S106 Improvement Programme Update: Delivery of Phase 3

This report has been produced to accompany the Infrastructure Funding Statement for 2024/25 in recognition of the role the programme plays in the delivery of improvements for the management of S106 funding and the planning of delivery of the Council's Infrastructure Programme

Executive Summary

1. This paper provides an update on the delivery of Phase 3 of the S106 Improvement Programme for Oxfordshire County Council. The report outlines the programme's purpose, progress, and next steps on the management of Section 106 (S106) planning obligations funding and associated processes.

2. The S106 Improvement Programme, running for 18 months, was initiated following internal and external reviews that highlighted the need for improved management of S106 funds. The programme is structured in phases, with Phase 3 focusing on governance, funding strategy, and accelerated delivery, aiming to embed new processes and transition improvements into Business as Usual (BAU).

3. Progress highlights of phase 3 include:

   - **Accelerated Delivery:** A business case was presented to Cabinet (October 2025) to approve 33 schemes across North, Central, and South planning areas, supported by a £4m capital investment to unlock £20m in S106 funding. The total value of schemes is £27.5m.

   - **Reconciliation:** Circa 200 schemes and 800 legal agreements have been reviewed to clarify their status (completed, live, in development, or no longer required) and to find opportunities for acceleration or reallocation to corporate priorities where flexibility allows.

   - **Data and Systems:** A new Members Dashboard (version 2) is launching, and a senior systems accountant has been recruited to support data cleansing and integration across planning and financial systems.

   - **Prioritisation Tool:** A capital funding prioritisation calculator has been developed and is being tested for wider organisational use.

   - **Governance and Accountability:** The programme is embedding clearer structures for managing developer contributions, including a RACI matrix for negotiation and fund allocation, enhanced audit trails, and alignment with capital governance frameworks.

   - **Data Validation and Cleansing:** Efforts are ongoing to improve data quality and integration across key IT systems, supported by a cross-functional data working group and new dashboards for data quality and project tracking.

Background and Context

4. The S106 Improvement Programme has been underway for 18 months, initiated in response to internal recognition of the need for improvements in managing S106 funds. A Planning Advisory Service review completed in 2023 set out a series of recommendations, which were further endorsed by an external consultancy review in November 2024. This constituted Phase 1 of the programme. The recommendations from both assessments were combined, leading to the establishment of a phased programme (Phase 2) to deliver several key priorities, including:

   - Establishing a structured, cross-organizational approach with director-level leadership and oversight.

   - Launching an initial accelerated delivery programme to address the legacy of small-scale Section 106 schemes, including the creation and update of business cases.

   - Conducting a detailed review of data systems and processes, resulting in the production of a single-view members dashboard that integrates information from planning, project management, and financial systems.

   - Delivering an early integrated pre-delivery pipeline to help the identification and prioritization of capital projects across the board.

   - Undertaking a comprehensive review of S106 agreements to re-baseline schemes as "identified use" or "committed," and reviewing other agreements for flexibility where previously identified uses are no longer priorities.

5. Progress on Phase 2 was reported to the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2025.

6. Phase 3 of the programme was subsequently developed to combine improvement delivered so far and move to realise the benefits established. The Phase 3 work streams include:

   - Accelerated Delivery

   - Governance and Accountability

   - Data Validation & Cleansing

   - Dashboard Development

   - Pre-Pipeline Register

   - Strategic Spatial Planning

7. Workstreams launched in October 2025 include:

   - Updated arrangements for monitoring and compliance

   - Review of developer negotiation and agreement approach

8. This report provides updates and plans for these work streams.

Summary of Phase 3 Programme and Deliverables October 25

Accelerated Delivery

9. The S106 Accelerated Delivery project aims to accelerate delivery of minor transport schemes through an accelerated programme of works during 2025/26-2027/28 and to learn from the initial project to establish proposals to develop a further programme of accelerated schemes for the future.

Summary of Progress

10. In October 2025 Cabinet approved 33 schemes (6 are development only, and 27 schemes include construction) which span across the North, Central and South place planning areas. £4m corporate funding, approved as part of the 2025/26 budget, will be used to unlock the spend that will be funded by approximately £20m S106 funding. After taking account of all funding sources, the total value of schemes approved by Cabinet in October 2025 is £27.5m.

