

Oxfordshire County Council

Budget and Business Planning 2024/25

Overarching Equality Impact Assessment

Context and Purpose

Oxfordshire County Council's vision is to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. This includes working to ensure that our policies and services support equality and inclusion.

This assessment sets out the equalities impact of our budget proposals for 2024-25.

We can look to legislation to support our understanding of the council's equalities impacts. The Equality Act (2010) states that all public bodies need to take extra steps to stop discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations: this is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Act defines discrimination as the less favourable treatment of a person because of a protected characteristic, as compared with others who do not share that characteristic. The legislation also applies where there is a belief that the person who is disadvantaged has a particular protected characteristic, even if it is not the case.

These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership

Including Everyone – an inclusive Oxfordshire

The council has set out its approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion, including how we meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, in the [Including Everyone](#) framework.

Including Everyone also sets out how the council goes further than the protected characteristics in the Equality Act by considering the impact our decisions might have on:

- People living with social deprivation
- Rural communities
- Those leaving care
- Carers
- Those in our armed forces community

This Overarching Equality Impact Assessment shows how our budget proposals might impact the nine protected characteristics and the five additional areas above, and what we are doing to reduce or remove any potential negative impacts.

Equality Impact Assessments

All council decisions about services are reviewed for their impact on equalities. We assess the potential impacts of new policies and services and review existing services or policies when they are being updated. Where there is potential for material – i.e. significant – impact, a formal Equality Impact Assessment is done.

This Overarching Equality Impact Assessment is made in support of the council's whole Budget and Business Planning proposals for 2024/25. It provides summary information on the equalities impacts which the council's budget proposals might have if the proposals are approved and implemented. It also gives an indication of how we might mitigate any potential negative impacts.

Assessing equality impacts does not guarantee that a change will never have a negative impact. Rather it is intended to ensure that our policies are designed and implemented to meet the diverse needs of individuals, groups and communities in Oxfordshire. Equality Impact Assessments also help to ensure that the outcomes of a proposal are carefully considered, with the potential benefits maximised and possible challenges mitigated, within the overall funding available.

Overarching Equality Impact Assessment – approach

The following pages show how we approach the assessment of impacts on equalities and diversity, setting out at a summary level what impacts our total budget proposals might have on each characteristic listed above.

If a potential material service impact were identified, an initial Equality Impact Assessment would be completed. Any individual Equality Impact Assessments would then be made available as part of the budget's background papers. Following the public consultation, equalities impacts would be reviewed, and any Equality Impact Assessments updated as necessary to take into account consultation responses.

Background Papers

Our current budget proposals are not expected to have significant negative impacts on equalities. Consequently, no Equality Impact Assessments have been published with the Budget consultation at this time.

Public Consultation

Public consultation on specific proposals is one of the tools which OCC can use to help understand and mitigate the potential impacts of proposed savings on equalities (the nine protected characteristics) or wider community areas (rural communities, areas of deprivation, carers, care leavers, armed forces community, social value). Achievement of the savings proposed would be dependent on the outcome of any public consultation.

At present there are no public consultations planned on individual 2024-25 savings proposals.

Section 1: Summary details

Directorate / Service Area	All Directorates and Service Areas
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed change).	This assessment sets out the overall impact that the budget and business planning proposals have on a range of equality and diversity characteristics, including the nine protected characteristics defined under the Equality Act 2010. The assessment also summarises any mitigations that have been planned or put in place to reduce or remove any potentially negative impacts.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	This impact assessment is an overview of the 2024/25 budget and business planning proposals and so comments on existing programmes as well as new proposals.
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community?	<p>This assessment covers the budget and business planning proposal for Oxfordshire County Council for 2024-25. It is an opportunity to highlight key evidence and intelligence that the council has used to assess the impact of its budget proposals on the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>In line with our equalities, diversity and inclusion (EDI) framework, the council has also assessed the impact on those living in rural areas, those living with social deprivation, armed forces communities, carers and those leaving care, and Social Value.</p> <p>This assessment has not identified any bias, unfair advantage or disadvantage to any groups or individuals. Where potential negative impacts have been identified, mitigations have been put in place to reduce impact.</p> <p>A summary of the impacts of the budget proposals on climate change outcomes have been set out in a separate overarching Climate Impact Assessment.</p>
Completed By	Steven Fairhurst Jones
Authorised By	Emily Schofield
Date of Assessment	November 2023

Section 2: Detail of proposal

Context / Background

Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.

Oxfordshire County Council's vision is to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county.

We want to make sure that everyone in Oxfordshire can take advantage of what the county has to offer. Our strategic plan explains our cross-cutting priorities and commitments to achieve our vision and sets out our areas of focus.

In recent years Oxfordshire County Council has delivered significant savings both in response to reductions in government funding and in order to release funds to reinvest in meeting rising demand. This budget planning round has been affected by the continued impact of slower than forecast falls in inflation in the UK and the consequent continued high levels of costs and prices for energy, fuel, materials and staff costs.

