

Divisions Affected – all

CABINET

17 September 2024

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING – ACTION PLAN AND NEXT STEPS

Report by Director of Economy and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED:**
 - a. **to approve the project allocation of the existing budget for the Community Wealth Building Programme**
 - b. **to agree the principles laid out in the first iteration of the social value definition statement (at Annex 2), for incorporation into operational policy and strategy**

Executive Summary

2. During the last year, officers have been exploring policy approaches to tackling deprivation and financial inequality in Oxfordshire over the long term. Community Wealth Building (CWB) is an approach that seeks to ‘build wealth’ in local communities by reimagining how place-based organisations can maximise the local benefit of their economic activities. The 2024/25 budget allocated funding specifically for the development of a programme of CWB actions, and a CWB strategy. This paper highlights the progress of this programme, and the plans for how the entire budget will be spent.

Background

3. During 2023/24, officers developed actions relating to the ‘fairer’ element of the council’s ‘greener, fairer, healthier’ visions, particularly with respect to financial inequality. Alongside short-term cost of living programmes, officers have explored interventions that can be shown in other places to have tackled cycles of deprivation over the long-term.
4. The development of Community Insight Profiles in the 10 most deprived wards in Oxfordshire, and the targeted investment of health-related grant funding in those areas, has highlighted strong evidence for the correlation between economic and health inequalities in Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy also acknowledges this link, making clear that efforts to

tackle health inequalities must also look at other inequalities that impact the health and life outcomes of Oxfordshire residents.

5. A Cost-of-Living Programme report was submitted to Cabinet on 14 May 2024¹, and an update report was reviewed by Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 November 2023². These reports indicated how the council intends to spend the Household Support Fund and other locally funded investment. Any further allocations of this fund from central government is positive news, however, as was noted at Committee in November 2023, a longer-term approach to addressing the fundamental problem of economic inequality across Oxfordshire is needed. Supported by a dedicated budget to develop a Community Wealth Building and Social Value Strategy, this paper outlines a shift in approach from short term crisis interventions to a set of longer-term actions that will inform a wider strategy.

What is community wealth building?

6. Community Wealth Building (CWB) is a set of principles that outline how the council, working in partnership with business, the community and the wider public sector, can positively impact on the fairer impact of Oxfordshire's economic strength. It considers how the council's economic activities (such as procuring goods or services, employing staff and owning land/assets) can generate reinvestment in the local economy (specifically in local people) which will support Oxfordshire to become fairer, healthier and greener. A Community Wealth Building approach will also requires the Council to explore its role in shaping an approach to economic development that brings benefits for people and place in Oxfordshire.
7. In order to develop the council's approach to CWB, building on the strengths and assets already in place locally, the Centre for Local Economic Studies (CLES) was engaged to undertake a six-month project with the purpose of exploring the opportunities for CWB in Oxfordshire, and producing a recommendations report. The project included numerous workshops with service area representatives and partners to determine Oxfordshire's assets, and identify opportunities for developing CWB further.
8. The Centre for Local Economic Studies³ (CLES), who describe themselves as 'the national organisation for local economies' define Community Wealth Building as: "an approach to economic development that changes the way that our economies function, retaining more wealth and opportunity for the benefit of local people". In the CLES model, there are five pillars of Community Wealth Building:
 - a. Economic development
 - b. Procurement and commissioning
 - c. Employment and training

¹ [Cost of Living Programme for 2024/25](#), Report to Cabinet, 14 May 2024

² [Cost of Living Programme Report](#), Report to Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 10 November 2023

³ [CLES - The national organisation for local economies](#)