11. An outline of schemes and locality is provided below

Analysis by District - Combined Programmes (Accelerated Delivery/s106 Transport Corporate Funding)				
District	Secured	Held	s106 TCF (£)	Total (s106 + s106 TCF)
Central	£0.00	£206,141	£0.00	£206,141
Cherwell	£8,109,843	£6,860,869	£730,000	£15,700,712
South	£75,000	£1,011,027	£765,000	£1,851,027
Vale	£0.00	£2,823,730	£2,041,515	£4,865,245
West	£853,182	£3,634,749	£210,000	£4,697,931
Programme Contingency			*£253,485*	*£253,485*
Programme Funding Totals	£9,038,025.54	£14,536,518.03	£4,000,000.00	£27,574,543

Next Steps

12. Next steps for the acceleration include:

- Establishing a reporting process to capture and report Tranche 1 delivery progress into the S106 Programme Board. This will provide oversight and transparency as schemes transition into Infrastructure Business-as-Usual (BAU), with governance and reporting mechanisms.

- To use learning from Tranche 1 to prove the accelerated approach as a practical delivery route, informing the design and structure of Tranche 2.

- Develop criteria for schemes suitable for the accelerated delivery route, to ensure consistent assessment and readiness standards.

- In parallel, scope and develop a secondary delivery route for minor works, enabling an annual rolling programme that can be delivered alongside major schemes.

Governance and Accountability

13. This workstream will, as part of the end-to-end sub process reviews, clarify responsibility for S106 and other developer contribution processes across the relevant departments creating a responsibility and accountability matrix and standard operating procedures. This will enable a central oversight function to monitor allocation and expenditure with introduction of regular reporting mechanisms to track progress and flag delays.

Summary of Progress

14. Progress has continued this period, focusing on embedding structure and transparency in how developer contributions are managed across the organisation. The fund allocation process and associated assessment scorecard have now been finalised, supported by enhanced oversight through an updated reconciliation process and a revised risk assessment.

15. A policy review on Deeds of Variation has begun to ensure compliance with legislation and alignment with evolving planning obligations.

16. Systems are being developed to capture audit trails around fund movements, improving traceability and accountability for S106 agreements.

17. Work has begun to align S106 processes with the new capital governance framework, ensuring that S106 is recognised and utilised as a key funding source within the broader capital planning process.

18. Next steps for the governance and accountability improvement include:

- Embedding governance mechanisms to ensure service areas are responsible for providing regular project updates, enabling central oversight and more accurate programme forecasting.

- Developing workflow and task management structures to introduce greater efficiency and visibility across the funding lifecycle.

- Introducing a revised negotiation framework using data-driven insights to enable more structured and evidence-based negotiations with developers.

- Developing a revised cost model to improve transparency and ensure that project budgets reflect true delivery costs—reducing pressure on corporate fund top-ups.

- Reviewing the use of clauses to ensure obligations remain achievable, proportionate, and aligned with Local Plan objectives.

- Introducing structured frameworks for the use and enforcement of Section 278 agreements, ensuring consistency in approach and compliance with policy.

- Engaging developers to promote a more collaborative, transparent, and community-focused approach to the negotiation and use of development contributions.

Data Validation & Cleansing

19. The Data Validation and Cleansing workstream is aimed at setting up clear data governance procedures including ownership and accountability for data at all sections of the planning pathway, as well as providing technology tools to enhance management, for example automated exception reporting when schemes are out of tolerance. Once complete, it will create a robust data foundation to support streamlined processes, improved reporting, and a significant reduction in offline and manual working practices. This represents a critical step toward achieving consistency, transparency, and operational efficiency across the full lifecycle of S106 agreement management**.**

Summary of Progress

20. Work has continued in this phase to improve the under-pinning data quality and data alignment across four key IT systems. Work has also continued at aligning system processes and recording practice across teams. Further work is needed to fully align current process to the new integrated and interdependent ways of working.

21. A cross functional data working group has been stood-up and is now supported by a newly built data-quality dashboard. The dashboard includes reports that highlight critical data integration issues or data gaps. In this phase, new reports were developed related to the updates in the members dashboard i.e. projects in delivery and their associated S106 funding allocations.

22. A new corporate systems accountant role was recruited to in August 2025. This officer has started detailed discovery work, assessing how the financial dataflows between our corporate finance system and line of business systems work now. They will move on to redesign financial flows to enable the automation of; transfers of financial data in and out of the corporate finance system; financial reporting; and reconciliations across the four systems. The work to date has highlighted gaps in the data held in our systems, which will require changes to our systems, as well as further data cleaning work required. Work is ongoing with teams that run these systems and feeding into the cross functional data working group.