The council also continues to experience demand-led pressures and the effects of the growing nationwide costs of supporting children and young people; the rising cost of social care and care placements for both children and adults; and a national shortage of social care workers leading to a reliance on agency staff and higher costs.

The last Census confirms Oxfordshire has a growing and ageing population, which will continue to increase demand on services.

<p>Proposals Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>This impact assessment covers all savings proposals across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health and Community Safety • Adult Social Care • Children’s Services • Environment and Place • Culture, Customer Services, Property and Investment • Finance & Procurement, Human Resources and IT <p>Details of proposals are set out in the main Budget and Business Planning papers.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact</p>	<p>In considering the impact of budget proposals before they are formally agreed, the council undertakes a detailed process of democratic and community engagement. For equalities this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of health and wellbeing needs, and the associated Equalities Briefing, to consider the impact of proposals as they are drawn up and in the development of this overarching assessment. The council’s JSNA can be found here; • Using data and intelligence gathered through implementing our Including Everyone Framework on equalities, diversity and inclusion, which can be found here; • Directorates follow the council’s approach to undertaking Equalities Impact Assessments (EIA). This can include considering at an early stage what impacts each proposal might have on the nine protected characteristics or on wider inequalities, and subsequently setting out greater detail, including any actions identified to mitigate negative impacts. If potential impacts are assessed as significant, individual Equalities Impact Assessments are completed and published to aid understanding and outline mitigations. • A public consultation process is being undertaken for the budget proposals. EIAs will be updated as necessary following the budget consultation to take account of responses.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A democratic process including agreement of proposals by Cabinet, analysis and comment on those proposals by Performance Scrutiny Committee, and adoption of a budget by Full Council. Each of these stages provides an opportunity to invite comment and engagement from the public and representatives of particular organisations or population groups.
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Section 3: Impact Assessment

<p>Assessing the evidence and impact on those with the protected and additional characteristics</p>	<p>The 2021 Census records that Oxfordshire has a population of 725,292. Demographic data below has been taken from the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2023 unless otherwise stated. Census 2021 data is still being analysed and the JSNA is being continuously updated.</p> <p>Age: Oxfordshire’s population has a median age of 39, compared to the national average of 40.7. The biggest populations by age range are 35-49 year olds, who make up 19.5% of the population, closely followed by 50-64 years at 19% of Oxfordshire’s population. Those aged 65+ make up 17.8% of the population, with a higher proportion of over 65s living in rural districts (20%) compared to the city of Oxford (12%). Over the last ten years, the number of over 65s has increased by 48%, whereas the number of 0-15 year olds (18% of the population) has increased by only 10%. Three of Oxfordshire’s districts have more residents aged 65+ than 0-15 year olds (South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire).</p> <p>No specific issues relating to age have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.</p> <p>Disability: 14.5% of people in Oxfordshire consider themselves disabled as defined in the Equality Act 2010, compared to 17.5% of people nationally. Of those 14.5%, approximately 35% feel limited ‘a lot’ by their disability in day-to-day activities, with 65% limited ‘a little’. Since 2011, the proportion of disabled people in Oxfordshire has increased by 0.7%. The most common types of disability for older people are mobility, breathing/stamina issues and hearing. The main type of disability experienced by working age adults relates to mental health, with children experiencing the most social/behavioural and learning disabilities. As of March 2021, there are 20,000 blue badge holders in Oxfordshire, 2.9% of Oxfordshire</p>
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residents (source: Department for Transport), compared with 4.2% of England's population. In November 2022 there were 52,169 disability-related benefits claimed in Oxfordshire.

Gender Reassignment: 0.6% of Oxfordshire residents over the age of 16 identify with a gender which differs from their sex registered at birth, compared with 0.5% of over 16s in England. Of this population, 16% identify as a trans woman, 17% as a trans man and 67% as other gender identities. Oxford City has the largest trans and non-binary population outside of London.

No specific issues relating to gender reassignment have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these budget proposals.

Pregnancy and maternity: There were 7,379 live births in Oxfordshire in 2021. The general fertility rate (GFR) for Oxfordshire (51.2) is lower than in England (54.3), and the birth rate among mothers aged 30-39 is higher than the England average. The biggest increases in birth rates from 2020-2021 are in South Oxfordshire (11% increase) and Cherwell (9%), with a 2% decrease in live births in Oxford. 4.2% of Oxfordshire maternities took place at home, higher than the UK average of 2.4%.

No specific issues relating to pregnancy and maternity have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Marriage and civil partnership: At the time of the 2021 Census there were 132,060 households of married couples or couples in a civil partnership (47% of the Oxfordshire population, 3% higher than national average). 0.8% of Oxfordshire married couples or those in a civil partnership are same-sex couples.

