

Cabinet

Tuesday, 17 March 2026

ADDENDA 2

Local Government Reorganisation and Household Waste Recycling Centres

8. Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire: Statutory consultation response (TO FOLLOW) (Pages 3 - 116)

Cabinet Member: Leader

Forward Plan Ref: 2026/063

Non-key decision

Contact: Lauren Rushen, Senior Policy Officer

Lauren.rushen@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Report by the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) **(CA8)**

To consider the Council's draft response to the Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) consultation on local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire.

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:

- (a) **approve the submission of three consultation responses (Annex 1, 2 and 3) to the Ministry for Housing Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG)'s consultation on local government reorganisation (LGR) in Oxfordshire as requested by the Minister of State for Local Government's letter on 5 February 2026.**
- (b) **Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer in consultation with the Leader to make any changes to the text/and or formatting of the submissions prior to submission to government whilst not materially affecting the overall content of the responses**

15. Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) - Management Reprovision (Pages 117 - 148)

Cabinet Member: Place, Environment and Climate Action

Forward Plan Ref: 2025/057

Non-key decision

Contact: Caroline Coyne, Project Manager (BPSI Team)

Caroline.coyne@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Report by Director of Economy and Place **(CA11)**

Annex 6 – Equalities Impact Assessment attached

CABINET 17 March 2026

Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire: Statutory consultation response

Report by Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Officer)

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - (a) **approve the submission of three consultation responses (Annex 1, 2 and 3) to the Ministry for Housing Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG)'s consultation on local government reorganisation (LGR) in Oxfordshire as requested by the Minister of State for Local Government's letter on 5 February 2026.**
 - (b) **Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer in consultation with the Leader to make any changes to the text/and or formatting of the submissions prior to submission to government whilst not materially affecting the overall content of the responses**

Executive Summary

2. On 5 February 2025, an invitation from the then Minister of State of Local Government and English Devolution to submit proposals for LGR by 28 November 2025 was received by Oxfordshire's Council Leaders. Three proposals were submitted to government by the 28 November 2025 deadline: a single council for all Oxfordshire, two Councils including West Berkshire and three Councils, also including West Berkshire.
3. On 5 February 2026 MHCLG published its statutory consultation on the proposals for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire. The government is consulting on each of the three proposals submitted.
4. Oxfordshire County Council is listed as a statutory consultee and must respond to the consultations by 26 March 2026. The draft responses to each of the consultations are attached in annexe 1, 2 and 3 of this report and detail the suggested responses and wording that this Council intends to submit.
5. In line with Cabinet's previous intention, the consultation response favours a single council for Oxfordshire as the Council believes that this would create a single front door for all local authority services across the historic and recognised county of Oxfordshire.

Background

6. Local government across England is undergoing significant reform as part of the national programme of local government reorganisation and devolution. In December 2024, the government signalled its intention to streamline local governance structures, inviting councils in two-tier areas to put forward proposals for new models of unitary local government. In response, all councils in Oxfordshire received a statutory invitation in early 2025 to develop options for how services could be delivered more efficiently and sustainably in future.
7. Oxfordshire currently has a two-tier system comprising one county council and five district councils, alongside a network of 318 town and parish councils and parish meetings. Town and parish councils and parish meetings are outside the scope of this local government reorganisation but are encouraged to consider responding to the statutory consultation.
8. By November 2025, three proposed models for local government reorganisation had been submitted to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The Ministry published its statutory consultation on the three proposals on 5 February 2026. This council is listed as one of the statutory consultees.
9. Responding to the consultation is an Executive responsibility and so final sign-off will be sought through Cabinet. An all-member briefing on 16 March 2026 will give all members of the council the opportunity to express their views in relation to the statutory consultation. Whilst the Council's official response will be submitted via a Cabinet decision, councillors may also choose to submit their own consultation response individually.
10. The statutory consultation can be accessed via the MHCLG website: [Proposals for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire - GOV.UK](#) and it is the council's intention to respond to all three proposals:
 - (a) One unitary council comprising the current areas of Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council
 - (b) Two unitary councils. These would comprise of Oxford and Shires Council (Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council and West Oxfordshire District Council) and Ridgeway Council (South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, plus West Berkshire Council who are outside of the invitation area)
 - (c) Three unitary councils. These would comprise of Greater Oxford Council (Oxford City Council plus a boundary change to encompass parts of Cherwell District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council), Northern Oxfordshire Council (most of Cherwell District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council) and Ridgeway Council (South Oxfordshire District Council, most of Vale of White Horse District Council plus West Berkshire Council who are outside of the invitation area)

Consultation Themes

11. Oxfordshire County Council, as one of the affected councils within the proposals, is a statutory consultee. Other statutory consultees include councils that fall within the Oxfordshire invitation area, neighbouring councils, public service providers including health and the police, and certain other business, voluntary and community sector and educational bodies. The consultation itself is grouped into a number of themed questions which ask respondents the extent to which they agree or disagree with the respective proposal as follows:
 - (a) Sensible geography and economic areas
 - (b) Delivery against outcomes
 - (c) The right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks
 - (d) The extent to which proposals will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that West Berkshire are in receipt of exceptional financial support
 - (e) Delivery of high quality, sustainable public services
 - (f) The extent to which proposals have been informed by local views and will meet local needs
 - (g) The extent to which proposals will support devolution arrangements
 - (h) The extent to which proposals enable stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment
 - (i) If a proposal involves a boundary change, the extent to which the proposal will deliver strong public services and financial sustainability to justify the boundary change
12. For each of the questions above, respondents are asked to state their level of agreement from strongly disagree through to strongly agree. An opportunity to provide additional information to support a submission is also included in an open text box question.
13. The proposed responses to each of the three consultations are attached as annexes 1, 2 and 3 of this report and Cabinet is asked to approve the responses for submission.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

14. MHCLG issued a statutory invitation to Oxfordshire County Council and district/city partners inviting the council to submit proposals for local government reorganisation in line with the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill.
15. The development of new local government proposals for the county will contribute towards creating a greener, fairer and healthier county by

streamlining local governance arrangements and empowering communities to have a greater say in services in their local communities.

Financial Implications

16. The consultation responses for each of the three proposals set out the Council's view of whether the successor councils would be the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
17. The fragmentation of services and contracts and diseconomies of scale, that would arise through either the 2UA or 3UA proposals would increase costs and reduce the ability of each successor council to respond to pressures and national and local funding issues.
18. Compared to other freestanding fire authorities, an Oxfordshire Combined Fire and Rescue Authority would be relatively small so on-going financial sustainability would likely be an issue unless the service merged with another neighbouring fire authority. This would add further complexity to the implementation of the 2UA and 3UA proposals.
19. The inclusion of West Berkshire Council who have in principle approval from MHCLG for exceptional financial support of £30m in 2026/27 in addition to £20m in 2025/26 (increased from £3.0m) and £13m in 2024/25 has the potential to significantly impact on the stability of Ridgeway council from the outset in both of the 2UA and 3UA proposals. The on-going, and escalating, requirement for EFS means that including West Berkshire Council would import significant and unnecessary financial risk into Ridgeway Council from day one. It would also add further complexity and risk to transformation costs and savings.

Comments checked by:

Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance

Legal Implications

20. All the functions of the County Council are executive functions unless identified in The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 ("Regulations") or other primary legislation or Regulations as being reserved for Council. The response on behalf of the Council to a statutory consultation constitutes an executive function and therefore the Cabinet is the appropriate decision taker.

Comments checked by: Anita Bradley, Director for Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, anita.bradley@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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Draft Consultation Response – 1UA - One Oxfordshire

March 2026

- 1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggestions councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?**

Strongly Agree

- 2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?**

Strongly Agree

- 3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?**

Strongly Agree

- 4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?**

Strongly Agree

- 5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?**

Strongly Agree

- 6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?**

Strongly Agree

- 7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?**

Strongly Agree

- 8. If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-7 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on the proposal.**

1. Sensible geographies and economic areas

A single, coherent economic geography

One Oxfordshire is built around an established, well recognised and easily articulated county geography that already functions as a single economic, social and public service delivery area. Oxfordshire shows strong internal economic coherence, with around 85% of working residents living and working within the county, reflecting integrated travel to work patterns, labour markets and infrastructure networks. It is a recognised functional economic area and a significant net contributor to the national economy, supporting around 430,000 jobs and generating approximately £29.3bn in GVA per year. These physical, social and economic characteristics are countywide and do not align with smaller or newly created unitary boundaries. One Oxfordshire reflects the real economic footprint of this county.

Alignment with how the economy already operates

Key economic and growth functions are already delivered effectively at county scale, including strategic planning, transport and highways, public health, education and skills, and economic partnership and inward investment. One Oxfordshire strengthens this by bringing strategic planning, housing, infrastructure and transport into a single decision-making framework. Where housing pressures are linked to employment growth, coordinated countywide planning is essential to align homes, jobs and infrastructure in the right places. Multiple unitaries risk planning disputes, inconsistent policies, and failure to deliver the large-scale sites and transport links that underpin growth. A single council could produce and deliver a single local planning without the cooperation failures that multi-council arrangements have historically produced in Oxfordshire.

The Oxfordshire economy is anchored by nationally recognised and interconnected economic and spatial geographies including the Knowledge Spine from Science Vale through Oxford to Bicester, the Science and Innovation Campus at Harwell, and wider strategic corridors such as the Oxford–Cambridge Arc, and the Chilterns and Cotswolds National Landscapes. These cut across district boundaries but align naturally with a single county footprint. Anchor institutions benefit from a single, authoritative partner for negotiations over skills, land, transport, and research commercialisation. One Oxfordshire reflects this reality, whereas smaller unitaries risk fragmenting strategic economic planning and weaken Oxfordshire's collective economic voice.

A stronger platform for investment and global engagement

Evidence shows Oxfordshire's fastest growing sectors are distributed across the county, reinforcing the case for a single economic footprint. Many economic development functions are most effective at county scale, including inward investment, skills planning, business support and infrastructure delivery.

Oxfordshire's Knowledge Spine — linking Bicester, Oxford, Culham, Milton Park and Harwell and the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor — relies on countywide coordination. Attracting inward investment requires presenting Oxfordshire at countywide or pan-regional scale, with a coherent portfolio of opportunities across knowledge-intensive sectors. A strong proposition depends on combining strategic scale with locally defined sites and projects.

Over the past five years, Enterprise Oxfordshire's inward investment team has supported 184 inward investment projects, securing c.£3.6bn of investment and supporting around 6,500 jobs across Oxfordshire. This would be fragmented by a 2UA or 3UA model but can be delivered at a strategic scale alongside local tailoring in the One Oxfordshire model.

A county-wide approach to the visitor economy

Oxfordshire's visitor economy, valued at around £2.4bn annually, is inherently countywide. The county attracts 30 million visitor trips each year and supports 11% of employment. Visitor movements, destinations and supporting infrastructure do not align with proposed unitary boundaries. Major assets such as Blenheim Palace, the University of Oxford's colleges and museums, and Bicester Village operate as distinct draws across the county, alongside nationally protected landscapes. One Oxfordshire enables a more integrated approach to managing the visitor economy, bringing together transport, infrastructure, place shaping and destination management at the scale at which impacts are experienced. This maximises value while managing pressures coherently so benefits are shared across the county.

Sensible geography for public service delivery

One Oxfordshire is the only proposal that fully meets government guidance on population scale, serving 760,000 residents. This creates the strongest and largest possible tax base, improves financial resilience and enables demand and cost pressures to be managed effectively across our diverse communities and geography. 85% of public services, by expenditure, are already delivered on a countywide footprint. One council aligned to a recognised county geography avoids fragmentation, supports efficient strategic decision making and strengthens alignment between planning, infrastructure and service delivery. Splitting the county would introduce duplication, weaken resilience and increase transition risk with no guarantee of improving outcomes for residents.

Managing uneven demand through sensible geography

A countywide geography is particularly important for planning and managing uneven care needs. Demand for Children's services is highly uneven, with persistent concentrations in Oxford City and parts of Cherwell and lower demand in South and West Oxfordshire. This pattern is consistent across safeguarding, early help, children in need, child protection, children in care, youth justice and SEND. A single authority can pool high and lower demand areas and deploy resources where needed flexibly and seamlessly. Disaggregation would lock concentrated demand into smaller councils, reducing resilience and increasing risk unnecessarily.

Addressing county-wide challenges at the right scale

Many of Oxfordshire's most pressing challenges are inherently countywide, including housing affordability, infrastructure capacity, labour market accessibility and health inequalities. Housing affordability is inseparable from economic growth and transport capacity and requires countywide coordination and delivery. One Oxfordshire provides the scale needed to respond strategically and coherently. Alternative proposals introduce boundaries that cut across economic realities, fragment planning and increase risk.

2. Deliver the outcomes described in the proposal

The One Oxfordshire proposal is credible because it links outcomes directly to the scale, governance, financial resilience and delivery mechanisms required to achieve them. It is evidence based, shaped by demand and cost analysis, and builds on existing countywide services that are already performing well, particularly in adult and children's social care, SEND and public health. Unlike alternative models, it avoids unnecessary fragmentation and transition risk, cost and disruption. Instead, a single unitary can focus on integrating new services into a redesigned countywide model, making it easier for vulnerable residents to access critical services. This will make use of existing relationships with health and criminal justice services, and voluntary and community support organisations to strengthen these ties.

How One Oxfordshire will deliver its outcomes

Outcomes will be delivered through operating at the right scale, enabling economies of scale, removing duplication, avoiding disaggregation costs, supporting strategic investment and devolution. Integrated strategy and service delivery will align services around people and place, support systemwide commissioning and partnership working, and use data and evidence to drive prevention. Robust financial foundations include independently assured modelling, lower transition costs, faster savings realisation and capacity to invest in transformation and prevention. Strong neighbourhood governance will operate alongside scale through area-based committees, strengthened local delivery and dedicated support for town, parish and neighbourhood engagement. Clear leadership and transition governance will ensure service continuity, independent assurance and a safe, lawful transition. The model

aligns strongly with devolution and strategic growth by providing a single credible partner for government and investors.

Delivering new housing

Three councils in Oxfordshire have recently had their local plans rejected for failing to meet the duty to co-operate. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 – Joint Statutory Spatial Plan similarly failed because the five planning authorities could not reach an agreement on how to plan for future housing need across the county, by creating a single unitary authority for Oxfordshire this risk will be mitigated. An established economic area managed by a single unitary will support the delivery of increased housing supply and create a political institution that will be required to resolve long standing issues of co-operation across the local housing market. The 3UA proposal argues that housing delivery for Greater Oxford can be best achieved through greenbelt release and that this release can only effectively be delivered where the only significant land available to a local planning authority is green belt. This is not the case and clear mechanisms exist for bringing forward appropriate development in the green belt where a compelling case can be made and evidenced and the review tests can be met. Little is said in the 3UA case about housing delivery in the other two authorities. Seeking to lock-in city expansion through the LGR process assumes a static NPPF and a political outcome pre-disposed to this approach. The appropriate way to take strategic decisions about future land use is through the evidenced based Spatial Development Strategy process as set out the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025. At scale housing delivery is most effectively delivered over the widest footprint, including but not only considering development around the city.

Disaggregation is the single greatest risk to delivering outcomes

Evidence shows that disaggregation is the dominant risk to outcomes. Larger authorities achieve lower unit costs when key drivers are controlled for, particularly in people-based services. There is no robust evidence that fragmented unitaries deliver lower costs in children's services, adult social care or SEND. Disaggregation weakens workforce resilience, specialist commissioning and market stability.

Outcomes depend on prevention and prevention depends on scale

Prevention relies on pooled risk, integrated commissioning and systemwide data, all of which are undermined by disaggregation. Demand drivers do not change with reorganisation. A single authority is better placed to invest in early intervention, manage needs and resources sustainably and reduce inequalities.

Continuity of well performing services matters

Residents and partners prioritise stability in statutory services. One Oxfordshire protects good and improving services and avoids the unnecessary disruption that disaggregation would bring. The other models proposed for Oxfordshire introduce significant transition risk without clarity on how new service models would drive

prevention and reduce needs. Instead of using scarce resources to disaggregate, further service transformation can be delivered in concert with the NHS and our Voluntary, Faith and Community Sectors. This will drive prevention and early intervention and support integration of aligned services such as housing, leisure and culture.

Delivery credibility rests on transition planning and risk management

Lower transition costs, faster payback, simpler governance, independent assurance and clear leadership provide confidence that outcomes will be delivered.

3. Right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks

One Oxfordshire is built on aggregation rather than fragmentation, maximising efficiency, workforce and commissioning capacity, and financial resilience. Fragmented models introduce duplication and structural risk without addressing demand.

Efficiency

A single authority removes duplication in leadership, corporate functions, statutory roles, IT and procurement. In services such as highways, scale enables bulk purchasing, shared expertise and preventative maintenance, reducing unit costs and protecting assets.

Capacity

Scale supports recruitment, retention, market stability and service continuity, particularly in statutory people-based services. Rurality and uneven demand reinforce the need for countywide risk and resource pooling.

Financial resilience

Serving over 760,000 residents, One Oxfordshire delivers the highest recurring savings, lowest transition costs and fastest payback. The populations in the other two Oxfordshire proposals fall below and, in some cases, well below the government threshold of 500,000 increasing the potential for financial shocks and funding volatility. Disaggregation costs are real and recurring. Only One Oxfordshire provides the balance sheet strength to invest in prevention and long-term sustainability.

Fire and Rescue Services

Retaining Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service within a single authority avoids transition cost, preserves reserves and maintains resilience. These are firm foundations to transition into a Thames Valley MSA in due course. Without a clear path towards a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA), it is unclear what the benefits are to a highly short-term solution to operating a safe and legal fire and rescue service for Oxfordshire. The likely cost of a freestanding Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority would be between £34m and £50m and would carry a high level of financial risk. For example, the annual impact of pay inflation – estimated at around £0.8m for

an uplift of around 3% would need to be met within the funding for the authority rather than being supported by the flexibility of the wider council budget. Other options – such as a merger with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue carry service and financial risks. It is unclear what the benefits of this are given the commitment to progress to an MSA at pace. Ultimately, we believe that making a blue light service potentially financially unsound through disaggregation creates an unacceptable level of risk that can only be mitigated by creating a countywide unitary through One Oxfordshire.

4. High quality, sustainable public services

High-quality services are already delivered most effectively at county scale. One Oxfordshire protects and strengthens these services by avoiding fragmentation. The One Oxfordshire proposal is designed to protect, continue and strengthen existing high-performing services, particularly adult social care, children's social care, SEND and homelessness, by avoiding the fragmentation and disaggregation that would place service quality and continuity at risk.

By bringing all local authority functions together within a single unitary, One Oxfordshire enables:

- more joined-up services
- simpler access through a single front door
- consistent eligibility and county-wide standards
- stronger alignment between prevention, early intervention and statutory services

This integration supports both service quality today and sustainability over the long term, particularly in the face of rising demand and workforce pressures. Smaller councils may appear more local, but the risks to vulnerable people from breaking up safe, established and high-performing services are immediate.

Disaggregation is the greatest risk

Breaking up high performing services increases operational, safeguarding and financial risk, particularly in people-based services. One Oxfordshire is the only model that guarantees continuity of statutory safeguarding, avoids postcode lotteries, and maintains consistent standards and pathways for vulnerable children and adults across the county. Instead of wasting public money on disaggregation activity, services will join up leisure and housing to create holistic service pathways to meet needs and prevent escalation of needs on higher cost services.