Next Steps

23. Next steps for this workstream include:

- Concluding data completeness and validation testing on the new reports being made available in the Members dashboard release 2: Projects in delivery funding, future spend profile and Pre-delivery pipeline reports.

- Moving current off system working into our core systems, and introduce additional systems where needed, including income reconciliation spreadsheet (planning to corporate finance systems), capital income funding allocations, IFS reports, notifications of funding allocation changes.

- Automate the developer contribution billing and cash receipting process within the planning system

Reconciliation

24. In August 2025, a reconciliation project was launched to review all S106 schemes and agreements to understand status of delivery and to improve the alignment of legal, financial, and planning records related to developer contributions.

25. The reconciliation when considering status has included; whether schemes are already delivered using alternative capital funds (for example external grant), live (in delivery); awaiting delivery, or no longer required.

26. Reconciling the legacy of S106 agreements is a complex process that demands significant data entry and validation. Currently, the council lacks a single system that provides a complete and accurate record of S106 agreements from inception to completion. As a result, the data collected for scheme reviews requires extensive cleaning before it can be properly analysed. These challenges are being addressed through the above data validation and cleansing project with activities outlined above.

Summary of Progress

27. A taskforce with representatives from each service area has been established. This group has conducted a desktop review to assess the status of schemes, confirming which are delivered, live projects, awaiting delivery, or currently unknown. Nearly 200 schemes and 800 legal agreements have been reviewed with ambition to define status (completed, live, in development and no longer needed). The process is also assessing opportunities for appropriate reallocation to meet corporate priorities funding such as the Cowley Branch line and SEND school programmes, where this flexibility exists within agreements.

Next Steps

28. Next steps for this workstream include:

- Completing Desktop Reviews: All service areas, except Transport, are needed to finish their desktop reviews by the deadline of 3 November 2025.

- Initiate Onsite Audit Checks: Once desktop reviews are complete and the status of all schemes is clarified, schemes that have reported unknown will likely undergo an onsite audit, to verify whether schemes have been delivered but remain unclosed.

- Continue Legal Reviews**:** Where additional schemes are identified as no longer required or already delivered, legal review will examine flexibility and options.

- Assess Pre Delivery Portal Data**:** Plans are in place to analyse the latest information received to update scheme statuses, confirm undeliverable schemes, clarify timelines, explore barriers, and minimise the number of schemes requiring further officer review, especially where recent updates have already been made. Additional candidate schemes for the acceleration project should come out of this process.

Dashboard Development

29. The Planning application and S106 Funding Dashboard is a key component of the wider S106 Improvement Programme, the ambition is

   a. to democratise access to S106 data for stakeholders;

   b. integrate disparate systems into a single, unified reporting platform;

   c. enhance transparency, consistency, and efficiency in the management of developer contributions.

30. The dashboard brings together financial, planning, and project data into a real-time, interactive interface that supports informed decision-making. Phase 1 of the dashboard development was successfully completed in June 2025, marked by the launch of Release 1 of the Members Dashboard.

Summary of Progress

31. Work has progressed on developing out the existing Members dashboard (release 2) to meet member requirements. In addition, a Data Quality dashboard has been created to support the data validation workstream, provide reports to support the reconciliation workstream, as well as requirement gathering for the operational dashboards for planning obligation tracking.

32. To improve reporting reliability and capability the underpinning data model has been redesigned and moved onto dedicated enterprise capacity.

33. Release 2 of the members dashboard has been completed in the development environment ready for release on 31 October 2025. Updates will include:

- a new section on pre-delivery pipeline, including barriers to delivery

- projects in delivery - information has been expanded to include timeframes, status, S106 funding allocation, links to live website project details

- travel plan funding has been included

   The dashboard will undertake validation and data completeness checking ahead of publishing.

34. The data quality dashboard has been set up and is continuously being updated to support project work streams, or to highlight data quality issues that are impacting the insight provided via the dynamic dashboards.

35. Sessions have been held with operational teams to understand information gaps and requirements for an internal operational officer dashboard. Building of draft reports are in progress, as well as re-platforming existing planning obligation reports. The data quality work has taken priority to ensure the published dashboards are and remain a reliable source of information for all users.

