

**CABINET**  
**15 July 2025**

**Community Banking Hubs Motion**  
**Report by Director of Public Affairs, Policy & Partnerships**

**RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**
  - a) Agree to the continuation of efforts to engage banks to provide community services within library facilities and other suitable locations in areas lacking banking services

**Executive Summary**

2. This report sets out the intended approach to take forward the Council Motion on community banking hubs resolved by Council on 1 April 2025.
3. A summary of recent work is included in the report together with an analysis of areas currently lacking banking services.

**Background**

4. On 1 April 2025 the Council passed a motion which stated: "Council requests the relevant Cabinet member for Community and Corporate Services and the Cabinet Member for Finance to take a lead from forward-thinking colleagues at Buckinghamshire Council and, working with its Town Council, and District Council partners, invite banks and building societies that have left – or are due to leave – our high streets to explore opportunities to work with this Council to set up similar banking hubs within appropriate Council libraries."
5. This report is presented to Cabinet with the aim of responding to the motion and setting out the council's approach to Community Banking Hubs.

**Evidence of need for community banking services**

6. The records of the council debate on the motion on 1 April 2025 notes that the loss of community banking services is of concern to many residents, especially older constituents and those with disabilities and adaptive needs.
7. The debate identified a variety of groups who may need access to banking services. This included those listed above but also businesses and people who preferred not to use digital services, and the main need identified was to have places to deposit and withdraw cash. Since the debate, Nat West have announced the closure of branches in Abingdon and Bicester, although this leaves other banking services in these towns.

8. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published their latest research into the use of banking services in England and Wales in May 2025. A link to the report and some relevant extracts are included at Annex 1. Whilst this research reflects national trends, it provides some additional insight into potential needs for banking services.
9. LINK (the British interbank network) provide a map which identifies the location of cash facilities in all locations in the country: [LINK / Cash Locator](#). Using this data and other publicly available sources, an analysis has been conducted of the types of banking and similar services available in settlements of more than 5,000\* inhabitants in Oxfordshire. Settlements without traditional banking services are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1\*\*

Settlement	Types of financial services available		
	Post Office	Building Society	Other
Benson	Yes		
Carterton	Yes		
Chinnor	Yes		
Eynsham	Yes		
Faringdon	Yes		
Grove	Yes		
Henley-on-Thames	Yes	Nationwide	Barclays Community Bank
Kidlington	Yes	Coventry	Barclays Community Bank
Shrivenham	Yes		
Sonning Common	Yes		
Thame	Yes	Nationwide	Lloyds advice service (until Oct 25)
Wallingford	Yes	Nationwide	

\*The figure of 5,000 is not significant in relation to the provision of services but is a low enough number to include all towns and large villages.

\*\*Chipping Norton has not been included in the above list as it has a Barclays community banking service operating four days a week.

### Attempts to develop community banking services in Oxfordshire

10. Library Services have been actively pursuing opportunities with a number of banks to provide community banking services in our libraries, including Barclays, Bank of Scotland and Lloyds.
11. Barclays have set up a number of pop-up sessions offering community banking services for half and full days. However, this has not yet led to an ongoing presence. The Bank of Scotland has been operating out of Didcot library for a couple of months and will continue until September 2025. A six-week trial is due to commence shortly at Didcot Library with Lloyds Banking Group providing 'community banking' support.
12. Thame Town Council have been keen to support the development of a banking hub there. A review by LINK of access in Thame made the sole recommendation of providing a cash deposit service for businesses. The town council have made a complaint regarding this decision but have had both their

first and second stage appeals turned down. The next appeal stage involves the appointment of an Independent Assessor to consider the matter. Hosting a hub in Thame library has also been discussed, but the building has limited space and privacy.

13. One of the main barriers to greater take-up has been limited availability of confidential meeting space at libraries. To address this need, Libraries are building this kind of facility into all new refurbishments. This will be of use for a variety of potential services.

#### **Provision of cash facilities**

14. There are a range of challenges in providing facilities for cash withdrawal and deposit in community banking hubs. The hub provided in Buckingham uses the Post Office for this purpose. However the deposit limits operated by the Post Office would make this unsuitable for many business customers. For the council to provide its own cash facilities would bring a range of requirements. The most obvious ones are secure facilities for cash storage, appropriate staffing levels, training and processes for cash handling.

#### **Alternative forms of support**

15. In the FCA research in Annex 1, a key factor driving demand for in-person banking services is digital exclusion and mistrust of digital services. As such improved digital inclusion could deliver improved access to banking services. This approach would have a broader reach than the potential establishment of a small number of banking hubs.
16. Getting Oxfordshire Online are currently delivering a project to identify barriers to digital inclusion in the most deprived areas of the county. This work is jointly funded by Public Health and the Cost of Living Programme. The work is due to complete in the autumn.

#### **Next Steps**

17. Although the council is keen to develop community banking services, it requires active support from banks to do so.
18. It is proposed to continue the conversations with the banks which are participating in existing projects to discuss how we can continue and extend these initiatives. We will also discuss the approach taken in Buckingham with the Town Council and Buckinghamshire Council to take advantage of their learning.

#### **Corporate Policies and Priorities**

19. Enabling access to banking services addresses the council's priority of tackling inequality in Oxfordshire. It also indirectly addresses the prioritising of residents' health and wellbeing.

## Financial Implications

20. There are no new budgetary implications arising from this report. The current work is being completed using existing resources.

Comments checked by:  
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## Legal Implications

The General Power of Competence, introduced by the Localism Act 2011, allows councils to do anything an individual can do, unless it's specifically prohibited. However, this power does not extend to permit the Council itself to provide and act as a banking service. However, it is possible for the Council to work with banks as set out in this report to facilitate the provision of banking services within its community settings such as libraries. As this report recommends that further engagement with banks is undertaken there are no specific legal implications arising directly from this report. Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer.

## Staff Implications

21. Work so far has been undertaken within the Library Service within existing budgets.

## Equality & Inclusion Implications

22. Section 1 of the Equality Act which sets out a socio-economic duty has not been enacted, although doing so is a manifesto commitment from the current government. The duty would seek to reduce socio-economic disadvantage and ensuring access to financial services is an important element of this. People suffering socio-economic disadvantage are also more likely than average to have another protected characteristic. Measures to reduce socio-economic disadvantage therefore will also reduce inequality.

## Sustainability Implications

23. There are no significant impacts in respect of environmental sustainability in this programme.

## Risk Management

24. The risks in this area of work are low, and set out below:
- Reputational – People without access to banking services may perceive the council to be the only organisation in a position to address the issues. Failing to attempt to address the issue could therefore lead to a loss of reputation.

June 2025

## **Annex 1 – Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) research**

The full FCA research findings are here: [Financial Lives 2024 survey - Retail banking: Selected findings](#)

Some relevant excerpts are as follows:

- In 2024, 7% of day-to-day account holders had not undertaken banking activities online or using a mobile banking app in the last 12 months.
- In 2024, we asked day-to-day account holders who do not use online or mobile banking why they do not do so. The main reasons given were a preference to speak with someone in person (41%) and a concern that digital banking is not secure (37%)
- In 2024, day-to-day account holders most likely to use a branch regularly (at least once a month) were the digitally excluded (40%)
- In 2024, 17% of all UK adults said they found getting to a bank, building society or credit union difficult – up 4pp since 2022. 5% said it was difficult to get to an ATM and 6% said it was difficult to get to a Post Office – neither statistically different from 2022