No specific issues relating to marriage and civil partnership have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality: JSNA records that the largest ethnic group in Oxfordshire is White “English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British” at 83.63% of the population. Aside from that group the largest ethnic groups in Oxfordshire are “Other White” (6.16%), “Indian” (1.25%), “Pakistani” (1.20%) and “African” (1.08%). Oxford City is proportionately more ethnically diverse than England and Wales, whereas all other Oxfordshire districts are less ethnically diverse than England and Wales. West Oxfordshire is the least ethnically diverse Oxfordshire district.

56% of school pupils in Oxford are of an ethnic minority, double the rate of Oxfordshire as a whole, and 33% have a first language which is not English. 18.7% of Oxfordshire residents were born outside of the UK, of which those born in Poland are the largest group, followed by India and Romania. As of 2021 there were 652 ‘White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller’ residents and 1,229 ‘White: Roma’ residents in Oxfordshire. The majority of Roma residents reside in Oxford and Cherwell, with the highest proportion of Gypsy and Irish Traveller population residing in West Oxfordshire.

No specific issues relating to race have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Religion or Belief: JSNA data on religion and belief is based on the 2021 Census where this question was voluntary. 65% of Oxfordshire residents chose to disclose a religion. Of those stating a religion, 47% of Oxfordshire residents are Christian, 3% (23,500) are Muslim, 1% (6,332) are Hindu, 1% (3,257) are Buddhist, 1% (2,716) Other Religion, and less than 1% of residents are Jewish (1,893) or Sikh (1,192).

No specific issues relating to religion or belief have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Sex: As of mid-2020 there were 347,569 (49.9%) males and 349,311 (50.1%) females living in Oxfordshire. Females in Oxfordshire have a higher life expectancy (84.9) than males (81.5).

No specific issues relating to sex have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Sexual Orientation: There is limited data on sexual orientation, defined as people who identify as heterosexual/straight, gay/lesbian, bisexual or another sexual orientation. In 2020 the JSNA estimates that there were 18,446 people aged 16+ in Oxfordshire identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual. The 2021 Census shows that 3.4% of Oxfordshire residents (21,428) describe their sexual orientation as something other than Straight or Heterosexual. Of this group, 47% are bisexual, 41% are gay or lesbian, 7% are pansexual, 2.5% are asexual, 1.3% are queer and 0.7% other sexual orientation.

No specific issues relating to sexual orientation have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Rural Communities: Oxfordshire is a rural county, with 2.8 people per hectare, and is the most rural county in the South East. Rural areas have a higher proportion of elderly (aged 85+) residents than urban areas: higher rates of over 65s live in one of four rural districts (20%) compared to 12% in Oxford City. 40% of Oxfordshire residents live in small towns and villages. 85 out of 407 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Oxfordshire are ranked within the most deprived 10% nationally on the geographical access to services (defined as road distance to a post office, primary school, GP and supermarket).

No specific issues relating to rural communities have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Armed Forces: In April 2022 there were 9,350 regular armed forces personnel stationed in Oxfordshire and there are a number military bases in Oxfordshire including Vauxhall Barracks, Dalton Barracks, RAF Brize Norton, RAF Benson and Bicester Garrison. There are 23,541 armed forces veterans in Oxfordshire and as of March 2022 there were 6,718 recipients of pensions/compensation under the Armed Forces

Pension Scheme, War Pension Scheme and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme in the county. There are an estimated 3,500 military families in the county, of which there are 3,043 school-aged children.

No specific issues relating to the armed forces have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Carers: In 2021-2022 there were 4,275 registered carers in Oxfordshire, 44% of whom were aged 65 and over. At least 52,674 residents were providing unpaid care, including 983 young carers aged under 16. The areas in Oxfordshire with highest rates of unpaid carers are within the most deprived wards.

No specific issues relating to carers have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Care leavers: As of March 2021, Oxfordshire has 129 care leavers aged 17-18 and 301 care leavers aged 19-21. Care leavers face many challenges as they move into adulthood, such as those relating to careers, education and training, accommodation, finances and personal change. Our Care Leavers Local Offer explains the services which can be accessed by those who have been in OCC's care.

No specific issues relating to care leavers have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Areas of Social Deprivation: Oxfordshire is one of the 10 least deprived counties in England, However, there are a number of areas of deprivation in the county: 9 areas in Oxford City, 6 in Banbury and 1 in Abingdon fall within the 20% most deprived areas in the country, with one of the Oxford City areas falling within the 10% most deprived. These communities are often more frequent users of many public services, more densely populated, have lower life-expectancies and greater health inequalities.

No specific issues relating to areas of social deprivation have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

	<p>The overall budget proposals have been developed with the objective of effectively targeting services so that we continue to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, including those living with deprivation, and fulfil our statutory duties. All proposals that will have an impact, positive or negative, on any protected characteristic or on rural communities, armed forces, carers or areas of social deprivation, will have an individual Equality Impact Assessment completed alongside policy development, to ensure full compliance to our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.</p>
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