36. Work has started to migrate the mapping component to ArcGIS to enhance the level of detail and insights available in the dashboard reports. These dashboards will be a first use case of Geographic Information System (GIS) integration into live business intelligence tool reports, in this case using Power BI. The project team is working with the council's GIS team to complete robust testing and design.

Next Steps

37. Next steps include:

- Member Dashboard – Release Two: Go live with version two of the Members Dashboard on 31 October 2025.

- Operational Dashboards: Continue development of the Planning Obligation Team dashboard as the foundation for future operational dashboards. Progress requirement gathering for service and place teams.

- Data quality: Continue to build data quality reports in the dashboard as identified as required by the redesigned future ways of working and the data quality community.

- Pre-Delivery Portal: Set up ongoing monitoring and continuous enhancement of the Pre-Delivery Portal component as needed.

- Mapping: Continue work with the council's GIS team to test and launch GIS mapping integrated into dashboards.

- Systems: Support with the planning and implementation of the move to cloud hosted planning system.

Pre-Pipeline Register

38. The pre-delivery portal (PDP) is a newly established central repository designed to capture any capital scheme or concept that has not yet been included in the formal capital programme for delivery. By providing a holistic view of the entire capital pipeline, it enables the organisation to align priorities and plan resources more efficiently. This visibility creates opportunities for schemes to be programmed together, optimises funding application at the earliest stages, and supports early feasibility work to move projects towards a 'shovel-ready' status.

39. This approach streamlines processes, accelerates implementation, and ensures a more coordinated and strategic delivery of capital projects. Although the initial version of the PDP is specifically focussed on capturing projects that are funded by S106, the longer-term ambition is to ensure all capital schemes are visible, enabling a single view of capital activity across the County.
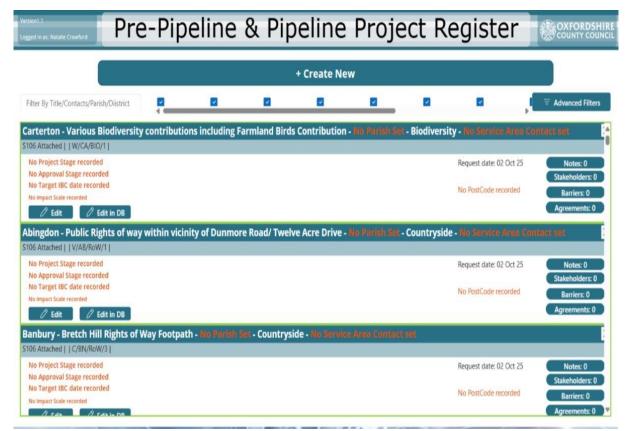
Summary of Progress

40. The programme has now successfully recorded 461 s106 funded projects within the Pre-Delivery Pipeline (PDP), representing a significant milestone in establishing a comprehensive, centralised register of projects.

41. Work is ongoing to enhance the qualitative data within the system, focusing on identifying and capturing insights on known barriers to delivery and overall project readiness. The project continues to embed new ways of working with service areas to ensure that all project information is correct, consistent, and up to date.

42. Preparations are underway for the release of PDP data to the Member Dashboard at the end of October 2025, providing improved visibility and transparency for decision-makers.

Next Steps:

43. Next steps for the PDP include:

- To populate and refine PDP data to include all identified project needs.

- Gather current user feedback improving on the established framework for capturing delivery insights and barriers for ongoing monitoring by releasing version 2 of PDP.

- Develop qualitative data capture processes to record delivery risks, barriers, and community impact factors.

- Embed PDP use within service areas' day-to-day operations, ensuring consistent project entry and management up to the point of capital programme inclusion.

- Support the transition towards using PDP data to inform future s106 negotiations, aligning developer contributions to genuine local needs and community priorities.

- Provide user assurance testing of the PDP data ahead of the Member Dashboard V2 release at the end of October.

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Scheme Prioritisation Calculator

44. This workstream will ensure that all capital projects seeking developer contributions are rigorously assessed against criteria that align with the council's strategic vision as well as the relevant planning regulations. The essential criteria will include:

- Direct Mitigation: The project satisfies the legal tests for S106.

- Policy Alignment: The project must demonstrate a clear link to the strategic objectives of the Council's corporate strategy and policy framework.

- Deliverability and Readiness: A credible and costed project plan must be in place, with evidence of project management capacity to deliver it. Priority should be given to "shovel-ready" schemes.