Disaggregation increases risk in people-based services where scale underpins:

- workforce resilience and recruitment
- specialist commissioning
- market stability and provider viability

Fracturing commissioning power would increase exposure to high-cost spot purchasing, weaken market leverage and drive cost inflation. Fragmentation also increases administrative burden and complexity without improving outcomes.

Prevention and sustainability depend on scale

Taking cost drivers into account, larger authorities tend to cost less per unit. Fragmentation does not reduce demand and undermines sustainability.

The evidence shows that:

- larger authorities achieve lower unit costs when deprivation, income and market conditions are taken into consideration
- more disaggregated unitaries do not deliver lower people-service unit costs, making savings assumptions unsafe
- the strongest predictors of cost are deprivation and demography, not council boundaries

A larger authority is better placed to pool risk, invest in prevention, stabilise markets and manage long-term demand through system-wide commissioning.

Protecting vulnerable people

County-wide pooling avoids postcode lotteries and ensures services are delivered based on need rather than boundaries. SEND provision, specialist placements and safeguarding pathways are system-wide by nature, requiring county-scale planning, commissioning and risk pooling.

Under disaggregation:

- neighbouring councils could inherit radically different levels of demand and cost based solely on boundary design
- smaller authorities would have limited resilience to absorb volatility
- reliance on out-of-area placements could increase, raising cost, complexity and legal risk
- achieving the ambitions set out in the recent *Every Child Achieving and Thriving* white paper, particularly the expectations that schools will form or join multi academy trusts will be harder to manage particularly for schools that are currently local authority-maintained schools
- One Oxfordshire embeds simpler and safer governance arrangements, which support the deliverability and transformation of quality services.
- A single authority also strengthens partnership working with the NHS, VCS and other public sector partners by providing a clear, stable and accountable partner
- Alternative proposals introduce significant governance complexity, which compounds risk, slows down service delivery and adds additional layers of accountability and decision-making, while lacking the capacity to effectively

drive transformation and strengthen service delivery. This blocks ability to improve outcomes.

5. Informed by local views, meeting local needs

The proposal is informed by extensive engagement with residents, businesses, town and parish councils, public sector partners, the voluntary sector, young people and the workforce. Engagement consistently shows support for simplicity, service continuity, financial resilience and meaningful local influence.

Resident priorities

Engagement consistently identified a clear set of shared priorities:

- clear and accountable decision-making
- minimal disruption to services
- financial resilience
- simpler access to services
- strong local identity and influence

These priorities are directly reflected in the One Oxfordshire model. Clear governance and accountability scored highest in resident feedback, alongside minimising service disruption and reducing duplication. While residents expressed strong attachment to their local communities, engagement showed that people value meaningful local influence through neighbourhood, town and parish arrangements, rather than the creation of additional councils that increase complexity and confusion.

Stakeholder engagement

Engagement extended well beyond residents and consistently reinforced the same core messages, while highlighting sector-specific risks and requirements:

- Town and parish councils supported the simplicity of a single council but stressed the importance of strong local focus, clear routes for resolving local issues, and avoiding the transfer of additional responsibilities without funding. Proposals for area committees, neighbourhood governance and a strengthened Oxfordshire Councils' Charter were welcomed as practical responses to these concerns.
- Businesses prioritised clarity, speed and certainty in decision-making, supported a single planning authority and a clear county-wide economic vision, and emphasised the importance of strong democratic accountability within any new structure.
- Transport and infrastructure providers emphasised the importance of scale for efficiency and of the impact of administrative barriers across commuting

pathways on creating inconsistent policies in areas like ticketing, route subsidy and active travel infrastructure.

- Voluntary and community organisations prioritised service stability, clear geography and minimal disruption. They explicitly raised concerns about fragmentation and competition if the county were split, including risks associated with widening inequalities and disruption to trusted delivery relationships.
- Public sector partners valued geographic coherence, pooled budgets and system alignment, and highlighted workforce and service delivery risks if services were fragmented across multiple authorities.
- Employees emphasised the importance of minimising disruption to services and career pathways, noting that fragmentation of services poses greater risks to workforce stability than organisational scale alone.

Equality and local needs

Analysis of adult social care demand shows that need in Oxfordshire is shared, system-wide and granular, varying by age group, service type and neighbourhood rather than by district boundary. Geographical differences in demand for children's services are already outlined above also.

A single county-wide authority therefore aligns with how local needs actually present and how services must respond in practice. Fragmentation would embed unequal pressures between councils based on boundary design rather than need. Only One Oxfordshire can ensure that services are designed and delivered based on need, not geographical boundaries.

A robust Equality Impact Assessment underpins the proposal. Analysis shows that need is system-wide and granular rather than aligned to district boundaries.

Preserving Oxford's city status

Engagement also highlighted the importance of protecting Oxford's city status, civic and political identity and historic role, alongside wider county reform. For many residents and stakeholders, Oxford's status as a city is not symbolic but closely tied to local identity, democratic representation and civic pride.

The One Oxfordshire proposal recognises this and provides a clear, practical route to preserving Oxford's city status through Charter Trustees, ensuring the continuation of the city's historic mayoralty, civic traditions and ceremonial functions. This directly responds to concerns raised during engagement that local identity should not be lost as part of reorganisation.

By contrast, alternative proposals do not clearly set out how Oxford's city status would be protected, nor how civic continuity would be maintained. The absence of explicit provision for Charter Trustees or equivalent arrangements creates uncertainty for residents and risks undermining confidence that local identity and heritage would be safeguarded.

6. Support devolution arrangements

The One Oxfordshire proposal is designed to support and unlock devolution, by creating a single, resilient local authority that can act as a clear, credible and strategically capable partner to a future strategic authority, preferably a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA). A single county-wide unitary provides the scale, governance clarity and delivery capacity required for devolved powers over transport, housing, skills, economic development and infrastructure, avoiding the fragmentation and competing voices that would weaken Oxfordshire's position and influence under multiple smaller councils.

One Oxfordshire is the only local government reorganisation proposal that:

- advocates for the whole of Oxfordshire as a recognised functional economic area and a recognisable anchor institution for inter-regional initiatives such as the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor and England's Economic Heartland.
- provides a single, coherent and financially resilient partner for devolution, and
- directly supports the government's wider devolution objectives
- provides the clearest governance to drive productivity and revenue growth through a single local growth plan and spatial development strategy
- offers financial resilience and scale, reducing the risk of devolved powers being held by weaker or fragmented councils.
- provides a single front door for engagement with government, investors and strategic partners
- is best placed to support future devolution of the governance of fire and rescue services

One Oxfordshire sets out a clear and simplified dual-delivery model, fully aligned with government devolution policy intent:

- Strategic functions (transport, housing, skills, economic development and investment) exercised at mayoral level.
- All local government functions delivered by a single Oxfordshire Council, covering the full functional economic area.

This creates the clearest possible division of responsibilities between local and regional governance, avoiding blurred accountability. A single Oxfordshire Council provides a strong, stable and credible partner for an MSA. This alignment enables more coherent policy-making across strategic transport, housing, skills and

economic development — particularly important in a region where high-performing economic areas are currently strong but disconnected.

Preserving functional economic geography and accelerating growth

The proposed Thames Valley MSA would be able to leverage complementary sectoral strengths across the region into a unified, distributed growth model. This approach connects places, boosts housing delivery, supports innovation and drives productivity.

By collaborating across member councils, the MSA will be able to accelerate progress on productivity, create integrated supply chains, expand labour market opportunities and speed up innovation — delivering sustained productivity growth and increased revenue locally and nationally.

One Oxfordshire is uniquely positioned to support this model because it:

- preserves Oxfordshire as a single, recognised functional economic area with clear narrative of place and identity within the wider region
- avoids fragmenting strategic corridors such as the Knowledge Spine,
- delivers an authority who can be a more effective partners, with single voice for the area, and
- offers a single local growth plan and spatial development strategy feeding into regional plans.

Coordinating LGR and devolution reduces risk and disruption

Co-ordinating the transition to a single unitary authority and an MSA at the same time avoids repeated disruption to services and governance. This is particularly important for complex, high-risk functions such as Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The proposal anticipates the establishment of:

- a shadow MSA, and
- an Implementation Executive with continuing / preparing authority status to oversee governance, strategic planning and financial frameworks prior to the transfer of powers.

One Oxfordshire significantly limits disruption at a time when Berkshire councils would be joining the MSA as existing unitaries, ensuring continuity and stability during transition.

7. Enables stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment

Neighbourhood governance is embedded through area committees, strengthened town and parish partnerships and protected local identity. Financial resilience provides the headroom needed for sustained local empowerment. Risks of remoteness are manageable through design, while risks of fragmentation are permanent.

One Oxfordshire commits to a robust and consistent neighbourhood governance framework, including:

- area committees aligned to real communities (city neighbourhoods, market towns and rural clusters),
- councillors acting as community convenors, shaping place-based priorities,
- neighbourhood-level forums and engagement mechanisms to influence service design and delivery.

These are not temporary or discretionary arrangements. The proposal explicitly sets out permanent structures, supported by the financial resilience of a single authority, ensuring neighbourhood governance is durable, visible and properly resourced.

This approach ensures that every community—urban, rural or market town—has a clear and consistent route to influence decisions.

Crucially, the proposal is clear that good neighbourhood empowerment depends on financial headroom. One Oxfordshire's stronger savings and resilience enable:

- sustained investment in area committees and neighbourhood working,
- consistent support for local engagement across the whole county,
- empowerment that is long-term and reliable, not vulnerable to cuts.

The risks of “remoteness” under a single council are solvable through good design and consistent engagement. By contrast, the risks under alternative proposals - service fragmentation, weaker finances and inconsistent neighbourhood arrangements—are structural and permanent.

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2 Unitary Authority- Consultation Response DRAFT

- 1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?**

Strongly disagree.

- 2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?**

Strongly disagree.

- 3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?**

Strongly disagree.

- 4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in receipt of exceptional financial support?**

Strongly disagree.

- 5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?**

Strongly disagree.

- 6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?**

Disagree.

- 7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?**

Strongly Disagree.

- 8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?**

Strongly Disagree.

9. If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal.

Q1. Sensible geographies and economic areas

The establishment of two unitary councils, splitting Oxfordshire, would fragment an established and highly integrated economic and social geography. The Ridgeway and Oxford and Shires proposals do not present a clear place narrative that residents or business identify with. Ridgeway lacks a focal economic or cultural focus. Oxford and Shires would be dominated by Oxford, particularly, as set out in the services section, for serving high needs in Oxford. The most likely outcome being that services have to concentrate on the city, to the disadvantage of those living in rural areas and significant inequalities like Banbury.

Evidence from Metro Dynamics shows that Oxfordshire's fastest growing sectors are distributed across the county rather than concentrated in one place. This evidence recognises the benefits of industries clustering around the city, while also highlighting the strong links between business ecosystems across the whole county. Travel to work, education, healthcare and leisure patterns are overwhelmingly countywide, particularly along key corridors linking Oxford, Bicester, Didcot, the Science Vale of Culham, Milton Park and Harwell. Splitting the county would sever the Knowledge Spine and fragment economic strategy, weakening leverage with government and investors. Oxfordshire also operates within wider economic geographies, including the Thames Valley and the Oxford Cambridge Growth Corridor. These opportunities depend on strategic scale and coherence, which would be undermined by two competing councils.

Two unitaries would fragment partnerships, duplicate effort and complicate strategic planning, infrastructure delivery, inward investment and skills planning. Critically the 2UA model would put an arbitrary upper-tier authority boundary right through the edge of the city leaving highly connected areas like Botley, Wheatley and Kennington in a neighbouring council. In contrast, One Oxfordshire would enable a single, coherent growth strategy aligned to the county's real economic geography.

The proposed Oxford & Shires and Ridgeway councils are not based on sensible geographies. Disaggregating services currently delivered on a county footprint—particularly transport, social care, SEND and public health—would create significant cost, risk and disruption for residents without any guarantees that outcomes would be improved.

The inclusion of West Berkshire lacks a clear economic rationale as evidenced in the travel to work area of Oxfordshire which clearly shows an absence of significant movements between Oxfordshire and West Berkshire for work purposes. Furthermore, the council was not part of the statutory invitation.

Many economic development functions are most effective at county scale, including inward investment, skills planning, business support and infrastructure delivery. Attracting inward investment requires presenting Oxfordshire at countywide or pan-regional scale, with a coherent portfolio of opportunities across knowledge-intensive sectors. A strong proposition depends on combining strategic scale with locally defined sites and projects. Over the past five years, Enterprise Oxfordshire's inward investment team has supported 184 inward investment

projects, securing c.£3.6bn of investment and supporting 6,500 jobs across Oxfordshire. Undertaking this work on a smaller geography could risk fragmentation and unnecessary competition between areas. The significant amount of housing development required to unlock economic growth requires an integrated approach to planning and delivery, this would be best met through a single unitary council as key supporting services such as strategic infrastructure, water and digital systems serve multiple labour markets and sites, making a countywide approach to planning and prioritisation of sites essential.

Q2. Ability to deliver outcomes

The 2UA proposal significantly underestimates the complexity and risk of reorganisation. It assumes strong collaboration between the two new councils without setting out clear governance, dispute resolution or accountability arrangements.

The proposal provides limited detail on how staff with different organisational histories would be integrated, or how disruption to essential partnerships—such as safeguarding, joint commissioning and highways—would be avoided.

The Oxfordshire 2050 Plan – Joint Statutory Spatial Plan failed to be delivered because the five planning authorities could not reach an agreement on how to plan for future housing and growth allocations across the county. This demonstrates that multiple planning authorities cannot be relied upon to reach an agreement to deliver housing and growth ambitions. Only creating a single unitary authority for Oxfordshire can truly ensure housing and growth potential for the county is fully realised.

By splitting responsibility for housing and employment across two authorities, the model risks fragmentation that would act as a barrier to delivery. The proposals are unclear on how long-standing issues of co-operation across areas would be addressed. There is a risk that this will result in getting the balance wrong between job growth and housing delivery across the geography, exacerbating the twin challenges of housing affordability and pressure on transport infrastructure. If projected growth and savings are not realised, the financial consequences could be significant and difficult to manage for small unitary authorities.

Disaggregation of services, particularly public health, adult social care and children's services, would be materially costly, complex and risky. Smaller budgets would reduce commissioning power and resilience, and shared service arrangements lack clear governance. The proposal recognises workforce risks but provides little detail on how these would be managed. £15.9m transformation savings arising from redesigning social care services are estimated to be delivered from year 5 onwards; the proposal says that this total includes cost avoidance measures which CIPFA LGR guidance advises should not be included so the saving is overstated. It is also unclear what costs would be required to deliver the savings or for social care systems and whether these adequately reflect the cost of disaggregating these services.

There are extensive shared service arrangements between existing Berkshire and surrounding councils. West Berkshire itself is either a partner or lead for over 30 shared service arrangements, removal from these shared service contracts would be felt by all Berkshire and surrounding councils at a critical and fragile time and may serve to undermine the operational stability of their neighbouring authorities. There is also an added complexity of needing to manage two Local Government Pension Scheme funds from Oxfordshire and Berkshire, with no clear method of managing this.

The proposal also fails to adequately address the challenge of asset disaggregation. Services such as social care, waste and transport rely on assets unevenly distributed across the county. Splitting these would leave both councils dependent on complex joint arrangements, undermining the case for separation.

The Peopletoo report, which underpins the 2UA proposal, uses flawed assumptions, particularly around social care costs. Independent analysis by the County Councils Network (CCN) and Newton shows that deprivation and income—not council size—are the primary drivers of care costs, and that larger authorities tend to pay less per unit when these factors are also considered. This significantly weakens the proposal's financial and service delivery claims.

Q3. Size, efficiency and financial resilience

Both proposed councils would fall below the government's recommended population threshold of 500,000, reducing efficiency, resilience and strategic capacity. Disaggregation would increase costs and risk service disruption, particularly given that the county council currently delivers the majority of local government services by expenditure.

Ridgeway Council's resilience would be further undermined by the inclusion of West Berkshire who have in principle approval from MHCLG for exceptional financial support of £30m in 2026/27 in addition to £20m in 2025/26 (increased from £3.0m) and £13m in 2024/25. This has the potential to significantly impact on the stability of the council from the outset importing financial risk, weaker reserves and ongoing additional transformation pressures from day one.

Q4. Financial sustainability

The financial case relies heavily on ambitious transformation savings that would save £59.8m per year in the best-case scenario. Financial modelling is based on an assumption of a percentage saving based on the budget at vesting day. Given the additional financial challenges facing West Berkshire Council, it may not be realistic to assume that the projected level of savings can be achieved in an existing unitary area, especially given that the council area is already in receipt of exceptional financial support.

The proposal acknowledges the impact of the Fair Funding Review but does not reflect this uncertainty in its modelling. There is also no clear roadmap for IT and

digital rationalisation—an area that has driven cost overruns in previous local government reorganisation processes.

Disaggregation costs are understated, while aggregation benefits are overstated. For example, highways are treated as an aggregation opportunity despite requiring significant disaggregation in practice. By contrast, One Oxfordshire avoids disaggregation costs and offers a more robust and sustainable financial footing.

Furthermore, the inclusion of West Berkshire Council who have in principle approval from MHCLG for exceptional financial support of £30m in 2026/27 in addition to £20m in 2025/26 (increased from £3.0m) and £13m in 2024/25 has the potential to significantly impact on the stability of Ridgeway council from the outset.

A single unitary offers higher savings, lower transition costs, faster payback and significantly lower delivery risk. It would also maintain established policing, fire and rescue, NHS and voluntary sector geographies.

Q5. Quality and sustainability of public services

Adults & Childrens Social Care

Disaggregating adult social care would break up a high performing, CQC ‘Good’ rated service and introduce significant operational, financial and safeguarding risk. The proposal underestimates the complexity of meeting Care Act duties from vesting day.

The proposal is silent on the future of the Safeguarding Adults Board and Safeguarding Children’s Partnership. Under the Care Act 2014, each authority must establish these, requiring either two new boards or a legally complex joint arrangement — neither of which is addressed or costed. West Berkshire is currently part of an integrated partnership that includes Reading and Wokingham councils so this would involve needing to disaggregate an existing partnership as well as setting up new arrangements to cover the new authorities covering the existing Oxfordshire geography.

Smaller authorities risk fragmented provider markets, weaker bargaining power, workforce pressures and greater exposure to uneven demand. Evidence from CCN and Newton shows that larger authorities deliver better rated services and greater financial stability.

Similar risks apply to Children’s Services, including SEND. Demand is unevenly distributed across the county, with higher pressures in Oxford City and Cherwell. Splitting services would reduce flexibility, disrupt partnerships with schools and the NHS, and risk poorer outcomes for children.

Fire and Rescue

An independent analysis of the likely cost of a freestanding Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority shows that this could be between £34m and £50m at the maximum. Compared to other freestanding fire authorities, an Oxfordshire

Combined Fire and Rescue Authority would be relatively small – even at the higher end of that range - so on-going financial sustainability would likely be an issue unless the service merged with another neighbouring fire authority adding further complexity to the implementation of the proposal. A merger would most likely be with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service unless legislative changes permit a Foundation Strategic Authority to take on this responsibility.

The ability to fund capital works and any increases in costs for new vehicles above the existing planned level, would also be challenging as this would be reliant on capital receipts from the existing Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service property estate, revenue contributions, or borrowing which would impact on on-going revenue costs.

There would be diseconomies arising from the requirement for additional governance and activity such as the need to develop and agree a budget and produce a separate statement of accounts. Ongoing commissioning of effective value for money support services including those critical for delivery of an emergency service would be challenging for a service of this scale.

