

# DRAFT – FOR FINALISATION AFTER BUDGET CONSULTATION HAS CLOSED

Annex 5a

## Oxfordshire County Council

### Budget and Business Planning 2023/24

#### Overarching climate impact review of 2023/24 budget proposals

#### Context & Background

1. This overarching climate impact assessment provides an assessment of the potential impact of proposed changes to the revenue budget on the council's ability to meet climate action commitments.
2. 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 by 2050
3. The council has a cross-organisational work programme to deliver on these commitments. The latest report on this programme can be found at [Decision - Climate Action Update | Oxfordshire County Council](#). In the 22/23 budget setting process the council made additional investment of £0.824m in climate action and resilience measures including:
  - Supporting community activity to cut carbon emissions and helping the transition to electric vehicles (EVs), as well as increasing its capacity as the lead flood authority for Oxfordshire.
  - Supporting plans to develop a countywide nature recovery strategy, develop a tree and woodland strategy and support the development of a new local nature partnership for Oxfordshire.
  - Investing in supporting the retrofitting of residential homes to improve energy efficiency and support the delivery of a zero-carbon route-map for the county.
  - Working work with partners to expand EV charging capacity across the county and sustain the benefits of Project Local Energy Oxfordshire (LEO). Project LEO is running energy trials in the county to help build a greener (zero carbon), more flexible and fairer electricity system.

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4. It is currently 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.

### **Purpose of a Climate Impact Review**

5. The review is intended to ensure that our decisions are aligned with our climate action commitments. It provides a high-level overview of the impacts of the revenue budget proposals to increase or lessen our ability to meet such commitments with potential benefits maximised and possible challenges mitigated, within overall funding available. It is part of our ongoing pledge to embed climate into all our decision-making.
6. Services are asked to assess how their revenue budget proposals affect the council's ability to reduce emissions from our buildings, highways, fleet, staff travel, purchased products and services (including construction), and to enable emission reductions in maintained schools and at a county level.

### **Revenue Proposals Climate Impact Review**

7. As identified within the budget and business planning report, issues and volatility in the wider economy, including the ongoing impact of inflation which increased by 10.1% in the year to September 2022, workforce shortages and supply side issues mean that similar to local households the council needs to pay more to maintain the same level of service provision.
8. No revenue proposals were identified as materially negatively impacting the council's overall ability to meet its climate action commitments.
9. A one-off reduction in revenue budget for the climate action service (24EP23) is proposed. This is offset by a multi-year commitment to increase staff resource in this area agreed in the 2021/22 budget setting process. The one-off reduction will be delivered through less reliance on consultancy resource made possible by greater in-house capacity.
10. The impacts of national government policy on removing charges for DIY waste (24EP9) will be monitored and any negative impacts be addressed through the waste partnership. The national influence of limited care placements locally and nationally (24CS4) may create pressures on need to travel both for our staff and families. This may in part be mitigated through the council's low carbon business travel project set out in the capital programme.
11. A one-off saving has been made to the replacement of fire appliances (24PHCS2) meaning existing assets may operate for longer, before being replaced by potentially more efficient units. The council continues to invest in its One Fleet service and approach (24CCCS3) and continues to seek funding and partnerships to trial alternates to fossil-fuelled large vehicles such as fire engines.

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12. A number of proposals will positively contribute to the delivery of climate commitments;

- Prevention of unsorted waste at Household Waste Recycling Centres will increase diversion to recycling (24EP20)
- The council is now predicting lower overall growth in waste tonnages driven by a range of national and local factors (24EP21 and 24EP22)
- The council is investing in staff resource to continue the decarbonisation and resilience of its estate particularly in buildings and fleet. Proposals are also included associated with increasing efficiency operation of the fleet asset, reduction of property footprint and more efficient use of office space and replacement of ICT with more efficient equipment (24CCCS3, 24CC10, 24CC05, 24CCCS16 and 24CC07)

13. A number of budget lines include changes to contracts or service design. These offer opportunities to seek improved environmental outcomes through use of the council's social value policy eg. the Live Well contract making better use of our travel hierarchy identified within the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.

### **Capital Proposals**

14. A fundamental review of the current capital programme has been undertaken, prioritising the schemes and initiatives using the prioritisation framework included at Annex 4a. This includes an assessment of schemes contributing to Climate Action or Active Travel (Prioritisation Category 3).
15. Climate Impact Assessments of the proposals in Annex 4b will be carried out as business cases are developed including consideration of the standards to which buildings will be constructed.
16. Provision has been made within the programme for investment in transitioning the council's fleet to electric vehicles, reducing the impact of the council's front line business travel, and delivering the council's property strategy which support the council's commitment to be net zero by 2030.
17. Provision is also made for piloting an energy efficiency loan scheme for maintained schools to support schools to invest in energy efficiency improvements. £3m has been prioritised for further climate priorities. Options to be considered include a Tree Planting scheme; in line with the council's Tree Policy a minimum of 1,120 trees need to be planted annually to replace removed trees.
18. £24m of investment need in decarbonising our estate has been added to the capital pipeline for consideration to fund from 2024/25 supporting meeting our net zero targets and increasing the resilience and energy efficiency of our estate, following decisions made in our property strategy in 2023/24.
19. Investment in household waste recycling centres is also identified in the capital pipeline for future consideration, following agreement of a household waste recycling centre strategy. This investment will in part support more sustainable management of waste through greater provision for recycling and reuse.