- Value for Money: A clear assessment of the project's costs and benefits will be required.

- Maximising Community Benefit: The overall ambition is to ensure that S106 funds are allocated and prioritised in a fair, transparent, and strategic way.

Summary of Progress

45. The prioritisation tool has now reached a mature testing stage. User feedback has been positive, with one team noting that "a tool like this is much needed and long overdue."

Next Steps

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46. Next steps include:

- Agree final weighting and scoring factors to enable launch of the tool to internal OCC teams.

- Refine tool functionality to include narrative fields and contextual information for projects.

- Develop and document governance arrangements to oversee prioritisation, validation, and escalation of schemes.

- Create a visual priority matrix and flow diagram to map the process from project identification through to programme inclusion.

- Use learning from workshops to embed the calculator as a core part of OCC's capital planning process.

Strategic Spatial Strategy

47. The Council is proactively progressing with the spatial strategy workstreams in-line with emerging government expectations on the future development of Spatial Development Strategies. Early work has been undertaken by the Council on several spatial strategy workstreams including and developing plans for an integrated spatial model digital tool and developing land use principles.

48. National government is developing a new digital spatial tool - via the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA) – this digital tool will provide advanced modelling and insights by overlaying key datasets on land use, environment, and economic potential. Strategic planning teams are engaging with NISTA on this new tool to understand further details of its technical capability and potential future uses.

49. In addition, NISTA's collaboration with DEFRA and other agencies on related national projects, such as the forthcoming Land Use Framework, means that the Council's early work on spatial strategy workstreams is well-positioned to adapt and align with these emerging national policies and strategies. By staying connected to these changes the Council will ensure that efforts are future-proofed and avoid duplicating work that may soon be superseded by government measures.

50. This approach allows resources to be focussed on areas where local ambition and expertise can add the greatest value.

Projects due to start October 25

Monitoring and Compliance

51. This workstream will create a revised framework for monitoring and managing fund expenditure, to drive delivery and reduce risk. The framework will ensure funds are allocated within legal deadlines and linked to realistic delivery timescales. This workstream will oversee the delivery of:

- A Compliance Policy and Standard Operating Procedure to provide a consistent approach to compliance and monitoring of S106 funds.

- The establishment of audits and quarterly Fund Review Meetings and a structured review process (with Planning, Finance, Infrastructure Delivery, and Legal teams) to assess:
  - Status of committed vs. uncommitted funds
  - Spend progress and delivery outcomes
  - Alignment of funds with priority schemes
  - Expiring funds and potential risks
  - Opportunities for reallocation based on alternative funding sources (e.g., CIL, government grants)
  - Annual Reallocation Exercise – Conduct a deep-dive review to identify funds that can be repurposed within legal constraints, ensuring alignment with council priorities.
  - Triggers for Fund Reallocation – Develop clear criteria for when a project should be reassessed or funding should be reallocated (e.g., delays, changes in priorities, alternative funding secured)
    .

52. To ensure accountability, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Fund Management will be agreed such as:
    a. % of funds committed within set timescales
    b. Number of schemes delivered on schedule
    c. Overall spend vs collection rate
    d. Level of fund expiry risk

53. Finally, a comprehensive training programme will be set up to embed new ways of working.

Developer Negotiations and Agreement Structuring

54. This workstream will sit within the sub-process review programme and will seek to strengthen the link between planning obligations and real-world project costs to ensure contributions are sufficient and deliverable. Standardised developer negotiation processes will be created and documented (SOPs) which will ensure early engagement with delivery teams to align obligations with council priorities and include clearer milestones and financial triggers.

Conclusion

55. In summary, the S106 Improvement Programme has delivered substantial progress in strengthening Oxfordshire County Council's approach to managing developer contributions, embedding robust governance, and accelerating the delivery of vital infrastructure projects. Through enhanced data systems, rigorous reconciliation, and the introduction of innovative tools such as the Members Dashboard and prioritisation calculator, the programme has improved transparency, accountability, and strategic alignment with corporate priorities.

56. As the Council moves into the next phase, continued collaboration, ongoing data validation, and the refinement of operational processes will be essential to

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sustaining momentum and ensuring that S106 funding is maximised for the benefit of Oxfordshire's communities. The lessons learned and structures established through this programme provide a solid foundation for future growth, effective fund management, and the delivery of infrastructure that meets the evolving needs of the county.

Melanie Graham, S106 Improvement Programme Manager
October 2025