The level of reserves and balances that would be disaggregated would be relatively small. A smaller organisation, especially with lower levels of financial reserves, would be less financially resilient to sudden events. For example, the annual impact of pay inflation – estimated at around £0.8m for an uplift of around 3% would need to be met within the funding for the authority rather than being supported by the flexibility of the wider council budget. It would also be less able to cope with the costs of major incidents or accidents. Ultimately, we believe that making a blue light service potentially financially unsound through disaggregation creates an unacceptable level of risk that can only be mitigated by creating a countywide unitary through One Oxfordshire.

Other services

Other upper tier services, including highways, public health, minerals and waste planning, are also underdeveloped in the proposal and would be more difficult and costly to manage at smaller scale.

Q6. Local views and equality

Although engagement was broad, there is limited evidence that it was representative or that concerns raised by residents and stakeholders were meaningfully addressed. A significant proportion of respondents felt their views would have little impact on decisions.

The 2UA proposal is not accompanied by an Equality Impact Assessment. While not legally required, this is best practice and essential for demonstrating compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Q7. Devolution

Smaller is not better when it comes to devolution. A single council is easier for government and regional partners to work with, providing a single point of contact,

avoiding duplication and an inconsistent approach to regional priorities. Smaller unitaries would lack the financial resilience and strategic capacity needed to deliver on devolved powers.

Two unitaries would dilute Oxfordshire's voice and complicate collaboration at a strategic authority level, be it foundational or mayoral. Treating Oxford & Shires and Ridgeway as separate economies breaks up the Knowledge Spine and weakens Oxfordshire's role as a strategic growth engine. Government guidance favours larger, strategic partners for devolution which can best be found in the One Oxfordshire proposal with a single, unified, voice for the county. A single county authority provides a stronger, clearer partner for devolution.

Q8. Community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment

The proposal does not safeguard Oxford's city status or provide clear mechanisms for city level empowerment. Its approach to locality working risks oversimplifying Oxford's diverse needs. There is a relative overrepresentation of councillors for West Berkshire than from South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse in the proposed Ridgeway Council, leading to the latter areas having a democratic deficit in comparison.

There is limited clarity on the role and support of town and parish councils, despite acknowledged anxiety about increased responsibilities. The 2UA proposal lacks information surrounding the support that will be put in place for town and parish councils under the two proposed unitaries, especially regarding support on offer if town and parish councils take on enhanced responsibilities.

One Oxfordshire provides a clearer, more consistent framework for neighbourhood governance and support. One Oxfordshire builds on the successful Town and Parish Council Charter as a basis for positive engagement with towns and parishes and empowering parishes to take on additional responsibilities where there is a clear desire to do this.

10. This is a proposal that is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary change or that affects wider public services. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for these changes?

Strongly disagree.

11. If you would like to, please use this free text box to explain your answer to question 10.

- **The inclusion of West Berkshire would pose a financial threat to the success of Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire, and arguments for its inclusion are unconvincing.**
 - West Berkshire Council is in receipt of exceptional financial support (EFS) from the government and has received in principle approval for a further £30m EFS in 2026/27 in addition to £20m for 2025/25 (revised

up from £3.0m) and £13m for 2024/25. The government expect local authorities seeking additional support to have robust plans to deliver the improvements and service transformation required to help them to return to financial stability over the multi-year settlement. The on-going, and escalating, requirement for EFS means that including West Berkshire Council would import significant and unnecessary financial risk into Ridgeway Council from day one. It would also add further complexity and risk to transformation costs and savings.

- West Berkshire Council is already a unitary council and has not been invited to submit plans for reorganisation, and it is hard to argue that the inclusion of West Berkshire would benefit the residents of Oxfordshire given the financial risk it would add to local government in the county.
 - The financial case for including West Berkshire is weak, as it argues that West Berkshire is too small to survive alone and that the two unitary model represents the greater good. Oxfordshire residents and businesses would effectively be subsidising West Berkshire while taking on additional risk. This is not in the best interests of our county.
 - There are extensive shared service arrangements between existing Berkshire and surrounding councils. West Berkshire itself is either a partner or lead for over 30 shared service arrangements, removal from these shared service contracts would be felt by all Berkshire and surrounding councils at a critical and fragile time and may serve to undermine the stability of their neighbouring authorities.
- **While the 2UA proposal justifies West Berkshire's inclusion on the grounds of traditional boundaries, these do not align with the realities of the area's current relationship with neighbouring authorities.**
 - There is minimal economic activity or travel to work pattern between West Berkshire and Oxfordshire.
 - West Berkshire has a closer functional relationship with Reading, and creating a firmer boundary between the two authorities could create unnecessary friction. For example, most of West Berkshire's growth effectively forms suburban Reading, as 74% of West Berkshire is protected within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. Reinforcing this boundary could store up housing conflict and duty to cooperate issues for the future.
 - It would create unnecessary and costly disruption of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, the coroners service and the boundaries of the Lieutenancy, which all operate on an Oxfordshire footprint, in addition to the disruption expected through the disaggregation of services such as SEND, adult and children's social care and transport.
 - Furthermore, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse are in a different Functional Economic Area to West Berkshire, which is not acknowledged within the proposal.

3 Unitary Councils – Draft Response

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?

Strongly disagree.

2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?

Strongly disagree.

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?

Strongly disagree.

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in receipt of exceptional financial support?

Strongly disagree.

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?

Strongly disagree.

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?

Strongly disagree.

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?

Strongly Disagree.

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?

Strongly Disagree.

9. If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal.

Q1. Sensible geographies and economic areas

Splitting Oxfordshire into three unitaries would fragment an already coherent economic and social geography with very little vision for the Ridgeway and North Oxfordshire councils set out in the 3UA proposal. Oxfordshire is already a coherent economic area, with strong internal connectivity and a self-contained labour market - 85% of residents work within the county. Furthermore, nearly a third of Oxford's labour force commute in from outside the city (ONS 2021). Oxfordshire functions as a single labour and housing market, with strong internal connectivity and countywide travel patterns for work, education, healthcare and leisure. Transport corridors, housing markets and economic activity operate at a county scale rather than within city or district boundaries.

A three unitary model would introduce artificial boundaries, disrupt countywide partnerships and make it harder to deliver joined up services, particularly in health, social care, transport and economic development. Fragmentation would weaken Oxfordshire's ability to plan and deliver growth strategically and reduce leverage with government and investors.

Oxfordshire's Knowledge Spine — linking Bicester, Oxford, Culham, Milton Park and Harwell and the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor — relies on countywide coordination. Splitting the county would fragment economic strategy, planning and investment, increasing duplication and reducing investor confidence. Evidence shows Oxfordshire's fastest growing sectors are distributed across the county, reinforcing the case for a single economic footprint.

Many economic development functions are most effective at county scale, including inward investment, skills planning, business support and infrastructure delivery. Attracting inward investment requires presenting Oxfordshire at countywide or pan-regional scale, with a coherent portfolio of opportunities across knowledge-intensive sectors. A strong proposition depends on combining strategic scale with locally defined sites and projects. Undertaking this work on a smaller geography could risk fragmentation and unnecessary competition between areas. The significant amount of housing development required to unlock economic growth requires an integrated approach to planning and delivery, this would be best met through a single unitary council as key supporting services such as strategic infrastructure, water and digital systems serve multiple labour markets and sites, making a countywide approach to planning and prioritisation of sites essential.

Over the past five years, Enterprise Oxfordshire's inward investment team has supported 184 inward investment projects, securing c.£3.6bn of investment and supporting around 6,500 jobs across Oxfordshire. This would be fragmented by a

3UA model but can be delivered at a strategic scale alongside local tailoring in the One Oxfordshire model.

The proposed Ridgeway Council would share boundaries with Oxford, Swindon and Reading and act as an inhibitor to the development of these key areas.

Services currently delivered countywide, including transport, adult social care and children's services, would become fragmented, costly and harder to access under a three unitary model. Disaggregation risks duplication, confusion for residents and weaker financial viability.

The proposal focuses overwhelmingly on Greater Oxford and does not adequately test the identity, viability or sustainability of the proposed North Oxfordshire or Ridgeway councils. No clear identity or place narrative for these two councils are set out with no clear economic, social or cultural focal points. A Greater Oxford authority risks loss of identity for surrounding communities, particularly for Kidlington, Botley and Wheatley who would be subsumed into Greater Oxford.

Different electoral arrangements, four-year cycles for Ridgeway and North Oxfordshire and bi-annual for Greater Oxford, would also create confusion for residents and reinforce perceptions of an Oxford centric model.

Q2. Ability to deliver the proposed outcomes

The three unitary proposal relies on optimistic assumptions about growth, green belt release for development, housing delivery and transformation savings, with limited consideration of downside risks. The growth assumptions are exactly that – assumptions. It is the decisions of a future authority that will enable or disable those assumptions to be realised.

The 3UA proposal argues that housing delivery for Greater Oxford can be best achieved through greenbelt release and that this release can only effectively be delivered where the only significant land available to a local planning authority is greenbelt. This is not the case and clear mechanisms exist for bringing forward appropriate development in the greenbelt where a compelling case can be made and evidenced and the review tests can be met. Little is said in the 3UA case about housing delivery in the other two authorities. Seeking to lock-in city expansion through the LGR process assumes a static NPPF and a political outcome pre-disposed to this approach. The appropriate way to take strategic decisions about future land use is through the evidenced based Spatial Development Strategy process as set-out the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025. At scale housing delivery is most effectively delivered over the widest footprint, including but not only considering development around the city. The issues around scarcity and high house prices could then realistically remain and even be exacerbated under this proposal.

The Oxfordshire 2050 Plan – Joint Statutory Spatial Plan failed to be delivered because the five planning authorities could not reach an agreement on how to plan for future housing and growth allocations across the county. This demonstrates that multiple planning authorities cannot be relied upon to reach an agreement to deliver housing and growth ambitions. Only creating a single unitary authority for Oxfordshire can truly ensure housing and growth potential for the county is fully realised.

By splitting responsibility for housing and employment across three authorities, the model risks fragmentation that would act as a barrier to delivery. The proposals are unclear on how long-standing issues of co-operation across areas would be addressed and is especially unclear on the visions for housing and growth in Ridgeway and the North Oxfordshire councils. There is a risk that this will result in getting the balance wrong between job growth and housing delivery across the geography, exacerbating the twin challenges of housing affordability and pressure on transport infrastructure. If projected growth and savings are not realised, the financial consequences could be significant and difficult to manage for small unitary authorities.

While the proposal emphasises growth, it provides little evidence of how this growth would be inclusive or address Oxford's deep and widening inequalities. Oxford already performs strongly on economic output yet remains one of the UK's most unequal cities. Further growth alone, without targeted interventions, will not reduce poverty or inequality.

Proposals to address inequality through apprenticeships and housing lack detail and scale. Skills and employment programmes are most effective when delivered at county scale, and many new jobs would be filled by people moving into the area rather than existing residents in need. Increased housing supply does not guarantee affordability or access for current residents, particularly without safeguards. Despite generating significant growth within the city, with PwC's Good Growth for Cities Index highlighting that the city saw a 5.1% annual GDP growth between 2020-21, inequality in the city is growing. Oxford is the UK's second most unequal city. 26% of children in Oxford live below the poverty line (Census data, 2021.) Just under a third of the households in Oxford experience at least 1 dimension of deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025) and six areas of the city are in the 20% most deprived areas in the country (two in Northfield Brook, two in Blackbird Leys, one in Littlemore and one in Rose Hill.) Conversely, there now 21 areas in Oxford that are in the top 10% least deprived in the country – an increase from 12 in 2019. This demonstrates that by concentrating efforts into a Greater Oxford authority, the inequality gap will continue to widen and only a single countywide unitary can ensure that growth benefits are felt across the county.

Disaggregation of services, particularly public health, adult social care and children's services, would be materially costly, complex and risky. Smaller budgets would

reduce commissioning power and resilience, and shared service arrangements lack clear governance. The proposal recognises workforce risks but provides little detail on how these would be managed. £15.9m transformation savings arising from redesigning social care services are estimated to be delivered from year 5 onwards; the proposal says that this total includes cost avoidance measures which CIPFA LGR guidance advises should not be included so the saving is overstated. It is also unclear what costs would be required to deliver the savings or for social care systems and whether these adequately reflect the cost of disaggregating these services.

There are extensive shared service arrangements between existing Berkshire and surrounding councils. West Berkshire itself is either a partner or lead for over 30 shared service arrangements, removal from these shared service contracts would be felt by all Berkshire and surrounding councils at a critical and fragile time and may serve to undermine the stability of their neighbouring authorities.

There is also an added complexity of needing to disaggregate Local Government Pension Scheme funds from Oxfordshire and Berkshire, with no clear method of managing this.

The proposal places significant reliance on local freedom over council tax precepting without setting out how affordability, harmonisation or divergence between neighbouring councils would be managed. This creates governance, fairness and reputational risks in a single functional housing and labour market. A single unitary provides clearer accountability, consistency and transparency.

Q3. Size, efficiency and financial resilience

Two of the three proposed unitaries would fall well below the government's recommended population threshold of 500,000, relying on uncertain future growth to achieve scale. This is especially relevant for the Northern Oxfordshire Council proposal which lacks any economic narrative. Arguments for smaller authorities focus on identity and governance rather than demonstrating improved efficiency, capacity or resilience. The three proposed unitaries are also unbalanced in revenue budget size with the largest over twice as large as the smallest.

The methodology for estimating tax bases across revised boundaries is not set out, limiting assurance over the robustness of the figures. The council tax bases are also uneven, with Greater Oxford having a materially lower council tax-raising capacity relative to the other proposed unitaries.

Smaller unitaries would increase costs, duplicate senior leadership and undermine high performing countywide services. Diseconomies of scale would impact on the ability to manage on-going reductions in funding arising through the Fair Funding Review 2.0 and create a much less resilience to withstand future funding changes.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) projections, which include assumptions about known savings, costs and demography changes, are not included for any of the seven existing local authorities. Similarly, the balance sheet disaggregation does not account for any capital or borrowing requirements in the MTFS of the existing local authorities. As a result, the opening financial positions of the proposed unitaries on vesting day could differ materially from those modelled.

The comparator authorities which have been used in the benchmarking analysis behind the conclusions about financial resilience included in the proposal are not explained. This information might change the conclusions reached.

The proposal includes significant boundary changes, including West Berkshire, without demonstrating proportionate financial or service benefits. Including West Berkshire would import financial risk, disrupt established service geographies and increase transition complexity.

Strategic partnerships operate more effectively on a county level because they can achieve economies of scale, particularly when addressing poverty and inequality. Work by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2024) to create 'anchor networks' of public and private sector organisations has found that these organisations are best placed to work on a larger scale when making meaningful interventions in their local economies. For example, in Birmingham, currently the largest unitary council in the country, organisations such as the NHS, housing associations, the council, universities and the voluntary sector have worked together on an initiative to direct hard-to-fill entry-level roles in the health sector at unemployed residents in the most deprived parts of the city, leading to over 550 job offers to unemployed residents in just over two and a half years. (Centre for Local Economic Strategies, 2024.) Only a single unitary can achieve this level of scale and joined-up targeted working to ensure years of widening inequality in Oxfordshire are reversed.

Q4. Financial sustainability and footing

Disaggregating countywide services into three unitary councils, and the boundary changes required to do that, as well as disruption to established geographies for health and fire authorities for example, would be resource intensive, complex and significantly increase transition risk.

While headline transition costs appear plausible, a substantial proportion of costs and savings are unexplained or insufficiently evidenced in the proposal, undermining confidence in the financial case. There is also limited differentiation between one – off transition benefits, sustainable efficiencies and cost avoidance. The proposal does not fully account for existing MTFS pressures, so there is a risk that the new councils will start with weaker financial positions than presented.

Key costs relating to IT, workforce, shadow authorities, legal advice and service disaggregation are unclear. There is also no mention of the removal of duplication of

roles beyond the senior management layer, for example in front office or service delivery roles, when bringing together district authorities nor additional middle leadership staff and safeguarding teams needed in social care across 3 unitaries. Recurring savings appear to be overstated and rely on assumptions that are not transparent or aligned with best practice guidance.

The proposal acknowledges the impact of the Fair Funding Review but does not reflect this in the level of savings which can be achieved, given the expected reductions in funding as a result of its implementation.

There is no mention of one – off transformation costs in the narrative. These can be inferred from subtracting the £36.2m transition costs (pages 95 and 114) from the £57m total one-off costs in Table 5.7 on page 116 but there is no narrative to explain what these relate to, nor how they have been calculated.

Costs associated with running shadow authorities, legal advice, staff relocation, changes to third-party payments or disaggregating social care services are not mentioned in the narrative so it is not clear how these have been treated.

Net recurring savings totalling £48.6m by year 5 are set out on in the proposal (page 96). The total is made up of £28.3m transformation benefits, offset by £13.7m transformation costs plus £34.0m transition savings. The majority of the savings are unexplained, or the amounts are unspecified in the proposal. Narrative within the report also suggests that the calculation includes savings that CIPFA LGR guidance advises should not be included such as a reduction in depreciation and notional interest). A 5% efficiency saving against the Public Health budget is assumed - this is funded by a ring-fenced grant and does not directly impact on the General Fund. Since a large share of the savings is unexplained or reliant on high-level assumptions, with limited distinction between one-off transition benefits, sustainable efficiencies and cost-avoidance there is a material risk that savings could be overstated.

Furthermore, the inclusion of West Berkshire Council who have in principle approval from MHCLG for exceptional financial support of £30m in 2026/27 in addition to £20m in 2025/26 (increased from £3.0m) and £13m in 2024/25 has the potential to significantly impact on the stability of Ridgeway council from the outset.

A single unitary offers higher savings, lower transition costs, faster payback and significantly lower delivery risk. It would also maintain established policing, fire and rescue, NHS and voluntary sector geographies.

Q5. Quality and sustainability of public services

Planning and Infrastructure

A three unitary model would perpetuate fragmented planning and undermine integrated delivery of housing, transport, infrastructure and environmental services. Smaller authorities would struggle to coordinate land release, infrastructure investment and strategic planning. A single, integrated highways service allows Oxfordshire to leverage bulk purchasing, shared specialist equipment, and streamlined supply chains. This reduces unit costs, improves productivity, and delivers better value for taxpayers. Larger contracts also attract competitive pricing and enable extra investment across the county. Unified planning supports a proactive, preventative maintenance approach, up to 20 times cheaper than reactive pothole repairs. This extends the lifespan of Oxfordshire's £6 billion road network, ensures compliance with Department for Transport standards, and reduces overall deterioration, avoiding costly emergency interventions. The artificial boundaries of the 3UA proposal would cause significant blockers to transport infrastructure as all buses need to cut through the city.

Oxfordshire is a significant minerals supplier, supplying 25% of minerals to the south-east region, so this is economically important, but this proposal gives no mention to it. There is real complexity in minerals and waste planning in a small unitary environment. The three councils would have a duty to cooperate, but identifying quarries and waste sites is going to be a challenge and, with no final point of political accountability, there is a risk that there is no agreement.

Childrens and adults social care, education and homelessness

Disaggregating highways, adult social care, children's services and SEND would introduce unacceptable transition risks, weaken economies of scale, fragment provider markets and increase costs. Evidence shows larger authorities deliver more resilient and higher performing care services.

