

Divisions Affected – ALL

CABINET 23 April 2024

Future Generations Mission Statement

Report by Executive Director of Resources

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to

1. Cabinet is asked to agree the principle of Future Generations, and the mission statement that sets the direction of Oxfordshire County Council's work in this space.

Executive Summary

2. Oxfordshire County Council passed a motion setting out a commitment to considering Future Generations in decision-making, and as part of this there has been the appointment of a Future Generations Member Champion and Future Generations included in the Cabinet portfolio.
3. The next steps are to set out the approach and ambition to be one of the leading English councils in this space. A mission statement has been developed to set out the scale of our goals, along with some initial actions of where to start work in this space.

Background

4. On 28 March 2023, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) passed a [motion](#) with broad cross-Party support stating: "Council believes that it is vital to consider the wellbeing of Future Generations in all decision-making in the Council."

Council resolved to:

- Review how OCC makes decisions & commissions services so that it takes into account the wellbeing of future generations
 - Consider the need for future internal roles e.g. a Future Generation commissioner
 - Implement a Future Generations impact assessment for all decisions
 - Set up an Oxfordshire Youth and Future Generations Advisory Council
 - As part of the governance review, consider how best to structure political decision-making to consider impact on future generations & explore the role of deliberative and participatory processes (including citizens' assemblies)
5. The principle of Future Generations is about acting in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
 6. The School of International Futures (SOIF) outlines 3 aspects of future generations work:
 - Citizens participate in shaping their desired futures, especially next generation voices
 - Organisations and sectors are prepared for the future and uncertainty
 - Leaders make intergenerationally fair decisions
 7. The Welsh Government is a leader in this space, having introduced a [Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in 2015](#), with duties for public bodies (including local authorities) coming into place in 2016.
 8. While operating in a different context to OCC (Welsh local authorities are bound by legislation to consider Future Generations), the work of the Welsh Government can provide direction and [best practice](#) in this space.

Key Issues

9. At OCC, it is important to consider how the concept of Future Generations can shape robust and sustainable policies that will help to create a healthier, greener, and fairer Oxfordshire.

10. OCC appointed a Future Generations Member Champion in 2023 and have added the responsibility for Future Generations to the Deputy Leader's portfolio. Futures Planning has also been recommended to the Cabinet by the Governance Working Group.

11. The recommended first step to show our commitment is the adoption of a mission statement which will set out our ambition.

Draft Mission Statement

12. The draft mission statement that Cabinet is asked to agree is:

“We affirm the fundamental importance of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. We will take a nationally leading role in putting intergenerational fairness at the heart of our decision-making.”

13. Supporting this mission statement will be a work programme which will follow two phases. Phase one will be focussed on short-term actions, as set out in the Council motion, while phase two will be focussed on longer-term planning.

14. Phase One will include four key actions:

- Adoption of the Future Generations mission statement.
- Impact Assessment – the Transport and Infrastructure Service is working together with the Inter-Generational Foundation to develop an inter-generational impact assessment for large scale infrastructure proposals. Impact and mitigations for future generations will also be incorporated into the current Climate and Equalities Impact Assessment templates.
- Youth Engagement with Local Democracy – The Engagement and Policy Teams are developing an approach for enhanced youth engagement, which involves building on the work that is already ongoing across the council, especially in Children's Services and the recently agreed budget for citizens assemblies. This also links with the People and Culture Strategy and the

work being undertaken by Organisational Development to enable our people to grow and evolve for the future. In line with the commitments of the development Local Councils Charter, this will also extend to youth engagement in participative democracy.

- Place Narrative – as the Place Narrative for Oxfordshire continues to be developed, the council will consider future generations and incorporate this into its development.

15. As the long-term ambition is to be a leading English council, phase two will be to embed intergenerational fairness even further into organisational decision-making and planning. The use of futures thinking and foresight will be explored through the convening of a cross-sector future generations summit in Oxfordshire in partnership with the Blavatnik School of Government.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

16. The mission statement and related work will advance and support the corporate priorities of the council. In particular, it will support the priorities to:

- a. Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work.
- b. Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.
- c. Play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy.

Financial Implications

17. On-going funding of £0.1m for dedicated resource to mainstream public health principles and goals aligned with the wellbeing of future generations framework was agreed as part of the 2024/25 budget in February 2024. Part of this funding allocation will be used to support the development of the Future Generations approach and work programme set out in this paper.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

18. There are no legal implications arising from this report

Comments checked by:

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Staff Implications

19. There are no immediate staff implications resulting from the adoption of the mission statement. The mission statement sets out the direction for Future Generations, and some of the resulting future projects may have an impact on staff resource.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

20. The impact of the mission statement will be positive on age-based inequalities, as the needs of future generations (including both younger people, and those not yet born) will be explicitly considered in decision making and the impacts on them will be assessed through the inter-generational impact assessment once this is delivered.

21. An additional Equalities Impact Assessment has not been developed for the mission statement but will be developed for projects associated with Future Generations that require one.

Sustainability Implications

22. The Future Generations work is closely linked to our work on sustainability and climate action, as it will encourage careful consideration of longer-term decisions and how these will impact future generations. Many of these long-term impacts may be ones that impact on the environment.

Risk Management

23. Council has committed to a number of priorities for future generations and not delivering on the commitments would prevent the council meeting the requirements of the passed motion. There are also longer-term implications for the next generations if we do not seek to consider the long-term impact of the decisions we make today. There are no significant risks to the delivery of this initial phase.

Lorna Baxter
Executive Director of Resources

Annex: Nil

Background papers: Nil

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