- d. Land and assets
 - e. Social economy
9. This six-month project was recently been completed and makes recommendations on how a Community Wealth Building approach can be embedded into policy and practice in the Oxfordshire context. The recommendations report can be seen at Annex 3.
10. The CLES report (Annex 3) moves thematically through the five pillars of community wealth building. You can see a highlight of the key findings below:
- a. *Economic Development*
 - Highlights the progress that has been made as a system through the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP).
 - Recommends that the council build community wealth building principles into the council's approach to economic development.
 - b. *Spending and Procurement*
 - Highlights the success of the council's Social Value Policy, and the work of the social value subgroup of the OIEP.
 - Recommends that the council embeds community wealth building principles into all elements procurement and commissioning (wider than the requirements of the Social Value Act) and seeks to understand the impact of local authority spend in the Oxfordshire economy.
 - c. *Land and Property*
 - Outlines the strength of Community Land Trusts (CLTs) in Oxfordshire, particularly the success of collaboration between CLTs and the City Council.
 - Recommends that the council develops a stronger Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy that ensures the financial sustainability of arrangements by integrating with business support offers.
 - Challenges the council to support and influence strong partnerships across anchor institutions that can bring about infrastructure investments that meet the needs of Oxfordshire residents (affordable housing and business space is identified, but these are not the only priority areas for the council)
 - d. *Employment and Skills*
 - Highlights the success of the 'social contract programme' which was funded by COMF funding administered through the council, and delivered by the LEP and partners.
 - Recommends that the council identifies opportunities to strengthen the pre-employment support offer in the County, particularly for residents living in areas of high deprivation to secure good employment with anchor organisations. This work must be done in partnership through the OIEP.
 - e. *Social Economy*

- Highlights the positive impact of partnerships such as Owned by Oxford, the Community Action Groups (CAGs) and the Community Recovery Network.
- Recommends that the council audit the appropriateness of current business support available to social enterprises, cooperative and community-owned organisations, and consider additional support in the form of expertise or funding streams.

Community wealth building at Oxfordshire County Council

11. Officers have been developing a programme of actions, based on the CLES recommendations, that will progress the implementation of a CWB approach across the council.
12. This programme of work is not starting from scratch, there are many elements of Community Wealth Building principles that the County Council and partners in Oxfordshire are already enacting. The list below is not exhaustive, but gives an indication of the CWB work already ongoing at the council.
 - a. Since implementing the Social Value Policy in 2022, Oxfordshire County Council has delivered £4.9million worth of social value through contracts that are above the social value procurement threshold (as of September 2024).
 - b. The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) has catalysed significant interest in and progress towards creating a fairer and more accessible economy in Oxfordshire.
 - c. Employment and skills programmes delivered in collaboration with the LEP and local voluntary sector organisations, and initiatives like the County Print Finishers that provides supported employment opportunities are successful examples of expanding access to the wealth generated by jobs in Oxfordshire. The County Council also champions apprenticeships through direct employment opportunities and through social value contributions from suppliers.
 - d. Oxfordshire has a strong social economy, having been recognised as a Social Enterprise Place, and being home to numerous Community Action Groups.
13. A summary of the recommendations made in the CLES report was published at Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee⁴ on 19 July 2024 (see para 32 below). The section below sets out the action plan that has since been developed, and present a breakdown for the CWB budget in the 2024/25 financial year.

Proposed CWB budget

⁴ [Community Wealth Building and Wider Social Value](#), Report to Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 19th July 2024

14. The CWB budget has been amalgamated from a number of sources. Firstly, £60,000 was provided in the 2024/25 budget allocated for developing a community wealth building and social value strategy. This total was combined with funds carried forwards from the 2024/25 cost-of-living programme, which means that a total of £350,000 is available for CWB and related initiatives in 2024/25.
15. In addition, £55,000 was allocated in the 2024/25 budget for the development of a care cooperatives pilot and £8000 was allocated for OCC to gain membership of the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network. Both of these budget lines are held elsewhere, however their delivery is being managed by officers leading on the CWB programme. This brings the overall budget for CWB activities to a total of £413,000, including budget lines held elsewhere.
16. Below is a costed summary of activities that will be undertaken in the 2024/25 financial year to build a strong foundation for CWB at the council. The table has been split into funding that has been spent, committed or proposed. Any funding that has been spent or committed has been done with the approval of the relevant portfolio holders.

Total	Purpose
Status: spent	
£50,000	Developing a community wealth building (CWB) strategy, including officer costs
£15,000	Doughnut economics ⁵ project with the Oxfordshire Doughnut Economics Collective
£75,000	Support for the BIPC (The Business and Intellectual Property Centre) to carry out their activities, and to expand outreach and engagement in areas of high deprivation
£10,000	Collaboration with the Oxfordshire Social Enterprise Partnership (OSEP) and B Lab UK to provide a bursary for 20 recipients to attend the B-Corp Conference in Oxford in September, with tickets, travel and childcare all paid for
£8,000	Membership of the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN) (budget held elsewhere)
Total: £158,000	
Status: committed	
£14,000	Funding to support 2 interns from areas of high deprivation to access a paid internship at OCC – the funding will contribute to the cost of running the internship
£23,200	Project with local CWB experts to develop a showcase and analysis report detailing how CWB has been done well in Oxfordshire, and what the council can do to support this activity at the grassroots. This report will be co-produced with 'community wealth builders' in Oxfordshire, and will contribute to the development of a CWB and social value strategy