Fragmentation risks postcode lotteries, workforce instability and loss of strategic integration with health and other partners. Joint or shared governance arrangements proposed in the 3UA model are legally complex, unproven and introduce accountability risks. The three unitary proposal is based on the break-up of a high-performing and CQC 'Good' rated adult social care service to create smaller place-based services. This carries significant operational and financial risk around service fragmentation, transition complexity, lack of consistency, and weaker financial viability compared to the One Oxfordshire model, which emphasises service continuity, consistency, scale and financial resilience. The 3UA model fails to provide a compelling, evidence-based case for the high-risk and costly disaggregation. Moreover, it is based on a non-compliant legal framework. The process of dividing services, budgets and staff is complex and could distract from service improvement.

There is a duty to make enquiries into abuse or neglect and to establish a multi-agency Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB). The duty requires a simple, clear line of accountability. The 3UA proposal to retain a single SAB to cover three unitaries is legally complex. A SAB is a statutory body of a local authority, not a free-floating

entity that can be 'shared' via a lead authority model while claiming to be the single statutory board for all three. This legal error creates an immediate and significant vacuum of governance and accountability.

The proposed joint-board arrangements are unproven, fragmented, ambiguous and introduce unnecessary risk. This model of SAB is also unable to hold the local authority and Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) to account, which is meant to be its primary function. A single SAB, operationally hosted and funded by the lead authority, cannot be truly independent in scrutinising a safeguarding failure within that same lead authority. By contrast the 1UA model provides simple, clear and continuous accountability for the SAB. Additionally, it should be noted that neighbouring authorities who have set up a similar shared Board have recently disaggregated this model.

The Care Act 2014 creates a specific duty to integrate care and support with health services (e.g. the NHS) and health-related services (e.g. housing, leisure). The 3UA model requires a high-risk disaggregation that could sever, not strengthen, health partnerships during the transition. There will also be additional duplication created by the need to potentially have a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and principle social workers which have not been factored into the proposed joint arrangements. The 1UA model combines ASC and district-level housing functions into one entity safely.

Similarly, disaggregation of Children's Services (including SEND) comes with unacceptable risk, with the potential to disrupt a whole generation of children in Oxfordshire. Smaller authorities could be overwhelmed by demand and may struggle to recruit skilled staff. Larger councils deliver better Ofsted-rated services and have the scale to keep costs down.

Both the County Councils Network (CCN) and Newton have evidenced that larger councils deliver better Ofsted-rated services and have the scale to keep costs down. The CCN is urging government to stick to its 500k population rule and ensure reforms don't shatter fragile care services.

Splitting SEND and Children's Services responsibilities between three councils risks fragmented approaches, with different priorities, policies and commissioning strategies; disruption to families who move or live near boundaries; and higher costs as well as a loss of economies of scale in commissioning. While disaggregation is possible, a generation of children will be affected by this disruption. Each new unitary may interpret statutory duties differently, and there is a risk of inconsistent thresholds for intervention, assessment and support across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. The proposal suggests some functions (e.g. safeguarding, youth justice) will be shared, but the details and governance of these partnerships are not fully specified. This also does not take account of the raft of reforms that are being delivered including: Working Together 2023 and the delivery of area partnerships, *Every Child*

Achieving and Thriving education and SEND reforms (February 2026), and the Families First reforms.

There is no acknowledgement of the staff shortages and need for staffing created by a 3UA model. There is no acknowledgement of the complexities of disaggregation of the designated schools grant and the implication of financial challenges as a result.

Housing and homelessness services would be more inconsistent and financially fragile under three authorities, particularly given higher demand pressures in Oxford and patterns of demand being inconsistent around the rest of the county. Partnership working would become more complex and less coherent.

Fire and Rescue

An independent analysis of the likely cost of a freestanding Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority shows that this could be between £34m and £50m at the maximum and would likely be somewhere between those. Compared to other freestanding fire authorities it would be relatively small even at the higher end of that range so on-going financial sustainability would likely be an issue unless the service merged with another fire authority adding further complexity to the implementation of the proposal. A merger would most likely be with Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service unless legislative changes permit a Foundation Strategic Authority to take on this responsibility.

The ability to fund capital works and any increases in costs for new vehicles above the existing planned level, would also be challenging as this would be reliant on capital receipts from the existing OFRS property estate, revenue contributions, or borrowing which would impact on on-going revenue costs.

There would be diseconomies arising from the requirement for additional governance and activity such as the need to develop and agree a budget and produce a separate statement of accounts. Ongoing commissioning of effective value for money support services including those critical for delivery of an emergency service would be challenging for a service of this scale.

The level of reserves and balances that would be disaggregated would be relatively small. A smaller organisation, especially with lower levels of financial reserves, would be less financially resilient to sudden events. For example, the annual impact of pay inflation – estimated at around £0.8m for an uplift of around 3% would need to be met within the funding for the authority rather than being supported by the flexibility of the wider council budget. It would also be less able to cope with the costs of major incidents or accidents. Ultimately, we believe that making a blue light service potentially financially unsound through disaggregation creates an unacceptable level of risk that can only be mitigated by creating a countywide unitary through One Oxfordshire.

Q6. Local views and equality

The proposal's engagement appears focused on Oxford. There is limited evidence of meaningful engagement with residents in the proposed North Oxfordshire, Ridgeway or West Berkshire areas, or with communities proposed for inclusion in Greater Oxford. With no political proponents championing this from of the Ridgeway Council (significantly altered from the Ridgeway promoted in the 2UA option) or the North Oxfordshire council, it is unclear whether effective future political and civic leadership would emerge. It is unlikely to do so organically, especially in North Oxfordshire.

Engagement questions were leading and did not address major service responsibilities such as social care or SEND. Quotes used in the proposal disproportionately reflect Oxford-centric views. The other two council areas (Northern Oxfordshire and Ridgeway) seem largely ignored, particularly regarding the needs of residents.

The proposal mentions conducting two Oxford Resident Panel surveys on the 'Future of local Government for Oxford' but does not mention conducting similar for residents of the proposed Northern Oxfordshire and Ridgeway areas. Additionally, whilst the proposal overly-focuses on the Greater Oxford Council it even seems to ignore the wishes of some of the villages it wants to subsume into this Greater Oxford. For example, Kidlington has recently changed its status from a village to a town after Kidlington Parish Council voted unanimously following a consultation with residents. In the Parish Council proposal for this change they explicitly state that part of the reason for doing this is because they do not want to be subsumed into a Greater Oxford Council and will be strongly opposing the 3UA proposal. The engagement quotes in the 3UA proposal do not reference Kidlington or present any positive feedback from residents there as to why they would welcome the Greater Oxford Council.

Overall, the proposal cannot be said to be informed by local views, as the evidence provided in the proposal suggests that it has only been informed by views in Oxford. There is a therefore a huge risk that the unitary councils in Ridgeway and Northern Oxfordshire will not meet local needs, as they have not been designed or informed by local views.

Q7. Devolution

Smaller is not better when it comes to devolution. A single council is easier for government and regional partners to work with, providing a single point of contact, avoiding duplication and an inconsistent approach to regional priorities. Smaller unitaries would lack the financial resilience and strategic capacity needed to deliver on devolved powers.

The 3UA proposal argues that Oxford as a city would not be politically represented on a future combined authority. This could be addressed through the appointment process that the future council agrees in its constitution.

Fragmenting Oxfordshire into three unitaries would weaken the county's voice within a strategic authority, be it foundational or mayoral, and create competing interests. Government guidance favours larger, strategic partners for devolution which can best be found in the One Oxfordshire proposal with a single, unified, voice for the county.

Q8. Community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment

The proposal risks fragmenting local identity and representation and gives limited attention to town and parish councils. Neighbourhood Area Committees are insufficiently defined and risk adding bureaucracy without guaranteed empowerment.

This will be particularly detrimental to the towns and villages that would become part of Greater Oxford, in particular Kidlington, Botley and Wheatley who would face a potential loss of identity under this proposal.

There is very little mention of town and parish councils in the 3UA proposal, and their engagement. The One Oxfordshire model builds on a strong network of parish and town councils, ensuring that neighbourhood governance is integrated with, not layered on top of, existing local democratic institutions. The County Council has a developed Town and Parish Council engagement strategy and as part of the one unitary proposal, the council commits to strengthen local democracy through robust neighbourhood governance, area committees and closer partnerships with town and parish councils. A single county unitary will use its scale and resources to work to support all parish and town councils to participate as much as they want to in their places. A clear and dedicated point of contact will be established, and a learning and development programme and advice hub will be delivered.

A single county unitary can provide consistent, well-resourced neighbourhood governance across Oxfordshire, strengthening local democracy while avoiding duplication and inequity.

10. This is a proposal that is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers boundary change or that affects wider public services. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for these changes?

Strongly disagree.

11. If you would like to, please use this free text box to explain your answer to question 10.

A. Oxfordshire County Council believes that the incorporation of West Berkshire does not meet the government's request for reorganisation.

- It would place Oxfordshire on a weaker financial footing – West Berkshire Council is in receipt of exceptional financial support (EFS) from the government and has received in principle approval for a further £30m EFS in 2026/27 in addition to £20m for 2025/25 (revised up from £3.0m) and £13m for 2024/25. The government expect local authorities seeking additional support to have robust plans to deliver the improvements and service transformation required to help them to return to financial stability over the multi-year settlement. The on-going, and escalating, requirement for EFS means that including West Berkshire Council would import significant and unnecessary financial risk into Ridgeway Council from day one. It would also add further complexity and risk to transformation costs and savings. The proposal argues that West Berkshire is too small to survive on its own and that the 3UA model represents the greater good. This means the model is not about what's best for Oxfordshire, but about Oxfordshire residents 'saving' West Berkshire. It is not in Oxfordshire's interests to subsidise or 'save' West Berkshire.
- Including West Berkshire would raise planning challenges - Reading is very tightly bounded and much of West Berkshire growth effectively forms suburban Reading. 74% of West Berkshire is protected within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. West Berkshire has a closer functional relationship with Reading, and creating a firmer boundary between the two authorities could create unnecessary friction, such as storing up housing conflict and duty to cooperate issues for the future.
- There is limited travel to work pattern between West Berkshire and Oxfordshire.
- There are extensive shared service arrangements between existing Berkshire and surrounding councils. West Berkshire itself is either a partner or lead for over 30 shared service arrangements, removal from these shared service contracts would be felt by all Berkshire and surrounding councils at a critical and fragile time and may serve to undermine the stability their neighbouring authorities.
- It would create a ceremonial boundary change between Oxfordshire and Berkshire and require additional boundary adjustments across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.
- Oxfordshire is a recognised and significant geography, with established economic, social and administrative coherence and a strong unified voice for the county at a future MSA table. Including West Berkshire would break this coherence, creating a less logical geography for local government and a weaker voice for the MSA.
- It would create unnecessary and costly disruption of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, the coroners service and the boundaries of the Lieutenancy, which all operate on an Oxfordshire footprint in addition to the complete disaggregation of services such as SEND, adult and children's social care and transport.
- Finally, as mentioned in Q6 B, there is no evidence provided in the proposal to suggest residents of West Berkshire want these changes to happen. Where West Berkshire is discussed, the proposal frames inclusion as West Berkshire being "too small to survive on its own", and Ridgeway providing financial sustainability and risk

spreading. This is a technocratic argument, not a democratic one. There is no claim that residents want this outcome, only that it is deemed necessary.

DRAFT



Oxfordshire County Council
Equalities Impact Assessment

'One Oxfordshire' LGR proposal

9/3/2026

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Not applicable
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	'One Oxfordshire', Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposal to replace Oxfordshire's existing two-tier councils with a single county-wide unitary council. This EIA examines the proposal's potential impacts on equalities. This EIA has been updated ahead of submitting the council's response to the Ministry for Housing and Local Government's (MHCLG) statutory consultation on Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	New
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? (following completion of the assessment).	The One Oxfordshire proposal is a structural change intended to streamline services and improve efficiency across the county. There is no evidence of inherent bias or discrimination in the proposal's design, it does not single out or exclude any group. On the contrary, the intended service model (a single 'front door' for all residents) aims to provide consistent access for everyone county-wide. If implemented, One Oxfordshire could advance equality of opportunity by eliminating the current fragmentation of services, which is expected to benefit all communities including those with protected characteristics (for example, more cohesive planning of social care, housing, and other support). Crucially, this assessment has considered whether any group would be unfairly disadvantaged. No unfair disadvantage is anticipated provided that robust mitigations are in place during transition. The proposal does not alter eligibility or provision of services based on any protected characteristic; services will continue to be delivered on need. Some risks (e.g. temporary disruption during reorganisation, or perceptions of reduced local voice in rural areas) are identified, but these are practical issues not deliberate biases. With careful management (see mitigations in Section 3), such risks can be minimised. Overall, the proposal complies with the Public Sector Equality Duty, it seeks to foster equitable service access and does not introduce any form of unlawful discrimination. This EIA remains impartial and fact-based, given the politically sensitive context; it focuses solely on objective impacts against the Equality Act criteria, ensuring a neutral, balanced analysis.
Completed By	Lauren Rushen

Authorised By	Helen Mitchell
Date of Assessment	9/3/26

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>Oxfordshire currently operates a two-tier local government system: Oxfordshire County Council plus five district councils (Cherwell, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, West Oxfordshire). This structure has been in place for ~50 years. In recent years, multiple factors have driven the case for change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Pressures - Like many areas, Oxfordshire’s councils face severe budget strain. Rising service demands (especially in adult and children’s social care) and reduced central funding have led to forecasts of future financial shortfalls. Efficiency savings and transformation are needed to maintain services. The government’s devolution agenda (White Paper 2024) has also signalled that moving to single-tier councils is a preferred solution to improve financial resilience and service delivery. • Fragmentation of Services - The two-tier setup is viewed as fragmented and inefficient, with overlapping responsibilities across county and districts. Key functions are split, e.g. the county manages social care and 5 highways, while districts handle housing and planning, leading to duplication, siloed decision-making and complexity for residents. All Oxfordshire councils ‘do their best’ for residents, but bureaucracy and split accountability can hinder strategic action on cross-cutting issues (for example, aligning housing development with social care or public health). The current system sometimes results in uneven service experiences depending on district boundaries. • National Policy Direction - The UK Government has invited proposals for local government reorganisation in shire counties, aiming for single-tier (‘unitary’) structures that cover coherent economic areas. In Oxfordshire’s case, the entire county is seen as the sensible geography for one unitary. Government guidance indicates new councils should serve populations of ≈500k+ to be viable and efficient. Oxfordshire’s population (~725,000 in 2021, projected 760,000+ by 2025) fits well within this criterion, bolstering the case for a single county-wide council.
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<p style="text-align: center;">Proposals</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>Three expressions of interest were submitted to MHCLG setting out proposals as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) One unitary council comprising the current areas of Cherwell, Oxford City, Oxfordshire County, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, and West Oxfordshire (b) Two unitary councils. These would comprise Oxford and Shires Council (Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire) and Ridgeway Council (South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, plus West Berkshire who are outside of the invitation area) (c) Three unitary councils. These would comprise Greater Oxford Council (Oxford City plus a boundary change to encompass parts of Cherwell and Vale of White Horse), Northern Oxfordshire Council (Most of Cherwell and West Oxfordshire) and Ridgeway Council (South Oxfordshire, most of Vale of White Horse plus West Berkshire who are outside of the invitation area) <p>MHCLG are currently consulting on the three proposals outlined above.</p> <p>The rationale for One Oxfordshire is as follows:</p> <p>One Oxfordshire entails abolishing the five district councils and the county council and establishing one new 'Oxfordshire Council' unitary authority for the whole county. In practical terms, this means all local government services, from social care and highways to housing, planning, waste collection, environmental health, libraries, etc., would be delivered by the single county-wide council instead of six separate councils.</p> <p>The new Council would be governed by one elected body of councillors (replacing the current county councillors and district councillors) and a single officer leadership team.</p> <p>Rationale / Why this option - Through an options appraisal, One Oxfordshire was identified by Oxfordshire County Council as the preferred and most beneficial model for the county's future. Key reasons include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlined, 'One-Stop' Services. Residents and businesses will have one point of contact ('one front door') for all local government services. This simplifies access, no confusion over whether the county or district handles an issue. For example, currently a resident needing social care (county function) and a housing adaptation (district function) must deal with two councils; under One Oxfordshire, these related needs can
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be handled seamlessly together. Clear accountability is a benefit, a single Council is wholly responsible for service outcomes, making it easier for the public to understand and influence.

- **Avoiding Service Disruption.** Crucially, One Oxfordshire maintains county-wide critical services intact. Services like adult social care, children's services, and firefighting are currently run by OCC for the whole county; this proposal keeps them under one roof, avoiding any break-up ('disaggregation') of these services. In contrast, splitting into multiple unitary areas would divide those county services between new authorities, risking disruption, higher costs, and inconsistent standards (a point highlighted by the government's criteria). One Oxfordshire is the only option that combines continuity of crucial services with an opportunity to redesign local delivery for the better.
- **Financial Efficiency and Resilience.** By merging duplicative structures, the single council is projected to save over £30 million per year in operating costs, with net savings of ~£163 million over the first five years. (These savings arise from consolidating management, offices, contracts, IT systems, etc.) An independent analysis by PwC backs these figures. The new council would have a much larger tax base and budget, improving resilience to economic shocks and allowing strategic investment. Importantly, One Oxfordshire is estimated to be the fastest and least costly option to implement among the reorganisation choices, it involves a single transition rather than multiple new entities. Savings can be reinvested into front-line 7 services or initiatives to address inequalities, benefiting all communities. (Note: Implementation would incur one-off costs ~£22m, but these are outweighed by the recurring savings within a short payback period.)
- **Stronger Strategic Capacity.** A single Oxfordshire Council can plan at scale for the whole county's needs. This is vital for issues like housing, infrastructure and economic development that transcend district boundaries. For example, Oxfordshire's housing plans have struggled under fragmented governance (a joint countywide plan failed previously). One Oxfordshire would enable unified spatial planning to meet housing need across the county, potentially easing inequalities in access to affordable housing. It also creates a single strong voice to work with partners (NHS, Police, universities, neighbouring counties) and to lobby Government. This can unlock opportunities like devolution deals and investment, e.g. the proposal argues a single council will better support a future Thames Valley regional mayor and not create intra-county competition.
- **Devolution and Localism Together.** The model is designed to empower local communities while achieving strategic unity. One Oxfordshire plans to establish Area Committees and a new 'Communities' unit to ensure decision-making happens at the local level on local matters. Town and parish councils would be key

	<p>partners (possibly taking on more responsibilities and funding in local service delivery). This two-tier within one organisation, a large unitary with devolved area structures, aims to balance the perceived loss of the district councils. Essentially, residents would still have local democratic forums (area committees, parish engagement) but backed by the resources and coherence of a single county council. Maintaining local identity and 'place' is a stated priority: no changes to ceremonial boundaries or postal addresses are proposed, and services would be delivered in communities as today, just managed by one council instead of six. In summary, the proposal is to create One Oxfordshire Council that is 'stronger, simpler, closer, and connected.' It consolidates governance to one layer, with promises of improved service equity (fair access for all residents), cost effectiveness, and the capacity to tackle countywide challenges like inequality, housing, and climate change in a coordinated way.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>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 on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.</p>	<p>Formulation of One Oxfordshire has been supported by a range of evidence sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Research & Reviews. The financial case rests on independent modeling by PwC. Likewise, projections for service demand (e.g. in social care) were informed by external experts such as Newton Europe. The proposal references lessons from comparable counties (Buckinghamshire, Dorset, etc., which recently transitioned to unitaries), assessing what worked well there and what pitfalls to avoid. This external evidence base lends credibility to claims about savings, feasibility, and risk mitigation. • Engagement and Consultation. Extensive stakeholder engagement underpins the case. Over Summer 2025, OCC ran a countywide engagement programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A statistically representative residents' survey (with ~1,200 respondents) covering all parts of Oxfordshire. o An open public survey (1,300+ responses) and on-street interviews gathering wider public opinion. o Deliberative research: focus groups (9 groups with 63 residents) and youth sounding boards (81 young people) to get qualitative insights. o Targeted sessions with stakeholders, e.g. town and parish councils (318 local councils were invited), voluntary sector, business groups, MPs and public service partners. Feedback from these channels indicated residents' priorities align with the aims of One Oxfordshire: people want 'a council that is cost-effective, with simpler services and easy access,' but also reassurance that local voices will continue to be heard in a larger setup. This directly shaped the proposal, confirming the importance of the 'one front door' approach to services, and prompting robust measures for localism (area

