a range of services including waste management, biodiversity, public rights of way which link with climate outcomes. 2025EP693 - No additional budget has been allocated to these areas and it is anticipated that the pressures will be managed in the overall service budget.

Capital Proposals

9. A review of the current capital programme has been undertaken, prioritising the schemes and initiatives using the prioritisation framework included at Annex 3a. This includes an assessment of schemes contributing to Climate Action or Active Travel (Prioritisation Category 3).
10. Climate Impact Assessments of the proposals in Annex 3b will be carried out as business cases are developed including consideration of the standards to which buildings will be constructed.

Provision has been made within the programme for investment to support the council's own estate net zero by 2030 target including:

- Property rationalisation programme to reduce our assets and accelerate the decarbonisation of the remaining estate. Ensuring properties are energy efficient, accessible for agile working and fit for purpose for the longer term.
- Refurbishment works at our council owned and managed Gypsy and Traveller sites will increase energy efficiency and support health and well being.
- A new fire station built to net zero standards at Rewley Rd and Carterton and the redevelopment of Slade Fire Station that includes measures to significantly increase energy efficiency.
- Decarbonisation Phase 1 including improvements to the thermal fabric of the several council buildings alongside electrical and renewable electricity improvements to counter the increasing running costs.
- Provision of vehicle charging equipment to charge OCC mobile worker home based fleet vehicles. This enables the transition of council fleet vehicles to electric limiting cost and carbon usage.
- Investment in ICT to support hybrid agile working approach for staff and increase energy efficiency of equipment.

11. Of the £94m of investment identified to date to decarbonise and improve buildings/assets and reduce energy demand and costs in line with the council's net zero by 2030 target; these proposals bring the total funded within the capital programme to £70m. The council is seeking £3.1m of grant funding through the latest round of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and has set aside the match funding to support this. The further £21m identified on the capital pipeline is not yet funded and will need funding in future years. Further investment will be needed to support offset. Work is taking place to quantify potential offset needs and develop a strategy.
12. Provision has been made to fund the next phases of both the Zero Emissions Zone (ZEZ) and Traffic Filters work. Both schemes support the delivery of the Local Transport and Connectivity plan and objectives to reduce congestion, reduce emissions and improve air quality.
13. Provision has been made for a replacement HWRC site, this aligns with the emerging HWRC Strategy, which supports HWRC expansion to meet population growth and potential increase in reuse and recycling capacity. Essential stabilisation works at Redbridge HWRC driven by health and safety considerations offer opportunities to increase household recycling and reuse capacity as well as providing opportunities to install solar panels and protect/restore local biodiversity.
14. Provision has been made for a replacement mortuary site to fulfil our statutory obligations. This work is at options appraisal stage. Should a new building be required costs to build to net zero will need to be established through the business case development stage. This may create additional investment needs.
15. A proposal to deliver a new underpass under the A40 at Eynsham will support safe and active travel connecting Eynsham with the development in Salt Cross. This proposal will be subject to a full EIA. It is recognised that mitigations will be required related to the embodied carbon in the development and for the landscape aspects of the development.
16. Funding is included for the A4095 at NW Bicester. The consented scheme (granted in August 2019) included a number of Conditions in relation to Ecology. The Interim

Baseline Report will be updated as the design continues and mitigation and monitoring are confirmed. The constraints identified relate to amphibians, reptiles, bats and breeding birds – mitigation to be use of the District Level Licensing Scheme, address timing of work and carry out further surveys. The development includes a fully segregated footways and cycleways and a number of high-quality crossing facilities and a bus link.