⁵ 'Doughnut economics' is an economic theory which challenges the focus on GVA growth as a measure of economic success. The theory outlines that economies should use resources in a way that builds a strong social foundation that tackles inequality, while remaining within an ecological ceiling that protects the climate and natural world. Doughnut economics measures multiple dimensions, using this data as a compass to shift the goal to creating a safe and just space where humanity can thrive in balance with ecological limits. More information can be found here: [What is Doughnut Economics? | University of Leeds](#)

£55,000	Care cooperatives prototype project with local partners (budget held elsewhere)
Total: £92,200	
Status: proposed	
£25,000	Contribution to the cost of an Impact graduate or a management apprentice to support the development of the CWB programme
£25,500	Analysis of the Oxfordshire procurement spend – baselining to understand how much of the money OCC spends through procurement is retained within Oxfordshire's economy
£30,000	Support for reviewing the community asset transfer (CAT) policy
£15,000	Support for pre-employment and inclusive recruitment efforts in partnership with anchor organisations
£55,000	Co-produced training for staff around broader social value and CWB
£12,300	Contingency to provide flexibility in the budget
Total: £162,800	
Overall total: £413,000	

17. This overview does not include some actions that don't have a significant cost associated with them, or that may have a very small cost. These actions will be funded from the contingency that provides this level of flexibility.
18. The full Community Wealth Building action plan is attached as Annex 1. The action plan indicates the status of all actions.
19. Cabinet members are asked to consider and approve the overall spend breakdown for the Community Wealth Building budget.
20. This budget has been developed in collaboration with partners and services across the council.

Next steps and the Social Value statement

21. The implementation of the actions included in the CWB action plan will provide learning opportunities for officers to work with partners to understand how the council can be an enabler of CWB work across the county. This learning will then be used as evidence to shape a Community Wealth Building and Social Value Strategy for Oxfordshire, as outlined in this year's budget.
22. Community Wealth Building aligns with efforts to develop a broader understanding of social value. A *draft* Social Value Definition Statement was presented at Performance and Corporate Services Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2024. This statement details what the council means by generating social value 'beyond procurement', and will be developed along with the CWB strategy which will identify social value as one element of Community Wealth Building.
23. The Social Value Definition Statement (attached as Annex 2) provides definitions for social value in different contexts:

- a. **Social Value** - any additional economic, social or environmental benefit generated in any areas of activity carried out by OCC in the way it conducts business, rather than in the specific services it delivers
 - b. **Social Value as defined in The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012**
 - additional economic, social or environmental benefit generated through the procurement of goods, works or services from the council's suppliers and the supply chain as a direct requirement of the Social Value Policy and the Social Value Act 2012
24. The Social Value Definition Statement recommended for agreement by Cabinet is attached in Annex 2. It is a first iteration and will be refined and developed as officers explore its practical application. It provides a foundation for developing community wealth building and social value policy and training that prompts officers to explore any additional social benefits that can be designed into how the council delivers projects, and how the council builds partnerships. The statement builds on the good progress the council has already made towards embedding social value.
25. The definition statement will be revisited and reviewed to bring in further learning from colleagues across the council who are enacting the social value principles and future iterations will be brought to Cabinet as required for update.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

26. As a policy framework, CWB is rooted in tackling financial inequality, and therefore has significant cross-over with efforts to tackle health inequalities and to support community resilience.
27. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy (HWS) sets out the importance of anchor organisations in supporting communities to remain healthy and well. The HWS outcomes framework outlines actions pertaining to community wealth building, particularly in delivering its priorities relating to financial wellbeing, healthy homes and community resilience. Community wealth building supports ongoing efforts to tackle the building blocks of health through healthy place shaping. Principles such as 'plural ownership of the economy' are already in use as part of the Community Insight Profile programme that uses delegated grant-making to involve communities directly in access to funding.
28. The Oxfordshire Way seeks to invest in community resilience, and to give residents access to the support they may need in their own communities, and to prevent further deterioration of their situation into crisis. In terms of deprivation, community wealth building interventions seek to prevent residents from slipping into crisis by providing greater access to the wealth and support that would meet their needs. Whether that be through skills, education and good employment, or through repurposing underused land as growing spaces or as a community centre for example. Extending the Oxfordshire Way into a cross-organisational transformation programme will mean encompassing a group of intersecting approaches including innovative community-led delivery with more

holistic economic development practice. In this context CWB is essential for supporting the council's commitment to increase community resilience.