	<p>committees, etc.) to address the concern about local voice. The engagement showed an appetite for change if it delivers tangible benefits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on Needs and Inequalities. The proposal references Oxfordshire’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and other research to illustrate current and future service needs. For instance, the JSNA highlights a growing and aging population (Oxfordshire’s 65+ age group grew 48% from 2001–2021), which implies rising demand for adult social care, a challenge better met by a unified council pooling resource. It also notes pockets of deprivation and health inequality even in a relatively affluent county. These findings support the argument that a single council could deploy county-wide initiatives (like the new Marmot Partnership on health inequality) more effectively than fragmented councils. Local service performance data also indicate that the county council has very low unit costs and strong outcomes in critical services (adult social care, children’s services), the risk to these services would be lowest with the continuity of a single unitary. • Consultation with Other Councils. Although districts and OCC have differing visions, there has been technical collaboration. Data and perspectives have been shared in working groups, and regular meetings between chief executives and leaders occurred during the proposal development. This helped ensure all options were understood. Ultimately, OCC’s proposal reflects a conviction (supported by evidence above) that one council best meets the government’s tests and the public’s needs in Oxfordshire.
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>During development, OCC considered three main options against the government’s criteria for reform:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Option 1: One Unitary Council for Oxfordshire, (the chosen proposal, as described). On Oxfordshire County Council’s existing boundaries 2. Option 2: Two Unitary Councils, A north Oxfordshire council (created from the existing district councils of Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire) and a Ridgeway Council (created from the existing district councils of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, and the unitary council of West Berkshire) 3. Option 3: Three Unitary Councils, with a unitary city on expanded boundaries as well as northern and southern unitaries, including West Berkshire. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 2 (Two Councils), This might have grouped some districts together (exact boundaries varied in ideas, e.g. City and Cherwell in one, and the southern districts in another). It was rejected because it scored lower

on key criteria. Neither new council would meet the preferred population size (both would be under 500k). This raises concerns about resilience and viability from the start. Financially, while some savings would occur, they'd be eroded by the need to duplicate county-level services. Some mitigations exist in using West Berkshire as an existing unitary. Disaggregating the county services into two parts would be costly and complex, introducing risks to service continuity (particularly for vulnerable groups reliant on countywide services). For these reasons, a two-council model was deemed suboptimal.

- Option 3 (Three Councils), This scored even lower. Three mini-unitaries would be below the 500k population guideline (approx. 200k–300k each). The fragmentation of services would be greatest here: not only splitting current county services three ways (with attendant cost and risk), but also potentially altering boundaries (one idea involved redrawing Oxford city separately, etc.), causing disruption. Financially, the savings case is highly sub optimal likely yielding limited or no net savings after transition costs. This option was therefore not pursued further. Why One Oxfordshire over the alternatives.

In summary, One Oxfordshire (Option 1) was found to:

- Best meet government requirements for a single tier covering the whole area.
- Offer the highest financial benefit, with a swift payback, whereas Options 2 and 3 had fewer reliable savings and high disaggregation costs.
- Avoid breaking up crucial countywide services (adult social care, children's services, fire), avoiding the attendant risks of Options 2/3.
- Provide a coherent geography matching Oxfordshire's functional economic area and identity (Options 2/3 would split the economy and potentially create competition between parts of the county).
- Be simplest to implement (single transition program vs. multiple) with lowest risk of service interruption during the changeover. Alternatives were therefore set aside. The chosen proposal includes measures to mitigate the downsides sometimes associated with large unitaries (as noted, area committees for localism, service hubs, maintaining local ties) to combine the benefits of scale with the strengths of local focus. The emphasis is on 'continuity plus positive reform', keep what works in the current system (county services, local access points) and reform what doesn't (duplication, fragmentation). This balanced approach is at the core of One Oxfordshire, and its anticipated impacts, especially on different community groups, are detailed next.

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
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<p>Age</p>	<p>☒</p>	<p>☒</p>	<p>☐</p>	<p>The age profile in Oxfordshire is diverse, the county has an aging population (20% of residents in rural districts are 65+ vs 12% in Oxford city), and areas with many young people (Oxford's student population makes its median age only 32). One Oxfordshire is expected to benefit older people by protecting and enhancing adult social care and health services. Under a single council, critical services for older adults (e.g. social care, home care, day services) will not be split or disrupted, the proposal explicitly avoids disaggregating these services. This stability is crucial because older residents rely heavily on such support. In fact, maintaining one county-wide adults' service prevents the major risk of fragmentation that could</p>	<p>To ensure older people benefit and do not experience any service gaps during transition, the implementation plan includes a 'disruption-free transition' commitment, meaning current care packages, contacts, and support channels will be maintained through the change. The new council may consider retaining locality teams for social care so that on Day 1, an elderly resident still deals with the same social worker or support team as before (just under a new employer).</p> <p>For rural areas, Area Committees and possibly local area boards will be set up early, to give local representatives (including those advocating for older residents) a forum to influence decisions. The council also has an age friendly initiative through its</p>	<p>Programme Transition Lead & Adult Services Director, OCC</p>	<p>Throughout transition 2025 2028, with post vesting day review of any reported access issues from elderly or youth groups.</p>
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				<p>occur under multiple smaller councils (which could have led to uneven care standards or confusion). A unified authority can also more effectively join up services that older people use, for example, integrating OCC's adult social care with district run housing adaptations and community transport, which should improve outcomes for older residents (currently these are handled separately).</p> <p>There is a potential concern that a larger council might feel more distant for some elderly residents, especially in rural villages, e.g. fearing loss of the familiar local district office or slower response. However, mitigations are built-in: the new council plans local area offices and Area Committees to retain a</p>	<p>public health and communities' strategies (e.g. 'community hubs' for multi generational activities) which the unitary can expand. In summary, by carefully managing the changeover and investing savings into community-level services, the needs of both older and younger residents will be safeguarded. No further specific actions are required beyond those already planned (e.g. communications to elderly residents about where to get help, continuity of care assurances), but continuous monitoring is advised.</p>		
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				<p>presence in communities. Customer access points (like libraries or council hubs) will remain distributed, so an elderly person should still be able to access face-to-face support nearby. The council's digital services will also be unified and made user-friendly for those who prefer online access. By bringing together information from multiple councils, it may become easier for older people (and their families) to navigate one system rather than several. The proposal also emphasises working closely with town/parish councils and the voluntary sector in service delivery, this local partnership approach will help ensure older residents in rural communities are not left isolated or unheard.</p> <p>For younger people and children, the impact is</p>			
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				<p>likewise neutral or slightly positive. Children's social care and youth services (currently county-run) would continue seamlessly, avoiding any break-up of teams that support vulnerable children. Education services (school place planning, SEN support) remain unified, potentially benefiting from closer links to housing and community services now under the same council. The Marmot principles adopted by OCC include 'Give every child the best start in life', a single council can align early years support, public health and family services across the county to further this goal. There is no aspect of the proposal that would negatively treat people due to age. Service delivery will continue to be needs-based, and the large council's strategic focus on</p>			
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				prevention (as described in the case for change) could particularly help both ends of the age spectrum, e.g. projects to reduce isolation among the elderly, and better opportunities for youth countywide.			
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<p>Disability</p>	<p>☒</p>	<p>☒</p>	<p>☐</p>	<p>Around 99,000 people in Oxfordshire have a disability (per Census 2021, including physical, mental, and sensory disabilities). Ensuring their needs are met is a vital part of this proposal. Overall, disabled individuals should not experience any reduction in support, on the contrary, they could see improvements through more integrated services. For instance, currently someone with a disability might receive social care from the county council, housing support (such as Disabled Facilities Grants for home adaptations)</p> <p>Under One Oxfordshire, these functions would be coordinated within one authority, making it easier to deliver a holistic package of support. The proposal explicitly notes that keeping services like</p>	<p>The implementation should involve disability advocacy groups in design of the new processes, to ensure nothing is inadvertently made less accessible (e.g. new council website, contact centre, physical offices should all meet accessibility standards from the outset).</p> <p>OCC already has an accessible website and does Equality Impact Assessments for major changes, this culture will continue. The EIA finds no inherent negative impact on disabled people, but to solidify positive outcomes the new council could streamline assessment processes (for instance, explore a single assessment that covers social care needs and housing needs together). This would reduce bureaucratic burden on individuals with disabilities.</p>	<p>Adult Social Care & Community Services leads</p>	<p>Design phase 2025-27 ensure all customer pathways are accessible, review post 2028).</p>
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				<p>adult social care and Special Educational Needs (SEN) services intact is a benefit, avoiding the disaggregation that could 'increase costs and lower service standards' for these critical areas. This continuity is a positive for people with disabilities who rely on consistent care, therapy, or specialist education support.</p> <p>Importantly, the new council will also inherit and continue the county's commitments to accessibility and inclusion. Oxfordshire CC has been working on improving digital accessibility, building access, and rolling out tools for people with disabilities (for example, the 'Inclusive Service Delivery' strategy under the Including Everyone framework).</p>	<p>Also, the Council should maintain the existing Joint Commissioning approach with the NHS for services like Learning Disability support, this joint working can be enhanced when there is one local authority instead of six. One Oxfordshire can be beneficial for people with disabilities. All planned mitigations (maintaining service continuity, engaging users) are in place; no significant additional actions are needed beyond monitoring.</p>		
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			<p>These efforts will carry on uninterrupted, now applied countywide with potentially more resources. There is no indication of any negative impact such as loss of eligibility or reduction in provisions for disabled residents, the merger does not change service criteria. If anything, a unified approach may make it easier to address gaps. For example, consistent Blue Badge parking enforcement policy across the county, or a single disability register for planning services, could emerge as benefits.</p> <p>One area to watch is how the new council manages community-based support networks (currently, some districts fund local disability charities or run accessible recreation programs). These need to be preserved or unified so that people do not lose local</p>			
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				<p>support. Given the financial savings projected, the Council should be able to continue such support and possibly target it better using a county-wide view of needs (ensuring all parts of Oxfordshire have equitable access, not dependent on district budget disparities).</p>			
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<p>Gender Reassignment</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>This refers to people who are transgender or non-binary. Oxfordshire has a relatively small but notable trans/non binary community, about 0.6% of residents identify with a gender different from birth sex (slightly above the national average), and Oxford City is known to have one of the largest trans and non-binary populations outside London. The One Oxfordshire proposal is not expected to have any direct specific impact (positive or negative) on this group, as it does not alter personal identity documents or gender-related services. The council’s duties toward trans residents (e.g. providing inclusive services, tackling any discrimination) remain unchanged. One potential indirect positive is that a</p>	<p>Given neutrality, the main mitigation is to continue engagement and inclusive practices. The council should ensure its public consultation and communication recognises trans and non binary voices (for example, using the appropriate language, providing the option for people to identify as non-binary in surveys, etc., which OCC already does). There should also be a focus on supporting LGBTQ+ youth, e.g. ensuring youth services and schools remain attentive to gender identity issues. The existing LGBTQ+ employee network at OCC can be expanded to all staff of the new council, which helps maintain an internal culture of inclusion that translates into better service for the community. In summary, no adverse impact on</p>	<p>EDI Lead</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
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			<p>single council can adopt uniform inclusive policies and staff training across the whole county. Currently, OCC and the districts may have slightly different approaches to LGBTQ+ inclusion (though all follow Equality Act requirements).</p> <p>With One Oxfordshire, there is an opportunity to adopt the Equality & Diversity framework, OCC's 'Including Everyone' framework 2025 2029 emphasises tackling discrimination and specifically mentions commitments like achieving the Race Equality Code and being a Council of Sanctuary for vulnerable migrants. While these are broader, they create an environment of inclusion beneficial to all protected groups, including trans people. The new council can ensure all</p>	<p>gender reassignment is identified. The new council's policies will uphold the rights and dignity of trans individuals just as the current councils do.</p>		
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				front-line staff (from libraries to housing officers) get awareness training about transgender and non-binary residents' needs, building on existing best practice. This consistency might be an improvement if any district had less developed training before.			
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<p>Marriage & Civil Partnership</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Marriage and civil partnership status does not receive differential service (except in employment rights, which the council will uphold for its staff). For the public, the main related service is the Registration Service (for marriages, civil partnerships). Currently, Oxfordshire County Council already manages births, deaths, and marriages registration countywide, this will continue under the unitary. No change in how marriages or civil partnerships are registered or recognised will occur; all legal rights remain the same. The workload and offices of the Registration Service simply move into the new council structure untouched.</p> <p>There is no indication that any group of people based on marital status would be advantaged or</p>	<p>None needed specific to this characteristic. The Registration service should ensure continuity (e.g. existing bookings for weddings at council-run venues will be honoured without interruption by the change in governance). Communication to residents might clarify that 'Oxfordshire Council' will be the authority issuing marriage certificates instead of OCC, but legally this is a seamless transition. Council policies (for example, employee benefits for spouses/partners) will carry over and likely be standardised at the best level across the new organisation.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Monitored as part of general service continuity</p>
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				<p>disadvantaged by the council reorganisation. Married people, single people, those in civil partnerships or divorced, all would continue to access services equitably. The Census data shows about 47% of Oxfordshire households are married couples (including 0.8% same-sex married/civil partners). Those proportions are not expected to shift due to this proposal.</p>			
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<p>Pregnancy & Maternity</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Services touching on pregnancy and new parents include maternity healthcare (NHS-led), but also council services like antenatal classes in children's centres, health visiting (commissioned by public health), family support and housing for expectant mothers, etc. These will not be negatively impacted by the structural change. Oxfordshire's general fertility rate is slightly below national average (about 51 births per 1,000 women) and in 2021 there were ~7,380 births in the county. The proposal does not change eligibility or access to any support for pregnant women or parents of infants. In fact, having a single council overseeing both children's services and housing could help families who need support, for instance, a pregnant</p>	<p>Ensure that information for new parents (e.g. how to register a birth, how to access support) is clearly consolidated under the new council, but this is a straightforward communications task. The council's public health function, which includes maternal health improvement programs, will remain intact and likely get a stronger platform in one authority. Perhaps one mitigation is to keep maternity voices included in area forums, e.g. invite local mother and baby groups or use parent forums to get feedback during transition, to catch any unforeseen hiccups (like if a particular baby group was district-run, making sure it continues). There appear to be no negative impacts, so no major mitigation required</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>To be reviewed by Registration/Children's Services post reorganisation</p>
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				woman facing homelessness currently might navigate between district housing and county social services; under one council, assistance can be more coordinated. The council already has initiatives for early help (through Children & Family Centres) which will continue uniformly. No adverse impact is foreseen on maternity leave or related employment rights within the council, staff who are pregnant or on maternity leave will transfer to the new council with protected terms (TUPE laws apply). For service users, things like free childcare entitlements, maternity disability adaptations, etc., are governed by national policy and remain unaffected.	beyond maintaining service levels.		
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<p>Race</p>	<p>☒</p>	<p>☒</p>	<p>☐</p>	<p>Oxfordshire's population is ethnically diverse in some areas and less so in others. Overall, nearly 1 in 4 residents (23%) are from an ethnic minority background (not White-British). Oxford City is ~47% non-White British, whereas some rural districts are over 90% White British. Key point: the council reorganisation does not alter any person's ethnic background or how they are treated by law; it can, however, influence how well the council addresses racial inequalities. There is no indication of any negative impact such as reduced access for any ethnic group. All residents, regardless of ethnicity, will come under the new council's single set of services and policies, which will be designed to be inclusive. In fact, One</p>	<p>The new council should continue targeted engagement with ethnic minority communities. For instance, maintain advisory groups or forums that existed (like Oxford City's migrant communities forum or similar initiatives) at the county level. Providing translated information about the changes (in common community languages like Polish, Urdu, Portuguese, noting ~9% of residents speak English as second language) is a simple communication mitigation to ensure no one is left confused by the transition. Also, monitoring service uptake by ethnicity after the reorg will be important to ensure that previously underserved groups are not slipping through cracks. In employment and service design, applying an anti racism lens (the Council</p>	<p>EDI Lead, Engagement Team</p>	<p>During transition communications and ongoing in new council's EDI strategy.</p>
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			<p>Oxfordshire could help standardise best practices county-wide. For example, if one district had particularly effective outreach to Gypsy, Roma & Traveller communities and another did not, the new council can adopt that approach across the board. As a single employer, the council can strengthen its diversity in staffing (aiming for workforce representation of global majority/racialised communities at all levels). The Including Everyone framework highlights that the County Council is working towards Race Equality Code accreditation, this commitment could extend to the new Council potentially improving how services are delivered to minority ethnic residents (through cultural awareness, language</p>	<p>has committed to be an anti racist organisation) will help guard against bias. There is no evidence the reorg would cause bias, but maintaining training and accountability (e.g. continue unconscious bias training for staff, use Equality Impact Assessments for new policies) will mitigate any subtle negative trends. Overall, the impact on racial groups is expected to be neutral or even positive through improved equity strategies.</p>		
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				<p>support, etc.). Some racial disparities exist in Oxfordshire's outcomes (for instance, higher proportions of ethnic minorities in Oxford experiencing poverty or lower access to services). A unitary council can address these more strategically, e.g. targeting deprived multi ethnic neighbourhoods with coordinated interventions (housing, education, public health all together). The proposal explicitly mentions tackling 'deep inequalities across the county', including those masked by overall affluence. The Marmot partnership and Local Policy Lab are tools the new council will use to reduce inequalities in health and opportunity for ethnic minorities. This suggests a positive intent. There is a risk worth</p>			
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				noting: if there were any distrust or lack of engagement from minority communities due to changes in governance (for example, new council might need to rebuild relationships that district community workers had), it must be managed.			
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<p>Sex</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>This considers impacts on men and women. The population of Oxfordshire is roughly half male, half female (50.1% female, 49.9% male). The council's services are largely gender-neutral in provision (apart from specific initiatives like women's refuges for domestic abuse survivors, which will continue).</p> <p>The reorganisation does not alter any rights or access based on sex. Both women and men should see no change in how they receive services like libraries, waste collection, social care, etc. One possible positive is that a single council may streamline initiatives that benefit a particular gender group, e.g. domestic abuse services (currently county council handles support and districts handle housing for survivors)</p>	<p>Ensure continuity and strengthening of gender specific programs: e.g. the new council should maintain Oxfordshire's commitments as a White Ribbon authority (assuming OCC/districts have such commitments against violence to women) and continue supporting women's centres, etc., as well as support initiatives for men (like men's mental health projects, father's parenting groups, etc.). There is no direct negative impact to mitigate but being vigilant that service redesign post-merger does not inadvertently overlook gender differences is key. For example, if community engagement structures change, make sure women's groups (WI, mother toddler groups) and men's sheds or similar have equal voice. In employment, the council</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
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				<p>could be unified for a more cohesive response. This would benefit predominantly women (who are most domestic abuse victims) but also male victims who will have one system to approach. Similarly, things like support for women's health or men's health via public health could see more consistent rollout across all areas.</p>	<p>should monitor any changes: ensure female staff (who may form a larger portion of the workforce in services like care) are treated fairly through reorganisation. The proposal already notes the need to engage and retain staff through the change; this includes both men and women. With these considerations in place, we foresee a neutral impact on sex.</p>		
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<p>Sexual Orientation</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Approximately 3.4% of Oxfordshire residents identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB+) in the 2021 Census, though the true figure may be higher due to non-disclosure. The One Oxfordshire proposal does not negatively affect residents based on sexual orientation. All services are provided regardless of sexual orientation, and that will remain so. As with gender reassignment, the impact here is more about ensuring continued inclusion. The new council can champion county-wide LGBTQ+ inclusion (for instance, supporting Pride events in Oxford and perhaps expanding engagement to towns across the county). If anything, a unified council might allocate more consistent support to LGBTQ+ community groups which previously</p>	<p>Maintain visible support for LGBTQ+ communities as a single council, to signal continuity. E.g., if multiple councils currently mark Pride Month, the new council must do the same, so no one feels the loss of an ally. Internally, policies like supporting staff networks for LGBTQ+ employees should continue. Externally, the council should continue diversity training so that front-line staff provide inclusive service to all residents (for example, not assuming gender of partners, etc.). There is no direct adverse impact to mitigate beyond these ongoing good practices. New council to adopt existing equality policies from OCC and districts that protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation</p>	<p>EDI Lead/HR Policy</p>	<p>By vesting day when polices merge</p>
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				might have only been funded by one or two district councils. There is no evidence that any council run service specifically for LGB or heterosexual people will change, services such as sexual health clinics are NHS but commissioned jointly with OCC Public Health, and will remain coordinated			
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<p>Religion or Belief</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Oxfordshire residents have various faiths, 47% Christian, ~3% Muslim, ~1% Hindu, etc., and 37% no religion (2011 data, similar proportions in 2021). The council reorganisation is secular in nature and does not affect freedom of religion. People of all religions will continue to receive services equitably. If anything, one council might better coordinate with faith groups on community projects (for instance, working with churches, mosques, etc. on social initiatives could be streamlined under one authority rather than separate approaches by district and county).</p> <p>There are no policies in the proposal that touch on religious practices (like planning permission for places of worship will follow the same planning</p>	<p>Ensure the new council continues interfaith engagement. OCC has, for example, connections through its Prevent and cohesion work with religious leaders. This should be maintained so faith communities feel represented. Practical accommodations (e.g. prayer rooms in public buildings, or scheduling meetings around major religious holidays) should continue. But no negative impact is identified, so mitigation is simply ongoing inclusion.</p>	<p>EDI Lead/Policy</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
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				rules, just under one planning authority). The only minor consideration: currently some district councils have civic traditions tied to certain religious dates (like perhaps a civic service); the new council will establish its own civic traditions but that has negligible impact on the public.			
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Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	One Oxfordshire will not change the presence of services in rural areas, for example, libraries, fire stations, clinics in market towns will remain. It may benefit rural residents by coordinating improvements across the whole rural area rather than by district. For instance, the new council could develop a comprehensive strategy for rural transport links or digital connectivity using the combined resources of county and district. Rural communities sometimes fear that a large, centralised authority could overlook them in favour of urban centres. The proposal recognises this and explicitly commits to 'bringing decision making closer to	Maintaining localism is the key mitigation. The proposal of creating Area Committees for different parts of the county will mitigate the risk of rural communities feeling removed from decision making. These committees can focus on local priorities, e.g. a cluster of villages can raise issues specific to them. Additionally, the new council may wish to instate locality based officers (community liaison) who understand rural community needs, an approach OCC already uses in some services. Ensuring that the savings from reorg do not disproportionately come from closures of rural facilities is vital, current plans are to keep service delivery points as-is initially, so no		

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>communities' through area committees and empowering town/parish councils. With these structures, rural voices (parish councillors, local community groups) should have a formal channel into the new council, arguably stronger than under the two-tier system where influence might have been fragmented. From an equalities perspective, rurality itself is not a protected characteristic, but rural isolation can exacerbate disadvantage (e.g. accessing care or employment). The new council's duty is to ensure equitable service delivery so that rural residents get a fair share of attention. Given OCC already covered the whole rural area for many services, continuity is assured for those services. District level rural programs (like specific rural</p>	<p>village libraries or rural tip sites should close purely due to reorganisation. The data shows rural areas have poorer physical access to services (85 small areas in Oxon are in the worst 10% nationally for access to key services by distance); one council can target these through innovative solutions (mobile services, digital offers). Effective communication will also mitigate apprehension: rural residents should be informed how to contact the new council (likely the same phone numbers/online portals they used for OCC and districts, just unified). Emphasising that local councillors will represent divisions that are often rural in nature, and that parishes remain intact, helps reassure</p>		

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				grants or community bus services) would be absorbed into the unitary, it will be important that these are not lost. However, the amalgamation of budgets could even allow more efficient support for rural initiatives, eliminating duplication	continuity of local democratic input. Overall, with these mitigations, no negative impact on rural communities is expected. Instead, the outcome should be neutral or slightly positive if one council can deliver more consistent support to rural areas (for example, applying successful pilots in one district to all rural areas countywide).		
Armed Forces	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	One Oxfordshire will inherit OCC's lead role in the Armed Forces Covenant for the county. Currently, both county and districts have Covenant commitments (e.g. each district may have an Armed Forces champion councillor, and OCC coordinates countywide support). Under a single council, this support can be unified, one elected Armed Forces Champion, one point of contact for forces queries,	The new council should continue the Armed Forces Covenant partnership work, with continuity of a county wide Civil-Military Partnership Board. They should ensure representation from military base commanders in community engagement structures. A practical action is to re issue the Covenant under the new council's name promptly, to show commitment hasn't		

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>which might simplify things for service members and families. There should be no break in services for armed forces community. For instance, support for veteran housing, today, a veteran might approach a district housing authority for social housing and OCC for adult care; with one council, those processes link up more directly. The distinct nature of military life (frequent moves, schooling needs, healthcare, etc.) means the new council must remain sensitive to the community. But since OCC already covers education admissions (important for forces children) and healthcare liaison, continuity is strong. We do not anticipate any negative impact, the Armed Forces community will be treated as any other</p>	<p>changed. Also, maintain specialist staff roles, such as an Armed Forces Liaison Officer, to help service families navigate council services. By keeping these in place, forces personnel and families should experience seamless support. In summary, the impact is neutral, no loss of service or additional barriers. The cohesive approach could even be beneficial by having one consistent policy (for example, some districts may have slightly different council tax reliefs for forces, one council can simplify and apply best practice for all)</p>		

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				residents, with awareness of their Covenant rights (e.g. priority in school admissions, housing allocations where applicable) continuing under a single set of policies.			
Carers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Under One Oxfordshire, the support to carers (which is largely through adult social care and children's services for young carers) remains under the same organisation, no structural change in roles. It may even simplify things: currently a carer might interact with county council for a Carer's Assessment and with district for say a housing issue; one council can handle both aspects in a joined-up way. The proposal emphasises strengthening social care, which indirectly benefits carers by ensuring the people they care for get consistent support. There is	The new council should continue the existing Carers Strategy work. OCC has a carers support team and contracts with charities (like Carers Oxfordshire), those will remain in place and just be managed by the new council. It will be important to communicate to carers that all contact points remain (e.g. the Carers Helpline number stays active). No disruption in services like respite bookings should occur; this is ensured by the commitment to a 'safe and legal Day 1' for all social care operations. Since carers are by nature often stretched thin, the council must avoid		

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				no anticipated negative effect on carers, eligibility and rights (from the Care Act) remain. Potential positives: • Unified data might help identify and support 'hidden' carers across the county. Also, a single council can pool budgets to possibly enhance respite services or carers' breaks. If any districts had local carer support grants, those could be merged with county's carers support budget to create a larger, countywide program (ensuring equitable access for carers in all areas)	any confusion for them during transition, clear letters or public info can reassure that 'you will continue to get support as usual; the name on the letterhead might change to Oxfordshire Council, but phone numbers and staff contacts remain consistent.' This will mitigate any anxiety among the carer community.		
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The One Oxfordshire proposal explicitly aims to tackle inequalities and 'level up' outcomes across the county. By having one council, it can direct resources to deprived areas without bureaucratic hindrance. For example, previously, district councils	The new council should develop a targeted plan for deprived communities, building on existing district regeneration plans. For example, if Oxford City had a plan for Barton or Blackbird Leys regeneration, the new council needs to adopt and		

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>controlled certain regeneration funds for their areas; a single council could take a countywide view and ensure that the most deprived wards (wherever they are) get priority in investment. The foreword of the proposal and the Marmot commitment underscore that addressing socio-economic disadvantage is a core objective, 'provide an equitable distribution of support to our most vulnerable residents'. This indicates a likely positive impact for deprived areas: more coherent anti-poverty strategies (across housing, education, skills, public health), and potential reinvestment of efficiency savings into preventive services in those communities. Also, one council can simplify customer service for those facing hardship. For instance,</p>	<p>continue it. The advantage is they can combine it with county transport or education projects in that area for a bigger impact. Ensuring community involvement (resident associations, etc.) in shaping interventions will mitigate any sense of disengagement. Additionally, continuing to monitor socio-economic data (as OCC does via the JSNA and insight reports) will help the unitary direct funding appropriately. The proposal mentions leveraging the Local Policy Lab with universities to address inequalities, following through on that will provide evidence-led actions for deprived areas. The Council's adoption of the socio-economic duty (voluntarily, via Including</p>		

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>currently a resident in poverty might have to apply to a district for housing benefit/council tax support and to the county for a welfare assistance grant; with a single entity, there could be a one stop application for financial help. There is no negative impact foreseen on deprived areas, services there (like community centres, advice centres, etc.) will continue, and the new council will be politically incentivised to show it's improving outcomes in those areas. However, one risk might be if a deprived area feels that losing its district council means losing its 'champion.' Mitigation through area committees (which would cover those urban areas specifically) can ensure local advocacy remains.</p>	<p>Everyone framework) means it will consider poorer groups in decisions. All this indicates a systemic positive approach. In practical terms, no mitigation needed, because impact is positive. The main 'mitigation' is to keep the focus: do not let the impetus fade amidst structural change, i.e. ring-fence some of the savings to invest in prevention programs in deprived communities (this is a policy choice outside the EIA but relevant to outcomes)</p>		

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Refugees, Asylum seekers and Undocumented migrants (i.e. vulnerable migrants)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Existing partnership working arrangements such as the Oxfordshire Migration Partnership may be strengthened through One Oxfordshire as a with other services by consolidating key services under a single council e.g. social care, housing, education and skills. There is no negative impact foreseen on refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants as services like community centres, advice centres, etc. will continue.	The new authority should seek to combine and enhance existing strategies where previous councils have been Councils/Cities of Sanctuary to develop a targeted action plan to support this group. No direct mitigation are anticipated.		

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The reorganisation offers opportunities for staff but also brings challenges. Overall, all employees across the six existing councils will transition to the new unitary council, ensuring job continuity in the immediate term. However, merging organisations of this scale inevitably means some duplicate roles (especially senior management and back office positions) will become unnecessary over time to achieve the efficiency savings promised. This creates a potential negative impact for those staff at risk of redundancy. On the positive side, a single large council can provide a more unified career structure, clearer progression pathways, and the chance to work in a more integrated	The council has committed to a 'disruption-free transition' for both services and staff. In practice, this means comprehensive HR planning and support for employees. Key mitigation measures include: • Early in the transition, the council will establish an HR workstream (as noted in the transition plan) to map out the new staffing structure and inform people how and when changes will occur. • Transparent communication about which posts might be at risk and what the selection process is will help reduce rumour and stress. Staff and unions will be consulted extensively; trade union engagement is a legal requirement, and OCC has	HR and Culture Change/ HR lead for LGR	Ongoing from decision through 2028, with regular pulse surveys and union meetings to monitor workforce well being

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>environment, with shared values and culture. The proposal explicitly states that OCC will 'work with Oxfordshire employees to develop the culture, values and identities of the new council(s)'. This indicates a strong commitment to engage staff in shaping the new organisation, which can boost morale and a sense of ownership. Under One Oxfordshire, approximately 8,000–10,000 staff (those currently employed by the county and five districts) will come together into one workforce. From Day 1 (vesting day) all staff will be legally transferred to the new Oxfordshire Council, preserving their existing terms and conditions (via TUPE or equivalent staff transfer protections). This means in</p>	<p>positive relations with unions like Unison, who will no doubt be involved in protecting staff interests (indeed, Unison nationally urges that no compulsory redundancies happen due to LGR).</p> <p>The council will seek to bring staff together into a single council and where redundancies are needed at the point of transition or after vesting day, organisational change policies will apply. absorb staff where possible</p> <p>A positive mitigation is the plan to actively 'develop the culture' with staff. The new council will run engagement workshops, joint team building across former organisations, and training on the new values. Change</p>		

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>the short term no one automatically loses their job or suffers a change in pay due to reorganisation alone. The new council must be 'safe and legal from day one', so all critical posts will be in place to maintain services. Over the medium term, as the council consolidates, it will review structure for efficiency. The business case assumes a significant portion of the £30m annual savings comes from reducing duplication in management, administration, and support functions. For example, instead of six separate HR teams, IT teams, finance teams, etc., the unitary will have one of each.</p> <p>Similarly, one Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team will replace the six that exist now. This implies some posts will be deleted. The exact</p>	<p>management programmes (often called 'Organisation Development') are expected to help staff adapt.</p> <p>Monitoring of attrition by protected groups will help the new council in understanding if there have been any unintentional negative effects from its actions. Consistent and regular monitoring of equalities will be critical to ensuring that transition to vesting and beyond will be as equitable and fair as possible.</p>		

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>number is not in the proposal, mostly at management or corporate levels, phased out through restructuring and natural attrition. While front line service jobs (like social workers, planners, customer service staff, bin collectors, etc.) are expected to be retained to continue service delivery, even they will experience change in reporting lines and possibly location or team adjustments. [For staff, negative impacts include uncertainty and anxiety during the transition period. Change of employer and restructuring can affect morale, especially if communication is poor or if individuals fear redundancy. It's crucial to manage this carefully to avoid loss of skilled personnel (a risk if people leave due to</p>			

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>insecurity). There may also be practical challenges: aligning different pay scales and HR policies from six councils into one could be complex. Some staff might face changes in work base or team, for example, a district housing officer may find themselves in a larger county-wide housing service. Differences in organisational culture (county vs districts) will need reconciliation; without care, this could lead to friction or 'us vs them' feelings. On the positive side, One Oxfordshire can offer a stronger employment proposition in the long run. A bigger authority can provide more varied internal opportunities; employees can move or be promoted across a broader range of roles without leaving the organisation. Professional</p>			

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>development might improve with unified training budgets and peer support across former council boundaries. A single employer for the county could also standardise benefits to the best level currently offered (for instance, if one council had a particularly good flexible working scheme or family leave policy, the new council may adopt it for all staff). The proposal indicates an intention to 'embed a values-based culture, where employees work together effectively and are empowered to make decisions', suggesting that the new council will try to take the best aspects of each predecessor's culture to create an improved working environment. Additionally, by eliminating duplication, remaining staff may have</p>			

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				more resources to do their jobs (e.g. one well-resourced IT system instead of multiple outdated ones, etc.), which can increase job satisfaction.			
Other Council Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Under the two-tier system, various services were split between county and district councils. One Oxfordshire brings them together. For example, currently the County handles highways while districts handle parking enforcement; the County handles social care while districts handle housing; public health is county, leisure services are district, etc. In the new council, these related services will sit under one management structure and one political leadership. This holistic governance is expected to improve strategic coordination and remove the	Ensuring that the impact on services stays positive requires meticulous planning and continuous oversight: • For each service area, a continuity plan should be drawn up. This means identifying key tasks, deadlines, and responsible personnel during the transition. For instance, finance teams will ensure that supplier payments and benefit disbursements occur without interruption on changeover of bank accounts, etc. A 'safe and legal Day 1' audit will be performed to verify all statutory services (from child		

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>'silo effect' that sometimes impeded service effectiveness. As the proposal notes, only a single council 'joins up ... housing and licensing with adults and children's services, trading standards and transport in a single council for the first time'. This should enable more innovative service models, e.g., multidisciplinary teams that cover a range of resident needs in one visit, or unified customer service centres that handle any enquiry without bouncing citizens between authorities. Importantly, One Oxfordshire avoids breaking apart any services. Many crucial services (adult social care, children's safeguarding, fire & rescue, SEN, highways) are already county-wide; these remain intact and under the same organisational roof, so</p>	<p>protection to registrars) are fully staffed and legally compliant as the new entity begins.</p> <p>The council should assign experienced service managers to transition workstreams (as indicated by the plan with specific workstreams for Children's Services, Highways, Housing, etc.). These leads will engage current district officers and subject experts to transfer knowledge into the new organisation. By involving those who run the services now, the new council can avoid reinventing the wheel or missing functions.</p> <p>A useful mitigation in such reorganisations is to initially keep public interfaces the</p>		

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				<p>there's Zero disaggregation risk. Had the county been split into multiple parts, those services would have been divided, but with a single unitary, continuity is maintained. For district-run services (waste collection, local planning, housing, benefits administration, etc.), the new council will take them on wholesale. All existing service contracts and teams in those areas will transfer to the unitary. Thus, on Day 1, residents should notice no break in service availability: bins will still be collected on the usual days, planning applications will still be processed (just now by 'Oxfordshire Council' instead of District X), etc. The implementation plan explicitly includes service specific workstreams to ensure each</p>	<p>same, then gradually improve them. So, residents might still use the same phone numbers or websites for a short while, with calls redirected internally. Gradually, the council will consolidate into a single customer platform once it's sure nothing will fall through cracks. This staged approach prevents immediate confusion.</p> <p>The Council's programme includes a legal and procurement review of all existing contracts to ensure they are novated correctly and continue to be delivered under the new authority. For example, waste collection contracts that Districts had with providers will be seamlessly on vesting day. The mitigation for any</p>		

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>area is mapped and handed over smoothly. For example, there will be dedicated planning to merge IT systems and contact centres so that no emails or calls get lost in the changeover. Over time, the impact on services should be positive enhancements:</p> <p>A single council can standardise service levels upward. Currently, some services vary by district (e.g. different waste collection rules, different taxi licensing policies). The unitary can adopt the best approaches and apply them county-wide, making access to services more equal. It also simplifies things like one council tax bill instead of two tiers.</p> <p>Bringing support services together (one IT system, one</p>	<p>misalignment is renegotiation or bridging arrangements so that services don't stop. Essentially, residents shouldn't notice any change in their service providers just because governance changed.</p> <p>Internally, as noted above, staff will be guided on new processes (so they know where to escalate issues in a new structure). Externally, clear public communication will help mitigate any confusion: e.g. well ahead of time, the councils will inform residents that from X date they will contact 'Oxfordshire Council' for services and transferred to Oxfordshire Council reassure them all services remain available. This includes updating signage, websites, emails,</p>		