29. Community wealth building principles can be found in action in work that is already ongoing across the council, including the council's approach to inclusive employment (People and Culture Strategy) as well as the approach to consumption (Circular County Strategy). The Oxfordshire Food Strategy is closely aligned with supporting CWB, as is the grant funding programme to Community Action Groups that directly support CWB initiatives already underway in the community.
30. CWB is a set of approaches that seek to widen the access that local people have to the wealth held in Oxfordshire's economy. Good community wealth builders are anchors in the local place, cognisant of the impact they have as an economic unit, as well as a service provider. Community wealth building will facilitate access to financial wealth, or property that brings investment to local people. In addition, CWB will also generate wealth for local people in the form of security, cultural capital, relationships, agency and power for example. In its role as place-shaper and partner of choice OCC has an opportunity to inform and influence other anchor organisations, supporting shared learning and the delivery of commitments to inclusive economy and climate change priorities, which were made as a system.
31. The purpose of working with CLES was to understand how the council can take steps to become a leading 'community wealth builder' and how this learning can be applied to support the council's role as an anchor and signatory to the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Charter, and a partner in the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP).
32. A Community Wealth Building approach aligns strongly with the missions identified in the new Commercial Strategy that is in development for the County. Namely commitments around thoughtful value creation, strategic thinking about how actions impact the wider 'system' and collaboration with a variety of partners to effectively work towards shared goals.

Feedback from Scrutiny

33. At its meeting on 19.07.2024, the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the CLES recommendations report and the draft social value statement. The following observations were made:
 - a. Officers need to ensure that this CWB approach is not Oxford-centric and that it address the needs and opportunities in different areas of the County.
 - b. Members talked about ways to ensure collaboration with different groups such as local government, universities, businesses and community groups.

- c. The committee explored ways to refine the CAT policy for greater consistency, clarity, and conformity with community wealth building values, while addressing the associated difficulties and necessary compromises.
 - d. The committee discussed methods for evaluating the results and effects of community wealth building, considering not just economic factors but also social, health, and well-being aspects, and the process of harmonising these with current metrics and strategies
34. These observations have been incorporated into the CWB approach and action plan and will be included in the future development of the CWB Strategy.
35. Subsequently, the draft CWB expenditure plan has been shared with members of the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment ahead of Cabinet's decision.

Financial Implications

36. The overall budget for the cost-of-living programme, including community wealth building spending was agreed at Cabinet on 14 May 2024. There are no additional budgetary implications of this report. However, Community Wealth Building and Social Value approaches in themselves may have financial implications as they are applied. New policy or actions developed through the approaches described will need to be fully tested for cost / benefit, value for money and affordability through future decision making, including that this would go through full governance and approvals process.

Comments checked by:

Drew Hodgson
Strategic Finance Business Partner
Drew.hodgson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

37. There are no direct legal implications of this report.

Comments checked by:

Paul Grant
Head of Legal
paul.grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality & Inclusion Implications

38. Community wealth building work will have a positive impact on residents, especially those from areas of high deprivation, by generating an increase in the wealth retained and owned by the community. Low-income and deprivation

is often intersectional with issues faced by people with protected characteristics. For example a recent Joseph Rowntree Foundation report indicated that nearly half of everyone in poverty is either a disabled person, or lives with a disabled person⁶.

Sustainability Implications

39. Community wealth building approaches are aligned with circular economy principles, namely supporting local and regenerative economic practices, that reduce the extraction and transportation of resources.

Robin Rogers, Director of Economy and Place

Annex: Annex 1 – Proposed community wealth building action plan for 2024/25

Annex 2 – Social Value Definition Statement

Annex 3 – CLES recommendations report

Background papers: [Cost of Living Programme Report](#), Report to Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 10 November 2023

[Cost of Living Programme for 2024/25](#), Report to Cabinet, 14 May 2024

[Community Wealth Building and Wider Social Value](#), Report to Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 19th July 2024

Contact Officer: Emily Urquhart, Policy Officer (deprivation, financial inequalities and community wealth building), 07564055878 emily.urquhart@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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⁶ [Nearly half of everyone in poverty is either a disabled person or lives with a disabled person | Disability Rights UK](#)