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				<p>finance system) means more resources can be focused on front-line delivery rather than duplicated admin. Also, specialist teams (say a GIS mapping team or legal team) can cover the whole county rather than each</p> <p>council having a small team, this creates a larger pool of expertise and resilience if one member is away. For smaller services that each district struggled to maintain, a unitary could provide more capacity (for instance, emergency planning or economic development functions will benefit from unified staffing).</p> <p>The new leadership might explore cross cutting reforms. This could lead to new ways of delivering services, like the</p>	<p>etc. on a coordinated schedule so that the public always find the help they need.</p>		

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				<p>'Oxfordshire Way' prevention approach in social care expanding into community services or combining currently separate processes (e.g. a joint assessment for a resident's social care and housing needs). Freed from inter council negotiations, the single authority can implement changes faster.</p> <p>The main potential negative to guard against is short-term disruption during transition. Merging operations is complex: data and IT integration issues could temporarily affect service responsiveness (for example, aligning all customer databases might cause some delays if not properly tested). There is also a risk that during the reorganisation effort, management attention is</p>			

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				diverted from day-to-day service performance. The council acknowledges these risks and has committed to prioritise service continuity above all else during the change. The phased approach (with a joint programme team before vesting day) is intended to pre-plan every detail to make the 'switchover' seamless for the public.			
Providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Currently, some providers have contracts with the County Council, others with District Councils, some with both. For example: • The waste management consortium Ubico is employed by some Oxfordshire districts for collection; a different contractor (Biffa) handles others, or a single leisure trust might operate leisure centres in two districts separately. •	The council should (and will) proactively engage all major contractors, suppliers, and commissioned partners well before the transition. This may include briefing events or individual meetings to explain how invoicing, contract management, and contacts will change. Clear guidance (FAQs, helpdesk) will be provided so that no provider is confused about		

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				<p>Social care providers (like home care agencies) are contracted by the County, but they also might liaise with districts for housing related support. Immediately upon reorganisation, all these contracts will be transferred to the unitary. The contract terms, payment schedules, and points of contact might eventually be consolidated, but initially the providers continue delivering services as contracted. The new council inherits all legal obligations to pay and manage those contracts. To the providers, the main change is administrative: invoicing 'Oxfordshire Council' instead of, say, 'Cherwell District Council,' but the work and payment shouldn't change. The programme team will communicate with all</p>	<p>who to talk to for their contract. This reduces any administrative hiccups (like a supplier not getting paid on time due to confusion, which the council will want to avoid at all costs). As noted, a combined legal procurement team is likely reviewing every contract. They will identify any that require formal novation letters or consents from the provider and ensure those are secured. Mitigation for complex cases (if any contract has a clause triggered by structural change) is to seek agreement with the provider for continuity or put in place interim arrangements until a new contract can be let. The council should reassure voluntary sector providers that grants or contracts they depend on will continue. For</p>		

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>contractors well in advance to explain the novation of contracts and ensure they are comfortable with it, this is typically a formal process but usually straightforward since the contract terms remain the same, just the client's name changes.</p> <p>Over time, the positive impacts for providers could include:</p> <p>Instead of, for example, a care home needing separate monitoring visits from county (for care quality) and district (for housing grant compliance), they will have one set of contract managers. This can simplify reporting for providers.</p> <p>Larger unified contracts might be issued (for instance, a single countywide waste</p>	<p>example, if a charity receives grants from multiple district councils and the county, the new council should ideally consolidate those funds (not cut them) and give the charity a single multi-year agreement. Early budget planning in the new council will consider these commitments to prevent any funding gap. Publishing a statement like 'all existing service contracts will be honoured through their term' would be a good practice to settle any nerves in the provider community. To mitigate the risk to small providers, the new council's procurement strategy can include dividing large contracts into regional lots or requiring big contractors to sub-contract locally. OCC's current approach (according</p>		

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				<p>collection contract when current ones expire, or unified grounds maintenance). Big providers might welcome this as it increases scale and efficiency, they can serve a larger area under one agreement rather than juggling multiple smaller ones. Similarly, voluntary sector partners might have access to a single, larger grant fund rather than multiple small pots, potentially increasing funding stability if the new council commits to long-term countywide commissioning of services (like homelessness prevention or advice services).</p> <p>Providers often must adapt to different rules in different districts. One Oxfordshire can reduce that complexity (e.g. a housing developer will face one set of planning policies</p>	<p>to its Social Value Action Plan) is to set up Oxfordshire-only supplier frameworks to give local SMEs a first shot at council business. The unitary can adopt this, meaning even as contracts unify, local businesses and social enterprises get fair opportunity. Additionally, the council will apply the Social Value Act in all procurements, considering economic and social well being benefits in awarding contracts. (This is expanded under 'Social Value' below.) For key partners (NHS, Police, universities), the council has likely established a liaison group as part of the programme. This ensures external stakeholders align their arrangements (for instance, the Health &</p>		

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				<p>and one Community Infrastructure Levy regime rather than up to five). This regulatory consistency can make Oxfordshire a more attractive place for doing business with the council, as processes will be clearer and uniform. Potential negative impacts or concerns:</p> <p>There's a risk that if the council moves to very large contracts, smaller local providers could be edged out by big firms. To mitigate this, the council's procurement strategy (and Social Value policy) can break tenders into lots or favour local supply chains where appropriate. Indeed, OCC's Social Value Action Plan specifically aims to create opportunities for Oxfordshire-based SMEs/VCSEs (small</p>	<p>Wellbeing Board and Community Safety Partnership will be reconstituted to match the single council structure). Ensuring these partners have updated contacts and that no joint projects fall through the cracks is part of these mitigations. With these measures, providers should experience a smooth transition and possibly easier working relationship with local government after the change. Essentially, the new council wants to be seen as a reliable single client, with timely payments and coherent oversight, thereby maintaining provider goodwill. Over the longer term, any efficiencies in contract management could even translate into savings that allow the council to</p>		

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				<p>enterprises and charities) in procurement.</p> <p>In some cases, the new council might rationalise overlapping contracts. For example, if two districts had separate but similar contracts with the same provider (say for software or equipment), the council might merge them into one sooner than waiting for expiry, by negotiation. This should not harm the provider (it may simplify their dealings), but it requires legal handling.</p> <p>Partners such as the NHS or Thames Valley Police, while not 'providers' to the council, will suddenly interact with one council instead of six on various boards and operational matters. This is generally positive (simpler partnership), but they will need</p>	<p>reinvest in services (potentially benefiting providers through expanded contracts). Since no provider is being specifically targeted for cost-cutting (savings are largely from internal restructuring), the impact remains neutral/slightly positive.</p>		

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				to adjust their contacts and possibly agreements (like information-sharing protocols) to reflect the new structure. Early engagement is underway to ensure partners are ready for this change, and they largely support having a single interlocutor for the county.			
Social Value ¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Although the 'One Oxfordshire' proposal is not a procurement, the reorganisation can influence the council's approach to Social Value – i.e., the additional economic, social, and environmental benefits arising from council activities, especially regarding how it commissions services, works with communities, and fosters well-being. The Public	Adoption of a Single Social Value Policy should be one of the first tasks to merge the existing County and District policies on social value into one robust policy for the unitary. Given OCC has an updated policy framework, the new council can likely extend that to cover all procurement (including former district domains). This policy should be approved by		

¹ If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires councils to consider improving social, economic, environmental well being in procurement of services. Oxfordshire County Council already has a strong social value policy and has recently developed a new definition and action plan for social value. A single unitary council provides a chance to embed these principles across all services and contracts county-wide, potentially generating greater social value. The impact is positive in that it can amplify initiatives like local job creation, carbon reduction, and community resilience by leveraging the larger scale of the new council. There is no identified negative aspect – at worst, it's neutral if the council simply carries on existing practices;</p>	<p>the new council's Cabinet early on, signalling the importance of social value in everything from construction projects to service contracts. Ensure that all commissioning officers and decision-makers in the new council understand how to incorporate social value. The Commercial team is already planning learning & development around this – that will continue. Councillors on the new council will also be briefed so that, for instance, when approving a contract award, they expect to see social value considerations included. Some services (like waste collection, housing maintenance) that were previously district-led might not have embedded social value clauses historically. As</p>		

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				<p>at best, it actively uses the unification to drive more ambitious social value outcomes: • The new council becomes one of the largest purchasers and employers in the region. By having a single procurement service, it can ensure that for every contract, considerations like using local suppliers, creating apprenticeships, and supporting small businesses are built in. Previously, one council might do this and another might not; now it can be uniform. For example, if Oxfordshire Council builds a new road or school, it can set requirements for contractors to hire local apprentices or use local supply chains, thus boosting local employment.</p> <p>The council can harmonise how it supports volunteering,</p>	<p>those contracts come up for renewal under the unitary, the council can enhance them with social value requirements. A mitigation here is to avoid any lapses, i.e., ensure that even during interim periods, no opportunities for social value are missed. For example, if a district contract is expiring in 2026 (before the unitary goes live), perhaps extension options are considered to let the new council handle a more social-value-rich re procurement post-2028. The new council should track the social value delivered. OCC noted current reporting was 'sporadic' and intends to improve contract management to ensure promised social value is delivered. The unitary can strengthen this by, for</p>		

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				<p>community groups, and addressing inequalities. The proposal links closely to the idea of inclusive growth and tackling deprivation. Social value in procurement might mean insisting that service providers contribute to community programs (like a bus company providing free travel to jobseekers as part of a contract). Also, an integrated council can pursue 'community wealth building' strategies – keeping wealth within local communities by contracting locally and encouraging employee-led enterprises. OCC's Cabinet in Sept 2024 approved new social value principles to do exactly this; the new council will inherit those commitments. A single council can have a unified climate action plan (e.g. net zero targets) and use</p>	<p>instance, using the Social Value Portal or similar tools across all services. Strong monitoring will ensure the positive impacts (jobs, community benefits) materialise on the ground. The council itself can create initiatives – like a local community fund or support for apprenticeships, using the efficiencies gained. This is a way to directly channel some of the £30m savings into social value projects (for example, funding community centres, or investing in renewable energy on council buildings, which yields environmental and social returns). Even though the savings are needed for financial sustainability, prioritising some reinvestment in preventative, community-level work</p>		

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				<p>its purchasing power to enforce green standards (low emission vehicles in contracts, biodiversity net gain in planning, etc.). The Social Value Act encompasses environmental well being, so procurement can reward bidders who offer carbon reductions or other green benefits. With all services combined, policies like moving to electric vehicle fleets or sustainable construction can be applied more broadly. Additionally, One Oxfordshire’s scale might allow innovation in delivering social value. The Commercial & Procurement Service’s action plan (2025) outlines steps such as establishing local supplier frameworks and setting default social value criteria for tenders. As a large unitary, implementing these</p>	<p>(aligned with being a ‘Marmot County’ to tackle health inequalities) would greatly boost the social outcomes of the reform.</p> <p>Legally, for any service contract over the threshold, the council must consider social value. The new council’s larger procurement will certainly meet that threshold regularly, so to mitigate any risk of non compliance, standard procedures will be in place to document how social value is considered for each relevant contract. The Commercial team will continue to have a legal obligation to ensure the provisions of the Social Value Act 2012 are implemented effectively. Doing so uniformly across the new entity is the</p>		

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				<p>will have a wider impact: for instance, default criteria could include requiring contractors to contribute to local workforce skills – doing this across all spend (county and district functions combined) means more benefit accrues in absolute terms than if only some councils did it. There is also a community development dimension: the new council's emphasis on area committees and locality working can generate social value by empowering local initiatives (e.g. supporting social enterprises, parish councils, etc.). While this is indirectly related, it aligns with the intent to improve social outcomes as part of the council's operation.</p>	<p>mitigation against any part of the council lagging.</p>		

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	Post consultation outcome (likely summer 2026)
Person Responsible for Review	Helen Mitchell
Authorised By	Helen Mitchell



Oxfordshire County Council
Equalities Impact Assessment

Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) Management Re-provision

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	<p>Highways & Environment Directorate</p> <p>Countryside and Waste Services</p>
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	<p>HWRC Management Reprovision.</p> <p>Under Section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) has a legal duty to provide HWRCs for Oxfordshire residents and currently provides 7 across the county. On 1 October 2017, a 10-year contract (7-year main term plus up to 3-year extension) commenced with W&S Recycling Ltd (W&S) for the management of 6 of the 7 HWRCs. (The 7th Dix Pit is contracted to FCC). The W&S contract expires on 30 September 2027, with no ability to extend, and a new HWRC management model / contract needs to put in place.</p> <p>An optioneering process has provided an assessment and ranked scoring of 12 different potential new HWRC service models. The highest ranked model is the procurement of a long-term contract with a break clause to support LGR. This EIA assesses this option as the preferred new HWRC service model going forward. This option will go to Cabinet on 17.03.26 for cabinet decision. If approved, it will go through competitive flexible procedure procurement with a contract mobilisation period (6 months) with a start date of 1 October 2027.</p>

<p>Summary of assessment</p> <p>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? (following completion of the assessment).</p>	<p>The proposal bias for the option of procurement for a long-term HWRC management contract as the preferred new HWRC service model going forward does not discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community but does instead support disadvantaged individuals or groups within the community in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By providing HWRC’s, OCC supports Oxfordshire’s residents by ensuring that all residents have access to the same level of HWRC services for recycling and waste disposal, regardless of their location, with service availability for areas of deprivation. • HWRC contractors assessed through a competitive flexible procurement procedure will be contracted to deliver the HWRC service safely and effectively, reducing risks to vulnerable residents and those with protected characteristics. Procurement questions within the competitive flexible procurement processes will aim to identify how the contractor will eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster social value and good community relations. • HWRC service quality standards will be set up through the new contract that will support and encourage HWRC use, including by those with protected characteristics. This will help residents with protected characteristics in making safe and managed waste disposal and recycling choices, which may otherwise cause confusion or barriers for some vulnerable residents. • Having one contracted provider across 6 HWRC’s, who provides consistent waste and recycling services, can make recycling easier for everyone, including those who may face additional challenges. Contractors will have the necessary operational skills and experience to provide reliable public-facing services (e.g., safe site operation, staffed support). • Option E is the only long-term option rated green under a multiple-unitary scenario, meaning minimal disruption to service access for all communities during LGR. Long term contracted services will limit service delivery disruptions, protecting vulnerable households who may struggle with alternative disposal routes or private waste costs. • A longer 8-year contract Supports social value, service quality and access improvements: Longer terms enable contractors to invest in staff training and educational opportunities, including social value initiatives-
<p>Completed By</p>	<p>Caroline Coyne</p>

Authorised By	Jamie Kavanagh
Date of Assessment	05.02.26

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>The W&S HWRC Management contract is an outsourced contract, providing on-site HWRC service delivery management, including all the staffing, vehicles and equipment required to deliver the service. Although this contract has supported the council in achieving one of the highest recycling rates in the country, significantly exceeding the national average, the contract is limiting in that it doesn't support OCC to harness commercial opportunities like re-use, embed new technology or introduce new innovative ways of working. And whilst the outsourced model is traditionally a preferred choice for councils, given the rapidly changing nature of the waste industry, it is recognised that new and different models of HWRC service delivery must be considered for the future.</p> <p>This provides OCC with an opportunity to review how different HWRC service model could work in the future, considering the changing nature of the waste industry and other legislation priorities. Key amongst these, is the upcoming local government reorganisation (LGR), which will provide Oxfordshire residents new local authority structures.</p> <p>Following the submission of HWRC Service Delivery Model paper to Cabinet in February 2025, Waste and Countryside service leads, with support from financial, commercial and legal have worked with consultants Eunomia to undertake a review of the potential new HWRC service model options (table 1 below). Over several workshops and analysis sessions, the 12 service model options were reviewed against a list of qualitative and costing criteria (table 2 below), exploring each option's benefits, opportunities and risks. Each option was also reviewed in terms of LGR. Extensive market testing was also carried out to understand the waste markets requirements.</p> <p>This optioneering has provided an assessment and ranked scoring of the 12 HWRC service models. (table 3 below) The highest ranked model is the procurement of a long-term contract with a break clause to support LGR. The option will go to Cabinet on 17.03.26 for cabinet decision. If approved, it will go through procurement with a mobilisation period and a start date on 1 October 2027</p>
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Proposals

Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.

Why a long-term contract is the preferred option

The procurement of a long-term contract (Option E) emerged as the highest-scoring and lowest-cost option across the evaluation process. Key advantages include:

- Strong market interest: Waste operators indicated clear preference for an 8-year contract, making the option more competitive and attractive, which supports pricing reductions and innovation. Long term contracted services will limit service delivery disruptions, protecting vulnerable households, and those who may struggle with alternative waste disposal routes or private waste costs.
- Lower risk profile: It carries minimal financial, operational, and commercial risk to OCC due to the transfer of operational responsibility to an experienced contractor. HWRC contractors assessed through a competitive flexible procurement procedure will be contracted to deliver the HWRC service in accordance with the Equality Act reducing risks to those with protected characteristics.
- Operational skills and experience: Contractors will have the necessary operational skills and experience to provide trained staff that can provide a reliable public-facing service ensure that no service user is treated unfavourably because of a protected characteristic (such as disability, age, race, sex, religion, etc.).
- A longer 8 year contract supports social value, service quality and access improvements: Longer terms enable contractors to invest in staff training and educational opportunities, including social value initiatives.
- Most resilient within LGR: It is the only green-rated long-term option in a multiple-unitary scenario, offering flexibility through options such as including a 4-year break clause. Option E is the only long-term option rated green under a multiple-unitary scenario, meaning minimal disruption to service access for all communities during LGR.
- Best overall value for money: It has the lowest modelled annual cost relative to other future models and avoids the repeated mobilisation costs associated with short-term options.

In terms of ensuring and promoting equality and diversity, a competitive flexible procurement process will ensure that a contractor complies with the Equality Act 2010, focusing on both service user accessibility and workforce diversity. Procurement questions will aim to identify how the contractor will eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster social value and good community relations. HWRC's are public facing; they can support community cohesion in areas of deprivation and can be used develop and foster strong positive relationships between the council and different people from different backgrounds within a community.

	<p>The successful contractor will be held contractually responsible via quality standards and KPI's to ensure equality policy compliance, and that there are clear lines of responsibility for overseeing support for residents with protected characteristics who visit the HWRC sites. The contractor must have due regard and take steps to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics and enable a clear complaints procedure and conflict resolution. The successful contractor will also work closely with OCC to support any future waste policy changes or on-site HWRC improvement construction projects.</p>																													
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>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</p>	<p>The HWRC service model optioneering reviewed 12 short-term and long-term service model options – see table 1 below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="376 566 853 1088"> <thead> <tr> <th>Term</th> <th>Option</th> <th>Description</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="5">Short Term</td> <td>A</td> <td>Re-Procurement</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B</td> <td>In-House</td> </tr> <tr> <td>C</td> <td>LATCo (Own)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D(i)</td> <td>LATCo (Joint)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D(ii)</td> <td>LATCo (ODS via Oxford City Council- S101)</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="7">Long Term</td> <td>E</td> <td>Re-Procurement</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>In-House</td> </tr> <tr> <td>G</td> <td>LATCo (Own)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>H(i)</td> <td>LATCo (Joint)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>H(ii)</td> <td>LATCo (ODS via Oxford City Council- S101)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I</td> <td>JV- Public/Public</td> </tr> <tr> <td>J</td> <td>JV- Public/Private</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Table 1 – 12 Service Model Options</p> <p>Each option was risk assessed against a range of qualitative and costing criteria (table 2 below). Each criteria was weighted using a percentage % adding up to 100%. This methodology approach provided an evidence-based evaluation, that ensured both the council's strategic aims and the services delivery priorities could be equally captured and applied for each option.</p>	Term	Option	Description	Short Term	A	Re-Procurement	B	In-House	C	LATCo (Own)	D(i)	LATCo (Joint)	D(ii)	LATCo (ODS via Oxford City Council- S101)	Long Term	E	Re-Procurement	F	In-House	G	LATCo (Own)	H(i)	LATCo (Joint)	H(ii)	LATCo (ODS via Oxford City Council- S101)	I	JV- Public/Public	J	JV- Public/Private
Term	Option	Description																												
Short Term	A	Re-Procurement																												
	B	In-House																												
	C	LATCo (Own)																												
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	I	JV- Public/Public																												
	J	JV- Public/Private																												

impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.

Primary Criteria	Secondary Criteria	Question	Weighting
Cost: 35%	Cost	What is the annual modelled cost of the option?	25%
	Financial and Commercial Risk	Does the option increase OCC's financial and commercial risk position?	10%
Quality: 65%	People Risk	Does the operational entity have the necessary skills and experience to deliver the service?	10%
	Management Risk	Does the operational entity have the necessary skills and experience to manage the service?	10%
	Market Conditions	Are the market conditions supporting this option?	5%
	Operational Risk	Does the option pose an operational risk of failure to the authority?	5%
	Implementation Risk	Does the option present implementation risk?	5%
	Control and Ability to Change	Does the option allow OCC to control and develop services?	5%
	Social Value	Does the option support OCC's social value objectives?	5%
	Service Quality	Does the option improve the quality of service offered to residents?	5%
	Service Capacity	Does the option improve OCC's Waste Services capacity?	5%
	Strategic Alignment	Does the option align with OCC's Strategic Priorities / Aims?	5%
Innovation	Does the option include opportunities for innovation?	5%	

Table 2 – Options qualitative assessment criteria – including social value and service quality criteria.

This qualitative risk review considered each options risks, benefits and opportunities, as well as considering each option of LGR (for a single authority and for multiple authorities). This provided an overall RAG status table for each option – see table 3 below.

Criteria	Weighting	Short Term Options					Long Term Options						
		A	B	C	D(i)	D(ii)	E	F	G	H(i)	H(ii)	I	J
		Re-Procurement	In-House	LATCo (Own)	LATCo (Joint)	LATCo (ODS - \$101)	Re-Procurement	In-House	LATCo (Own)	LATCo (Joint)	LATCo (ODS - \$101)	JV Public/Public	JV Public/Private
Cost	25%	23.8%	24.7%	23.2%	24.6%	20.9%	25.0%	24.7%	23.2%	24.6%	20.9%	23.8%	22.5%
Financial and Commercial Risk	10%	8%	2%	4%	4%	4%	8%	2%	4%	4%	4%	2%	4%
People Risk	10%	10%	4%	6%	8%	8%	10%	4%	6%	8%	8%	4%	10%
Management Risk	10%	10%	4%	4%	8%	6%	10%	4%	4%	8%	6%	4%	10%
Market Conditions	5%	2%	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	1%
Operational Risk	5%	4%	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Implementation Risk	5%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%
Control and Ability to Change	5%	3%	5%	4%	4%	3%	3%	5%	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%
Social Value	5%	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Service Quality	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Service Capacity	5%	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%
Strategic Alignment	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	3%	5%	5%	5%	5%	3%	5%	5%
Innovation	5%	4%	5%	5%	5%	4%	4%	5%	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%
Total Score	100%	83.8%	71.7%	72.2%	80.6%	69.9%	88.0%	71.7%	72.2%	80.6%	69.9%	68.8%	76.5%
Rank		2	-8	-6	-3	-10	1	-8	-6	-3	-10	12	5
LGR RAG (Single Authority)													
LGR RAG (Multiple Authority)													

Table 3 – Qualitative risk RAG assessment table for each option, including LRG.

The equalities impacts of each option were considered via the Social Value and Service Quality criteria:

Social Value - The question asked was – Does the option support the authority’s social value objectives now and in the future? All options apart from Option A were assessed to be able to potentially offer a substantial increase in social value provision compared to the current arrangement:

- One element of Social Value focuses on advancing equality of opportunity. Suppliers are required to demonstrate how they will create training, apprenticeships and employment opportunities for underrepresented or disadvantaged groups, directly supporting the equality acts aim to reduce inequality.
- Tackling economic inequality through procurement and supply routes; social value initiatives promote fair, equitable and diverse supply chains.
- Reducing health inequalities by focusing on social determinants of health such as providing a living wage and secure work.
- Support for protected characteristics; social value questions within the procurement processes can require bidders to outline how they will meet specific measurable equality goals during contract delivery. Social value transforms contractual duties into measurable actions that improve social value for communities.
- It allows the council the opportunity to engage and negotiate with providers through the competitive flexible procurement process to ensure they do have social value included as part of their contract tender submissions, and that a social value action plan and timetable forms part of their tender submissions.
- The procurement of a long-term contract supports providers in making long-term contracted commitments to increase and deliver on social value delivery throughout the lifetime of the contract. A long-term contract has a longer lifespan; creating more substantial social value achievements, as there is more time to establish these benefits.

Service Quality – The questions asked within this criteria were regarding the different model’s staff policies and training, the quality and proactiveness of options management and supervision structures, and the ability of the different models to monitor and manage quality standards, including addressing any discrimination issues or equality concerns.

Although within each option the management and control of the service is still to a lesser or greater degree dictated by OCC, it is the focus and ability of the model to provide the mechanisms that can flex and change as required if quality changes need to be addressed swiftly.

- Each option was assessed on whether it would deliver and provide a good quality service for Oxfordshire’s residents, and how it would develop and promote waste segregation, recycling and re-use of household materials taken to HWRCs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each option was assessed to understand its service delivery mechanisms, and how it would monitor and manage the services quality standards and KPI's. • Although each option would facilitate quality standards to manage and monitor service delivery quality issues, a long-term contract does enable contracted quality performance standards (via KPI's) to be set up, monitored and maintained. This would provide a mechanism by KPI's can be used to monitor equality compliance throughout the contract lifespan. • The procurement of a long-term contract allows the council an opportunity to engage and negotiate with providers through the competitive flexible procurement process, ensuring providers have included equality impact assessments as part of their tender submissions. The council can ask providers to evidence within their tender submission what potential risks to equality have they identified and how will they mitigate them? • As part of competitive flexible procurement process, providers could also be asked to submit their equality policies and compliance evidence to outline how they communicate equality and diversity to their employees and contractors, detailing responsibility lines and support. This could also include their complaints procedures and staff welfare policies. • The competitive flexible procurement process is also an opportunity to ask for equality and diversity evidence, not just policy statements, but ensuring the senior management is held accountable for policy.
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed</p>	<p>The optioneering process considered all the options and all the models were reviewed in detail, but many fell short due to cost, complexity, or risk.</p> <p><u>Short-Term Options (A–D)</u> Short-term approaches provide flexibility during LGR but bring significant drawbacks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor market appetite, reducing competitiveness and weakening price outcomes. • Implementation costs must be repeated after four years, offering no financial advantage. • Minimal measurable benefit compared with long-term options. <p><u>In-House Delivery (B & F) - Not viable due to:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest revenue costs, driven largely by LGPS pension liabilities. • Risks around a two-tier workforce and recruitment of specialist management. • Substantial operational, financial, and staff-transfer risks under LGR. <p><u>LATCo Models (C, D(i), D(ii), G, H(i), H(ii)) - These options presented:</u></p>

service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.

- High commercial and financial risk, as most risk transfers back to OCC.
- Complex governance arrangements and lengthy negotiation processes.
- Pricing concerns for LATCo based models (D(ii)/H(ii)), including risks of additional annual costs.

Joint Ventures (I & J)

- JV Public/Public: No suitable partner or clear benefits; high complexity.
- JV Public/Private: Low market interest; unclear commercial advantages; inconsistent with sector practice.

Also, why “Doing Nothing” is not an option:

- The W&S contract legally cannot be extended, requiring a new service model.
- The W&S contract relies on the contractor absorbing risks that the market will not accept in a new procurement.
- LGR requires OCC to put in place a stable, resilient service model that can be transferred smoothly to any new authority structure.
- Failure to act would expose OCC to HWRC service continuity risks.

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
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<p>Age</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>HWRC contractors assessed through a competitive flexible procurement procedure will be contracted to deliver the HWRC service safely and effectively, reducing risks to vulnerable younger or older residents.</p> <p>Contractors will have the necessary operational skills and experience to provide reliable public-facing services (e.g., safe site operation, staffed support).</p> <p>Long term contracted services will limit service delivery disruptions, protecting vulnerable households who may struggle with alternative disposal routes or private waste costs.</p> <p>A longer 8-year contract Supports social value, service quality and access improvements: Longer terms enable contractors to invest in staff training and</p>	<p>The procurement of a long-term contract allows the council an opportunity to engage and negotiate with providers through the competitive flexible procurement process, ensuring providers have included equality impact assessments as part of their submissions. The council will ask providers to evidence what potential risks to equality have they identified and how will they mitigate them? They will also be asked to submit their equality policies and compliance evidence.</p> <p>Quality standard KPI's will be set up and managed contractually throughout the contract lifespan.</p> <p>Ensure staff are trained in equality and diversity and that they understand protected characteristics.</p>	<p>Jeffrey Farrell, HWRC Manager</p>	<p>Throughout the procurement processes and contract delivery</p>
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				<p>educational opportunities, including social value initiatives, and on-site access improvements</p> <p>Option E is the only long-term option rated green under a multiple-unitary scenario, meaning minimal disruption to service access for all communities during LGR.</p>	<p>Ensure they have the support in place to manage queries, questions, complaints effectively.</p> <p>Provide staffing support for on-site access to HWRC areas. Provide face to face HWRC support to all residents with clear information about site rules, opening times, waste segregation and recycling policy.</p>		
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<p>Disability</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>HWRC contractors assessed through a competitive flexible procurement procedure will be contracted to deliver the HWRC service safely and effectively, reducing risks to disabled residents.</p> <p>Contractors will have the necessary operational skills and experience to provide reliable public-facing services (e.g., safe site operation, staffed support).</p> <p>Long term contracted services will limit service delivery disruptions, protecting vulnerable households who may struggle with alternative disposal routes or private waste costs.</p> <p>A longer 8-year contract Supports social value, service quality and access improvements: Longer terms enable contractors to invest in staff training and educational opportunities,</p>	<p>The procurement of a long-term contract allows the council an opportunity to engage and negotiate with providers through the competitive flexible procurement process, ensuring providers have included equality impact assessments as part of their submissions. The council will ask providers to evidence what potential risks to equality have they identified and how will they mitigate them? They will also be asked to submit their equality policies and compliance evidence.</p> <p>Quality standard KPI's will be set up and managed contractually throughout the contract lifespan.</p> <p>Ensure staff are trained in equality and diversity and that they understand protected characteristics.</p>	<p>Jeffrey Farrell, HWRC Manager</p>	<p>Throughout the procurement processes and contract delivery</p>
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				<p>including social value initiatives, and on-site access improvements</p> <p>Option E is the only long-term option rated green under a multiple-unitary scenario, meaning minimal disruption to service access for all communities during LGR.</p>	<p>Ensure they have the support in place to manage queries, questions, complaints effectively.</p> <p>Provide staffing support for on-site access to HWRC areas. Provide face to face HWRC support to all residents with clear information about site rules, opening times, waste segregation and recycling policy.</p>		
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

<p>Race</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>HWRC contractors assessed through a competitive flexible procurement procedure will be contracted to deliver the HWRC service safely and effectively, reducing risks to disabled residents.</p> <p>Contractors will have the necessary operational skills and experience to provide reliable public-facing services (e.g., safe site operation, staffed support).</p> <p>Long term contracted services will limit service delivery disruptions, protecting vulnerable households who may struggle with alternative disposal routes or private waste costs.</p> <p>A longer 8-year contract Supports social value, service quality and access improvements: Longer terms enable contractors to invest in staff training and educational opportunities,</p>	<p>The procurement of a long-term contract allows the council an opportunity to engage and negotiate with providers through the competitive flexible procurement process, ensuring providers have included equality impact assessments as part of their submissions. The council will ask providers to evidence what potential risks to equality have they identified and how will they mitigate them? They will also be asked to submit their equality policies and compliance evidence.</p> <p>Quality standard KPI's will be set up and managed contractually throughout the contract lifespan.</p> <p>Ensure staff are trained in equality and diversity and that they understand protected characteristics.</p>	<p>Jeffrey Farrell, HWRC Manager</p>	<p>Throughout the procurement processes and contract delivery</p>
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				<p>including social value initiatives, and on-site access improvements</p> <p>Option E is the only long-term option rated green under a multiple-unitary scenario, meaning minimal disruption to service access for all communities during LGR.</p>	<p>Ensure they have the support in place to manage queries, questions, complaints effectively.</p> <p>Provide staffing support for on-site access to HWRC areas. Provide face to face HWRC support to all residents with clear information about site rules, opening times, waste segregation and recycling policy.</p>		
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<p>Sex</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>HWRC contractors assessed through a competitive flexible procurement procedure will be contracted to deliver the HWRC service safely and effectively, reducing risks to all residents.</p> <p>Contractors will have the necessary operational skills and experience to provide reliable public-facing services (e.g., safe site operation, staffed support).</p> <p>Long term contracted services will limit service delivery disruptions, protecting vulnerable households who may struggle with alternative disposal routes or private waste costs.</p> <p>A longer 8-year contract Supports social value, service quality and access improvements: Longer terms enable contractors to invest in staff training and educational opportunities,</p>	<p>The procurement of a long-term contract allows the council an opportunity to engage and negotiate with providers through the competitive flexible procurement process, ensuring providers have included equality impact assessments as part of their submissions. The council will ask providers to evidence what potential risks to equality have they identified and how will they mitigate them? They will also be asked to submit their equality policies and compliance evidence.</p> <p>Quality standard KPI's will be set up and managed contractually throughout the contract lifespan.</p> <p>Ensure staff are trained in equality and diversity and that they understand protected characteristics.</p>	<p>Jeffrey Farrell, HWRC Manager</p>	<p>Throughout the procurement processes and contract delivery</p>
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				<p>including social value initiatives, and on-site access improvements</p> <p>Option E is the only long-term option rated green under a multiple-unitary scenario, meaning minimal disruption to service access for all communities during LGR.</p>	<p>Ensure they have the support in place to manage queries, questions, complaints effectively.</p> <p>Provide staffing support for on-site access to HWRC areas. Provide face to face HWRC support to all residents with clear information about site rules, opening times, waste segregation and recycling policy.</p>		
Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Contracted providers assessed through procurement will manage on-site hazardous waste, traffic management, and site safety effectively reducing risks to local and rural communities who are more at risk of unsafe fly tipping and incorrect waste disposals.</p> <p>The option to provide a long term contract supports HWRC service delivery in Oxfordshire's more rural HWRC'S.</p>	<p>The procurement of a long-term contract allows the council an opportunity to engage and negotiate with providers through the competitive flexible procurement process, ensuring providers have included equality impact assessments as part of their submissions. The council will ask providers to evidence what potential risks to equality have they identified and how will they mitigate them? They will also be asked to submit their equality policies and compliance evidence.</p> <p>Quality standard KPI's will be set up and managed contractually throughout the contract lifespan.</p>	Jeffrey Farrell, HWRC Manager	Throughout the procurement processes and contract delivery

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
					<p>Ensure staff are trained in equality and diversity and that they understand protected characteristics.</p> <p>Ensure they have the support in place to manage queries, questions, complaints effectively.</p> <p>Provide staffing support for on-site access to HWRC areas. Provide face to face HWRC support to all residents with clear information about site rules, opening times, waste segregation and recycling policy.</p>		
Armed Forces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Those in the armed forces may be stationed in areas away from home that are unfamiliar to them. Having the same level of service across the HWRC's will provide a	The procurement of a long-term contract allows the council an opportunity to engage and negotiate with providers through the competitive flexible		

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				good understanding of recycling and safe waste disposal opportunities.	<p>procurement process, ensuring providers have included equality impact assessments as part of their submissions. The council will ask providers to evidence what potential risks to equality have they identified and how will they mitigate them? They will also be asked to submit their equality policies and compliance evidence.</p> <p>Quality standard KPI's will be set up and managed contractually throughout the contract lifespan.</p> <p>Ensure staff are trained in equality and diversity and that they understand protected characteristics.</p> <p>Ensure they have the support in place to manage queries,</p>		

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
					<p>questions, complaints effectively.</p> <p>Provide staffing support for on-site access to HWRC areas. Provide face to face HWRC support to all residents with clear information about site rules, opening times, waste segregation and recycling policy.</p>		
Carers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	HWRC contractors assessed through a competitive flexible procurement procedure will be contracted to deliver the HWRC service safely and effectively, reducing risks to disabled residents.	The procurement of a long-term contract allows the council an opportunity to engage and negotiate with providers through the competitive flexible procurement process, ensuring providers have included equality impact	Jeffrey Farrell, HWRC Manager	Throughout the procurement processes and contract delivery

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>Contractors will have the necessary operational skills and experience to provide reliable public-facing services (e.g., safe site operation, staffed support).</p> <p>Long term contracted services will limit service delivery disruptions, protecting vulnerable households who may struggle with alternative disposal routes or private waste costs.</p> <p>A longer 8-year contract Supports social value, service quality and access improvements: Longer terms enable contractors to invest in staff training and educational opportunities, including social value initiatives, and on-site access improvements</p> <p>Option E is the only long-term option rated green under a</p>	<p>assessments as part of their submissions. The council will ask providers to evidence what potential risks to equality have they identified and how will they mitigate them? They will also be asked to submit their equality policies and compliance evidence.</p> <p>Quality standard KPI's will be set up and managed contractually throughout the contract lifespan.</p> <p>Ensure staff are trained in equality and diversity and that they understand protected characteristics.</p> <p>Ensure they have the support in place to manage queries, questions, complaints effectively.</p>		

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				multiple-unitary scenario, meaning minimal disruption to service access for all communities during LGR.	Provide staffing support for on-site access to HWRC areas. Provide face to face HWRC support to all residents with clear information about site rules, opening times, waste segregation and recycling policy.		

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other Council Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>A longer 8-year contract Supports social value, service quality and access improvements: Longer terms enable contractors to invest in staff training and educational opportunities, including social value initiatives, and on-site access improvements</p> <p>Option E is the only long-term option rated green under a multiple-unitary scenario, meaning minimal disruption to service access for all communities during LGR.</p>	See above	Jeffrey Farrell, HWRC Manager	Throughout the procurement processes and contract delivery
Providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>A longer 8-year contract Supports social value, service quality and access improvements: Longer terms enable contractors to invest in</p>	See above	Jeffrey Farrell, HWRC Manager	Throughout the procurement processes and contract delivery

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>staff training and educational opportunities, including social value initiatives, and on-site access improvements</p> <p>Option E is the only long-term option rated green under a multiple-unitary scenario, meaning minimal disruption to service access for all communities during LGR.</p>			
Social Value ¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>A longer 8-year contract Supports social value, service quality and access improvements: Longer terms enable contractors to invest in staff training and educational opportunities, including social value initiatives, and on-site access improvements</p> <p>Option E is the only long-term option rated green under a</p>	See above	Jeffrey Farrell, HWRC Manager	Throughout the procurement processes and contract delivery

¹ If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				multiple-unitary scenario, meaning minimal disruption to service access for all communities during LGR.			

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	
Person Responsible for Review	
Authorised By	Teresa Kirkham 20 February 2025